Enneads

PLOTINUS

c. AD 204–270

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Ἐννεάδες

Translated from the Greek with AI (Claude) and edited



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Enneads · Plotinus (c. AD 204–270)

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INTRODUCTION

Plotinus (AD 204/5–270) was born in Egypt, studied philosophy in Alexandria for eleven years under the obscure teacher Ammonius, and in 244 settled in Rome, where he taught a circle of senators, doctors and friends until his death. He began writing only at about fifty, in short treatises that grew out of the questions raised in his seminars. After his death his pupil Porphyry edited them, cutting and grouping them into six sets of nine—in Greek, "enneads"—arranged to lead the reader upward: from ethics and the human being (I) through the natural world (II–III) and the soul (IV) to Intellect, being and the One (V–VI).

Plotinus thought of himself as an interpreter of Plato, but he built something new: a picture of all reality flowing from a single source, the One or the Good, which is beyond being and beyond thought. From it comes Intellect, the realm of the Forms, where thinking and what is thought are one; from Intellect comes Soul, which orders and animates the visible cosmos; at the bottom is matter, formless and closest to nothing. The movement runs both ways: everything proceeds from the One and everything longs to return to it, and the human soul, never wholly descended, can turn inward and rise through virtue and philosophy to Intellect and at last to union with the One.

The treatises are dense, conversational and full of objections raised and answered, and Plotinus writes with unusual force when he describes the ascent: the soul sculpting its own statue (I.6), the vision of intelligible beauty (V.8), the call to "cut away everything" (V.3), and the "flight of the alone to the alone" that ends the last treatise (VI.9). Through Porphyry, Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, the Arabic "Theology of Aristotle" and Ficino's Latin translation, the Enneads shaped Christian, Muslim and Jewish mysticism and Renaissance thought.

I.1 What Is the Living Being, and What Is the Human Being?

Τί τὸ ζῷον καὶ τίς ὁ ἄνθρωπος
Plotinus asks whether passions, perception and thought belong to the soul, the body or their compound, and locates the true self.
no. 53 in order of writing

1.1.1 Pleasures and distresses, fears and feelings of confidence, desires and aversions, and pain: whose would these be? They belong either to the soul, or to the soul when it uses a body, or to some third thing made from both. And this last can be taken in two ways: either it is the mixture itself, or something else, different, that comes from the mixture. The same goes for whatever results from these affections: what is done and what is believed. So discursive thought and opinion must also be examined. Do they belong to the same thing as the affections, or do some belong to it in this way and others in another? We must also consider acts of thinking, how they happen and whose they are. And we must ask what this very thing is that examines these questions and carries out the inquiry and the judging. Before all this: whose is perceiving? That is where we ought to begin, since the affections are either perceptions of some kind or do not occur without perception.

1.1.2 First we must find out whether soul is one thing and being-soul another. If so, soul is something composite. Then it is no longer absurd for it to receive such affections and for them to be its own, if the argument allows even this. The same holds in general for better and worse states and dispositions. Or, if soul

and being-soul are the same, soul would be a form, unable to receive any of these activities, which it brings to something else. It would have within itself an activity native to it, whatever the argument shows that to be. For in that case it is also true to call it immortal, if what is immortal and imperishable must be unaffected. It gives something of itself, in a way, to another, but itself has nothing from another, except what it has from what is prior to it. It is not cut off from those, since they are better.[1] For what would such a thing fear, when it cannot receive anything from outside? Let fear belong, then, to what can be affected. Nor is it confident, then: confidence belongs to those to whom frightening things are present. And desires [how?], which are satisfied through the body as it is emptied and filled, and what is filled and emptied is something else. And how [could it receive] mixture, if what is essential is unmixed? How could anything be brought into it? It would then be hurrying toward not being what it is. Pain is still further off. And how could it be distressed, or over what? What is simple in its being is self-sufficient, since it is such as to remain in its own being. Will it feel pleasure when something comes to it, when nothing comes to it, not even a good? For what it is, it always is. Nor, again, will perception, discursive thought or opinion have anything to do with it. Perception is the reception of a form, or of an unaffected body, and discursive thought and opinion depend on perception. As for thinking, we must consider how it works, if we are going to leave this to the soul. We must also ask about pure pleasure, whether it occurs to the soul when it is alone.

1.1.3 But we must place soul in body, whether it exists before this body or in it, since it is from body and soul together that the whole has been called a living being. If it uses the body as a tool, it is not forced to receive the affections that come through the body, any more than craftsmen receive the affections of their tools. Perception, though, it might perhaps have to receive, if it must use the tool and know the external affections through per-

1 The distinction between a thing and its being, "soul" and "what it is to be soul," is Aristotle's (*Metaphysics* VIII.3, 1043b): the two coincide only in what is simple.

ception, since using eyes is seeing. But seeing can also be damaged, and so there are distresses and pain, and in general whatever happens to the body as a whole. So there are desires too, as the soul seeks care for its tool. But how will the affections reach the soul from the body? A body will pass on what is its own to another body. But how will a body pass anything on to a soul? That would be like one thing being affected because another is. For as long as one is the user and the other what is used, each is separate. At any rate, whoever makes soul the user separates them. But before one separates it through philosophy, how was it? It was mixed, presumably. But if it was mixed, there are several options. It was some kind of blend. Or it was woven through. Or it was like a separate form, or a form in contact, like the pilot. Or one part of it was in one way and another part in another. I mean that one part is separate, namely the user, and another is mixed in some way and ranks with what is used. Then philosophy can turn this part, too, back toward the user, and lead the user away from what it uses, as far as is not absolutely necessary, so that it does not always use it.

1.1.4 Let us suppose, then, that it has been mixed. But if it is mixed, the worse will become better, and the [better] worse. The body becomes better by getting a share of life, and the soul worse by getting a share of death and irrationality. Then how could what has lost life in some way gain perceiving as an addition? On the contrary, it would be the body, having received life, that partakes of perception and of the affections that come from perception. So this is what will desire, since this is what will enjoy what it desires. And it will fear for itself, since this is what will miss out on pleasant things and will perish. We must also investigate the manner of the mixture. Perhaps it is not possible at all, as if someone said a line had been mixed with white: one nature with another of a different kind. Being woven through does not make the interwoven things share the same affections. What is woven through can be unaffected. The soul can pass right through and not undergo the body's affections, just like light, especially if it is woven through the whole in this way. So

it will not undergo the body's affections just because it is interwoven. Rather, it will be in the body as form is in matter. But first, it will be like a separable form, if it is a substance, and even more so if it is there as the user. But suppose it is like the shape of an axe in the iron, and the compound will do what iron so shaped does, in virtue of its shape, that is. Then we should rather assign the shared affections to the body. But to body of this kind: natural, equipped with organs, having life potentially.[2] Indeed, he says it is absurd to say that the soul weaves, and so also that it desires and is distressed. It is rather the living being that does these things.[3]

1.1.5 But by "the living being" we must mean either the body of this kind, or the common entity, or some other third thing that has come from both. Whichever it is, either we must keep the soul unaffected while it causes this sort of thing in something else, or it is affected along with it. In that case it undergoes either the same affection or a similar one. For instance, the living being desires in one way, and the desiring part is active or affected in another. The body of this kind we must consider later. But how is the compound distressed, for instance? Is it that the body is disposed in a certain way, the affection passes as far as perception, and the perception ends in soul? But how perception works is not yet clear. Or is it that distress begins from an opinion and judgment that something bad is present, either to oneself or to someone close, and that a distressing change then passes from there into the body and, in general, into the whole living being? But here too it is not yet clear whose the opinion is, the soul's or the compound's. Then, the opinion about the bad does not contain the affection of distress. It is possible for the opinion to be present and distress not to follow at all. In the same way, anger need not arise when one has formed the opinion of being slighted, and desire need not be stirred by the opinion of a good. So how are these things common? Is it because

2 The axe and the definition of the body soul belongs to ("natural, equipped with organs, potentially having life") come from Aristotle, *On the Soul* II.1.
3 "He" here is Aristotle (*On the Soul* I.4, 408b).

desire belongs to the desiring part, anger to the spirited part, and, in general, reaching out toward something to the appetitive part? But then they will no longer be common. They will belong to the soul alone, or to the body too, since blood and bile must boil and the body must be in some state to stir desire, as in the case of sex. Desire for the good, however, will not be a common affection but the soul's, as other things are too; the argument does not give everything to the common entity. Yet when a man desires sex, it will be the man who desires, and in another way it will be the desiring part that desires. And how? Will the man begin the desire and the desiring part follow? But how could the man desire at all if the desiring part had not been moved? Then the desiring part will begin. But where will it begin from, if the body has not first been disposed in this way?

1.1.6 But perhaps it is better to say, in general, that when powers are present it is the things that have them that act in accordance with them, while the powers themselves are unmoved and supply the capacity to those that have them. But if so, when the living being is affected, what gives the compound its cause of life must itself be unaffected, while the affections and activities belong to what has it. But if so, living as a whole will also belong not to the soul but to the compound. Or rather, the life of the compound will not be the soul's. And the perceptive power will not perceive; what has the power will. But if perception, being a movement through the body, ends in soul, how will the soul not perceive? Or rather, with the perceptive power present, it will perceive by that power's being present. What will perceive [then]? The compound. But if the power is not going to be moved, how is it still the compound that perceives, when neither soul nor the soul's power is counted in?

1.1.7 Or rather, it will be the compound, by the soul's presence. The soul does not give itself, as it is, to the compound or to the other member. Out of the body of this kind and a sort of light given from itself, it makes the nature of the living being, which is something different. Perceiving belongs to this, along with all the other affections said to belong to the living being. But how

do we perceive? Because we have not been released from such a living being, even if other, more valuable things are also present in us, contributing to the whole being of a human, which is made of many. The soul's power of perceiving should not be perception of sensible things. It should rather be the power to apprehend the impressions that perception produces in the living being, for these are already intelligible. So external perception is an image of this one. This one is truer in its being: a contemplation of forms alone, without being affected. From these forms, through which the soul alone now takes over the leadership of the living being, come discursive thoughts, opinions and acts of thinking. And this is where we most of all are. What comes before these is ours, but we are what, from here upward, presides over the living being. Nothing prevents us from calling the whole a living being, mixed in its lower parts, while from here on it is more or less the true human being. Those lower parts are "the lion-like" and, in general, "the many-colored beast." For since the human being coincides with the rational soul, when we reason it is we who reason, because acts of reasoning are activities of soul.[4]

1.1.8 And how do we stand toward Intellect? By Intellect I do not mean the state the soul has, which is (one of the things) that come from Intellect, but Intellect itself. We have this too, as something above us. We have it either as common or as our own, or rather as both common to all and our own. It is common because it is undivided and one and the same everywhere; our own because each of us has the whole of it in the first soul. So we also have the Forms in two ways: in soul, as it were unrolled and as it were separated out; in Intellect, all together. And how do we stand toward god? Or rather, as riding upon the intelligible nature and on what really is; and we are third from there, from the "undivided" nature, he says, which is above, and from "the nature divided about bodies." We should understand this nature as divided about bodies in one of two senses. It gives

4 The lion and the many-colored beast are Plato's images for the spirited and appetitive parts of the soul (*Republic* IX, 588c–590a).

itself to the magnitudes of body, however large each living being is, since even in the whole All it is one. Or it appears to be present to bodies by shining into them and making living beings, not out of itself and body. It remains itself, and gives images of itself, like a face in many mirrors.[5] The first image is the perception in the common entity. Then from this, in turn, every other form of soul is spoken of, each one always from another. It ends with the generative and growth-producing form and, in general, with what makes and brings to completion something other than the soul that makes it, since the making soul itself is turned toward what it is completing.

1.1.9 So the nature of that soul of ours will be free of responsibility for the evils a human does and suffers, since these concern the living being, the common entity, as has been said. But if opinion and discursive thought belong to the soul, how is it free of fault? Opinion can be false, and many bad things are done in accordance with it. Or rather, bad things are done when we are overcome by what is worse in us, for we are many. We are overcome by desire, or anger, or a bad image. What is called thought about falsehoods is imagination, which did not wait for the judgment of the reasoning part. We acted persuaded by the worse parts, just as in perception the common perception sometimes sees falsely before the reasoning part has passed judgment. Intellect was not in contact with it, and so it is free of fault. Or perhaps we should put it like this. Either we were in contact with what is intelligible in Intellect or we were not (or with what is in us), since it is possible to have it and not have it at hand. Now we distinguished what is common from what is the soul's own as follows. What is common is bodily and does not exist without body. Whatever does not need body for its activity is the soul's own. Discursive thought, when it judges the impressions that come from perception, is already contemplating forms. It contemplates them as it were by self-awareness, at least the discursive thought that belongs properly to the true soul. For true discursive thought is an activity of acts of thinking, and is often

5 The phrases are from Plato's account of how the soul is mixed (*Timaeus* 35a).

a likeness and communion of outer things with those within. So the soul will be at rest none the less, toward itself and in itself. The changes and the turmoil in us come from what is attached to us and from the affections of the common entity, whatever exactly that is, as has been said.

1.1.10 But if we are the soul, and we undergo these things, then the soul would undergo them, and again it will do what we do. Or rather, we said that the common entity is ours too, especially while we have not yet been separated. After all, we say that we suffer what our body suffers. So "we" is double: either with the beast counted in, or what is already above it. The beast is the body that has been brought to life. The true human being is another, the pure one. He has the virtues that belong to thinking, which are seated in the soul itself as it separates, separating and separable even while it is still here. For when this soul withdraws completely, what was illuminated by it also goes away, following along. But the virtues that come not from understanding but from habit and training belong to the common entity. The vices belong to it too, since so do envy, jealousy and pity.[6] And whose are friendships? Some belong to the common entity, others to the inner human being.

1.1.11 When we are children, the powers of the compound are active, and little shines into it from above. When it is inactive toward us, it is active toward what is above. It is active toward us when it reaches as far as the middle. What then? Are we not also what comes before this? Yes, but it must be apprehended. We do not always use everything we have, only when we direct the middle part either toward what is above or toward the opposite, (or) whatever we bring from potentiality or a settled state into activity. And how do animals have the living being? If there are human souls in them that have done wrong, as is said, then this soul, insofar as it is separable, does not come to belong to the animals. It is present, but not present to them. Their self-aware-

6 "Virtue" translates *aretē*, rendered "excellence" in our Plato and Aristotle. Plotinus distinguishes the civic virtues from higher virtues that are purifications (see I.2).

ness has the image of soul along with the body. The body, then, is of this kind, qualified as it were by an image of soul. If no human soul has entered, then such a living being has come about by illumination from the whole Soul.

FAULTLESS SOUL AND PUNISHED SOUL

Plotinus reconciles the soul's freedom from fault with punishment by assigning faults to the composite.

1.1.12 But if the soul is free of fault, how can there be punishments? Yet this argument is out of tune with every argument that says the soul errs, is purified, and pays penalties (both) in Hades and by passing into new bodies. One may side with whichever argument one likes, but perhaps one could find a way in which they will not conflict. The argument that grants the soul freedom from fault made it one thing, simple in every way, saying that soul and being-soul are the same. The one that grants that it errs weaves together with it, and adds to it, another form of soul, which has the terrible affections. So the soul becomes composite, the product of them all. It is affected as a whole, and it is the composite that errs. And this is what pays the penalty in its case, not that other. That is why he says: "We have seen it like those who see Glaucus of the sea." But if one wants to see its nature, he says, one must knock off what has grown onto it. One must look to its love of wisdom, to see what it lays hold of and by kinship with what it is what it is. So there is another life and other activities, and what is punished is something else. The withdrawal and the separation is not only from this body but also from everything that has been added. For the addition comes about in coming into being; or rather, coming into being as a whole is the coming into being of the other form of soul.[7]

How this coming into being happens has already been said: when soul descends, something else comes from it, and this is

7 In *Republic* X (611c–612a), Plato compares the soul encrusted by the body to the sea-god Glaucus, overgrown with shells and weed.

what descends in the inclination. Does it then let go of the image? And how is the inclination not a fault? But if the inclination is an illumination toward what is below, it is not a fault, any more than a shadow is. What is responsible is what is illuminated: if that did not exist, it would have nowhere to shine. So soul is said to descend and incline because what it illuminates lives with it. It lets go of the image, then, if what is to receive it is not near. It lets go not by the image being cut off, but by its no longer existing. And it no longer exists if the soul looks There with the whole of itself. The poet seems to separate this in the case of Heracles. He gives his image a place in Hades, but places Heracles himself among the gods, held by both stories, that he is among the gods and that he is in Hades. At any rate, he divided him. Perhaps the story would be persuasive like this. Heracles had practical virtue and for his nobility was judged worthy to be a god. But because he was a man of action and not of contemplation, he is above, and yet something of him is also below. If he had been a man of contemplation, he would have been wholly There.[8]

1.1.13 And what has examined these matters: is it we or the soul? It is we, but by the soul. And how "by the soul"? Did we examine by having it? Or rather, by being soul. So it will not be moved? Or rather, we must grant it movement of a kind that is not that of bodies but is its own life. And our thinking is ours in this way too: the soul is intellectual, and thinking is a higher life, both when soul thinks and when Intellect is active in us. For Intellect too is a part of us, and toward it we ascend.

8 Homer, *Odyssey* 11.601–604: Odysseus sees the image of Heracles in the underworld, while Heracles himself feasts among the gods.

I.2 On Virtues

Περὶ ἀρετῶν
Becoming like god through virtue: Plotinus distinguishes civic virtues from the purifications that turn the soul toward Intellect.
no. 19 in order of writing

1.2.1 Since evils are here and haunt this place of necessity, and the soul wants to flee evils, we must flee from here. What, then, is the flight? Becoming like god, he says. And this happens if we become just and holy with understanding, and in general if we live in virtue. If, then, we become like by virtue, is it like something that has virtue? And like which (god)? Is it the one who seems more to have these, that is, the Soul of the cosmos and the ruling principle in it, which has a wondrous understanding? It is reasonable, after all, that while we are here we should become like this. Or rather, first of all it is disputable whether even this has all the virtues. Take being moderate [or] brave. Nothing is frightening to it, since nothing is outside it. Nor does anything pleasant come to it whose absence could give rise to a desire to have it or seize it.[1] But if it too is in desire for the intelligibles, as our souls are, then clearly our order and our virtues come from there as well. Does that, then, have these virtues? Or rather, it is not reasonable for it to have at least the so-called civic virtues. These are understanding, which concerns the reasoning part; courage, which concerns the spirited part; moderation, which lies in a kind of agreement and harmony of the desiring part

1 "Becoming like god" is Plato's phrase (*Theaetetus* 176a–b), where evils are also said to "haunt this place of necessity."

with reason; and justice, each of these parts together doing its own work in ruling and being ruled. Then do we not become like by the civic virtues, but by the greater ones that use the same name? But if by others, are we not like by the civic ones at all? Or rather, it would be unreasonable for there to be no likeness at all by these. Tradition, at least, calls people who have them godlike, and we must say they have become like in some way. Still, the likeness itself is by the greater ones.

But either way it turns out that one has virtues, even if not of this kind. So if one grants that we can become like, even though we stand differently toward different virtues and have not become like by the civic ones, nothing prevents us from becoming like, by our own virtues, to what has not acquired virtue. How? Like this. If something is heated by the presence of heat, must the source the heat came from also be heated? And if something is hot by the presence of fire, must fire itself be heated by the presence of fire? To the first point one might reply that there is heat in fire too, but innate heat. Then the argument, following the analogy, would make virtue something brought into the soul from outside, but innate in that from which the soul has it by imitation. And to the argument from fire one might reply that it would make that principle virtue itself. But we hold it to be greater than virtue. Now if what the soul participates in were the same as its source, we would have to speak like that. But as it is, that is one thing and this is another. For the sensible house is not the same as the intelligible one, although it has been made like it. The sensible house participates in arrangement and order, but There, in its rational principle, there is no arrangement, order or proportion. So it is with us. We participate in order, arrangement and harmony from there, and these belong to virtue here. But the things there have no need of harmony, order or arrangement, and so they would have no need of virtue either. And we become like the things there none the less, through the presence of virtue. That is enough to show that virtue need not exist There as well, given that we

become like by virtue. But we must add persuasion to the argument, and not stop at compulsion.

1.2.2 First, then, we must take the virtues by which we say we become like, in order to find this very thing. In us, as an imitation, it is virtue; There, as an archetype so to speak, it is not virtue. We should note that likeness is twofold. One kind requires something the same in the like things, when they have been made like equally from the same source. But sometimes one thing has been made like another while the other is primary. It does not reciprocate and is not called like the first. There we must take likeness in another way. It does not require the same form, but rather a different one, since the likeness is of the other kind. What, then, is virtue, both as a whole and each virtue? The account will be clearer if we take each one. In this way what is common to them, by which they are all virtues, will easily become clear. The civic virtues, then, which we mentioned above, give order to us while we remain [still and have them here] and make us better. They set bounds and measure to our desires and, in general, our affections, and they remove false opinions. They do this by what is better in every way, by being bounded, and because what is measured lies outside the unmeasured and the unbounded. And being themselves bounded, insofar as they are measures in the soul as their matter, they have been made like the measure There and have a trace of the best There. For what is wholly unmeasured, being matter, is wholly unlike. But insofar as it participates in form, so far it becomes like that which is formless. What is near participates more. Soul is nearer than body and more akin, so it participates more, so much so that it can deceive by appearing as a god, as though this were the whole of god. This, then, is how these virtues make us like.

1.2.3 But since he hints that there is another likeness, belonging to the greater virtue, we must speak about that one. In doing so, the being of civic virtue will also become clearer, as well as what the greater virtue is in its being, and in general that there is another besides the civic. Plato says that likeness to god is a

flight from things here. He does not give the virtues of civic life the name without qualification, but adds "civic." And elsewhere he calls them all purifications. So he clearly posits two kinds, and does not place likeness in the civic kind. In what sense, then, do we call these purifications, and how is it that by being purified we become most like?[2] Since the soul is bad when it is mixed up with the body, shares its affections and joins it in all its opinions, it would be good and have virtue if it did not share its opinions but acted alone. That is thinking and understanding. It would also be good if it did not share the body's affections, which is being moderate; if it did not fear being separated from the body, which is being brave; and if reason and intellect led and the rest did not resist, which would be justice. If one called such a disposition of the soul, in which it thinks and is in this way unaffected, likeness to god, one would not be wrong. For the divine too is pure, and its activity is such that what imitates it has understanding. What then? Is that too disposed in this way? Or rather, it is not disposed at all; disposition belongs to soul. And the soul thinks in another way. Of the things There, one thinks in a different way, and the other does not think at all. Is "thinking," then, again just a shared name? Not at all: one thinks primarily, the other thinks in a different way, derived from it. For as the word spoken aloud is an imitation of the word in the soul, so the word in the soul is an imitation of the word in something else. So as the uttered word is an imitation in relation to the word in the soul, so the word in the soul, as its interpreter, is an imitation in relation to what is before it. Virtue, then, belongs to soul. It does not belong to Intellect, nor to what is beyond.[3]

1.2.4 We must ask whether purification is the same as virtue of this kind, or whether purification comes first and virtue follows. We must also ask whether virtue lies in being purified or in hav-

2 Plato speaks of "civic" courage in *Republic* IV (430c) and calls the virtues purifications in *Phaedo* 69b–c.

3 "What is beyond" is the first principle, which Plotinus, following Plato (*Republic* 509b, "beyond being"), places beyond being and Intellect.

ing been purified. [That which lies in being purified, at any rate,] is less complete than that which lies in having been purified, [for having been purified] is already a kind of end. But having been purified is the removal of everything foreign, and the good is something other than that. Or: if it was good before the purification, is purification enough? Purification will be enough, then; but what remains will be the good, not the purification. And we must ask what it is that remains. For perhaps the nature that remains was not the good either, or it would not have come to be in evil. Should we then call it good-like? Or rather, not able to remain in what is really good, since by nature it inclines both ways. Its good, then, is to be with what is akin to it, and its bad to be with its opposites. So it must be purified and then be with what is akin to it, and it will be with it by turning back. Does it turn back, then, after purification? Or rather, after purification it has turned back. Is this, then, its virtue? Or rather, its virtue is what comes to be in it from the turning back. And what is that? A vision, and an impression of what was seen, set in it and active, as sight is in relation to what is seen. So did it not have these things, and does it not recollect them? It had them, but not active: stored away and unlit. For them to be lit up, and for it then to know they are within it, it must apply itself to what gives light. And it did not have the things themselves, only impressions. So it must fit the impression to the true things of which the impressions are. Perhaps it is also said to have them in this sense: Intellect is not foreign to it, and least of all foreign when it looks toward Intellect. Otherwise, even though present, Intellect is foreign. For branches of knowledge too are foreign to us, if we are not active in them at all.

1.2.5 But we must say how far purification goes. In this way it will also become clear which god the likeness is to, and which god the identity is with. This means, above all, asking how [it purifies] anger and desire and all the rest, distress and its kin, and how far separation from the body is possible. From the body, perhaps, by gathering itself together even, as it were, in place. But [at any rate] wholly by being unaffected, and by tak-

ing the necessary pleasures [and the] perceptions only as remedies and releases from pain, so as not to be troubled. It removes pains, and if that is not possible, bears them gently and makes them smaller by not sharing the affection. It removes anger as far as possible, and entirely if it can. If not, at least it is not angry along with it; the involuntary belongs to something else, and the involuntary is slight and weak. Fear it removes entirely, for it will be afraid of nothing (here too there is the involuntary), except as a warning. As for desire, it is clear that it will be for nothing base. It will not itself have desire for food and drink, for relief; nor for sex either. If at all, I think, it will be for what is natural, and without even the involuntary. If at all, only as far as an impulsive imagining, and that alone. In general, the soul itself will be pure of all these things, and it will want to make the irrational part pure as well, so that it is not even struck. Or if it is, not violently: its blows will be few and at once dissolved by the nearness of reason. It is like someone living next to a wise man, who benefits from the wise man's neighborhood, either by becoming like him or by feeling such respect that he does not dare do anything the good man does not want. So there will be no conflict. The presence of reason is enough, and the worse part will respect it. Even the worse part itself will be vexed, if it is moved at all, that it did not keep quiet while its master was present, and it will reproach itself for its weakness.

1.2.6 None of these things, then, is a fault; for a human being it is right action. But our concern is not to be without fault but to be god. If, then, some such involuntary movement still occurs, a person like this would be a god and a spirit, being double. Or rather, he would have with him another, who has a different virtue. If nothing of the kind occurs, he is a god only, one of the gods who follow the First. For he himself is the one who came from There, and his own self, if he became as he was when he came, is There. Coming here, he has been made to live with intellect. He will make this like himself as far as its capacity allows, so that, if possible, it is not struck, or at least does not do what the master does not approve. What, then, is each virtue for

such a person? Wisdom [and understanding] lies in the contemplation of what Intellect has; Intellect has it by contact. Each of these is twofold, then: one is in Intellect, the other in soul. There it is not virtue; in soul it is virtue. What, then, is it There? Its activity, and what it is. Here, what is in something else and comes from There is virtue. For neither Justice itself nor each virtue itself is virtue, but a model, as it were; what comes from it in soul is virtue. For virtue is somebody's, but each thing itself belongs to itself and not to anything else. If justice is "doing one's own," is it always found in a plurality of parts? Or rather, one kind is in a plurality, when there are many parts, but the other is doing one's own simply, even if it belongs to one thing. True Justice itself, at any rate, is a relation of one thing to itself, in which there is not one part and another. So for the soul too, the higher justice is acting toward Intellect, and moderation is the turning inward toward Intellect. Courage is being unaffected, in likeness to what it looks toward, which is unaffected by nature. In the soul this comes from virtue, so that it does not share the affections of the worse partner it lives with.

1.2.7 These virtues in the soul, then, imply one another, just as There the things in Intellect that come before virtue, the models as it were, do too. For thinking There is knowledge and wisdom; being directed toward itself is moderation; its own work is doing its own; and what is, so to speak, courage is its identity and its remaining pure by itself. In the soul, then, seeing toward Intellect is wisdom and understanding, which are its virtues; for it is not these itself, as Intellect is There. And the rest follow in the same way. With purification too, if all the virtues are purifications in the sense of having been purified, all of them must be there, or none is complete. And whoever has the greater virtues necessarily has the lesser ones potentially, but whoever has the lesser ones does not necessarily have the greater. This, then, is the principal life of the good person. Whether he has the lesser virtues as well as the greater in activity, or in some other way, we must examine for each one. Take understanding. If it uses other principles, how does that lower understanding still

remain, even if it is not active? And what if one virtue by nature allows so much, and another so much, moderation of one kind measuring those things and the other abolishing them altogether? The same goes for the other virtues, once the question about understanding has been raised at all. Or rather, he will at least know them, and how much he will get from them. Perhaps at times, when circumstances require, he will act in accordance with some of them. But on reaching greater principles and other measures, he will act in accordance with those. For instance, he will not place moderation in that measure. He will separate himself entirely, as far as possible, and will not live at all the human life of the good man, which civic virtue thinks worth [living]. He will leave this behind and choose another in exchange, the life of the gods. For the likeness [for him] is to them, not to good human beings. Likeness to good human beings is as image is made like image, each from the same source. Likeness to the other is as to a model.

I.3 On Dialectic

Περὶ διαλεκτικῆς
Plotinus describes how the musician, the lover and the philosopher are led upward, and praises dialectic as philosophy's most precious part.
no. 20 in order of writing

1.3.1 What art, method or practice leads us up to where we must go? Where we must go, toward the Good and the first principle, let that be taken as agreed and shown by many arguments. And indeed the means by which it was shown were themselves a kind of leading up. But what sort of person must the one be who is to be led up? Is it the one who has seen all things, or, as he says, "most things," who at his first birth [entered] into the seed of a man who would be a philosopher [or] a musician of some kind or a lover? The philosopher by nature, the musician and the lover must be led up. What, then, is the way? Is it one and the same for all of these, or is there a particular way for each?[1] For all of them the journey is twofold, whether they are going up or have arrived above. The first starts from things below. The second is for those who are already in the intelligible and have, as it were, set foot there. They must travel on until they reach the farthest point of the region, which is in fact the end of the journey, when one is at the summit of the intelligible.

But let that one wait. First we must try to speak about the leading up. First, then, we must distinguish these men, beginning with the musician and saying what he is like by nature. We

1 Plato, *Phaedrus* 248d: the soul that has seen most of true being is born as a lover of wisdom or of beauty, or a person devoted to the Muses and to love.

must take him to be easily moved and excited by beauty, but less able to be moved by himself. He is ready to respond to whatever impressions come his way, sounds as it were. As timid people react to noises, so he reacts to tones and the beauty in them. He always flees what is out of harmony and not one in songs, and he pursues what is rhythmical and well-shaped in rhythms. After these sensible tones, rhythms and figures, then, he must be led on like this. Separating out the matter in which the proportions and ratios are found, he must be led to the beauty that is over them. He must be taught that what he was excited about was this: the intelligible harmony, the beauty in it, and beauty in general, not just some particular beauty. And the arguments of philosophy must be planted in him. From these he must be led to conviction about what he has without knowing it. What these arguments are, we will say later.

1.3.2 The lover, into whom the musician too may turn and, having turned, either stay or pass beyond, has in a way a memory of beauty. But he cannot grasp it apart from bodies; struck by the beautiful things he sees, he is excited about them. So he must be taught not to fall for one body and be excited about it. He must be led by reason to all bodies and shown what is the same in all of them. He must be told that it is other than the bodies, that it comes from elsewhere, and that it is present more fully in other things. He should be shown beautiful ways of life and beautiful laws, for here his habituation to what is lovable already lies among incorporeal things. And he should be shown that it is in arts, sciences and virtues. Then these must be made one, and he must be taught how they come to be in things. From the virtues he [must] now ascend to Intellect, to being, and There he must walk the upward journey.[2]

1.3.3 The philosopher by nature is ready, as it were winged. He does not need separation, as these others do. He is already moving toward what is above, and, being at a loss, he needs only someone to show him the way. So he must be shown and set free, since he is willing by his own nature and has long been

2 This ascent follows Diotima's "ladder of love" in Plato's *Symposium* (210a–212a).

free. He should be given mathematics, to accustom him to thinking about and believing in the incorporeal; he will take it in easily, being a lover of learning. And since he is naturally virtuous, he must be led to the perfection of his virtues. After mathematics he must be given the arguments of dialectic, and in general he must be made a dialectician.

1.3.4 What is dialectic, which must be handed on to the others as well? It is the state that can say, by a reasoned account, about each thing what it is, how it differs from other things, and what it has in common with them. It can say among which things each is and where each belongs, and whether it is what it is. It can say how many the things that are are, and again the things that are not, which are other than the things that are. It discusses good and not good, what falls under the good and what under its opposite, what is eternal and what is not, and it does all this by knowledge, plainly, not by opinion. It stops wandering about the sensible and settles in the intelligible, and does its work there. It has let go of falsehood and nourishes the soul in what is called the plain of truth. It uses Plato's method of division to discern the Forms and to define what each thing is, and also for the primary kinds. It weaves together, intellectually, what comes from these until it has gone through the whole intelligible world. Then it unravels it again in reverse until it arrives at the principle.[3] Then it keeps still, since for as long as it is There it is at rest. It no longer busies itself with anything; it has become one, and it looks. The so-called logical study, about propositions and syllogisms, it hands over to another art, as it would knowing how to write. It regards some of these things as necessary and as coming before art. But it judges them as it judges everything else, and considers some useful and others superfluous, belonging to the method that wants them.

1.3.5 But where does this science get its principles? Intellect gives clear principles, if a soul is able to take them. Then it puts together, combines and divides what follows, until it arrives at perfect intellect. "For it is," he says, "the purest part of intellect

3 The "plain of truth" is from Plato's *Phaedrus* (248b).

and understanding." Being the most valuable of our states, then, it must be concerned with being and with what is most valuable: as understanding with being, as intellect with what is beyond being. What, then, is philosophy? The most valuable thing. Are philosophy and dialectic the same?[4] Or rather, dialectic is the valuable part of philosophy. We should not think it is the philosopher's tool. It is not bare theorems and rules; it concerns things, and has the things that are as its matter, so to speak. It does approach them methodically, though, holding the things together with the theorems. Falsehood and sophistry it knows only incidentally, when someone else has produced them. It judges falsehood as something foreign by the truths within itself. When someone brings it forward, it recognizes that it runs against the rule of truth. So it does not know about the proposition as such (that would be like knowing letters). But because it knows the truth, it knows what they call a proposition. In general, it knows the movements of the soul: what it posits and what it rejects, whether it rejects the very thing it posits or something else, and whether things are different or the same. It grasps what is put before it, as perception does, and leaves precise detail to another discipline that enjoys it.

1.3.6 So dialectic is the valuable part, since philosophy has other parts as well. It studies nature too, with help from dialectic, just as the other arts also make use of arithmetic, though philosophy draws on dialectic from closer at hand. It studies ethics in the same way. It contemplates from there, but adds the states and the training from which the states proceed. The rational states hold what comes from there as already their own, for most of it involves matter. The other virtues apply reasoning to particular affections and actions. Understanding is a kind of higher reasoning, more concerned with the universal. It asks whether they imply one another, and whether to hold back now or later, or whether some other course is altogether better. Dialectic and wisdom, still more universally and immaterially, supply everything for understanding to use. Can the lower virtues

4 The quotation is from Plato, *Philebus* 58d.

exist without dialectic and wisdom? Yes, but incompletely and deficiently. And can one be wise and a dialectician without the lower virtues? It could not even happen: they must either come first or grow up alongside. Perhaps one might have natural virtues, from which the complete virtues come when wisdom is added. Then wisdom comes after the natural virtues, and then it perfects character. Or rather, once the natural virtues exist, both grow together and are perfected together; or one comes first and perfects the other. For in general natural virtue has both an imperfect eye and an imperfect character, and for both of them what counts most is the principles from which we have them.

I.4 On Happiness

Περὶ εὐδαιμονίας
Plotinus argues that happiness is the perfect life of intellect, which the sage keeps intact through pain, loss and misfortune.
no. 46 in order of writing

1.4.1 Suppose we place living well and being happy in the same thing: are we then going to grant them to the other animals too? If they can live out their lives unhindered in the way their nature intends, what prevents us from saying that they too are living well? Whether one places living well in pleasant experience or in accomplishing one's proper work, on both counts it will belong to the other animals as well. They can have pleasant experiences, and they can be engaged in the work that accords with their nature. Take the musical animals: they have pleasant experiences in other ways, and above all they sing as their nature intends, and in this respect too their life is worth choosing for them. And then, if we make happiness an end, the last term of natural desire, in this way too we would grant them a share in happiness when they reach their last point. That is the point at which the nature in them comes to rest, once they arrive there, having run through its whole life and filled it out from beginning to end. But someone may balk at bringing happiness down to the other animals: for then, he says, we will be granting it even to the lowest of them, and to plants as well, since they too are alive and have a life that unfolds to its end. Then, first of all, won't he seem absurd in saying that the other animals do not live well, just because they don't seem to him worth much? As for plants, he would not be forced to grant them

what he grants to all animals, since they have no perception. Perhaps, though, there may be someone who grants it to plants too, if indeed he grants them life. One life would be good, another the opposite; plants too can do well or badly, and can bear fruit or fail to. So if pleasure is the end and living well consists in it, it is absurd to deny the other animals living well. The same holds if the end is freedom from disturbance, and also if living well is said to be living in accordance with nature.[1]

1.4.2 Those, however, who refuse it to plants because they lack perception run the risk of not being able to grant it even to all animals. For if by perceiving they mean this—that an affection does not go unnoticed—then the affection must be good before it is noticed: being in one's natural state, for instance, even if this goes unnoticed, and being in a state proper to oneself, even if one does not yet recognize that it is proper and that it is pleasant. For it must be pleasant. So if this is good and present, whatever has it is already in a state of well-being. Why, then, must perception be added? Unless, of course, they attribute the good not to the affection that occurs, the condition, but to the knowing and perceiving of it. But then they will be saying that perception itself is the good, the activity of the perceptive life—and so it will belong to those who apprehend anything whatever. If they say the good comes from both together—from perception of a state of this kind—how can they say that what comes from both is good, when each of the two is indifferent? And if the affection is good, and living well is this sort of condition, when one knows that the good is present to one, we must ask them: does one live well by knowing that this present thing is present? Or must one know not only that it is pleasant but that it is the good? But if one must know that it is the good, this is no longer the work of perception but of another power, greater than perception. Living well, then, will belong not to those who feel pleasure, but to the one who can know that pleasure is the good. So the cause of living well will not be pleasure, but what is

1 Pleasure as the end, and freedom from disturbance (ataraxia), are Epicurean views; "living in accordance with nature" is the Stoic formula.

able to judge that pleasure is good. And what judges is better than what goes by affection: it is reason or intellect, while pleasure is an affection, and nowhere is the irrational superior to reason. How, then, could reason set itself aside and declare something else, lying in the opposite genus, to be better than itself?

In fact it looks as though both those who refuse it to plants and those who place well-being in perception of this kind are, without realizing it, looking for something greater in living well, and placing what is better in a more vivid life. As for those who say it lies in the rational life, and not in life simply, not even in perceptive life, they may well be right. But it is fair to ask them why they confine happiness to the rational animal alone, and to put it like this. Do you add rationality because reason is more resourceful and can easily track down and secure the primary things according to nature? Or would you add it even if it could not track them down or obtain them?[2] If it is because it is better able to find them, then happiness in accordance with nature will belong even to beings without reason, if they obtain the primary things by nature without reason. Reason would then become a servant, not chosen for its own sake—and neither would its perfection, which we say is virtue. If you say that it does not owe its value to the primary things according to nature but is welcome for its own sake, you must say what other work it has, what its nature is, and what makes it perfect. For what makes it perfect must not be the contemplation of these things. Its perfection must be something else, its nature must be different, and it must not itself be one of these primary things according to nature, nor of the things from which they arise, nor of this kind at all, but superior to all of them. Otherwise I don't think they will be able to say how it has its value. But until these people find a nature superior to the things they now stop at, they must be left where they are, where they want to stay, at a

2 "The primary things according to nature" is a Stoic term for the first objects of natural impulse, such as life, health and soundness of body.

loss to say how living well belongs to those of these beings that are capable of it.

1.4.3 Let us, for our part, say from the beginning what we take happiness to be. Suppose we place happiness in life. If we took "life" in one and the same sense, we would grant all living things that they are receptive of happiness. We would grant that those actually live well which possessed one and the same thing, of which all living beings were by nature receptive. And we would not grant the rational being the capacity for this and deny it to the irrational. For life was the common thing, which was to be receptive of the same thing with a view to happiness, if happiness lay in some kind of life. This is why, I think, those who say happiness arises in the rational life, by not placing it in life in common, failed to notice that they were not even supposing happiness to be life. They would be forced to say that the rational power, around which happiness is constituted, is a quality. But what they start from is rational life: it is around this whole that happiness is constituted, and so it is around another kind of life. I don't mean one kind set against another by logical division, but in the way we say that [the one] is prior and the other posterior. Life, then, is spoken of in many ways, and differs according as it is first, second and so on in order; "living" is said in different senses, in one way of the plant, in another of the irrational animal; and these differ by vividness and faintness. Clearly, then, "well" differs in proportion. And if one is an image of another, clearly the "well" of the one is also an image of the "well" of the other.

But if happiness belongs to whatever has life to the full—that is, what falls short in no respect of life—then happiness would belong only to what lives to the full. To it belongs the best as well, if among the things that are, the best is what is really in life, the perfect life. In this way the good would not be something brought in from outside, nor would some other thing, coming from elsewhere and serving as a base, provide it with being in a good state. For what could be added to the perfect life to make it the best? If someone says, "the nature of the Good,"

that account is congenial to us; but we are not looking for the cause, we are looking for what is present within. That the perfect life, the true and real life, is in that intellectual nature, and that the others are imperfect, phantoms of life, lives neither perfectly nor purely, and no more lives than the opposite—this has often been said. Let it be said briefly now as well: so long as all living things come from a single principle, but the others do not live to the same degree, the principle must be the first and most perfect life.

1.4.4 If, then, a human being is able to have the perfect life, a human being who has this life is happy. If not, one would place happiness among the gods, if such life is found in them alone. Since, then, we say that happiness exists among human beings too, we must examine how this is so. What I mean is this. That a human being has the perfect life, since he has not only the perceptive life but also reasoning and true intellect, is clear from other considerations too. But does he have it as one thing having another? Or rather, is there no human being at all who does not have this, either potentially or actually—and the one who has it actually is the one we call happy? But are we to say that this perfect form of life is in him as a part of him? Or rather, the rest of mankind have it as a sort of part, since they have it potentially, while the happy man already is this actually and has passed over into being identical with it. The other things are now merely draped around him. One would not even count them as parts of him, since they are draped around him against his will; they would be his if they were attached to him by his choice. What, then, is the good for this man?

Or rather, he is his own good, by what he has. What is beyond, the cause of the good in him, is good in a different way, and is present to him in a different way. The evidence that this is so is that one in this state seeks nothing else. What, after all, could he seek? Nothing of what is worse; and he is in company with the best. So the life of one who has life in this way is self-sufficient. If he is a good man, he is self-sufficient for happiness and for the possession of the good, since there is no good he does not

have. What he does seek, he seeks as a necessity, and not for himself but for something that belongs to him. He seeks it for the body attached to him; and even granting that this is a living body, he seeks what belongs to it as living, not what belongs to a man of this kind. He knows these things, and he gives what he gives without taking anything away from his own life. So he will not be diminished as regards happiness even in adverse fortune, since such a life remains even so. When relatives and friends die, he knows what death is—and so do those who suffer it, if they are good men. Even if relatives and kin suffering this cause him grief, they grieve not him but what in him has no intellect, and he will not take on its pains.

1.4.5 But what about pains and diseases, and whatever else hinders activity? And what if he is not even conscious of himself? That can happen from drugs and certain diseases. How, in all these conditions, could he have living well and happiness? Poverty and obscurity we may leave aside. And yet someone might look at these too and raise a difficulty, and above all at the much-talked-of misfortunes of Priam. For even if he bore these, and bore them easily, still they were not what he wished for; and the happy life must be one that is wished for. Besides, the good man is not just this, a soul of a certain kind, with the nature of the body not counted in with his being. They would say they readily accept this, so long as the body's affections are referred to the man himself, and his choices and avoidances in turn are made on the body's account.[3] And if pleasure is counted in with the happy life, how could anyone be happy who, because of misfortunes and pains, has something distressing—when these things happen to him though he is a good man? Such a disposition may be happy and self-sufficient for gods; but human beings have received an addition of something worse, and for them one must look for happiness in the whole that has come to be, not in a part. For if one part is in a bad way, the other would

3 Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1.9–10) cites Priam, king of Troy, who lost his sons and his city in old age, as a man whose misfortunes prevent us from calling him happy.

necessarily be hindered in its own work, since the affairs of the first are not going well. Otherwise one would have to tear away the body, or even the body's perception, and look for self-sufficiency for happiness that way.

MISFORTUNE AND THE ONE GOOD

Happiness lies in the true good alone, so pain, illness and loss cannot diminish it.

1.4.6 But if the argument placed happiness in not being in pain, not being ill, not suffering misfortune, not falling into great disasters, then no one could be happy while their opposites were present. If, however, it lies in the possession of the true good, why must we pass this by, and the practice of judging the happy man by looking to it, and look for other things that are not counted as part of happiness? If it were a heap of goods and necessities, or even of things that are not necessary but are also called goods, we would have to look for these to be present too. But if the end must be one thing and not many—otherwise one would be seeking not an end but ends—one must take only that which is last and most precious, and which the soul seeks to hold close within itself. This seeking and this wishing are not aimed at not being in such conditions. Those things reasoning avoids, not by the very nature of the soul but only when they are present, managing them away; or else it seeks to acquire them in addition. But the soul's desire itself is for what is better than itself: when that is present within it, it is filled and comes to rest, and this is the life that is really wished for. To have some necessity present would not be an object of wishing, if one takes "wishing" in its proper sense instead of speaking loosely, just because we think it right that these things too should be present. In general we avoid evils, and surely what that kind of avoidance achieves is not an object of wishing; what is wished for, rather, is not even to need such avoidance. The things themselves bear witness to this when they are present, health, for instance, and freedom from pain. What attraction do they have? At any rate, health and

freedom from pain are disregarded when they are present. Things which, when present, have no attraction and add nothing to happiness, but are sought when absent because of the distressing presence of their opposites, may reasonably be called necessities rather than goods. So they are not to be counted in with the end either. Even when they are absent and their opposites are present, the end must be kept intact.

1.4.7 Why, then, does the happy man want these things present and push their opposites away? Perhaps we shall say: not because they contribute any share to happiness, but rather to existence. He pushes their opposites away either because they tend toward non-existence, or because their presence is a nuisance to the end—not because they take it away, but because one who has the best wants to have it alone, and nothing else with it; and this other thing, when present, has not taken the best away, but is there all the same alongside it. In general, if there is something the happy man does not want, and it is present, it does not follow that something is at once taken away from his happiness. Otherwise he would be shifting and falling out of happiness every day—if he lost a child, for instance, or any of his possessions. There could be countless things that turn out against his wishes without in any way disturbing the end he has attained. "But great things," they say, "not just any." Yet what among human affairs could be so great as not to be looked down on by one who has climbed to what is higher than all of them and no longer depends on anything below? If he does not think good fortune great, however great it may be—kingship, rule over cities and nations, the founding and building of cities, even if he does it himself—why should he think the loss of power and the razing of his own city something great?

And if he thought it a great evil, or an evil at all, he would be ridiculous for his opinion, and no longer a good man, if he thinks timber and stones, and even—by Zeus—the deaths of mortals something great: he who, we say, must hold the opinion about death that it is better than life with the body. And if he himself were sacrificed, will he think his death an evil because

he died at an altar? Or if he is not buried? His body will rot anyway, whether laid above ground or below it. If it is because he has been buried without expense, nameless, not thought worthy of a lofty monument—how petty! If he is led off as a captive, "the road is there for you" to depart, if it is not possible to be happy. And if his family are taken captive, his sons and daughters dragged away—what then, we shall say, if he died without having seen anything of the kind?[4] Would he then have departed holding the opinion that such things could not happen? He would be absurd. So would he not hold the opinion that his family might fall into such misfortunes? Is he not happy, then, because he would hold the opinion that it might happen? No: he is happy even holding that opinion, and so he is happy even when it happens. For he would reflect that the nature of this All is such as to bring things like this too, and one must go along with it. Many, too, will actually fare better for having become captives. And if they find it heavy to bear, it is up to them to depart. If they stay, either they stay reasonably, and there is nothing terrible in it, or they stay unreasonably, when they should not, and are themselves responsible. For he certainly will not be in an evil state because of the folly of others, even if they are his family, nor will he hang on other people's good and bad fortune.

1.4.8 As for his own pains, when they are severe, he will bear them as long as he can; if they are too much, they will carry him off. And he will not be pitiable in his pain: his own light is within, like the light in a lantern while outside the wind blows hard in a great storm of wind and winter weather. But what if he is not conscious, or the pain stretches out, mounting so high that, severe as it is, it still does not kill? If it stretches out, he will deliberate about what he ought to do, for his self-determination is not taken away in these circumstances. One must know that things will not appear to the good man as they appear to others, and that none of them reaches inside—neither other things, nor

4 "The road is there for you" echoes Diomedes to Agamemnon (Homer, *Iliad* 9.43); here, as with the Stoics, it means suicide as a way out.

pains, nor griefs, when the painful things happen to others. That would be a weakness of our soul. This is shown by the fact that we consider it a gain when such things escape our notice, and count it a gain if they should happen after we are dead—looking no longer to the others' interest but to our own, so as not to be grieved. That is already a weakness of ours, which we must strip away, not leave in place and then be afraid that it will happen. If someone says that we are so made as to feel pain at the misfortunes of our families, let him recognize that not everyone is so, and that it belongs to virtue to lead what is common to our nature toward the better and the finer, beyond what most people reach; and it is finer not to give in to what common nature thinks terrible. One must be disposed not like an amateur, but like a great athlete fending off the blows of fortune. He knows that such things are unwelcome to some natures, but bearable to his own—not as terrible, but as the sort of thing that frightens children. Did he want them, then? No: but even toward what is not wished for, when it comes, he has virtue, which makes his soul hard to move and hard to affect, toward these things too.

HAPPY WITHOUT KNOWING IT

The good man remains happy even asleep or unconscious, since awareness is not needed for activity.

1.4.9 But what if he is not conscious, submerged by diseases or by the arts of magicians? If they will grant that he remains a good man in this state, as if sunk in sleep, what prevents him from being happy? After all, they do not take happiness away from him when he is asleep, nor do they take that time into account so as to deny that he is happy his whole life. If they say he is not a good man, they are no longer talking about the good man. We, however, have assumed a good man, and are asking whether he is happy so long as he is a good man. "Granted he is a good man," they say, "but if he is not perceiving or acting in accordance with virtue, how could he be happy?" Well, if he did not perceive that he is healthy, he would be no less healthy; and if

he did not perceive that he is handsome, no less handsome. If he did not perceive that he is wise, would he be less wise? Unless perhaps someone says that in wisdom perception and consciousness of oneself must be present, since happiness too is present in wisdom when it is active. Now if understanding and wisdom were something brought in from outside, there might perhaps be something in this argument. But suppose the reality of wisdom lies in a kind of being, or rather in being itself; and this being has not perished in one who is asleep or, in general, in one said to be not conscious of himself; and the activity of his being is in him, and such activity is sleepless. Then the good man, as such, would be active even then. This activity would escape the notice not of him as a whole, but of some part of him. So too, when the vegetative activity is at work, the awareness of such activity does not reach the rest of the man through the perceptive part; and if we were our vegetative part, we would be the ones active. As it is, we are not that, but the activity of what thinks; so that when that is active, we would be active.

1.4.10 Perhaps it escapes notice because it is not concerned with any object of perception; for it is through perception, as a kind of intermediary, that one must be active in relation to these things and about them. But why should intellect itself not be active, and the soul around it, which is prior to perception and to awareness in general? There must be an activity prior to awareness, if indeed "thinking and being are the same." It seems that awareness exists and comes about when the act of thinking bends back, and what is active in the soul's life is, as it were, thrown back again—like the image in a mirror, on a smooth, bright surface at rest.[5] In such cases, when the mirror is there, the image comes about; when it is not there, or not in the right condition, the activity of which there would have been an image is present all the same. In the same way, in the soul: when that in us in which the likenesses of discursive thought and intellect appear is at rest, they are seen in it and known, as it were, by

5 "Thinking and being are the same" is a line of Parmenides (fragment 3), a favorite of Plotinus.

perception, together with the prior knowledge that intellect and discursive thought are active. But when this is shattered because the harmony of the body is disturbed, discursive thought and intellect think without an image, and thinking then takes place without imagination. So one might gather this as well: that thinking takes place together with imagination, though thinking is not imagination. One could find many fine activities, contemplations and actions, even when we are awake, which, while we contemplate and act, do not involve our being conscious of them. The reader need not be conscious that he is reading, least of all when he is reading with concentration. Nor need the brave man be conscious that he is being brave and acting in accordance with courage, so long as he is acting; and there are countless other cases. So it looks as though consciousness makes the very activities it accompanies fainter, and as though, when they are alone, they are pure, and more active, and more alive. And indeed, when good men are in such a state, their life is more truly life, not poured out into perception but gathered together in itself.

1.4.11 If some people say that such a man is not even alive, we shall say that he is alive, but that his happiness escapes their notice, just as his life does. If they are not persuaded, we shall ask them to assume a living man, a good man, and then inquire whether he is happy. They must not diminish his life and then ask whether living well is present; not do away with the man and then inquire about a man's happiness; not grant that the good man has turned inward and then look for him in external activities; nor, in general, look for the object of his wishing in external things. For in that way there would not even be any reality to happiness, if you said that external things are objects of wishing and that the good man wishes for them. He would like all human beings to do well, and no evil to befall anyone; but if this does not happen, he is happy nonetheless. If someone says it would make him unreasonable to want these things—since it is not possible for evils not to exist—clearly he will agree with us when we turn the good man's wishing inward.

1.4.12 When they demand pleasantness for such a life, they will not ask for the pleasures of the dissolute or the pleasures of the body to be present—these cannot be present, and would make happiness vanish—nor indeed for transports of joy (why should they?). They will ask for the pleasures that accompany the presence of goods, which do not consist in motions and so do not come to be either. For the goods are already present, he is present to himself, and this pleasure and serenity stand still. The good man is always serene; his condition is calm and his disposition contented, and none of the things called evils disturbs it, if indeed he is a good man. If someone looks for another kind of pleasure in the good man's life, it is not the good man's life he is looking for.

1.4.13 Nor would his activities be hindered by fortune. Different activities would arise under different fortunes, but all of them fine—and perhaps finer the more they are called forth by circumstance. As for the activities of contemplation, those concerned with particulars he might perhaps bring forth after inquiry and examination. But "the greatest study" is always at hand and with him—all the more so even if he is in the so-called bull of Phalaris, which it is pointless to call pleasant, however often one says it, twice or many times. For there, what uttered it is the very thing that is in pain. Here, what is in pain is one thing, and there is something else, which, keeping company with itself for as long as it must keep company with the body, will never be cut off from the vision of the whole Good.[6]

1.4.14 That a human being, and especially the good man, is not the composite is attested also by the separation from the body and by contempt for the so-called goods of the body. To claim that happiness extends as far as the living being is ridiculous, since happiness is living well, which is constituted in the soul, being its activity—and not that of all soul. Not of the vegetative soul, for then it would have touched the body; happiness was

6 Phalaris, tyrant of Acragas, roasted victims in a bronze bull, and Epicurus claimed the wise man would call even such torment pleasant; "the greatest study" is Plato's phrase for knowledge of the Good (*Republic* 505a).

certainly not size and fitness of body. Nor again does it lie in perceiving well, since excess in these things risks weighing a man down and dragging him toward themselves. Rather, as a sort of counterweight on the other side, toward the best, the bodies [must] be reduced and made worse, to show that this man is other than what is external. Let the man who belongs to this world be handsome, tall, rich, and ruler of all men, as one who belongs to this place; and we must not envy him, deceived as he is by such things. Around the wise man these things would perhaps not arise in the first place; and if they did, he will cut them down himself, if he cares for himself. He will diminish the body's advantages and let them wither through neglect, and he will lay aside offices of rule. While preserving the health of his body, he will not want to be entirely without experience of disease, nor indeed without experience of pains. Even if they do not come, he will want to learn them when he is young; but once he is old, he will want neither these nor pleasures to trouble him, nor anything of this world, pleasant or the opposite, so that he does not look to the body. When he is in pain, he will set against it the power he has acquired for that purpose. He takes no addition to his happiness from pleasures, health and freedom from toil, and no subtraction or diminution of it from their opposites. For if one opposite adds nothing to a thing, how could the other opposite take anything away?

1.4.15 But suppose there were two wise men, and one had all the things that are called according to nature, the other their opposites: shall we say that they have happiness equally? We shall, if they are equally wise. And if one of them is handsome in body and has all the other things that contribute nothing to wisdom, or to virtue in general, or to the vision of the best and to being the best, what would that amount to? Not even the man who has these things will take pride in being happier than the one who lacks them; an abundance of them would not contribute even to the goal of flute-playing. The truth is that we look at the happy man with our own weakness, thinking things dreadful and terrible which the happy man would not think so. Or rather, he

would not yet be wise or happy unless he had changed all his imaginings about these things, and become, as it were, an entirely different man, trusting himself that he will never have anything evil. That way he will also be fearless about everything; if he is cowardly about anything, he will not be perfect in virtue but a sort of half-man. Even the involuntary fear that arises before judgment, if it ever comes on him while his mind is on other things, the wise man will come forward and drive away. He will calm the child in him that has been stirred, as if toward distress, by threat or by reason—a threat without passion, as when a child is struck dumb merely by a stern look. This does not make such a man unfriendly or unfeeling; he is like this toward himself too, and in his own affairs. So, giving his friends all that he gives himself, he would be the best of friends, while keeping his intellect.

1.4.16 If someone does not lift the good man up and set him here, in this intellect, but brings him down to fortune and fears that it may befall him, he will not preserve the good man as we think he should be. He will give us a decent man, mixed of good and bad, and assign to such a man a mixed life of some good and some bad—and such a man is not easy to find. Even if he did exist, he would not deserve to be called happy, since he would have nothing great, either in the worth of his wisdom or in purity of good. So it is not possible to live happily in what is common. Plato is right to require that the good be taken from there, from above, and that one who is to be wise and happy look to it, become like it, and live according to it. This alone, then, he must have for the end. The rest he will treat as he would changes of place, which add nothing to his happiness; he takes account of them as of the other things that surround him, such as whether he will lie down here or there. He gives the body all it needs, as far as he can, while he himself is someone else, not prevented from leaving it, and ready to leave it at nature's appointed time; and he is himself master of deliberating about this too. So some of his works will contribute to happiness, while others will not be for the sake of the end, and not his at all, but belong to what

is yoked to him. He will look after it and put up with it as long as possible, like a musician with his lyre, as long as it can be used. If not, he will change it for another, or he will give up using lyres and abstain from playing them, since he has another work that needs no lyre; he will leave it lying beside him and sing without instruments. And the instrument was not given him in vain at the start: he has used it many times already.

I.5 Whether Happiness Grows with Time

Εἰ ἐν παρατάσει χρόνου τὸ εὐδαιμονεῖν
Plotinus argues that happiness lives in the present and does not grow greater by lasting longer.
no. 36 in order of writing

1.5.1 Does happiness increase with time, when happiness is always taken with reference to the present? The memory of having been happy would make no difference; nor does happiness lie in saying something, but in being disposed in a certain way. And the disposition is a matter of the present, as is the activity of life.

1.5.2 Suppose someone said that, since we always desire to live and to be active, attaining this is happiness in a fuller sense. Then, first, tomorrow's happiness will be greater, and each succeeding one greater than the one before, and happiness will no longer be measured by virtue. Second, the gods too will be happier now than before, and not yet perfectly happy—and never perfectly. Third, desire, when it attains, has attained what is present, and always seeks the present, for as long as happiness is to be had. And the desire for life, since it seeks being, would be of the present, if being is in the present. And if it wants the future and what comes next, what it wants is what it has and what it is—not what is past or what is to come, but to be what already is. It seeks not perpetuity, but that what is present now should be, now.

1.5.3 What then? Suppose he was happy for a longer time, and saw the same thing with his eyes for a longer time? If in the longer time he saw it more exactly, the time would have done

something more for him; but if he saw it in the same way throughout, the one who looked only once has as much.

1.5.4 "But the other enjoyed pleasure for a longer time." That would not be right to count toward happiness. And if someone says that pleasure is unhindered activity, he is saying the same thing as what we are looking for. Even the greater pleasure has only the present; what is past of it is gone.

1.5.5 What then? If one man was happy from beginning to end, another in the later part of his life, and a third was happy earlier and then changed, do they have an equal share? Or rather, the comparison here is not between people who are all happy, but between people who were not happy, at the time when they were not, and one who is happy. So if he has anything more, what he has is what a happy man has over those who are not happy—and his advantage over them lies in the present.

1.5.6 What, then, of the unhappy man? Is he not more unhappy for a longer time? And all the other troubles—do they not bring greater misfortune the longer they last, long-lasting pains, for instance, and griefs, and everything of that type? But if these things increase the evil with time in this way, why do their opposites, and happiness, not do the same? Perhaps one could say that in the case of griefs and pains time does add something—the persistence of a disease, for instance: it becomes a settled condition, and the body gets worse with time. For if it stayed the same and the harm did not grow, here too the painful thing would always be the present—unless one counts in the past, looking at what has happened and what remains. And in the case of the unhappy condition, the evil is intensified over a longer time as the vice, too, grows by persisting. At any rate, being more unhappy comes about by the addition of intensity, not by length of time. And the longer is perhaps not there all at once; nor should one call it "longer" at all, counting what no longer is along with what is. The state of happiness, by contrast, has a boundary and limit, and is always the same. If someone finds an increase here too over a longer time, so that a man who advances to greater virtue is happier, he is not counting up and

praising many years of happiness, but happiness that has become greater, at the time when it is greater.

1.5.7 But if we must look only at the present and not count in what has been, why don't we do the same with time, instead of counting the past together with the present and calling it more? Why, then, shall we not say that happiness is as great as the time? Then we would also divide happiness according to the divisions of time; for, conversely, by measuring it by the present we shall make it indivisible. Or rather: it is not absurd to count time even when it no longer is, since we can count things that have been but no longer are—the dead, for instance. But it is absurd to say that happiness that no longer is, is present and greater than present happiness. For being happy demands to be actually there, while the time beyond the present amounts to what no longer is. In general, more time means the scattering of something that is one in the present. That is why time is fittingly called an image of eternity: it wants to make what remains in eternity disappear into its own scattering. So if it takes from eternity what remained in it and makes it its own, it destroys it—preserved till then, in a way, by eternity, but destroyed if it came to be wholly in time. If, then, happiness is in accordance with good life, clearly we must place it in accordance with the life of being, for that is the best. So it is not to be counted by time but by eternity; and eternity is neither more nor less, nor of any length, but is a "this," unextended and not temporal.[1] So we must not join being to non-being, nor time to eternity, nor even the everlasting of time to the eternal, nor stretch out what is unextended. We must take it all as a whole, if we take it at all—taking not the indivisible of time, but the life of eternity, a life not made up of many times, but all together, out of all time.

1.5.8 Suppose someone were to say that memory of the past, persisting in the present, gives something more to one who has spent more time in happiness. What would he mean by memory? Either memory of understanding that occurred earlier —in which case he would be saying that the man has more

1 Plato calls time "a moving image of eternity" (*Timaeus* 37d).

understanding, and would not be keeping to the hypothesis; or memory of pleasure, as if the happy man needed a great deal of delight and was not content with what is present. And yet what pleasure could the memory of the pleasant hold? It would be as if someone remembered that yesterday he enjoyed a fine dish—or, more ridiculous still, ten years ago. And so with understanding: remembering that last year I understood.

1.5.9 If the memory were of fine things, wouldn't there be something in it? But this is the mark of a man who lacks fine things in the present, and who, because he does not have them now, seeks the memory of those that have been.

1.5.10 "But a long time produces many fine actions, which the man happy for a short time has no share in"—if one should call happy at all the man who is not so through many fine things. Or rather, whoever says happiness comes from many times and many actions makes it consist of things that no longer exist but are past, together with some single present thing. That is why we placed happiness in the present and then asked whether being happy for longer is being more happy. So what we must examine is whether happiness over a long time has an advantage through its greater number of actions. First, it is possible to be happy without being engaged in actions—and not less but more happy than the man who has acted. Second, actions do not give well-being of themselves; it is dispositions that make actions fine as well, and the man of understanding reaps the good even when acting, not because he acts, nor from the results, but from what he has. For the salvation of one's country could come about through a worthless man too, and the pleasure at the country's salvation could be one's own even if someone else did it. So it is not this that produces the happy man's pleasure; it is his settled state that produces both happiness and whatever pleasure there is because of it. To place happiness in actions is to place it in things outside virtue and the soul. For the soul's activity lies in understanding and in being active within itself in this way. And this is the happy state.

I.6 On Beauty

Περὶ τοῦ καλοῦ
The soul's ascent from bodily beauty to the Beautiful itself,
which the soul finds by sculpting itself.
no. 1 in order of writing

1.6.1 Beauty is found mostly in sight, but it is also found in hearing, in combinations of words and in all music; for melodies and rhythms are beautiful too. And for those who advance upward from perception there are also beautiful ways of life, actions, characters and branches of knowledge, and the beauty of the virtues. Whether there is anything prior to these as well, that will show itself. What is it, then, that makes bodies appear beautiful, and makes hearing assent to sounds as beautiful? And the things that come next and depend on soul—how are they all beautiful? Is it by one and the same thing that all are beautiful, or is beauty in a body one thing and beauty in something else another? And what are these, or this? Some things, bodies for instance, are beautiful not by virtue of what underlies them but by participation; others are beautiful in themselves, as the nature of virtue is. For the same bodies appear beautiful at one time and not beautiful at another, as though being bodies were one thing and being beautiful another. What, then, is this thing that is present in bodies? This is what we must examine first. What is it that moves the eyes of those who look, turns them toward itself, draws them on, and makes them delight in the vision? If we find this, we might perhaps use it as a stepping-stone and view the rest as well. Now practically everyone says that the proportion of the parts to one another and to the whole, with

good color added, is what makes beauty for sight; and that for these things, and for all other things generally, being beautiful is being proportioned and measured. On this view nothing simple will be beautiful; only what is composite, necessarily, will be. The whole will be beautiful, as they see it, but the individual parts will not be beautiful in themselves, only as contributing to the whole, so that it may be beautiful. And yet if the whole is beautiful, the parts must be beautiful too; surely it is not made of ugly parts, but beauty must have taken hold of all of them.[1]

And on their view beautiful colors, and the light of the sun too, will be excluded from being beautiful, since they are simple and do not get their beauty from symmetry. And gold: how is it beautiful? Lightning in the night, or [the] stars: what makes them beautiful to see? With sounds, likewise, the simple will disappear, although each note within a beautiful whole is often beautiful in its own right as well. And when the symmetry stays the same and yet the same face looks beautiful at one time and not at another, how can we avoid saying that beauty is something else, over and above the symmetry, and that the symmetrical is beautiful because of something else? And if they move on to beautiful ways of life and beautiful speech and make symmetry the cause in their case too, what symmetry could be meant in beautiful ways of life, or laws, or studies, or branches of knowledge? How could theorems be symmetrical with one another? If it is because they agree, then bad things too will have their consistency and agreement. The claim that moderation is foolishness agrees and harmonizes with the claim that justice is a noble simplicity; the two are consistent with each other. Every virtue, then, is a beauty of soul, and a truer beauty than those before. But how is it symmetrical? Not as magnitudes are, nor as numbers are, even though the soul has several parts. In what ratio would the combining or blending of the parts, or

1 This definition of beauty as proportion plus good color is Stoic (cf. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 4.31).

of the theorems, be? And what would the beauty of Intellect be, alone by itself?

1.6.2 So let us take it up again and say what beauty in bodies is in the first place. It is something that becomes perceptible even at the first glance; the soul speaks of it as though it understood it, recognizes it and welcomes it, and is, as it were, attuned to it. But when it encounters the ugly, it shrinks back, refuses it and turns away from it, out of tune with it and estranged. We say, then, that because the soul is by nature what it is, and comes from the higher kind of being among the things that are, whenever it sees something akin to it, or a trace of something akin, it is delighted and thrilled, and refers it to itself, and remembers itself and what is its own. What likeness, then, do beautiful things here have to the beautiful things there? For if there is a likeness, granted, they will be alike; but how are both those and these beautiful? These, we say, are beautiful by participating in form. Everything shapeless that is naturally meant to receive shape and form is ugly so long as it has no share in rational principle and form, and stands outside divine rational principle; and this is the utterly ugly. Ugly too is what has not been mastered by shape and rational principle, because the matter has not allowed itself to be completely shaped according to the form. So the form comes to it and arranges what is to be one thing out of many parts by combining them; it brings them into a single completed whole and makes it one by their agreement, since it was itself one, and what it shaped had to be one, as far as it could, being made of many. So beauty is seated upon it once it has been brought together into one, giving itself to the parts and to the wholes. When it takes hold of something that is one and uniform throughout, it gives itself to the whole: as [if] beauty were given sometimes to a whole house together with its parts, and sometimes to a single stone—to the stone by a nature, to the house by art. This, then, is how a body becomes beautiful: by sharing in a rational principle that comes from the gods.

1.6.3 The power assigned to beauty recognizes it, and nothing has more authority in judging what is its own, when the rest of

the soul joins in the judgment. Or perhaps it too pronounces, by fitting the thing to the form it has within itself and using that for the judgment, like a ruler for judging what is straight. But how does what is in body accord with what is prior to body? How does the builder fit the house outside to the form of the house within and then say that it is beautiful? Or rather: because the house outside, if you set the stones aside, is the inner form divided by the external mass of matter—something partless appearing in many. So when perception sees the form in bodies binding together and mastering the contrary nature, which is shapeless, and sees shape riding conspicuously upon other shapes, it gathers into one what was spread out in many places, carries it up and brings it inside, by now partless, and gives it to what is within as something in tune with it, fitting it and dear to it. It is like the pleasure a good man takes when a trace of virtue shows itself in a young man, in tune with the true virtue within himself.

The beauty of color is simple; it comes by shape and by mastery of the darkness in matter, through the presence of light, which is bodiless and a rational principle and form. That is why fire itself is beautiful beyond the other bodies: it holds the rank of form in relation to the other elements. It is highest in position and the subtlest of the bodies, as being near to the bodiless; and it alone does not admit the others, while the others admit it. They are warmed, but it is not cooled; it is colored primarily, and the others take the form of their color from it. So it shines and glitters, as being form. What is not mastered by it, fading in its light, is no longer beautiful, since it does not share in the whole form of color. The hidden harmonies in sounds, which make the audible ones, have in this way too made the soul grasp beauty, showing the same thing in something else. It follows that sensible harmonies are measured by numbers—not in any ratio whatever, but in one that serves to produce form [and] to master. So much, then, for the beautiful things in perception, which are images and shadows [that], as it were, ran out and

came into matter, adorned it and thrilled us when they appeared.

BEAUTY BEYOND THE SENSES

Souls see the beauty of virtue and ways of life, and ugliness is a soul soiled by the body.

1.6.4 As for the beauties further on, which perception is no longer given to see, but which the soul sees and speaks of without instruments, we must go up and contemplate them, leaving perception to wait below. With the beauties of perception, it was not possible to speak of them to those who had never seen them or grasped them as beautiful—people blind from birth, for instance. In the same way, one cannot speak of the beauty of ways of life to those who have not welcomed the beauty of ways of life, of branches of knowledge and of other such things; nor of the splendor of virtue to those who have never even imagined how beautiful is the face of justice and moderation, and that neither the evening star nor the morning star is so beautiful. One must have seen them, with that by which the soul sees such things; and having seen, one must be delighted, struck with amazement and thrilled far more than before, since now one is in touch with things that are true. For these are the feelings that must arise around whatever is beautiful: wonder, a sweet amazement, longing, love, and a thrill mixed with pleasure. One can feel these, and souls do feel them, even about things that are not seen: all souls, so to speak, but more those that are more given to loving these things. It is the same with bodies: everyone loves, but they are not all stung equally; some are stung most, and these are the ones who are said to be in love.

1.6.5 So we must also put the question to those who love what is not in perception: What do you feel about what are called beautiful ways of life, beautiful manners, moderate characters, and in general works of virtue and dispositions, and the beauty of souls? And when you see yourselves beautiful within, what do you feel? How is it that you are roused to Bacchic frenzy, stirred

up, and long to be with yourselves, gathering yourselves together away from your bodies? For these are the feelings of those who truly love. But what is it about which they feel this? Not a figure, not a color, not some size: it is about soul, itself colorless, which has its moderation colorless too, and the rest of the splendor of the virtues—when you see in yourselves, or contemplate in someone else, greatness of soul, a just character, pure moderation, courage with its fierce face, dignity and modesty blossoming in a disposition steady, calm as a windless sea and untouched by passion, and over all of these, shining upon them, godlike intellect. Admiring and loving these, then, how do you call them beautiful? They are, and they appear so, and no one who has seen them will ever say anything but that these are what really is. Really is what? Beautiful. But the argument still wants to know what it is in them that has made the soul lovable. What is this, like a light, that shines out over all the virtues? Would you like to take the opposites—the ugly things that arise in the soul—and set them side by side? Perhaps it would help with what we are looking for to see what ugliness is and why it appears. Let there be, then, an ugly soul, licentious and unjust, full of countless desires and the greatest turmoil, sunk in fears through cowardice and in envies through pettiness, all its thoughts, such as they are, mortal and low, crooked everywhere, a friend of impure pleasures, living a life of whatever it feels through the body, taking [the] ugliness for something sweet.

Shall we not say that this very ugliness has come upon it like an evil brought in from outside, which has mutilated it and made it impure and smeared with much evil, so that it no longer has a pure life or a pure perception, but lives a dim life through its mixture with evil, a life blended with much death? It no longer sees what a soul should see, and it is no longer allowed to remain in itself, because it is always being dragged toward the outside, the below, the dark. Being impure, I think, and pulled every which way toward whatever strikes perception, with much of the body blended into it, keeping close company with much that is material, and having taken into itself a different

form, it has been changed by a blending with what is worse. It is as if someone had plunged into mud or slime: the beauty he had no longer shows, and what is seen is what he has picked up from the mud or slime. Ugliness has come to him by the addition of something foreign, and his task, if he is to be beautiful again, is to wash and clean himself and be what he was. So we would be right to say that the soul becomes ugly by mixture and blending and by its inclination toward body and matter. And this is ugliness for a soul: not to be pure and unmixed. It is like gold filled with earthy stuff: if someone removes that, gold is left, and it is beautiful, isolated from everything else and keeping company with itself alone. In the same way the soul, isolated from the desires it has because of the body, with which it kept too close company, freed from its other passions and purified of what it has from being embodied, remaining alone, has laid aside all the ugliness that came from the other nature.

1.6.6 For in fact, as the ancient saying has it, moderation and courage and every virtue is purification, and so is understanding itself. That is why the mysteries are right to say, in their riddling way, that whoever has not been purified will lie in mud even in Hades: what is not pure, because of its badness, is fond of mud, as pigs, whose bodies are not pure, take pleasure in such stuff. For what would true moderation be, except not keeping company with the pleasures of the body, but fleeing them as impure and as not belonging to what is pure? Courage is not fearing death. And death is the soul's being apart from the body. Whoever is glad to be alone does not fear this. Greatness of soul is disdain for the things here. And understanding is thinking that turns away from the things below and leads the soul to the things above.[2] Once purified, then, the soul becomes form and rational principle, wholly bodiless and intellectual, and entirely of the divine, where the spring of beauty is, and all that is akin to it. Soul led up to Intellect, then, is beautiful to a higher

2 The "ancient saying" and the mysteries both come from Plato, *Phaedo* 69b–c, where virtue is called a purification and the uninitiated are said to lie in mud in Hades.

degree. And Intellect, and what comes from Intellect, is its beauty—its own and not foreign—because then it is really soul alone. That is why it is rightly said that the soul's becoming good and beautiful is becoming like god: because beauty comes from there, and so does the other portion of the things that are. Or rather, beauty is the things that are, and the other nature is the ugly. This same [ugly] is also the first evil; so that, on the other side, the same thing is good and beautiful—or rather, the Good and Beauty. So we must look for the beautiful and the good in the same way, and for the ugly and the evil. We must posit the first as Beauty, which is also the Good. Immediately from it comes Intellect, which is beauty; and soul is beautiful by Intellect. Other things are then beautiful from soul, which gives them shape: the beauties in actions and in ways of life. And bodies too, those that are called beautiful, are by this stage made so by soul. Since it is divine and, as it were, a portion of beauty, it makes whatever it touches and masters beautiful, as far as they are able to share in it.

THE ASCENT TO THE GOOD

The soul strips off what it put on coming down and sees beauty itself, unmixed and pure.

1.6.7 So we must go up again to the Good, which every soul desires. Anyone who has seen it knows what I mean, how beautiful it is. It is desired as good, and the desire is directed toward it; but attaining it is for those who go up to the higher world, turn back, and strip off what we put on in coming down—just as for those who go up into the holy places of temples there are purifications, and the laying aside of the clothes they wore before, and going up naked—until, passing in the ascent everything that is foreign to the god, one sees, with oneself alone, it alone, unmixed, simple, pure: that on which all things depend, to which they look, and by which they are and live and think. For it is the cause of life and intellect and being. If anyone sees it, then, what loves will he feel, what longings, as he wants

to be blended with it, and how he will be struck with amazement and pleasure! One who has not yet seen it can desire it as good; but one who has seen it can marvel at it as beautiful, be filled with awe and pleasure, be struck with an amazement that does no harm, love with a true love and a piercing longing, laugh at other loves and scorn what he used to think beautiful. It is like what happens to those who have met with appearances of gods or spirits: they would no longer welcome the beauty of other bodies in the same way.

What, then, do we think it would be like if someone contemplated beauty itself, by itself, pure—not filled with flesh or body, not on earth, not in heaven, so that it may be pure? For all these are added from outside and mixed, and not first; they come from it. If, then, he sees that which supplies all things, and gives while remaining by itself, and receives nothing into itself; if he remains in the vision of such a thing and enjoys it, becoming like it, what other beauty could he still need? For this, being beauty itself in the highest degree and the first beauty, makes its lovers beautiful and lovable. Here, then, the greatest and ultimate contest is set before souls, and all their toil is for it: not to be left without a share in the best vision. Whoever attains it is blessed, having seen a blessed sight; whoever fails to attain it is unfortunate. For it is not the one who fails to win beautiful colors or bodies, or power, or office, or kingship who is unfortunate, but the one who fails to win this, and this alone. To attain it one should give up kingdoms and rule over all the earth and sea and sky, if by leaving these behind and disregarding them one might turn to it and see it.

1.6.8 What, then, is the way? What means is there? How will anyone see a beauty beyond all means, which stays, as it were, inside the holy sanctuaries and does not come out to where even the uninitiated might see it? Let whoever can, go and follow it inside, leaving the sight of the eyes outside and not turning back to the former splendors of bodies. For when he sees beauty in bodies, he must not run after it, but know that they are images, traces and shadows, and flee to that of which they are images.

For if someone runs to grasp them as if they were real—like a beautiful image riding on water, which someone wanted to grasp, as some myth, I think, hints darkly, and plunged into the depths of the stream and vanished—then in the same way whoever clings to beautiful bodies and will not let them go will sink, not with his body but with his soul, into depths that are dark and joyless to intellect, where, blind [and] remaining in Hades, he will keep company with shadows both here and there. "Let us flee to our beloved homeland": that is the truer advice one might give. What, then, is this flight? And how shall we put out to sea? As Odysseus says he did from the sorceress Circe, or Calypso—speaking in riddles, I think—not content to stay, though he had pleasures for the eyes and kept company with much sensible beauty. Our homeland is the place we came from, and our father is there. What, then, is the journey, and the flight?[3] It is not a journey for the feet: feet only carry us everywhere from one land to another. Nor should you get ready a horse-drawn carriage or anything that goes by sea. You must let all these go and stop looking: shut your eyes, as it were, and exchange this sight for another, and wake it—the sight that everyone has, but few use.

SCULPTING YOUR OWN STATUE

The inner eye is trained on fine deeds and souls, then works on itself until it becomes sight.

1.6.9 What, then, does that inner sight see? Just woken, it cannot yet see very bright things. So the soul itself must be trained, first to see beautiful ways of life; then beautiful works—not those the arts produce, but those of the men who are called good; then look at the soul of those who produce the beautiful works. How, then, could you see what kind of beauty a good soul has? Go back into yourself and look. And if you do not yet see yourself as

3 The myth is that of Narcissus, drowned reaching for his reflection. "Let us flee to our beloved homeland" adapts Homer, *Iliad* 2.140; Odysseus' departures from Circe and Calypso are told in the *Odyssey*.

beautiful, then do as the maker of a statue that has to become beautiful does: he cuts away here, scrapes there, makes this part smooth and that part clean, until he has brought out a beautiful face on the statue. So you too: cut away whatever is excessive, straighten whatever is crooked, clear whatever is dark and work to make it bright, and never stop sculpting your own statue, until the godlike splendor of virtue shines out on you, until you see moderation "established on its holy pedestal."[4] If you have become this, and seen yourself, and come together with yourself in purity, with nothing hindering you from becoming one in this way, and with nothing else mixed in with you inside, but are wholly yourself, true light alone—not measured by magnitude, nor bounded by shape into smallness, nor again expanded into magnitude without limit, but unmeasured everywhere, as greater than every measure and superior to every quantity—if you see that you have become this, then, having become sight itself, take courage about yourself; having already climbed this far, you no longer need anyone to show you: gaze intently, and see. For this eye alone sees the great beauty.

But if someone comes to the vision with eyes bleary from vices, unpurified, or weak, unable through lack of courage to look at very bright things, he sees nothing, even if someone else shows him what is there and can be seen. For the seer must make itself akin and like to what is seen before it applies itself to the vision. No eye ever saw the sun without becoming sunlike, nor could a soul see beauty without becoming beautiful. So let each one first become wholly godlike and wholly beautiful, if he means to contemplate the Good and beauty. For as he goes up he will come first to Intellect, and there he will see all the Forms as beautiful, and will say that this is beauty: the Forms. For by them all things are beautiful, by the offspring and being of Intellect. What is beyond this we call the nature of the Good, which holds beauty set out in front of it. So, speaking roughly, the First is beauty. But if one divides the intelligibles, one will say that intelligible beauty is the place of the Forms, while the Good is

4 The quotation is from Plato, *Phaedrus* 254b.

what is beyond, the spring and principle of beauty. Or else one will place the Good and the first beauty in the same thing. In any case, beauty is There.

I.7 On the First Good and the Other Goods

Περὶ τοῦ πρώτου ἀγαθοῦ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀγαθῶν ἢ περὶ εὐδαιμονίας
Each thing's good is its natural activity; Plotinus traces all such activity to the Good and argues that life is good.
no. 54 in order of writing

1.7.1 Could anyone say that the good for each thing is anything other than the activity of its life in accordance with nature? And if something is made of many parts, that its good is the activity of the better part in it—an activity that is its own, in accordance with nature, and lacking nothing? So for soul, its activity in accordance with nature is its good. And if, being the best, it is active toward the best, then this would be not only its own good but the good without qualification. If, then, there is something that is not active toward anything else, since it is the best of beings and beyond beings, while the others are active toward it, it is clear that this would be the Good, through which the others too can share in good. The others, those that have the good in this way, would have it in two ways: by having become like it, and by directing their activity toward it. If, then, desire and activity toward the best is good, the Good must not look toward anything else or desire anything else; it must be at rest, the spring and principle of activities in accordance with nature, making the others good-like, not by an activity directed toward them—for they are directed toward it. It is not by activity [then], nor by thinking, that it is the Good, but by [the] remaining itself. For since it is beyond being, it is also beyond activity, and beyond intellect and thinking. Again, we must posit as the Good

that on which all things depend, while it depends on nothing; for that is how "that which all things desire" comes out true. So it must remain, and all things must turn back toward it, as a circle does toward the center from which all the radii come. The sun is an example: it is like a center for the light that comes from it and depends on it. At any rate the light is everywhere with it and is not cut off; even if you want to cut it off on one side, the light still belongs to the sun.

1.7.2 And all the other things—how are they directed toward it? Lifeless things are directed toward soul, and soul toward it through Intellect. Each thing has something of it by being in a way one and in a way a being; and it also shares in form. As it shares in these, so it shares in the good too. In an image of it, then: for what it shares in are images of being and of unity, and the form likewise. For soul, the good is living—for the first Soul, the one after Intellect, a life nearer to truth, and through Intellect it is good-like; it would have the good if it looked toward that Intellect. And Intellect comes after the Good. Life, then, is the good for whatever has life, and intellect for whatever shares in intellect; so whatever has life together with intellect is directed toward it in two ways.

1.7.3 If life is a good, does it belong to every living thing? No: life limps in the bad person, like an eye in someone who does not see clearly; it does not do its work. If, then, our life, in which bad is mixed, is a good, how is death not a bad? Or bad for whom? For the bad must happen to something. But what no longer exists, or, if it exists, is deprived of life, [is not receptive of the bad,] is no more harmed in this way than a stone is. And if there is life and soul after death, then by that time it would be a good, all the more as it exercises its own activities without body. And if it becomes part of the whole Soul, what bad could there be for it while it is there? In general, just as for the gods there is good and no bad, so there is none for the soul that keeps its purity; and if it does not keep it, it would not be death that is bad for it, but life. And if there are punishments in Hades too, then once again life is bad for it, even there, because it is not life alone. But

if life is the coming together of soul and body, and death their separation, the soul will be receptive of both. But if life is good, how is death not bad? Or rather: life is good for those for whom it is good—good not insofar as it is a coming together, but because through virtue it wards off the bad; and death is more of a good. Or we should say that life in the body is in itself bad, but that through virtue the soul comes to be in the good, not living [according to] the composite, but already separating itself.

I.8 On What Evils Are and Where They Come From

Περὶ τοῦ τίνα καὶ πόθεν τὰ κακά
Plotinus defines evil as absolute lack, identifies it with matter, and explains how souls come to share in it.
no. 51 in order of writing

1.8.1 Those who ask where evils come from—whether they have entered into beings in general or into some kind of beings—would make a fitting start to their inquiry if they first laid down what evil is, and what the nature of evil is. In this way one could know where it has come from, where it is seated and in what it occurs, and in general reach agreement on whether it exists among the things that are. But by which of the powers in us we could know the nature of evil would be hard to say, since knowledge of each thing comes about by likeness. Intellect and soul, being forms, would know forms and would have their desire for them. But how could anyone imagine evil as a form, when it shows itself in the absence of every good? But perhaps, since there is one and the same knowledge of opposites, and evil is opposite to good, the knowledge of the good will also be knowledge of evil. Then those who mean to know evils must get a clear view of the good, since the better things come before the worse and are forms, while the worse are not, but rather privation. Still, it is also a question [as to] how the good is opposite to evil—unless it is that one is a principle and the other is the last, or that one is form and the other privation. But more on this later.

1.8.2 For now let us say what the nature of the Good is, so far as it concerns the present discussion. It is that on which all things depend and which all beings desire, having it as their principle and needing it. It is itself without need, sufficient to itself, lacking nothing, the measure and limit of all things, giving from itself Intellect and being and Soul and life and the activity that concerns Intellect. Up to this point all things are beautiful. He himself is beyond beauty, beyond the best, reigning as king in the intelligible world. That Intellect is not intellect of the kind one might suppose from what we call intellects here: those are filled out from premises and able to understand what is said; they reason and consider what follows, and see beings by inference, as though they did not have them before but were empty until they learned, intellects though they are. That Intellect is not like this. It has all things and is all things, and is with them by being with itself, and has all things without having them. For they are not one thing and it another; nor is each of the things in it separate. Each is the whole, and everywhere all, and they are not blurred together, but again separate. At any rate, what participates in it does not participate in all of them at once, but in what it can. And Intellect is the first activity of that, and its first being, while that remains in itself. Yet Intellect is active around it, as it were living around it. And Soul, dancing around Intellect from outside, looking toward it and contemplating its interior, sees the god through it. And this is the untroubled and blessed life of the gods; evil is nowhere here, and if things had stopped here there would be no evil, only goods: first, second and third. [And] all things are around the king of all, and that is the cause of all beautiful things, and all things are his, and the second things are around the second, and the third around the third.[1]

1.8.3 If, then, beings and what is beyond beings are like this, evil could not be among beings, nor in what is beyond beings; for these are good. It remains, then, if it exists at all, that it is among non-beings, as a sort of form of non-being, and that it

1 Plotinus draws on Plato's *Second Letter* (312e), whose "king of all" with things second and third around it he reads as the Good, Intellect and Soul.

concerns one of the things mixed with non-being or sharing in non-being in some way. Non-being not in the sense of what is altogether non-being, but only what is other than being; and not non-being in the way that motion and rest, which concern being, are, but as an image of being, or something still more non-being. This is the whole sensible world and all the affections that concern the sensible; or something posterior to these, like an accident of them; or their principle; or one of the things that make up this reality, being of this kind. One might already arrive at a notion of it as a sort of measurelessness in relation to measure, the unlimited in relation to limit, the formless in relation to what produces form, the always needy in relation to the self-sufficient: always undefined, nowhere stable, affected in every way, insatiable, utter poverty. And these are not accidents of it, but, as it were, its very being; whatever part of it you look at, it too is all these things. Other things, those that share in it and become like it, become bad, but they are not what evil is.

To what kind of reality, then, do these belong—not as something other than it, but as itself? For even if evil occurs in something else, it must first be something itself, even if it is not some kind of being. Just as there is good itself and good as an attribute, so there is evil itself and evil that, deriving from it, occurs as an attribute in something else. What, then, is measurelessness, if not in the measureless? And what is measure, if not in the measured? But just as there is measure that is not in the measured, so there is measurelessness that is not in the measureless. For if it is in something else, it is either in the measureless—but that has no need of measurelessness, since it is itself measureless—or in the measured; but the measured cannot have measurelessness in the respect in which it is measured. So there must be something unlimited in itself, and again formless in itself, and possessing the other features mentioned before that characterized the nature of evil. And if anything after it is like this, either it has this mixed in it, or it is like this by looking toward it, or it produces something like this. That which underlies figures and forms and shapes and measures

and limits, and is adorned with an adornment not its own, having no good of its own, but an image in relation to beings, the very being of evil—if there can be such a thing as a being of evil—this the argument finds to be evil: primary evil, evil in itself.

BAD BODIES, BAD SOULS

Bodies are evil insofar as they share in matter, and souls become bad by looking toward it.

1.8.4 The nature of bodies, then, insofar as it shares in matter, would be evil. It has a form that is not true; it is deprived of life; bodies destroy one another by their disordered motion; they are hindrances to the soul in its own activity; and they flee from being, always flowing. Soul, by itself, is not bad, nor again is all soul bad. Which, then, is the bad soul? It is, as he says, the one enslaved to that in which vice of soul naturally arises, since it is the irrational kind of soul that receives evil—measurelessness, excess and deficiency—from which come licentiousness and cowardice and the rest of the soul's vice: involuntary affections, which produce false opinions and make it think bad and good the things it flees and pursues. But what has produced this vice, and how will you trace it back to that principle and cause? Or rather: first, a soul of this kind is not outside matter, nor by itself. So it is mixed with measurelessness and has no share in the form that orders it and brings it to measure; for it is blended with a body that has matter. Then too, if its reasoning part is harmed, it is prevented from seeing, by the affections, by being darkened by matter, by having inclined toward matter, and in general by looking not toward being but toward becoming. And the principle of becoming is the nature of matter, which is so bad that it fills with its own evil even what is not yet in it but has only looked at it. For since it has no share in good at all, and is privation of it and unmixed deficiency, it makes like itself everything that touches it in any way whatever. So the perfect soul, inclined toward Intellect, is always pure: it has turned away from matter, and it neither sees nor approaches anything

undefined, measureless or bad. So it remains pure, wholly defined by Intellect. But the soul that has not remained like this, but has proceeded out of itself because it is not perfect or first—a sort of phantom of that other, by its deficiency, insofar as it falls short—is filled with indefiniteness. It sees darkness, and by now has matter, looking at what it does not see, in the way we are said to see even darkness.

1.8.5 But if lack of the good is the cause of seeing darkness and being with it, then evil would lie in the lack, in the soul, and would be primary—the darkness will be second—and the nature of evil will no longer be in matter, but even prior to matter. Or rather: evil lies not in just any lack, but in absolute lack. At any rate, what falls a little short of the good is not evil; it can even be perfect relative to its own nature. But when something falls absolutely short—and this is what matter is—that is what is really evil, having no portion of good. For matter does not even have being, so as to share in good that way; "being" is said of it only in name, so that it is true to say that it is not. So lack means not being good, while absolute lack means being evil; and greater lack means being able to fall into evil, and is already bad. So we must think of evil not as this or that evil, such as injustice or some other vice, but as that which is not yet any of these, while these are, as it were, species of it, specified by additions: in the soul, for instance, wickedness and its species, distinguished either by the matter they concern, or by the parts of the soul, or by one being a sort of seeing and another an impulse or an affection. And if someone holds that things outside the soul are bad too—illness, [ugliness], poverty—how will he trace them back to that nature?

Or rather: illness is deficiency and excess in material bodies that do not keep order and measure; ugliness is matter not mastered by form; poverty is need and privation of what we require because of the matter to which we are yoked, which has a nature that is neediness itself. If this is rightly said, we must not be posited as the principle of evils, as though we were bad of ourselves; these are prior to us. Whatever evils take hold of

human beings take hold of them against their will. There is an escape from the evils in the soul for those who are able to make it, but not all are able. Our thesis is this: though matter is present to sensible things, evil is not present as the vice that human beings have, since vice is not present even in all human beings. For they master it—and those in whom it is not present are better—and they master it by what is not material in them.

1.8.6 We must also consider in what sense it is said that evils cannot be destroyed but exist of necessity, and that they are not among the gods but always haunt mortal nature and this region. Is it said in the sense that heaven is pure of evils, always moving in order and carried round in an orderly way, with no injustice there nor any other vice, its bodies not wronging one another but moving in order, while on earth there is injustice and disorder? For this is mortal nature and this region. But the saying that we must flee from here is no longer about things on earth.[2] For flight, he says, is not leaving the earth, but being just and holy with understanding while on earth. So what is meant is that we must flee vice, so that for him evils are vice and whatever comes from vice. And when his interlocutor says that evils would be done away with if he could persuade people of what he says, he replies that this cannot happen: evils exist of necessity, since there must be something opposite to the good. Now how can the vice that concerns human beings be opposite to that Good? It is opposite to virtue, and virtue is not the Good but a good, one that makes us master matter. But how could anything be opposite to that Good? It is not a quality. And then, what necessity is there, in every case, that if one of two opposites exists, the other does too? Let it be possible, granted, that the opposite exists when its opposite exists—when there is health, for example, it is possible that there is illness too—but not of necessity. Or rather, he need not be saying that this holds of every opposite; it was said of the good. But if the Good is being, how can anything be opposite to it—or to what is beyond being?

2 The passage discussed is Plato, *Theaetetus* 176a–b, where Socrates tells Theodorus that evils can never be destroyed and that we must flee from here to there.

Now, that nothing is opposite to being has been convincingly shown, by induction, in the case of particular beings.

But it has not been shown universally. What, then, will be opposite to being universally, and in general to the first things? Or rather: to being, non-being; and to the nature of the good, whatever is the nature and principle of evil. For both are principles, the one of evils, the other of goods; and all the things in each nature are opposites, so that the wholes too are opposites, and more opposite than the others. For other opposites are either in the same species or in the same genus, and share in something common in which they are. But things that are separate, where what completes the essence of the one has its opposites in the other—how could these not be opposites most of all, if opposites are things that stand furthest apart from one another? To limit and measure, then, and the other things in the divine nature, unlimitedness and measurelessness and the other things the evil nature has are opposed; so the whole is opposite to the whole. And it has being falsely, and is primarily and really falsehood, while the other has being truly; so that as falsehood is opposed to truth, so what belongs to the being of the one is opposed to what belongs to the being of the other. So it has become clear to us that it is not true in every case that nothing is opposite to being. Indeed, in the case of fire and water we would have accepted that they are opposites, if matter were not something common to them, in which hot and dry and wet and cold occurred as attributes. If these alone were in them, completing their being without the common element, then here too being would be opposite to being. So things that are entirely separate, having nothing in common and standing furthest apart in their nature, are opposites. For opposition does not lie in a quality, or in any genus of beings at all, but in being separated as far as possible from one another and being constituted of contraries; and this is what makes opposites.

THE NECESSITY OF EVIL

Evil exists of necessity as the last term of procession from the Good, and that last is matter.

1.8.7 But how, then, if the Good exists, does evil also exist of necessity? Is it like this: that there must be matter in the All? For this All is necessarily made of opposites; or rather, it would not even exist if matter did not exist. So the nature of this cosmos is mixed from intellect and necessity, and what comes into it from god is good, while the bad comes from the ancient nature—he means the underlying matter, not yet ordered by forms. But how "mortal nature"? Granted, "this region" may stand for the All. Or is it the words, "But since you have come to be, you are not immortal, yet you will by no means be dissolved by me"? If so, it would be right to say that evils cannot be destroyed. How, then, will one escape?[3] Not by place, he says, but by acquiring virtue and separating oneself from the body; for in that way one separates oneself from matter too, since whoever is with the body is also with matter. What separating means, and what not, he himself presumably makes clear. And being among the gods means being among the intelligibles, for they are immortal. One can also grasp the necessity of evil in this way. Since the Good is not alone, there must, by the going-out from it—or, if one prefers to put it so, by the continual stepping down and moving away—be a last, after which nothing more could come to be; and this is evil. What comes after the First exists of necessity, and so the last does too; and this is matter, which has nothing of it any longer. And this is the necessity of evil.

1.8.8 But suppose someone says that it is not because of matter that we become bad—for neither ignorance nor wicked desires come from matter; and if the condition arises through the badness of the body, it is not matter that produces it but form: heats and colds, bitter and salty and all the kinds of flavors, and also

3 Plotinus draws on Plato's *Timaeus*: the cosmos as a mixture of intellect and necessity (47e–48a), and the creator's words to the gods he has made (41b).

fillings and emptyings—and not fillings simply, but fillings with things of a certain kind; in general it is being of such a kind that makes the difference in desires and, if you like, in mistaken opinions, so that form rather than matter is evil. Even so, he will be forced to concede no less that matter is evil. For what the quality in matter produces, it does not produce as something separate, just as the shape of an axe does nothing without the iron. Then too, the forms in matter are not the same as they would be if they existed by themselves: they are rational principles in matter, corrupted in matter and filled with its nature. For fire itself does not burn, nor does any of the other things, by itself, do the things they are said to do when they come to be in matter. For matter, once it has become master of what is reflected in it, corrupts and ruins it by setting beside it its own nature, which is contrary—not bringing cold against hot, but bringing its own formlessness against the form of the hot, its shapelessness against shape, its excess and deficiency against what is measured—until it has made the thing belong to matter and no longer to itself. It is like the nourishment of animals: what is taken in is no longer what it was when it came in, but dog's blood and all dog, and all the juices become whatever has received them. If, then, body is the cause of evils, matter would in this way too be the cause of evils.

"But the soul should have mastered them," someone else might say. But what is able to master them is not pure, unless it escapes. Desires also grow more violent with a particular blend of bodies, some with one blend, some with another, so that what is in each of us does not master them. People become duller in judging, too, chilled and hampered by the badness of their bodies, while the opposite blends make them light and unballasted. Their passing states bear witness to this as well. Some people are full, in their desires and in their thoughts alike, others empty; and some are one way when filled with these things, others another way when filled with those. So let the measureless be evil primarily, and what has come to be in lack of measure, by likeness or by participation, because lack of measure has

befallen it, be evil secondarily. Likewise darkness is primary, and what has been darkened is secondary in the same way. Vice, then, being ignorance and lack of measure in the soul, is evil secondarily and not evil itself. Virtue is not the primary good either; it is good because it has been made like the Good or participates in it.

1.8.9 By what, then, have we come to know these things? And first, by what do we know vice? Virtue we know by intellect itself and by understanding, for understanding knows itself. But vice—how? Or rather: just as with a ruler we know what is straight and what is not, so we know what does not fit with virtue? Do we know it, then, by seeing it or by not seeing it—vice, I mean? Or rather, complete vice we do not see, for it is unlimited; so we know it by taking away, as what is nowhere. Vice that is not complete we know by its falling short of virtue. So we see a part, and from the part that is present we grasp the part that is absent, which is in the whole form but missing there; and in this way we speak of vice, leaving what has been deprived in the indefinite. And so in the case of matter: when we see, so to speak, an ugly face, in which the rational principle has not prevailed so as to hide the ugliness of the matter, we imagine it as ugly through the deficiency of form. But what has no share of form at all—how do we know that? Or rather, we take away every form completely, and what has none of it present we call matter. We ourselves take on formlessness within us in taking away all form, if we are going to view matter. That is why this intellect is another, not intellect, since it has dared to see what is not its own. It is like an eye that withdraws from the light in order to see the darkness—and does not see it, by leaving the light, since with light it could not see the darkness; yet without light it could not see either, but only not see, so that this might be its seeing, as far as seeing was possible. In just this way intellect, leaving its own light within itself and, as it were, going out of itself to what is not its own, not bringing its own light with it, has undergone the opposite of what it is, in order to see what is opposite to it.

1.8.10 So much for that. But how can matter be evil if it is without quality? Or rather, it is called without quality because in itself it has none of the qualities that it will receive and that will be in it as in a substrate—not in the sense that it has no nature at all. If, then, it has some nature, what prevents this nature from being evil, though not evil in the way a quality is? For a quality is that in virtue of which something else is called qualified. Quality, then, is an accident and is in something else; but matter is not in something else: it is the substrate, and the accident is about it. So, since it has not received quality, whose nature is to be an accident, it is called without quality. If, then, even quality itself is without quality, how could matter, which has not received quality, be called qualified? So it is rightly said both to be without quality and to be evil. It is not called evil by having quality, but rather by not having quality; so that it is evil not, perhaps, as being a form, but as a nature opposed to form.

1.8.11 But the nature opposed to all form is privation; and privation is always in something else and has no existence by itself. So if evil lies in privation, evil will be in what is deprived of form, and so it will not exist by itself. If, then, there is to be evil in the soul, the privation in it will be the evil and the vice, and nothing outside. Besides, some arguments claim to do away with matter altogether, while others hold that matter, though it exists, is not itself evil. So there is no need to look for evil anywhere else; one should place it in the soul, and place it there as an absence of good. But if privation is the absence of some form that ought to be present, then if there is privation of the good in the soul, and the soul produces vice in itself by its own rational principle, the soul has nothing good—and so it does not have life either, though it is soul. Then the soul will be soulless, if it does not even have life; so, being soul, it will not be soul. It has life, then, by its own rational principle; so it does not have the privation of the good of itself. It has, then, something good, something of the form of good, a trace of Intellect, and it is not evil of itself. So it is not primary evil either, nor is primary evil an accident of it, since not all of the good is absent from it.

1.8.12 What then, if someone said that vice, the evil in the soul, is not complete privation of good, but a partial privation of good? But if so, having part of it and being deprived of part, the soul will have a mixed perception, and the evil will not be unmixed; and we have not yet found the primary and unmixed evil. And the soul will have the good in its being, and the evil as something accidental.

1.8.13 Unless, then, vice is evil to the soul in this sense, as an obstacle, as something is to the eye with regard to seeing. But then what is evil for the soul will be what produces evil, and produce it in such a way that evil itself is something different. If, then, vice is an obstacle to the soul, it produces evil, but vice will not be evil itself; and virtue will not be the good, except as a helper. So if virtue is not the good, vice is not evil either. Further, virtue is not the beautiful itself nor the good itself; so vice is not the ugly itself nor evil itself either. We said that virtue is not beauty itself or the good itself because before it and beyond it are beauty itself and the good itself; and it is good and beautiful by participation, in a way. So just as for someone going up from virtue there are the beautiful and the good, so for someone going down from vice there is evil itself. He starts from vice: he contemplates evil itself, insofar as there is any contemplation of it, and he becomes it, insofar as there is participation in it. For he comes wholly into "the place of unlikeness," where, sinking into it, he will have fallen into dark mud. Indeed, if the soul goes completely into complete vice, it no longer has vice, but has exchanged it for another nature, the worse; for vice is still something human, mixed with something opposed to it.[4] So it dies, as a soul might die. Its death, while it is still immersed in the body, is to sink down in matter and be filled with it; and when it has left the body, to lie there until it runs back up and somehow lifts

4 "The place of unlikeness" is from Plato, *Statesman* 273d; the dark mud recalls *Phaedo* 69c, where the uninitiated lie in mud in Hades.

its gaze out of the mud. And this is "going to Hades and falling asleep there."[5]

WEAKNESS AND THE SOUL'S FALL

Vice is weakness of soul, caused by matter crowding the soul and darkening its light.

1.8.14 Suppose someone says that vice is weakness of soul. The bad soul, at any rate, is easily affected and easily moved, carried from every evil to every other: easily moved to desires, easily provoked to anger, rash in its assents, and readily yielding to dim imaginings, like the flimsiest things made by art or nature, which winds and eddies easily sweep away. Then it would be worth asking what this weakness in the soul is and where it comes from. For weakness surely does not belong to the soul in the same way as to bodies. Rather, just as there weakness means incapacity for work and being easily affected, so here too the condition got the name of weakness by analogy—unless matter is, in this respect, the cause of weakness in both cases alike. But we must come closer in our argument to the cause of what is called weakness of soul. For it is surely not densities or rarities, nor thinness or fatness, nor a disease like a fever, that has made the soul weak. Such weakness of soul must lie either in the souls that are completely separate, or in those in matter, or in both. If it is not in those apart from matter—for they are all pure and, as the saying goes, winged, and perfect, and their work is unhindered—it remains that the weakness is in the souls that have fallen, those that are neither pure nor purified. And their weakness would be not the removal of something but the presence of something foreign, like phlegm or bile in the body. Once we grasp more clearly, and as it should be grasped, the cause of the soul's fall, what we are seeking will become plain. There is, then, among the things that are, matter; there is also soul; and there is, so to speak, a single place.

5 Plato, *Republic* 534c: the person who cannot grasp the Good dreams through this life and falls asleep for good in Hades.

For the place of matter is not in one spot and the place of soul in another—as if matter's were on earth and soul's in the air. Rather, the soul's place is separate in its not being in matter; that is, in its not being united with matter; that is, in nothing single coming to be out of it and matter; that is, in its not coming to be in matter as in a substrate. And that is what being separate means. But the powers of soul are many, and soul has a beginning, middle and last parts. Matter, being present, begs and, as it were, pesters, and wants to get inside. But the whole region is holy, and there is nothing that has no share of soul. So matter is illuminated by putting itself beneath; and it cannot grasp that from which it is illuminated. For that does not put up with matter, even though matter is present, because matter does not see, owing to its badness. But the illumination, the light from there, matter has darkened by mixture and made weak, itself supplying coming-to-be and the reason for soul's coming into it; for soul would not have come to what was not present. And this is the fall of the soul: to come in this way into matter. It grows weak because not all its powers are present for activity. Matter prevents them from being present by occupying the place the soul holds and making the soul, as it were, huddle up, and by making evil what it has taken, as if by theft—until the soul is able to run back up. Matter, then, is the cause of the soul's weakness and the cause of vice. So matter itself is evil before soul, and is primary evil. For even if it was the soul itself that, affected by matter, brought this about, and even if it associated with matter and became evil, matter is the cause by being present. For the soul would not have come into it if it had not received its coming-to-be through matter's presence.

1.8.15 If someone says that matter does not exist, we must show him from our discussions of matter that its existence is necessary; the subject has been treated at more length there. If someone should say that there is no evil at all among the things that are, he must also do away with the good, and nothing will be desirable. Then there will be no desire, nor aversion, nor thinking. For desire is of good, aversion of evil, and thinking

and understanding are of good and evil—and understanding is itself one of the goods. There must, then, be good, unmixed good, and also what is mixed of evil and good. What has a greater share of evil has itself already contributed to what is wholly evil; what has a lesser share, insofar as it is diminished, contributes to the good. For what would evil be for a soul? Or rather, for which soul would there be any, if it had not touched the worse nature? Then there would be no desires, nor pains, no anger, no fears. Fears belong to the composite, afraid of being dissolved; pains and sufferings belong to it as it is dissolved; desires arise when something troubles its structure, or when it plans a remedy so that nothing may trouble it. Imagination is the blow of something irrational from outside; and the soul receives the blow through what is not without parts. And false opinions come when it has got outside its own truth; and it gets outside because it is not pure. Desire for Intellect is something else: the soul must be with it alone, settled in it, not inclining to the worse. Evil is not evil all alone. Because of the power and nature of the good, since it came to light of necessity, it has been bound around with fine fetters, as some prisoners are with gold, and is hidden by them, so that, though it is [evil], it may not be seen by the gods, and so that human beings need not always look at evil, but even when they do see it, may have images of beauty with them to remind them.

I.9 On Leaving Life with Good Reason

Περὶ εὐλόγου ἐξαγωγῆς
A brief note against suicide: the soul should wait for the body to release it rather than force its way out.
no. 16 in order of writing

1.9.1 You shall not take it out, so that it does not go out [having something]. For it will go out having something, in order that it may go out at all; and going out means moving to another place. Rather, it will wait for the body to depart from it entirely, when it does not need to move out but is wholly outside. How, then, does the body depart? When nothing of the soul is bound to it any longer, since the body can no longer bind it, its harmony, by having which it had the soul, being gone. What then, if someone contrived to have the body dissolved? Then he has used force and departed himself; he has not let the body go. And when he dissolves it he is not free of passion: there is disgust, or grief, or anger. But one must do nothing. What, then, if he perceives the onset of madness? Perhaps this does not happen to a good man. But if it did happen, it would be ranked among things that are necessary and chosen because of circumstances, not chosen absolutely.[1] Indeed, giving oneself drugs to bring about the soul's departure is perhaps not fitting for the soul either. And if the time given to each of us is fated, it is not a happy thing to go before it, unless, as we say, it is necessary. And if each person holds a rank there corresponding to the state in which he leaves,

1 The treatise opens with an oracular saying (later ascribed to the Chaldean Oracles): the soul must not be "taken out" of the body by force, that is, by suicide.

then while progress is still possible, one should not take the soul out.

II.1 On the Cosmos

Περὶ τοῦ κόσμου
Plotinus explains how the heavens and stars can last forever as individuals while earthly things persist only in their species.
no. 40 in order of writing

2.1.1 When we say that the cosmos, though it has a body, always existed before and will always exist, if we refer the cause to the will of the god, we might perhaps be saying something true, but we would not be offering any clarity. Again, since the change of the elements and the perishing of living things on earth preserve the form, perhaps one will think that the same holds for the All. The will would be capable of this: while the body is always slipping away and flowing, to put the same form now on one thing, now on another, so that what is preserved forever is not the numerically one but the one in form. But then why should some things have their "always" only in form, in this way, while the things in heaven, and heaven itself, have their "always" as individuals? But suppose we make the cause of its not perishing the fact that it has encompassed everything, so that there is nothing into which it could change, and nothing from outside that could fall on it and destroy it. Then from this argument we shall grant the whole, the All, that it cannot perish. But our sun and the being of the other stars, because each is a part and not a whole and an all, will not get from this argument any assurance that they will last for all time. Their permanence would seem to be only in form, as it would seem to be for fire and things like it—and for the whole cosmos itself as well.

For nothing prevents the cosmos, even though it is not destroyed by anything else from outside, from being constantly destroyed in this way, as its parts destroy one another, and so persisting only in form. And since the nature of the substrate is always flowing, and something else gives the form, the same thing would happen with the whole living being as with a human being, a horse and the rest: there is always a human being and a horse, but not the same one. So there will not be one part of it that remains forever, like the heaven, and another, the things on earth, that perishes. All things will be alike, differing only in time; the things in heaven will simply last longer. If, then, we agreed that the "always" applies in this way to the All and its parts, our view would be less troubled by difficulty. Or rather, we would be entirely clear of difficulty, if the will of the god were shown to be sufficient to hold the All together even in this way and this manner. But if we say that some particular part of it, of whatever size, has the "always," then we must show whether the will is sufficient to do this. And the difficulty remains: why some things are so and others not so, but only in form; and how the parts in heaven are so too—since on that view all things themselves would be so as well.

2.1.2 If, then, we accept this view, and say that the heaven and everything in it have their "always" as individuals, while the things below the sphere of the moon have it in form, we must show how the heaven, having a body, will be an individual in the strict sense, remaining the same, so that the individual is always as it was, when the nature of body is always flowing. For this is the view both of the others who have spoken about nature and of Plato himself, not only about the other bodies but about the heavenly ones too. "For how," he says, "could things that have bodies and are seen remain always unchanged in the same state?" Here, evidently, he agrees with Heraclitus about these things too, who said that even the sun is always coming to be. For Aristotle there would be no problem, if one accepted his

hypotheses [about] the fifth body.[1] But for those who do not posit this, and for whom the body of the heaven is made of the same things as the living beings here, how could it be an individual [always]? And still more, how could the sun and the things in heaven, which are parts? Since every living being is composed of soul and the nature of body, the heaven, if it is to be always numerically the same, must be so either through both, or through one of its constituents, soul or body. Whoever grants incorruptibility to the body would need nothing from soul for this, except their always being together to make up a living being. But whoever says the body is corruptible of itself and gives the cause to the soul must try to show that the state of the body is not itself opposed to the composition and its persistence. In naturally composed things there is nothing discordant; the matter too must be suited to the intention of the finished work.

2.1.3 How, then, could the matter and body of the All cooperate in the immortality of the cosmos, when it is always flowing? Or rather, we would say, because [it flows]—it does not flow outside. If, then, it flows within itself and not away from itself, remaining the same, it would neither grow nor waste away; so it does not age either. We must see that earth too has remained in the same shape and bulk from all time, and air never fails, nor the nature of water. So as much of them as changes has not altered the nature of the whole living being. Even in our case, though our parts are always changing and passing outside, each of us remains for a long time. But for that which has nothing outside it, the nature of body would not be discordant with soul as regards being the same living being and always remaining. Fire is sharp and swift because it does not stay here, just as earth is too because it does not stay above. But when fire has come to where it must stop, we should not suppose it is settled in its own place in such a way that it does not, like the others, seek exten-

1 Plato, *Statesman* 269d–e; Heraclitus said "the sun is new every day." Aristotle's "fifth body" is the aether, an imperishable element of which, he held, the heavens are made.

sion in both directions. It could not be carried higher, for there is nothing further; and it is not of a nature to go downward. It remains, then, for it to be easily led, and, drawn by a natural attraction by soul toward life, to move very well in a beautiful place: in the soul. And if anyone is afraid it may fall, he should take heart: the soul's revolution gets ahead of every inclination, so as to hold it up by mastering it. And if it does not even have from itself any tendency downward, it remains without resistance. Our parts, then, having come to be in a shape, cannot hold their structure together by themselves, and they demand particles from other things in order to persist. But if nothing flows away from up there, there is no need of nourishment. If something did flow away from there and was extinguished, another fire would have to be kindled; and if it contained some other element as well and that flowed away from there, another would be needed in its place too. But then, if that were so, the whole living being would not, for this reason, remain the same.

2.1.4 But we must examine the question in its own right, not as it bears on our inquiry: whether something flows away from up there, so that those things too need what is called—improperly—nourishment, or whether the things there, once set in order and remaining in their natural state, undergo no outflow; and whether there is fire only, or mostly fire, while the others too can be lifted and held aloft by what dominates. For if one added the most sovereign cause too, the soul, together with bodies that are pure in this way and in every respect better—since in other living beings too nature selects the better materials for their principal parts—one would arrive at a firm view about the immortality of the heaven. Aristotle was right to call flame a kind of boiling, fire running riot, as it were, from surfeit. But the fire up there is even and calm and suited to the nature of the stars. And the greatest point: the soul is placed next after the best things, with a wonderful power. How, then, could anything once placed within it escape it into non-being? Not to think that soul, which has set out from god, is stronger than any bond belongs to people with no experience of the cause that holds all

things together. For it would be absurd that what has been able to hold things together for any length of time whatever should not do so forever—as if holding together came about by force, and what is natural were something other than this, which is in the nature of the All and in things well ordered; or as if there were something that would use force, dissolve the structure, and, as it were, depose the nature of soul from its kingship and rule. And its never having begun (a beginning would be absurd, as has already been said) gives assurance about the future too. For why should there be a time when it is not—and why not already? For the elements are not worn out like pieces of wood and such things; and as they always remain, the All remains. And even if they are always changing, the All remains, since the cause of the change remains too. As for the soul's changing its mind, it has been shown that this is an empty notion, since its governance involves no toil and no harm; and even if all body could perish, nothing would be any different for it.

2.1.5 How, then, do the parts up there remain, while the elements and living beings here do not? Or rather [because], as Plato says, those were made by the god, while the living beings here were made by the gods who were made by him; and what was made by him may not lawfully perish. This amounts to saying that the heavenly soul comes next after the craftsman, and our souls do too; and that from the heavenly soul an image of it, going forth and, as it were, flowing off from the higher things, makes the living beings on earth.[2] Since, then, a soul of this kind imitates the one up there, but falls short, because it uses worse bodies for its making, and in a worse place, and what it took up for the composition does not want to remain, the living beings here cannot remain forever; and the bodies would not be mastered in the same way as they would be if the other soul ruled them directly. But if the whole heaven was to remain, its parts too, the stars in it, had to remain; or how could it have remained if these did not remain likewise? For the things below

2 Plato, *Timaeus* 41a–d, where the craftsman makes the heavenly gods and leaves the making of mortal creatures to them.

the heaven are no longer parts of the heaven—or else the heaven does not reach down to the moon. We, though, are molded by the soul given by the gods in heaven, and by the heaven itself, and it is in virtue of that soul that we are joined to our bodies. For the other soul, the one that is our self, is the cause of our being well, not of our being. At any rate, it comes when the body has already come into being, and contributes only a little to its being, from reasoning.

WHAT THE STARS ARE MADE OF

Plotinus reads the Timaeus: heavenly bodies are mostly fire, so they need no nourishment and do not flow away.

2.1.6 But now we must consider whether there is fire only up there, and whether it flows away and needs nourishment. Timaeus made the body of the All first of earth and fire, so that it would be visible because of fire and solid because of earth; and it seemed to follow that he made the stars too not wholly but mostly of fire, since the stars evidently have solidity. And perhaps this is right, since Plato too endorses this view as likely. For to perception, by sight and by the grasp of touch, they appear to be mostly or wholly fire; but to those who examine it by reason, if solidity could not arise without earth, they would have earth too. But what would they need water and air for?[3] For it would seem absurd for there to be water in so much fire; and air, if it were in it, would change into the nature of fire. But if two solids standing as extremes in a proportion need two means, one might ask whether this holds among natural things too; for one could mix earth with water without needing any mean. And if we say, "But the others are already present in earth and water," perhaps we shall seem to be saying something. Yet someone

3 Timaeus is the main speaker of Plato's *Timaeus* (31b, 40a), where the god makes the body of the All out of fire and earth, and the stars mostly of fire.

might say, "But not so as to bind the two together when they meet."[4]

All the same, we shall say they are already bound together by each containing all. But we must examine whether earth is not visible without fire and fire not solid without earth. For if so, perhaps nothing would have its own being by itself; all would be mixed, and each named after what predominates in it. Indeed they say that not even earth can hold together without moisture, since the moisture of water is earth's glue. But even if we grant this, it is surely absurd to say that each is something and yet not allow it any structure by itself, but only together with the others, none of them being anything on its own. For how could there be a nature of earth, and what it is to be earth, if there is no particle of earth that is earth unless water is present to glue it? And what would the water glue, if there were no magnitude at all for it to join, continuous, to another particle? If there is any magnitude whatever of earth itself, earth can exist by nature even without water; if not, there will be nothing for the water to glue. And why would a mass of earth need air in order to exist, when air remains air before it changes? As for fire, it has not been said to be needed for earth to be earth, but for it to be visible, both itself and the other things; for it is reasonable to grant that being seen comes from light. We must not say that darkness is seen, but that it is not seen, just as silence is not heard.

But fire need not be present in earth; light is enough. Snow, at any rate, and many very cold things are bright without fire. But fire was present in them, someone will say, and colored them before it left. About water too we must ask whether there is no water unless it takes on some earth. And how could air be said to share in earth, when it breaks up so easily? As for fire, we must ask whether it needs earth, since of itself it has neither continuity nor three-dimensional extension. But its solidity—not in the sense of three-dimensional extension, but obviously in the sense of resistance—why should it not have it insofar as it is

4 Plato, *Timaeus* 32a–b: two solids can be bound in proportion only by two means, which is why the god set water and air between fire and earth.

a natural body? Hardness belongs to earth alone. Indeed, density accrues even to gold, which is water, not through earth being added but through densification or solidifying. And why should fire by itself not hold together, when soul is present, according to soul's power?[5] There are fiery living beings too: those of the spirits. But shall we unsettle the doctrine that the whole living being is composed of all the elements? Or rather, one will say this holds for those on earth; but to lift earth into the heaven is contrary to nature and against what nature has ordered; and it is not plausible that the swiftest motion should carry earthy bodies round with it, which would also obstruct the brilliance and whiteness of the fire up there.

2.1.7 Perhaps, then, we should understand Plato better. He says that in the whole cosmos there must be this kind of solid, the resistant kind: so that earth, settled in the middle, may be a footing and a firm seat for what walks on it; so that the living beings on it may of necessity have this kind of solidity [from earth]; so that earth may have its continuity from itself but be lit up by fire; that it shares in water so as not to be parched, and so that the coming together of its parts is not hindered; that air lightens the masses of earth; and that earth is mixed with the fire above, not in the composition of the stars; rather, since each has come to be in the cosmos, the fire too enjoys something of earth, as earth does of fire, and each of each—not so that what enjoys comes to be made of both, itself and what it shares in, but in accordance with the community within the cosmos: remaining what it is, it takes not the other itself but something of it—not air, for instance, but air's softness, and fire's brightness. It is the mixing that gives everything and then produces the compound, not earth alone and the nature of fire—this solidity and density.

Plato himself bears witness to this when he says, "the god kindled a light in the second circuit from earth," meaning the sun. And elsewhere, I think, he calls the sun the brightest and also the whitest, leading us away from thinking it is anything

5 Plato (*Timaeus* 58d–59b) classes gold and the other metals among the kinds of "water," that is, fusible substances.

other than fire—but fire of neither of its other kinds: rather the light, which he says is different from flame and only gently warm. This light is a body; and from it shines out the light that shares its name, which we say is incorporeal. This is furnished by that light, shining out from it like its bloom and luster; and that is what the truly white body is. We take "earthy" in the worse sense, whereas Plato took earth in terms of solidity; we call earth one single thing, whereas he posits different kinds of earth. Since this kind of fire, which gives the purest light, lies in the upper region and is settled there by nature, we must not suppose that the flame here mixes with the things there. Rather, it reaches up to a certain point and is extinguished when it meets more air; and having risen together with earth, it is thrown back down, unable to pass beyond to the upper region, and it stops below the moon, so that it makes the air there finer. And the flame, if it remains, dies down into something gentler, and has no brightness of the kind that goes with boiling, but only as much as it receives in light from the light above; while the light up there, diversified in rational proportions in the stars, produces the difference among them in their colors as in their sizes. The rest of the heaven, too, is made of this kind of light, but it is not seen because of the fineness of its body and its unresisting transparency, just as pure air is not seen—and, besides, because of its distance.

2.1.8 Since, then, this light remains above, where it has been set, pure in the purest place, what manner of outflow from it could there be? Such a nature is not of a kind to flow downward, nor is there anything there that forces it to push downward. Every body together with soul is different, not the same as it would be alone; and the body up there is of this kind, not like a body alone. As for what is next to it, be it air or fire—what could air do? And fire would not be fitted to act on it, nor could it touch it so as to affect it. It would pass by in its rush before that could be affected; and it is lesser, and not as strong as the fire down here. Then, too, to act on something is to heat it; but what is to be heated must not be hot of itself. And if anything is going

to be destroyed by fire, it must first be heated, and in being heated come into a state contrary to its nature. The heaven, then, needs no other body in order to remain, nor in order for its revolution to be natural. For it has not yet been shown that its natural motion is in a straight line. For these things, the natural state is either to stay still or to move round; the other motions belong to things under force. So we must not say that the things up there need nourishment either, nor make pronouncements about them on the basis of things here. They do not have the same soul holding them together, nor the same place, and the cause is not present there by which the composites here, always flowing, are nourished. As for change, the bodies here change away from themselves because another nature presides over them, which, through weakness, does not know how to hold them in being, but imitates the nature prior to it in coming to be or generating. That they are not in every way the same, as the intelligibles are, has already been said.

II.2 On the Circular Motion of the Heavens

Περὶ τῆς κυκλοφορίας
Plotinus argues that the heavens move in a circle because soul, imitating Intellect, circles around its center and itself.
no. 14 in order of writing

2.2.1 Why does it move in a circle? Because it imitates Intellect. And whose is the motion—soul's or body's? [Or soul's.] What then? Is it because soul is in itself and always hastens to go toward itself? Or is it in itself without being continuous? Or does it carry the body along as it is carried? But then, in carrying it along, it should no longer be carrying it but have carried it—that is, rather, have brought it to a standstill, not keep it always going round. Or rather, soul itself too will stand still, or, if it moves, not in place. How, then, does it move the body in place, when it itself moves in another way? Or perhaps circular motion is not local either, except incidentally. What kind is it, then? A motion toward itself, a motion of self-awareness, of self-thinking, of life, nowhere outside and nowhere else, since it must encompass all things; for the sovereign part of a living being is what encompasses and makes it one. But it will not encompass in a living way if it stays still, nor will it preserve what is within, since it has a body; for the life of a body is motion. If, then, the motion is also local, it will move as it can, not as soul alone but as ensouled body and as living being. So the motion is mixed of the bodily and the psychic: the body by nature moves in a straight line, the soul holds it back, and out of both comes the motion of something that both moves and stays. But if circular motion is said to belong to the body, how so, when every body, [as] fire

too, moves in a straight line? Or rather, it moves in a straight line until it reaches the place where it has been set; for however it has been set, so it seems both to rest by nature and to move toward where it was set. Why then does it not stay still when it has arrived? Is it because the nature of fire is in motion? If, then, it does not move in a circle, it will scatter in a straight line; so it must move in a circle. But this is the work of providence. Or rather, it is in fire from providence; so that, once fire is up there, it moves in a circle of itself.

Or rather, aiming at the straight but no longer having room, it slides round, as it were, and bends back within the places it can; for it has no place beyond itself, since this is the last. So it runs in the place it has, and is itself its own place, not in order to stay [there] once it has arrived, but in order to move. And in a circle, the center stays still by nature, but if the outer circumference stayed still, it would be a big center. So it will rather move around the center, being a body that is alive and in its natural state. For in this way it will converge on the center: not by collapsing inward, for that would destroy the circle, but, since it cannot do that, by whirling round; only so will it fulfil its desire. And if soul drives it round, it will not grow tired; for it does not drag it, nor is the motion against nature, since nature is what has been ordered by the whole Soul. Again, since the Soul of the All is everywhere whole and not divided part by part, it gives the heaven too the power to be everywhere, as far as it can; and it can by passing through and traveling over all things. For the heaven would have stopped on arriving there, if the soul were standing still somewhere; but as it is, since soul is all its own, the heaven longs for all of it. What then? Will it never reach it? Or rather, it is always reaching it in this way. Or rather, soul, always leading it toward itself, always moves it in always leading it; and moving it not elsewhere but toward itself, in the same place, leading it not in a straight line but in a circle, it grants it to have soul wherever it comes. If it stayed still, as though soul were only there where each thing stays, it would stop. If, then,

soul is not only in some one place, the heaven will be carried everywhere, and not outside—in a circle, then.

2.2.2 What about the other things, then? Or rather, each of them is not a whole but a part, held in a partial place. But the heaven is whole and is, as it were, place, and nothing hinders it; for it is the All itself. What about human beings, then? Or rather, insofar as they come from the All, they are a part; insofar as they are themselves, each is its own whole. If, then, wherever it is, it has soul, why must it go round? Or rather, because it does not have it only there. And if soul's power is around the center, in this way too it would move in a circle. But "center" must not be understood in the same way for body and for the nature of soul: there, the center is that from which the rest comes; for body it is local. So we must [take] the center by analogy: as there, so here too there must be a center, which alone is the center of a spherical body; for as that is around itself, so is this. If, then, it is soul that runs around the god, it embraces him lovingly and holds itself around him as far as it can; for all things depend on him. Since, then, it cannot go to him, it goes around him. Why then do not all souls do so? Or rather, each does so where it is. Why then do our bodies not do so too? Because the straight-moving is attached to them, their impulses are toward other things, and our spherical part does not roll easily, being earthy; but up there the body follows along, fine and easily moved—for why should it stand still at all, whatever motion the soul moves with? Perhaps in us too the breath around the soul does the same. For if the god is in all things, the soul that wants to be with him must come to be around him; for he is not in any one place. And Plato gives the stars not only the spherical motion together with the whole, but also, to each, a motion around its own center; for each, where it is, embracing the god, rejoices—not by reasoning but by natural necessities.

2.2.3 Let us put it this way too. One power of soul, the last, starting from the earth, is woven through the whole; while the power that is by nature perceptive and receives opinion-forming reason keeps itself above, in the spheres, riding on the former

and giving it from itself the power to make it more alive. So the lower power is moved in a circle by the higher, which encompasses it and is seated upon all of it that has run up into the spheres. Since the higher encompasses it in a circle, the lower converges and turns back toward it, and its turning back carries round the body in which it is interwoven. For when any part in a sphere moves in any way at all, if it moves while remaining in place, it shakes what it is in, and the sphere moves too. For in our bodies too, when the soul moves in a different way—in joy, for instance, or when some good appears—the body's motion becomes local as well. Up there, then, soul, coming to be in the good and becoming more perceptive, moves toward the good and shakes the body locally, as is natural there. And the perceptive power, in its turn receiving the good from above and delighting in what is its own, pursues it, and since the good is everywhere, it is carried toward the everywhere. Intellect, however, does not move in this sense: it stands still and moves, for it moves around itself. So the All too, in moving in a circle, at the same time stands still.

II.3 Whether the Stars Are Causes

Περὶ τοῦ εἰ ποιεῖ τὰ ἄστρα
Plotinus argues that the stars signify events rather than cause them, rejecting astrology that makes planets responsible for human vice.
no. 52 in order of writing

2.3.1 That the movement of the stars indicates what is going to happen in each case, but does not itself make everything happen, as most people believe, has been said before elsewhere, and the argument offered some proofs. But it must be said now too, more precisely and at greater length; for it is no small matter whether one believes it is so or otherwise.[1] They say that the planets in their courses produce not only other things—poverty and wealth, health and disease—but also ugliness and beauty, and, most important, vices and virtues, and indeed the particular actions that come from these on each occasion, as if they were angry with human beings over things in which human beings themselves do no wrong, having been made by the planets to be as they are. And they say the planets give what are called goods not because they are pleased with those who receive them, but because they themselves are either badly or well affected according to the places in their course, and become different in their minds when they are at the centers, and different again when they decline from them;[2] and, most important of all, though they say some of them are bad and oth-

1 Plotinus is referring to his earlier treatise on fate (III.1).
2 In astrology the "centers" (*kentra*) are the four cardinal points of the horoscope; a planet "declines" as it moves away from them.

ers good, still the ones said to be bad give good things, and the good ones turn bad. Further, they say that when the planets see one another they produce some things, and other things when they do not, as if they did not belong to themselves but were one thing when they see and another when they do not; and that this one is good when it sees, but alters if it sees another; and that it looks one way if the aspect is in this configuration, another way if in that; and that all of them together make a different blend, as from different liquids the mixture is different from the things mixed.[3] These, then, and similar things are what they believe, and it is fitting to examine each of them and speak to it. A fitting beginning would be this:

2.3.2 Are we to think of these moving bodies as ensouled or soulless? If soulless, they supply nothing but heat and cold, if we are even going to say that some of the stars are cold. In that case, at any rate, they will limit what they give to the nature of our bodies, since what reaches us from their motion is obviously bodily. Then the variation among bodies won't be great either, since the outflow from each of them is the same, and all of it is mixed together into one on earth. So differences arise only according to place, from being near to or far from the moving body, and the cold one gives in the same way. But how do they make some people wise and others ignorant, some grammarians, others orators, others lyre-players or practitioners of the other arts, and again some rich and others poor? And what of everything else whose coming to be is not caused by a blending of bodies? For instance, having such-and-such a brother, father, son and wife, enjoying good fortune at this moment, becoming a general or a king. If, on the other hand, they are ensouled and act by choice, what harm have they suffered from us that they willingly do us harm? And this when they are set in a divine place and are themselves divine! For they have none of the things that make human beings bad. Nor does anything at all, good or bad, come to them from our faring well or faring badly.

3 "Seeing" one another is the astrologers' term for planets standing in "aspect," that is, in certain angular relations to each other.

2.3.3 "But they don't do these things willingly: they are compelled by their positions and configurations." But if they are compelled, then surely all of them ought to produce the same effects when they are in the same positions and configurations. As it is, what different experience does a planet have when it passes this segment of the zodiac, and then that one? It doesn't even enter the sign itself. It passes far beneath it, and whatever sign it is under, it is in the heavens. It would be absurd for it to become different with each sign it passes and to give different things each time. And when it is rising, when it has reached a cardinal point, when it is declining, [how] is it different? Surely it isn't pleased at one time, when it is at the cardinal point, and distressed or sluggish at another, when it declines. Nor does one of them grow angry when it rises and calm down when it declines, while another one of them is actually better when it declines. For each of them is always at a cardinal point for some and declining for others, and declining for some and at a cardinal point for others. And surely it isn't glad and distressed, angry and gentle, at one and the same time. And to say that some of them rejoice when they are setting and others when they are rising: how is that not irrational? For then it follows that they are distressed and glad at the same time. Next, why would their distress do us harm? In general we shouldn't grant that they are ever distressed, or glad at particular moments either. They are always serene, glad of the goods they have and of what they see. For each of them has its own life to itself, and its well-being lies in its activity, and that has nothing to do with us. Above all, for living beings that have nothing in common with us, their effect on us is incidental, not a primary aim, [and] not an effect at all, if their signifying is incidental, as it is with birds.

2.3.4 This too is irrational: that one planet is glad when it sees a particular other one, while another feels the opposite on seeing another. What hostility is there between them, or over what? Why is it one way when it sees at trine, and another way when it is in opposition or at square? Why does it see when it is con-

figured like this, but not see when it is in the next sign and closer? And in general, what will be the manner of their producing what they are said to produce? How does each do it separately, and further, how do all of them together produce something else out of them all? Surely they don't come to an agreement with one another and then do to us what they have decided, each giving up something of its own. Nor has one forcibly prevented another's gift from taking effect, nor has one given way to another, persuaded to let it act.[4] And the claim that this one is glad when it is in the other's houses, while conversely the other is not when it is in the first one's: how is that not like someone who supposed two people to love each other, and then said that the first loves the second but, conversely, the second hates the first?[5]

2.3.5 They say that one of them is cold and is better for us the farther away from us it gets, locating its harm to us in its coldness. Yet then it ought to be good for us when it is in the opposite signs. They say that when the cold one and the hot one are opposite each other, both become dangerous. Yet there ought to be a blending. And that one rejoices in the day and becomes good when it is warmed, while another, being fiery, rejoices in the night. As if it weren't always day for them, I mean light! Or as if the other could be overtaken by night when it is far above the earth's shadow! And that the moon, when full, is good in conjunction with a particular planet, but bad when waning: it would be the reverse, if we are to grant this at all. For when it is full toward us, it would be unlit on its other hemisphere, toward that planet [the one] above it; and when it is waning for us, it would be full for that one. So it ought to produce the opposite effects when it is waning, since then it looks at that planet with its light. To the moon itself, whatever its state, it would make no difference, since half of it is always lit. To the other planet it

4 Trine, square and opposition are astrological "aspects," angles between two planets of 120°, 90° and 180°.

5 Each planet has its "houses," zodiac signs assigned to it, in which it is held to be especially powerful.

might perhaps make a difference, by warming it, as they say. But it would be warmed if the moon were unlit toward us; so if it is good for the other planet when it is unlit, that is because it is full toward it.

The dark side of the moon toward us matters to things on earth; it doesn't hurt what is above. When that planet gives no help because of its distance, things seem worse; but when the moon is full, it is enough for what is below, even if that planet is far off. And in relation to the fiery planet, the moon seemed to be good when it is dark toward us; for that planet's own influence is enough by itself, since it is fierier than what is turned toward it. The bodies of the ensouled beings that travel up there are hotter, some more and some less than others, but none of them is cold: their place bears witness to that. The one they call Zeus is a well-tempered blend of fire, and so is the Morning Star; that is why they seem to be in accord, through their likeness. Toward the one called the Fiery, it is [agreeable] in its blend, and toward Kronos alien, because of the distance. Hermes, it seems, is indifferent toward all, since it assimilates itself to all.[6] All of them are favorable to the whole, and so they are related to one another in the way that benefits the whole, as each of the parts is seen to be in a single living being. That is above all what they are there for. Bile, for instance, serves both the whole and what is next to it: there had to be something to rouse anger, and to keep both the whole and its neighbors from running riot. In the All, too, there had to be something of this sort, something unpleasant linked to the pleasant. Some parts are eyes, but all are in sympathy through what is irrational in them; for that is how there is one thing and a single harmony. So how could these not be signs, by analogy?

2.3.6 And to suppose that Ares here, or Aphrodite, produces adulteries if they are in a certain position, as if they were satisfying through human licentiousness the needs they have for each other: how is that not deeply irrational? And who could

6 Plotinus uses the Greek names of the planets: Zeus (Jupiter), the Morning Star (Venus), the Fiery One (Mars), Kronos (Saturn), Hermes (Mercury).

accept that their seeing one another, if they see each other in a certain way, gives them pleasure, and that there is no limit to it for them? When countless myriads of living beings are being born and existing, they would always be accomplishing for each one what they have decided to give, making them rich, poor, licentious, and carrying out the activities of each of them themselves. What kind of life do they have, then? Or how is it possible for them to do so much? Then there is the idea that they wait for the risings of the signs and only then act; that the years of the rising are as many as the degrees in which each sign rises; that they count out on their fingers, as it were, when they will act, and are not allowed to before those times; and in general that sovereign control of the administration is given to no single one, but everything is given to these. As if there were not one in charge, on whom the All depends, who grants to each thing to accomplish its own work according to its nature and to carry out its own activities, each in turn being ordered together with him! This is the view of someone who dissolves the cosmos and fails to understand its nature: it has a principle and a first cause that extends to all things.[7]

THE STARS AS LETTERS

The stars signify what will happen, as parts of one living being signify one another.

2.3.7 But if the stars signify what will happen, as we say that many other things too are signs of what will happen, what would be doing the producing? And how does the order come about? For things would not be signified in an orderly way unless each of them came about in order. Let us suppose, then, that they are like letters always being written in the heavens, or written once and moving, while they also do another job as well. And let their signifying follow from this, just as in a single living being, from one principle, one could learn one thing from another part. You

7 Astrologers measured how many degrees of the celestial equator rise with each sign and converted these "rising-times" into years of a person's life.

could tell someone's character by looking at their eyes or some other part of the body, and also dangers and escapes from danger. So they are parts, and we are parts too; one part tells of another. Everything is full of signs, and the wise person is one who learns one thing from another. Many things are already known to everyone from familiarity. What, then, is the single coordination? For this is also what makes sense of reading signs from birds and the other animals from which we receive indications of particular things. All things must be bound up with one another. There is a single breathing-together not only within one well-knit individual thing, but much more, and earlier, in the All. One principle [must] make a single living being of many living beings, one out of all; and just as in each single being the parts have each received one particular job, so too in the All each thing must have its own jobs, and more so than these, inasmuch as they are not only parts but also wholes, and greater ones. So each thing proceeds from one [principle], doing its own work, but one contributes to another, since none is cut off from the whole. Each acts on others and is acted on by them, and something else again comes along and hurts or pleases it. But they don't proceed at random or by chance; for something else results from these, and something else again follows in sequence according to nature.

2.3.8 Soul too sets out to do its own work (for soul makes all things, having the status of a principle), whether it goes straight on or is thrown into confusion; and justice follows on what is done in the All, if the All is not to be dissolved. It always remains, the whole being kept upright by the order and power of what rules it. The stars cooperate too, since they are no small parts of heaven: they are splendid contributors both to the whole and to signifying. They signify, then, everything in the perceptible world, but they produce other things, those they evidently produce. We, for our part, do the works of soul according to nature as long as we have not slipped in the multiplicity of the All; when we slip, our penalty is both the slip itself and a worse lot afterward. Wealth and poverty, then, come from

chance conjunctions of external things. But virtues and vices: [how?] Virtues come from what is original in the soul, vices from the soul's chance encounter with external things. But these matters have been discussed elsewhere.

2.3.9 Now let us recall the spindle. For the ancients, the Fates spin on it; for Plato, the spindle is the wandering and the fixed parts of the heavens' revolution, and the Fates and Necessity, their mother, turn it and spin at the birth of each, and through her what is born comes into being. In the *Timaeus*, the god who made the cosmos gives the principle of the soul, while the gods that move in the heavens give the terrible and necessary affections, angers and desires, pleasures and pains in turn, and another kind of soul, from which these affections come. These statements bind us to the stars, since we get soul from them, and they subject us to necessity when we come here. So our characters come from them, and our actions and affections follow our characters, from a disposition that is open to affection. What, then, is left that is *we*?[8] Or rather: what we truly are, we to whom nature has given the power to master our affections. For even so, amid these evils hemmed in by the body's [nature], god has given us "virtue that has no master." It isn't when we are at peace that we need virtue, but when there is danger of being among evils if virtue is not present. That is why we must flee from here and separate ourselves from what has been added to us, and not be the compound, an ensouled body, in which the nature of body, having received some trace of soul, has the upper hand, so that the shared life belongs more to the body; for everything that belongs to this life is bodily.[9]

To the other soul, the one outside, belong the movement upward, the beautiful and the divine, over which no one has mastery. Either one makes use of it, so as to be that and to live according to it, withdrawn; or, bereft of this soul, one lives under destiny, and then the stars not only signify for him, but he

8 Plotinus draws on the myth of Er in Plato's *Republic* (616c–617d) and on the *Timaeus* (41c–42e, 69c–d).

9 "Virtue has no master" quotes Plato, *Republic* 617e.

himself becomes, as it were, a part, and follows along with the whole of which he is a part. For each of us is double: one is the compound of the two, the other is himself. So too the whole cosmos: one is what is made of body and a soul bound to body; the other is the Soul of the All, which is not in body but shines its traces into the soul that is in body. And the sun and the other heavenly bodies are double in the same way. To the other, pure soul they give nothing bad. What comes from them to the All, insofar as they are parts of the All and an ensouled body, the body gives, as part to part, while the choice of the star, and of its true soul, looks toward the best. Other things follow on it, or rather not on it but on what surrounds it, as heat comes from fire into the whole, and as something may pass from one soul into another soul akin to it. The troublesome things come from the mixture. For the nature of this All is indeed mixed, and if you were to separate from it its separate soul, what remains is not great. With that soul counted in, it is a god; the rest, he says, is "a great spirit," and the affections in it are the affections of spirits.[10]

2.3.10 If this is so, we must now grant the signifying. As for producing, we must not grant it altogether, nor to the stars as wholes, but only what are affections of the All, and as much as belongs to the rest of them. We must grant that soul, even before it comes into birth, arrives bringing something of its own; for it would not come into a body unless it had a considerable capacity for being affected. We must also grant that it meets with its fortunes as it enters, because it enters in accordance with the revolution itself. And we must grant that the revolution itself produces, cooperating and filling out, on its own part, what the All must accomplish, each of the parts within it having taken up its position.

2.3.11 We must also keep this in mind: what comes from them does not arrive in its recipients in the state in which it left them. If it is fire, it is faint here. If it was a disposition toward affection,

10 Plotinus adapts Plato, *Symposium* 202d–e, where Love is called "a great spirit," between gods and mortals.

it became weak in the recipient and produced a not very fine kind of loving. Spiritedness, when it was not received in the right measure to become courage, produced irascibility or lack of spirit. What belongs to honor in love ⟨...⟩ and is concerned with the beautiful produced a craving for things that seem beautiful. And an emanation of intellect produced cunning; for cunning wants to be intellect, but cannot get what it is after. So each of these becomes bad in us, though up there they are not such. For what comes, though it is not those things themselves, does not remain as it came either, since it is mixed with bodies, with matter and with one another.

2.3.12 Moreover, what comes from them falls together into one, and each thing that comes into being receives something from this blend, so that, being what it is, it also becomes of a certain quality. For it doesn't make the horse; it gives something to the horse. Horse comes from horse, and human being from human being. The sun cooperates in the shaping, but the human being comes from the rational principle of the human being. Still, external things sometimes harm or help. The child is like its father, but often it turns out better, and sometimes worse. Yet they don't make it depart from what underlies it; though sometimes matter prevails rather than nature, so that the product is not complete, because the form has been defeated.

WHAT THE HEAVENS DO AND DO NOT CAUSE

Soul governs the All by rational principle, and the stars contribute only to some things.

2.3.13 From here on, then, since some things come from the revolution and others do not, we must distinguish and separate them, and say where each comes from in general. The starting point is this. Soul administers this All according to rational principle, just as, in each living being, there is the principle within it from which each of the living being's parts is shaped and coordinated with the whole of which they are parts. In the whole, all things are present; in the parts, only as much as each

part is. What comes to them from outside is in some cases contrary to what nature wants, in others suited to it. But in relation to the whole, all things are entirely coordinated, since they are its parts: they have received the nature they have, and yet by their own impulse they help to complete the whole life of the All. The soulless things in it, then, are entirely instruments, pushed from outside, as it were, into acting. Of the ensouled things, some have indeterminate motion, like horses under a chariot before the driver has marked out their course, since they are steered by the whip. The nature of a rational living being has its driver within itself; and when it has a knowledgeable one, it goes straight ahead and not, as so often, at random. Both are inside the All and contribute to the whole. The greater among them and those of higher worth do many great things and contribute to the life of the whole, having a role that is more active than passive. Others are continually acted upon, having little power to act. And those in between are acted upon by others, but do many things, and in many cases have in themselves a principle of actions and makings.

And the All becomes a complete life, with the best doing the best things, insofar as the best is in each. This must be coordinated with what leads, like soldiers with their general: these are the ones said to "follow Zeus" as he sets out for the intelligible nature. Those that make use of a lesser nature are the secondary parts of the All, like the secondary parts of soul in us; and the others are in proportion to the parts in us. For in us too, not everything is equal.[11] All, then, are living beings according to the rational principle of the All as a whole, both all those in the heavens and the others that have been divided off within the whole. And none of the parts, however great, has the power to alter the rational principles or what comes to be according to them. It can produce change in either direction, for worse or for better; but it cannot make a thing depart from its own nature. It makes things worse either by giving weakness to the body; or by

11 "Follow Zeus" alludes to the procession of gods and souls in Plato, *Phaedrus* 246e–247a.

becoming, incidentally, a cause of badness to the soul that is in sympathy with it and has been given by it to what is below; or by making a badly composed body hinder the activity directed into it, by reason of the body itself. It is like a lyre not tuned well enough to take the precision [of] harmony needed to make its notes musical.

2.3.14 What about poverty and wealth, reputation and office? Or rather: if the wealth comes from one's fathers, the stars signified the rich man, just as they merely indicated that the person born of such parents is well-born, because of his distinguished lineage. If it comes from prowess, and the body has cooperated, then those who produced the body's strength would contribute: first the parents, and then, if place supplied [something], the heavens and the earth. If the virtue is without body, then most must be credited to it alone, together with whatever divine contributions came from those who rewarded it. If those who gave were good, the cause must in this way too be traced back to virtue; if they were bad but gave justly, this has happened because the best part of them was active. If the man who got rich is wicked, his wickedness comes first, along with whatever caused it; and those who gave to him must be counted in as having likewise become joint causes. If it comes from labor, for example from farming, it goes back to the farmer, [but] with the environment as a cooperating factor. If he found treasure, something from the All coincided; and if so, it is signified, since all things certainly follow on one another; that is why it is certainly [signified]. If someone has lost his wealth: if it was taken from him, it goes back to the one who took it, and him to his own principle; if it was lost at sea, [to] the accidents. Distinction is either just or not. If just, [to] his deeds and to the better part in those who think well of him; if not just, to the injustice of those who honor him. The same account holds for office: it is held either fittingly or not. The first case goes back to the better element in those who chose him; the other to the man himself, who brought it off by organizing his associates or in some other way. As for marriages, it is either choice or chance and coincidence arising

from things as a whole. The births of children follow from these. Either the child has been shaped according to its rational principle, with nothing hindering, or it has turned out worse because some obstacle arose within: either due to the mother herself, or because the environment was so disposed as to be ill-suited to this pregnancy.

2.3.15 Plato gives lots and choices before the turning of the spindle, and afterward gives those in the spindle as cooperators, since they help in every way to bring about what was chosen; the guardian spirit too cooperates in fulfilling the choices. But what are the lots? Or rather: [the fact of] being born when the All was in the state it was in when they entered the body; entering this particular body, of these parents; being born in such-and-such places; in short, as we said, the external circumstances. That all these happen together and are, as it were, spun together is shown, for each individual and for the whole, through one of the so-called Fates; Lachesis brings the lots; and Atropos must necessarily bring on what has thus coincided.[12] Of human beings, some are, as it were, bewitched by what comes from the whole and from external things, and are little or nothing themselves. Others master these and rise above them, with their head, so to speak, toward the region above and outside, and preserve the best of the soul and [the] original part of the soul's being. For we must not think that soul is the kind of thing whose nature is whatever it is affected by from outside, so that it alone of all things has no nature of its own. Rather, far more than other things, since it has the status of a principle, it must have many powers of its own for its natural activities. For it is not possible for something that is a being not to possess, together with its being, desires and actions and a bent toward the good. The compound, then, takes its character from its compound nature and has works of a corresponding kind. But if a soul separates itself, its activities are separate and its own, and it

12 In the myth of Er the three Fates are Lachesis, who allots, Clotho, who spins (the "one" meant here), and Atropos, who makes the spinning irreversible.

doesn't count the body's affections as its own, since it now sees that one thing is one thing and the other is another.

2.3.16 But what is mixed and what is not, what is separable and what inseparable when soul is in body, and in general what the living being is: we must investigate this later, from another starting point, for not everyone has held the same opinion about it. For now, let us say further in what sense we said that Soul administers the All according to rational principle. Does it make each thing as if in a straight line, a human being, then a horse and another animal, and wild beasts too, but fire and earth first; and then, seeing these collide and destroy or else benefit one another, does it merely see the interweaving that results from them and the consequences that keep coming about, contributing nothing further to what follows, except to produce once more, from the beginning, the births of animals and leave them to what they suffer from one another? Or do we say it is the cause of what happens in this way too, because what came from it produces what follows? Or rather: the rational principle includes this thing's suffering or doing something, not at random or by chance, nor just because these things happen, but necessarily so. Is it, then, that the rational principles make these things? Or rather: the rational principles exist, not as making but as knowing; or better, the soul that has the generative rational principles knows what results from all its works. For when the same things coincide and the same circumstances surround them, the same results must certainly be brought about; and soul, taking these over or foreseeing them, then completes and links together what follows upon them. So there are antecedents and consequents in every case, and in turn what follows on these becomes antecedent, as coming from what is present. Hence, perhaps, what follows is always worse. Men, for instance, were different long ago and are different now, since through the distance between and what is always necessary, the rational principles give way to the affections of matter.

So soul, observing things that are always different, some one way and some another, and following the affections of its own

works, has a life of that kind. It is never free of concern for its work, never able to put a finishing touch on what it has made and contrive once and for all how it will be in good shape forever. Rather, like a farmer who has sown or planted, it is always setting right whatever rainy winters or long frosts or squalls of wind have damaged. But if this is absurd, then we must say that destruction and the works of vice are already known, or even contained, in the rational principles. But if so, we shall be saying that the rational principles make vices too; and yet in the arts and their principles there is no error, nor [what is] contrary to the art, nor the destruction of what accords with the art. But here someone will say that there is nothing contrary to nature and nothing bad for the whole. Still, he will grant that there is a worse and a better. What, then, if the worse too cooperates with the whole, and not everything ought to be fine? For opposites also contribute, and there is no cosmos without them; and it is the same with individual living beings. The better things the rational principle compels and shapes; those that are not such lie potentially in the rational principles and actually in what has come to be. Soul is no longer able to make anything or to stir the principles, since matter, through the shaking that comes from the antecedent principles, now makes its own contribution, the worse things, though it is mastered no less toward the better. So there is one thing out of all, as things come to be differently in each of the two ways, and differently again in the rational principles.

2.3.17 Are these rational principles in soul thoughts? But then how will it make things according to thoughts? For the rational principle makes in matter [naturally], and what makes naturally is not thinking or seeing but a power that changes matter, not knowing but only acting, like an imprint and a shape in water, a circle for instance, when something else has given the impulse for this making. If so, the ruling part of soul will make by changing the soul that is in matter and generative. Will it change it, then, by reasoning? But if by reasoning, it will refer to something. To something else, or to what is in itself? But [if] to what

is in itself, there is no need of reasoning. For it isn't reasoning that will do the changing, but what in it holds the rational principles; this is more powerful and able to make within soul. So it makes according to Forms. It must, then, give them having itself received them from Intellect. Intellect gives to the Soul of the All, and Soul, the one after Intellect, gives from itself to the one after it, illuminating and imprinting it; and that one, as if under orders, now makes. It makes some things without hindrance, others hindered. Since it has received a power to make and has been filled with rational principles that are not the first ones, it will not only make according to what it received, but something might also come from itself, and this is plainly worse. A living being, yes, but a more imperfect one, discontented with its own life, as being the worst, ill-tempered and savage, made from a worse matter, a sort of sediment of what came before, bitter and making things bitter. And these too it will contribute, on its own part, to the whole.

2.3.18 Are the evils in the All necessary, then, because they follow on what comes before? Or rather because, if they did not exist, the All would be incomplete. For many of them, or even all, provide some use to the whole, venomous creatures for instance, though in most cases we fail to see why. Even vice itself has many uses and produces many fine things, all artistic beauty for example, and it rouses us to understanding and does not let us sleep in security. If this is rightly said, then the Soul of the All must contemplate the best, always striving toward the intelligible nature and god; and as it is being filled and has been filled, brimming over, so to speak, its image that comes from it, its last part toward what is below, is what does the making. This, then, is the last maker. Above it is the part of soul that is first filled from Intellect; and over all is Intellect the craftsman, who gives to the soul after him what has its traces in the third. So this cosmos is rightly called an image always being imaged: the first and the second stand still, and the third stands still too, but is moved in matter and incidentally. For as long as Intellect and Soul exist, the rational principles will flow into this kind of soul,

just as, as long as the sun exists, all the light that comes from it will flow.[13]

13 The cosmos as an "image" of an eternal model comes from Plato's *Timaeus* (29b, 37d).

II.4 On the Two Kinds of Matter

Περὶ τῶν δύο ὑλῶν
Plotinus defends a formless, bodiless matter beneath sensible things and an intelligible matter in the world above.
no. 12 in order of writing

2.4.1 Those who say that what is called matter is a substrate and a receptacle of forms all give this common account of it, all who have arrived at a conception of such a nature; up to this point they travel the same road. But what this underlying nature is, how it is receptive and of what: here, as they inquire further, they part company. Some hold that only bodies are beings and that substance is in them. They say that matter is one, that it underlies the elements and is itself substance, while everything else is like affections of it, and the elements too are matter in a certain state. They even dare to bring it as far as the gods, and finally to make god himself [the] matter in a certain state. They also give it body, calling it body without quality, and magnitude too.[1] Others say it is incorporeal, and some of these say it is not one. They too hold that this matter, the one the former speak of, underlies bodies; but there is another, prior one in the intelligible world, underlying the Forms there and the incorporeal substances.

2.4.2 So we must first inquire about this one: whether it exists, what it is, and how it exists. If matter must be something indefinite and shapeless, and nothing indefinite or shapeless is found among the things there, which are the best, then there would be

1 This is the Stoic view: only bodies exist, and god is matter in a certain state.

no matter there. And if each of them is simple, there would be no need of matter to make a compound of it and something else. Things that come into being and are made out of one another need matter (it was in their case that the matter of perceptible things was conceived), but things that do not come into being do not. And where has it come from, and how did it come to exist? If it came into being, then it was produced by something; if it is eternal, there are several principles and the first things are there by chance. And if form comes to it, the compound will be body; so there will be body there too.

2.4.3 First, then, we must say that the indefinite is not to be despised everywhere, nor anything that is shapeless in its own concept, if it is going to offer itself to what comes before it and to the best. Soul, for instance, is like this in relation to Intellect and rational principle: it is shaped by them and brought to a better form. And in the intelligible world the compound is of another kind, not like bodies; for rational principles too are compound, and by their activity they make compound the nature that is active toward form. And if it is active toward something else and from something else, all the more so. The matter of things that come into being always takes on one form after another; that of eternal things is the same and always has the same form. Perhaps the matter here is the reverse. For here everything is in turn, and only one at a time. That is why nothing endures, one thing pushing out another, and why it is not always the same. There, all things are together at once; so it has nothing to change into, since it already has everything. So the matter There is never shapeless, since the matter here isn't either; but each has shape in a different way. Whether it is eternal or came into being will be clear once we grasp what it is.

2.4.4 Let our argument proceed, assuming for now that the Forms exist; this has been shown elsewhere. If, then, the Forms are many, there must be something common in them, and also something distinctive, by which one differs from another. This distinctive feature, the separating difference, is its own shape. And if there is shape, there is also what is shaped, with which

the difference is concerned. There is, then, also matter, which receives the shape, and always some substrate. Further, if there is an intelligible world there, and this cosmos is an imitation of it, and this one is compound and made of matter, there must be matter there too. Or how will you call it a world without looking to its form? And how will you have form without grasping what the form is on? For while it is altogether partless in every respect, it is still divisible in some way. If the parts are torn apart from one another, cutting and tearing apart are an affection of matter, since it is matter that is cut. But if, being many, it is undivided, then the many, being in one, are in matter, as its shapes. For think of this one thing, which is many, as variegated and many-shaped. So before it was variegated, it was shapeless. For if with your intellect you take away the variety, the shapes, the rational principles and the thoughts, what is before these is shapeless and indefinite, and none of the things that are on it and in it.

2.4.5 But if, because it always has these and has them together, the two are one and there is no matter there, then there will be no matter of bodies here either; for it is never without shape but always a whole body, though compound all the same. And intellect finds the doubleness. It divides until it [should] reach something simple that can no longer be analyzed; and as long as it can, it advances into the thing's depth. The depth of each thing is matter. That is why all matter is dark: because the light is rational principle, and intellect is rational principle. So intellect, seeing the rational principle in each thing, takes what is below it to be dark, as lying beneath the light, just as an eye, which is light-like, casting itself toward the light and the colors, which are lights, says that what lies beneath the colors is dark and material (hidden by the colors). Yet the darkness in intelligibles and that in perceptibles are different, and the matter differs as much as the form laid upon each differs. The divine matter, when it receives what defines it, has a defined and intellectual life of its own; the other becomes something defined, but not living or thinking: a decorated corpse. The shape is an image, and

so the substrate is an image too. There the shape is true, and so is the substrate.

So those who say that matter is substance would have to be taken as speaking correctly if they were talking about that matter. For the substrate there is substance; or rather, conceived together with what is upon it, and as a whole illuminated, it is substance. Whether the intelligible matter is eternal must be investigated in the same way as one would investigate the Forms. They are generated, in that they have a principle, but ungenerated, because they do not have their principle in time but always from something else, not as always coming into being, like the cosmos [here], but as always being, like the cosmos there. For otherness there is eternal too, and it is what makes matter; for this is the principle of matter, this and the first motion. That is why motion too was called otherness: because motion and otherness sprang out together. Both the motion and the otherness that come from the First are indefinite and need it in order to be defined; and they are defined when they turn back toward it. Before that, otherness too is indefinite and not yet good, but unilluminated by it. For if the light comes from it, then what receives the light has no true light before it receives it, but has it as something other, since the light comes from something else. So much for the matter in the intelligibles: more has been laid bare here than was fitting.[2]

THE MATTER OF BODIES

The transformation of elements shows a substrate, which is neither body, quality nor magnitude.

2.4.6 About the receptacle of bodies, let this be said. That there must be some substrate for bodies, something other than they are, is shown by the transformation of the elements into one another. For the destruction of what changes is not total, or else some substance will perish into non-being; nor again has what

2 Motion and otherness are two of the five "greatest kinds" of Plato's *Sophist* (254d–255e), with being, rest and sameness.

comes into being come into being out of what is absolutely nonbeing. There is a change of form out of another form, and what has received the form of what came into being and has lost the other remains. This, then, shows it, and so does destruction in general; for destruction is of a compound. If so, each thing is made of matter and form. Induction also testifies to it, showing that what is destroyed is compound; and so does analysis. If the bowl is resolved into gold, for example, and the gold into water, then water too, when it is destroyed, requires something analogous. The elements must be either form, or prime matter, or made of matter and form. They can't be form, for how, without matter, could they have bulk and magnitude? Nor are they prime matter, since they are destroyed. So they are made of matter and form. The form accounts for quality and shape, matter for the substrate, which is indefinite because it is not form.

2.4.7 Empedocles, who sets the elements in matter, has their destruction testifying against him. Anaxagoras makes the mixture matter, and says it has not a fitness for all things but all things in actuality; so he does away with the Intellect he introduces, since he doesn't make it the giver of shape and form, nor prior to matter, but simultaneous with it. But simultaneity is impossible. For if the mixture participates in being, being is prior; and if both this and that are beings, there will be need of another, third thing over them. If, then, the craftsman must be prior, why did the forms have to be in matter in tiny pieces, and then Intellect separate them out with endless labor, when it could have extended quality and shape over the whole of matter, since it has no quality? And how is the claim that everything is in everything not impossible? As for the one who posited the unlimited, let him tell us what on earth this is.[3] If it is unlimited in the sense of untraversable, it is clear that there is no such thing among beings, neither the unlimited itself nor the unlimited as an accident in another nature, some body. Not the unlim-

3 Empedocles posited four elements; Anaxagoras held that all things were at first mixed together until Intellect separated them out. "The one who posited the unlimited" is Anaximander.

ited itself, because its part too would necessarily be unlimited; not as an accident, because that to which it belongs as an accident would not be unlimited in itself, nor simple, nor matter. Nor will atoms hold the position of matter, since they don't exist at all: every body is divisible at every point. Moreover, the continuity of bodies and their fluidity are impossible without intellect and soul in each case, and soul cannot be made of atoms; nor is it possible to fashion out of atoms a nature other than the atoms. Besides, no craftsman will make anything out of a material that is not continuous. Countless things could be said, and have been said, against this hypothesis; so it is superfluous to dwell on it.

2.4.8 What, then, is this matter that is called one, continuous and without quality? That it is not body, if it is without quality, is clear; otherwise it will have quality. When we say that it is the matter of all perceptible things, and not matter for some while being form in relation to others (as clay is matter for the potter, but not matter without qualification), when we say it is matter not in this way but in relation to everything, we would attach to it none of the things seen in perceptible things. If so, then besides the other qualities, such as colors, heat and cold, it has neither lightness nor weight; it is not dense, not rare; it has no shape either. Nor, then, does it have magnitude. For to be magnitude is one thing and to be something that has magnitude another; to be shape is one thing and to be something shaped another. It must not be compound, but simple and one thing by its own nature; for in this way it is bare of everything. And the one who gives it shape will give the shape as something other than it, and magnitude, and everything, bringing them, as it were, from the things that are. Or else he will be a slave to its magnitude and will make things not as large as he wants but as large as matter wants; and to have his will run in step with its magnitude is a fiction. But if the maker is prior to matter, matter will be in every respect as the maker wants, and easily led into everything, and so into magnitude too. If it had magnitude, it would necessarily also have shape, and so it would be still

harder to work. So form comes upon it, bringing everything onto it; and every form has magnitude as well, and whatever size it is, it has with the rational principle and by its agency. That is why in each kind the quantity is defined together with the form: one for a human being, another for a bird, and another for this particular sort of bird. It is [not] more remarkable [, though,] to bring a different quantity onto matter than to add quality to it; nor is quality a rational principle while quantity, which is form, measure and number, is not.

2.4.9 How, then, will anyone grasp something among the things that are which has no magnitude? Or rather: anything at all that is not the same as quantity, for being and quantity are certainly not the same. Many other things, too, are different from quantity. In general, every incorporeal nature must be put down as without quantity, and matter too is incorporeal. Besides, quantity itself is not a quantity; what partakes of it is. So from this too it is clear that quantity is a form. Something became white, then, by the presence of whiteness, while what produced the white color in an animal, and its other varied colors, was not a varied color but, if you like, a varied rational principle. In the same way, what produces a thing of such-and-such a size is not of such-and-such a size. It is the how-large itself, or [the] largeness, or the rational principle, that produces it. Does largeness, then, come to matter and unroll it into magnitude? Not at all, for matter was not rolled up small beforehand. Largeness gave it magnitude, which was not there before, just as it gave it quality, which was not there before.

2.4.10 What, then, am I to think of as sizeless in matter? And what will you think of as in any way without quality? What is the thinking here, and what is the approach of discursive thought? Or rather: indefiniteness. For if like is known by like, the indefinite too is known by the indefinite. An account of the indefinite might well be definite, but the approach to it is indefinite. Each thing is known by reason and thinking. Here, though, reason says what it does say about matter, while what would like to be thinking is not thinking but, as it were, a lack of thought. If so,

the image we have of matter would be spurious and not genuine, put together from one component that is not true and the other, reason. And perhaps it was with this in view that Plato said matter is grasped "by a kind of illegitimate reasoning." What, then, is this indefiniteness of the soul? Is it complete ignorance, an absence?[4] Or rather, the indefinite lies in a kind of affirmation. For the eye, darkness is the matter of every color it cannot see. In the same way the soul, when it has taken away everything that lies on sensible things like a kind of light, and has nothing left to define, becomes like sight in the dark, which then becomes in a way the same as what it, as it were, sees. Does it see, then?

Or rather, it sees in the way one sees shapelessness, colorlessness, something without light, and moreover something that has no magnitude; otherwise it would already be giving it form. When the soul thinks nothing, then, isn't this the same experience? Or rather no. When it [thinks] nothing, it says nothing, or better, it experiences nothing. But when it thinks matter, it undergoes an experience that is like an impression of the shapeless. For even when it thinks things that have been shaped and given magnitude, it thinks them as composites, as colored and in general qualified. So it thinks the whole, the two together. The thinking or perception of what lies on the surface is clear; that of the substrate, the shapeless, is faint, for it is not a form. So the soul grasps something in the whole, the composite, along with what lies on it. When it has analyzed those features and separated them off, it thinks what reason leaves behind: dimly, a dim thing; darkly, a dark thing; and it thinks it without thinking. And since matter itself did not stay shapeless either, but is shaped in things, the soul too immediately imposed on it the form of things. It is pained at the indefinite, as if afraid of being outside the things that are, and it cannot bear to stand for long in nonbeing.

2.4.11 Is something else still needed for the constitution of bodies, beyond magnitude and all the qualities? Yes: something that

will receive them all. A bulk, then? But if a bulk, surely a magnitude; and if it is sizeless, it has no room in which to receive anything. And being sizeless, what would it contribute, if it contributes neither to form and quality nor to extension and magnitude, which seem to come into bodies from matter, wherever matter is? In general, actions, productions, times and motions are among the things that are without having any underlying matter in them. Just so, the primary bodies need not have matter either. Each of them is wholly what it is, and is more varied because it is constituted by a mixture of several forms. So this sizeless matter is an empty name. First, then, what receives anything at all need not be a bulk, unless magnitude is already present to it. The soul, after all, receives everything and holds everything all together; if magnitude were an attribute of the soul, it would hold each thing in magnitude. Matter takes what it receives in extension precisely because it is receptive of extension. In the same way, animals and plants, as they grow larger, have their quality drawn out alongside their quantity, and when the quantity shrinks, the quality would shrink with it.

Someone may demand a magnitude in the case of matter too, because in such cases some magnitude already exists as a substrate for what shapes it. He is wrong. For here the matter is not matter simply but the matter of this particular thing, whereas matter simply must get even this from something else. So what is to receive form need not be a bulk. Rather, at the same time as it becomes a bulk, it receives the rest of quality too. It has an image of bulk, as a sort of first aptitude for it—but an empty bulk. That is why some have said matter is the same as the void. I say "an image of bulk" because the soul too, having nothing to define when it associates with matter, pours itself out into indefiniteness, neither drawing a boundary around it nor able to come to a point; for that would already be defining. That is why matter should not be called large on its own, nor small either, but large-and-small. It is a bulk in this way, and sizeless in this

4 Plato, *Timaeus* 52b, where the receptacle of becoming is said to be grasped "by a kind of illegitimate reasoning."

way: because it is the matter of bulk, and, contracting from the large to the small and from the small to the large, it runs through, as it were, a bulk. Its indefiniteness is a bulk of this sort, a receptacle of magnitude in itself; in imagination it is a bulk in the other way. Of the other sizeless things, those that are forms are each defined, so that there is no notion of bulk about them at all. But matter is indefinite and not yet stable of itself; it is carried this way and that toward every form and is pliant in every direction. It becomes many through being led into all things and coming to be, and in this way it has acquired the nature of bulk.[5]

2.4.12 Magnitudes, then, do contribute to bodies, for the forms of bodies are in magnitudes. But these forms would not have come to be around magnitude itself, but around what has been given magnitude. If they were around magnitude and not around matter, they would equally be sizeless and without real existence, or they would be only rational principles—and these belong to soul—and there would be no bodies. So here the many must be around some one thing; this one thing has been given magnitude; and this is different from magnitude. Indeed, even now, things that are mixed come together into one by having matter, and need nothing else to be around, because each of the things mixed comes bringing its own matter. All the same, they do need some one thing to receive them, a vessel or a place. But place comes after matter and bodies, so that bodies would need matter first. Nor, because productions and actions are without matter, are bodies therefore without matter too. Bodies are composite; actions are not. And when agents act, matter provides them with the substrate, remaining in them, [but] it does not give itself over into the acting; nor is that what agents are looking for.

Nor does one action change into another, in which case actions too would have matter. It is the agent who changes from one action to another, so that he himself is the matter for his

5 "Great and small" is Plato's name, as Aristotle reports it (*Metaphysics* I.6), for the indefinite principle that functions as matter.

actions. Matter, then, is necessary both to quality and to magnitude, and so to bodies as well. It is not an empty name; it is a substrate, even if it is invisible and sizeless. Otherwise, by the same argument, we shall deny qualities and magnitude too, for each of these, taken by itself alone, might be said to be nothing. But if these exist, though each of them dimly, all the more would [the] matter exist, even if it is not clear, since it is not grasped by the senses. Not by the eyes, for it is colorless; not by hearing, for it is not a sound; it has no flavors, so neither nostrils nor tongue [grasp it]. By touch, then? No, since it is not a body either. Touch is of body, because it is of dense or rare, soft or hard, wet or dry, and none of these belongs to matter. It is grasped by a reasoning that does not come from intellect but is empty—which is why, as was said, it is spurious. Nor does corporeality belong to it. [For] if corporeality is a rational principle, it is different from matter, and matter is something else. And if it has already done its work and been, as it were, blended, the result would plainly be body and not matter alone.

2.4.13 If the substrate is a quality common to each of the elements, we must first be told what this quality is. Then, how will a quality be a substrate? How will something qualified be observed in what is sizeless, when it has neither matter nor magnitude? Again, if the quality is definite, how is it matter? And if it is something indefinite, it is not a quality but the substrate, the matter we are looking for. What, then, prevents matter from being without quality, in that its own nature shares in none of the other qualities, and yet qualified by this very fact of sharing in none—having some particular character entirely its own, which distinguishes it from the others, a sort of privation of them? After all, someone deprived is qualified: a blind man, for example. If, then, a privation of these qualities belongs to matter, how is it not qualified? And if privation in general belongs to it, all the more so—if privation is indeed something qualified. But whoever says this—what else is he doing but making everything qualified, and qualities? So quantity would be a quality, and substance too. If matter is qualified, a quality is

present to it. But it is ridiculous to make what is other than the qualified, and not qualified, qualified. Suppose it is qualified because it is other. If it is otherness itself, even so it is not qualified, since quality itself is not qualified either. And if it is merely other, it is other not by itself but by otherness, just as a thing is the same by sameness. Nor, then, is privation a quality or something qualified. It is an absence of quality or of something else, as soundlessness is an absence of sound or of anything else. For privation is a removal, while the qualified lies in affirmation. Matter's particular character is not a shape either, for not being qualified means not having any form. It is absurd, then, to call it qualified because it is not qualified; it is like saying it has magnitude by the very fact that it is sizeless. Its particular character, then, is nothing other than what it is. The character is not added on to it; it lies rather in its relation to other things, in its being other than they. The other things are not only other; each is also something, as a form. Matter, though, might properly be called only "other"—or perhaps "others," so that you don't define it with the singular "other" but indicate its indefiniteness with the plural.

MATTER AS PRIVATION AND THE UNLIMITED

Matter is the unlimited itself, poverty and privation, and so evil.

2.4.14 But we must investigate this: is matter privation, or does privation belong to it? Whoever says the two are one in substrate but two in account ought, in fairness, to have taught us which account must be given of each: an account of matter that defines it without bringing in privation at all, and likewise one of privation. For either neither is in the account of the other, or each is in the other's, or only one of them, whichever it is, is in the other's. If each is separate and neither requires the other, they will be two, and matter will be other than privation, even if privation is an attribute of it. And in the account of the one, the other must not be seen even potentially. But if they are like the snub nose and snubness, then too each is double, and they are

two.[6] If they are like fire and heat—heat being in the fire, while fire is not included in heat—and matter is privation in the way fire is hot, then privation will be a sort of form of matter, and the substrate, which is what matter must be, will be something else. So even in this way they are not one. Are they, then, one in substrate and two in account in this sense: that privation signifies not that something is present but that it is not, privation being a sort of negation of the things that are—as if someone said "non-being," for the negation adds nothing but says that something is not? Is privation, then, non-being in this sense? If it is non-being in the sense that it is not being but some other being, the accounts are still two: one touches the substrate, while that of privation shows its relation to other things. Or rather, the account of matter refers to other things, and so does that of the substrate; while the account of privation, if it shows matter's indefiniteness, might perhaps itself touch matter. Either way, though, they are one in substrate and two in account. But if, for matter, to be indefinite, to be unlimited and to be without quality are the same, how can the accounts still be two?

2.4.15 So we must investigate again whether the unlimited and the indefinite belong as an attribute to some other nature, how they are an attribute, and whether privation is an attribute. Now all that is number and rational principle lies outside unlimitedness. For these are limits and orders, and other things too get their ordered state from them. What they order is not what is already ordered, nor order itself; what is ordered is different from what orders, and what orders is limit, boundary and rational principle. If so, what is ordered and bounded must be the unlimited. Matter is what is ordered, and so is whatever is not matter in so far as it participates in matter or plays the role of matter. So matter must be the unlimited—not unlimited incidentally, as though the unlimited were an attribute of it. For, first, what is an attribute of something must be a rational principle, and the unlimited is not a rational principle. Second, to what

6 Aristotle (*Physics* I.7–9) held that matter and privation are one in substrate but two in account.

sort of being will the unlimited be an attribute? To limit and to what is limited. But matter is neither limited nor a limit. Besides, if the unlimited came to what is limited, it would destroy its nature. So the unlimited is not an attribute of matter: matter itself is the unlimited.

Even in the intelligible world matter is the unlimited, and it would be generated from the unlimitedness, or power, or everlastingness of the One—not that there is unlimitedness in the One; it produces it. How, then, is the unlimited both there and here? Or rather, the unlimited too is twofold. And what is the difference? That of archetype and image. Is the unlimited here less unlimited, then? Or rather more: the more it is an image that has fled true being, the more unlimited it is. For unlimitedness is greater in what is less defined, since what is less in the good is more in the bad. So the unlimited there, having more being, is unlimited only in a way, as an image; while the unlimited here, having less [being], is more truly unlimited, to the extent that it has fled true being and slid down into the nature of an image. Is the unlimited, then, the same as what it is to be unlimited? Or rather, where there is a rational principle and matter, each is distinct; but where there is only matter, we must either say they are the same or—which is better—that there is no "what it is to be unlimited" here at all. For that would be a rational principle, and there is none in the unlimited, if it is to be unlimited. So matter must be called unlimited of itself, by its opposition to rational principle. Just as a rational principle is a rational principle without being anything else, so too matter, opposed to rational principle by its unlimitedness, must be called unlimited without being anything else.

2.4.16 Is it, then, the same as otherness too? Or rather no, but the same as a part of otherness, the part opposed to the things that are in the strict sense, which are rational principles. That is why [the] non-being, being something in this way, is also the same as privation, if privation is opposition to the things that exist in rational principle. Won't privation be destroyed, then, when that of which it is the privation arrives? Not at all. What

receives a state is not a state but a privation; and what receives limit is not what is limited, nor the limit, but the unlimited, in so far as it is unlimited. How, then, will the limit not destroy its nature by coming to it—especially since it is not unlimited incidentally? Or rather: if it were unlimited in quantity, the limit [would] destroy it. As it is, it is not unlimited in that way; on the contrary, the limit preserves it in its being. For the limit brings what it naturally is to activity and completion, as with unsown ground when it is sown; and when the female conceives [by] the male, the female is not destroyed but rather becomes more female—that is, it becomes more what it is. Is matter, then, evil even when it has a share in good? Or rather, it is evil for this very reason, that it needed good: it did not have it. Whatever needs one thing and has another might perhaps come to be midway between good and bad, if it is somehow balanced between the two. But whatever has nothing, since it is in poverty—or rather is poverty—must be evil. For this is not poverty of wealth or of strength, but poverty of understanding, poverty of virtue, of beauty, of shape, of form, of quality. How, then, can it not be ill-formed? How can it not be wholly ugly? How can it not be wholly evil? That other matter, the matter there, is being, for what comes before it is beyond being. Here, though, what comes before matter is being. So matter itself is non-being, something other, beside the beauty of being.

II.5 On What Is Potentially and What Is Actually

Περὶ τοῦ δυνάμει καὶ ἐνεργείᾳ
Plotinus distinguishes the potential from the actual and argues that matter is forever only potential, a mere phantom of being.
no. 25 in order of writing

2.5.1 Some things are said to be potentially, others actually; and something among the things that are is also said to be actuality. We must examine, then, what the potential is and what the actual is. Is actuality the same as being actual, so that whatever is actuality is also actual? Or is each different, so that what is actual need not also be actuality? That the potential exists among sensible things is clear. Whether it exists among intelligibles too must be examined, or [whether] only the actual is there; and if the potential is there, [whether] it is forever only potential, and, if forever, whether it could never come to actuality, because time is excluded there. But first we must say what the potential is—if indeed "potentially" must not be said without qualification. For nothing can be potential without being potentially something. Bronze, for example, is potentially a statue. For if nothing were to come from it or upon it, and nothing were going to be after what it was, and [anything] could not come to be from it, it would be only what it was. But what it was was already present and not still to come. What else, then, could it have been capable of, beyond what was already present? So it would not be potential.

What is potentially, then, must already be something else, and be called potential by being able to be something more after itself—either remaining while it produces that other thing, or giving itself up to what it is capable of becoming, being itself destroyed. For bronze is potentially a statue in one way; water is potentially bronze, and air potentially fire, in another. Since this is what the potential is, might it also be called a potentiality in relation to what is to be—the bronze, say, a potentiality of the statue? Or rather, if potentiality is taken in the sense of the power to produce, not at all; for potentiality taken in the sense of producing could not be said to be potential. But if the potential is spoken of not only in relation to the actual but also in relation to actuality, then the potential [thing] would also be a potentiality. It is better and clearer, though, to relate the potential to the actual, and potentiality to actuality. The potential, then, is something like a substrate for the affections, shapes and forms that it is going to receive, which it is naturally fit, or even eager, to take on—some of them for the better, others for the worse and destructive of it—and each of which is also actually something else.

2.5.2 As for matter, we must examine whether, while being actually something else, it is potentially the things it is shaped into, or whether it is actually nothing. And in general, we must examine whether the other things we call potential become actual when they receive the form and remain themselves, or whether "actual" will be said of the statue, the actual statue simply being contrasted with the potential statue, without "actual" being predicated of the very thing of which "potentially a statue" was said. If so, it is not the potential that becomes actual; rather, out of what was earlier potential there came what is later actual. For what is actual is the composite, not the matter; the form is what lies on the matter. And this is so if a different substance comes to be, as a statue from bronze. For the statue, as the composite, is a different substance. And in the case of things that do not remain at all, it is evident that the potential was something entirely different. But when the potential gram-

marian becomes an actual grammarian, how is the potential here not the same as the actual? For Socrates potentially wise is the same as Socrates actually wise. Is the ignorant man, then, also a man of knowledge? He was, after all, potentially a man of knowledge.

Or rather, it is the man who is ignorant incidentally who is a man of knowledge. For it was not as ignorant that he was potentially knowledgeable; being ignorant was incidental to him, while his soul, being in itself suitably disposed, was the potential thing, in the very respect in which he is also knowledgeable. Does he still keep the potential, then, and is [the] potential grammarian still potential when he is already a grammarian? Or rather, nothing prevents this, but in another way: there it was potential only, while here the potentiality has its form. If, then, the potential is the substrate and the actual is the composite, the statue, what should we call the form on the bronze? Or rather, it is not absurd to call the shape and the form an actuality—the actuality by which the thing is actual and not only potential—not actuality without qualification, but the actuality of this thing. For we might perhaps more properly call something else actuality: the actuality that is the counterpart of the power which brings it about. For the potential has its actuality from something else, while for a power, what it is capable of is its own actuality, from itself: a state, for example, and the actuality said to correspond to it—courage and acting courageously. So much for that.

2.5.3 Now we must say why all this was said in advance: how "actually" is said in the intelligible world; whether each thing there, and all of them, are only actual or also actuality; and whether the potential is there too. Suppose there is no matter there, in which the potential resides; suppose nothing there is going to be what it is not already, and nothing changes into something else, or, while remaining, generates something different, or, departing from itself, lets something else be in its place. Then there would be no potential there, in the realm where [all things truly] are, among beings that have eternity, not

time. Suppose, then, someone asks those who posit matter in the intelligible world too whether there is not potentiality there as well, corresponding to the matter there. For even if matter is there in another way, still in each thing there will be one part as matter, another as form, and the composite. What will they say? Perhaps that what serves as matter there is also form, since the soul too, being a form, might be matter in relation to something else. Isn't it potential in relation to that, then? Or rather no. The form belonged to it; the form was not something for later, and it is not separated except in thought. So it has matter in this sense: it is thought of as double, while both are one nature—just as Aristotle too says that the fifth body is immaterial. But what shall we say about soul? For it is potentially a living being when it is not yet one but is going to be; it is potentially musical, and potentially all the other things it becomes without always being them. So the potential is among the intelligibles too.

Or rather, these are not potential: the soul is the potentiality for them. And how is the actual there? Is it like the statue, the composite, which is actual because each thing has taken on its form? Or rather, because each thing is a form, complete as what it is. For Intellect does not pass from potentiality, in the sense of being able to think, to the actuality of thinking—then it would need something else prior to it which did not come from potentiality—but it has everything in itself. What is potential wants something else to come to it and bring it into actuality, so that it may become something actually; but what has its everlasting state from itself, by itself, would be actual. All the first things, then, are actual, for they have what they must have, both from themselves and always. So too is soul—the soul that is not in matter but in the intelligible. And the soul in matter is actual too, in another way—the vegetative soul, for example, for this too is actually what it is. But granted that all things are actual: are they, in the same way, all actuality? Or how? If it has rightly been said that that nature is unsleeping, and life, and the best life, then the finest actualities would be there. So all things there are both actual and actuality, all are lives, and the place there is

the place of life, truly the principle and source of soul and intellect.

2.5.4 Everything else, then, that is potentially something also actually is something else, which, being already, is said to be potential in relation to something further. But as for what is called matter, which we say is potentially all beings, how can one say that it is actually any of the beings? If it were, it would not be potentially all beings. If, then, it is none of the beings, it must be non-being. How, then, could it be anything actually, when it is none of the beings? Well, it would be none of the beings that come to be on it, but nothing prevents it from being something else, if indeed not all beings are on matter. If, then, it is none of the things on it, and these are beings, it would be non-being. Surely, if it is imagined as something formless, it would not be a form? So it could not be counted among the forms either. In this way too, then, it will be non-being. Being non-being on both counts, it will be non-being many times over. If it has fled the nature of the things that truly are, and cannot even reach the things falsely said to be, since it is not even a phantom of rational principle as they are, in what kind of being could it be caught? And if it is in no kind of being, what could it be actually?

2.5.5 How, then, are we to speak of it? How is it the matter of beings? Because it is potentially. Not that, being potentially, it already is what it is going to be; its being is only an announcement of what is to come. Its being is, as it were, deferred to what it will be. The potential, then, is not something; it is potentially everything. And since it is nothing in itself, but is what it is by being matter, it is not actual either. For if it is actually something, then what it actually is will not be matter; so it will not be matter through and through, but will be like the bronze. It would, then, be non-being—not as something other than being, like motion. For motion rides on being, coming as it were from it and existing in it, whereas matter has been, as it were, cast out and wholly separated. It cannot change itself, but is always as it was from the beginning—and it was non-being. It was not actu-

ally anything from the beginning, standing apart as it does from all beings, nor did it become anything. It has not even been able to take color from the things it wanted to slip into. Remaining in relation to something else, potential with respect to what comes next, it appeared when those beings had already come to an end; and, caught by the things that came to be after it, it settled as the last of these too.

Caught by both, then, it would actually belong to neither. It has been left being only potentially, a weak and faint image, unable to take shape. So it is actually an image; so it is actually a falsehood. And this is the same as being truly a falsehood; and this is really non-being. If, then, it is actually non-being, it is more non-being, and so really non-being. It is far, then, from being actually any of the beings, since its truth lies in non-being. If, then, it must exist, it must not be actually, so that, having stepped outside true being, it may have its being in non-being. For with things that are falsely, if you take away their falsity, you have taken away whatever being they had. And with things that have their being and their reality in potentiality, if you bring in actuality, you have destroyed the cause of their existence, since their being lay in potentiality. If, then, matter is to be kept indestructible, it must be kept as matter. So it seems we must say that it is only potential, so that it may be what it is—or else these arguments must be refuted.

II.6 On Quality and Form

Περὶ ποιότητος καὶ εἴδους
Plotinus asks whether qualities that make up a substance differ from mere qualities, tracing both back to the activity of forming principles.
no. 17 in order of writing

2.6.1 Are being and substance different? Is being stripped of the others, while substance is being together with the others—motion, rest, sameness, otherness—so that these are its elements? Then the whole is substance, and of its components one is being, another motion, another something else. Motion, then, is being incidentally; is it, then, substance incidentally? Or does it complete substance? Or rather, motion too is substance, and everything there is substance. Why not here as well, then? Or rather: there, because all things are one; but here, since the images have been separated, one is one thing and another another. In the seed, likewise, all things are together and each is all, with no hand apart and head apart, while here they are separated from each other; for they are images and not true. Shall we say, then, that the qualities there are differences of substance, belonging to substance or being, differences that make substances different from one another—and that they are substances in general? Or rather, that is not absurd; the trouble concerns the qualities here. Some of them are differences of substances, like two-footed and four-footed; others, not being differences, are called qualities and only that. And yet the same thing becomes a difference that completes the substance and, in something else, not a difference, not completing the substance

but an accident. White, for example, completes the swan or white lead, but in you it is an accident. Or rather, the white in the rational principle completes and is not a quality, while the white on the surface is a quality. Or perhaps we should divide quality: one sort is substantial, being a particular character of the substance, while another is only quality, the kind by which a substance is qualified. Quality of this sort does not produce a change into substance or out of substance; in a substance that already exists and is complete, it produces a sort of disposition from outside, an addition to the thing after its substance, whether it arises in a soul or in a body.

But what if the white we see on white lead completes it? On the swan it does not complete it, for a swan could come to be not white; but on white lead it does. So does heat in fire. But what if someone says that fieriness is the substance, and the analogue in white lead? All the same, fieriness or heat completes the visible fire, and whiteness the other thing. So the same things will complete and not be qualities, and will not complete and be qualities. And it is absurd to say they are something different where they complete and not different where they don't, the nature being the same. But perhaps the rational principles that produced them are wholly substantial, while their products already have, as their "what," the things there, [whereas] here they are qualities, not a "what." That is why we always go wrong about the "what": in our inquiries into it we slip away from it and are carried down into quality. For fire is not what we name when we look at its quality. Fire is substance, while the things we now see, and look at when we speak, lead us away from the "what" and define the quality. With sensible things this is reasonable, for none of them is substance; they are affections of substance. Hence that other question too: how does substance come from what are not substances? It was said, then, that what comes to be need not be the same as the things it comes from. But now we must say that what comes to be is not substance either. Yet how do we say that what we called substance there comes from what is not substance? For we shall say that the sub-

stance there, which has being more properly and with less admixture, is substance as being in differences [of] being—or rather, it is called substance with the addition of activities. It seems to be a completion of being; but perhaps it is more deficient through the addition and through not being simple, already departing from being.

2.6.2 But we must examine what quality in general is; perhaps once we know what it is, our difficulties will come to an end. First, then, we must ask whether the same thing should be posited as sometimes only a quality and sometimes completing substance—without balking at a quality's [not] completing substance, though it completes rather a qualified substance. In a qualified substance, then, the substance, the "what it is," must come before its being qualified. What, then, in the case of fire, is the substance before the qualified substance? Is it body? Then body will be the substance, and fire hot body; the whole will not be substance, and the hot will be in it as snubness is in you. So when heat is taken away, and brightness and lightness, which do seem to be qualities, and resistance too, what is left is the three-dimensionally extended, and matter is the substance. But that does not seem right; the form is more substance. But the form is a quality.

Or rather, the form is not a quality but a rational principle. Then what are the things made of rational principle and substrate? Not what is seen and burns, for that is a quality—unless someone says that burning is an activity coming from the rational principle. Then heating, whitening and the rest are productions too, so that we shall have nowhere left to put quality. Or rather, those that are said to complete substances should not be called qualities, since they are their activities, proceeding from the rational principles and the substantial powers. Qualities are those things which are outside all substance, which do not appear as qualities in one place and not qualities in another, but carry what is surplus after substance: virtues and vices, for example, uglinesses and beauties, states of health, and having a certain shape. Triangle and square, in themselves, are not qual-

ities; but having been made triangular, in so far as the thing has been shaped, should be called a quality—not triangularity, but the shaping. So too with arts and aptitudes. Quality, then, is a sort of disposition in substances that already exist, whether acquired or present from the beginning; if it were not present, the substance [would] have had nothing less. This disposition is either easily changed or hard to change, so that there are two kinds of it, one easily changed, the other persistent.

2.6.3 The white on you, then, should evidently be posited not as a quality but as an activity coming from the power of whitening. And there, all the so-called qualities should be posited as activities, which get their qualitative character from our opinion, because each is a particular character, as if marking substances off from one another, and has a stamp of its own. How, then, will quality there differ? For these too are activities. Or rather, they do not show what sort a thing is, nor an alteration of substrates, nor a stamp; they show only that what is called quality there is activity. So when the thing has the particular character of substance, it is clear from the outset that it is not a quality. But when reason separates off the particular feature in such things—not taking it away from there, but rather grasping it and generating something else—it has generated a quality, grasping as a sort of part of substance what appeared to it on the surface. If so, nothing prevents heat too, because it is innate in fire, from being a form of fire and an activity, and not a quality of it. And again, taken differently, in something else, it is only a quality, no longer a shape of substance but only a trace and shadow and image, having left behind its own substance, of which it is the activity. Whatever, then, is incidental, and not activities and forms of substances providing certain shapes, these are qualities. States, for instance, and the other dispositions of substrates should be called qualities, while their archetypes, in which they primarily exist, are activities of those substances. And the same thing does not become both quality and not quality. What is stripped of substance is a quality; what is with it is form or activity. For nothing is the same when it remains in itself and when it

has fallen, in something else, from being form and activity. What is never the form of something else, but always an accident, is purely quality and only that.

II.7 On Total Mixture

Περὶ τῆς δι' ὅλων κράσεως
Plotinus weighs Stoic and Peripatetic accounts of bodies blending through and through, arguing that qualities, not bulk, interpenetrate.
no. 37 in order of writing

2.7.1 We must look into what is called the total blending of bodies. Is it possible for a liquid blended with a liquid, whole through whole, either for each to pass through the other, or for one to pass through the other? It makes no difference which, if it happens. Those who allow only juxtaposition should be set aside, since they are mixing rather than blending—if blending must make the whole uniform, so that every smallest part is composed of the things said to have been blended.[1] Those who blend only the qualities, and set the matter of each body side by side, bringing onto it the qualities from each, might be persuasive when they attack total blending. They argue that the magnitudes of the bulks end up reduced to cuts, if no gap at all is left in either body, if the division is to be continuous, with the penetration of one into the other happening throughout. And they point out that the blended bodies occupy a greater place than either one—as great as the places of the two put together. Yet, they say, if whole had passed through whole, the place of the body into which the other was put should have remained the same. And where the place does not become greater, they blame

1 Total blending, in which each of two bodies occupies the whole space of the other, was Stoic doctrine; it was attacked by Peripatetics such as Alexander of Aphrodisias.

certain escapes of air, in place of which the other entered. And how could the small, spread out in the larger, pass through the whole of it? They say many other things too. Those, on the other hand, who introduce total blending could say that bodies are divided and yet not used up into cuts, even when the blending is through and through. For they will say that even sweat does not make cuts in the body, nor is the body bored full of holes. And if someone says that nothing prevents nature from having made the body so, so that sweat can pass through, still, with artifacts too, when they are thin and continuous, liquid is seen soaking them through and through and flowing out on the other side. But since these are bodies, how can this happen?

It is not easy to conceive of one body passing through another without cutting it; and if it cuts it throughout, they will obviously destroy each other. And when they say that in many cases no increase occurs, they give the other side grounds to blame escapes of air. As for the increase in place, it is difficult, but still, what prevents one from saying that, since each body brings along its magnitude together with its other qualities, the increase necessarily occurs? For magnitude is not destroyed either, any more than the other qualities are; and just as there another kind of quality comes about, mixed from both, so too another magnitude—for it is the mixture that makes the magnitude out of both. But here the other side might say to them: if matter lies beside matter and bulk beside the bulk with which the magnitude goes, you would be stating our view. But if matter, together with the magnitude that primarily belongs to it, passes through the whole, it would not happen the way a line lies next to a line, touching at the ends by their points, in which case there would be an increase. It would happen the way a line is fitted onto a line, so that no increase occurs. But the smaller passes through the whole of the larger, and the smallest through the whole of [the] greatest, in cases where it is evident that it is blended. In unclear cases one can say it does not reach everywhere; but in cases where this evidently happens, one could [not] say so. And when they speak of the bulks being stretched,

they would not be saying anything very persuasive, stretching the smallest bulk so far. For even when they change the body, they do not give it more magnitude—as would happen if air came to be from water.

2.7.2 This question must be investigated on its own: what happens when a bulk that was water becomes air—how the greater size is present in what has come to be. For now, let what has been said suffice, though many other things are said by each side. Let us examine for ourselves what we should say about this: what view agrees with what has been said, or what other view will appear besides those now stated. When water flows through wool, then, [or] a papyrus lets the water in it drip out, how does the whole watery body not pass through it? And even when it does not flow, how shall we join matter to matter and bulk to bulk, and make only the qualities blended? For the matter of the water will not lie outside the papyrus, nor again in certain gaps in it; the whole papyrus is wet, and nowhere is there matter empty of [watery] quality. And if the matter is everywhere along with the quality, the water is everywhere in the papyrus. Or rather, not the water, but the quality of the water. But then where is the water? And how is the bulk not the same? Or rather, what was added stretched the papyrus, which took on magnitude from what came in. But if it took on magnitude, some bulk was added; and if it was added, it was not swallowed up in the other. So the matter must be in different places.

Or what prevents one body from giving some of its magnitude to another and receiving some in return, just as they give and receive some of their quality? For a quality that meets another quality is no longer that quality on its own but is with another; and in being with another, no longer pure, it is not entirely what it was but has been dimmed. A magnitude that meets another magnitude, by contrast, does not disappear. As for the claim that a body passing through a body must make cuts, one might stop to ask what it means: after all, we ourselves say that qualities pass through bodies without making cuts. Or is that because qualities are incorporeal? But if matter too is itself incorporeal,

why, when matter is incorporeal and so are the qualities (if they are such as to be few), do they not pass through together with the matter in the same way? And do solids fail to pass through because their qualities are of a kind that prevents them, or because many qualities together are unable to do this along with matter? Now if it is the multitude of qualities that makes what is called a dense body, the multitude would be the cause; but if density is a quality of its own, as is what they call corporeality, then it is that specific quality. So it is not as qualities that they will produce the mixture, but as qualities of a certain kind; nor, again, will matter fail to mix as matter, but as accompanied by a certain kind of quality—especially if it has no magnitude of its own, except insofar as it has not cast off its magnitude. Let this much, then, serve as our discussion of the difficulties.

2.7.3 Since we have mentioned corporeality, we should consider whether corporeality is what is composed of all the qualities [together with matter], or a form and a rational principle which, coming to be in matter, makes a body. Now if body is this —what is [composed] of all the qualities together with matter— corporeality would be the same thing. And if it were a rational principle that makes the body by coming to matter, clearly the rational principle embraces and contains all the qualities. But this rational principle, if it is not simply like a definition that shows what the thing is, but a rational principle that makes a thing, must not include matter along with it. It must rather be about matter and, by coming to be in it, complete the body; the body must be matter plus a rational principle present in it, while the rational principle itself, being form, is contemplated bare, without matter, however inseparable it may in fact be. For the separate one is different: the one in Intellect. And it is in Intellect because it is itself Intellect too. But that belongs elsewhere.

II.8 How Distant Things Look Small

Πῶς τὰ πόρρω ὁρώμενα μικρὰ φαίνεται
A short optical inquiry: distant things look small because their color and detail fade, leaving sight unable to measure magnitude.
no. 35 in order of writing

2.8.1 Do distant things appear smaller, and things far apart seem to have little space between them, while things near at hand appear as large as they are and with as much distance between them as they actually have? Distant things seem smaller to those who see them because the light tends to be drawn together toward the sight and to the size of the pupil—and the farther away the matter of the thing seen is, the more its form arrives, as it were, isolated, stripped both of the form of size and of quality too, so that only its rational principle arrives. Or else it is because we perceive magnitude, how large it is, by going through it and passing over it part by part—so it must be present and near for its size to be known. Or else it is because magnitude is seen incidentally, color being what is seen primarily. Near at hand, then, we recognize how much is colored; at a distance, only that it is colored. And the parts, distinguished in quantity along with the color, do not give an accurate discernment of the quantity, since the colors themselves too reach us faint. So what wonder is it if magnitudes, like sounds, also become smaller in proportion as their form comes through faint? For there too it is form that hearing seeks; magnitude it perceives incidentally. But as for hearing—is magnitude really perceived incidentally? For to which sense does magnitude in

sound belong primarily, in the way visible magnitude seems to belong to touch? Or rather: hearing perceives apparent magnitude not by quantity but by more and less, and not incidentally—I mean intensity—just as taste, too, perceives the intensity of sweetness. Magnitude of sound in the strict sense is its extent; and hearing might indicate this incidentally from the intensity, but not accurately. For intensity is the same in each part, whereas magnitude as amount reaches over the whole place the sound has occupied.

But colors are not small, they are faint; whereas magnitudes are small. Or rather, what is common to both is the "less." In a color, the less is faint; in a magnitude, the less is small; and magnitude, following the color, is diminished proportionally. The effect becomes clearer with things that are varied: for instance, mountains with many dwellings, a multitude of trees and many other things. Each of these, if it were seen, would let us measure the whole from the individual things seen; but when the form does not come through for each one, sight is deprived of the individual items and so of measuring the underlying magnitude and knowing how large the whole is. Things near at hand too, when they are varied and our glance takes them in all at once and not all their forms are seen, would appear smaller in proportion to how much of each was stolen from our view; but when they have all been seen, they are measured accurately and we know how large they are. And magnitudes that are uniform in kind and color also deceive us about their quantity, since sight cannot really measure them part by part: it slips as it measures part by part, because there is no difference at which it can stop at each part. And something far away looks near because the interval between is contracted in its size, for the same reason. For how great what is near is does not escape us, for the same reasons; but sight, not going through the distant part of the interval and what it is like in form, could not say how large it is in magnitude either.

2.8.2 As for the explanation by the smaller angles of sight, it has been said elsewhere too that this is not so; and now we should

add this point. Whoever says that a thing appears smaller by a smaller angle leaves the sight seeing something outside the object—something else, which is outside it altogether, like air. So when the mountain, because it is large, leaves nothing over, but either is equal to the sight, so that the sight can no longer see anything else since its span fits exactly to the thing seen, or the thing seen even exceeds the sight's reach on both sides—what would one say here, when the object appears much smaller than it is and yet is seen with the whole of the sight? And if one looks at the heavens, one would learn this beyond dispute. No one could see the whole hemisphere in a single glance, nor could sight spread out so far as to extend all the way to it. But if anyone wants, let it be granted. If, then, the whole of sight has taken in the whole, and the magnitude in the heavens is many times greater than the apparent one, how could one blame a narrowing of the angle for its appearing much smaller than it is?

II.9 Against the Gnostics

Πρὸς τοὺς κακὸν τὸν δημιουργὸν τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τὸν κόσμον κακὸν εἶναι λέγοντας
Plotinus attacks the Gnostics for multiplying principles and despising the cosmos, defending the world's goodness and its maker.
no. 33 in order of writing

2.9.1 Since, then, the nature of the Good has appeared to us as simple and first—for everything that is not first is not simple—and as having nothing in itself but being something one; and since the nature of what is called the One is the same—for this is not something else and then one, nor is that something else and then good—when we say "the One" and when we say "the Good," we must think of it as the same nature and call it one, not predicating anything of it, but making it clear to ourselves as far as we can. It is called the First, too, because it is simplest; and self-sufficient, because it is not made of many things—otherwise it would depend on the things it is made of; and not in another, because everything that is in another also comes from another. If, then, it is neither from another nor in another, nor any composition at all, there must be nothing above it. So we should not go off after other principles. We should set this first, then Intellect after it, the primary thinker, then Soul after Intellect—for this is the order according to nature—and posit neither more than these in the intelligible world, nor fewer. If fewer, they will say either that Soul and Intellect are the same, or Intellect and the First; but that they differ from one another has been shown in many places. What remains is to consider now whether there

are more than these three. What natures could there be besides them? No one could find anything simpler than the principle of all, described as we have described it, or anything at all rising above it. They will surely not say that one is in potentiality and another in actuality: it is ridiculous, among things that are in actuality and immaterial, to make more natures by dividing between potentiality and actuality.[1]

Nor can we do it among the realities that come after these, conceiving of one intellect at rest and another, as it were, in motion. What would rest of Intellect be, and what its motion and utterance? Or what would the idleness of one be, and what the work of the other? Intellect is as it is, always the same, set in a stationary activity. Motion toward it and around it is already the work of Soul; and a rational principle passing from it into Soul makes Soul intellectual, not some other nature between Intellect and Soul. Nor, for that matter, should we make several intellects on the grounds that one thinks and another thinks that it thinks. For even if, in beings like us, thinking is one thing and thinking that one thinks another, still it is a single act of apprehension, not unaware of its own activities. It would be ridiculous to suppose this of the true Intellect; no, the one who thinks that it thinks will be entirely the same as the one who was thinking. Otherwise one will be merely thinking, and the other thinking that it thinks while being someone else, not the very one who did the thinking.

But if they say the distinction is only in thought, first, they will be abandoning their multiple hypostases. Then we must consider whether even conceptual distinctions have room to take an intellect that only thinks, without being conscious that it thinks. If this happened even in us, who always oversee our impulses and our thinking, we would be charged with folly, if we were even moderately serious people. But when the true Intellect, in its thoughts, thinks itself, and its intelligible object is not outside it but it is itself the intelligible, then necessarily in

1 The unnamed opponents of this treatise (Porphyry's title is *Against the Gnostics*) are Gnostics, religious sectarians, some of whom attended Plotinus' seminar.

thinking it has itself and sees itself; and seeing itself, it sees itself not unthinking but thinking. So in thinking primarily it would also have the thinking that it thinks, as one thing; and there it is not double even in conception.[2] And if it is always thinking, as it is, what room is there for a conception that separates thinking from thinking that it thinks? And if someone brought in yet another, third conception on top of the second, which says that it thinks that it thinks—one that says [it thinks] that it thinks that it thinks—the absurdity would be even more evident. And why not go on like this to infinity? And when someone makes the rational principle come from Intellect, and then from this has another arise in Soul from that rational principle itself, so that it stands between Soul and Intellect, he will deprive Soul of thinking, if it is to receive its rational principle not from Intellect but from another, intermediate one. It will have an image of a rational principle, not a rational principle; it will not know Intellect at all, nor think at all.

2.9.2 So we must not posit more than these, nor superfluous conceptual distinctions in those realities, which do not admit them; but one Intellect, the same, always in the same state, unwavering in every way, imitating its father as far as it can. And we should hold that of our soul one part is always directed toward those realities, one toward these things here, and one in the middle between them. For since it is one nature in many powers, sometimes the whole of it is carried along with the best of itself and of being, and sometimes the worse part of it is dragged down and drags the middle along with it; for it was not right that the whole of it should be dragged down. And this experience befalls it because it did not remain in the most beautiful, where Soul remains—the Soul that is not a part, and of which we are no longer a part—and by remaining gave the body of the All to have from it as much as it can have. It remains untroubled itself, not governing by discursive thought nor setting anything right, but ordering things with a wonderful power

2 "Hypostasis" (literally "what stands under") means a level of reality; for Plotinus there are three primary ones: the One, Intellect, Soul.

by its vision of what is before it. For the more intent it is on this vision, the more beautiful and powerful it is; having from there, it gives to what comes after it, and as it illuminates, it is [always] always illuminated.

2.9.3 Always illuminated, then, and having the light continuously, it gives it to what comes next; and these are always held together and watered by this light and enjoy life as far as they can—as if a fire lay somewhere in the middle and those who could were warmed by it. And yet the fire has a limited measure; but when powers that are unmeasured have not been removed from among the things that are, how could they exist while nothing shared in them? No: each must give of its own to another too, or the Good will not be good, or Intellect not Intellect, or Soul not what it is—unless, after what lives primarily, something also lives secondarily, for as long as what is primary exists. So all things must follow on one another in sequence, and always; and the others are generated in the sense that they come from others. So the things said to be generated did not come into being at some point; they were always coming into being and will go on coming into being. Nor will they be destroyed, except those that have something to dissolve into; what has nothing to dissolve into will not be destroyed. If someone says "into matter," why should matter not perish too? And if he says matter too, what necessity was there, we shall ask, for it to come into being? And if they say it was necessary for it to follow along, it is necessary now as well. And if matter is to be left alone, the divine things will not be everywhere but in some separate place, walled off, as it were; and if that is impossible, matter will be illuminated.

DID SOUL FALL TO MAKE THE WORLD?

The Soul of the All neither inclined nor forgot; the cosmos is the best possible image of the intelligible.

2.9.4 If they say that Soul made the world after, as it were, shedding its wings, the Soul of the All does not suffer this. And if they

say it erred, let them state the cause of the error. When did it err? If from eternity, it remains in error by their own account; if it began, why not before? We, for our part, do not say that the soul that makes inclined downward; on the contrary, we say it did not incline. If it inclined, it was obviously by forgetting the realities there; and if it forgot, how does it craft? From what does it make, except from what it saw there? And if it makes while remembering them, it did not incline at all. For even if it has them only dimly, would it not rather incline toward there, so as not to see dimly? Why would it not have wanted to go back up, if it had any memory at all? What did it reckon it would gain for itself from making a cosmos?[3] It's ridiculous to say "so that it might be honored"—they are transferring this from the sculptors here below. Besides, if it made by discursive thought, and making was not in its nature and its power was not a making power, how could it have made this cosmos? And when will it destroy it? If it repented, what is it waiting for? And if it has not yet repented, it would not repent now, being used to it by now and grown fonder of it with time. And if it is waiting for the individual souls, they ought by now to have stopped coming into birth, having long ago experienced the evils here in their previous birth; so they would already have ceased coming. Nor must we grant that this cosmos has come about badly because there are many unpleasant things in it. That is the claim of people who assign it too high a rank, if they think it should be the same as the intelligible and not an image of it. Or what other image of that world could have come about more beautiful? What other fire would be a better [image] of the fire there than the fire here? Or what other earth than this one, after the earth there? What sphere more exact, or more regular in its motion, after the self-enclosing compass of the intelligible cosmos there? And what other sun, after that one, could come before this visible one?

2.9.5 But [it is unreasonable] that these people, who have a body such as humans have, and desires and griefs and angers, should

3 "Shedding its wings" is Plato's image (*Phaedrus* 246c) for the soul's fall into a body.

not disparage the power within themselves but say it can touch the intelligible—and yet deny that the power in the sun is freer of affection than theirs, more in order and less subject to change, or that it has better understanding than we, who were born only just now and are hindered by so many deceptions from reaching the truth. Nor should they call their own soul immortal and divine, and that of the most worthless people too, while denying that the whole heaven and the stars in it share in the immortal soul—though they are made of far more beautiful and purer things—when they see the order there, the grace and regularity, and are themselves the loudest in blaming the disorder here around the earth. As if the immortal soul had deliberately chosen the worse place and decided to cede the better one to the mortal soul! Unreasonable, too, is their bringing in of this other soul, which they compose out of the elements. For how could a compound of the elements have any life at all? Their mixture produces something hot or cold or mixed, or dry or wet or a blend of these.

And how could it hold the four together, when it came later than they did and out of them? And when they also attribute to it apprehension and deliberation and countless other things, what is one to say? Since they do not honor this craftsmanship, or this earth, they say a new earth has come into being for them, to which they will go away from here; and that this is the rational principle of the cosmos. And yet why do they need to be in the model of a cosmos they hate? Where does this model come from? On their account, it comes from the maker of the model when he had already inclined toward the things here. If, then, the maker himself was greatly concerned to make another cosmos after the intelligible cosmos he possesses—and yet what need was there?—[he made it either before this cosmos or after the cosmos]. And if before the cosmos, for what purpose? So that souls might be on their guard. Then how is it that they did not guard themselves, so that it came into being in vain? And if after the cosmos, taking the form from the cosmos and stripping it from matter, then experience would have been enough for the

souls that had experienced it to be on their guard. And if they claim that the form of the cosmos was received in souls, what is new in their doctrine?

2.9.6 What should one say about the other hypostases they introduce—"sojournings," "antitypes" and "repentances"? If they say these are affections of soul—"repentance" when it repents, and "antitypes" when it contemplates, as it were, images of the beings and not yet the beings themselves—then they are talking emptily, to set up their own sect. As though they had no hold on the ancient Greek philosophy, they contrive these things, while the Greeks knew clearly and spoke without inflation of ascents out of the cave, advancing little by little toward a truer and truer vision. In general, some of their ideas are taken from Plato, while those in which they innovate in order to set up a philosophy of their own have been found outside the truth. The judgments of the dead, too, and the rivers in Hades, and the reincarnations come from there.[4] Their making of a plurality in the intelligible world—Being, Intellect, a further craftsman, and Soul—is taken from what is said in the *Timaeus*. For he said: "As many Forms as Intellect sees present in the Living Being that is, so many did the maker of the All resolve in his thought that this world too should have." But they did not understand. They took one to be at rest, holding all beings within itself; another, Intellect, distinct from it, contemplating; and another thinking discursively—often for them the crafting principle is Soul instead of the one thinking discursively—and they think this is the craftsman according to Plato, far from knowing who the craftsman is.[5] And in general they misrepresent the manner of the crafting and many other things in him, and drag the man's views toward the worse, as if they themselves had understood the intelligible nature, while he and the other blessed men had not.

And by naming a multitude of intelligibles they think they will seem to have found out the exact truth, though by that very

4 "Sojournings," "antitypes" and "repentances" are technical terms of Gnostic texts; the ascent from the cave is Plato's allegory in *Republic* VII.
5 Plato, *Timaeus* 39e.

multitude they are bringing the intelligible nature into likeness with the perceptible, inferior one. One should instead pursue the smallest possible number there, and, by attributing everything to what comes after the First, be done with it—since that is all things: the first Intellect, being, and every other fine thing that comes after the first nature. Soul is a third form. And one should trace the differences of souls in their affections or in their nature without disparaging the divine men, but receiving their teachings kindly, as those of older men, and taking from them what they say well: the immortality of the soul, the intelligible world, the first god, that the soul must flee its association with the body, separation from it, flight from becoming to being. For these things are set down in Plato, and when they state them clearly in this way they do well. No one begrudges them saying the things on which they wish to disagree. But they should not build up their own position among their listeners by disparaging and insulting the Greeks. They should show from their doctrines themselves that what they have chosen to say of their own, against the Greeks' view, is correct, setting out their own opinions kindly and as philosophers, and those they oppose fairly, looking to the truth—not hunting for reputation by censuring men judged good long ago by men who were not worthless, and saying they are better than they. For what the ancients said about the intelligibles is far better and said with learning, and those not deceived by the deception now rushing in upon people will easily recognize it. They will recognize, too, that what these people took later from the ancients has received certain additions that are not at all fitting—and also in the points where they want to oppose them: introducing total comings-to-be and destructions, finding fault with this All, blaming the soul's association with the body, censuring the one who governs this All, identifying the craftsman with Soul and attributing to him the same affections as to souls that are parts.

2.9.7 That this cosmos too neither began nor will cease, but always exists as long as those realities exist, has been said. As for the soul's association with the body, it was said before them

that it is not better for our soul. But to judge the Soul of the All from ours is like taking the class of potters or smiths in a well-run city and blaming the whole city. We must grasp the differences in how the whole Soul governs: it is not in the same way, nor is it bound. For besides the other differences, countless as they are, which have been stated elsewhere, we should have considered this one too: that we are bound by the body, the bond having already come about. For the nature of body, already bound within the whole Soul, binds together whatever it encompasses; but the Soul of the All itself could not be bound by the things it has bound—it is the ruler. That is why it is unaffected by them, whereas we are not masters of them. For what of it is turned toward the divine above remains pure and unhindered, and what of it gives life to the body takes on nothing from it in return.

In general, what is in another necessarily receives that other's affection, but does not in turn give its own to the other, which has a life of its own—as when something is grafted onto another: when the host is affected, the graft is affected with it, but if the graft withers, it leaves the host to keep its own life. When the fire in you goes out, the whole of fire has not gone out; indeed, even if the whole of fire perished, the soul there would not be affected at all, only the structure of the body; and if some kind of cosmos could exist through the remaining elements, the soul there would not care at all. For the structure is not the same in the All and in each living being. There, Soul, as it were, runs over it and commands it to remain; here, the parts, as if slipping away to their own place, are bound by a second bond. But there they have nowhere to flee. So Soul need neither hold them in from inside nor press from outside to push them in; it remains where its nature wanted from the beginning. And if any of them moves according to its nature, the things for which this is not natural are affected, while they themselves are carried along well, as parts of the whole. The others are destroyed, unable to bear the order of the whole—as if, when a great troupe of dancers was moving in order, a tortoise caught in the middle of its

path were trampled, unable to get out of the dancers' way; though if it had fallen into step with them, it would not have suffered anything from them either.

2.9.8 Asking why Soul made a cosmos is the same as asking why there is Soul and why the craftsman made. First, this is the question of people who assume a beginning for what is eternal; then they think he became the cause of the crafting by turning from something to something and changing. So we must teach them, if they would bear it kindly, what the nature of these things is, so that they stop their abuse of what is venerable, which they indulge in so readily, instead of the great reverence that would be fitting. For one could not rightly find fault even with the government of the All, which first of all displays the greatness of the intelligible nature. If it has come into life in such a way as to have not an inarticulate life—like the smaller things in it, which are born night and day from the abundant life in it—but a life continuous, clear, abundant and everywhere, displaying immeasurable wisdom, how could one not call it a clear and beautiful statue of the intelligible gods? And if, being an imitation, it is not that, this is exactly its natural condition; otherwise it would no longer be imitating. To say it imitates badly is false: nothing has been left out that a beautiful natural image could have. The imitation had to exist, not from discursive thought and contrivance; for the intelligible could not be last. For its activity had to be twofold, one within itself, one toward another. So there had to be something after it; for only that which is the most powerless of all has nothing further below it. But a wonderful power runs there; and so it also worked. If, then, there is another cosmos better than this one, what is it?

And if there must be one, and there is no other, this is the one that preserves the imitation of that world. The whole earth is full of living things of every kind, immortal ones too, and everything up to the heaven is full. And the stars, both those in the lower spheres and those in the highest—why are they not gods, moving in order and going round in ordered array? Why should they not have virtue, or what hinders them from acquir-

ing virtue? The things that make people here bad are not there, nor the badness of body, troubled and troubling. And why should they not understand, always at leisure, and grasp in their intellect god and the other intelligible gods, while we have a wisdom better than theirs? Who but a man out of his mind could tolerate this? Then there are the souls. If they came here forced by the Soul of the All, how are they better, having been forced? Among souls, what prevails is superior. And if they came willingly, why do you blame the world you came into willingly, when it even lets you leave if you don't like it? And if this All is such that within it one can have wisdom and, while here, live according to the realities there, how does it not bear witness that it depends on those realities?

AGAINST THE ARROGANCE OF THE ELECT

Wealth and injustice here do not discredit the cosmos; claiming to be better than the gods is folly.

2.9.9 If someone finds fault with wealth and poverty, and the inequality in all such things, first, he does not know that the good person does not seek equality in these things. He does not think that those with many possessions have more, nor rulers more than private persons; he leaves such pursuits to others, and has learned that life here is twofold, one for the good and one for most people. For the good it is a life directed toward the highest and toward what is above; for the more human sort it is again twofold: one kind, mindful of virtue, has a share in some good, while the worthless crowd is, so to speak, a band of craftsmen of necessities for the better sort. And if someone commits murder, or is overcome by pleasures through weakness, what wonder is it that there are faults—not in intellect, but in souls like boys not yet grown? And if it is a training ground with winners and losers, how is it not fine in this way too? If you are wronged, what is terrible about that for an immortal being? And if you are murdered, you have what you want. And if you already find fault with taking part in civic life, you are under no

necessity to do so. It is agreed that there are trials and punishments here too. How, then, is it right to blame a city that gives each his due? There virtue is honored and vice has its fitting dishonor, and not only statues of the gods but the gods themselves look down from above—who "will easily escape blame from men," he says—leading all things in order from beginning to end, giving each the fitting lot, in keeping with what went before, through the succession of lives. Whoever is ignorant of this is one of the more reckless sort of men, showing his boorishness about divine matters.

Rather, one should try to become as good as possible oneself, but not think that one alone can become best—for then one is not yet best. One should think that other men too are best, and that there are good spirits too, and much more the gods, both those in this world who look there and, above all, the leader of this All, the most blessed Soul; and from there go on to hymn the intelligible gods, and above all the great king of that world, displaying his greatness especially in the multitude of the gods. For not to contract the divine into one, but to show it as manifold, as much as he himself has shown it—this is what those who know the power of god do, when, remaining what he is, he makes many, all depending on him and existing through him and from him. And this cosmos too exists through him and looks there, both as a whole and each of the gods in it; it prophesies his things to men, and they give oracles of what is dear to the realities there. And if they are not what he is, this is exactly in accordance with their nature. But if you want to look down on them and exalt yourself as not inferior, first, the better someone is, the more kindly he is toward all, [toward gods] and toward men. Then, one should exalt oneself in due measure, without boorishness, going as far as our nature is able to rise; and think that there is room for others too beside god, and not, placing oneself alone next to him, fly as in dreams, depriving oneself of becoming god as far as is possible for a human soul. And it is possible as far as Intellect leads; to go beyond Intellect is already to fall outside Intellect. Foolish people believe this kind of talk

when they suddenly hear: "You will be better than everyone, not only men but gods." For there is much self-will in human beings; and a man who was formerly humble and modest, an ordinary private person, if he were to hear, "You are a child of god, and the others you used to admire are not children [of gods], nor are the things they honor, having received them from their fathers, [divine]; you are greater even than heaven, without any effort" ⟨...⟩—and then others join in the chorus.

It is as if a man who cannot count, among a great many others who cannot count, heard that he was a thousand cubits tall: what would he think but that he was a thousand cubits tall? And if he heard that the others were five cubits [if five cubits], he would only imagine that a thousand is a big number. On top of this: god cares for you—but why does he neglect the whole cosmos, in which they themselves are? If it is because he has no leisure to look at it, nor is it permitted him, then, when he looks downward and at them, why does he not look outside and at the cosmos in which they are? And if he does not look outside, so as not to oversee the cosmos, he does not look at them either. But they have no need of him? The cosmos, though, does need him, and it knows its own order; those within it know how they are within it and how they are there; and so do those men who are dear to god, bearing gently what comes from the cosmos if something necessarily befalls them from the movement of the whole—for one must look not to what pleases each individual but to the whole. Such a man honors each according to his worth, always hastening toward where all things hasten that can —and many are those hastening there; those that reach it are blessed, while the others have, as far as possible, the lot that fits them—and he does not grant the ability to himself alone. For if someone professes to have something, it does not follow that he has what he says; many say they have it even knowing they don't, and think they have it when they don't, and that they alone have what they alone do not have.

2.9.10 Much else, or rather everything, one could examine, and have abundant material to show, argument by argument, how

things stand. But a certain reticence holds us back with regard to some of our friends, who came upon this doctrine before they became our friends and, I don't know how, persist in it. They themselves, to be sure, do not hesitate to say what they say—whether because they want their views to seem credibly true, or because they actually believe them to be so. But we, speaking to our pupils, not to them—for nothing more would be gained toward persuading them—so that our pupils may not be troubled by people who bring no proofs—how could they?— — but only assert themselves arrogantly, we have said these things; for there is another method by which a written work might defend against those who dare to disparage what the ancient, divine men said well and in keeping with the truth. That way of examining must be left aside; for those who have grasped exactly what has now been said will be able to know how all the other points stand too. But I must end the discussion after mentioning one thing which surpasses everything in absurdity—if "absurdity" is even the word for it. They say that Soul inclined downward, and a certain Wisdom too—whether Soul began it, or such a Wisdom was the cause, or they mean both to be the same. They say the other souls came down together with it, and as members of Wisdom put on bodies, human bodies for instance; but the one for whose sake they themselves came down, they say in turn did not come down—did not incline, as it were—but only illuminated the darkness, and then from there an image came to be in matter.[6] Then they fashion an image of the image somewhere here, through matter or materiality or whatever they want to call it—calling it now one thing, now another, and using many other names for what they mean, to obscure it—and they generate what they call the craftsman. They make him revolt from his mother and then drag the cosmos, as made by him, down to the last of images, so that whoever wrote this might rail at it as violently as possible.

2.9.11 First, then, if it did not come down but illuminated the darkness, how could it rightly be said to have inclined? If some-

thing like light flowed from it, that is no reason to say it has inclined—unless the darkness lay somewhere below and it came to it spatially and illuminated it when it was near. But if it illuminated while remaining by itself, having done nothing toward this, why did it alone illuminate, and not the things more powerful than it among the beings? And if it was by conceiving a reasoned plan of a cosmos that it was able to illuminate from that reasoning, why did it not make a cosmos at the same time as it illuminated, instead of waiting for the generation of the images? Then too, the reasoned plan of the cosmos—what they call the "alien earth," made by the greater beings, as they themselves say—did not lead its makers down into inclining. Then, how does matter, once illuminated, produce images of soul, rather than the nature of bodies? An image of soul would need no darkness or matter; once produced, if it is produced, it would follow its maker and remain attached to it. Then, is this a being, or, as they say, a thought? If a being, what is its difference from that from which it comes? And if it is another kind of soul—if that one is rational—perhaps this one is vegetative and generative; but if so, how could it still make "so that it might be honored," and how could it make out of arrogance and audacity? In general, making through imagination, and still more through reasoning, is ruled out. And what further need was there for the maker to make it out of matter and image? And if a thought, first one must point out where the name comes from; then, how does it exist, unless he grants the thought the power to make? But besides this fiction, how does the making happen? [Or to make] this first, and something else after that ⟨...⟩ but they speak as though they had license to say anything. And why fire first?

2.9.12 And how does it set to work when it has only just come into being? [Or] by memory of what it saw? But it did not exist at all to have seen anything—neither it nor the mother they give it. Then isn't it astonishing that they themselves, who came here not as images of souls but as true souls, are barely and with diffi-

6 In Gnostic myth Sophia ("Wisdom"), a divine being, falls, and her fall gives rise to the craftsman who makes this world.

culty moved away from the cosmos, one or two of them, [and], coming to recollection, barely recover some remembrance of what they once saw; while this image—dimly, as they say, but still—having only just come into being, conceived those realities, or its mother did, a material image; and not only conceived those realities and got the notion of a cosmos [from] that cosmos, but even learned what it might be made of? And where did it get the idea of making fire first, thinking that this had to come first? Why not something else? But if it could make fire by conceiving fire, why, having conceived a cosmos—for it should have conceived the whole first—did it not make a cosmos all at once? Those things too were contained in the conception. It would surely have made in a more natural way, not as the crafts do; for the crafts come after nature and the cosmos. Even now, the things produced individually by natures do not come about by first fire, then each of the others, then a kneading of these together, but by an outline and contour shaping the whole animal upon the menstrual matter. Why, then, was matter there too not outlined with the imprint of a cosmos, an imprint containing earth and fire and the rest?[7]

But perhaps they themselves would have made a cosmos that way, using a truer soul, while he did not know how to make it like that. And yet to foresee the size of the heaven, or rather that it should be just so great, and the obliquity of the zodiac, and the motion of the bodies beneath it, and the earth set as it is—so that one can state the reasons why it is so—this did not belong to an image; it surely came from a power that came from the best realities. And this they themselves admit, against their will. For the illumination into the darkness, once examined, will force them to admit the true causes of the cosmos. Why did it need to illuminate, unless it absolutely had to? It must be either according to nature or against nature. If according to nature, it is always so. If against nature, there will be what is against nature even in the realities there, and evils before this cosmos; and the

7 Ancient biology held that the embryo was formed out of the mother's menstrual blood, shaped by the father's seed.

cosmos will not be the cause of evils, but the realities there will be the cause of them for it; and for soul they will not come from here, but from soul to here. And the argument will end up referring the cosmos back to the first realities. And if so, matter too, from which it appeared. For the soul that inclined saw the darkness, they say, already existing, and illuminated it. Where, then, did this come from? And if they say the soul made it by inclining, there was obviously nowhere for it to incline to, nor again was the darkness the cause of the inclining, but the soul's nature itself. And this is the same as the necessities that went before; so the cause goes back to the first realities.

2.9.13 So whoever finds fault with the nature of the cosmos does not know what he is doing, nor where this audacity of his is leading. This is because they do not know the sequential order of firsts, seconds and thirds, and so on always to the last, and that one must not abuse what is worse than the first, but gently accept the nature of all things and run oneself toward the first, putting an end to the melodrama of the terrors, as they think, in the spheres of the cosmos—which, in fact, "make all things gentle" for them. What is terrible about them, that they should frighten people inexperienced in argument, who have never heard of educated and harmonious knowledge? If their bodies are fiery, we need not fear them, since they are in proportion to the All and to the earth; we should look instead to their souls—the very thing for which these people themselves surely claim to be valued. And yet their bodies too, outstanding in size and beauty, cooperate and work together with the things that come about according to nature—things that could never fail to happen as long as the first realities exist—and they complete the All, being great parts of it. And if humans are something valuable compared with other animals, these are far more so, being in the All not to tyrannize but to provide order and arrangement. And what is said to come about from them should be taken as signs of what will be; while the things that come about turn out differently by chance circumstances—for the same things could not happen to everyone—and by the moments of birth, by

places very far apart, and by the dispositions of souls. Nor, again, should one demand that all be good; nor, because this is impossible, [is it fitting] for those who once more claim that these things should differ in no way from those to be quick to find fault; nor should one think evil is anything other than what falls short in understanding, a lesser good, always toward the smaller—as if someone were to call nature evil because it is not perception, and the perceptive power evil because it is not reason. Otherwise they will be forced to say there are evils there too; for there too Soul is worse than Intellect, and Intellect less than something else.

SPELLS AND THE DESPISING OF VIRTUE

Gnostic incantations and exorcisms are mocked, and their contempt for the world leaves no room for virtue.

2.9.14 But above all, they themselves in another way too make the beings there less than pure. When they write incantations as if addressing them, and not only the Soul but also what is above it, what are they doing but saying that those beings are subject to spells, charms and persuasions? That they obey a word and can be led, if one of us is skilled enough at saying these particular things in this particular way: chants and sounds, breathings and hissings of the voice, and everything else that their writings prescribe for working magic there? And if they don't want to say this, then how can incorporeal beings be moved by sounds? So by the very means with which they make their own doctrines look more august, they have, without noticing it, stripped those beings of their majesty. They say they purify themselves of diseases. If they said they did it by moderation and an orderly way of life, they would be right, just as the philosophers say. As it is, they suppose that diseases are spirits, and they claim, and advertise, that they can drive these out by a word. This might make them seem more impressive to the many, who marvel at the powers of magicians. But they would not persuade people of sound mind that diseases do not have their causes in exhaus-

tion, or excess, or deficiency, or decay, and in general in changes whose origin is either outside or inside. Their treatments show it too. When the bowels have moved, or a drug has been given, the disease has passed down and out; so too when blood has been drawn; and fasting too has cured. Or did the spirit get hungry, and did the drug make it waste away? Did it sometimes leave all at once, or stay inside?

But if it still stays, how is it that the person is no longer sick while it is inside? And if it has gone out, why? What has happened to it? Perhaps it was being fed by the disease. Then the disease was something other than the spirit. Next, if it enters when there is no cause, why isn't the person always sick? And if it enters when a cause has arisen, what need is there of the spirit to make him sick? The cause is enough to produce the fever. And it is absurd that the moment the cause arises, the spirit should at once spring into existence, as it were, alongside the cause, ready and waiting. But it is clear how, and for what purpose, they have said these things too; and that is why, no less than for the rest, we have mentioned these spirits as well. The rest I leave to you to examine as you read, and to observe this everywhere: that the kind of philosophy we pursue, besides all its other goods, displays simplicity of character together with pure understanding. It aims at dignity, not arrogance; its confidence comes with reason, with great security and caution, and the widest circumspection. Compare everything else with philosophy of this kind. The philosophy of the others has been built in the most opposite way in every respect; it would not befit us to say any more about them.

2.9.15 But above all we must not overlook what these doctrines do to the souls of those who hear them and are persuaded to despise the cosmos and what is in it. There are two schools of thought about attaining the end. One sets pleasure, the pleasure of the body, as the end; the other chooses the beautiful and virtue, the desire for which depends on god and leads back to god—how, we must consider elsewhere. Epicurus, who abolishes providence, urges us to pursue pleasure and enjoyment, which

is all that is left. But this doctrine is still more brazen. It finds fault with the lord of providence and with providence itself; it scorns all the laws of this world; it mocks virtue, discovered over the whole course of time, and moderation along with it, so that nothing beautiful may be seen to exist here at all. And so it has done away with moderation, and with the justice that is innate in character and is perfected by reason and training, and in general with everything by which a person could become good.[8] So what is left for them is pleasure, their own interest, what is not shared with other people, and mere need—unless someone's own nature is better than these doctrines. For nothing of all this is beautiful in their eyes; only something else, which they will go after some day.

And yet those who already have knowledge ought to pursue it starting from here, and in pursuing it ought first to set these things right, since they come from a divine nature. For it belongs to that nature to heed the beautiful—[the] nature that scorns the pleasure of the body. Those who have no share in virtue could never be moved toward those higher things at all. There is evidence against them in this too: they have produced no account of virtue, and have left the discussion of these matters out entirely. They say neither what it is, nor how many kinds there are, nor any of the many fine things studied in the writings of the ancients, nor what it comes from and how it will be acquired, nor how the soul is cared for, nor how it is purified. Just saying "Look to god" does nothing to advance anyone, unless one also teaches how to look. For what prevents someone, one might ask, from "looking" while abstaining from no pleasure, or while unable to control his anger—remembering the name "god" but held fast by every passion, and making no attempt to get rid of any of them? Virtue, advancing to its goal and coming to be in the soul together with understanding, reveals god. Without true virtue, "god" is just a name.

2.9.16 Nor, again, does despising the cosmos and the gods in it and the other beautiful things make one good. Every bad person

would despise the gods even before; and someone who was not bad before would become bad by that very act of despising, even if he were not bad in everything else. Indeed, the honor they claim to pay to the intelligible gods would itself become devoid of fellow-feeling. Whoever loves anything also cherishes everything akin to what he loves, and loves the children of the father he loves. And every soul is that father's child. The souls in these beings too are intellectual and good, and joined to the beings there much more closely than ours are. For how could this cosmos exist if it were cut off from that one? And how could the gods in it? But we have said this before. The point now is that, since they despise what is akin to those beings, they don't know those beings either, except in words. Again, how is it pious to say that providence does not reach to the things here, or to anything at all? And how is [it] consistent with themselves? For they say that it provides for them alone. Is that once they have got there, or also while they are here? If there, how did they come here? If here, how are they still here? And how is it that he himself is not here too? For how will he know that they are here? And how will he know that, being here, they have not forgotten him and become bad? But if he knows those who have not become bad, he knows those who have, too, in order to tell them apart from the others. So he will be present to all and will be in this cosmos, in whatever way; and so the cosmos will share in him. But if he is absent from the cosmos, he will be absent from you too, and you will have nothing to say about him, or about the beings that come after him.

But whether some providence comes to you from there, or whatever you like, the cosmos at any rate has it from there, and has not been abandoned and never will be. Providence belongs much more to wholes than to parts, and so, much more, does the share in that Soul; its existence shows this, and its intelligent existence. Which of those who so senselessly look down on it is as well ordered or as intelligent as the All? Even to compare

8 Epicurus (341–270 BC), founder of the Epicurean school, held that the gods take no care of the world and that pleasure is the goal of life.

them is laughable and utterly absurd; anyone who made the comparison other than for the sake of argument could not escape impiety. Even to inquire about these things is not the mark of an intelligent person, but of someone blind, who has neither perception nor intellect at all and is far from seeing [the] intelligible world—since he does not see this one. For who could be a musician who, having seen the harmony in the intelligible, will not be stirred when he hears the harmony in perceptible sounds? Or who skilled in geometry and numbers will not take pleasure when he sees with his eyes what is symmetrical, proportioned and ordered? After all, even with paintings, those who look at the works of art with their eyes do not all see the same things in the same way. When they recognize in the perceptible an imitation of what lies in thought, they are, as it were, thrown into turmoil and come to a recollection of the truth; and it is from this experience that loves are stirred. Someone who sees beauty well imitated in a face is carried off to that world. Will anyone, then, be so sluggish of mind and so unmoved toward anything else that, seeing all the beauties in the perceptible world, all its symmetry and this great good order, and the form that shines out in the stars, distant as they are, he will not be led by this to reflect, and be seized with awe—"What things, and from what source!"? Then he has neither understood these things nor seen those.

BEAUTY HERE AND BEAUTY THERE

Whoever despises the body's beauty should look past it to the Soul that made it beautiful.

2.9.17 And yet, even if they were inclined to hate the nature of body because they have heard Plato often finding fault with the body for the hindrances it puts in the soul's way, and saying that all bodily nature is inferior, they should have stripped it away in thought and looked at what remains. There is an intelligible sphere that embraces the form the cosmos bears; souls in their order, which without bodies give magnitude and lead the intelli-

gible out into extension, so that what has come to be may, by its size, match in power the partlessness of its model—for what is great there in power is great here in bulk. And whether they wanted to think of this sphere as moving, carried round by the power of a god who holds the beginning, middle and end of it all, or as standing still, as not yet governing anything else, it would have served them well toward a conception of the Soul that governs this All. Then, placing the body in it too—the Soul suffering nothing, but giving to another, since there can be no envy among the gods, to have whatever each thing is able to receive—they should have thought about the cosmos in this way: granting the Soul of the cosmos so much power that it made the nature of body, which is not beautiful, share in beauty as far as it was capable of being made beautiful. And this very beauty moves souls, divine as they are. Unless, of course, they say that they themselves are not moved, and see no difference between ugly and beautiful bodies. But then they will see none between ugly and beautiful ways of life either, or beautiful studies; nor, then, contemplation; nor, then, god. For these things here exist because of the first ones. If not these, then, not those either; and so these things here are beautiful, coming after those. But when they say they despise beauty here, they would do well to despise the beauty of boys and women, so as not to be overcome by it and fall into licentiousness.

But they must realize that they would have nothing to be proud of if they despised what is ugly; their pride is in despising what they had first called beautiful, in their bad state of mind. Next, that beauty is not the same in a part and in the whole, in all the individuals and in the All. Then, that there are beauties of this kind even in perceptible and partial beings, such as those of the spirits, so that one admires their maker and believes that they come from there, and from this that the beauty there is beyond telling—that is, if one does not cling to these things but goes from them to those, without reviling these. And if they are beautiful within too, one should say that inner and outer are in harmony; if they are bad within, that they fall short in their bet-

ter part. But perhaps it is not even possible for something really beautiful outside to be ugly inside; for the outside is not wholly beautiful without the inside having prevailed. Those who are called beautiful but are ugly within have a false outward beauty too. And if someone says he has seen people who really are beautiful but ugly within, I think he has not seen them, but takes others to be the beautiful ones. Or if he has, their ugliness is acquired, though they are beautiful by nature; for here there are many obstacles to reaching completion. But what was there to prevent the All, which is beautiful, from being beautiful within too? Moreover, those to whom nature did not give perfection from the beginning might perhaps fail to reach completion, so that they can even become bad. But the All was never a child, so as to be incomplete, nor did [anything] come to it as it advanced, or get added to its body. For from where? It had everything. Nor could one invent any such thing for its soul either. And even if one granted them this, it would still not be anything bad.

2.9.18 But perhaps they will say that their doctrines make people flee the body, hating it from afar, while ours hold the soul down to it. That would be like two people living in the same beautiful house. One finds fault with its construction and its builder, yet stays in it none the less; the other does not find fault, but says the builder built it with the greatest skill, and waits for the time to come when he will leave and no longer need a house. The first might think himself wiser and readier to leave because he knows how to say that the walls are made of soulless stones and timber and fall far short of a true dwelling—not realizing that he differs only in not putting up with what is necessary; if indeed he does not do this out of discontent, [but] secretly loves the beauty of the stones. As long as we have bodies, we must stay in the houses built by a good sister soul, which has great power to create without toil. Or do they think fit to call even the basest of men brothers, while with their raving mouths they refuse to call the sun and the beings in the heavens brothers—or even the World Soul? It is not right, to be sure, to

join ourselves in kinship to the bad; but only to those who have become good, and are not bodies but souls in bodies, and are able to dwell in them in a way that comes very close to the way the Soul of the All dwells in the whole body.

This means not to be jarred, not to give in to pleasures or sights that strike us from outside, and not to be disturbed if something is harsh. That Soul is not struck, for there is nothing to strike it. But we who are here could, by virtue, ward off the blows: some we could make smaller by greatness of mind, others, through strength, would not even strike us. And when we come close to being unstruck, we could imitate the Soul of the All and that of the stars; and having come close to likeness, we could hasten toward the same goal, and the same things would be objects of vision for us too, since we too have been well prepared, by nature and by care. But they have it from the beginning. Nor, if they say that they alone can contemplate, would they contemplate any the more for it; nor because they claim that they can leave when they die, while those beings cannot, since they forever adorn the heavens. They would say this out of inexperience of what "outside" really is, and of the way all soul cares for all that is soulless. So it is possible not to love the body, to become pure, to despise death, to know what is better and pursue it, and not to begrudge others who are able to pursue it and are forever pursuing it, as if they were not. And it is possible not to suffer the same thing as those who think the stars do not move because their perception tells them the stars stand still. For this is why these people too do not think that the nature of the stars sees what is outside: because they do not see the stars' soul being outside.

III.1 On Destiny

Περὶ εἱμαρμένης
Plotinus reviews theories of causation—atoms, Stoic fate, astrology—and argues that the soul is a cause in its own right.
no. 3 in order of writing

3.1.1 Everything that comes to be and everything that is either comes to be and is according to causes, or both are without cause. Or, in both cases, some are without cause and some with a cause. Or all the things that come to be are with a cause, while of the things that are, some are with a cause and some without, or none with a cause. Or, conversely, all the things that are are with a cause, while of the things that come to be some are one way and some the other, or none of them with a cause. Now among eternal things, the first cannot be traced back to other causes, since they are first; but let whatever depends on the first have its being from them. And when one accounts for the activities of each, let one trace them back to their substances; for their being consists in this, in giving off an activity of such and such a kind. As for things that come to be, or that always are but do not always exercise the same activity, we must say that all of them come to be according to causes. We must not admit the uncaused, giving no room either to empty swerves, or to a sudden movement of bodies that arises with nothing preceding it, or to a capricious impulse of the soul when nothing has moved it to do something it was not doing before.[1]

Or rather, by this very fact a greater necessity would hold it: not to belong to itself, but to be carried along by such motions,

unwilled and uncaused as they are. For either what it wanted moved it—and this is either outside or inside—or what it desired; or, if nothing desirable moved it, it would not have moved at all. Since all things come to be according to causes, it is easy to grasp the immediate causes of each and trace things back to them. The cause of walking to the marketplace, for example, is thinking one ought to see someone or collect a debt, and in general choosing this or that and setting out for it, and then its seeming right to each person to do this particular thing. And some things can be traced back to the arts[: for instance,] medicine and the doctor [are the cause] of being healed. And of getting rich, a treasure found, or a gift from someone, or making money by labor or a trade. And of a child, the father, and whatever else contributes from outside to producing children, coming from one source or another: a particular diet, for example, or, a little further back, a good flow for begetting children, or a woman well suited to childbearing. And, in general, to nature.

3.1.2 To come this far and stop, unwilling to go higher, is perhaps the mark of someone lazy, who doesn't listen to those who ascend to the first causes and to the causes beyond. For why is it that when the same things happen—when the moon appears, say—one man steals and another does not? And when similar influences come from the environment, one falls sick and another does not? And [one] becomes rich and another poor from the same work? Differences of manners, characters and fortunes do indeed call for going further back. And so, never coming to a stop, some posit bodily principles, atoms for instance. By the atoms' motion, collisions and entanglements with one another they make each thing be and come to be as it does, according to how the atoms combine, act and are acted upon; and they make our impulses and dispositions be as the atoms make them. So they bring this necessity, the one that comes from atoms, into the things that are. And if someone assigns other bodies as prin-

1 The "swerve" is the Epicurean doctrine that atoms sometimes deviate from their course without any cause.

ciples and has everything come from them, he makes the things that are slaves to the necessity that comes from those bodies.

Others go to the principle of the All and derive everything from it. They say that it is a cause that pervades all things, and that it not only moves but also makes each of them; they posit that it is itself fate and the most sovereign cause, and that not only everything else that happens but even our thoughts come from its movements—as each of an animal's parts moves not of itself but from the ruling part in each animal. Others hold that the revolution of the All, which embraces everything and produces everything by its motion, and the positions and configurations of the planets and fixed stars relative to one another, are the source of each thing; their confidence comes from the predictions they make from these.[2] Moreover, if someone speaks of the interweaving of causes with one another and the chain from above, of later things always following earlier ones and leading back to them, since they came to be through them and would not have come to be without them, and of later things being slaves to those before them—he will plainly be introducing fate in another way. And one would not miss the truth if one divided these too into two groups: some hang everything from some one thing, others do not. We shall speak of these. For now the argument must go to the first group; then we must examine the views of the others in turn.

3.1.3 To hand everything over to bodies, whether atoms or the so-called elements, and to have order, reason and the soul that governs generated from their disorderly motion, is absurd and impossible either way—but more impossible, if one can say so, from atoms. Many true arguments have been made about these. But even if one were to posit such principles, it would not follow, even so, that either necessity over all things or fate in some other sense must result. Suppose first that atoms exist. They will move, then, some downward—let there be a "down"—and some

2 The first group are the Stoics, for whom fate is a divine cause pervading everything; "the ruling part" is their term for the soul's governing center. The second are the astrologers.

sideways, wherever they happen to go, different ones in different directions. Nothing, then, would happen in an orderly way, since there is no order; what comes about is simply whatever came about, when it did. So there would be no prediction or divination at all: neither by art—how could there be an art of what is disorderly?—nor by possession and inspiration, for here too the future must be determinate. Bodies, struck by the atoms, will necessarily suffer whatever the atoms bring them; but to what movements of atoms will one attribute the works and affections of the soul? What blow from an atom, moving downward or colliding anywhere, will make reasonings or impulses be of this or that kind—or make reasonings, impulses or thoughts be necessary, or exist at all? And what about when the soul opposes the affections of the body? By what motions of atoms will one man be compelled to be a geometer, another to study arithmetic and astronomy, another to be wise? For our own activity, and our being living creatures at all, will be utterly lost, if we are carried wherever the bodies lead, as they push us about like soulless bodies. The same applies against those who posit other bodies as the causes of everything: these can heat and chill us and destroy weaker things, but none of the works that soul produces could come from them; these must come from another principle.

3.1.4 But is it, then, that one soul, pervading the All, accomplishes everything, each thing being moved by it as a part, in the way the whole leads; and that, as the causes are carried along from there, their continuous succession and interweaving must follow—and this is fate? It would be as if someone said that, in a plant whose principle lies in the root, the interweaving that extends from there to all its parts and binds them to one another, their acting and being acted upon, is one administration and, as it were, the fate of the plant. But first, this very excess of necessity, of a fate of this kind, does away with fate itself, and with the chain and interweaving of causes. Our limbs are moved according to the ruling part, and it is unreasonable to say that they are moved by fate; for it is not that one thing

imparts the motion and another receives it and makes use of the impulse that comes from it, but it is the ruling part that is first in moving the leg. In the same way, if in the All too there is to be one thing acting and being acted upon, and not one thing from another, by causes that always lead back to something else, then it is not true that everything comes to be by causes; rather, all things will be one. So we are not ourselves, and no act is ours. Nor do we ourselves reason: our decisions are someone else's reasoning. Nor do we act, any more than our feet kick; we do, through parts of ourselves. But each must be itself; our actions and thoughts must be our own; and each person's fine and shameful actions must come from himself, and we must not, at any rate, attribute the doing of the shameful ones to the All.

AGAINST THE ASTROLOGERS' CAUSES

The stars may signify what will happen, but they do not make our characters or actions.

3.1.5 But perhaps things are not accomplished in that way. Perhaps the revolution that governs everything and the movement of the stars arrange each thing according to how the stars stand toward one another, in culminations and risings, settings and conjunctions. At any rate, divining from these, they predict both what will happen in the All and what will happen to each person —how he will fare in fortune and, not least, in mind. One can see, they say, that the other animals and the plants grow and diminish through their sympathy with the stars, and are affected by them in other ways too. The regions of the earth differ from one another according to their relation to the All, and above all to the sun. And it is not only the other plants and animals that follow their regions, but human beings too: their looks, sizes and colors, their tempers and desires, their ways of life and characters. So the revolution of the All is sovereign over everything. Against this, the first thing to say is that this man too, in a different way, attributes to those beings what is ours—choices and passions, vices and impulses—and, granting us

nothing, leaves us to be stones that are carried along, not human beings with an activity of their own, coming from themselves and their own nature. Rather, we must grant to ourselves what is ours, while allowing that some things come from the All into what is already ours and our own. Distinguishing what we do from what we undergo of necessity, we must not attribute everything to the stars. We must allow that from the regions and the differences of the surrounding air there come into us things like heat or cold in our temperament; and things come from our parents too: we resemble our parents, at any rate, mostly in appearance and in some of the irrational affections of the soul. Nevertheless, even among people who look alike because of their regions, a very great variety is seen in character and in thought, as though such things came from another principle. And the resistance we put up against bodily temperaments and desires could fittingly be mentioned here too.

If, because they predict what happens to each person by looking at the positions of the stars, they infer that it is produced by the stars, then birds too would produce what they signify, and so would everything diviners look to in making predictions. One might examine these matters more precisely from the following as well. Whatever someone predicts by looking at the position the stars had when each person was born, they say this comes about through the stars, which not only signify it but also produce it. Well then, when they speak of noble birth, as coming from distinguished fathers and mothers, how can one say that this is produced, when it already belonged to the parents before the stars took up the position from which they make the prediction? Again, they tell parents' fortunes from their children's births; and from the fathers they tell what the children's dispositions will be and what fortunes they will meet with, about children not yet born; and from brothers they tell brothers' deaths, and from wives what concerns their husbands, and the reverse. How then could the position of the stars at each person's birth produce what is already said to be going to turn out so, from the fathers? Either those earlier positions will be what produces it,

or, if those do not produce it, these do not either. And then there is the resemblance to parents in appearance: beauty and ugliness, they say, come from the family, not from the motion of the stars. And it is reasonable that, at the same moments, all sorts of other animals are born together with human beings. All of these, to whom the same position applies, ought to have the same fortunes. How then can the [same] configurations produce human beings at once, and the other creatures at once?

3.1.6 No: each thing comes to be according to its own nature—a horse because it comes from a horse, a human being because from a human being, and of this sort because from one of this sort. Let the revolution of the All be a contributing cause, leaving the greater part to the things that come to be. Let the stars give much to the body, in a bodily way: heat and cold, and the bodily temperaments that follow. How then do they give characters and ways of life, and especially those that do not seem to be slaves to bodily temperament—someone being a grammarian, say, or a geometer, or a dice-player, or an inventor of these things? And how could wickedness of character be given by [stars that are] gods? And in general, how could they give all the evils they are said to give when they are harmed—because they set and because they pass beneath the earth? As if they suffered something different when they set relative to us, and were not forever moving on the heavenly sphere, keeping the same relation to the earth! Nor should one say that one god becomes worse or better by seeing another god in this or that position, so that they do us good when they are in a good state and harm us in the opposite case. Rather, they move for the preservation of the whole, and they also provide another service: those who know this kind of grammar can look at them as at letters and read the future from their configurations, working out what is signified by analogy—as if someone were to say that because the bird flies high it signifies some lofty deeds.

3.1.7 It remains to consider the view that posits a single principle which interweaves all things, and, as it were, strings them together and brings about the "how" of each—a principle from

which everything is accomplished according to seminal rational principles. This opinion too is close to the one that says that all our states and movements, and every one [of all things], come from the World Soul, even if it wants to grant us and each thing something toward acting on our own. It holds, however, the absolute necessity of all things: once all the causes are included, it is impossible for anything not to happen; for nothing is left to prevent it or make it happen otherwise, if everything has been included in fate. Things being so, and set in motion as from a single principle, they will leave us nothing but to be carried wherever they push us. For the images of our imagination will follow from what preceded, and our impulses from them, and "what is up to us" will be a mere name. The fact that it is we who have the impulse will add nothing, since the impulse arises in accordance with those causes. What is ours will be like what belongs to the other animals, and to infants, who go by blind impulses, and to madmen—for they too have impulses; and, by Zeus, like the impulses of fire, and of everything that, a slave to its own constitution, moves in accordance with it. Everyone sees this and does not dispute it; but they look for other causes of this impulse and do not stop at it as a principle.

SOUL AS A PRINCIPLE

Each soul is a primary cause, free outside body and partly bound within it.

3.1.8 What other cause, then, coming in besides these, will leave nothing uncaused, keep sequence and order, allow us to be something, and not do away with predictions and divinations? We must bring soul into the things that are as another principle —not only the Soul of the All but, together with it, the soul of each individual, as a principle of no small importance—to weave everything together. This soul does not itself come to be from seeds, as other things do, but is a primary, originating cause. Without a body, then, it is wholly its own master and free, and outside cosmic causation; but once brought into a body, it is no

longer master of everything, since it has been ranked with other things. Chance circumstances—all the things around it, among which it fell when it came into their midst—have led it in many things, so that some things it does because of them, while in others it masters them and leads them wherever it wants. The better soul masters more, the worse less. For the soul that gives in to the body's temperament is compelled to feel desire or anger, or is abased by poverty, or puffed up by wealth, or made a tyrant by power. But the other, the soul good by nature, has held out even in these same circumstances, and has changed them more than it has been changed, so that it has altered some and gone along with others without vice.

3.1.9 Necessary, then, are all the things that come about from choice and chance blended together; for what else could there be? Once all the causes are taken, everything happens absolutely; and among the external causes is included whatever contribution comes from the revolution of the heavens. Now when the soul has been altered by external things and acts and has an impulse, using, as it were, a blind momentum, we must not call the action or the disposition voluntary. Nor when the soul, being worse by its own doing, uses impulses that are not right in every case, nor in command. But when it has an impulse with its own reason as its guide, pure and unaffected, this alone is the impulse we must call up to us and voluntary; and this is our own act. It has not come from elsewhere but from within, from the pure soul, from a first principle that guides and is sovereign—not from a soul that has been led astray through ignorance, or defeated by the violence of desires, which come upon it and lead and drag it, and no longer allow there to be acts on our part, only things we undergo.

3.1.10 In the end, then, the argument says that all things are signified and come to be according to causes, but that these are of two kinds: some things come about through soul, others through other causes, the ones around it. And when souls do what they do according to right reason, they do it of themselves; otherwise they are hindered from doing what is their own, and

are acted upon rather than act. So the causes of lacking understanding are other things; and it is perhaps correct to say that such actions are done by fate—at least for those who hold that fate is an external cause. But the best things come from us. For this is the nature [we] belong to, when we are alone. The good do fine things, and doing them is up to them; the others do fine things to the extent that they are allowed a breathing space—not getting their understanding from elsewhere, when they have it, but simply not being hindered.

III.2 On Providence I

Περὶ προνοίας πρῶτον
Plotinus defends providence against the world's apparent evils, arguing that the whole is good even when its parts suffer.
no. 47 in order of writing

3.2.1 To ascribe the being and structure of this All to spontaneity and chance is unreasonable, the mark of a man who has neither intellect nor perception; this is plain, I suppose, even before argument, and many adequate arguments have been set down to show it. But what is the manner in which each of these things comes to be and has been made? Some of them do not seem to come about rightly, and so people come to be puzzled about the providence of the All: it has occurred to some to say that there is none, and to others that [the cosmos] has been made by an evil craftsman. This we should examine, taking up the argument from above and from the beginning. Providence for each individual, then—a reasoning before action about how something that ought to be done should or should not come about, or how we should or should not have something—let that be set aside. Let us assume the providence we call providence of the All, and connect what follows. If we said that the cosmos came to be at some point in time, not having existed before, we would posit in our account the same providence we said there is in particular cases: a kind of foresight and reasoning on the part of god about how this All might come to be, and how it might be as good as possible.

But since we say that the cosmos has always existed and has never not existed, we would be right, and consistent, to say that providence for the All is its being in accordance with Intellect, and that Intellect is prior to it—not as being earlier in time, but because the cosmos comes from Intellect, and Intellect is prior by nature and is its cause, as an archetype, so to speak, and model, of which the cosmos is an image, existing through it and subsisting forever. It goes like this. The nature of Intellect and being is the true and first cosmos. It is not separated from itself, not weakened by division, not deficient even in its parts, since none of them is torn away from the whole. Rather, its whole life and whole intellect, living and thinking together in one, makes the part a whole and all of it friendly to itself; no part is separated from another, or has become merely other and estranged from the rest. So no part wrongs another, not even if it is its opposite. Being everywhere one and complete wherever it is, it stands still and undergoes no alteration; for no part acts on another. For what purpose would it act, when it lacks nothing? Why would a rational principle produce a rational principle, or an intellect another intellect? The capacity to make something by oneself turns out, then, to belong to what is not in a good state in every respect, but makes and moves in so far as it is worse. For beings that are blessed in every way, it is enough to stand still in themselves and be what they are; to busy themselves would not be safe for them, since it would draw them out of themselves. But that world is so blessed that by not acting it accomplishes great things, and by remaining in itself it makes no small ones.

3.2.2 At any rate, from that true and single cosmos this cosmos takes its existence, a cosmos that is not truly one. It is, in any case, many and divided into a multitude, one part standing apart from another and become estranged from it; there is no longer friendship alone but enmity too, because of the separation, and in its deficiency each part is of necessity at war with another. For the part is not sufficient to itself; while being preserved, it is at war with the other by which it is preserved. And

it came to be not by a reasoning that it ought to come to be, but by the necessity of a secondary nature. For that world was not such as to be the last of beings. It was first, and had much power —all power; and so it had this power too, of making something else without seeking to make it. For if it sought, it would not already have it from itself, and it would not come from its own being; it would be like a craftsman who has his making not from himself but brought in from outside, acquired by learning. Intellect, then, giving something of itself to matter, made all things while remaining unmoved and at rest; and this something is a rational principle flowing from Intellect. For what flows out of Intellect is a rational principle, and it flows forever, as long as Intellect is present among the things that are.

In the rational principle in a seed, all the parts are together and in the same place, none fighting with another, none at odds, none an obstacle; then something comes to be in bulk, with its different parts in different places, and then one part may even obstruct another, and one consume another. In just the same way, from one Intellect and the rational principle that comes from it this All arose and spread apart, and of necessity some things became friendly and gentle, others hostile and warlike. Some willingly, some unwillingly, they did each other harm, and in perishing brought about each other's coming to be. And yet, acting and being acted upon in this way, they established a single harmony among themselves, each sounding its own notes, while the rational principle over them produces the harmony and a single ordering for the whole. For this All is not Intellect and rational principle, as that world is, but participates in Intellect and rational principle. That is why it needed harmony: Intellect and necessity came together, necessity dragging toward the worse and carrying toward unreason, since it is itself without reason, but Intellect nevertheless ruling over necessity. For the intelligible is rational principle alone, and there could not come to be another that is rational principle alone. If something else came to be, it had to be less than that, and not a rational principle—nor, again, matter, for matter is without

order. So it is a mixture. What it ends in is matter and rational principle; where it begins is soul, presiding over the mixture. And we must not think that soul suffers hardship: it governs this All with the greatest ease, by its presence, so to speak.

3.2.3 Nor could one reasonably fault this cosmos for not being beautiful, or for not being the best of things that have bodies, nor again blame the cause of its existence. First, because it exists of necessity and did not come from reasoning, but from a better nature naturally generating something like itself. Then, even if it were a reasoning that made it, that reasoning would not be ashamed of what it made. For it made a whole that is all-beautiful, self-sufficient, and friendly to itself and to its own parts, the more important and the lesser alike, as being suited to it. So someone who blames the whole on the basis of its parts would be making an absurd charge. One must consider the parts in relation to the whole itself, whether they are in harmony and fit with it; and in considering the whole, one must not look at a few small parts. That is not blaming the cosmos, but taking some of its parts in isolation—as if someone were to look at a single hair of a whole living being, or a toe, ignoring the whole human being, a wondrous sight; or, by Zeus, were to pass over the other animals and pick out the most worthless; or, passing over a whole kind, humankind for instance, were to bring Thersites forward.[1]

THE COSMOS SPEAKS

The whole cosmos declares that god made it complete, full of living beings, gods and good souls.

Since, then, what has come to be is the cosmos as a whole, if you contemplate it you might perhaps hear it say: God made me, and from there I came to be, complete, made up of all living beings, sufficient for myself and self-sufficient, lacking nothing, since all things are in me: plants and animals, and the nature of all

1 Thersites is the ugliest and most abusive of the Greeks at Troy in Homer's *Iliad* (2.212–219).

things that come to be, and many gods and peoples of spirits, and good souls, and human beings made happy by virtue. For it is not the case that the earth is adorned with all its plants and animals of every kind, and the power of soul has reached as far as the sea, while the whole air and ether and the whole heaven have no share in soul. No: up there are all the good souls, giving life to the stars and to the well-ordered, eternal revolution of the heaven, which, in imitation of Intellect, moves intelligently in a circle around the same center forever; for it seeks nothing outside itself. All the things in me aspire to the Good, and each attains it according to its own power. For the whole heaven depends on it, and all my soul, and the gods in my parts, and all the animals and plants, and whatever in me seems to be soulless. Some seem to share only in being, others in life, others more fully in perceiving; others already have reason, others the whole of life. For one must not demand equal things from things that are not equal. Seeing does not belong to fingers but to eyes; to a finger belongs something else—being a finger, I suppose, and having what is its own.

3.2.4 If fire is put out by water, and something else is destroyed by fire, don't be surprised. Something else brought it into being; it was not brought into being by itself, and it was destroyed by something else. It came into being, too, through the destruction of something else, so that, if this is how things stand, its destruction would bring it nothing terrible; and in place of the fire that was destroyed there is another fire. In the bodiless heaven each thing remains. In this heaven the whole is always alive, and so are all its honored and principal parts, while the souls change bodies and come to be now in one form, now in another; and when it is able to, a soul stands outside generation and is with the whole of Soul. Bodies live by species, and each of them as a whole, since animals will come from them and will be nourished. For life here is in motion, but there it is motionless. But motion had to come from motionlessness, and from the life within itself there had to come another life from it: a life that breathes, as it were, and is not still, the breathing of the life that

is at rest. Animals' attacks on one another and their destructions are necessary, since they did not come into being to be everlasting. They came into being because a rational principle took hold of all matter and had them all within itself, since they are there in the heaven above. Where would they have come from if they were not there? Men's wrongs against one another might have as their cause the desire for the good; but failing through their inability to attain it, they turn on one another. When they do wrong they pay the penalty: they are made worse in their souls by the activities of vice, and they are placed in a worse region. For nothing ever escapes what has been ordained in the law of the All.

Order does not exist because of disorder, nor law because of lawlessness, as someone thinks, so that the better might come to be through the worse and be made visible by it. No: disorder exists because of order, which is imposed from outside. It is because there is order that there is disorder, and it is because of law and rational principle; and it is because there is a rational principle that there is lawlessness and folly. The better have not produced the worse; it is that the things that need to receive the better have not been able to receive them, whether because of their own nature, or by chance, or through hindrance from other things. For what makes use of an imposed order might fail to attain it either because of itself, from itself, or because of something else, from something else. Many things also suffer at the hands of others, even when the agents do not intend it and are aiming at something else. But living beings that have, of themselves, a self-determined motion might incline sometimes toward the better, sometimes toward the worse. The turn toward the worse is perhaps not worth looking into. A slight turn, made at the beginning, keeps making the error larger and greater as it goes on in that direction; and there is a body with it, and, necessarily, desire. And the first step, the sudden one, if it is overlooked and not taken back at once, has even produced a choice of what one has fallen into. Yet punishment follows; and it is not unjust that one who has become like this should suffer what cor-

responds to his disposition. Nor must we demand that happiness belong to those who have done nothing to deserve happiness. Only the good are happy; that, after all, is why the gods are happy too.

3.2.5 If, then, souls can be happy even in this All, and some are not, we must not blame the place but their incapacities, which were unable to compete well where the prizes of virtue are set out. And if those who have not become divine do not have a divine life, what is terrible in that? Poverty and illness are nothing to the good, and they are of benefit to the bad; and those who have bodies must fall ill. Nor are even these things entirely useless for the ordering and completion of the whole. Just as, when some things are destroyed, the rational principle of the All uses what has been destroyed for the generation of others—nothing anywhere escapes being taken hold of by it—so too, when a body has been harmed, and a soul that undergoes such things has been weakened, what illness and vice have seized is placed under another chain of sequence and another order. Some things are of benefit to those who suffer them, poverty and illness for instance; and vice has achieved something useful to the whole by becoming an object lesson in justice and supplying many useful things out of itself. It has made people wide awake, and it rouses intellect and intelligence in those who stand against the ways of wickedness; and it makes them learn what a good thing virtue is, by setting beside it the evils the wicked have. Evils did not come to be for these purposes. What has been said is that, since they did come to be, it uses them too as needed. This belongs to the greatest power: to be able to use even evils well, and to be capable of using things that have become shapeless to make other shapes. On the whole, evil must be set down as a falling short of the good; and there must be a falling short of the good here, because it is in something else. So the something else in which the good is, being other than the good, produces the falling short; for this was not good. That is why evils will not be destroyed: some things are less than others in relation to the nature of the good, and things other than the

good have received from there the cause of their existence but have become like this by being far off.

3.2.6 Then there is the injustice of desert, when good people have bad things and worthless people the opposite. To say that nothing is bad for the good man, nor anything good for the worthless one, is correct. But why does the one get what is contrary to nature, and the wicked what accords with nature? How is it fine to distribute things like that? Still, if what accords with nature adds nothing toward being happy, and what is contrary to nature takes nothing away from the evil in the worthless, what difference does it make whether it's this way or that? No more than it does if one man is beautiful in body and the other ugly. But the fitting, the proportionate and what accords with desert would have been the other way, and that is not how things are now; and the other way would have been the work of the best providence. And then, for the bad to be masters and rulers of cities and decent people to be slaves would not be fitting either, even if these things add nothing to the possession of good and evil. And yet a wicked ruler might commit the most lawless acts; and the bad win in wars and do every kind of shameful thing once they have taken prisoners. All these things make one wonder how they happen if there is providence. For even if whoever is going to make anything at all must look to the whole, it is still right to order the parts as is due, especially when they are ensouled and have life and are rational; and providence must reach to everything, and this must be its work: to have neglected nothing. If, then, we say that this All depends on Intellect, and that its power has reached into everything, we must try to show in what way each of these things is as it should be.

3.2.7 First, then, we must accept that those who look for what is fine in the mixed must not demand it wholly, as much as being fine amounts to in the unmixed, nor look for first things among the second. Since it has a body too, we must grant that something comes from this as well into the All, and praise as coming from the rational principle as much as the mixture was able to

receive, if nothing of this is lacking. For instance, if someone were examining the perceptible human being to see who is most beautiful, he would surely not expect him to be the same as the human being in Intellect; he would be satisfied with the maker if, even though the man is in flesh and sinews and bones, he has taken hold of him with the rational principle, so as to make these beautiful too and to enable the rational principle to spread over the matter. With these assumptions laid down, we must go on from here to the questions we are investigating; for perhaps in them we may find what is wonderful in the providence and the power from which this All came to exist. Take, then, all the works of souls that stay within the very souls that do the worse things: all the harm bad souls have done to others, for example, and all that bad souls have done to each other. Unless one blames what exercises providence for their being bad at all, it is not proper to demand an account of it, nor to call it to audit, since we assign the blame to the soul that chose.[2] For it has been said that souls too had to have motions of their own, and that they are not only souls but already living beings; and so it is no wonder that, being what they are, they have a life that follows from it. They did not come because there was a cosmos. Before the cosmos they already had the capacity to belong to a cosmos, to care for it, to bring it into existence, to govern it and to make it, in whatever way: whether by presiding over it and giving something from themselves, or by coming down into it, or some in one way and some in another. That is not our subject now; the point is that, however it may be, providence is not to be blamed for these things.

But what about when someone looks at how evils are distributed in relation to their opposites: good men poor and wicked men rich, the worse having more of what human beings, being human, need to have, and ruling both over them and over nations and cities? Is it, then, because providence does not reach as far as the earth? But the fact that everything else comes

2 "The blame belongs to the one who chooses" echoes the myth of Er in Plato's *Republic* (617e).

about by a rational principle is evidence that it reaches the earth too; for animals and plants share in rational principle and soul and life.—But though it reaches, it does not prevail.—But since the All is a single living being, that would be like someone saying that a man's head and face are produced by nature and a rational principle that prevails, while assigning the rest to other causes, to chances or necessities, and saying it turned out poor because of these, or through the weakness of nature. It is neither holy nor pious to concede that these things are not well ordered and then find fault with the work.

GOOD MEN AND BAD RULERS

Humans stand between gods and beasts; the bad rule because the good neglect to arm themselves.

3.2.8 It remains, then, to ask in what way these things are as they should be, and how they share in order—or in what way they are not bad. In every animal the upper parts, the face and head, are more beautiful, while the middle and lower parts are not their equal. Human beings are in the middle and below; above are heaven and the gods in it. Most of the cosmos is gods and the whole heaven in a circle, while the earth is like a center, and like one of the stars. People are astonished at injustice among men because they think man is the precious thing in the All, as though there were nothing wiser. But man lies in the middle between gods and beasts and inclines toward both. Some become like the one, some like the other, and some—the majority—are in between. Those who have turned bad, so as to come close to irrational animals and beasts, drag the middle ones along and use force on them. These are better than those who force them, but they are overpowered by the worse insofar as they too are worse: they are not good, and they have not prepared themselves not to suffer this. Suppose boys who have trained their bodies, but whose souls have become worse than their bodies through lack of education, were to beat in wrestling those who have been trained neither in body nor in soul, and

snatch their food and take their soft clothes: what would the affair be but a joke?

Or how could it not be right for the lawgiver, too, to let those others suffer this as the penalty for their laziness and luxury, if, when gymnasia had been set up for them, they let themselves, through laziness and soft, slack living, become fattened lambs, the prey of wolves? For those who do this, the first penalty is being wolves and wretched men; and then there also lies in store for them what such people must suffer. For those who have become bad, it does not stop here, with dying; what always follows on what went before is according to rational principle and nature, worse things for the worse, better for the better. But things like this are not a wrestling school: there, it's play. When the boys had grown bigger, both lots remaining foolish, both ought by then to have girded themselves and taken up arms, and the spectacle would be finer than for a wrestling trainer. As it is, some are unarmed, and those who have armed themselves win. Here it was not right for a god to fight in person for those who will not fight; for the law says that in wars one must be saved by being brave, not by praying. Nor does one get in a harvest by praying, but by tending the land; nor be healthy without tending one's health. Nor should one be indignant if the worthless get bigger harvests, or if farming goes better for them in general. Then too, it's ridiculous that people should do everything else in life by their own judgment, even if they don't do it in a way the gods would like, and expect to be saved by the gods alone without even doing the things by which the gods tell them to be saved. And so death is better for them than staying alive in a way the laws of the All do not want them to live. So if the opposite happened, and peace were kept amid every kind of folly and vice, providence would be neglectful, letting the worse prevail like that. The bad rule because of the cowardice of the ruled: this is just, and the other is not.

3.2.9 Providence must not be such that we are nothing. If providence were everything, and it alone, it would not even exist; for of what would it still be the providence? There would

be only the divine. And that exists even now. It has come to something else too, not to destroy that other, but coming upon something—a man, say—it was there over him [as providence], keeping the man a man; and that means living by the law of providence, which is doing everything its law says. And it says that for those who have become good there will be a good life, laid up for them hereafter too, and for the bad the opposite. For those who have become bad and abandoned themselves to expect others to be their saviors is not a lawful prayer to make. Nor, then, should they expect gods to rule them in every detail, setting aside their own life, nor good men, who live another life better than human rule, to be their rulers. For they themselves never took care that good men should become rulers over the rest, so that they themselves might be cared for; instead they envy anyone who grows good on his own. There would have been more good men if they had made such men their leaders.

So the human race has come to be as a living being that is not the best, but holds a middle rank and has chosen it. Even so, providence does not let it perish in the place where it lies, but it is always being brought back up toward the higher by all kinds of devices, which the divine uses to make virtue prevail more. It has not lost its rationality: it shares, if not to the highest degree, in wisdom and intellect and skill and justice—at least the justice each has toward the others; and even those they wrong they think they wrong justly, since they deserve it. In this way man is a beautiful work, as beautiful as he can be, and, woven into the All, he has a lot better than that of the other animals on earth. Indeed no one with sense finds fault with the other animals, those lesser than he, that bring adornment to the earth. It would be ridiculous to find fault with them because they bite people, as though people ought to spend their lives asleep. These too must exist. Some of the benefits they bring are obvious, and time has discovered many that were not apparent, so that nothing about them is pointless, even for human beings. It's ridiculous, too, to complain that many of them are wild, when there are wild men as well. And if an animal does not trust men, but

defends itself because it distrusts them, what is surprising about that?

3.2.10 But if men are bad involuntarily, and not willingly so, one could blame neither those who do wrong nor those who suffer, as if they suffered through their own fault. And if it is necessary for them to become bad like this, whether through the revolution of the heavens or through the first principle that gives what follows from there, then it is so by nature. But if it is the rational principle itself that makes them so, how is that not unjust?—Well, "involuntarily" means that error is involuntary. But this does not take away the fact that those who act are themselves acting from themselves. It is because they themselves act that they themselves err; otherwise they would not have erred at all, if they were not the ones acting. And "necessity" does not come from outside; it only means that it happens in every case. And the revolution of the heavens does not mean that nothing is up to us. For if everything came from outside, it would be as the makers themselves wanted; so men would not set themselves against them, nor would there be impious men, if gods made them. As it is, this comes from men themselves. Once a principle is given, what follows is carried through, and all the principles there are are taken into the sequence too; and men are principles as well. At any rate, they are moved toward fine things by their own nature, and this principle is self-determining.

3.2.11 Is each of these things like this through natural necessities and sequences, and as well as possible? Or not: rather, the rational principle makes all these things as their ruler and wills them so, and itself produces even the so-called evils in accordance with reason, not wanting everything to be good—as a craftsman would not make every part of an animal eyes. In the same way the rational principle did not make everything gods: it made some gods, some spirits, a second nature, then men and animals next in order—not out of envy, but by a reason that contains intellectual variety. But we are like people with no experience of painting who complain that the colors are not beautiful

everywhere, when the painter has in fact given each place what suits it; or like someone who finds fault with a play because not everyone in it is a hero, but there is also a servant, and some rustic who talks badly. But the play is not beautiful if one takes out the inferior characters; they too are part of what completes it.

3.2.12 If, then, the rational principle itself, fitting itself into matter, produced these things, being what it is—unlike in its parts, and being so because of what comes before it—then what came to be in this way could not have anything else more beautiful than itself. A rational principle would not have come from parts that are all alike and similar; and that way would be open to blame, since the principle is all things, each part differently. But if it brought in other things from outside itself, souls for example, and forced many of them against their own nature, fitting them into its work in the direction of the worse, how is that right? No: we must say that the souls too are, as it were, parts of it, and that it fits them in without making them worse, settling them where it is appropriate for them, according to their desert.

3.2.13 For we must not reject that other account either, which says that what is looked to each time is not the present but the earlier cycles, and the future as well, so as to assign desert from there. It changes those who were masters before into slaves, if they were bad masters (and that this is good for them); those who used wealth badly into poor men (and being poor does no harm to the good); and those who murdered unjustly are murdered—unjustly as far as the one who does it is concerned, but justly as far as the victim is concerned. And it brings the one who is to suffer together with the one fit to do to him what he had to suffer. For no one is a slave by accident, or a prisoner of war as it happens, or outraged in body at random: he once did the things he is now suffering. Someone who killed his mother will be killed by a son, having become a woman; and a man who raped a woman will become [a woman], so as to be raped. Hence, too, "Adrasteia," a word from the gods: for this ordering truly is Adrasteia, and truly Justice, and a wonderful wisdom.

We must infer that the order of the whole is always something of this kind from what we see in the All: how it extends to everything, even the very smallest, and how wonderful the art is not only in divine things but also in those one might have supposed providence would disdain as small. Think of the intricate wonder-working even in ordinary animals, and the comeliness that reaches even to plants, in their fruits and even their leaves, and how effortlessly they flower, how slender and varied they are; and think that this was not made once and then stopped, but is always being made, while the things above move along the same courses, though not in the same way.[3] So the things that change are not changed at random, nor do they take on other shapes haphazardly, but as is beautiful, and as it would befit divine powers to make. For everything divine makes as its nature is; its nature accords with its being; and its being is what brings out, along with its activities, the beautiful and the just. If these are not there, where could they be?

3.2.14 The ordering, then, accords with Intellect in such a way that it is without reasoning; yet it is such that, if someone were able to use reasoning as well as possible, he would be amazed that reasoning could not have found any other way of making it. One can see something like this happening even in individual natures, which are always more intellectual than an ordering made by reasoning. So in each of the kinds that are always coming to be, one cannot blame the rational principle that makes them—unless someone thinks each ought to have come to be like the things that have not come to be but are everlasting, always the same, both among intelligibles and among perceptibles. Such a person asks for a larger addition of good and does not consider the form given to each sufficient—complaining about this one, for example, that it has no horns. He does not consider that it was impossible for a rational principle not to reach everything, but that there had to be lesser things within

3 Adrasteia ("the Inescapable") was a name for Nemesis, the goddess of retribution; Plato speaks of the "law of Adrasteia" governing the fate of souls (*Phaedrus* 248c).

the greater, and parts within the whole, and they could not be equal; otherwise they would not be parts. Up above, everything is all things; here below, each is not all things. And a man too, insofar as each is a part, is not the whole. But if in some parts there is also something else, which is not a part, then by this that part too is all. So the individual, as such, is not to be required to be perfect, reaching the summit of virtue; for then he would no longer be a part. Yet the whole does not begrudge the part being adorned to greater worth; for the part, adorned with greater worth, makes the whole more beautiful too. For it becomes so by being made like the whole, and, as it were, being allowed to be so and being ordered so, in order that even in man's region something may shine out in it, as the stars do in the divine heaven; and that the impression from here [may be] that of a great and beautiful statue, whether alive or made by the art of Hephaestus, [and] with stars glittering on its face and others on its breast, and wherever the setting of stars placed there would allow.

3.2.15 So much for the individual things considered each by itself. But the interweaving of these things that have been generated and are always being generated might give cause for pause and perplexity: the other animals eating one another, men attacking one another, and the fact that there is always war and it never gets any pause or truce—especially if a rational principle has made it so, and it is said to be well so. For those who say this, that other argument no longer helps: that things are as good as possible, [and] matter is the cause of their being so, so as to be in a lesser state, and that evils cannot be destroyed—if indeed things had to be so, and it is well so. Matter has not come forward and taken control; it was brought forward so that things might be so—or rather, it too is so by the causality of the rational principle.

LIFE AS A STAGE PLAY

Wars and deaths are scene changes in a play; only the outer man weeps and laments.

The origin, then, is a rational principle, and all things are a rational principle, and what comes to be in accordance with it and is ordered together in its generation is in every case so. What, then, is the necessity of this truceless war among animals and among men? Or rather: animals eating one another is necessary, being exchanges of animals that could not remain as they are forever, even if no one killed them. And if, when the time came for them to depart, they had to depart in such a way as to be of use to others, why begrudge it? And what if, once eaten, others grew up? It's as if, on the stage, an actor who has been murdered were to change his costume and come on again, taking up another mask: he did not truly die. If, then, dying too is a change of body, as of costume there, or even a complete putting off of body, like a complete exit from the stage there, never to come back later to compete, what would be terrible in this kind of transformation of animals into one another, which is far better than their never coming to be in the first place?

That would mean a desolation of life, and life that is in something else would be impossible. As it is, the abundant life in the All makes all things and varies them in living, and cannot bear not to be always making beautiful, comely living toys. When men, mortal as they are, take up arms against each other and fight in seemly order, as they do in play in the war dances, they show that all human seriousness is play, and they announce that deaths are nothing terrible; dying in wars and battles is getting a little ahead of what happens in old age, going away sooner and coming again. And if they are robbed of their property while alive, they might realize that it was not theirs before either, and that the possession is laughable for the robbers themselves, since others rob them in turn; for even for those who are not

robbed, possessing it turns out worse than being robbed.[4] As we watch on the stage in theaters, so we should view murders, and all deaths, and the capture and plundering of cities: all of it changes of scene and costume, and acted-out lamenting and wailing. For here too, in each of the events of life, it is not the soul within but the outer shadow of the man that wails and laments and does everything, on a stage that is the whole earth, where people have set up stages in many places. Such are the doings of a man who knows only how to live the lower, outer life, and has not realized that in his tears and his serious pursuits he is playing. Only the serious person should take serious works seriously; the rest of mankind is a toy. And toys are taken seriously by those who do not know how to be serious and are toys themselves. And if someone [serious] who plays along with them should suffer such things, let him know that he has stumbled into a children's game and has laid aside the mask he wore. If Socrates too should play, it is the outer Socrates who plays. We must also bear this in mind: we must not take weeping and lamenting as evidence that there are evils, since children too weep and wail over things that are not evils.

3.2.16 But if this is rightly said, how can there still be wickedness? Where is injustice? Where is error? How, if everything comes about well, can those who act do wrong or err? And how are they unhappy, if they neither err nor do wrong? How shall we say that some of what happens is according to nature and some contrary to nature, when everything that is done is according to nature? And how could there be any impiety toward the divine, when [the maker and] what is made are like this? It would be as if a poet in a play were to make an actor abuse and disparage the poet of the play. Let us say again, then, more clearly, what the rational principle is, and how it is reasonably the way it is. This rational principle, then—let us dare to say it; perhaps we may even hit the mark—this, then, is not unmixed Intellect, nor Intellect itself, nor of the kind of pure soul either;

4 The pyrrhic was a dance performed in armor, imitating the movements of combat.

it depends on that, and is a kind of radiance shining out from both. Intellect and Soul—Soul disposed according to Intellect—begot this rational principle, a life that quietly holds a certain reason. All life is activity, even the poor kind; and activity not in the way fire is active: its activity, even if no perception is present, is a movement that is not random. At any rate, whatever it is present to, and whatever shares in it in any way at all, is at once given a rational principle, that is, given shape, since the activity that belongs to life is able to shape, and moves in such a way as to shape. So its activity is artistic, as a dancer in motion would be. For the dancer himself is like a life that is artistic in this way, and his art moves him, and moves him as though the life itself were in a way of this kind. Let this be said, then, to show what we should think any life whatever is like.

This rational principle, then, coming from one Intellect and one life, each of them full, is neither one life nor some one intellect, nor full everywhere, nor does it give itself whole and entire to those it gives itself to. By setting its parts against one another and making them deficient, it produced the constitution and generation of war and battle; and so it is one whole, even if it is not one thing. For having become hostile to itself in its parts, it is in this way one and friendly, as the plot of a play is one while containing many battles within itself. Now the play brings what has been in conflict into a single harmony, as it were, a concordant one, making, as it were, one whole story of the combatants. But there, the battle of the things that stand apart comes from one rational principle. So one would do better to compare it to the harmony that comes from conflicting notes, and to ask why there are conflicting elements in the rational principles. Here too, then, rational principles make high and low, and, being principles of harmony, come together into one, into harmony itself—another, greater rational principle—while they themselves are lesser, and parts. We also see opposites in the All—white and black, hot and cold, and indeed winged and wingless, footed and footless, rational and irrational—all of them parts of the one living being that is the whole; and the All agrees with

itself though its parts are often at war, and the All is according to a rational principle. If all this is so, this one rational principle too must be one made of opposite principles, since it is this kind of opposition that gives it its constitution and, as it were, its being. For if it were not many, it would not be all, nor a rational principle. Being a rational principle, it differs from itself, and the greatest difference is opposition. So if it makes something other at all, and it does make the other, it will make what is most other rather than what is less other. Making things other to the utmost, then, it will of necessity make opposites too, and it will be complete not if it makes itself merely different things, but if it makes itself opposites as well.

3.2.17 Being of such a kind that it makes in every case, it will make what it makes far more opposed, the further apart these stand. The perceptible cosmos is less one than its rational principle, so it is more many, and there is more opposition, and a greater desire in each thing to live, and a greater love of coming into one. Lovers often destroy what they love, hurrying toward their own good, when the beloved things are perishable; and the desire of the part for the whole draws into itself what it can. So too, then, the good and the bad are like the opposite movements of a dancer performing by one and the same art; and we shall say that one part of him is good and another bad, and that it's well so. And yet then they are not even bad any more. Or rather, their being bad is not done away with; only this is: that they are such of themselves.—But perhaps the bad deserve forgiveness.—Unless the rational principle also makes forgiveness and its absence; and the rational principle makes us unforgiving toward such people. But if one part of it is a good man and another a wicked one, and the wicked man is more of its parts, it is as in plays: the poet assigns some things to the actors, but makes use of them as they already are. He does not himself make the leading actor, or the second or the third; by giving each the lines that suit him, he has thereby assigned each to the place where he should be put. In the same way there is a place for each, one fitting the good man, another the bad.

Each, then, according to nature and rational principle, goes to the one or the other, the place that fits him, holding the place he chose. Then he speaks and acts, the one "producing" impious words and deeds, the other the opposite; for the actors were like this even before the play, giving themselves over to the play. In human plays the poet has supplied the words, but each actor has from himself and of himself his acting well or badly—for they have work to do, too, beyond the poet's lines. But in the truer poem, which men with a poetic nature imitate in part, soul is the actor, and what it acts it has received from the poet. Just as actors here receive their masks and costume, the saffron robes and the rags, so soul itself receives its fortunes, and not at random: these too accord with rational principle. And having fitted these on, it comes into tune and has ordered itself into the play and the whole rational principle. Then it voices, as it were, its actions and everything else a soul would do in its own manner, like a kind of song.

An actor, by his own voice and bearing, is fine or ugly. Either he adds an adornment to the poem, as it would seem; or, adding the badness of his own voice, he does not make the play other than it was, but he himself is seen to be graceless, and the poet of the play sends him off in disgrace, as he deserves, doing the work of a good judge, while he promotes the other to greater honors and, if he has them, to finer plays, and the first, if he had worse plays somewhere, to these. In the same way soul enters into this poem that is the All and makes itself a part of the play. It brings to the performance, from itself, its acting well or badly; it is placed in the cast at its entrance, and receives everything else apart from itself and its own works; and then in turn it receives penalties and honors. But these actors have something more, since they act in a greater space than a stage's measure, and the poet of this whole makes them masters; and since they have a greater power to go to many kinds of places, they themselves determine honors and dishonors, because they themselves contribute to their honors and dishonors. Each place is fitted to their characters, so as to be in tune with the rational

principle of the All, each one being justly fitted to the parts that will receive it—just as each string is set in its own proper and fitting place according to the ratio of its sounding, whatever the power it has for this.

For in the whole there is fittingness and beauty if each is placed where he should be, uttering evil things in the darkness and in Tartarus; for there it is beautiful to utter in that way. And this whole is beautiful not if each were a stone, but if each, bringing in his own note, contributes to one harmony, voicing a life himself too, though a lesser, worse and less complete one. In the same way, in a panpipe there is not one sound: even a lesser and faint one contributes to the harmony of the whole pipe, because the harmony is divided into unequal parts, and all the notes are unequal, while the complete note is one, made of them all. So too the whole rational principle is one, but divided into unequal parts. Hence the All, too, has different places, better and worse, and unequal souls fit in accordingly with the unequal places. And so it turns out here too that the places are unlike, and the souls are not the same but unequal and of unlike character, as with the unlike parts of a panpipe or some other instrument; and that they are in places that differ from one another, [and] in each place utter their own notes in tune both with the places and with the whole. Their badness will be set within beauty as regards the All, and what is contrary to nature for them will be according to nature for the All; and it is nonetheless a lesser note. But the soul that sounds this way has not made the whole worse, just as the executioner, wicked as he is, has not made the well-governed city worse—if we may use another image too. The city needs him too (and it often needs a man of that kind too), and he too is well placed.

3.2.18 Souls are worse and better, some for other reasons as well, and some because, as it were, they are not all equal from the beginning; for they too are unequal parts, in proportion to the rational principle, since they have become separated. We must also bear in mind the second and third levels, and that soul does not always act with the same parts. But then again we

must also put it like this, for the argument needs much more to be clear. Perhaps we need not bring in actors of the kind who will utter something other than the poet's words—as if the play were incomplete in itself and they were filling in what is lacking, the poet having left empty places in the middle—as though the actors were going to be not actors but a part of the poet, and he knew in advance what they would say, so as to be able to string together the rest and what follows. For in the All too, what follows and comes after bad deeds are rational principles and according to rational principle. From adultery and the carrying off of captives, for example, come children who are by nature better, and men too, it may be, and other cities better than those sacked by wicked men. If, then, it is absurd to bring in souls, some of which will do the wicked things and some the good—for we shall deprive the rational principle of the good things too if we take the wicked ones away from it—what prevents us from making the actors' deeds parts as well, as they are parts of the play there, so of the rational principle in the All; and from saying that here too both acting well and its opposite come from it, so that they reach each of the actors in this way from the rational principle itself, all the more since this play is more complete and everything comes from it? But to make evil—what for? And then the more divine souls are no longer anything in the All; all of them are parts of the rational principle. And either all rational principles are souls, or why are some souls and others only rational principles, when [the] All belongs to some soul?

III.3 On Providence II

Περὶ προνοίας δεύτερον
Continuing his defense of providence, Plotinus argues that good and bad souls play their parts in one rational drama.
no. 48 in order of writing

3.3.1 What, then, are we to think about these things? Perhaps this: the whole rational principle encompasses both the wicked and the good, and these too are parts of it. It is not that the whole rational principle generates them; rather, the whole is with them. For the rational principles are the activity of a soul, a whole soul, and the parts are the activity of its parts. Since it is one but has different parts, the rational principles correspond, and so do the works, which are the last offspring. The souls are in concord with one another, and so are the works—in concord in such a way that one thing comes from them, even if from opposites. For all things that set out from some one thing come together into one by a necessity of nature, so that even though they grow out different and become opposites, they are nonetheless drawn together into one order by coming from one. It is just as with each kind of animal: [for example,] the race of horses is one, even if they fight, and bite one another, and compete, and rage in rivalry; and the other kinds, each taken as one, likewise; and that is how we must take human beings too. We must then join all these species together again into one, the genus of animals; then the non-animals too, by species; then into one, the non-animal; then together, if you like, into being; then into what provides being. And having fastened it all to this, come back down, dividing, and see the one scattering as it

reaches everything and at the same time encompasses it in one order, so that it is one living being, differentiated and many, each of the things in it doing what accords with its own nature while still being within the whole: fire burning, for instance, [and] a horse doing a horse's work; and men each doing their own, as each is naturally fitted, and different men different things. And according to their natures follow both their works and, in their life, living well or badly.

3.3.2 Chance events are not in control of living well; they too follow in concord with what comes before them, and go along woven into the sequence. The leading principle weaves all things together, while the things on either side move along together according to nature—as in a military campaign, where the general leads and those ranged under him breathe as one with him. The All has been ordered by a generalship of providence that sees the actions and the sufferings and what must be on hand—food and drink, and indeed all the weapons and siege engines—and has foreseen everything that results from their interweaving, so that what comes of these may have room to be well placed. Everything has come from the general in a well-contrived way, even though what the enemy were going to do lay outside, and it was not possible to command that army too. But if it were the great commander, under whom all things are, what could be out of order, what could fail to be fitted together?

3.3.3 For even if I am in control of choosing this or that, still the choice is ordered in with the rest, because what is yours is not an interpolated episode in the All: you have been counted in as the kind of person you are.—But where does your being this kind of person come from? There are two things the argument is looking for. One is whether we should refer the cause of the quality of each person's character to the one who made him, if there is such a one, or to what has come to be itself; or whether no blame should be laid at all, any more than in the generation of plants, because they do not perceive, or in the case of the other animals, because they are not as humans are. For this is the same as asking why humans are not what gods are. Why, in

these cases, do we reasonably blame neither the things themselves nor their maker, but in the case of humans we blame them for not being better than this? If it is because this could have been more beautiful: if it was up to him to add something toward the better, then he who did not do it is himself responsible for himself. But if it was not from himself, and it had to be added from outside, by the one who begot him, then whoever demands more than what was given is being absurd, as if he were to demand it for the other animals and the plants too. We must ask not whether a thing is less than another, but whether it is sufficient as it is; for not all things had to be equal.

Did he, then, measure it out by a deliberate choice that not all things should be equal? Not at all: this is simply how things were bound to come about, by nature. For this rational principle follows upon another soul, and this soul follows upon Intellect; and Intellect is not some one of these things but all of them, and all things are many. Since they are many and not the same, some were bound to be first, some second, and others next in order, in rank as well. So the living beings that come into existence are not souls only but diminutions of souls, as if they were already fading as they proceed. For the rational principle of a living being, even if it is ensouled, is a different soul, not the one from which the principle comes; and this principle as a whole becomes lesser as it hastens into matter, and what comes from it is more deficient still. Look how far what has come into being stands from its source, and yet it is a marvel. So if what has come into being is like this, it does not follow that what comes before it is like this too. That is better than everything that has come into being, and beyond blame. We should rather marvel that it gave something after itself, and that its traces are such as these. And if it gave even more than they are able to take hold of, it deserves all the more to be welcomed. So it looks as if the blame falls on the things that have come into being, while providence's part is all the greater.

3.3.4 If a human being were simple—by simple I mean being only what he was made, acting and being acted on always in the

same way—there would be no room for the blame that goes with reproach, any more than with the other animals. As it is, only a human being, the bad one, is blamed, and perhaps with good reason. For he is not only what he was made: he has another principle, a free one, which is not outside providence or the rational principle of the whole. The higher things are not cut off from these; the better shine upon the worse, and that is what perfect providence is. There is one rational principle that makes, and another that joins the better things to those that have come into being. The higher things are providence from above; the other is the providence that derives from what is above, the second rational principle, joined to the first. From both comes the whole web, the whole of providence. Human beings, then, have another principle, but not all of them use everything they have: some use the one, some the other, or the others, the worse ones. The higher principles are present too, even though they are not active upon these people—not that they are idle in themselves, for each does its own work. "But why," someone might say, "are they present and yet not active upon these people?" Perhaps they are not present. Yet we say they are present everywhere, and nothing is without them. Or rather: they are not present to those in whom they are not active upon them. Why, then, are they not active upon everyone, if these too are parts of them—I mean principles of this kind? In the other animals this principle does not belong to them at all; and among humans it does not belong to all. Is it, then, that not in all of them is this the only principle? But why is it not the only one? Those in whom it is the only one live by it, and by the other things only so far as necessity requires. For whether it is the bodily constitution that is such as to plunge one, as it were, into murky water, or whether desires dominate, we still have to say that the cause lies in the substrate.

But, first, it will then seem that the cause lies no longer in the rational principle but rather in matter, and that matter, not the rational principle, will dominate; and, second, that the substrate is as it has been molded. Or rather: the substrate for this prin-

ciple is the rational principle, and what has come from the rational principle and exists in accordance with it; so it is not matter that will dominate, nor, then, the molding. And one could trace someone's being of this kind back to a previous life—as if the rational principle had become dim, as a result of what went before, compared with the one before it; as when a soul has become weaker, but later it will shine out too. And let the rational principle be said to hold within itself, in turn, the rational principle of matter, which it will work up for itself, either qualifying matter according to itself or finding it in harmony with itself. For the rational principle of an ox is not found in any matter but an ox's. That is why he says that souls enter into the other animals too, as if the soul had become different and the rational principle altered, so that what was formerly a human being becomes the soul of an ox; so the worse one is worse with justice. But why did it become worse to begin with, and how did it slip? [Or rather,] it has often been said that not all things are first: those that are second and third have a nature lesser than what comes before them, and a small tilt is enough to leave the right path. And the interweaving of one thing with another is a kind of blending, in which something different comes from both. It did not diminish something that already existed: the lesser was lesser from the beginning, and what came to be is lesser by its own nature; and if it suffers what follows from this, it suffers what it deserves.[1] We must also carry our reasoning back to lives lived before, since what follows depends on them as well.

3.3.5 Providence, then, coming down from above, from beginning to end, is not equal in the way of number but proportionate, different in different places. It is as in a single living being, where each part depends on the beginning, down to the last, and each has what is proper to it: the better part has the better share of activity, while the part already further down has a lower one, acting and being affected with whatever affections

1 "He" is Plato, who describes souls passing into animal bodies in *Phaedo* 81e–82b, *Timaeus* 42b–c and *Republic* X 620a–d.

are proper to it, both in relation to itself and in its ordering with something else. So, when struck in this way, the parts that have voice cry out in this way, while others are affected in silence and move accordingly; and from all the sounds, affections and activities comes a single voice, as it were, of the living being, a single life and way of life. For its parts too are different and have different activities: feet do one thing, eyes another, discursive thought another, intellect another. But one thing comes from them all, and there is one providence. Fate begins from the worse; what is above is providence alone. Everything in the intelligible world is rational principle and beyond rational principle, since it is Intellect and pure soul. And what comes from there, so far as it comes from there, is providence—so far as it is in pure soul, and so far as it passes from there into living beings. But the rational principle comes divided into unequal portions, and so it does not make equal things either, as in each living being too.

From this point on, the things that are done are consequences, and they follow providence if someone does what is dear to the gods; for the rational principle of providence was dear to the gods. Deeds of this kind, then, are linked into the chain, but they have not been done by providence. Rather, things that come about—whether from human beings or from anything at all, a living being or a lifeless thing—(the things that come about), if anything good follows upon them, have again been taken in hand by providence, so that virtue prevails everywhere, and mistakes are transposed and set right. It is as when a single body has been given health in accordance with providence for the living being, and a cut or any wound occurs: the rational principle that governs it, in turn, joins it up, draws it together, heals it and sets right what has suffered. So evils are consequences, but consequences of necessity. They come from us, through causes that are not compelled by providence but come from ourselves. We have linked our acts to the works of providence and those that derive from providence, but we have been unable to carry the sequence on according to its will; we carry it on according to the will of those who acted, or accord-

ing to something else in the All which itself did not act, or produce some affection in us, according to providence. For the same thing does not have the same effect on everything it encounters; it has one effect on one thing and another on another. Helen's beauty, for example, worked one effect on Paris, while Idomeneus was not affected in the same way. A dissolute man meeting a dissolute man, a handsome man meeting a handsome one, produces one effect; a moderate handsome man produces another on a moderate man like himself, and the same man another on a dissolute one, while the dissolute man produces yet another on him. What the dissolute man does is neither done by providence nor in accordance with providence; what the moderate man does is not done by providence, since he does it himself, but it is in accordance with providence, since it is in harmony with the rational principle—just as when someone does something healthy on his own, he has done it in accordance with the doctor's principle.[2] For this is what the doctor too provided from his art, both for the healthy and for the sick. But whatever someone does that is unhealthy, he does himself, and he has acted against the doctor's providence.

3.3.6 How is it, then, that seers foretell bad things too, and foretell them by looking at the revolution of the All as well as by their other forms of divination? Clearly, because all opposites are woven together—shape and matter, for example. In a composite living being, the one who contemplates the shape and the rational principle also contemplates what has been shaped. He does not contemplate an intelligible living being and a composite living being in the same way: he contemplates the rational principle of a living being in the composite, shaping the worse things. Since the All is a living being, the one who contemplates what happens in it contemplates at the same time what it is made of and the providence over it. And providence extends over everything, including the things that come to be. These things are living beings, and their actions, and their disposi-

2 Idomeneus, king of Crete, knew Helen well from his visits to Menelaus' house (*Iliad* 3.230–233) but was not carried away by her beauty.

tions, mastered by rational principle and mixed with necessity. So he contemplates things that are mixed and are continually being mixed, and he cannot himself separate out providence and what accords with providence, on the one hand, and on the other the substrate and all that it contributes from itself to what comes to be.

But this is not something a man can do, not even a wise and divine one; or rather, one might say, a god would have this privilege. For it is not for the seer to tell the why, only the that. His art is a reading of natural letters, letters that reveal order and never swerve toward disorder—or rather, the revolution of the heavens bears witness and brings to light, even before it is apparent from the things themselves, what each is like and how much. For these things here move together with those there, and those with these, contributing together to the coherence and everlastingness of the cosmos; and by analogy they signify the others to one who has observed them—since the other forms of divination too work by analogy. For it was not right that all things should be cut off from one another; they had to be made like one another in some way. And this is perhaps what is meant by the saying that analogy holds all things together.[3] Analogy is such that the worse stands to the worse as the better to the better—as eye to eye and foot to foot, one to the other, and, if you like, as virtue to justice, so vice to injustice. If, then, there is analogy in the All, it is possible to foretell. And if those things act on these, they act the way the parts in any living being act on one another: not as though one begets the other, for they are begotten together, but in that each, according to its nature, is affected in the way that suits its own nature, and because this is of this kind, that is of that kind too. For this is how the rational principle, too, is one.

3.3.7 And because there are better things, there are worse things too. For how could there be anything worse in a thing of many forms if there were nothing better, or anything better if

3 The saying echoes Plato, *Timaeus* 31c, where proportion (*analogia*) is the finest of bonds holding the cosmos together.

there were nothing worse? So we should not blame the worse in the better; we should rather welcome the better for giving of itself to the worse. And in general, those who would abolish the worse in the All abolish providence itself. For what will it be providence for? Not for itself, surely, nor for the better: even when we speak of providence above, we speak of it in relation to what is below. For what holds all things in one is the principle, in which all things are together and all things are a whole. From this principle each thing now proceeds, while the principle remains within, as from a single root that stands firm in itself. They blossomed out into a divided multiplicity, each bearing an image of that; and here, now, one thing came to be in another. Some were close to the root, while others, going further out, branched off, down to what are, as it were, boughs and tips and fruits and leaves. Some remained forever, while others were forever coming to be—the fruits and the leaves—and the things that were always coming to be held within themselves the rational principles of those above them, as if they wanted to be little trees; and if they begot before they perished, they begot only what was near them. The gaps, as it were, between the branches were filled in again from the root, and these too grew in another way; and the tips of the branches were affected by them too, so that one thinks the affection comes only from what is near. But at the level of the principle, again, one part was affected and another acted, and the principle itself was dependent too. For the things that act on one another, coming from far off, are different, but from the beginning they come from the same source—as if brothers, who had grown alike since they started from the same parents, were to do something to one another.

III.4 On the Guardian Spirit Allotted to Us

Περὶ τοῦ εἰληχότος ἡμᾶς δαίμονος
Plotinus identifies our guardian spirit with the power just above the one we live by, chosen through our way of life.
no. 15 in order of writing

3.4.1 Some things give rise to hypostases while they themselves remain at rest; but Soul, as we said, generates while in motion—perception, as a hypostasis, and nature, and so on down to plants. For soul has nature even when it is in us, and there it dominates as a part; when it comes into plants, it dominates as if it had become alone. Does this, then, generate nothing? [Or rather,] it generates something altogether other than itself; for after it there is no longer life, and what it generates is lifeless. What then? Just as everything that was generated before this was generated unshaped, and was given form by turning back toward what generated it, as if being reared, so here too what is generated must be no longer a form of soul—for it no longer lives—but total indefiniteness. For even if there was indefiniteness in the earlier stages too, it was within form: it was not altogether indefinite, but only in relation to its own perfection. What we have now is altogether indefinite. When it is perfected, it becomes body, taking on a shape suited to its power, a receptacle for what generated and reared it; and this alone in body is the last of the things above, in the last of what is below.

3.4.2 And the saying "all soul cares for what is soulless" applies above all to this soul; the others care for it in other ways. "It travels about the whole heaven, appearing now in one form, now in another"—in the perceptive form, or the rational, or the

vegetative itself. For the part of it that dominates does what suits it, while the other parts are idle, since they are outside. In a human being the worse parts do not dominate, but they are there alongside; nor, for that matter, does the better always dominate, for the others too have a certain place. That is why we are also perceivers, since there are organs of perception too; and in many ways we are like plants, since there is a body that grows and reproduces. So all the parts work together, but it is by the better that the form as a whole is human. When the soul leaves the body, it becomes whatever has predominated in it.[1] That is why we must flee upward, so that we do not sink to the perceptive, following the images of sense, nor to the vegetative, following the urge to reproduce and the greed for food, but rise to the intellectual, to Intellect and god. Those who kept the human being in them become human again; those who lived by perception alone become animals. If they lived by perception together with temper, they become wild animals, and the differences among these make the differences among such beasts; those who lived with desire and the pleasure of the desiring part become the lustful and gluttonous animals. And if they did not even live by perception with these, but with a dullness of perception along with them, they become plants as well; for it was only, or chiefly, the vegetative part that was active in them, and they had been practicing to become trees. Those who loved music but were otherwise pure become songbirds; kings who ruled without reason become eagles, unless some other vice is present; those who studied the heavens without understanding, always soaring up into the sky, become birds that fly high. The one who [kept] civic virtue becomes human; one who has a smaller share of civic virtue becomes a social creature, a bee or the like.

3.4.3 Who, then, is the guardian spirit? The one that is ours here too. And who is the god? Or rather, the one here too. For what has been active in each person leads him, since here too it was in charge. Is this, then, the guardian spirit that had him as its lot

1 Plato, *Phaedrus* 246b.

while he was living? No: it is what comes before it. For that presides, idle, while what comes after it is active. If what is active is that by which we are perceivers, the guardian spirit is the rational part; if we live by the rational part, the guardian spirit is what is above it, presiding, idle, and giving way to what is at work. So it is rightly said that we shall choose: for we choose, by the life we lead, the one that stands above us. Why, then, does it lead? Or rather: it is not possible to lead someone who has finished his life. It led before, while he lived; when it stops living, it hands over its activity to another, having died to its own active life. This other one wants to lead, and when it has prevailed it lives itself, and it too has another as its guardian spirit. But if a person is weighed down by the strength of the worse character, he pays the penalty. In this way the bad person too, since his worse side has dragged him down, sinks into the life of a beast, in keeping with what was active in his life. But if he can follow the guardian spirit above him, he rises, living [according to] that spirit, and puts in charge that better part of himself toward which he is being led, and after that another, until he reaches the top. For the soul is many things and all things, both those above and those below, down through every kind of life; and each of us is an intelligible world, linked to this world by what is lower in us and to the intelligible by what is higher. With all the rest of what is intelligible in us we remain above, but by its last part we are bound to what is below, giving, as it were, an emanation from it to what is below—or rather an activity—while that is not diminished.

3.4.4 Is this, then, always in body? No: if we turn, it turns along with us. What, then, of the Soul of the All? When it turns, will its part withdraw too? Or rather, it did not even incline with its last part: it neither came nor came down. While it remains, the body of the cosmos attaches itself to it and is, as it were, lit up by it, causing it no trouble or anxiety, since the cosmos lies in safety. What then? Does it have no perception of any kind? "It has no sight," he says, since it has no eyes either; nor, obviously, ears or nostrils or tongue. What then? Does it have self-awareness, as we

have of what goes on inside us? Or rather, since everything is uniformly in its natural state, there is rest. Nor is there pleasure. So the vegetative part is present without being present, and the perceptive likewise. But we have spoken of the cosmos elsewhere; for now, we have said as much as the problem touched on it.[2]

3.4.5 But if the soul chooses its guardian spirit and its life there, how are we still in control of anything? Or rather, the choice spoken of there is a riddling way of pointing to the soul's deliberate choice and disposition in general, and everywhere. But if the soul's deliberate choice is in control, and what dominates is whichever part it has ready to hand from its previous lives, then the body is no longer the cause of any evil for it. For if the soul's character comes before the body, and it has what it chose, and "it does not change its guardian spirit," as he says, then neither the good person nor the bad one comes to be such here. Is each, then, so potentially, and does he become so actually? What then if someone good in character happens on a bad body, and someone else the reverse?[3] Or rather, either kind of body can bring out, more or less, what belongs to either kind of soul, since other external fortunes do not dislodge the choice as a whole either. When it is said that first come the lots, then the patterns of lives, and then what lies in fortune, and that souls [choose] their lives from what is available according to their characters, he gives the controlling role rather to the souls, which adapt what they have been given to their own characters. For the passage in the *Timaeus* bears witness that this guardian spirit is not altogether outside us, though not in the sense of being bound to us or active in us; it is ours as regards the soul, but not ours as regards us as human beings of a certain kind, living the life under it. If those statements are taken this way, they will involve no conflict, whereas they would show some discord

2 Plato, *Timaeus* 33c: the cosmos needs no eyes or ears, since there is nothing outside it to see or hear.

3 "There" refers to the myth of Er (Plato, *Republic* X 617d–620e), in which souls about to be reborn draw lots, choose their next lives, and each receives a guardian spirit.

if the guardian spirit were taken otherwise.[4] And the phrase "fulfiller of what one chose" fits too. For, presiding above, it does not let one go much further down into the worse; only what is under it is active, not what is above it or on its level. For one cannot become anything other than what one is.

3.4.6 Who, then, is the good person? The one who is active with the better part. Or would he not be good precisely by having his guardian spirit work along with him? For intellect is active in him. So either he is himself a guardian spirit, or he lives in accordance with a guardian spirit, and his guardian spirit is a god. Is it, then, even beyond intellect, if what is beyond intellect is his guardian spirit? Why, then, not from the beginning? Because of the turmoil that comes with birth. Still, even before reason there is the inner movement that reaches out for what is its own. Does it, then, always succeed? Not always, since the soul is so disposed that, being of this kind in circumstances of this kind, it has this kind of life and this kind of choice. This guardian spirit we are speaking of, though, is said, after leading the soul to Hades, to remain no longer the same, unless the soul chooses the same things again. But before that, how? To lead to judgment means to come, after departing from birth, into the same state the soul had before birth. Then, as if from a fresh beginning, it is present to the souls that are being punished, for the time until their later birth. Or rather, that is not even a life for them, but a penalty. What, then, of souls entering the bodies of beasts—do they have something less? Or rather, they have a guardian spirit, a wicked one, or at least a foolish one. And the souls above? Of those above, some are in the perceptible world, others outside it. Those in the perceptible world are in the sun or in another of the planets, others in the sphere of the fixed stars, each according to how it was rationally active here. For we must believe that there is a world in our soul too: not only an intelligible one, but also a disposition of the same form as that of the World Soul. Since that Soul is distributed over the fixed

4 *Timaeus* 90a–c, where the highest kind of soul in us is called the guardian spirit that god has given each of us.

sphere and the planets according to different powers, we must think that the powers in us too are of the same form as these powers, and that an activity comes from each; and that souls, when released, go there, to the star that is in tune with the character and power that was active and lived in them; and that they will have that kind of god, or guardian spirit, either this very power or the one above it—this must be examined more carefully. Those that have gone outside, we must think, have transcended the nature of guardian spirits and all the fate of birth, and in general what is in this visible world, for as long as they are there, since the part of their being that loves birth has been carried up with them too. And if someone said that this is the being that becomes divided about bodies, multiplying itself and dividing itself along with bodies, he would be right.

But it is not divided by magnitude: the same thing is whole in all, and one again, and from one living being many are always generated, as this soul is divided in this way—just as from plants too; for this soul too is divided about bodies. Sometimes, remaining in the same body, it gives, like the soul in plants; at other times it leaves, but has given before leaving, as in plants that have been cut down or in dead animals, when many are generated from one by putrefaction. And we must think that the corresponding power from the All, being the same, works along with it here. And if the soul comes here again, it has the same or another guardian spirit, according to the life it is going to lead. With this guardian spirit, then, it first embarks on this All as on a boat; then the nature called the spindle's takes it over and assigns it, as on a ship, to a seat of fortune. And as the revolution, like a wind, carries round the one who is sitting or moving about on board, many and varied sights, changes of place and incidents come about, as on the ship itself—either from the rolling of the vessel, or from the passenger himself, moved by an impulse of his own, which he might have, being on board, according to his own character. For not everyone moves, wills or acts alike in the same circumstances. So different things happen to different people, whether the same or different things

befall them, or the same things happen to others even if what befalls them differs. For such is fate.

III.5 On Love

Περὶ ἔρωτος
Plotinus interprets Plato's myths of Love as god, spirit and passion, reading Love's birth from Poverty and Resource as allegory.
no. 50 in order of writing

3.5.1 About love—whether it is a god or a spirit or a passion of the soul, or whether one kind is a god or spirit and another is also a passion, and what each is like—it is worth inquiring, going over what other people have thought, and the views on these matters that have arisen in philosophy, and above all what the divine Plato holds; for he wrote a great deal about love in many places in his works. He says not only that it is a passion that arises in souls, but also calls it a spirit, and he related its birth: how it was born and from whom. As for the passion for which we hold love responsible—that it arises in souls longing to be united with something beautiful, and that in some this longing belongs to the moderate, who have become intimate with beauty itself, while in others it wants to end in some shameful act—no one, surely, is unaware of this. But where each has its origin is what philosophy should examine from here on. If someone took as the origin the longing for beauty itself that was there in souls beforehand, and their recognition of it, their kinship with it and their unreasoning awareness of their affinity, he would, I think, hit on the truth about the cause. For the ugly is opposed both to nature and to god. Nature makes by looking toward the beautiful, and it looks toward the defined, which is in the column of

the good; the undefined is ugly and belongs to the other column.[1]

Nature comes from there, from the good, and so clearly from the beautiful too. And whatever someone delights in and is akin to, he feels at home with, even with its images. If someone did away with this cause, he would be unable to say how the passion comes about and for what reasons, not even in the case of loves aimed at intercourse. For these people too want to give birth in beauty, since it would be absurd for nature, which wants to make beautiful things, to want to beget in the ugly. But for those who are moved to beget here below, it is enough to have the beauty here, which is present in images and bodies, since the archetype is not present to them—the archetype that is the cause of their loving even this beauty. For those who come from this beauty to the recollection of that one, this one is loved as an image; those who have not recollected do not know what is happening to them, and take it for the true one. For those who are moderate, intimacy with the beauty here is no fault; but to lapse into intercourse is a fault. And one whose love of the beautiful is pure loves beauty alone, whether he has recollected or not; but one in whom another desire is mixed in, the desire to be immortal so far as a mortal can, seeks the beautiful in what is always being born and everlasting, and, going according to nature, sows and begets in beauty—sowing for perpetuity, and in beauty because of the kinship of the beautiful.

For the everlasting too is akin to the beautiful, and the everlasting nature is what is primarily of this kind, and everything that comes from it is of this kind too. So what does not want to beget is more self-sufficient as regards beauty, while what longs to produce wants to produce something beautiful out of lack, and is not self-sufficient; and it thinks it will produce something like that if it begets in beauty. Those who want to beget unlawfully and against nature started out on the natural path, but strayed from it; they have slipped, as off a road, and lie fallen,

1 The "columns" are the Pythagorean table of paired opposites (limit and unlimited, good and bad, and so on) reported by Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I 986a.

knowing neither the love that was leading them, nor the longing to beget, nor the use of an image of beauty, nor what beauty itself is. Now those who love beautiful bodies not for the sake of intercourse love them because they are beautiful; and those who have the so-called mixed love—of women, so as to have perpetuity too, but not of others, in which they would go astray—are both moderate; but the first are better. Some revere the beauty here and are content with it; others, those who have recollected, revere that beauty too, and do not dishonor this one either, since it is an offshoot and plaything of that. These, then, are concerned with the beautiful without anything shameful; others fall into the shameful because of the beautiful; for the longing for good, too, often lapses into what is bad. These, then, are the passions of the soul.

3.5.2 But about the one whom not only other people but theologians too, and Plato in many places, regard as a god—Love, son of Aphrodite, as he calls him, whose task is to watch over beautiful boys and to move souls toward the beauty there, or to strengthen the impulse toward it that has already arisen—about him above all we must philosophize. And we must take up what is said in the *Symposium*, where he is born not [of Aphrodite, Plato says, but] at Aphrodite's birthday feast, of Poverty and Resource. The argument seems to require us to say something about Aphrodite too, whether Love is said to have been born from her or with her. First, then, who is Aphrodite? Then, how is he either from her or with her, or in what way is he both from her and with her at once?[2] We say, then, that Aphrodite is twofold. One is the Heavenly, said to be daughter of Ouranos; the other, born of Zeus and Dione, is the one who has to do with marriages here. The first is motherless and beyond marriage, since there are no marriages in heaven either. The one called Heavenly, born of Kronos—who is Intellect—must be the most divine soul, coming straight from him, pure from the pure,

2 In Diotima's myth (Plato, *Symposium* 203b–e), Love is conceived at the feast for Aphrodite's birth by Penia ("Poverty") and Poros ("Resource"), son of Metis ("Cunning").

remaining above, so that she neither wished nor was able to come into the things here. For she is not of a nature to step down among the things below, since she is a separate hypostasis and a being without share in matter—which is why they hinted at it by calling her motherless. One might justly call her a goddess, not a spirit, since she is unmixed and remains pure by herself.[3]

For what has sprung straight from Intellect is pure itself as well, strong in itself by its nearness, since its desire and its settled place are directed toward what generated it, which is able to hold it above. So a soul attached to Intellect could fall away even less than the sun could hold off from itself the light that shines around it, the light that comes from it and is joined to it. Following Kronos—or, if you like, Kronos' father, Ouranos—she was active toward him and became intimate with him, and, loving him, she gave birth to Love, and together with Love she looks toward him. Her activity produced a hypostasis and a being, and both look there: the mother and the beautiful Love she bore, a hypostasis always directed toward another beautiful thing and having its being in this—between, as it were, the one who longs and the one longed for. He is the eye of the one who longs, providing the lover through himself with the sight of what he longs for, but running ahead himself and, before giving the lover the power of seeing through the organ, being filled himself with the sight. He sees first, but not in the same way, since he fixes the vision in the lover, while he himself enjoys the vision of the beautiful as it streams past him.

3.5.3 That there is a hypostasis and a being from a being, lesser than the one that produced it but still a being, we should not doubt. For that soul too was a being, come from the activity before it, and alive, belonging to the being of the things that are, and looking toward that which was the first being, and looking intensely. This was its first vision, and it looked at it as at its own

3 Plato, *Symposium* 180d–e, distinguishes the motherless "Heavenly" (*Ourania*) Aphrodite, daughter of Ouranos ("Heaven"), from "Common" Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus and Dione.

good, and rejoiced in looking. And the vision was such that the seer did not treat the seeing as a side matter, so that by its pleasure, as it were, its straining toward it and the intensity of its vision, it begot from itself something worthy of itself and of the vision. So from what was intently active about the object seen, and from what flows, as it were, from the object seen, an eye filled with sight—a seeing with an image, so to speak—Love came to be. And perhaps his name came from this too, because he has his existence from seeing (*horasis*). For the passion would take its name from him, since a being comes before what is not a being; and we do speak of the passion as "being in love," and say that love for this or that has someone in its grip—but it would not be called love without qualification.[4]

Such, then, would be the Love of the soul above, himself looking upward, since he is her attendant, born from her and of her, and content with the vision of gods. And since we call that soul separate—the soul that first illuminates Heaven—we shall set down this Love as separate too, even though we have called the soul heavenly in the highest degree; just as, in our own case, when we say that the best in us is in us, we nevertheless posit it as separate. Let him be only there, where the pure soul is. But since there also had to be a soul of this All, the other Love came into existence along with it at once, himself also an eye, born from the longing of this soul too. And this Aphrodite, being the soul of the cosmos, and not only soul nor soul without qualification, gave birth to the Love in this cosmos, who himself already has to do with marriages. And insofar as he too touches the longing above, to that extent he moves the souls of the young as well, and turns back the soul with which he is ranked, to the degree that it too is by nature able to come to remember those things. For every soul longs for the good, even the mixed soul and the one that has come to belong to someone; since this one too comes next after that one, and from it.

3.5.4 Does every soul, then, have a love of this kind as its being and as a hypostasis? Or why should the whole Soul, the Soul of

the All, have a love that exists as a hypostasis, but not the soul of each of us—and, besides, the soul in all the other living beings? And so this love is the spirit which they say accompanies each person, the love belonging to each. For he would be the one who produces the desires according to the nature of each soul, as each reaches out in proportion to its own nature and generates love fitted to its worth and its being. Let the whole Soul, then, have a whole Love, and the partial souls each its own. And insofar as each soul stands in relation to the whole, not cut off from it but contained in it, so that all are one, each love too would stand in relation to the whole Love. Again, the partial love would be with the partial soul, that great Love with the whole Soul, and the Love in the All everywhere in the All; and this one Love becomes and is many, appearing everywhere in the All where he wishes, taking shape in his parts and showing himself, if he wishes. We must also think that there are many Aphrodites in the whole, spirits that have come to be in it together with love, flowing from one whole Aphrodite, many partial ones depending on her, each with its own loves—since soul is the mother of love, Aphrodite is soul, and love is the activity of a soul reaching out for the good. This love, then, leading each soul to the nature of the good, would be a god in the case of the higher soul, since he always joins soul to that; in the case of the mixed soul he would be a spirit.

WHAT A SPIRIT IS

Plotinus asks how spirits differ from gods and why Love, a spirit, shares in matter.

3.5.5 But what is the nature of a spirit, and of spirits in general, which the *Symposium* also discusses—both the nature of the others and that of Love himself, who was born of Poverty and Resource, [the son] of Metis, at Aphrodite's birthday feast? To suppose that Plato means this cosmos by Love, and not the Love

4 A pun: Plotinus connects *erōs*, "love," with *horasis*, "seeing" (compare Plato, *Cratylus* 420a–b).

that has sprung up within the cosmos, runs up against a great deal: the cosmos is said to be a blessed god and self-sufficient, whereas this Love is agreed by him to be neither a god nor self-sufficient, but always in need. Next, if the cosmos is made of soul and body, and the soul of the cosmos is, for him, Aphrodite, then Aphrodite must be the ruling part of Love; or, if the cosmos is its soul, as a human being is the human soul, then Love must be Aphrodite. Next, why should this one, who is a spirit, be the cosmos, while the other spirits—clearly they are of the same being—are not? And then the cosmos will be nothing but a compound of spirits. And how could the one said to watch over beautiful boys be the cosmos? And how could "no bedding, no shoes, no home" fit it, except in a strained and jarring way?

3.5.6 But what, then, should we say about Love and his so-called birth? Clearly we must grasp who Poverty is and who Resource is, and how they will fit as his parents. And clearly we must fit them to the other spirits too, if spirits, as spirits, are to have one nature and being, and not just share a common name. Let us consider, then, how we distinguish gods from spirits—even if we often call spirits gods too—at least when we say that they are one kind and another. We say and believe that the race of gods is free of passion, but we attribute passions to spirits, calling them everlasting, next after the gods, already on our side of them, between the gods and our race. How was it, then, that these did not remain free of passion, and how did they come down in nature toward the worse? And this too must be examined: whether there is not a single spirit in the intelligible world, while in this cosmos there are only spirits and god is confined to the intelligible; or whether there are gods here too, and the cosmos is a god—the third, as we usually say—and each of the beings down to the moon is a god. It is better to say that there is no spirit in the intelligible world, but that even if there is a Spirit-itself, this too is a god; and again, that in the perceptible world the visible gods down to the moon are second gods, after those intelligible gods and modeled on them, depending on them like the radiance around each star.

And the spirits—what are they? Is a spirit the trace that each soul leaves when it has come into the cosmos? But why of soul in the cosmos? Because pure soul begets a god, and we said that the love of this soul is a god. First, then, why are not all spirits loves? And then, how is it that these too are not pure of matter? Or rather: loves are those that are born of soul longing for the good and the beautiful, and all souls here beget this spirit; the other spirits also come from soul, the Soul of the All, but they are born from other powers, according to the needs of the whole, and they help to complete it and help to govern each thing for the All. For the Soul of the All had to be sufficient for the All, generating powers of spirits suited to its own whole. But how, and in what matter, do they share? Not in bodily matter, surely, or they will be perceptible living beings. For even if they take on bodies of air or of fire, their nature must first be different, so that they can share in body at all; for what is altogether pure does not mix with body directly—although many people think that the being of a spirit, as a spirit, goes with some body, of air or of fire. But why does one kind of being mix with body and another not, unless there is some cause in the one that mixes? What, then, is the cause? We must posit an intelligible matter, so that what shares in it may come through it into this matter of bodies too.

3.5.7 That is why, in the birth of Love, Plato says that Resource was drunk on nectar, since wine did not yet exist—because Love came into being before the perceptible world, and Poverty shares in an intelligible nature. She is not an intelligible image reflected from there; she came to be there and was mingled, as from form and indefiniteness—the indefiniteness the soul has before it attains the good, when it divines that there is something, through an indefinite and unlimited appearance—and she gave birth to Love as a hypostasis. So a rational principle, coming to be in what is not rational principle but an indefinite longing and a dim existence, made what came to be not perfect or sufficient but deficient, since it was born of an indefinite longing and a sufficient rational principle. And this rational prin-

ciple is not pure, since it has within itself an indefinite, irrational, unlimited longing; it will never be filled as long as it has within itself the nature of the indefinite. It depends on soul, having come from it as from its source, but it is a mixture, made of a rational principle that did not remain in itself but was mixed with indefiniteness—not the principle itself blended with it, but what comes from it. And love is like a gadfly, resourceless by its own nature; and so even when it attains what it wants, it is resourceless again. For it cannot be filled, since its mixed nature does not allow it. Only that is truly filled which has also been filled by its own nature; but this, because of the lack that is in it, longs, and even if it is filled for the moment, it does not hold it. Its helplessness comes from its lack, its resourcefulness from the nature of the rational principle. And we must think that everything of the nature of spirits is like this and comes from such sources. For each spirit is resourceful in what it is assigned to, longs for it and is akin to it, and in this way is akin to Love too; and it too is not full, but longs for something among partial things, as for goods.

That is why the good people here, too, have the love they have for what is simply good and what really is. It is not some particular love. Those who are ranked under other spirits are each ranked under a different spirit: they have let the one they had simply lie idle, and they act under another spirit, which they chose in accord with the part of soul that is active in them. Those who desire bad things have fettered all the loves in them with the bad desires that have arisen in them, just as they have fettered right reason, which is innate in them, with the bad opinions that came on top of it. So the loves that are by nature, and in accord with nature, are fine. Those of a lesser soul are lesser in worth and power, those [of a better] better, and all of them belong to being. But those contrary to nature are affections of souls that have gone astray. They are in no way beings, nor hypostases that have real being. They are no longer generated by soul; they arise along with the vice of a soul that now generates things like itself in its dispositions and states. And in

general it may well be that true goods, when soul acts according to nature within what is defined, are being, while the rest, since then it is not acting from itself, are nothing but affections. They are like false thoughts, which have no realities underlying them, as true thoughts do. Those that really are true, eternal and defined have thinking, the intelligible and being all together, not only in what is simply so, but also in each case, with regard to what is really intelligible and the intellect in each Form. [We must] also posit in each of us pure thinking and the intelligible, even though we are not this all together and simply. That is why our love, too, is for what is simple; for so are our thoughts. And if it is for something particular, it is incidentally, as when [someone] contemplates that this triangle has angles equal to two right angles insofar as it is simply a triangle.

ZEUS, HIS GARDEN AND POROS

The myth is decoded: Zeus is Intellect, Aphrodite is Soul, Poros the rational principles flowing into her.

3.5.8 But who is Zeus, whose garden he speaks of, the one Poros entered? And what is this garden? Aphrodite, we said, was soul, and Poros was said to be the rational principle of all things. What should we take these to be, Zeus and his garden? We cannot take Zeus to be soul, since we have already taken Aphrodite to be that. Here too, then, we must get Zeus from Plato. In the *Phaedrus* he calls this god a great leader; elsewhere, I think, he calls him the third; and more clearly in the *Philebus*, when he says that in Zeus there is a kingly soul and a kingly intellect.[5] If, then, Zeus is a great Intellect and Soul, and is ranked among the causes, and we must rank him by what is better in him—for other reasons, and because the cause, the kingly and the leading, lies there—then he will correspond to Intellect. And Aphrodite, who is his and from him and with him, will be ranked with soul. She is called Aphrodite for soul's beauty and splendor, its innocence and its delicacy. For if we rank the male gods with

5 *Phaedrus* 246e; "the third" alludes to Plato's *Second Letter* (312e); *Philebus* 30d.

intellect and call the female ones their souls, since a soul goes with each intellect, then on this ground too Aphrodite would be Zeus's soul. And again the priests and theologians bear witness to this account: they identify Hera with Aphrodite and call Aphrodite's star in heaven Hera's.

3.5.9 So Poros, since he is the rational principle of the things in the intelligible and in Intellect, but more diffused and, as it were, unfolded, would come to be around soul and in soul. For what is gathered together in Intellect does not come into it from anything else, whereas for Poros, who is drunk, the filling is something brought in from outside. And what is it that is filled with nectar there, if not a rational principle that has fallen from a higher principle to a lower one? So this rational principle is in soul, coming from Intellect, at the time when Aphrodite is said to have been born; it has flowed into his garden. Every garden is a splendor, an adornment of wealth. Zeus's garden is made splendid by his rational principle, and its adornments are the splendors that have come from his intellect into soul. Or what could Zeus's garden be but his statues and his splendors? And what could his splendors and adornments be but the rational principles that have flowed from him? The rational principles taken together, then, are Poros, the plenty and wealth of beautiful things, now made manifest; and this is being drunk on nectar. For what is nectar for gods but what the divine receives? What is below Intellect receives a rational principle; but Intellect has itself in satiety and is not drunk in having it, since it has nothing brought in from outside. The rational principle, the offspring of Intellect, a hypostasis after Intellect, no longer belonging to it but in another, is said to lie in the garden of Zeus, who is Intellect. It lies there from the time when Aphrodite is said to come into existence among the things that are. Myths, if they are to be myths at all, must divide what they tell into times, and separate from one another many things that exist together but are distinct in rank or in powers. Even arguments, after all, create generations of things that are ungenerated, and they too divide things that exist together; and having taught as best they

can, they let the one who has understood put them back together.

Here is the putting together. Soul is with Intellect and has come into existence from Intellect; she is filled with rational principles in turn, beautiful, adorned with beautiful things and filled with plenty, so that one can see in her many splendors and images of all beautiful things. This whole is Aphrodite. All the rational principles in her are plenty and Poros, the nectar there having flowed from above. The splendors in her, lying as they do in life, are called the garden of Zeus, and Poros is said to sleep there, weighed down by what he was filled with. And since life has appeared and is always among the things that are, the gods are said to feast, since they are in such blessedness. And this one has always come into existence in this way, of necessity, from soul's aspiration toward the better and the good; and [the] Love has always existed, for as long as soul has. He is something mixed. He shares in need, by which he wants to be filled; but he is not without a share of plenty, by which he seeks what he lacks. For what had no share of the good at all would never seek the good. So he is said to be born of Poros and Penia, in the sense that the lack, the aspiration and the memory of the rational principles, coming together in soul, gave birth to the activity directed toward the good, and this is love. His mother is Penia because aspiration always belongs to what is in need. And Penia is matter, because matter too is in need of everything, and because the desire for the good is indefinite: there is no shape or rational principle in what desires it. Desiring makes what desires more material, to the extent that it desires. What it is directed toward is form, remaining alone in itself. And when something desires to receive, it makes what is to receive into matter for what comes to it. So Love is something material; and he is a spirit, born of soul insofar as soul falls short of the good and yet aspires to it.

III.6 On the Impassibility of Bodiless Things

Περὶ τῆς ἀπαθείας τῶν ἀσωμάτων
Plotinus argues that soul is unaffected by passions and that matter, a mere mirror for forms, cannot truly be changed.
no. 26 in order of writing

3.6.1 We say that perceptions are not affections but activities and judgments concerned with affections. The affections occur in something else—say, a body of such and such a kind—while the judgment occurs in the soul and is not an affection; otherwise another judgment would be needed, and so on, climbing forever to infinity. Even so, we would still have a difficulty here: whether the judgment, as judgment, has nothing of what is judged. Or rather: if it has an impression, it has been affected. Still, one could also say, about what are called impressions, that the way they work is altogether different from what has been supposed—the same way as with thoughts, which are also activities and able to know without being affected at all. And in general our argument and our aim is not to subject the soul to changes and alterations like the heatings and coolings of bodies. We also had to look at and examine what is called its affective part: whether we will grant that this too is unchangeable, or allow being affected to it alone. But that comes later; first we must examine the difficulties about the earlier points. For how is even the part before the affective part, and before perception, and in general any part of soul whatever, unchangeable, when vice comes to be in it, and false opinions, and ignorance? And feelings of attachment and aversion, when it feels pleasure and

pain, anger, envy, jealousy, desire, when it is never at rest at all but is moved and changed by each thing that strikes it? Now if soul is a body and has magnitude, it is not easy—or rather it is quite impossible—to show that it is unaffected and unchanged in any of the things said to happen to it. But if it is a being without magnitude, and must also be imperishable, we must beware of giving it affections of this kind, or we may find we have made it perishable without noticing. And indeed, whether its being is a number or, as we say, a rational principle, how could an affection arise in a number or a rational principle? Rather, we must think that irrational rational principles and unaffected affections come upon it. These terms, carried over from bodies, must each be taken in the opposite sense and by analogy: it has and does not have, it is affected and not affected. And what the manner of such things is, we must examine.

3.6.2 First we must speak about vice and virtue: what happens when vice is said to be present? For we say we must remove something, as if there were something bad in the soul, and put virtue in, and set it in order, and produce beauty in place of its former ugliness. Then if we say that virtue is a harmony and vice a disharmony, would we be stating an opinion the ancients held, and would the argument get us some way, and not a small one, toward what we are looking for? For if virtue is the parts of the soul harmonized with one another according to nature, and vice their not being harmonized, nothing would come in from outside or from anywhere else. Each part would come into the harmony just as it is, and would not, being such, come into the disharmony. Think of a chorus dancing and singing together, even if its members are not the same; or of one person singing alone while the others do not sing; or of each singing by himself. They must not only sing together; each must also sing his own part well, with his own musicianship. So there too, in the soul, there is harmony when each part does what belongs to it. So before the harmony itself there must be a distinct virtue of each part, and a vice of each part before their disharmony with one another. What, then, must be present for each part to be bad?

Vice, of course. And for it to be good, in turn? Virtue. Now in the case of the reasoning part, someone might perhaps say that its vice is ignorance, and ignorance in the sense of negation; and then he would not be saying that anything is present.

But when false opinions are in it as well—which is precisely what most of all produces vice—how will he deny that something comes to be in it, and that in this way this part becomes different? And isn't the spirited part in one state when it is cowardly and in another when it is courageous? And the desiring part, isn't it one way when it is dissolute and another way when it is moderate? Or rather: when each part is in virtue, we will say that it acts according to the being that each is, listening to reason; the reasoning part takes it from intellect, the others from the reasoning part. Listening to reason is like seeing: not being shaped, but seeing, and being in activity when it sees. Sight is the same in its being whether it is in potentiality or in actuality, and its activity is not an alteration: it has at once come to that to which its being is directed, and it knows, and has known, without being affected. In just the same way the reasoning part is related to intellect: it sees, and this is its power of thinking. No seal-impression comes to be inside it; it has what it saw and again does not have it. It has it by knowing it; it does not have it in that nothing is stored away from the vision, like a shape in wax. We must remember that memories too were said not to consist in anything stored up, but in the soul's so awakening its power that it has even what it does not have. What then? Wasn't it different before it remembered in this way and later, when it remembers?

Or would you like to call it different? Certainly not as having been altered—unless one were to call coming from potentiality into actuality an alteration. Nothing has been added; it is doing what it was naturally made to do. For in general the activities of immaterial things occur without their being altered along with them—otherwise they would be destroyed—but much rather while they remain. Being affected while acting belongs to things with matter. If something immaterial is going to be affected, it

has nothing to remain by. So in the case of sight, when seeing is active, what is affected is the eye; and opinions are like the things seen. But how is the spirited part cowardly? And how is it courageous? Perhaps cowardly by not looking to reason, or by looking to reason that is in a bad state, or through a deficiency of instruments—a lack, say, or rottenness of its bodily weapons—or by being prevented from acting, or by not being set in motion, [but] roused, as it were. And courageous if the opposite is the case. In none of this is there any alteration or affection. The desiring part, when it alone is active, produces what is called licentiousness. It does everything alone, and the others are not present, which, if they were present, would have their share in ruling and in showing it the way; and the part that sees would be something else acting, not wholly occupied, but at times having leisure to see the others as far as possible. Perhaps, for the most part, what is called the vice of this part is also a bad condition of the body, and its virtue the opposite. So in neither case is anything added to the soul.

3.6.3 But what about feelings of attachment and aversion? And pains and angers and pleasures, desires and fears—how are they not changes and affections present in the soul and moving it? About these, too, we must make the following distinction. To say that alterations do not occur, and intense perceptions of them, is to contradict what is plainly evident. Rather, granting this, we must inquire what it is that changes. For when we say these things about the soul, we risk supposing something like saying that the soul blushes or turns pale, without reckoning that these affections come about through the soul but occur in the rest of the structure. Shame arises in the soul when an opinion that something is disgraceful comes to be; and the body—which the soul, so to speak, holds, if we are not to be misled by words—being dependent on the soul and not the same as something lifeless, changes in the blood, which is easily moved. As for what is called fear, its beginning is in the soul, while the pallor comes from the blood withdrawing inward. In pleasure, too, the expansion, the part that reaches perception, belongs to the body,

while what belongs to the soul is no longer an affection. And the same with pain. Indeed in desire, too, what is in the soul, which is the principle of desiring, goes unnoticed, while what has proceeded from there is what perception has come to know. When we say the soul is moved in desires, in reasonings, in opinions, we do not mean that it does these things while being shaken about, but that the movements come from it. Even when we call living a movement, we do not mean an alteration: the activity of each part according to nature is a life that does not take it out of itself. A sufficient summary: if we grant that activities and lives and appetites are not alterations, and that memories are not impressions stamped in, nor imaginations impressions as in wax, we must grant that everywhere, in all the so-called affections and movements, the soul remains the same in its substrate and its being; and that virtue and vice do not come to be as black and white, or hot and cold, come to be in a body, but in the way that has been stated, for both and in general for all the opposites.

3.6.4 We must examine what is called the affective part of the soul. In a way something has already been said about this too, when we discussed all the affections occurring in the spirited and the desiring parts, and how each arises. Nonetheless we must say more about it, first grasping what the affective part of the soul is said to be. It is said, surely, to be that around which the affections seem to form; and these are the ones followed by pleasure and pain. Some affections form on the basis of opinions: as when someone forms the opinion that he is going to die and feels fear, or believes some good will come to him and is pleased. The opinion is in one thing, the affection is set in motion in another. Others, as it were taking the lead, themselves produce the opinion involuntarily in the part whose nature is to form opinions. Now it has been said that opinion leaves that part unchanged when it forms an opinion. Fear, which is outside opinion, comes from above, from the opinion, and gives a kind of understanding, as it were, to what is called the fearing part of the soul. What does this fearing produce? Disturbance and con-

sternation, they say, at an expected evil. That imagination is in the soul should be clear to anyone: both the first kind, which we call opinion, and the kind derived from it, which is no longer opinion but a dim quasi-opinion directed to what is below, an unexamined imagination, like the activity present in what is called nature, by which it makes each thing, as they say, without imagination. What follows from these is the disturbance, now perceptible, occurring in the body: the trembling and shaking of the body, the pallor, the inability to speak. These are certainly not in the soul part. Otherwise we will say that this part is itself bodily, if it really had undergone them; and then these things would no longer even reach the body, since what sends them would no longer be actively sending, being gripped by the affection and taken out of itself.

No: this affective part of the soul is not a body but a form. It is in matter, though—both the desiring part and the nutritive, growth and generative part, which is the root and principle of the desiring and affective form. But no form should have disturbance, or affection at all, present to it. It should itself stand still, while its matter comes to be in the affection, when it does, by the presence of that which moves it. For the vegetative principle, when it makes things grow, does not itself grow; nor when it increases things is it increased; nor in general, when it moves, is it moved with the motion with which it moves—either it is not moved at all, or it has another manner of movement or activity. The very nature of the form must be activity, and must act by its presence, as if the harmony moved the strings of itself. So the affective part will be the cause of the affection, either when the movement arises from it out of sense imagination, or even without imagination—but we must examine this, whether it happens when opinion has begun from above—while the part itself remains in the form of a harmony. The causes of the movement correspond to the musician; the things struck through the affection would correspond to the strings. For there too it is not the harmony that is affected but the string; and yet the string would

not have been moved [musically], even if the musician wished it, unless the harmony said so.

3.6.5 Why, then, should we try to make the soul unaffected through philosophy, if it is not affected in the first place? Or rather: what enters it in the so-called affective part, a kind of phantasm, produces the affection that follows, the disturbance; and yoked to the disturbance is the image of the expected evil. So the argument thought it right to remove this so-called affection altogether and not let it arise: when it arises, the soul is not yet in a good state; when it does not arise, the soul is unaffected, since the cause of the affection no longer arises in it. It is as if someone, wanting to abolish the images of dreams, were to bring the soul that has them to a waking state—if he were to say that it had produced the affections, calling the visions that seem to come from outside affections of the soul. But what would the purification of a soul be that has never been soiled at all? Or what is separating it from the body? Perhaps purification would be to leave it alone, not with others, or not looking at something else, nor again having alien opinions—whatever the manner of the opinions or of the affections, as has been said—neither seeing the images nor producing affections from them. And if it turns the other way, away from the things below, how is that not purification? And separation, on the soul's side, is its no longer coming to be in a body so as to belong to it, and being like light in murky water, which is unaffected even in the murk. For the affective part, purification is waking up from its strange images and not seeing them; separation is not inclining much downward and not imagining the things below. And separating it would also mean removing the things from which it is separated, when it does not rest on a murky pneuma made impure by gluttony and a mass of flesh, but what it is in is thin, so that it can ride on it quietly.[1]

1 Pneuma: the fine "breath" or vapor that, on a widespread ancient view, serves as the soul's vehicle in the body.

MATTER AND TRUE BEING

True being is life and Intellect, and the more bodily a thing is, the less it truly is.

3.6.6 It has been said, then, that intelligible being, all of it ranked as form, must be thought to be unaffected. But since matter too is one of the bodiless things, even if in another way, we must examine how it stands with matter as well: whether it is affectable, as people say, and changeable in every way, or whether we must think it too is unaffected, and what the manner of its unaffectedness is. As we set out on this and speak about its nature, what kind it is, we must first grasp that the nature of being, and substance, and existence, are not what most people think. For being—what one would truly call being—is what really is; and this is what is being in every way; and this is what falls short of being in nothing. Being perfectly, it needs nothing in order to be preserved and to be; it is also the cause, for the other things that seem to be, of their seeming to be. If this is rightly said, it must be in life, and in perfect life; otherwise, falling short, it will be no more being than non-being. And this is Intellect and understanding in every way. So it is also defined and limited; there is nothing outside its power, and its power is not of any particular size—for then it would fall short. That is why it has the "always" and the "in the same way," and receives nothing, and nothing enters it. For if it received anything, it would receive something other than itself, and that would be non-being. But it must be being in every way; so it must come into being from itself, having everything; and it is all things together, and all one.

If, then, we define being by these marks—and we must; otherwise intellect and life would not come from being, but would be brought into being from outside and would come from non-being, and being would be lifeless and mindless while what is truly non-being would have them, as if they had to be in inferior things, posterior to being; whereas what is before being supplies these to being without itself needing them—if, then, being is like

this, it must be neither a body nor the substrate of bodies. Rather, for these, to be is to be things that are not. And how is the nature of bodies non-being? How is matter, on which they rest? Mountains and rocks and all the solid earth, and everything that resists and forces what it strikes with its blows, testify that they have being. Suppose someone says: then how are things that do not press, do not force, do not resist, and are not seen at all—soul and intellect—beings, and really beings? Well, among bodies too, what moves more and is less heavy is more [being] than earth, which stands still, and the upper part of this is more so still; and fire is already escaping the nature of body. But I think that the more self-sufficient things trouble others less and are less painful to others, while the heavier and earthier ones—those that are deficient and falling and cannot lift themselves—fall through weakness and deliver blows by their downward rush and sluggishness.

Indeed, dead bodies are also more unpleasant to collide with; they have violence in their blows and the power to harm. Living things, which share in being, are more agreeable to those near them, to the extent that they share in it. And motion, which is a kind of life in bodies and an imitation of life, belongs more to things that have less of body, as though being's abandonment made what it leaves behind more of a body. And from the so-called affections one can see better that what is more body is more affectable: earth more than the others, and the others by the same reckoning. For the others, when divided, come together into one again if nothing prevents it, while anything earthy, once cut, stays forever apart, each piece by itself. Things that are failing in their nature, when a small blow occurs, stay as they were struck and perish; in the same way, what has most become body, having gone furthest into non-being, is too weak to gather itself back into one. So heavy and violent blows produce a collapse when bodies strike one another; and one weak thing falling on another weak thing is strong against it, non-being against non-being. This has been said against those who place real beings in bodies, taking the testimony of shoves and

the phantasms of perception as proof of truth. Like dreamers, they think the things they see are real, when they are dreams. For the business of perception belongs to soul asleep: as much of soul as is in body, so much of it sleeps. True waking is a true rising up from the body, not with the body. Rising with the body is moving from one sleep to another, as if from one bed to another; the true rising is away from bodies altogether, which, being of a nature opposite to soul, have what is opposite to it with respect to being. Their coming to be, too, and their flowing and perishing, which do not belong to the nature of being, bear witness to this.

3.6.7 But we must go back to the underlying matter and to the things said to be on matter; from these we will come to know both its not-being and matter's unaffectedness. Matter, then, is bodiless, since body comes later and is composite, and matter together with something else makes body. That is how it has come to share the same name with being, as bodiless: both being and matter are different from bodies. It is not soul, nor intellect, nor life, nor form, nor rational principle, nor limit—for it is unlimitedness—nor power: what does it make? Having fallen outside all these, it could not rightly receive even the name of being, but it might reasonably be called non-being—and not as motion is non-being or rest is non-being, but truly non-being. It is an image and phantasm of bulk, an aspiration to existence; it stands still, but not at rest; invisible in itself, it escapes whoever wants to see it; it is there when one is not looking, but is not seen when one gazes intently; it always shows opposite appearances in itself—small and great, less and more, falling short and exceeding—an image that does not stay, and yet cannot flee either. It does not have the strength even for that, since it has received no strength from Intellect but has come to be in the lack of all being.[2]

So whatever it announces is a lie. If it appears great, it is small; if more, it is less; and its being, in appearance, is not

2 In Plato's *Sophist* (255–256), motion and rest "are not" only in the sense that each is other than being.

being, like a toy that slips away. Hence the things that seem to come to be in it are toys too, simply images in an image, as in a mirror what is set in one place appears in another. It seems to be filled, [empty] as it is; it has nothing, and seems to be everything. The things that enter and leave, imitations of the things that are, are images entering a formless image, and are seen in it because of its formlessness. They seem to act on it, but they do nothing; for they are feeble and weak and have nothing to push against. But since it has nothing either, they pass through without cutting, as through water, or as if someone were to send shapes, as it were, into what is called the void. And again, if the things seen in it were like the things from which they came into it, someone might perhaps grant them some power of their senders that had come into it, and suppose it was affected by them. As it is, though, the things that appear in it are other, and the things seen in it are different in kind; and from this too one can learn that its being affected is a falsehood, since what is seen in it is false and has no likeness whatever to what produced it. Being weak and false and falling into what is false, as in a dream or in water or in a mirror, it necessarily leaves matter unaffected. And yet in the cases just mentioned the things seen in them do bear a likeness to the things that cast them.

3.6.8 In general, what is affected must be such as to have powers and qualities opposite to those of the things that come upon it and produce the affection. The heat present in a thing undergoes alteration from what cools it, and the moisture present from what dries it; and we say the substrate has been altered when it becomes cold from hot or wet from dry. What is called the destruction of fire also bears witness to this, when it changes into another element: the fire was destroyed, we say, not the matter. So the affections, too, concern the same thing that destruction concerns; for receiving an affection is the road to destruction, and being destroyed belongs to the same thing as being affected. But matter cannot be destroyed. Into what, and how? How, then, does it not itself share in the affection, when it

takes into itself heats, colds, countless qualities, unlimited altogether, and is parceled out by them, and has them as if grown into it and blended with one another—for they are not each separate—while it is caught in the middle and the qualities are affected in their mixing, with one another and by one another? Unless, of course, one is going to put it altogether outside them. But whatever is in a substrate is present to the substrate in such a way as to give it something of itself.

3.6.9 First we must grasp that "being present to another" and "being in another" do not occur in a single way. One kind, by being present, makes the other worse or better while changing it, as one sees with bodies, at least with those of living things. Another, as it were, makes it better or worse without the other being affected, as was said in the case of the soul. Another is as when someone applies a shape to wax: here there is no affection such as to make the wax something else when the shape is present, nor any lack in it when the shape has gone. And light does not even make an alteration of shape in what is lit. And the stone that has become cold—what does it get from the coldness, remaining a stone? And what would a line suffer from color? Nor does the surface, I think, but perhaps the underlying body. And yet what would that suffer from color? We must not call being present being affected, nor putting a shape around something. And if someone were to say that mirrors, and transparent things in general, are not affected at all by the images seen in them, the example he offered would not be unlike the case. For the things in matter are images too, and matter is even more unaffected than mirrors are. Heats and colds do come to be in it, but they do not heat it; for being heated and being cooled belong to a quality that brings the substrate from one quality to another.

We should examine whether coldness is not an absence and a privation. When the qualities come together in matter, they will act on one another—many of them, or rather those that are opposed. For how could a fragrance produce sweetness, or a color a shape, or one thing of one kind another thing of a different kind? From this one might be especially convinced that it is

possible for one thing to be [in] another in the same subject, or something different in something different, causing no harm by its presence to that to which or in which it is present. Just as what is harmed is not harmed by any chance thing, so too what is changed and affected would not be affected by just anything: affection is for opposites by opposites, and other things are unchanged by others. Things in which there is no opposition would be affected by no opposite. So if anything is affected, it must be not matter but some composite, or in general many things together. What is alone, isolated from the others and altogether simple, would be unaffected by everything, even when caught in the middle of all the things acting on one another—as when people in the same house strike one another, the house is unaffected, and so is the air in it. Let the things on matter, then, come together and act on one another, as far as their nature allows; matter itself will be unaffected, and much more so than the qualities in it that are unaffected by one another because they are not opposites.

3.6.10 Next, if matter is affected, it must have something from the affection: either the affection itself, or a different condition from the one it was in before the affection entered it. Then when another quality comes on after that one, what receives it will no longer be matter but qualified matter. And if this quality too should depart, leaving something of itself behind because it acted, the substrate would become still more something else. And as things go on in this way, the substrate will be something other than matter, many-sided and multiform; so it would no longer be all-receiving, since it would become an obstacle to the many things coming upon it. And the matter will no longer remain; nor, then, is it indestructible. So if there must be matter, it must always be the same as it was from the beginning; to speak of its being altered is not for those who keep it as matter. Further, if in general everything that is altered must remain in the same form and be altered incidentally, not in itself—if, then, what is altered must remain, and what remains of it is not what is affected—one of two things is necessary: either matter is

altered and departs from itself, or it does not depart from itself and is not altered. If someone says it is altered, but not insofar as it is matter, first he will be unable to say in respect of what it will be altered; and then he will admit that even so matter itself is not altered. For just as the other things, being forms, cannot be altered in their being, since their being lies in this, so too, since for matter to be is to be as matter, it cannot be altered in respect of being matter, but remains. And just as there the form itself is unalterable, so here matter itself is unalterable.

HOW MATTER PARTICIPATES

Forms appear in matter like images in a mirror, leaving it unchanged and unaffected.

3.6.11 That is why I think Plato too, thinking along these lines, was right to say "the things that enter and leave are imitations of the things that [always] are." He did not say "enter and leave" idly; he wanted us to understand by attending to the manner of participation. And it may be that the famous difficulty, how matter participates in the Forms, is not what most of our predecessors thought—how they come into it—but rather how they are in it. For it seems truly astonishing how, when these are present to it, it remains the same, unaffected by them, and that even though the very things that enter are affected by one another.[3] Rather, the very things that enter push out, each of them, the ones before; and being affected belongs to the composite—and not even to every composite, but to one that has need of what comes or goes, one that is deficient in its constitution through the absence of something and complete through its presence. But matter gets nothing more for its constitution when anything whatever comes to it—for it does not become what it is when something comes—nor less when something leaves; it remains what it was from the beginning. Being adorned would be needed by things that need adornment and order; and adornment could

3 Plato, *Timaeus* 50c, from the account of the "receptacle" in which all becoming takes place.

come about without alteration, as with things we put ornaments on. But if something were adorned so that the adornment grew into it, then what was ugly before would have to be altered and become different, so that the adorned thing is beautiful instead of ugly.

If, then, matter was ugly and became beautiful, what it was before, in being ugly, it no longer is. So in being adorned in this way it will lose its being matter, especially if it was not ugly incidentally. But if it is ugly in such a way as to be ugliness, it could not participate in adornment; and if it is evil in such a way as to be evil itself, it could not participate in good. So its participation is not a matter of its being affected in some way; it is another manner, a kind of seeming. Perhaps in this way, too, the difficulty would be solved of how, being evil, it could aspire to the good: participation would not destroy what it was. For if what is called participation is of such a kind that matter remains the same and is not altered, as we say, but always is what it is, it is no longer astonishing how, being evil, it participates. For it does not depart from itself. Since it is necessary for it to participate, it participates in some way, as long as it exists; but by being what it is, through a manner of participation that preserves it, it suffers no harm to its being from what gives in this way. And it may be that for this very reason it is no less evil: because it always remains what it is. For if it really participated, and were really altered by the good, it would not be evil in its nature. So if someone calls matter evil, he would be speaking the truth if he called it unaffected by the good; and this is the same as being wholly unaffected.

3.6.12 Plato, having this in mind about matter, did not take participation to be form coming to be in a substrate and giving it shape, so that a single composite comes about from things changed together and, as it were, blended and affected together. He wanted to show that this is not what he means, and how matter could have the forms while remaining unaffected; and he looked for an example of unaffected participation, since it is not easy to teach in another way what it is that, while present, most

preserves the substrate as the same. So he took on many difficulties as he hurried toward what he wanted, wishing besides to show the emptiness of existence in sensible things and how large the territory of the likely is. Positing, then, that matter produces the affections in living bodies through shapes, while itself having none of these affections, he shows in this way that it persists, letting us infer that it does not get being affected and altered from the shapes either.[4] In these bodies, which receive one shape after another, someone might perhaps say that alteration takes place, calling the change of shape an alteration in name only. But since matter has no shape or magnitude, how could anyone call the presence of shape, in any way at all, an alteration, even in name only? So if someone said here "by convention color, and by convention the rest," on the ground that the underlying nature has nothing in the way it is thought to, he would not be out of place in the argument. But how does matter have them, if even "as shapes" does not satisfy? Well, the hypothesis gives an indication, as far as possible, of its unaffectedness, and of the seeming presence of what are, as it were, images that are not present.[5]

Or rather, we must first say more about its unaffectedness, teaching how we should take the customary words that carry us toward making it affected—as when he says it is dried [and] set on fire and moistened—keeping in mind also what comes next: "and receiving the shapes of air and water." For "and receiving the shapes of air and water" blunts "set on fire and moistened"; and in the words "receiving shapes" it shows not that matter itself has been shaped, but that the shapes are there as they entered. It also shows that "set on fire" is not said in the strict sense, but rather means "becoming fire." For becoming fire and being set on fire are not the same: being set on fire comes from something else, and that involves being affected; but how could

4 In the *Timaeus* (53c–56c) Plato explains the elements by the geometrical shapes of their particles, and calls his whole account a "likely story."

5 An echo of Democritus' dictum: "by convention sweet, by convention color; in reality atoms and void."

what is itself a part of fire be set on fire? It would be like saying that the statue had passed through the bronze, if one said that fire had gone through matter and, what is more, set it on fire. Further, if what comes to it is a rational principle, how would it set it on fire? Or if it is a shape? But what is set on fire is set on fire by both together. How, then, by both, if one thing has not come to be from both? Or rather: even if one thing has come about, they do not have their affections in each other; they act toward each other. Are both active, then, or does one make sure the other does not escape? But when some body is divided, how is matter not divided too? And when the body has been affected by being divided, how has matter not been affected by this same affection? Or what stops one, by this same argument, from destroying it too, by saying: how is it not destroyed when the body has been destroyed? We must say further that what is divided is something of a certain size and a magnitude, while what is not a magnitude does not undergo the affections of magnitude either, and in general what is not body does not undergo the affections of body. So those who make matter affectable must also concede that it is a body.

3.6.13 Further, they ought to consider this point too: how do they say that matter flees form? How could it escape the stones and rocks that have enclosed it? For surely they will not say that it sometimes flees and sometimes does not. If it flees by its own will, why not always? And if it stays by necessity, there is no time when it is not in some form. Rather, we must look for the cause of each piece of matter's not always holding the same form, and look for it rather in the things that enter. In what sense, then, is it said to flee? Or is it by its very nature, and always? But what would this mean, except that, never departing from itself, it has form in such a way as never to have it? Otherwise they will not know what to do with what he says.[6] "The receptacle and nurse of all becoming." If it is the receptacle and nurse, and becoming is something other than it, and what is

6 "He" is Plato: the phrases quoted in what follows ("receptacle," "nurse," "space," "seat") come from his account of matter in the *Timaeus* (49a–52d).

altered is in becoming, then it would exist before becoming and before alteration. And "receptacle," and still more "nurse," keep it as what it is, unaffected; and so do "that in which each thing, coming to be in it, appears, and from which it departs again," and its being "space" and "seat." As for the remark that has been made and criticized, that he calls it a "place of forms": it does not speak of an affection in that thing, but is looking for a different manner. What, then, is this? Since this nature we are speaking of must be none of the things that are, but must have escaped the whole being of the things that are and be altogether other than them—for they are rational principles and really are—it must, by this very otherness, preserving the security it has been allotted, not only be unable to receive the things that are, but also, if there is some imitation of them, have no share in that either so as to make it its own. For in this way it would be altogether other. Otherwise, by taking in some form to dwell in it and becoming something else along with it, it would have lost its being other, and its being the space of all things and the receptacle of everything without exception.

Rather, it must remain the same when things enter it, and unaffected when they leave, so that something may always be entering it and leaving. What enters, then, enters as an image, and into what is not true as what is not true. Does it truly enter, then? And how could it, into something that may by no means share in truth, because it is falsehood? Does it, then, come falsely into falsehood, and is it much the same as when the images of things reflected are seen in a mirror, for as long as those things look into it? For here too, if you took away the things that are, not one of the things now seen in the sensible world would appear for any time at all. Now in this case the mirror is itself seen too, since it is itself a form of some kind. But there, matter, being no form, is not itself seen; for it would have had to be seen first by itself. Rather, something happens to it like what happens to air: when lit, it is invisible even then, because it was not seen without being lit either. This, then, is why the images in mirrors are not believed to be real, or less so:

because the thing they are in is seen, and it remains while they go away. But in matter, matter itself is not seen, either when it has them or without them. If the things that fill mirrors could remain while the mirrors themselves were not seen, no one would have doubted that what appears in them is real. If, then, there is something in mirrors, let sensible things be in matter in the same way. But if there is not, and it only appears to be, then we must say that there too they appear on matter, and make the existence of the things that are the cause of the appearing—an existence in which the things that are always really participate, while the things that are not participate not really; since they cannot be in the state they would be in if what is were not and they themselves were.

3.6.14 What then? If matter did not exist, would nothing have come into existence? No—any more than an image would if there were no mirror or something of the kind. For what is naturally such as to come to be in something else could not come to be if that thing did not exist; for this is the nature of an image: to be in something else. If something went off from the things that are, it could exist even without being in something else. But since those things remain, if they are to be reflected in something else, there must be something else that offers a seat to what does not come—something that by its presence, its boldness, its begging, as it were, and its poverty, as it were forces its way to take, and is cheated by not taking, so that its poverty may remain and it may beg forever. For once it has come into existence, the myth makes it a beggar, showing its nature: that it is destitute of good.[7] And the beggar asks not for what the giver has, but is glad of whatever he gets; so this too shows that what appears in it is something other. And her name means that it is never filled. That she unites with Poros (Resource) shows that it unites not with what is, nor with plenty, but with something resourceful—that is, with the cleverness of the illusion.

For it is impossible for anything that is in any way whatever outside being to have no share at all in being—this is the nature

7 Poverty (Penia) is Love's mother in Diotima's myth; here she is read as matter.

of [the] being: to make things be—while what altogether is not is unmixed with being. So the thing becomes a marvel: how it participates without participating, and how it has something, as it were, from being neighbor to it, even though by its own nature it is unable, so to speak, to stick to it. So whatever it might take slips off it as from an alien nature, like an echo from smooth, flat surfaces; and it is precisely because it does not stay that [the] being there and coming from there was imagined. If it did participate and receive in the way some think, what came to it would have been swallowed up and sunk into it. As it is, it is evident that it was not swallowed up: matter remained the same, having received nothing, but holding back the approach like a seat that thrusts it away, and a receptacle for the things that come to the same point and mingle there. It is like the smooth objects people set up facing the sun when they want to catch fire—some even filled with water—so that the flame, blocked by the opposite within, does not pass through but collects outside. In this way, then, matter becomes the cause of becoming, and the things that are constituted in it are constituted in this sort of way.

3.6.15 In the case of things that gather fire from the sun around themselves, since they receive the kindling that occurs around them from a sensible fire, they too are sensible; that is why it is evident that what forms there is outside them, adjacent and near, and that they touch, and that there are two limits. But in the account of matter, "outside" has a different sense. For the difference of nature suffices, needing no double limit; much more, it is alien to every limit by the otherness of its being, and has its unmixedness by having no kinship at all. And this is the reason why it remains by itself: neither does what enters get anything from it, nor does it get anything from what enters. Just so, opinions and imaginings in the soul are not blended with it, but each goes off again, as being what it alone is, drawing nothing with it and leaving nothing behind, because it was not mixed in; and it [has] the "outside" not because it lay on top; and [the] thing it rests on is other, not to sight—it is reason that says so. Here, then, imagination is like an image, while the soul is not

by nature an image. And though imagination seems to lead it in many things, and to lead it wherever it wishes, the soul nonetheless uses it as [form] matter, or something analogous. Yet imagination, often pushed out by the soul's own activities, did not hide it, nor, even if it came with all [its effort], did it make the soul hidden, or seem to be such as itself; for the soul has in itself activities and rational principles opposed to it, by which it pushes away what approaches. But matter—for it is far weaker in power than soul, and has none of the things that are, neither a true one nor even a falsehood of its own—has nothing through which it might appear, being an emptiness of all things. It becomes the cause of appearing for other things, but it cannot say even this much: "Here I am." But if ever some profound reasoning were to track it down, starting from other realities, finding that there is, after all, something forsaken by all the things that are, even by the later things that seemed to be, something dragged into everything and following, as it would seem, and yet again not following.

3.6.16 Again, a rational principle came and led it to whatever extent it wished, and made it large, putting largeness around it from itself—it being neither large nor even becoming so; for the large upon it [would have] been magnitude. So if one takes this form away, the substrate no longer is or appears large. If what had become large was a man, say, and a horse, and the horse's largeness came along with the horse, then when the horse goes, its largeness goes too. And if someone were to say that the horse comes to be on a large bulk of a certain size and the largeness remains, we will say that what remains there is not the horse's largeness but the bulk's. If, however, this bulk is fire or earth, then when the fire [or the earth] goes away, the largeness of the fire or of the earth goes away. So matter would not keep anything either of the shape or of the magnitude; otherwise it will not change from fire into something else, but, remaining fire, will become [not fire]. For even now, having become so large as to seem as large as this All, if the heaven and everything within it were to cease, all magnitude would vanish from it together

with all these, and clearly the other qualities along with it; and it will be left as what it was, keeping none of the things that were previously around it in this way. Yet in things capable of being affected by the presence of something, something still remains in what received it even after it goes; but in things that were not affected, nothing does—as in the case of air, when light is around it and when the light departs. And if anyone is puzzled how what has no magnitude will be large—well, how will what has no heat be hot? For surely being matter and being magnitude are not the same, since there is also immaterial magnitude, just as there is immaterial shape. And if we keep matter as it is, it will have all things by participation; and magnitude too is one of all things. Now in bodies, since they are composite, magnitude is present along with the other things, though not as something marked off, since magnitude too is contained in the rational principle of body; but in matter there is not even magnitude that is not marked off—for matter is not body.

3.6.17 Nor again will it be magnitude itself. For magnitude is a form, not something that receives; and magnitude taken by itself is not magnitude in that sense. But since [that] which lies in Intellect or in Soul wants to be great, it granted to the things that, as it were, wish to imitate it, by their aspiration for it or their movement toward it, to imprint their own affection on something else. So the great, running forward in a procession of appearing, made the not-great of matter run along with it into this very greatness, and so has made it seem great, by an extension that does not fill it. For this is what is falsely great: when, by not having greatness, it is stretched out toward that and extended by the stretching. For since all [the] things that are produce their own mirror image in other things, and each of the producers was great in the way it itself was, the whole too was great in that way.

So the largeness of each rational principle—of horse, say, or of anything else—came together with largeness itself; and matter as a whole became large, lit up in relation to [the] great itself, and each portion became something large, and all things

appeared together, from the whole form to which largeness belongs, and from each. Matter was, as it were, stretched out both toward the whole and toward all things, compelled to be in this form and in bulk, to the extent that the power made what is itself nothing to be all things. In the same way, by merely appearing, the color here, which comes from what is not color, and the quality here, which comes from what is not quality, got the name they share with those; and so did magnitude, [the one] that comes from what is not magnitude, or from what shares its name only—those things being seen in between matter itself and the form itself. And they appear, because they come from there; but they deceive, because that in which they appear is not. The several things, then, are made large, drawn out by the power of the things seen in it as they make room for themselves; and matter is drawn out over everything without force, because the whole is matter. Each draws it according to the power it has; and it has that power from there. What makes matter large, so that it seems large, comes from the reflection of the great; and this reflected thing is the large here. Matter, on which it is compelled to run along, offers itself all together and everywhere; for it is the matter of this and is not this. And what is nothing of itself can become even the opposite through something else, and having become the opposite, it is not that either; for then it would have come to a stop.

3.6.18 So someone who has a thought of the great—if his thinking had the power not only to be in itself but also, as it were, to be carried outward by a power—would take hold of a nature that is not in the thinker and has no form, nor any trace of the great, nor of anything else at all. What, [then], would he make with this power? Not a horse, not an ox: others will make those. Or rather: since it comes from a great father, the other cannot hold [the] great, but will have it as an image appearing in it. So for what has not had such good fortune with the great as to be great itself, what is left is to appear great in what belongs to it, as far as it can. And this means not falling short, not being scattered over many things in many places, having its parts akin within

itself, and lacking none. For the image of the great, since it is of the great, could not bear to be in a small bulk and still be equal; but as far as it aspired to the hope of that, it went as near as it could, together with what runs along with it [and] cannot be left behind; and it made great that which was not great and did not even seem so, and made what is seen in bulk large. But matter all the same keeps its own nature, using this largeness like a garment, which it put on when it ran along with it as it ran and led it; and if the one who dressed it should take it off, it remains again the same as it was of itself—or as large as the form present makes it.

For soul, having the forms of the things that are and being itself a form, has all things together; and since each form is gathered together in itself, when it sees the forms of sensible things, as it were, turning back toward it and approaching, it will not tolerate receiving them with their multiplicity, but sees them stripped of their bulk; for it cannot become anything other than what it is. But matter, having nothing to resist—for it has no activity—and being a shadow, waits to undergo whatever the agent wishes. So what proceeds from the rational principle there already has a trace of what is going to come about. For the rational principle moving, as it were, in an image-making imagination—or the movement that comes from it—is a division; otherwise, if it were one and the same, it would not even have moved, but stays. And matter cannot take all things together to dwell in it, as soul does; otherwise it would be one of them. Yet it must receive all things, and receive them not without parts. So, being a place for all things, it must go out to all things, meet them all, and be equal to every extension, because it is not itself taken up by extension, but lay open to what was to come. How, then, did not some one thing, entering, block the others, since they could not be on top of one another? Or rather, there was nothing first; or if there was, it was the form of the All. So all things are at once, but each in a part; for the matter of a living being is divided along with the division of the living being. Oth-

erwise nothing would have come to be besides the rational principle.

3.6.19 The things that have entered matter, as into a mother, do it no wrong, nor again do they benefit it. Nor are their blows aimed at it, but at one another, since powers act on their opposites, not on their substrates—unless one were to consider the substrates as taken together with what comes in. For hot put an end to cold, and black to white; or, blended, they produced another quality out of themselves. So the things affected are the things blended, and being affected, for them, means not being what they were. In living beings, too, the affections concern the bodies, since alteration takes place according to the qualities and powers present in them; and when their structures dissolve, or come together, or are shifted contrary to their natural structure, the affections are in the bodies, while the souls have the knowledge of the more intense ones joined to them; otherwise they do not notice. But matter remains: it has undergone nothing when the cold departs and the hot arrives, since neither was either dear or foreign to it. So "receptacle and nurse" suits it better; "mother" is said only as a manner of speaking, for it generates nothing.

But those who call it mother seem to be people who also think the mother has the role of matter toward what is generated, as only receiving and contributing nothing to the offspring; since even whatever body the offspring has comes from nourishment. But if the mother does give something to the offspring, it is not insofar as she is matter, but because she is also form: for form alone is fertile, while the other nature is sterile. That is why, I think, the wise men of old, speaking in mystic riddles and in the rites, make the ancient Hermes always have his organ of generation ready for action, showing that what generates the things of the sensible world is the intelligible rational principle; and they show the sterility of matter, which always remains the same,

through the sterile beings around it.[8] For they made her the mother of all—they call her by this name, taking her as the principle that corresponds to the substrate, and giving her this name to show what they meant. Wanting to indicate that she is not in every way like a mother, to those who wish to grasp the manner more precisely and do not inquire superficially, they indicated, from afar but as best they could, that she is sterile and not even altogether female, but female so far as receiving goes, and no further where generating is concerned. They did so by making what goes to her neither female nor able to generate, but cut off from all power of generating—a power that belongs only to what remains male.

8 Hermes was represented in archaic pillar statues (herms) with an erect phallus; the sterile attendants are the eunuch priests of the Great Mother, Cybele, the "mother of all" of the next paragraph.

III.7 On Eternity and Time

Περὶ αἰῶνος καὶ χρόνου
Plotinus defines eternity as the unchanging life of Intellect and time as the life of soul moving from one state to another.
no. 45 in order of writing

3.7.1 When we say that eternity and time are different, each from the other, and that eternity has to do with everlasting nature and time with what comes to be and with this All, we think, straightaway and as if by the more concentrated apprehensions of our notion, that we have a clear experience of them in our souls, since we are always talking about them and naming them on every occasion. Yet when we try to examine them closely and, so to speak, come right up to them, we are once again at a loss in our thinking. We take up the pronouncements of the ancients about them—different ones in different ways, or perhaps the same ones differently—and rest on these; we think it enough if, when asked, we can say what they thought, and, content with that, we let ourselves off from inquiring any further about them. Now we must believe that some of the ancient and blessed philosophers found the truth; but which of them hit on it most fully, and how we too might come to understand these things, is what we ought to examine. And we should first inquire about eternity: what in the world do those who make it different from time think it is? For once we know what stands still as the model, its image too—which they say is time—might perhaps become clear. But if someone, before contemplating eternity, should form a picture of what time is, he too could go from here

to there by recollection and contemplate what time was made like, if indeed time has a likeness to it.

3.7.2 What, then, are we to say eternity is? Is it intelligible being itself—just as if someone were to say that time is the whole heaven and cosmos? For some, they say, did hold this opinion about time too. Since we imagine and think eternity to be something most august, and what belongs to the intelligible nature is most august, and one cannot say that either of them is more august—while of what is beyond, not even this may be predicated—one might in this way bring them together into the same thing. And again, both the intelligible world and eternity are encompassing, and encompass the same things. But when we say that the one lies in the other, and when we predicate "eternal" of them—for "the nature of the model," he says, "was eternal"—we are once again calling eternity something else, though we say it is around that nature, or in it, or present to it. And that each is august does not show identity; perhaps one of them gets its augustness from the other. And the encompassing will be, for the one, as of parts; for eternity the whole is all together, not as a part, but because all such things as are eternal are so in accordance with it.

But should we say that eternity there corresponds to rest, as they say time here corresponds to motion? One might reasonably ask whether we are saying eternity is the same as rest without qualification, or as the rest that belongs to being. If it is the same as rest, then first, we will not call rest eternal, just as we do not call eternity eternal either—for what is eternal is what participates in eternity. Then, how is motion eternal? For then it would also be at rest. Then, how does the notion of rest contain in itself the "always"? I mean not the "always" in time, but the one we think of when we speak of the everlasting. And if it is the same as the rest of being, we will once again be placing the other kinds of being outside eternity. Then too, eternity must be thought of not only as at rest but as in one; and also as without extension, so that it is not the same as time. But rest, insofar as it is rest, does not contain in itself the notion of one or that of the

unextended. Then again, we predicate of eternity "remaining in one"; so it would participate in rest, but would not be rest itself.

3.7.3 What, then, would this be, by which we say that the whole world there is eternal and everlasting? And what is everlastingness—is it the same as eternity, and identical with it, or is eternity in accordance with it? It must, at any rate, be in accordance with some one thing—yet a thinking, or a nature, gathered together from many, whether it accompanies the things there, or is with them, or is seen in them; and all these are that one nature, which is one but has many powers and is many. And whoever has looked into its manifold power calls this, as the substrate so to speak, being; then motion, according as he sees life; then rest, its being in every way the same; and otherness and sameness, insofar as these are all together one. And so, putting them together again so that they are all together one, life alone, contracting the otherness in them; and seeing the unceasing quality of the activity, its sameness, its never being other, and a thinking or life that does not go from one thing to another but is always the same and without extension—seeing all this, he saw eternity. He saw a life that remains in the same, always having the whole present to it: not this now and then something else, but all things at once; not now some things and later others, but a partless completion, as if all things were together at a point and never going forth into flux, while it remains in the same, in itself, and does not change at all, and is always in the present, because nothing of it has passed away, nor again will come to be, but what it is, that it always is. So eternity is not the substrate, but what, as it were, shines out from the substrate itself, in accordance with the sameness it proclaims about what is not going to be but already is: that it is thus and not otherwise.

For what could come to it later that it does not have now? Nor will it later be anything that it is not already. For there is nothing from which it will arrive at the now—that would be nothing other than this; nor, of what is going to be, is there anything it does not have now. So of necessity it will not have the "was" about it—for what is there that was for it and has passed away?

Nor the "will be"—for what will be for it? What remains, then, is that in its being it is just what it is. That, then, which neither was nor will be, but only is, having its being at a standstill by not changing into the "will be" nor having changed—this is eternity. So the life that belongs to what is, in its being, all together and full, without extension in any way: this is what we are looking for—eternity.

3.7.4 We must not think that eternity has come to that nature as an accident from outside; it is from it and with it. For it is seen in being, alongside it, since all the other things too that we say are there, seeing that they are present in it, we say are all from being and with being. For the things that primarily are must be with the first things and in the first things; for the beautiful too is in them and from them, and truth is in them. And some are as it were in a part of the whole of what is, others in the whole, just as this truly whole is not assembled from its parts, but has generated the parts itself, so that in this way too it may be truly whole. And truth there is not agreement with something else, but belongs to each thing whose truth it is. This true All, then, if it is to be really all, must not only be all in the sense of being all things, but must have the all in such a way as to lack nothing. [And] if this is so, nothing will be still to come for it; for if something will be, it was lacking that; so it was not all. And what could happen to it contrary to nature? It is affected by nothing.

If, then, nothing could come to it, it neither is about to be, nor will be, nor came to be. For things that come into being, if you take away the "will be," since they are always acquiring, [the] not-being belongs to them at once; while for things that are not of this kind, if you add the "will be," falling from the seat of being belongs to them. For clearly being was not native to them, if it lay in being about to be, in coming to be, and in being hereafter. It looks, in fact, as though for things that come into being, their being consists in existing from the beginning of their coming to be until they reach the last point of time, in which they no longer are, and that this is the "will be"; and if one took this away, their life would be diminished, and so their being too.

And for the All, too, its being is toward what it will be, in this same way. That is why it hurries toward what is going to be and does not want to stand still, drawing being to itself by doing one thing after another and moving in a circle, by a kind of aspiration for being; so we have also found the cause of the motion that hurries in this way toward always being by means of the future. But the first and blessed things do not even aspire to the future; for they already are the whole, and they possess all the life that is, as it were, owed to them. So they seek nothing, because the future is nothing to them, nor, then, is that in which the future lies. So the complete and whole being of what is—not only the being in the parts, but also the being that consists in its never going to lack anything and in nothing that is not being able to be added to it (for not only must all the things that are be present to the whole and all, but also nothing of what at some time is not)—this disposition and nature of it would be eternity: for *aiōn* comes from *aei on*, "always being."

3.7.5 And this is so when, applying my soul to something, I can say of it—or rather, see it to be—such that nothing at all has ever happened to it; for if something had, it would not be always being, or not always something whole. Is it then already everlasting? [Or not,] unless there is also present in it a nature such that one can be confident about it that it is this way and not otherwise any more; so that, if you applied yourself to it again, you would find it such. What, then, if one never stood away from the vision of it, but were [always] with it, wondering at its nature and able to do this with a tireless nature—or rather, running to eternity, were himself to stand there, not inclining away at all, so as to be like it and eternal, contemplating eternity and the eternal by the eternal in himself? If, then, what is in this state is eternal and always being—what does not incline in any respect toward another nature, having a life that it already has entire, having added nothing, adding nothing, and never going to add anything—then what is in this state would be everlasting, everlastingness would be this sort of condition of the substrate, coming from it and in it, and eternity would be the substrate

together with this sort of condition showing in it. Hence eternity is something august, and our notion declares it the same as the god. And eternity could rightly be called a god that shows itself forth and displays itself as it is: being unshaken and the same, and so too firmly established in life. And if we say it is made up of many things, there is no need to wonder; for each of the things there is many through unlimited power—since "unlimited" too means never failing, and this in the strict sense, because it uses up nothing of itself. And if someone were in this way to call eternity life that is already unlimited, by being whole and using up nothing of itself, because it has no past and no future—for then it would no longer be whole—he would be close to defining it. For what follows, "by being whole and using up nothing," would be an explanation of "being already unlimited."

3.7.6 Such a nature, so wholly beautiful and everlasting, is around the One, and from it and toward it, never stepping away from it but always remaining around it and in it and living according to it. And so Plato, as I think, put it well, with profound understanding and not idly, in that phrase "eternity remaining in one": so that it is not only that eternity brings itself into one, toward itself, but that the life of what is, around the One, is in the same way. This, then, is what we are seeking, and what remains in this way is eternity. For that which is this and remains thus, and is itself the remaining—the activity of a life that remains of itself, directed toward that and in that, and is false neither in its being nor in its living—would be what eternity is. For truly being is never not being and never being otherwise; and this is being in the same way; and this is being without difference. So it does not have any "this and then that": you cannot spread it apart, or unroll it, or draw it forward, or stretch it out; nor, then, can you take anything of it as earlier or later. If, then, there is neither earlier nor later about it, and the "is" is the truest thing about it, and is itself—and is so in the sense that it is, as being or as living—then once again what we are speaking of comes to us: eternity. When we say "always" and "not at one time being and at another not being," we must think

that this is said for our sake, for clarity. For "always" is perhaps not used in the strict sense, but, taken to indicate the incorruptible, it might lead the soul astray into an expansion toward more and more, and further into the idea of something that will never run out. Perhaps it would have been better just to say "being."

But just as "being" is a sufficient name for real being, yet because they thought becoming too was being, they needed, in order to understand, the addition of "always." For being is not one thing and always-being another, just as a philosopher is not one thing and the true philosopher another; but because there was something that put on the guise of philosophy, the addition "true" came about. So too "always" was added to "being," and "being" to "always," so that we say "always being." Hence "always" must be taken as meaning something like "truly being," and "always" must be contracted into an unextended power that needs nothing beyond what it already has; and it has everything. Such a nature, then, is all being, lacking in no respect, not full in one way and deficient in another. For what is in time, even if it is complete, as it seems—like a body adequate to a soul, complete—still needs the "afterward," lacking the time it needs. So it is together with that time—if it were present to it and ran along with it—that it would be; and, being incomplete in this respect, it could be called complete only in name. But that to which it belongs not even to need the "afterward," neither for some further measured time nor for the unlimited time that will unlimitedly be, but to have what it ought to be—this is what our notion reaches for: that whose being does not derive from a quantity but is before quantity. For it was fitting that, not being a quantity at all, it should not touch any quantity, so that its life should not be divided and destroy its pure partlessness, but that it should be partless both in its life and in its being. And "he was good" refers us to the notion of the All, signifying, by his being beyond the All, that it is not from any time; so that the cosmos too did not receive any temporal beginning, since it is the cause of its being that supplies the "before." Yet having said this for the sake of clarity, he later finds fault even with this word, as not

quite correctly used either of the things that have been allotted what is called and thought of as eternity.[1]

FROM ETERNITY DOWN TO TIME

Plotinus reviews and rejects the views that time is motion, the moving sphere, or a measure of motion.

3.7.7 In saying all this, then, are we bearing witness to others, and speaking as if about things foreign to us? How could that be? For what understanding could there be for those not in contact with it? And how could we be in contact with what is foreign to us? So we too must have a share in eternity. But how, when we are in time? Well, how it is possible to be in time and how in eternity might become known once we have first found out what time is. So we must go down from eternity to the inquiry into time, and to time; for there the journey was upward, but now let us speak, not having gone down altogether, but in the way that time came down. Now [then] if nothing had been said about time by the ancient and blessed men, we would have had to begin by linking it to eternity and say next what we think about it, trying to fit the opinion we state to the notion of it that we possess. As it is, we must first take the views most worth discussing and consider whether our own account will agree with any of them. And perhaps we should first divide the accounts given of it into three. They would say that time is either motion, or what is moved, or something of motion; for to say it is rest, or what is at rest, or something of rest, would be altogether remote from the notion of time, since time is never the same. Of those who say motion, some would say all motion, others the motion of the All; those who say what is moved would say the sphere of the All; and those who say something of motion would say, some, the extension of motion, others [number or] measure, others in general

1 "He was good": *Timaeus* 29e, of the maker of the cosmos; at 37e–38a Plato says that "was" and "will be" are wrongly applied to eternal being.

something that accompanies it—and this either of all motion or of ordered motion.[2]

3.7.8 It cannot be motion, then, whether one takes all motions together and, as it were, makes one out of all, or ordered motion; for each of the motions mentioned is in time. And if someone says motion is not in time, it would be much further still from being time, since that in which motion is is one thing and motion itself another. And among the other things that are and have been said, this [one] would be enough: that motion could stop and pause, but time does not. If someone were to say that the motion of the All does not pause—well, this too, if he means the circuit, would go round to the same point in a certain time, not the time in which half of it is accomplished; and the one time would be half and the other double, though both are motions of the All, the one from the same point to the same point and the one reaching halfway. And saying that the motion of the outermost sphere is the sharpest and swiftest bears witness to the argument: its motion and time are different. For it is clearly the swiftest of all by accomplishing the greater, indeed the greatest, distance in less time; the others are slower by accomplishing even a part of it in more. If, then, not even the motion of the sphere is time, the sphere itself would hardly be—the sphere which was supposed to be time because it moves.

Is time, then, something of motion? If it is extension, then first, the extension is not the same for all motion, not even for motion of the same kind; for motion, even motion in place, can be faster and slower. And both extensions could be measured by one other thing, which one would more correctly call time. But of which of the two is the extension time—or rather, of which of them all, since they are unlimited in number? And if it is of ordered motion, it is not of all, nor of all such motion; for these are many, so there will also be many times at once. And if it is the extension of the motion of the All—if it is the extension in the motion itself, what else would it be but the motion? A

2 "Extension of motion" was a Stoic definition, "number" or "measure of motion" Aristotle's (*Physics* IV.11), and something "accompanying" motion the Epicureans'.

motion of a certain size, to be sure. But this size will either be measured by place, because it is so great that it has traversed it, and this will be the extension—but this is not time but place; or the motion itself will have the extension by its continuity, by not stopping at once but always taking on more. But this would be the muchness of the motion; and if someone, looking at the motion itself, declares it much, as if someone were to say that heat is much, not even here will time appear or present itself, but motion again and again, like water flowing again and again, and the extension observed in it. And the "again and again" will be number, like a two or a three, and the extension will be that of the bulk. So too a multitude of motion will be like a ten, or like the extension that shows on what is, as it were, the bulk of the motion, which does not contain the notion of time; rather, this quantity will be something that has come about in time—or else time will not be everywhere, but in motion as in a substrate; and again it turns out that we are calling time motion. For the extension is not outside it; it is motion that is not all at once.

And what is not all at once—if what is all at once is in time—how will it differ from what is all at once, except by being [otherwise] in time? So extended motion and its extension are not themselves time, but in time. And if someone were to say that time is the extension of motion—not the extension of the motion itself, but that alongside which the motion itself has its stretch, as if running along with it—what this is has not been said. For clearly this is time: that in which the motion has taken place. But this was what the argument was looking for from the start: what time is. So it comes out like, indeed the same as, someone who, asked what time is, says: the extension of motion in time. What, then, is this extension that the person who places time outside motion's own extension calls time? For again, the one who places the extension in motion itself will be at a loss where to put the extension of rest. For something can be at rest for as long as something else is moving, and you would say that the time of each is the same, plainly as being something other than

both. What, then, is this extension, and what nature does it have? It cannot be spatial, since that too is outside.

3.7.9 Time is the number or the measure of motion—measure is the better word, since motion is continuous. How could this be? We must look into it. First, then, here too we must raise the same difficulty about its being the measure of all motion alike as we did about the extension of motion, if someone says it belongs to all motion. For how could anyone number motion that is disorderly and irregular? What number or measure would that be, and by what standard would it measure? And if one and the same thing measures each kind, and in general all motion, fast and slow, then the number and the measure will be like a ten that measures both horses and cattle, or like the same measure serving for liquids and for dry goods. If time is a measure of that sort, we have been told what it is the measure of, namely motions, but we have not yet been told what time itself is. But you can take the number ten and think of it even without horses, and a measure is a measure with a nature of its own even when it is not yet measuring anything. Suppose time, being a measure, must be like this too. Then if it is something like a number in itself, how would it differ from this number ten, or from any other number made up of units? If instead it is a continuous measure, it will be a measure by being a certain quantity, like a cubit-rule. So it will be a magnitude: a line, evidently, running along with the motion. But how will this line, running along with it, measure what it runs along with? Why should either one measure the other rather than be measured by it? It is better, and more plausible, to posit it not over all motion but over the motion it runs along with. That motion must be continuous, if the line running alongside is to keep pace with it. But we should not take the measuring thing as external or separate; we must take measured motion all together. And what will do the measuring? Well: the motion will be what is measured, and a magnitude will be what has measured it. And which of them will time be? The measured motion, or the magnitude that did the measuring?

For time will be either the motion measured by the magnitude, or the magnitude that did the measuring, or whatever used the magnitude, the way one uses a cubit-rule, to measure how much motion there is. In all these cases, as we said, it is more plausible to assume uniform motion. Without uniformity —and, besides that, without its being a single motion, the motion of the whole—the argument gets even more difficult for anyone who makes time a measure in any way at all. Now suppose time is measured motion, and measured by a quantity. Motion, if it had to be measured, had to be measured not by itself but by something else. In the same way, then, if motion is to have a measure other than itself—and that is why we needed the continuous measure to measure it—the magnitude itself must need a measure too, so that the motion can be measured for how much it is once the thing it is measured by has been fixed at so much. And then time will be that number of the magnitude which accompanies the motion, not the magnitude running along with the motion. But what could this number be, if not one made up of units? And how that will measure, we can't help being puzzled. For even if someone works out how, he won't have found time doing the measuring but a certain amount of time; and that is not the same as time. To say "time" is one thing, to say "so much time" another; before the "so much" we have to say what that is which is so much. But perhaps time is the number that has measured the motion from outside it, the way ten applies to the horses without being taken along with the horses. Then we have not been told what this number is which, before it measures, is what it is, as ten is. Or perhaps it is the number that measured by running alongside the motion according to its before and after.

But what this number "according to before and after" is, is not yet clear. In any case, whatever measures according to before and after, whether by a point or by anything else, will certainly be measuring according to time. So this number that measures motion by before and after will be holding on to time and touching it, in order to measure. For either it is the spatial before and

after that is taken, like the starting line of the racecourse, or it has to be the temporal. And in general, of before and after, the one is time ending at the now, the other time beginning from the now. Time, then, is something other than the number that measures motion by before and after—not only any motion whatever, but ordered motion too. Next: why should there be time once number has been added, whether on the side of what is measured or of what measures (for the same number could be both measuring and measured)? Why, I say, should there be time once number has come about, but no time when there is motion, with a before and after certainly belonging to it? That is like saying a magnitude is not as big as it is unless someone grasps how big it is. And since time is unlimited, and is called so, how could there be a number of it? Unless someone cuts off some part of it and measures that—a part in which time in fact existed even before it was measured. And why should time not exist before there is a soul to measure it? Unless one says that it owes its coming into being to soul. Certainly not because of the measuring; that much is necessary. For a thing is as much as it is, even if nobody measures it. As for what used the magnitude in order to measure, one might say that is the soul; but what would this contribute to the notion of time?

3.7.10 To call time a concomitant of motion, whatever that is, is not to teach anything, nor to have said anything, before saying what it is that accompanies; for that would perhaps be time. And we must examine whether this concomitant comes after, at the same time, or before—if there is any such concomitant at all. For however it is described, it is described in time. If so, time will be a concomitant of motion in time. But we are looking not for what time is not but for what it is. Many of our predecessors have said many things about each position, and anyone who went through them all would be writing history instead. We have said something about them in passing. And against anyone who says time is the measure of the motion of the All, one can argue from what has already been said, and from everything else just said about the measure of motion—for apart from the

point about irregularity, all the rest will apply to them as well. So it would be fitting now to say what we ought to take time to be.

HOW TIME CAME TO BE

A restless power of soul, wanting more than the present, made time as an image of eternity.

3.7.11 We must take ourselves back again to that state which we said belonged to eternity: that unwavering life, all together at once, already unlimited, wholly unswerving, standing in one and directed toward one. Time did not yet exist—or at any rate it did not exist for those beings; it was to come into being, in thought and in nature, with the "later." So while these were at rest in themselves, how did time first fall out? One could hardly call on the Muses to tell this, since they did not yet exist then—though perhaps one could, if the Muses too existed even then. But one might perhaps ask time itself, now that it has come into being, how it appeared and came to be.[3] It might speak about itself something like this. Formerly, before it had generated this "before" and come to need the "after," it rested with eternity in what is; it was not yet time, but it too kept still within that. But there was a nature that was restless, that wanted to rule itself and belong to itself, and chose to seek more than what it had. So it moved, and time moved too. And moving on always toward the "next" and the "later," toward what is not the same but different, and then different again, we covered a certain length of our journey and produced time as an image of eternity.

For there was a power of soul that was not at rest; it always wanted to transfer what it saw there into something else, and did not want the whole to be present to it all at once. A rational principle unfolds itself out of a seed at rest and works its way out to a great extent, as it thinks; but it annuls that greatness by dividing it, and instead of keeping its unity within itself, it

3 Plotinus plays on the epic appeal to the Muses to tell "how first" something happened (Homer, *Iliad* 16.112–13), as Plato does in *Republic* 545d–e.

spends its unity outside itself and goes forward into a weaker extension. In the same way soul, making the perceptible cosmos in imitation of that one—a cosmos moving with a motion not the motion there, but like the one there and wanting to be its image—first made itself temporal, producing time in place of eternity. Then it handed over what had come into being to be a slave to time, making the whole of it exist in time and enclosing all its unfoldings within time. For the cosmos moves in soul—there is no other place for this All than soul—and so it also moved in soul's time. For soul, putting forth its activity one act after another, and then yet another in sequence, generated succession along with its activity; and together with one discursive thought after another there came forth what had not existed before, since that thought had not been actualized, nor was the present life like the one before it. At once, then, there was a different life, and by being different it had a different time. The extension of life, then, involved time; life's constant going forward always involves time; and life that has passed involves past time.

So if someone said that time is the life of soul in a movement of passage from one way of life to another, would he seem to be saying something? For eternity is life at rest, in the same and in the same way, already unlimited; and time must be an image of eternity, as this All is of that one. So instead of the life there, we must say there is another life, that of this power of soul, which shares the name, so to speak; instead of intellectual motion, the motion of a part of soul; instead of sameness, the "in the same way" and the remaining, what does not remain in the same but is active now in one thing, now in another; instead of what is without extension and one, an image of the one, the one in continuity; instead of what is already unlimited and whole, what goes on to the unlimited, always toward what comes next; instead of the whole all together, what will be whole part by part, and always will be whole. For in this way it will imitate what is already whole, all together, and already unlimited, if it means to be always acquiring more in its being; for its being too

will in this way imitate the being of that. We must not take time as outside soul, any more than eternity there is outside being; nor again as a concomitant, or something that comes after, any more than it is there; but as something seen in soul, present in it and with it, just as eternity is there.

3.7.12 We may also understand from this that this nature—this length of such a life, advancing in changes that are uniform and alike and proceed without a sound—has continuity in its activity. Now suppose that in our thought we made this power turn back again and stopped it from this life it now has: a life without pause, never to end, because it is the activity of a soul that always exists—an activity not directed toward itself or within itself, but in making and generating. Suppose, then, that it were no longer active, that this activity had stopped, and that this part of soul too had turned back toward what is there and toward eternity, and remained in quiet. What would there still be after eternity? What "one thing and then another," when all things had remained in one? What would there still be that was "before"? What "after," or "more"? Where would soul still direct itself, toward anything other than that in which it is? Or rather, not even toward that; it would first have to stand apart from it in order to direct itself toward it. And then not even the sphere itself would exist, since it does not exist before time; it too both exists and moves in time. And even if it stood still while soul was active, we will measure how long its rest lasts, so long as soul is outside.

If, then, time is abolished when soul withdraws and is united, it is clearly the beginning of soul's motion toward these things here, and this life, that generates time. That is why it is said to have come into being together with this All: soul generated it along with this All. For it is in an activity of this kind that this All too has come into being; and the activity is time, while the All is in time. And if someone objects that Plato also calls the courses of the stars "times," let him remember that he says these came into being to make time plain and to mark it off, and "so

that there might be a clear measure."[4] For it was not possible for the soul to define time itself, nor for people to measure each part of it among themselves, since it is invisible and cannot be grasped—especially as they did not know how to count. So he makes day and night, by whose difference it was possible to get two, and from this, he says, came the notion of number. Then, taking the stretch from one sunrise to the next, it was possible to have so much of an interval of time, since the form of the motion we rely on is uniform; and we use this as a measure, so to speak—a measure of time, that is, for time itself is not a measure. How would it measure, and what would it say in measuring—that this is as long as I am, so long? Who, then, is this "I"?

Presumably that according to which the measuring takes place. Then it exists so that it may measure, and is not itself a measure. The motion of the All, then, will be measured according to time, and time will not be the measure of motion in what it is; rather, being something else first, it will incidentally make plain how much motion there is. And the single motion, taken in a given amount of time and counted over and over, will lead us to the notion of how much time has passed. So if someone said that the motion, the revolution, in a way measures time, as far as that is possible—since by its own amount it shows the amount of time, which cannot be grasped or understood otherwise—his account of the indicating would not be absurd. What is measured by the revolution—that is, what is indicated—will be time: not generated by the revolution but indicated by it. In this way the measure of motion is what is measured by a definite motion and is measured by it while being other than it; for as measuring, the motion was one thing, and as measured, time was another—and measured incidentally. That would be like someone saying that magnitude is what is measured by the cubit, without saying what magnitude itself is, as a definition of magnitude; or like someone unable to make motion itself plain, because it is indefinite, saying it is what is measured by place.

4 Plato, *Timaeus* 37c–39e: time came into being together with the heaven, and the sun, moon and planets were made to mark off and measure it.

For one would take the place the motion has traversed and say the motion is as great as the place.

3.7.13 So the revolution indicates time, in which it is. But time itself must no longer have an "in which"; it must first be what it is, that in which the other things move and stand still, uniformly and in order. It shows itself, and comes forward into our understanding, through something ordered, but it does not come into being through it, whether that thing is at rest or in motion—though more through what is in motion. For motion moves us more than rest does to recognize time and pass over to it, and how far a thing has moved is easier to recognize than how long it has stood still. That is why people were led into calling it a measure of motion, instead of saying it is measured by motion and then adding what it is that motion measures—rather than stating something incidental about it, and that the wrong way round. But perhaps they did not put it the wrong way round; perhaps it is we who don't understand, and although they plainly meant "measure" in the sense of "what is measured," we missed their meaning. The reason we don't understand is that in their writings they do not make plain what time is, whether as measuring or as measured, because they were writing for people who knew and had attended their lectures. Plato, however, did not say that its being consists in measuring or in being measured by something. Rather, to make it plain, he says that the revolution has taken a very small unit to correspond to a very small part of it, so that from this one could know what time is like and how much of it there is.

But when he wants to make plain its being, he says it came into being together with the heaven, after the model of eternity, as a moving image—because time does not remain either, since the life it runs along and keeps pace with does not remain. Together with the heaven, because a life of this kind makes the heaven too, and one life produces both the heaven and time. So if this life turned back to unity, if it could, then time, which is in this life, would at once have stopped, and so would the heaven, no longer having this life. Suppose someone takes the before

and after of this life and motion here and calls it time, on the grounds that this is something, but says that the before and after of the truer motion is nothing. He would be utterly absurd. He grants to soulless motion that it has a before and after, and time alongside it; but he does not grant this to the motion in imitation of which this one too exists—the motion from which before and after first came into existence, since it is a self-acting motion, and, just as it generates each of its activities, so it generates their succession too, and along with generating them, the passage from one to the next. Why, then, do we bring this motion of the All within the embrace of that motion and say it is in time, but not the motion of soul too, which within itself is an everlasting progression? Because what is before it is eternity, which does not run along with it or stretch out alongside it. This motion, then, was the first to go into time; it generated time, and has it along with its activity.

How, then, is time everywhere? Because that soul too is absent from no part of the cosmos, just as the soul in us is absent from no part of us. And if someone says that time has no real existence or reality, he will clearly be accusing the god himself of lying when he says "was" and "will be"; for these will be, and were, only in the way that the thing in which he says it will be exists. But people like that need a different kind of argument. What we must bear in mind, in addition to everything said so far, is this. When someone takes a man in motion and sees how far he has gone, he also takes how much motion there was; and when he sees the motion—the motion of the legs, say—he sees too that the movement within the man prior to this motion was of the same amount, if it kept the body's motion going for that long. The body, then, moving for so much time, will lead you back to the motion of this amount—for that is the cause—and to its time; and this motion will lead you back to the motion of the soul, which spread itself out over equal stretches. And the motion of the soul, to what will you lead it back? To whatever you choose: that will already be without extension. This, then, is what is primary, that in which the other things are; but it itself is

no longer in something, for it will have nothing to be in. And it is the same with the Soul of the All. Is time in us too, then? It is in every soul of this kind, in the same form in all, and all souls are one. That is why time will not be torn apart; just as eternity is not either, which in another way is in all the beings of the same form.

III.8 On Nature, Contemplation and the One

Περὶ φύσεως καὶ θεωρίας καὶ τοῦ ἑνός
Plotinus playfully argues that everything, from plants to Intellect, aims at contemplation, and that making is a byproduct of it.
no. 30 in order of writing

3.8.1 Suppose, playfully, before we set about being serious, we say that all things aspire to contemplation and look to it as their goal —not only rational living beings but irrational ones too, and the nature in plants, and the earth that produces them—and that all attain it as far as they can, each in its own way, contemplating and attaining, some truly, others by taking an imitation and image of it. Would anyone put up with so paradoxical an argument? Or rather, since the discussion is among ourselves, there will be no danger in playing with our own ideas. So are we too contemplating now, as we play? Perhaps both we and everyone who plays are doing this; at any rate it is what they aspire to as they play. And it may well be that whether a child or a man is playing or being serious, the one is serious and the other plays for the sake of contemplation, and that every action is seriously directed toward contemplation: necessary action drags contemplation further toward what is outside, while so-called voluntary action does so less, but it too arises from a desire for contemplation. But all this later. Now let us speak about the earth itself, and trees, and plants in general: what their contemplation is; how we shall trace what is made and generated by it back to the activity of contemplation; and how nature, which they say

lacks imagination and reason, has contemplation in itself and makes what it makes through contemplation, which it does not have.[1]

3.8.2 That there are no hands here, or feet, or any instrument added from outside or grown on, but that nature needs matter to work on and to bring into form, is surely obvious to everyone. We must also remove levering from nature's making. For what pushing, what levering, produces colors of every variety and kind, and shapes? Even wax-modelers—whom some people looked at and supposed that nature's craftsmanship was like theirs—cannot make colors unless they bring colors from elsewhere to what they are making. But they ought to have reflected that even in those who practice such crafts there must be something that remains within them, by virtue of which, as it remains, they will make their works with their hands. Then they should have gone up to the corresponding thing in nature, and understood that here too the power that makes, not with hands, must remain, and remain whole. For it does not need some parts that remain and others that move—matter is what is moved, and nothing of nature is moved—or else that moving part will not be the first mover, nor will nature be this, but rather what is unmoved in the whole. "The rational principle, then," someone might say, "is unmoved, but nature itself is different from the rational principle and is moved."

But if they say all of nature is moved, then the rational principle is too; and if some part of it is unmoved, that part is the rational principle. For nature must be a form, and not composed of matter and form. What need does it have of hot or cold matter? The matter that underlies and is worked on arrives bringing that with it; or matter that has no quality becomes such by being given rational form. For it is not fire that must come to matter for the matter to become fire, but a rational principle. And this is no small sign that in animals and plants it is the rational principles that make, and that nature is a rational prin-

1 "They" are probably the Stoics, for whom nature is a craftsmanlike power that shapes plants and bodies without imagination or reason.

ciple which makes another rational principle, its offspring, which gives something to the substrate while itself remaining. The rational principle in the visible shape is the last; it is dead and can no longer make another. But the one that has life—the brother of the one that made the shape, and itself having the same power—makes in what comes into being.

3.8.3 How, then, could nature, making as it does, and making in this way, have any contact with contemplation? Well, if it makes while remaining, and remaining in itself is a rational principle, it would itself be contemplation. For action would come about according to a rational principle, and would clearly be other than the rational principle; but the rational principle itself, which accompanies the action and presides over it, would not be action. If, then, it is not action but a rational principle, it is contemplation. And with every rational principle, the last comes from contemplation and is contemplation in the sense of having been contemplated; while the whole principle before it is contemplation, one part in one way, another in another—the one which is not nature but soul, and the one in nature, which is nature. Does this one too come from contemplation? Certainly from contemplation. But is that because it has itself contemplated itself? Or how? For it is the result of contemplation and of something that contemplated. But how does nature itself have contemplation? It does not, of course, have the kind that comes from reasoning—by "from reasoning" I mean examining what is in oneself. Why not, when it is a kind of life, a rational principle, and a power that makes? Is it because to examine is not yet to have? But nature does have, and precisely because it has, it also makes. For nature, then, being what it is, is making; and it is contemplation and object of contemplation, since it is a rational principle. So by being contemplation, object of contemplation and rational principle, it also makes, insofar as it is these. Making, then, has been revealed to us as contemplation. For it is the result of a contemplation that remains contemplation, that has done nothing else, but has made by being contemplation.

NATURE SPEAKS

Asked why it makes, nature answers that it contemplates in silence and its works simply appear.

3.8.4 And if someone asked nature why it makes, and if it were willing to listen to the questioner and to speak, it would say: "You ought not to ask, but to understand, yourself keeping silent, as I keep silent and am not in the habit of speaking. Understand what? That what comes into being is my spectacle [of me], made in my silence, an object of contemplation that comes into being by nature; and that since I came into being from contemplation of this kind, I have a nature that loves to contemplate. And what in me contemplates makes an object of contemplation, as geometers draw as they contemplate. But I do not draw; I contemplate, and the lines of bodies come into being as if they fell out of me. And I have the same experience as my mother and those who begot me: they too come from contemplation, and my birth came about without their doing anything; they are greater rational principles, and as they contemplate themselves I am born." What does this mean? That what is called nature, being a soul, the offspring of a prior soul that lives more powerfully, has contemplation quietly in itself, directed neither upward nor yet downward, but standing in what it is, in its own stillness and a sort of self-awareness. By this understanding and self-awareness it saw what comes after it, as far as it could, and sought nothing further, having produced an object of contemplation splendid and full of grace. And if someone wants to grant it some kind of understanding or perception, it is not the kind of perception or understanding we speak of in other things; it is as if one compared the awareness of someone asleep to that of someone awake.

For contemplating its object of contemplation, it is at rest—an object that came to be for it from its remaining in and with itself and being an object of contemplation. And its contemplation is silent, but dimmer. For there is another contemplation clearer

to look upon, and this one is an image of another contemplation. That is why what it generates is utterly weak: weak contemplation makes a weak object. Human beings too, when they are too weak for contemplating, make action a shadow of contemplation and rational principle. Because contemplating is beyond them through weakness of soul, since they cannot grasp the vision adequately and so are not filled, yet long to see it, they are carried into action, so that they may see what they could not see with intellect. At any rate, when they make something, they themselves want to see it and contemplate it, and want others to perceive it, whenever their intention is realized as far as possible in action. Everywhere, then, we shall find that making and action are either a weakness of contemplation or a concomitant of it: a weakness, if one has nothing beyond what was done; a concomitant, if one has something else prior to it, better than what was made, to contemplate. For who, if able to contemplate what is true, goes first to the image of the true? The duller children bear witness to this too: unable to cope with learning and contemplation, they sink down to crafts and manual work.

SOUL, ACTION AND CONTEMPLATION

Soul's contemplation generates in turn, and action is only a weaker contemplation aiming to see.

3.8.5 Now that we have said in what way nature's generating is contemplation, let us move on to the soul before nature and say this. Its contemplation, its love of learning and spirit of inquiry, its birth-pangs from what it had come to know, and its fullness, made it, once it had become wholly an object of contemplation, produce another object of contemplation—just as a craft, when it is full, makes another, a small craft as it were, in a young pupil who has an image of all of it. These, however, are spectacles and objects of contemplation of a different sort, dim, as it were, and unable to help themselves. The first part of soul, then, being above and always filled and illuminated by what is above, remains There; while the other part, sharing by the first sharing

of what shared, goes forth always, life from life. For [life's] activity reaches everywhere, and there is no place where it is absent. As it goes forth, however, it lets its earlier part remain where it left it; for if it abandoned what was before, it would no longer be everywhere, but only where it ends. But what goes forth is not equal to what remained.

Suppose, then, that it must come to be everywhere, and there must be nowhere without its activity; that what is earlier is always different from what is later; that activity comes from contemplation or from action; and that action did not yet exist, since it cannot come before contemplation. Then necessarily one activity is weaker than another, but all is contemplation; so that what seems to be action in accordance with contemplation is the weakest contemplation. For what is generated must always be of the same kind, though weaker, because it fades as it descends. All of it goes on without a sound, because it needs no visible contemplation or action from outside; and the soul that contemplates, and what has contemplated in this way, being further out and not like what is before it, makes what comes after it, and contemplation makes contemplation. For contemplation has no limit, nor does its object. That is why it is everywhere. For where is it not? It is the same in every soul as well, since it is not bounded by magnitude. Yet it is not present in all in the same way, and so not in every part of soul alike either. That is why the charioteer gives the horses what he has seen, and they, receiving it, would clearly long for what he saw, since they did not receive all of it. And if they act out of longing, they act for the sake of what they long for. And that was an object of contemplation, and contemplation.[2]

3.8.6 Action, then, is for the sake of contemplation and its object; so that for people of action too contemplation is the goal, and what they could not grasp directly they try to catch by wandering round about. And again, when they get what they want,

2 The image comes from Plato's *Phaedrus* (246a–248b), where the soul is a charioteer with two horses; after his vision of true being, the charioteer feeds his horses ambrosia and nectar (247e).

what they wanted to bring about, it is not so as not to know it, but so as to know it and see it present in the soul—clearly as something laid up there to be looked at. For they act for the sake of a good; and this not so that it may be outside them, nor so that they may not have it, but so that they may have the good that comes from the action. And where is that? In the soul. So action has bent back again to contemplation. For what one receives in the soul, which is a rational principle, what could it be but a silent rational principle? And the more so, the more it is so. For then the soul is at rest and seeks nothing, as having been filled, and the contemplation in such a soul lies within, through its confidence that it possesses. And the clearer the confidence, the quieter the contemplation, as it leads further into one; and the knower, insofar as it knows—now we must be serious—comes into one with what is known. For if they are two, the one will be one thing and the other another, so that they lie side by side, as it were, and this doubleness has not yet been made its own—as when rational principles present in the soul do nothing.

That is why the rational principle must not be outside, but united with the soul of the learner, until it finds it its own. Now the soul, once it has made it its own and is disposed accordingly, still brings it forth and has it at hand; for what it had first, it also comes to learn thoroughly, and by having it at hand it becomes, as it were, other than it, and in discursive thought it looks at it as one thing at another. And yet the soul itself was a rational principle and a sort of intellect—but one seeing something other. For it is not full, but falls short of what is before it. Yet it too sees quietly what it brings forth. What it has brought forth, it no longer brings forth; and what it does bring forth, it brings forth through its deficiency, for examination, coming to learn thoroughly what it has. In people of action, it fits what it has to what is outside. By having more than nature, soul is quieter, and by having more fully it is more contemplative; but by not having perfectly, it longs all the more for a thorough learning of what it has contemplated, and for the contemplation that comes from examination. And leaving itself and coming to be in other

things, and then coming back again, it contemplates with the part of itself it left behind; but the soul that stands within itself does this less. That is why the good man has already finished reasoning, and declares what comes from himself to another; but to himself he is vision. For he is already directed toward unity and toward quiet—not only from things outside but in relation to himself—and everything is within.

3.8.7 It is clear enough, I think, that all things are like this. The things that truly are come from contemplation and are contemplation; and the things that come into being from them as they contemplate are themselves objects of contemplation, some for perception, others for knowledge or opinion. Actions have knowledge as their goal, and their desire is desire for knowledge; and acts of generating start from contemplation and end in a form and another object of contemplation. In general, each of these things, being imitations of what makes them, makes objects of contemplation and forms; and the realities that come into being, being imitations of beings, show that what makes them has as its goal not the making or the action but the finished product, so that it may be contemplated. This is what discursive thinking wants to see as well, and before it perception, whose goal is knowledge; and before these again, nature makes the object of contemplation within it, and the rational principle, by bringing another rational principle to completion. Some of these points could be grasped straight off; others the argument has recalled to mind. And this too is clear: since the first things are in contemplation, all the others must aspire to it, if the beginning is the goal for all things. For when living things generate, it is the rational principles within that move them; and this is an activity of contemplation, a birth-pang to make many forms and many objects of contemplation, to fill everything with rational principles and, as it were, to contemplate always. For to make something exist is to make a form, and this is to fill everything with contemplation. Failures too, whether in what comes into being or in what is done, are a straying of contemplators from the object of their contemplation; and the bad crafts-

man is like one who makes ugly forms. And loves too belong to those who have seen and are pressing on toward a form.

INTELLECT AS LIVING CONTEMPLATION

In Intellect, thinker and thought are one living contemplation, many as well as one.

3.8.8 So much for that. As contemplation ascends from nature to soul, and from soul to Intellect, the contemplations become ever more intimate and united with those who contemplate; and in the good soul the things known move toward identity with the knowing subject, since they are pressing on toward intellect. In Intellect, clearly, both are now one—not by appropriation, as in the best soul, but in being, because being and thinking are the same. For there is no longer one thing and another; otherwise there would again have to be something else which is no longer one thing and another. This, then, must be truly one, both together; and this is living contemplation, not an object of contemplation like the one that is in something else. For what is in something else lives through that other; it is not living in itself. If, then, an object of contemplation and of thought is to live, it must be life—not the life of growth, nor of perception, nor the rest of the life of soul. For the others too are thinkings in a way: there is the thinking of growth, perceptive thinking, and the thinking of soul. How, then, are they thinkings? Because they are rational principles. And every life is a thinking of a kind, but one dimmer than another, as is life itself. This life is the clearest: it is the first life and the first Intellect, which are one. So the first life is the first thinking, the second life the second thinking, and the last life the last thinking. Every life of this kind, then, is also thinking. But while people might perhaps speak of differences of life, they do not speak of differences of thinking; they say that some are thinkings and others not thinkings at all, because they do not ask at all what life is. But this at least should be pointed out: once again the argument shows that all things are a by-product of contemplation.

If, then, the truest life is life by thinking, and this is the same as the truest thinking, then the truest thinking lives, and contemplation and the object of contemplation of this kind are living and life, and the two are one together. But if the two are one, how is this one in turn many? Because it does not contemplate as one. For even when it contemplates the One, it does not do so as one; otherwise it does not become Intellect. But having begun as one, it did not remain as it began; without noticing, it became many, as if weighed down, and unrolled itself out of a wish to possess everything—though it would have been better for it not to wish this, for it became second. It is like a circle that unrolls itself and becomes shape and surface and circumference and center and lines, some parts above and some below: better where they come from, worse where they go. For the "from which" was not like the "from which and to which," nor again is the "from which and to which" like the "from which" alone. And in another way, Intellect is not the intellect of some one thing, but is all; and being all, it is the intellect of all things. So, being all things and of all things, it must have its part too containing the whole and all things. Otherwise it will have some part that is not intellect; it will be composed of non-intellects, a heap piled together, waiting to become intellect out of all of them. That is why it is unlimited too, and if anything comes from it, there is no diminution—neither of what comes from it, since that too is all things, nor of that from which it comes, since it was not a composition of parts.

WHAT IS BEYOND INTELLECT

What is prior to Intellect is neither thinker nor thought but the power of all things.

3.8.9 That, then, is what Intellect is like. That is why it is not first; there must be what is beyond it, which is what our earlier discussion was aiming at too. First, because multiplicity comes after unity; and Intellect is a number, and the principle of number, and of anything like it, is what is really one. And Intellect is

at once intellect and intelligible, so two at once. And if two, we must find what is before the two. What, then? Intellect alone? But with every intellect the intelligible is yoked; if, then, the intelligible must not be yoked to it, it will not be intellect either. If, then, it is not intellect, but is to escape the duality, what is prior to these two must be beyond Intellect. What, then, prevents it from being the intelligible? That the intelligible too is yoked to intellect. If, then, it is neither intellect nor intelligible, what could it be? We shall say: that from which Intellect comes, and the intelligible with it. What, then, is this, and what shall we imagine it to be like? For again, it will be either something that thinks or something without thought. If it thinks, it is intellect; if it is without thought, it will be ignorant even of itself—so what will be majestic about it? Even if we say it is the Good and is utterly simple, we shall not be saying anything clear and distinct, though we speak the truth, so long as we have nothing to fix our thought on when we speak. For again, since knowledge of other things comes through intellect, and we can know by intellect only by thinking something, by what all-at-once apprehension could this be grasped, when it has gone beyond the nature of intellect? To which we must reply, indicating as best we can: by what in us is like it. For there is something of it in us too—or rather, there is nowhere it is not, for those who are able to share in it. For wherever you are, by setting what is able to receive before what is everywhere, you receive from it. It is as if a voice filled an empty place, and the people in it as well: set your ear anywhere in that empty place and you will take in the whole voice—and again not the whole.

What, then, is it that we shall take in when we set intellect before it? Rather, intellect must, as it were, withdraw backward and, as it were, give itself up to what lies behind it—for it faces both ways—and there, if it wants to see that, it must not be altogether intellect. For it is itself the first life, an activity that consists in a passage through all things—a passage not in the course of passing through, but one that has passed through. If, then, it is life and passage, and holds all things precisely and not in a

general way—otherwise it would hold them imperfectly and without articulation—it must come from something else, which is no longer in passage, but is the principle of passage, the principle of life, the principle of intellect and of all things. For all things are not a principle; all things come from a principle. And the principle itself is no longer all things, nor any one of them, so that it may generate all things, and so that it may not be multiplicity but the principle of multiplicity; for everywhere what generates is simpler than what is generated. If, then, this generated Intellect, it must be simpler than Intellect. And if someone thinks that the One itself is also all things, then it will be either each of all things one by one, or all of them together. If it is all of them together, gathered into one, it will come after all things; if it is prior to all things, all things will be one thing and it another; and if it and all things exist at the same time, it will not be a principle. But it must be a principle and exist before all things, so that all things may come after it. As for its being each of all things one by one: first, anything will be the same as anything else; then all will be together, and nothing will be distinguished. And so it is none of all things, but before all things.

THE SPRING AND THE ROOT

The One is like a spring feeding every river, or the root that gives a great plant its life.

3.8.10 What, then, is it? The power of all things. If it did not exist, neither would all things, nor would Intellect be the first and universal life. What is above life is the cause of life; for the activity of life, which is all things, is not first, but itself pours forth, as it were, from a spring. Think of a spring that has no other source, but gives itself to all the rivers without being used up by the rivers, remaining quietly itself; while the rivers that have come out of it, before each flows off in its own direction, still run together, though each already knows, as it were, where it will let its streams go. Or think of the life of a huge plant, which goes through the whole of it while its principle remains and is not

scattered over the whole, being seated, as it were, in the root. This principle, then, provided the plant with all its manifold life, but itself remained, not manifold but the principle of the manifold life. And there is nothing to wonder at in that.

Or rather, it is a wonder: how the multiplicity of life came from what is not a multiplicity, and how there would be no multiplicity unless, before the multiplicity, there were what is not a multiplicity. For the principle is not divided up into the All. Divided, it would have destroyed the All as well, and the All would not even have come into being, unless the principle remained by itself, being different from it. That is why the leading back is everywhere to one. In each case there is some one to which you will lead it back. The All, too, is led back to the one before it, though not to what is simply one, until one arrives at what is simply One; and this can no longer be led back to anything else. Now if one takes the one of the plant (this is the principle that remains), and the one of the animal, the one of soul, and the one of the All, one is taking in each case what is most powerful and most valuable. But if one takes the One of the things that truly are, their principle and source and power, shall we lose faith and suspect it is nothing? Or rather: it is none of the things of which it is the principle. Yet it is such that nothing can be predicated of it, not being, not substance, not life, so that it is what is above all these. If you grasp it by taking being away, you will be filled with wonder. Cast yourself toward it, reach it, come to rest within what is its own, and understand it better, grasping it by direct contact, and seeing its greatness all at once through the things that come after it and exist because of it.

3.8.11 Look at it this way, too. Since Intellect is a kind of sight, and a sight that sees, it will be a power that has come into activity. So there will be in it matter and form, as in actual seeing, but matter in the intelligibles. For actual seeing, too, has a doubleness: before seeing, at any rate, it was one. So the one has become two, and the two one. For seeing, then, the filling and the completion, as it were, come from the perceptible object. For the sight of Intellect, it is the Good that fills it. For if Intellect

itself were the Good, what need would it have to see, or to be active at all? The other things have their activity around the Good and because of the Good, but the Good needs nothing. So there will be nothing for it except itself. So when you have said "the Good," add nothing more in thought. If you add anything, then by whatever you have added you will make it deficient. That is why you must not even add thinking, so that you don't add something else and make two, Intellect and Good. For Intellect belongs to the Good, but the Good does not need Intellect. That is also why, when Intellect attains the Good, it becomes Good-like and is perfected by the Good: the form that comes upon it from the Good makes it Good-like. And as the trace of the Good is seen in it, so one should conceive the archetype, forming an idea of its true nature from the trace that plays over Intellect.

So the Good has given Intellect, as it looks, its own trace upon it to have. In Intellect, then, there is aspiration: it is always aspiring and always attaining. But the Good neither aspires (to what?) nor attains, since it did not aspire. So it is not Intellect either; for in Intellect too there is aspiration and convergence toward its form. Intellect is beautiful, the most beautiful of all things. It is set in pure light and pure radiance and embraces the nature of the things that are, and this beautiful cosmos of ours is its shadow and image. It is set in all splendor, because there is nothing unintelligent or dark or without measure in it, and it lives a blessed life. Amazement would seize anyone who saw even this, and saw it as one should, sinking into it and becoming one with it. Someone who looks up at the heavens and sees the light of the stars thinks of their maker and looks for him. In the same way, whoever has contemplated the intelligible world, gazed into it and marveled at it, must look for its maker too: who it is that brought such a world into being, or where, or how, he who fathered such a child, Intellect, a beautiful boy, a boy who is fullness and comes from him. Certainly he is neither Intellect nor fullness, but before Intellect and fullness. For Intellect and fullness come after him, having needed both to be filled and to have thought. These are close to what is without need, to what

has no need of thinking, yet they have true fullness and true thinking, because they have them first. But what is before them neither needs nor has. Otherwise it would not be the Good.[3]

3 Greek *koros* means both "boy" and "fullness, satiety"; Plotinus plays on Plato's etymology of Kronos as "pure intellect" and "boy" (*Cratylus* 396b).

III.9 Various Considerations

Ἐπισκέψεις διάφοροι
A set of short notes on Intellect and the Forms, the world-soul, matter, and the One beyond thought.
no. 13 in order of writing

3.9.1 "Intellect," he says, "sees the Forms present in what the living being is; then the craftsman thought," he says, "[it must be] that this All too should have what Intellect sees in what the living being is." Is he not saying, then, that the Forms already exist before Intellect, and that Intellect thinks them as already existing? First, then, we must ask about that, I mean the living being, whether it is not Intellect but something other than Intellect. For what contemplates is Intellect. So the living being itself is not Intellect: we will say it is an intelligible, and we will say that Intellect has what it sees outside itself. In that case it has images and not the true things, if the true things are There; for he says that truth too is There, in what is, where each thing itself is. Or rather: even if each of the two is different, they are not apart from each other, but different only in that they are other.[1] Next, as far as the statement goes, nothing prevents the two from being one, distinguished only in thought, if indeed it is only in this way that one is intelligible and the other is thinking. For he does not say that what Intellect beholds is altogether in something else, but that it has the intelligible in itself.

Or rather: nothing prevents the intelligible from being Intellect too, an Intellect at rest, in unity and stillness, while the

1 This treatise (III.9) is a collection of separate notes. It opens with Plato, *Timaeus* 39e, where the craftsman models the cosmos on "the living being itself."

nature of the Intellect that sees that Intellect within itself is a kind of activity derived from it, by which it sees it. Seeing it, it is, as it were, the intellect of that, because it thinks that; and thinking it, it too is intellect and intelligible, in another way, by imitation. This, then, is what was "thought out": to make in this cosmos what it sees There (four kinds of living beings). Yet what thinks it out seems, in a veiled way, to make something other than those two. Others will take the three to be one: the living being itself, Intellect, and what thinks it out. Or perhaps, as in many cases, it depends on how one sets the question out: one person thinks one way, another another, that there are three. Two of these have been discussed. But what is the third, which thought it out: to work, make and divide by itself the things seen by Intellect lying in the living being? Perhaps it is possible that in one way Intellect is the divider, and in another way the divider is not Intellect. Insofar as the divided things come from it, it is itself the divider; but insofar as it remains undivided itself, and what comes from it is what is divided—and these are souls—it is Soul that divides into many souls. That is why he says the division belongs to the third and is in the third: because it "thought out," which is not the work of Intellect but of soul, which has a divided activity in a divided nature.

3.9.2 It is like the division of a single science as a whole into its particular theorems. The science is not scattered or chopped into bits; each theorem holds the whole potentially, and the same thing is its beginning and its end. So too one must prepare oneself so that the principles in oneself are also ends, and wholes, and all, directed toward the best of one's nature; and when one has become that, one is There. For with this best part of oneself, when one has it, one will touch that.

3.9.3 Soul as a whole did not come into being anywhere, nor did it come anywhere, for there was no "where." Rather, the body, being its neighbor, came to share in it. That is why even Plato nowhere says it is in the body, but that the body is in it. The other souls do have a "whence"—they come from Soul—and something into which they come down and move from one to

another, and from which they can also go back up. But Soul is always above, in that in which it is its nature to be; what comes next is the All, like what is near, or what is under the sun. The partial soul, then, is illuminated when it moves toward what is before it, for there it meets what is; but when it moves toward what comes after it, it moves toward non-being. It does this when it turns toward itself. For wanting [to be] toward itself, it makes what comes after it, an image of itself, non-being, as if stepping into emptiness and becoming more indefinite. And this image, the indefinite, is altogether dark: it is altogether without reason and without intelligence, and stands far off from what is. When it moves to what is in between, it is in its own place; but looking again, as with a second glance, it gave the image shape and, delighted, enters into it.

3.9.4 How, then, does multiplicity come from one? Because it is everywhere: there is nowhere it is not. So it fills all things. So it is many, or rather, already all things. For if it were only everywhere, it would itself be all things. But since it is also nowhere, all things come into being through it, because it is everywhere, but they are other than it, because it is nowhere. Why, then, is it not only everywhere but, in addition, also nowhere? Because there must be one before all things. So it must fill all things and make them, not be all the things it makes.

3.9.5 Soul itself must be like sight, and what it sees must be Intellect. It is indefinite before it sees, but its nature is to think. So it is matter in relation to Intellect.

3.9.6 When we think ourselves, we are plainly looking at a thinking nature; otherwise our claim to think would be false. So if we think, and think ourselves, we are thinking a nature that is intellectual. So before this thinking there is another thinking, a still one, as it were. And thinking is thinking of being and thinking of life; so before this life and being there is another being and life. These, then, it saw, all that are activities. And if the activities that consist in thinking ourselves in this way are intellects, then we, the real we, are the intelligible; and the thinking of them carries their image.

3.9.7 The First is the power of motion and rest, so it is beyond them. The second stands still and moves around it. And the second is Intellect: being one thing, it has its thinking directed toward another, whereas the First does not have thinking. What thinks is double, even when it thinks itself, and deficient, because it has its well-being in thinking, not in its hypostasis.

3.9.8 For everything that passes from potentiality to actuality, what is in actuality is always the same, as long as it exists. So perfection belongs to bodies too, fire for instance; but fire cannot exist forever, because it is with matter. Whatever is incomposite and in actuality exists forever. But the same thing, while being in actuality, can be in potentiality in another respect.

3.9.9 But the gods are not the First, which is beyond. Intellect is the things that are, and here there is motion and rest. For the First itself is around nothing, while the other things, resting around it, stand still and move. For motion is aspiration, and the First aspires to nothing: what could the very summit aspire to? Does it not think, then, not even itself? Or rather: insofar as it has itself, it is said to think in a general sense. ⟨...⟩ Or rather, it is not by having itself that something is said to think, but by looking toward the First. And thinking itself is the first activity. If, then, this is first, there must be none before it. So what provides it is beyond it; and so thinking is second, after that. For thinking is not what is primarily venerable—nor is every thinking venerable, but only thinking of the Good. So the Good is beyond thinking. But then it will not be conscious of itself. Well, what would its consciousness of itself be? Consciousness of itself as good, or not? If as good, the Good already exists before the consciousness. But if the consciousness makes it good, the Good would not exist before it; and so the consciousness itself will not exist either, since it will not be consciousness of the good. What then? Does it not even live? Or rather, we must not say that it lives, since it gives life. What is conscious of itself and thinks itself is second: it is conscious of itself in order to be together with itself by this activity. So if it comes to know itself, it must have been unknown to itself, deficient in its own nature,

and perfected by thinking. Coming to know, then, must be taken away; for adding produces subtraction and deficiency.

IV.1 On the Essence of the Soul I

Περὶ οὐσίας ψυχῆς πρῶτον
A brief sketch of how soul is undivided in the intelligible world yet divided among bodies here.
no. 21 in order of writing

4.1.1 In the intelligible world is true being; Intellect is the best of it. But there are souls There too, for it is from There that they come here. That world has souls without bodies; this one has the souls that come to be in bodies and are divided by bodies. There, all Intellect is together, not separated or divided, and all souls are together in the one world, not in spatial separation. Intellect, then, is always unseparated and undivided; soul there is unseparated and undivided too, but its nature is to be divided. For its division is its departing and coming to be in body. So it is reasonably said to be "divisible in bodies," because in this way it departs and is divided. How, then, is it also undivided? Because not all of it departed: there is something of it that did not come, whose nature is not to be divided.[1] So what is "from the indivisible and the divisible in bodies" is the same as soul that is both above and below: fastened There, but flowing down as far as these things here, like a line from a center. Having come here, it sees with this part, and in this very part it keeps the nature of the whole. For even here it is not only divisible but also indivisible: the part of it that is divided is divided indivisibly. Giving itself to the whole body without being divided, whole to whole, it is divided by being in every part.

1 "Divisible in bodies" echoes Plato, *Timaeus* 35a, where the craftsman mixes soul from "indivisible being" and "the being that becomes divisible in bodies."

IV.2 On the Essence of the Soul II

Περὶ οὐσίας ψυχῆς δεύτερον
Plotinus argues that soul is both divisible and indivisible, present whole in every part of the body it animates.
no. 4 in order of writing

4.2.1 In investigating what the being of soul is, we showed that it is not a body, nor, among incorporeals, a harmony; we set aside the notion of entelechy, as not true in the way it is stated and as not revealing what soul is; and we said that it belongs to the intelligible nature and the divine portion. With that we may perhaps have said something clear about its being. All the same, it is better to go further. Then, we drew the distinction by separating the perceptible and the intelligible nature, and placed soul in the intelligible. Now let it be granted that it is in the intelligible; but let us pursue, by another road, what is closest to its nature.[1] We say, then, that some things are primarily divisible and by their nature dispersible: those of which no part is the same either as another part or as the whole, and whose part must be smaller than the all and the whole. These are perceptible magnitudes and masses, each of which has its own place; the same thing cannot be in several places at once. Opposed to this is another kind of being. It admits no division at all; it is without parts and indivisible; it admits no extension, not even in thought; it needs no place and comes to be in none of the things that are, either in parts or as a whole. It rides, as it were, on all things at once—not so as to be settled in them, but

1 The earlier inquiry is IV.7, *On the Immortality of the Soul*. "Entelechy" is Aristotle's definition of soul as the first actuality of a natural body.

because the other things cannot be without it, and do not want to be. It is a being always in the same state, common to all that come after it, like the center in a circle: all the lines to the circumference are fastened to it, yet they let it remain by itself, though they have from it their coming-to-be and their being. They share in the point, and the partless is their principle; yet they have gone forth while keeping themselves fastened there.

So there is this, which is primarily indivisible among the intelligibles and leads the things that are; and there is that, which is altogether divisible among perceptibles. Before the perceptible, close to it and in it, there is another nature. It is not primarily divisible, as bodies are, but it does become divisible in bodies. So when the bodies are divided, the form in them is divided too, yet it is whole in each of the divided parts, the same thing becoming many, each of which has departed altogether from the other, since it has become altogether divisible. Such are colors and all qualities, and each shape: it can be whole at once in many separate things, without having any part affected in the same way as another. That is why this too must be counted as altogether divisible. Next to that altogether indivisible nature, again, there is another being, derived from it. It has its indivisibility from that, but in its procession from it, hastening toward the other nature, it has settled in the middle between both: between the indivisible and first, and the "divisible in bodies" that is upon bodies. It is not like color and every quality, which are the same in many places, in many bodily masses, while what is in each is altogether separated from the other, just as one mass is separated from another.

And even if the magnitude is one, what is the same in each part has no community that would make it affected in common, because this "same" is one thing here and another thing there; for the sameness is an affection, not itself a being. But the being that we say is above this nature, drawing near to the indivisible being, is a being and comes to be in bodies; and it happens to be divided in relation to them, though it does not undergo this before it gives itself to bodies. So in whatever bodies it comes to

be—even if it comes to be in the largest, extended over everything—giving itself to the whole, it does not cease to be one. Not one as a body is one: a body is one by continuity, while each of its parts is different, one here and another elsewhere. Nor as a quality is one. The nature that is at once divisible and indivisible, which we say is soul, is not one in the way what is continuous is one, having one part here and another there. It is divisible because it is in all the parts of that in which it is, and indivisible because it is whole in all of them and whole in any one of them. Whoever has seen this will know the greatness of soul and its power: how divine and wonderful a thing it is, one of the natures beyond things. Having no magnitude, it is present to every magnitude; it is here, and again it is there, not with another part but with the same. So it is divided and again not divided—or rather, it is not divided and has not become divided. For it remains whole with itself, and is divided in relation to bodies, because bodies, through their own divisibility, cannot receive it indivisibly. So the division is an affection of the bodies, not of soul.

4.2.2 That the nature of soul had to be like this, and that apart from this there cannot be a soul that is either only indivisible or only divisible, but that it must be both in this way, is clear from the following. If it were like bodies, having one part here and another there, then when one part was affected, the other part would not come to perceive what was affected. Rather, that soul —the one around the finger, say—would perceive the affection as a separate soul existing by itself; and there would be, in general, many souls governing each of us. And indeed this All too would be governed not by one soul but by unlimitedly many, separate from one another. For continuity, unless it contributed to one, would be pointless. And we certainly must not accept what they say, deceiving themselves: that perceptions reach the ruling part by transmission. First, a "ruling part" of soul is spoken of without examination. How will they divide soul and say this part is one thing and that another? By what quantity will they mark off each, or by what difference of quality, when the mass is

one and continuous? And will only the ruling part perceive, or the other parts too? If the impression strikes only the ruling part itself, where will it perceive the sensation as located? But if it strikes another part of the soul, one not naturally able to perceive, this part will not transmit its affection to the ruling part, and there will be no perception at all. And if it strikes the ruling part itself, either it will strike one part of it, and once this part has perceived, the rest will no longer [perceive]—for that would be pointless—or there will be many perceptions, unlimited in number, and not all alike. One will say, "I was affected first"; another, "I perceived another's affection." And where the affection occurred, each will be ignorant except the first.

Or else each part of soul will be deceived, supposing it happened where it is itself. And if not only the ruling part but any part at all perceives, why will one be the ruling part and another not? Or why must the perception go up to it? And how will it know a single thing from many perceptions, from ears and eyes, say? If, on the other hand, soul were altogether one—entirely indivisible and one by itself—and escaped altogether the nature of multiplicity and division, then nothing soul took hold of would be ensouled as a whole. Setting itself, as it were, at the center of each thing, it would have left the whole mass of the living being without soul. So soul must be one and many, divided and undivided, in this way; and we must not disbelieve that one and the same thing [also] can be in many places. For if we did not accept this, there would be no nature to hold all things together and govern them, embracing all things at once and leading them with understanding: a multiplicity, since the things that are are many, but one, so that what holds them together may be one. By what in its unity is many, it supplies life to all the parts; by what in its unity is indivisible, it leads them with understanding. And in things without understanding, the one that leads imitates this. This, then, is what is divinely hinted at in the riddle: "From the indivisible, always in the same state [being], and from the being that becomes divisible in bodies, he mixed a third form of being out of both." So soul is one and

many in this way; the forms in bodies are many and one; bodies are only many; and what is highest is only one.

IV.3 Problems About the Soul I

Περὶ ψυχῆς ἀποριῶν πρῶτον
Plotinus examines how individual souls relate to the world-soul, how they descend into bodies, and where memory resides.
no. 27 in order of writing

4.3.1 Concerning soul, it would be right to make this our treatise: all the questions where we must raise difficulties and then reach a resolution, or, stopping within the difficulties themselves, at least gain this much—to know what is difficult in them. For what subject could one more reasonably spend time on, speaking at length and examining it, than this? There are many reasons, and in particular that it gives knowledge in both directions: of the things of which it is the principle, and of those from which it comes. And in making this inquiry we would also be obeying the god's command, which bids us know ourselves. Wanting to seek and find other things, we would rightly seek what this is that seeks, and what it is that longs to grasp the beloved among sights.[1] For in the whole Intellect, too, there was this doubleness; so it is reasonable that in the partial ones one aspect should predominate in some, the other in others. How there are receptacles for the gods must be examined.

1 "Know yourself" was inscribed on Apollo's temple at Delphi.

ARE OUR SOULS PARTS OF THE WORLD SOUL?

Plotinus tests the claim that our souls are portions of the Soul of the All.

But that belongs to the inquiry into how soul comes to be in body. Now let us go back to those who say that our souls, too, come from the Soul of the All. For they will perhaps say that, to show our souls are not parts of it, it is not enough that ours too reach as far as the same things the Soul of the All reaches, or that they are intellectual in the same way—even if one grants the "in the same way"—since parts too are of the same form as their wholes. And they will cite Plato as holding this view, when, in establishing that the All is ensouled, he says that just as our body is a part of the All, so our soul is a part of the Soul of the All. They also say that we follow the revolution of the All—this is both stated and clearly shown—and that we take our characters and fortunes from there, and that, coming to be inside it, we take our soul from what surrounds us. And just as in us each part of us receives from our soul, so we too, being parts in relation to the whole by the same ratio, receive a share from the whole Soul as parts. And "all soul cares for all that is soulless" means just this: that nothing outside soul is left after the Soul of the whole; for it is this soul that takes all that is soulless into its care.

4.3.2 To this we must first say that by making the souls of the same form, in granting that they reach the same things, and by giving them the same common genus, they put them outside the status of parts. They would more justly say that it is one and the same soul, and that each is the whole. But making it one, they hang it on something else: something that no longer belongs to this or that, but to nothing, and that itself makes it the soul of the cosmos or of anything else—soul of the cosmos and of any ensouled thing. And it is right that not all soul belongs to something, since it is a being; there is soul that belongs to nothing at all, while those that belong to something come to do so at some

time, incidentally. Perhaps we should grasp more clearly how "part" is meant in such cases. "Part" in the sense used of bodies —whether the body is of the same form throughout or not—we may leave aside, noting only this: in things whose parts are alike, when one speaks of a part, the part is a part of the mass, not of the form—whiteness, for example. The whiteness in a portion of milk is not a part of the whiteness of all the milk; it is the whiteness of a portion, but not a portion of whiteness, for whiteness is altogether without magnitude and is not a quantity. But enough of that. When we speak of a part in things that are not bodies, we might speak of it as in numbers—two as part of ten (let this be said of bare numbers only)—or as a part of a circle and of a line, or as a part of a science. With units and figures, as with bodies, the whole must be diminished by division into parts, and each of the parts must be smaller than the wholes. Being quantities, and having their being in quantity, not being quantity itself, they necessarily become greater and smaller. In these senses, then, "part" cannot be said of soul.

For soul is not a quantity in the way that the whole would be a ten and one soul a unit. Many other absurdities would follow: the ten would not be one thing, and either each of the units would be a soul, or soul would be made up of things all soulless. Besides, it has been granted that the part of the whole soul is of the same form; whereas with the continuous, the part need not be like the whole—a circle, for example, or a square—or at any rate not all the parts one can take [like the whole] are alike, as with triangles, which have triangles as parts, but varying ones; yet they hold that soul is of the same form. And with a line, the part does have the being of a line, but here too it differs in magnitude. But if the difference between the partial soul and the whole were said to be one of magnitude, soul will be a quantity and a body, taking its difference as soul from quantity. Yet it was laid down that they are all alike and whole. And soul plainly is not divided the way magnitudes are; nor would they themselves grant that the whole is chopped up into parts. They would use up the whole, and it will be a mere name—if there ever was a

whole soul—as if, when wine had been divided into many portions, each portion in each jar were called a part of the whole wine. Is it a part, then, in the way a theorem is called a part of the whole science, while the science itself remains no less, and the division is, as it were, the bringing forth and putting into act of each theorem? In such a case each theorem holds the whole science potentially, and the science is no less whole. If it is like this with soul, both the whole and the others, the whole of which such things are parts will not belong to anything, but will be itself by itself. So it will not be the soul of the cosmos either; even the soul of the cosmos will be one of the partial souls. So all are parts of one, being of the same form. But then how is one the soul of the cosmos, and others souls of parts of the cosmos?

4.3.3 But are they perhaps parts in the way someone might say, in the case of a single living being, that the soul in the finger is part of the whole soul in the whole animal? But this account either makes no soul exist outside body, or makes all of it—what is called the Soul of the All—exist not in body but outside the body of the cosmos. This must be examined; for now we must consider how it might be put in terms of the image. If the Soul of the All gives itself to all the partial living beings, and each is a part in this way, it would not be divided when it gives itself to each; the whole will be the same everywhere, one and the same, existing in many things at once. But this would no longer allow one to be the whole and another a part, especially in things in which the same power is present. For even where one thing has one function and another another—eyes and ears, for example—we must not say that one portion of soul is present to sight and another to the ears (dividing in this way belongs to other things); it is the same soul, even if a different power is active in each. For all the powers are in both; but because the organs differ, the perceptions turn out different, though all of them belong to forms that can [not] take shape in everything. This is also shown by the fact that everything must come to one. Since the organs differ [and] cannot receive everything, the affections that arise in the organs are different, but the judgment comes from

the same thing, like a judge who has attended to the words spoken and the deeds done. But it has been said that soul is one everywhere, even in different functions. If the parts are like the senses, none of them can think; only that whole soul can (if thinking belonged to each, each would be by itself). But when soul is rational too, and rational in the way the whole is said to be, what is called a part will be the same, and not a part of the whole.

ONE SOUL AND MANY SOULS

All souls are one, as Intellect is one, while each remains itself.

4.3.4 What, then, must we say, if it is one in this way, when someone pursues the inquiry from here? First he raises the difficulty whether one thing can [be] in all things at once in this way; then, what happens when [one soul] is in body and another not in body. For perhaps it will follow that all soul is always in body, and especially the Soul of the All. It is not said to leave the body the way ours is; and yet some say that ours will leave this body but will not be altogether outside body. But if it will be altogether outside body, how will one soul leave and the other not, though they are the same? With Intellect, which separates itself by otherness into parts that [differ] most from one another, yet are always together—for this being would be indivisible—no such difficulty would arise. But with the soul said to be "divisible in bodies," this claim that all souls are one would involve many difficulties. Unless one were to set the one by itself, not falling into body, and then derive from it all the souls, that of the whole and the others: up to a point they are together, as it were, and one, by not belonging to any particular thing; but, fastened by their upper edges and together with one another toward what is above, they reach out this way and that—like light that, as it reaches the earth, is divided among houses and yet is not divided, but is one no less. And the Soul of the All always stays above, because it has no coming down, no lower part, no turning [toward] things here; but ours [not always], because a part of

them has been marked off in this world, and because of their turning toward what needs care. The lowest part of the Soul of the All resembles the soul in a great plant, which governs the plant without toil and without noise; our lower part is as if maggots arose in a rotten part of the plant—for that is what the ensouled body is in the All. But the rest of our soul, which is of the same form as the upper parts of the whole Soul, is as if a farmer became worried about the maggots in the plant and gave his attention to the plant. Or it is as if one were to say that a man who is healthy and lives among other healthy men is devoted to the things he is devoted to, whether acting or giving himself to contemplation; but when he falls ill and is occupied with caring for his body, he is devoted to the body and has come to belong to the body.

4.3.5 But then how will one soul still be yours, another this man's, and another someone else's? Is it this man's by its lower part, and not this man's but that one's by its upper part? But in that case Socrates will exist when the soul of Socrates is in body, and will perish precisely when he comes to be in the best. Or rather: none of the things that are will perish. For there too the intellects will not perish, because they are not divided bodily (into one); each remains in its otherness, keeping the same being that it is. So too the souls, fastened in order to each intellect, are rational principles of intellects and more unfolded than they are; they have become much, as it were, from little. Connected with the little, which is less divided than each of them, they now want to be divided, yet cannot go to complete division; keeping both sameness and otherness, each remains one, and all together are one. The heart of the argument has now been stated: that souls come from one; that the many souls from one are, like Intellect, divided and not divided; that the soul that remains is one rational principle of Intellect; and that from it come partial and immaterial rational principles, just as There.

WHY THE SOUL OF THE ALL MADE THE COSMOS

The Soul of the All made the cosmos because it stays above, close to the whole Intellect.

4.3.6 But why has the Soul of the All, though of the same form, made a cosmos, while the soul of each individual has not, though it too has everything in itself? That it can come to be and exist in many things at once has been said; now we must say [how]. For perhaps we shall also learn how the same thing, in this and in that, does this or that, or is affected, or both; or perhaps this must be examined on its own. How, then, and why, did it make a cosmos, while the others govern some part of the cosmos? Perhaps it is no wonder that, among people with the same knowledge, some rule over more and others over fewer. But one might be able to say why. But, one might say, there is also a difference among souls, and a greater one, in that the one did not depart from the whole Soul but, remaining there, had the body around itself, while the others received their allotted portions when the body already existed and a sister soul, as it were, was already ruling—as though this soul had prepared dwellings for them in advance.

There is also [a difference in that] the one looks toward the whole Intellect, the others rather toward their own partial intellects. Perhaps these too could have made a world, but once that soul had made one, it was no longer possible for them as well, since that one had begun first. The same difficulty would arise if any other soul whatever had taken possession first. It is better to say: because it is more fastened to the things above; for the power of souls that incline toward that realm is greater. Keeping themselves in safety, they make things with the greatest ease—for it belongs to greater power not to be affected by what it makes—and the power comes from above. So, remaining in itself, it makes, and the things come to it; but the other souls themselves went to the things. So they departed into the depth. Or rather, a large part of them, dragged down, dragged them

along too, with their thoughts, to go downward. For the phrase "second and third" must be understood to refer to being nearer and farther. Just as among us, not all souls stand in the same relation to the things There: some would be united, some would reach toward them, aspiring from close by, and others would have this less, insofar as they are active not with the same powers, but some with the first, some with the one after it, others with the third, though all have all of them.[2]

4.3.7 So much for that. But what about the passage in the *Philebus* that suggests the other souls are portions of the Soul of the All? The argument there does not mean what someone supposes, but what was useful to him at the time: that the heaven too is ensouled. He establishes this by saying it is absurd to call the heaven soulless when we, who have a part of the body of the All, have soul. For how could the part have soul if the All were soulless? He makes his view clearest in the *Timaeus*: after the Soul of the All has come into being, he makes the other souls later, mixing them in the same bowl from which the Soul of the whole came, making the rest of the same form too, but assigning the difference to "second" and "third." As for the line in the *Phaedrus*, "all soul cares for all that is soulless" ⟨...⟩ what else could it be that governs the nature of body and either molds it or orders it or makes it, if not soul? And it is not that one soul is naturally capable of this and another not. "The perfect soul," he says—the Soul of the All—"travels on high," not sinking in but riding on it, as it were, and acts upon the cosmos; and "whatever soul is perfect governs in this way." When he speaks of "the one that has shed its wings," he makes it different from that one. As for following the revolution of the All, getting our characters from there and being affected by it, this would be no sign that our souls are parts. For a soul is quite capable of taking many impressions from the nature of places, of waters and of air; [and impressions are also made by] living in different cities and by the mixtures of bodies. And we said that, being in the All, we

2 Plato, *Timaeus* 41d: the other souls were mixed in the same bowl as the World Soul, but "second and third" in purity.

have something of the Soul of the whole, and we granted that we are affected by the revolution; but we set another soul against these influences, one shown to be other above all by its resistance. As for the fact that we are born inside it: with mothers too, we say that the soul that enters is a different one, not the mother's.

4.3.8 That, then, would be the solution to these points; and sympathy does not obstruct the argument either. Since all souls come from the same soul as the Soul of the whole, they are in sympathy. For it has been said that soul is both one and many. How the part differs from the whole has been said. Difference among souls in general has also been discussed; let it now be said briefly that souls might also come to differ because of bodies, and especially in their characters and in the works of discursive thought, as a result of lives lived before. For he says that souls' choices are made in accordance with their former lives.[3] But if one takes the nature of soul as a whole, its differences have also been stated in the passages where "second" and "third" were spoken of, and where it was said that all souls are all things, but each according to what is active in it: one is united in activity, one in knowledge, one in desire. They also differ in that different souls look at different things and are and become what they look at. And the fullness and perfection of souls is not the same for all.

But if the whole order they form is varied—for every rational principle is one, many and varied, like an ensouled living being with many shapes—if so, there is also an order, and the things that are are not wholly torn apart from one another. There is no chance among the things that are, since there is none even among bodies; and it follows that there is a definite number. For again, the things that are must stand fast, the intelligibles must be the same, and each must be one in number: that is how it is a "this." With bodies, because the nature of the individual is in flux, the form being brought in from outside, being in accord-

3 Plato, *Republic* X, 620a (the myth of Er), where souls choose their next lives according to the habits of the last.

ance with form always belongs to them by imitation of the things that are. But for things that do not come from composition, being consists in being what they are, one in number, which is theirs from the beginning; what was not does not come into being, and what is will not cease to be. For even if something is to make them, it will not make them out of matter; and if it does, it must add from itself something of the nature of being, so that there would be change in that very maker, if it now made more and now less. And why now, and not always thus? And what came into being would not be eternal, if it were more and less; but soul is laid down as being eternal. How, then, is it unlimited, if it is to stand fast? Or rather: it is unlimited in power, because its power is unlimited—not as though it will be divided to infinity.

For god too is not limited. So these souls, too, are each what they are not by an alien limit, as being of such and such a size; each is as much as it wants, and it never goes forth outside itself. It reaches everywhere—the part of it whose nature is to reach into bodies—yet it is not torn apart from itself when it is in the finger and in the foot. So too in the All: whatever it reaches, in this and that part of a plant, even one cut off, it is in both the original plant and the part cut from it. For the body of the All is one, and soul is everywhere in it as in one thing. And if, when an animal has rotted, many come from it, the soul of the whole animal is no longer in the body; for the body no longer has what can receive it, or it would not have died. But the products of the decay that are suited to the generation of animals, some of one kind, some of another, have soul, since there is nothing from which soul stands aloof; but one thing can receive it and another cannot. And the things that become ensouled in this way have not made more souls: they depend on the one soul, which remains one. Just so in us: when some parts are cut away and others grow in their place, soul leaves the former and comes to the latter, as long as the one soul remains. And in the All the one soul always remains; of the things within it, it holds some and lets go of others, while what belongs to soul remains the same.

HOW SOUL ENTERS BODY

The cosmos was never without soul; it lies in Soul like a net in the sea.

4.3.9 But we must inquire how soul comes to be in body. What is the manner of it, and how does it happen? This too is no less worth wondering at and inquiring into. Soul enters body in two ways. The first happens to a soul already in a body: to the soul that transmigrates, and to the soul that passes from a body of air or fire into an earthy one. They do not call this second case transmigration, because it is unclear where the entry starts from. The other way is from the bodiless into any body whatever, and this would be soul's first communion with body. So it would be right to examine this one: what exactly is the experience that takes place at that moment, when a soul entirely pure of body takes on a bodily nature around itself? As for the Soul of the All, it is perhaps [fitting] to begin there, or rather it is necessary. We must take it that our account speaks of its entry and ensoulment for the sake of teaching and clarity. For there was never a time when this All was not ensouled, nor a time when body existed while soul was absent, nor was matter ever unordered. But we can conceive these things by separating them from one another in thought, since we are free to take apart any composite in argument and in discursive thought.

For the truth is this. If there were no body, soul would not go forth, since there is no other place where it is naturally fitted to be. But if it is going to proceed, it will generate a place for itself, and so a body too. As its rest grew strong, as it were, in that very rest, it was as if a great light shone out, and at the outermost edges of the fire there came to be darkness. Soul saw this darkness, since it now existed, and gave it shape. For it was not permitted that anything neighboring Soul should be without a share of rational principle. So the darkness received such a share as it could, "dimly in the dim," as the saying goes, in the dim thing that had come to be. Having come into being, then, like a beautiful and richly varied house, the cosmos was not cut

off from its maker. Nor, on the other hand, did the maker give itself over to it. Instead the cosmos was judged worthy, everywhere and as a whole, of a care that benefits it in its being and its beauty, as far as it could share in being, and that does no harm to the one presiding over it, for that one presides while remaining above. The cosmos is ensouled in this way: it has a soul that is not its own but is there for it. It is mastered, not master; it is held, not holding. For it lies in the Soul that bears it up, and no part of it is without a share of Soul. It is like a net soaked in water, which would live but cannot make its own the element it is in. The sea is already spread out, and the net spreads out along with it as far as it can, since none of its parts can be anywhere other than where it lies. But Soul is so great by nature precisely because it has no definite size. So it grasps the whole body with the same self, and wherever body extends, there Soul is. And if there were no body, magnitude would be no concern of Soul's, for it is what it is. The All is as large as the extent where Soul is, and its size is bounded by how far it can go forward and still have Soul preserving it. The shadow is as large as the rational principle that comes from Soul, and that rational principle was such as to produce a magnitude as great as its form wanted to produce (a magnitude).

4.3.10 Having heard it put this way, we must go back again to what is always so and take all things as being together: air, light, sun, or moon, and again light and air, all together, but with an order of first, second and third. Here there is Soul, always standing still. Then come [the] first things and those that follow, like the outermost edges of a fire. So what comes after the first is thought of as coming from [the] shadow of the last fire, and then this too is lit up at the same time. In this way something like a form runs over what was laid beneath first, which was altogether dim. It was set in order according to rational principle by the power of Soul, which has within itself, through the whole of itself, the power to order according to rational principles. In the same way the rational principles in seeds mold and shape living beings like little cosmoses. For whatever comes into contact

with Soul is made according to what Soul's being is by nature. And Soul does not make things by a purpose brought in from outside, nor does it wait for deliberation or inquiry; if it did, it would make not by nature but by an imported art. Art comes later than Soul and imitates it. It produces dim and feeble imitations, toys of a sort that are not worth much, and uses a great many devices to produce images. But Soul, by the power of its being, is master of bodies, so that they come to be and are just as it leads them, and the things there from the beginning cannot oppose its will.

Among later things, they often obstruct one another and so fail to attain their proper shape, the shape that the rational principle on a small scale wants. But there the whole shape too comes into being from Soul, and the things that come to be have their order along with it, so what comes to be is beautiful without toil and without hindrance. Within it Soul built statues of gods, dwellings for human beings, and other things for others. For what should come from Soul but what it has the power to make? Fire's part is to make things hot, and another thing's part is to cool. Soul has one activity that goes out from it into another, and another within itself. In soulless things, the one that comes from themselves lies within them as if asleep, while the activity directed to something else is to make like themselves whatever can be affected. This is common to everything that is: to bring things into likeness with itself. But Soul's work is both something awake within itself and, likewise, what goes out to another. So it makes the other things live too, those that do not live of themselves, and it gives them the kind of life by which it lives itself. Living in rational principle, then, it gives a rational principle to the body, an image of what it has. For what it gives the body is an image of life too. It also gives the shapes of bodies, whose rational principles it has, and it has those of gods and of everything. That is why the cosmos too has everything.

4.3.11 And I think that the wise men of old, who wanted the gods to be present to them and so made shrines and statues, looked to the nature of the All. They grasped that the nature of

soul is everywhere easy to draw in, and that it would be easiest of all to receive it if one fashioned something sympathetic to it, something able to receive some portion of it. Whatever imitates it in any way at all is sympathetic, like a mirror able to catch a form. For the nature of the All too made everything skillfully, in imitation of the things whose rational principles it had. Each thing had thus become a rational principle in matter, shaped after the principle prior to matter, and so it was linked to that god after whom it had come to be, the god Soul looked to and held while making. So it was not possible for the thing to be without a share of him, nor, again, for him to come down into it. That god was Intellect, the sun There (let it serve as the model for our account). Next after it comes Soul, depending on it: Intellect remains, and Soul remains too. Soul gives its own boundaries, the ones that face this sun, to this sun. Through its mediation it makes this sun linked to the world There as well, acting as a kind of interpreter of what comes from that sun to this one and from this one to that, as far as anything reaches that one through Soul. For nothing is far or distant from anything; and yet, again, things are distant by difference and by mixture. Rather, [there is] being by oneself, not [separated] by places, and being together [again] while apart. These are gods because they never stand apart from the beings There. They are attached to the original Soul by the soul that, as it were, went out from it, and by this soul, the one by which they are what they are called, they look toward Intellect, since their soul looks nowhere but There.

THE DESCENT OF SOULS

Human souls go down to their images, each at its appointed time, as if called by a herald.

4.3.12 Human souls saw their images, as Dionysus did in the mirror, and came to be There, rushing down from above. Yet these souls too were not cut off from their own principle and from Intellect. For they did not come with their intellect: they

reached as far as the earth, but their head is set firm above heaven. It falls to them to come further down because their middle part was compelled to take care, since what they had reached needed care. But Father Zeus, pitying them in their toil, makes mortal the bonds over which they toil and gives them rests at intervals, setting them free of bodies, so that they too may be There, where the Soul of the All always is, without turning toward things here at all.[4] For what the All has is already sufficient for it. It is, and it will be, brought to completion in its times according to rational principles that stand forever, and at fixed times it is always restored to the same state, in the measures of determined lives. It brings things here into harmony with those there, following them. These things are brought to completion with all of them ordered under one rational principle, in the descents and ascents of souls and in everything else.

The harmony of souls with the order of this All bears witness to this as well. Souls are not detached from it. In their descents they connect themselves to it and make one harmony with the revolution of the heavens, so that their fortunes, their lives and their choices are signified by the figures of the stars, and they give out, as it were, a single voice in tune. This, all the more, is what is hinted at by speaking of it in musical and harmonic terms. It would not be so unless the All acted and was acted on in each thing according to the beings There, in measures of periods, of orderings, and of courses of lives according to kinds. Souls travel through these courses, now There, now in heaven, now turning toward these regions here. All Intellect is always above and could never be outside its own. It is wholly settled above and sends to things here through Soul. Soul, being nearer, is more disposed according to the form that comes from There, and it gives to what is under it. One soul does this always in the same way, another differently at different times, keeping its wandering in order. Soul does not always come down to the

4 In the Orphic myth the child Dionysus was gazing into a mirror when the Titans seized him and tore him apart.

same degree, but sometimes more and sometimes less, even if it goes to the same kind. Each comes down into what is ready for it, according to the likeness of its disposition. For it is carried there, to whatever it has become like: one into a human being, another into another animal, each to a different one.

4.3.13 For what is inescapable, and justice, consist in this: by a nature that prevails, each goes, in its order, to that of which it has become an image, an image of its archetypal choice and disposition. Every form of soul is There, close to that toward which it has the disposition within itself. There is no need of anyone to send it and bring it in at that time, either so that it comes into a body then or into this particular one. Rather, when the moment arrives, it comes down as if of its own accord and goes in where it must. Each has its own time, and when it arrives, as if a herald were calling, the soul comes down and slips into the fitting body. One might liken what happens to things moved and carried by the powers of magicians and by strong forces of attraction. In the same way, in each individual, the management of the living being is carried out, moving and generating each thing in its time: growing a beard, sprouting horns, impulses toward this or that at a given stage, blossomings that were not there before. So too the management of trees takes place at set, appointed times. Souls go neither willingly nor sent. At least their willingness is not the kind that chooses. It is like springing up by nature, or like the natural longing for marriage, or the way some people are moved to fine deeds without reasoning. What is fated is always this sort of thing for this sort of soul: for one, now; for another, later. Intellect, which is before the cosmos, has as its destiny to remain There, however much it also sends forth; and the individual, falling under the universal law, is sent. For the universal lies within each one, and the law does not get its power of fulfillment from outside. It is given to be in those very ones who will use it, and they carry it about with them. When the time comes, what it wants to happen happens then, through those who have it, so that they themselves fulfill it. They carry it about and have gained strength because it is

settled within them, as if it weighed down on them and produced in them an eagerness, a birth pang, to go where the law within them, as it were, cries out to go.

4.3.14 When this happens, this cosmos, which has many lights and is illuminated by souls, is adorned still further. On top of its earlier adornments it receives other adornments, one from one source and another from another, both from those gods and from the other intellects that give souls. This is probably what the myth hints at: when Prometheus had molded the woman, the other gods adorned her as well. Aphrodite gave something, the Graces too, and each gave a different gift, and they named her after the gift and after all who had given. For they all gave to this molded figure, which had come into being from a kind of forethought. And Prometheus refusing their gift: what would that signify, if not that the choice of what is more in the intelligible is better?[5] And the maker himself is bound, because in a way he touches what he has made, and a bond of this kind is external. His release by Heracles means that he has a power, so that even so he is set free. Let anyone take these things as he will. But the myth does display how gifts are given to the cosmos, and it is in tune with what we have said.

4.3.15 Souls go forth, peeping out of the intelligible, first into heaven. Having taken on a body there, they then pass through it into more earthy bodies, as far as they stretch out in length. Some go from heaven into lower bodies. Others pass from one body into another: these are the souls whose power was not enough to lift them out of here, because of the heaviness and forgetfulness they drag along in great quantity, which has weighed them down. They become different through variations in the bodies they have entered, or through fortunes, or upbringings, or else they bring the difference from themselves; or it comes through all of these, or some of them. Some souls are wholly subject to fate here. Others are sometimes subject to it, sometimes their own. Still others accept whatever must neces-

5 This is Hesiod's story of Pandora ("All-Gifts"), adorned by the gods. Plotinus plays on Prometheus' name, which means "forethought."

sarily be endured, but in what are their own works they are able to be their own, living according to another legislation, that of the totality of real beings, and giving themselves to another ordinance. This order is woven together from all the rational principles and causes here, from the movements of souls, and from the laws that come from There. It is in harmony with those laws, takes its starting points from There, and weaves in what follows from them. It keeps unshaken whatever can preserve itself in accord with the condition of those beings, and leads the rest around as is natural. So the cause of some being placed here and others lying there is in those that have come down.

4.3.16 The punishments that come upon the wicked we should rightly attribute to the order, as leading things as they ought to go. But what about the things that happen to good people undeservedly, such as punishments, poverty or diseases? Are we to say they come about because of earlier wrongdoing? For these things are woven together and signified in advance, so that they too come about according to reason. Or perhaps they are not according to natural rational principles and were not among the primary aims, but follow as consequences of them. Suppose a building falls: whoever is under it is killed, whatever sort of person he is. Or suppose two things are moving in their order, or even one, and whatever falls in their way is wounded or trampled. Or perhaps this injustice is not bad for the one who suffers it and is useful for the weaving of the whole. Or perhaps it is not even unjust, since it has its justification in what came before. For we must not think that some things are coordinated while others are let loose to their own independent power. If things must happen according to causes and natural sequences, according to one rational principle and one order, we must think that the smaller things too are coordinated and woven in. The wrong done by one person to another is a wrong on the part of the one who did it, and the doer is not let off from blame. But as coordinated in the All, it is not a wrong in the All, nor toward the one who suffered it; it had to be so. And if the sufferer was good, these things end in good. For we must think that this

coordination is neither godless nor unjust, but exact in giving what is due. It keeps its causes hidden, however, and so gives those who do not know grounds for complaint.

4.3.17 One might reason from considerations like these that souls go from the intelligible first into the region of heaven. If heaven is the better part of the perceptible realm, it would border on the last of the intelligibles. So these heavenly bodies are the first to be ensouled from There, and they participate first, as being better suited to participate. What is earthy is last, less naturally fitted to participate in soul and far from the bodiless nature. All the souls shine upon heaven and give it, as it were, the most and the first of themselves, while the other things are illuminated by their later parts. Those that come further down illuminate things further below, but it is not better for them to go far forward. For there is something like a center, and around it a circle shining out from it, and around these another, light from light. Outside these there is no longer another circle of light; this one, lacking light of its own, needs a radiance from elsewhere. Let this be a wheel, or rather a sphere of this kind, which receives light from the third circle, since it borders on it, as much as that circle is illuminated. So the great light shines while remaining, and radiance passes from it in due proportion. The other lights shine along with it: some remain, while others are drawn further by the brilliance of what is illuminated. Then, since the things illuminated need more care, these souls leaned further down too and [paid no attention] to what was their own. They were like the pilots of storm-tossed ships, who throw themselves more and more into the care of their ships and, neglecting themselves, fail to notice that they are often in danger of being dragged down in the wreck. Then the souls were held fast, fettered in bonds of enchantment, held by their solicitude for nature. If each living being were like the All, a perfect and sufficient body in no danger of being affected, then the soul said to be present would not be present to it; it would give it life while remaining wholly in the world above.

4.3.18 Does soul use reasoning before it comes, and again after it has left? Or does reasoning arise here, when soul is already at a loss, filled with care and growing weaker? For needing reasoning is a falling short of intellect in its self-sufficiency. In the arts too, reasoning comes to craftsmen when they are at a loss; when there is no difficulty, the art takes charge and does the work. But if souls are without reasonings There, how could they still be rational? Perhaps, one might say, because they are able to examine a situation when they are at a loss in it. We must take reasoning in this sense. For if one takes reasoning to mean the disposition that always comes from Intellect and is in souls, a stable activity that is, as it were, a reflection, then they would use reasoning There too. Nor, I think, should we suppose that they use speech, either while they are in the intelligible or when they have bodies in heaven. In general, whatever souls discuss here because of needs or disputes would not exist There. Doing each thing in order and according to nature, they would neither give commands nor give advice, but they would know what comes from one another by understanding. Even here, after all, we know a great deal from people who are silent, through their eyes. There every body is pure and each is like an eye. Nothing is hidden or feigned: before one speaks to another, the other has seen and known. As for spirits and souls in the air, it is not absurd that they use voice, for they are living beings of that kind.

4.3.19 Are the indivisible and the divisible in the same thing, as if blended together? Or is the indivisible in another place and in another respect, while the divisible comes next in order, as it were, and is a different part of the soul, in the way we say that the reasoning part is one thing and the irrational part another? This would become clear once we grasp what we mean by each. He calls it "indivisible" without qualification, but "divisible" not without qualification: he says it "becomes divisible in bodies," not that it has already become so. So we must look at the nature of body and ask what kind of soul it needs in order to live, and what of soul must be present to the body everywhere, and to the

whole of it. The whole perceptive power, if it is to perceive through the whole body, arrives at being divided, for since it is everywhere it could be said to be divided. But since it appears whole everywhere, it could not be said to be divided completely. Rather, it "becomes divisible in bodies."[6] Someone might say that in the other senses it is not divided at all, but only in touch. We must reply that it is divided in the others too. [For] if what participates is a body, it must be divided in this way, though less than in touch. The same holds for the vegetative and growth power of soul. And if desire is located around the liver and spiritedness around the heart, the same argument applies to these too. But perhaps he does not include these in that blend; perhaps they come in another way, from one of the ingredients he did include. Reasoning and intellect, however, no longer give themselves to body. Their work is not accomplished through a bodily instrument, and body would be a hindrance if one made use of it in one's investigations. So the indivisible and the divisible are each something different. They are not blended into one; they form a whole made of parts, each of them pure and separate in its power. If, however, what becomes divisible in bodies also has indivisibility from the power above, then this same thing can be both indivisible and divisible, blended, as it were, from itself and from the power that came into it from above.

4.3.20 We should also consider whether these and the other so-called parts of the soul are in place, or whether these are not in place at all while the others are in place, and if so where, or whether none of them is. Suppose we do not mark off a place for each of the [parts] of the soul, putting none of them anywhere and making soul no more inside the body than outside. Then we shall make the body soulless, and we shall be at a loss to say where the works done through bodily organs are to take place. But suppose we give places to some and not to others. Then we shall seem not to put the ones we give no place to in us, so that not all our soul is in us.

6 "He" is Plato.

HOW SOUL IS PRESENT IN BODY

Soul is in body not as in a place or vessel, but as light is present to air.

In general, then, we must say that no part of the soul, and not the whole of it, is in the body as in a place. Place is a container, a container of body. Where each divided part of a body is, there that part is, so that no body is as a whole in any one place. But soul is not a body, and it is no more contained than containing. Nor is it in the body as in a vessel. The body would then be soulless, whether it contained soul as a vessel does or as a place does, unless soul were in it by some distribution from itself while gathered together into itself; and then whatever the vessel took in would be lost to soul. Place in the strict sense is bodiless and not body, so why would it need soul? And the body would be near the soul with its boundary, not with itself. Many other things too would tell against soul's being in body as in a place. For the place would always be carried around along with the body, and there will be something that carries its own place around. And even if place were an interval, the soul would all the more not be in the body as in a place. For an interval must be empty, and the body is not empty, though perhaps that in which the body is will be empty, so that the body is in the void.

Nor will soul be in the body as in a subject. What is in a subject is an affection of that in which it is, as color and shape are, and the soul is separable. Nor is it there as a part in a whole, for the soul is not a part of the body. Someone might say it is a part in the whole living being. In the first place, the same puzzle would remain: how is it in the whole? It is surely not there as wine is in the wine jar, or as the jar is, nor in the way something is in itself. Nor is it there as a whole in its parts, for it is ridiculous to call the soul the whole and the body its parts. Nor is it there as form in matter. Form in matter is inseparable, and it comes later, when matter is already there. But the soul makes the form in the matter and is something other than the form. If they say it is not the form that comes to be in matter but the sep-

arable form, then it is not yet clear how this form is in the body; "and the soul is separable." How is it, then, that everyone says the soul is in the body? Perhaps because the soul is not visible, while the body is. We see a body and understand that it is ensouled, because it moves and perceives, and so we say that it has a soul. So it would be consistent for us to say that the soul is in the body. But if the soul were visible and perceptible, and it were seen to envelop the whole on every side with life, reaching evenly all the way to the extremities, we would not say that the soul is in the body. We would say that what is not of that kind is in what has more authority, the contained in the containing, the flowing in what does not flow.

4.3.21 What then? If someone asks how it is present, without saying how himself, what shall we answer? And is it present the same way as a whole, or one part in one way and another in another? None of the ways of being "in something" mentioned so far seems to fit the soul's relation to the body. It is also said that soul is in the body as the pilot is in the ship. That is well said as regards the soul's being able to be separate, but it would hardly show the manner we are now looking for. As a passenger the soul would be in the body incidentally; but as a pilot, how? For the pilot is not in the whole ship, as soul is in the body.[7] Should we say, then, that it is in the body as the art is in its instruments, for instance in the tiller, if the tiller were ensouled, so that the pilot's art moving it skillfully were inside it? As things are, there is this difference, that the art is outside. Suppose, then, following the example of a pilot who had gone into the tiller, we posit that the soul is in the body as in a natural instrument, since it moves the body in this way in whatever it wishes to do. Would we get any further toward what we are looking for? Or shall we again be at a loss as to how it is in the instrument, even though this manner is different from the earlier ones? All the same, we still long to find out and to come closer.

4.3.22 Should we say, then, that when soul is present to body, it is present the way fire is present to air? For this too is present

7 The pilot comparison comes from Aristotle, *On the Soul* 413a8–9.

without being present. It is present throughout and yet mixes with nothing; it stands still while the air flows past. When the air passes out of the region where the light is, it goes away with nothing, and as long as it is under the light, it is lit. So it is right here too to say that the air is in the light rather than the light in the air. That is why Plato did well, in the case of the All, not to put the soul in the body but the body in the soul. He says that there is a part of the soul in which the body is, and a part in which there is no body: clearly the powers of soul that the body does not need. The same account applies to the other souls as well. Of the other powers, [then], we should not even say that the soul is present to the body. Those powers the body needs are present, and present without being settled in its parts or in the whole. For perception, the perceptive power is present to the whole of what perceives; for activities, a different power is present to a different part. Here is what I mean.

4.3.23 When the ensouled body is illuminated by soul, each part of it participates in a different way. Soul gives each organ the power suited to its work, according to the organ's fitness for that work. So the power in the eyes is said to be the power of sight, the power in the ears that of hearing, the power of taste is in the tongue, smell in the nostrils, and the power of touch is present everywhere. For this kind of perception the whole body is present to the soul as its organ. The organs of touch are primarily in the nerves, which also have the power to move the living being, and this kind of power gives itself to them there. Since the nerves start from the brain, they put the principle of perception and impulse, and in general of the whole living being, there, assuming that what will use the organs is present where the starting points of the organs clearly are. It is better to say that the starting point of the power's activity is there. For where the instrument was to be moved from, there the craftsman's power, the one suited to the instrument, had, as it were, to plant itself. Or rather, not the power, for the power is everywhere: the starting point of the activity is there, where the starting point of the instrument is.

The power of perceiving and the power of impulse belong to soul, which is perceptive and imaginative in nature, and they had reason above them, bordering on it from below. That is why the ancients placed reason at the top of the whole living being, in the head: not as being in the brain, but as being in this perceptive part, through which reason was seated in the brain. One part had to be given to body, to the part of body most receptive of its activity. The other part, which has no communion with body at all, had to commune with what was a form of soul, of a soul able to receive the apprehensions that come from reason. For the perceptive part is in a way discerning, the imaginative part is, as it were, intellectual, and impulse and appetite follow imagination and reason. So the reasoning part is there, not as in a place, but because what is there benefits from it. How the perceptive part is "there" has already been explained. As for the vegetative, growth and nutritive part, it is missing from no part of the body and nourishes it by the blood. The nourishing blood is in the veins, and the starting point of the veins and of the blood is in the liver. Since the power plants itself there, the desiring portion of the soul was assigned to dwell there. For what generates, nourishes and makes things grow must also desire these things. The thin, light, quick and pure blood [is] an instrument suited to spiritedness, and its source, where blood of this kind is separated off, has been made a fitting dwelling for the seething of spiritedness.

WHERE SOULS GO AFTER DEATH

Each soul goes where its disposition and the divine law send it; pure souls are with god.

4.3.24 But where will soul be when it has left the body? It will not be here, where there is nothing whatever to receive it, and it cannot stay with what is not naturally fitted to receive it, unless it has something of body that draws it, senseless as it is, to itself. It is in that other thing if it has one, and follows it to where that thing naturally is and comes to be. Since there are many places,

of every kind, the difference must come from the soul's disposition, and it must also come from the justice in the nature of things. For no one could ever escape what he ought to suffer for unjust deeds. The divine law is inescapable, and it holds within itself, all at once, the execution of what has already been judged. The one who is to suffer is himself carried, without knowing it, to what he ought to suffer. He is tossed about everywhere in his wanderings by an unsettled motion, but in the end, as if exhausted by his resistance, he falls into the place that befits him. His going there is a voluntary motion; his suffering is involuntary. The law also states how much and how long he must suffer. And again, the remission of the punishment and the power to escape from those places come together at once, by the power of the harmony that holds all things. Souls that have a body also perceive bodily punishments. But pure souls, which draw nothing of body after them in any way, will necessarily not be anywhere in body either. So if they exist, and are nowhere in body (for they have no body), then where being is, and what is, and the divine, in god, there such a soul will be: with these and in this. If you still ask where, you must ask where those things are. And when you ask, do not ask with your eyes, nor in the way one asks about bodies.

MEMORY

Plotinus asks which soul remembers, and which of its powers does the remembering.

4.3.25 Memory is likewise worth inquiring into. Can souls themselves remember once they have left these regions, or can some and not others? Do they remember everything, or some things? And do they remember forever, or for some time close to their departure? But if we are going to inquire rightly into these questions, we must grasp what it is that remembers. I do not mean what memory is, but in which of the things that are it naturally arises. What memory is has been said elsewhere and talked over many times, but what it is that is naturally fitted to remember

must be grasped more precisely. If memory is of something acquired, whether learned or experienced, then remembering would not arise either in beings that cannot be affected or in those [not] in time. So we must not attribute memory to god, nor to being and Intellect. For nothing comes to them, not even time; eternity surrounds being, and there is neither before nor after. Being always is as it is, in the same state, admitting no change. How could what is in the same state, always alike, be engaged in memory? It does not have, or acquire, another state after one it had before, or one thought after another, so as to be in one and remember another it had before. But what prevents it from knowing the changes of other things without changing itself, for instance the circuits of the cosmos?

Because it would then be following the changes of what alters, thinking first one thing and then another. And remembering is something other than thinking. We must not say that it remembers its own thoughts either. They did not come to it, so that it would have to hold on to them lest they go away; otherwise it would fear that its own being might go away from it. Nor, then, should we say that soul remembers in the way we say that remembering concerns what it has innately. Rather, since it is here, it has them and is not active according to them, especially when it has just arrived here. The ancients seem to apply "memory" and "recollection" to souls that are already actively using what they had. So this is a different kind of memory, and that is why time is not involved in memory spoken of in this way. But perhaps we are being easygoing about this, and not examining it closely. For one might perhaps ask whether this so-called recollection and memory belongs not to that soul but to another, dimmer one, or to the compound. If it belongs to another soul, when or how did that soul get it? If to the living being, when or how? So we must inquire what in us has memory, which is just what we were inquiring from the start. If it is the soul that remembers, which power or which part of it? If it is the living being, which some have thought is also what perceives, how does it remember, and what are we to call the living

being? And further, should we suppose that the same thing apprehends both perceptions and thoughts, or a different thing each?

4.3.26 Now if the compound is what is involved in actual perceptions, perceiving must be something of this kind. That is why it is called common to both, like boring or weaving: in perceiving, the soul is in the place of the craftsman and the body in the place of the instrument. The body is affected and serves, while the soul receives the body's impression, or the impression that comes through the body, or the judgment it has made from the body's affection. On this view perception could be called a common work, but memory would not have to belong to the common thing, since the soul has already received the impression and either keeps it or loses it. Unless, that is, one inferred that remembering too is common from the fact that the blending of our bodies makes us good at remembering or forgetful. But even so, the body could be said to be a hindrance or not a hindrance, and remembering would be no less the soul's. And as for things learned, how will the common thing, and not the soul, be what remembers them? If the living being is a compound in the sense of being something different made out of both, then in the first place it is absurd to say the living being is neither body nor soul. For the living being will not be something different through both of them changing, nor through their being blended so that the soul is in the living being only potentially. And even so, remembering will be no less the soul's, just as in a blend of wine and honey, whatever sweetness there is will come from the honey. What, then, if the soul itself does [not] remember, but, because it is in body and not pure but, as it were, qualified, it can take on the imprints of perceptible things, since it [has], as it were, a seat in the body for receiving them and not letting them flow past?

But first, the imprints are not magnitudes. They are not like seal impressions, resistances or stampings, since there is no pushing, and it is not as in wax. Even in the case of perceptible things, the manner is like thinking. In the case of thoughts, what

could be called the resistance? Or what need is there of body, or of bodily quality to go with it? Moreover, the soul must have memory of its own movements, for instance of things it desired and did not enjoy, where the object of desire never reached the body. How could the body speak about things that never came to it? Or how will the soul remember, together with the body, what the body is not naturally fitted to know at all? We must say instead that some things, those that come through the body, end in the soul, while others belong to the soul alone, if the soul is to be something and to have a nature and a work of its own. If so, then it has desire, and memory of the desire, and so of attaining and of not attaining, since its nature is not one of the things that flow. Otherwise we shall grant it neither self-awareness nor consciousness, nor any power of putting together and, as it were, understanding. For it is not that it has none of these in its nature and acquires them in bodies. Rather, it has certain activities whose works need instruments in order to be accomplished. For some of these it comes bringing the powers; for others, the activities as well. As for memory, the body is actually a hindrance to it. Even now, when things are added, there is forgetting, while with taking away and purification memory often comes back up. Since memory is a kind of remaining, the nature of body, which moves and flows, must be the cause of forgetting, not of memory. That is also how the river of Lethe, Forgetfulness, could be understood. So let this experience belong to soul.

4.3.27 But to which soul? To the one we call more divine, by which we are ourselves, or to the other one, which comes from the whole? Or should we say that there are memories belonging to each, some private and some shared? When the two are together, all their memories are together. When they have separated, if both should exist and remain, each holds its own memories longer and the other's for a short time. At any rate, the image of Heracles in Hades remembers all that was done in his life, for the life was above all the image's own. And I think we should regard this image as what we are. The other souls, being the compound, still had nothing more to tell than the

things of this life. [For] they too, having become the compound, knew these things, or perhaps something to do with justice. But what Heracles himself, without the image, said, we are not told.[8] What, then, would the other soul say, once freed and alone? The soul that drags something of body after it would tell of everything the man did or suffered. But as time goes on after death, memories of other things would appear from earlier lives, so that it would even let some of the recent memories go, holding them of little account. For having become purer of body, it will also go back over things it did not hold in memory here. And if it leaves a body after having been in another, it will tell of the life outside the body, and will say that it is the one it has just let go, and it will tell many things of earlier lives too. But with time it will always be forgetting many of the things that came to it from outside. And the soul that has become alone, what will it remember? No: we must first examine which power of the soul it is that remembering belongs to.

4.3.28 Is it the power by which we perceive and by which we learn? Or is it also the part by which we desire what we desire, and, for what angers us, the spirited part? Someone will say that it isn't one thing that enjoys and another that remembers what the first enjoyed. At any rate, the desiring part is moved again toward what it enjoyed when the object of desire is seen, and plainly that happens by memory. Otherwise, why isn't it moved when something else is seen, or moved but not in this way? What, then, prevents us from giving it perception of such things as well, and in turn giving desire to the perceptive part, and so on all round, so that each is named after what predominates in it? Or rather, each has perception in a different way. For instance, it was sight that saw, not the desiring part. The desiring part was moved by the perception through a kind of transmission, not so as to say what sort of perception it was, but so as to be affected without being conscious of it. So too with anger: sight saw the wrongdoer, and anger rose up. It is as when a shep-

8 In the *Odyssey* (11.601–604) Odysseus meets the image of Heracles in Hades, while Heracles himself feasts with the gods.

herd sees a wolf at the flock, and the dog, without seeing it with its own eyes, is roused by the smell or the noise. So the desiring part did enjoy, and from this it keeps a trace of what happened, not as a memory but as a disposition and an affection. It is something else that saw the enjoyment and holds in itself the memory of what happened. The evidence is that memory often does not know what the desiring part has had a share in, although it would know if memory were in that part.

4.3.29 Shall we, then, go and assign memory to the perceptive faculty, so that the same thing in us will be what remembers and what perceives? But if the image will remember too, as was said, the perceptive faculty will be double. And if what remembers is not the perceptive faculty but something else, whatever it may be, what remembers will be double. Further, if the perceptive faculty is to remember what we have learned, it will also be the faculty of our thoughts. Or rather, there must be a different faculty for each. Shall we, then, posit a common faculty of apprehension and give it memory of both? Well, if it is one and the same thing that apprehends both sensibles and intelligibles, there might perhaps be something in that. But if it is divided in two, there would be two all the same. And if we give both to each of the two souls, there would be four. In general, what necessity is there that we remember with what we perceive with, and that both come about through the same power? Or that we remember our thoughts with what we think with? The same people are not the best at thinking and at remembering. People who make equal use of perception do not remember equally. Some have keen perception, while others, who are not sharp at perceiving, have good memories. But then again, if each must be something different, and something else is to remember what perception perceived before, that thing too must have perceived what it is going to remember. Or rather, nothing will prevent the percept from being a mental image for what is going to remember, and memory and retention from belonging to the faculty of imagination, which is something different. For this is where perception ends up, and when percep-

tion is no longer there, the thing seen is present to this faculty. If, then, the imagination of something already absent is in this faculty, it is already remembering. If the image stays for a short time, the memory is short; if it stays long, people have better memories, since this power is stronger and does not easily change and so let the memory be shaken off. Memory, then, belongs to the faculty of imagination, and remembering will be of things of this kind. We will say that people differ in memory either because the powers themselves differ, or through practice or lack of it, or because of bodily mixtures that are present or not, and that alter us or not, and that, as it were, cause disturbance. But that is for another place.

4.3.30 And what about memory of our thoughts? Does the faculty of imagination remember these too? Well, if imagination accompanies every act of thinking, then perhaps, since this imagination is like an image of the thought, the memory of what was known would come about through its remaining. If not, we must look for something else. Perhaps it is the reception into the faculty of imagination of the verbal expression that accompanies the thought. For the thought is without parts and, not yet having as it were come forth to the outside, it stays within unnoticed. But the verbal expression unfolds it and draws it out of the thought into the faculty of imagination, and so displays the thought as in a mirror; and that is how it is apprehended, how it stays, and how it is remembered. That is why, although the soul is always moving toward thinking, we apprehend it only when it comes to be in this faculty. For thinking is one thing and the apprehension of thinking another. We are always thinking, but we do not always apprehend it. This is because what receives does not receive only acts of thinking but, from the other side, perceptions as well.

4.3.31 But if memory belongs to the faculty of imagination, and each of the two souls has been said to remember, there are two faculties of imagination. Now when the souls are apart, let each have its own. But when they are in the same place, in us, how are there two, and in which of them does memory arise? If in

both, our images will always be double. For of course it is not that one soul's faculty images intelligibles and the other's sensibles: in that case there would be two living beings with nothing whatever in common. If, then, it arises in both, what is the difference? And then how is it that we don't notice? Or rather: when the one soul is in accord with the other, the two faculties of imagination are not separate either. The faculty of the better soul prevails, and the image becomes one, as if a shadow followed the other, or a small light slipped in under a larger one. But when there is conflict and discord, the other faculty too becomes evident on its own; while it is within the other it goes unnoticed, because the duality of the souls as a whole goes unnoticed. For the two have come together into one, and the one rides upon the other. So the one soul saw everything, and when it departs it takes some things with it and lets go of others that belong to the other soul. It is as when we have kept company with inferior companions and then exchange them for others: we remember little of the first, but more if they were better people.

4.3.32 But what about friends, children, wife? Our country, and the things that even a good person would not be out of place remembering? Or rather, the one soul remembers each of these with emotion, while the good person would hold the memories of them without emotion. For perhaps the emotion was in that lower soul from the beginning, and the good emotions in the excellent soul only insofar as it had something in common with the other. It is fitting that the worse soul should aspire to the memory of the higher soul's activities too, especially when it is itself good; for one can become better both from the start and through the education given by the better soul. But the better soul ought to be glad to forget what comes from the worse. For even when the one is excellent, the other can be worse by nature, and held in check by force by the first. So the more it hurries upward, the more it forgets, unless perhaps its whole life even here has been such that its memories are only of better things. For even here it is good to stand apart from human con-

cerns; necessarily, then, from the memories of them too. So if someone called the good soul forgetful, he would be right, in this sense. For it flees from multiplicity, and gathers the many into one, letting go of the unlimited. In this way it is not weighed down with many things, but light and by itself. Even here, when it wants to be There, it lets go of everything else while still here; so it takes few things from here with it There too. And when it is in heaven, more. And that Heracles might speak of his own deeds of valor. But the other one, who considers even these small, who has been transferred to a holier place and come to be in the intelligible world, and who has prevailed beyond Heracles in the contests, the kind that the wise contend in—[what will he remember?]

IV.4 Problems About the Soul II

Περὶ ψυχῆς ἀποριῶν δεύτερον
Plotinus asks what souls remember after death and whether stars have memory, then explores sympathy, magic and prayer.
no. 28 in order of writing

4.4.1 What, then, will the soul say, and what will it remember, when it has come to be in the intelligible world and has arrived at that being? Or rather, it follows that we should say it contemplates those things and is active about them, the things it is among; otherwise it would not be There at all. So it remembers nothing of things here: for instance, that it practiced philosophy, or even that while it was here it contemplated the things There. But suppose that when one directs one's thinking at something, one can do nothing other than think and contemplate it; and that having thought is not included in the thinking, but one might say it later, if it so happens—and that already belongs to someone who is changing. Then someone who is purely in the intelligible could not have memory of what once happened to him here. And if, as seems to be the case, all thinking is timeless, since the things there are in eternity and not in time, then it is impossible for There to be memory There—not just of things here, but of anything at all. Rather, each thing is present; for there is no going through, and no passing from one thing to another. What then? Will there be no division from above into species, or ascent from below to the universal and the higher? Let there be none for what is above, since it is [all]

together in activity; but why should there not be for the soul that is There?

What, then, prevents this soul too from making a single, all-at-once apprehension of things that are all at once? As of some one thing together? Or rather, as of many, all its acts of thinking together. For since the spectacle is varied, the thinking [must] come about varied and manifold at once, and the acts of thinking be many—like the many perceptions of a face when the eyes, the nose and the rest are seen at once. But what about when it divides and unfolds some one thing? Or rather, it is already divided in Intellect, and this kind of thing is more like a fixing of attention on it. And the prior and posterior in the Forms, since it is not in time, will not make the thinking of the prior and posterior temporal either. For there is prior and posterior in order too. The order of a plant, starting from the roots and going up to the top, holds its prior and posterior in no other way than in order, for someone who contemplates the whole at once. But when it looks at one thing and then has many, indeed all, how did it have the first, and then those that follow? Or rather, the single power was one in such a way as to be many in something else, and not all in a single act of thinking. For the activities are not one at a time but always all together, from a power that stands still; it is in other things that they come to be. For that other thing was already able, as not being [the] one, to receive into itself the nature of the many, which were not there before.

4.4.2 So much for that. But how will it remember itself? Or rather, it will not have memory even of itself, nor that it is itself the one contemplating, Socrates, say, or that it is intellect or soul. In answer to this, let us recall that even here, when someone contemplates, and especially when the contemplation is vivid, he does not then turn back to himself in his thinking. He possesses himself, but his activity is directed at that object, and he becomes it, offering himself as matter, as it were, being formed according to what he sees, and being himself, at that moment, only potentially. So he is actually himself, then, when he thinks nothing. Or rather, if he is just himself, he is empty of

everything. But if he is himself such as to be all things, then when he thinks himself he thinks all things at once. So such a one, seeing himself by the apprehension and activity directed at himself, has all things included in him; and by the activity directed at all things, he has himself included. But if it does this, it changes its acts of thinking, which we ourselves did not allow earlier. Or rather, we must say that in Intellect things stay the same, while in the soul, which lies as it were at the outermost edges of the intelligible, this can happen, since it can also move further inward. For if something comes to be around what remains, it must differ from what remains, and not remain in the same way. Or rather, we should not even say there is change when it passes from its own contents to itself, or from itself to the others; for it is all things, and both are one. But the soul, when it is in the intelligible, undergoes this "one thing after another" in relation to itself and what is in it? Or rather, when it is purely in the intelligible, it too has unchangeability. For it too is what it is. When it is in that region, it must come into union with Intellect, if indeed it has turned back; for once turned, it has nothing in between. Having come to Intellect, it is fitted to it, and once fitted it is united—not destroyed, but both are one and two. Being in this state, then, it would not change, but would be unalterably directed toward thinking, with self-awareness at the same time, as having become one and the same with the intelligible.

MEMORY AND THE SOUL'S DESCENT

Turning away from unity, the soul gains memory of itself and moves downward.

4.4.3 But when it comes out from There and cannot bear the unity, but embraces its own self and wants to be different, and as it were puts its head out, it acquires, it seems, memory of itself. Memory of the things There still holds it back from falling; memory of things here carries it down here; memory of things in heaven holds it there. In general, it is, and becomes, what it

remembers. For remembering was either thinking or imagining, and imagination comes to it not by possessing but according to what it sees and how it is disposed. And if it sees sensible things, it goes as deep as the amount of them it sees. For because it has all things in a secondary way, it does not become all things so perfectly; and being a boundary and placed in such a position, it moves in both directions.

4.4.4 There, then, it sees the Good too, through Intellect; for the Good is not shut off so that it cannot pass through to the soul, since there is no body in between to hinder it. And yet even when there are bodies in between, the first things often reach the third. But if the soul gives itself to the things below, it has what it wanted in proportion to its memory and imagination. That is why memory, even when it is of the best things, is not the best thing. We must take memory to be present not only in the kind of awareness, as it were, that one is remembering, but also when one is disposed according to earlier experiences or sights. For it can happen that someone, without being conscious that he has something, has it within himself more strongly than if he knew it. For if he knew it, he might perhaps have it as something other, being himself other; but not knowing that he has it, he runs the risk of being what he has. And it is just this experience that makes the soul fall further. But when it withdraws from the region There, it brings back memories that it had in some way even There; the activity of those things had kept the memory out of sight. For they were not lying there as imprints, in which case what happens might perhaps be absurd; it was the power that was later released into activity. So when the activity in the intelligible stopped, it saw what the soul had seen before it came to be There.

4.4.5 What then? Does this same power, by which we remember, now bring those things too into activity? Or rather: if we did not see them themselves, it is by memory; if we saw them themselves, it is by that with which we saw them There too. For this is awakened by whatever awakens it, and it is this that sees, concerning the things we have spoken of. One must not make pro-

nouncements by conjecture, or by a syllogism that takes its principles from elsewhere. About the intelligibles, as is said, even those of us who are here can speak by that same thing which has the power to contemplate the things There. For we must, as it were, awaken that same thing and so see the things There—as if someone, lifting his eye from some high lookout, were to see what none of those who had not climbed with him could see. So by this argument memory seems to begin from heaven, when the soul has already left the regions There. When it has come from here and settled in heaven, then, it is no wonder that it has memory of many things here, of the kind mentioned, and that souls recognize many of those they knew before, if indeed they must have bodies around them in similar shapes. And even if they changed their shapes and made them spherical, they would recognize one another through their characters and the individuality of their ways; there is nothing absurd in that. Let them have put away their emotions; nothing prevents their characters from remaining. And if they could also converse, they would recognize one another that way too. But when they come down from the intelligible, how? Or rather, they will stir up memory of the same things, though less than those other souls; for they will have other things to remember, and a longer time will have brought complete forgetting of many. But if they turn to the sensible world and fall into becoming here, what will their way of remembering be? Or rather, they need not fall into the whole depth. Once in motion, they can stop when they have gone forward to some point; and nothing prevents them from coming back out before they reach the lowest region of becoming.

DO THE STARS REMEMBER?

The heavenly bodies and Zeus need no memory, since they live a single unchanging life.

4.4.6 Now about souls that move about and change, one could say that they also remember, since memory is of what has happened

and is past. But those whose lot is to remain in the same state—what would they remember? The argument looks for memories in the soul of the stars, all the others and in particular the sun and moon; in the end it will go on to the Soul of the All, and will even venture to pry into the memories of Zeus himself. And in this search it will consider what their discursive thoughts and reasonings are, if they have any. Now if they neither search nor are at a loss—for they need nothing, and do not learn what they did not know before—what reasonings, what syllogisms, what discursive thoughts could they have? Nor do they have ideas and devices about human affairs by which they would manage our affairs, or the things of earth in general. The good order they bring to the All comes about in another way.

4.4.7 What then? Do they not remember that they saw the god? Or rather, they always see him; and as long as they see, they surely cannot say they have seen him. That would be the experience of those who had stopped. What about this: don't they remember that yesterday they went round the earth, and last year? Or that they were alive yesterday, and long ago, and ever since they have been alive? Or rather, they live forever, and "forever" is one and the same. The "yesterday" and "last year" of their motion would be as if someone were to split up a movement made in a single stride into many, making the one into one and another and many. For there too there is one motion; it is with us that many are measured, and different days, because nights come between. But there, where there is one day, how could there be many? So there is no "last year" either. But the interval covered is not the same but different, and the segment of the zodiac is different. So why won't it say, "I have passed this one, and now I am in another"? And if it also watches over human affairs, how will it not see the changes in them too, and that now there are different people? And if so, then also that before there were others, and other things; and so there is memory too.

4.4.8 Or rather, one need not store in memory everything one observes, nor do the merely incidental accompaniments need to

come into imagination. And in the case of things of which one's thinking and knowledge are clearer, if these were to occur in a perceptible way, one need not set aside one's knowledge of them and direct attention to the particular perceptible—unless one is actually managing something—since the particulars are included in the knowledge of the whole. Let me explain each point. First, that it is not necessary to store up what one sees. When it makes no difference, or the perception has nothing at all to do with oneself, having been moved involuntarily by the differences in what is seen, the perception alone undergoes this, and the soul does not take it inside, since the difference matters to it neither for need nor for any other benefit. And when its activity is directed at other things, it would not tolerate memory of such things at all once they are past, when it is not even aware of the perception while they are present. Again, that the wholly incidental things need not come into imagination—and that if they did, it would not be so as to keep and observe them, but the imprint of such a thing does not give self-awareness—one could understand by taking what I say in this way. I mean: if it were never one's primary aim to cut through this air and then that in moving from place to place, or even more to pass through it, then there would be no observation of it, nor any notion of it, as we walk. So too with a journey: if covering this particular stretch were not our primary aim, and we had to make our way through the air, we would not care at what stade of the earth we were, or how far we had come. And if we had to move not for such and such a time but simply to move, and did not relate any other action to time, we would not have kept one time and another in memory. It is well known that when discursive thought holds the whole of what is being done, and trusts that it will certainly be done this way, it would no longer pay attention to each step as it happens.

Further, when someone is always doing the same thing, it would be pointless for him to keep observing each detail of the same thing. So suppose the stars, as they move, are doing their own work and not moving in order to pass the places they pass;

their work is neither the sight of what they pass by nor the passing; the passing is incidental, and their mind is on other, greater things; what they pass through is always the same; and the time spent in a given stretch is not taken into account, even if it were divided. Then they need not have memory of the places they pass, or of the times, 〈...〉 and having the same life, since their local motion too is around the same point, so that their movement is not local but vital: the movement of a single living being active toward itself, at rest with respect to what is outside, but in motion by the life within it, which is eternal. Again, if one likened their motion to a dance: if it were a dance that stops at some point, the whole, completed from beginning to end, would be complete, while each part would be incomplete. But if it is a dance that goes on forever, it is forever complete. And if it is forever complete, it has no time in which it will be completed, nor any place; so in this way it would have no aspiration either; so it will not measure in terms of time or place; so there is no memory of these things either. If, however, the stars themselves live a blessed life, gazing at life in their own souls, then by this inclination of their souls toward one, and by the illumination from them into the whole heaven, they would, like strings on a lyre moved in sympathy, sing a melody in a kind of natural harmony. If the whole heaven and its parts moved in this way toward itself, the heaven itself moving and its parts each in a different way toward the same goal, their positions too being different, then our argument would be even more right, since the life of all would be even more one and alike.

4.4.9 But Zeus, who orders all things, manages them and arranges them, who has forever a kingly soul and a kingly intellect, providence for how things should come to be and oversight of them as they come to be, who governs in order and has already revolved and completed many cycles—how could he, in all this, not have memory of how many cycles there have been and of what kind? And as he devises how they will come about hereafter, putting things together and reasoning, he would [how

could he not] be the one with the best memory of all, just as he is the wisest craftsman. Now memory of the cycles would by itself raise a great difficulty: what their number would be, and whether he would know it. For if the number is finite, he will give the All a beginning in time; and if it is unlimited, he will not know how many his works are.[1] Or rather, he will know that it is one, and with one life forever. For it is unlimited in this way, and he will know the one not by knowledge from outside but in actual fact, since what is unlimited in this way is always with him—or rather, it follows along with him and is contemplated by a knowledge that is not acquired from outside. For just as he knows the unlimitedness of his own life, so too he knows his activity toward the All as one, but not that it is toward the All.

4.4.10 But the ordering principle is double: one we call the Demiurge, the other the Soul of the All; and when we say "Zeus" we sometimes refer to the craftsman and sometimes to the ruling principle of the All. In the case of the craftsman, then, we must remove entirely the before and after, and grant him one life, unchanging and timeless. But the life of the cosmos, which has the ruling principle within itself, still calls for an account. If, then, this life too does not consist in reasoning, nor in searching for what it should do—for what must be has already been found and set in order, without having been set in order: the things set in order were what comes to be, while what produces them is the order itself; and this is the activity of a soul that depends on an understanding that remains, of which the order in it is an image— then since that understanding does not change, this soul too cannot change. For it does not sometimes look There and sometimes not; if it fell away, it would be at a loss. For there is one soul and one work. The ruling principle is one and always rules; it is not sometimes ruling and sometimes ruled. Where would the plurality come from that could give rise to conflict or perplexity? And what governs, being one, always wills the same thing. Why would it will one thing and then another, only to be at a loss among several? And yet even if, being one, it changed, it

1 "A kingly soul and a kingly intellect" is said of Zeus in Plato, *Philebus* 30d.

would not be at a loss. It is not because the All has many species and parts, and oppositions among the parts, that it would be at a loss how to arrange it. For it does not begin from the last things, nor from the parts, but from the first; and beginning from the first, it proceeds on an unobstructed path to all things and orders them. It rules because it remains in one and the same work, and is itself the same. But if it planned now one thing and now another, where would the "other" come from? Then it would be at a loss as to what to do, and its work would be weakened, as it fell into uncertainty about acting by going through reasonings.

GOVERNING LIKE NATURE, NOT LIKE A DOCTOR

The ruling principle of the All governs without reasoning, as nature does.

4.4.11 For it is like the management of a single living being: one kind works from outside and from the parts, another from inside and from the principle. A doctor begins from outside, goes part by part, is often at a loss, and deliberates; but nature begins from the principle and has no need of deliberation. And the management of the All, and its manager, in ruling, must not be in the condition of a doctor, but like nature. The simplicity there is far greater, insofar as all things are included as parts of one living being. For one nature rules all the natures, and they follow, attached to it and hanging from it, as though they had grown out of it—as the nature in the branches has grown out of that of the whole plant. What reasoning, then, what counting, what memory could there be, when understanding is always present, active and ruling, and governing in the same way? It is not because what comes to be is varied and different that what makes it must lead by following the changes of what comes to be. The more varied what comes to be, the more what makes it remains the same. Even in each single living being, many things come about according to nature, and not all at once: the stages of life, the growths that appear in their time—horns, beards,

breasts—the prime of life, the generation of other beings. The earlier rational principles are not destroyed; others come in addition. This is clear also from the fact that in the offspring, in turn, there is the same, complete rational principle. It is right, then, to ascribe the same understanding to the All, and to say that it is universal, the stable understanding, as it were, of the cosmos: manifold and varied, and yet simple, the understanding of one supremely great living being, not altered by its multiplicity, but one rational principle, all things at once. For if it were not all things, the understanding would not be that of the whole, but of what comes later and of the parts.

4.4.12 But perhaps someone will say that this kind of work belongs to nature, and that if there is understanding in the All, there must also be reasonings and memories. This is how people talk who place understanding in not understanding, and who believe that seeking to understand is the same as understanding. For what else would reasoning be than the aspiration to find understanding and a true account that hits upon what is? The reasoner is like someone playing the lyre to learn lyre-playing, or practicing to acquire a skill, and in general like a learner aiming at knowledge. The reasoner seeks to learn just what the person of understanding already has; so understanding lies in what has come to rest. The reasoner himself testifies to this: when he finds what is needed, he stops reasoning, and he has come to rest by arriving at understanding. So if we rank the ruling principle of the All with learners, we must assign it reasonings, perplexities and memories, as it compares the past with the present and the future. But if we rank it with the one who knows, we must think that its understanding consists in a rest that has reached its goal. Then, if it knows the future—and it is absurd to say it does not—why will it not also know how it will be? And if it knows how it will be, what further need is there to reason, and to compare the past with the present? And its knowledge of the future, if we grant that it has it, would not be the kind that seers have, but the kind that makers themselves have, who are confident that a thing will be.

This is the same as the knowledge of those who are masters of everything, for whom nothing is doubtful or disputed; and those whose opinion is firmly fixed keep it. The understanding about the future, then, is the same as that about the present, in being stable; and this lies outside reasoning. But if it does not know the future things it will make, it will not make them knowingly, nor looking to anything, but will make whatever comes along; and that is the same as at random. So it remains fixed in that according to which it will make. But if it remains fixed in that according to which it will make, it will make in no other way than as the model it has within itself is. So it will make in one single way, and the same way: not now one way and later another—or else what is to prevent it from failing? If what is made turns out differently, it has indeed turned out differently not of itself, but as a servant of rational principles; and these come from the maker; so it has followed the rational principles in their sequence. So the maker is in no way forced to wander, or be at a loss, or have trouble, as some have thought that governing the universe is a burdensome business. For having trouble, it seems, meant taking on tasks that are not one's own—that is, tasks one does not master. But where one is master, and the only master, what would one need except oneself and one's own will? And this is the same as one's own understanding; for in such a being, will is understanding. Such a being, then, needs nothing in order to make, since its understanding is not borrowed either; it uses nothing brought in from outside. So it needs neither reasoning nor memory, for these are brought in from outside.[2]

NATURE, THE LAST IMAGE

Nature is the last reflection of understanding; it makes without knowing or imagining.

4.4.13 But how will such understanding differ from what is called nature? Or rather: understanding is first, nature last. Nature is a

reflection of understanding, and, being the last part of soul, it has the last glimmer of the rational principle shining in it—as if in thick wax an imprint went right through to the surface on the far side, distinct on the upper side and a weak trace on the lower. That is why nature does not know, but only makes. It gives what it has to what comes next, involuntarily, and its giving (to the bodily and material) is a making—as something that has been heated gives its own form, heat, to what touches it next, making it hot to a lesser degree. That is why nature does not even have imagination. Thinking is superior to imagination; and imagination is between the imprint of nature and thinking. For nature has no apprehension or comprehension of anything, while imagination has comprehension of what comes from outside, since it lets the one who has the image know what he has experienced. But thinking generates of itself, and is active from the very source of its activity. Intellect, then, possesses; the Soul of the All received, and does so forever, and this is its life, and what appears in it at each moment is the comprehension of a soul that thinks. What is imaged from it into matter is nature, in which—or even before it—the real beings come to a stop; and these are the last of the intelligible, for what comes from here on are imitations. But nature acts on matter and is acted upon, while the soul that is before it and near it acts and is not acted upon, and the one still higher does not act on bodies or on matter.

4.4.14 As for the bodies said to come to be by nature: the elements are just that. But are animals and plants such that they have nature as it were lying beside them? Is it as with light: when it has gone, the air has nothing of it, but the light is apart, as it were, and the air apart, as though not mixed with it? Or is it as with fire and what has been heated, where, when the fire has gone, some heat remains that is different from the heat in the fire, an affection of what was heated? For the shape that nature gives to what it has molded we must take to be a form different

2 Probably the Epicureans, who held that governing the world would be a troublesome burden incompatible with divine happiness.

from nature itself. But whether the body has something else besides this, something between this and nature itself, must be investigated. What difference there is between nature and the understanding in the All that we spoke of has been stated.

4.4.15 But here is a difficulty with regard to everything just said. If eternity is bound up with Intellect and time with soul—for we say that time has its existence in relation to the activity of soul and from it—then since time is divided and has a past, how would the activity not be divided too, and, turning back to the past, create memory even in the Soul of the All? For again, we [must] place sameness in eternity and otherness in time; otherwise eternity and time will be the same, if we do not allow change even to the activities of soul. Shall we say, then, that our souls, which admit change, including deficiency, are in time, while the Soul of the whole generates time but is not in time? Well, let it be not in time. [But] what is it that makes it generate time and not eternity? Or rather: it is because the things it generates are not eternal but contained by time. For souls are not in time either; certain of their affections are, and their products. Souls are eternal, and time is later, and what is in time is less than time; for time must contain what is in time, just as, he says, with what is in place and in number.[3]

4.4.16 But if in it there is this after that, and the prior and posterior of the things it makes, and if it makes in time, then it also inclines toward the future; and if so, toward the past too. Or rather, the prior and the past are in the things it makes, while in it nothing is past; all the rational principles are together, as has been said. In the things made, things are not simultaneous, since they are not together either; whereas in the rational principles they are together—hands and feet, for instance, as they are in the rational principle; in sensible things they are apart. And yet there too there is apartness, in another way; so there is priority too, in another way. Or rather, one might say the apartness is by otherness; but how is there priority, unless what

3 "He" is Aristotle, *Physics* IV.12: what is in time is contained by time, as what is in place is contained by place and what is in number by number.

orders presides over them? And presiding, it will say "this after that." For why will all things not be together? Or rather: if what orders and the order were different, it would be, as it were, speaking. But if what presides is the primary order, it no longer speaks, but only makes this after that. For if it speaks, it speaks looking to an order, and so it will be other than the order. How, then, is it the same? Because what orders is not matter and form: Soul is form alone, and power, and activity second after Intellect. The "this after that" is in the things, which cannot be all at once. For such a soul too is something venerable, like a circle fitted to its center, expanding immediately after the center, an extension without extension. For this is how each stands: if one ranked the Good as center, one would rank Intellect as an unmoving circle, and Soul as a circle that moves—moved by aspiration. For Intellect has and embraces at once, while Soul aspires to what is beyond. And the sphere of the All, having a soul that aspires in that way, moves in the way it is its nature to aspire. And it is its nature, as a body, to aspire to what it is outside of; and that means embracing it and going around it in every direction with itself. So, in a circle.

4.4.17 But how is it that in us the soul's acts of thinking and its rational principles are not like this, but here the "later" is in time, and investigations go in this way? Is it because many things rule and are moved, and no one thing prevails? Or also because one thing after another comes in response to need and the present situation, not determined in itself but always in relation to something else outside? Hence the decision differs, and is suited to the moment, when the need is present. And this happens from outside, then that. And because many things rule, there must also be many imaginings, acquired and new, one from one thing and another from another, getting in the way of each one's own movements and activities. For when the desiring part is moved, the imagining of the object comes, like a perception that announces and reports the affection, demanding that we follow along and get what is desired; and what receives it is necessarily left perplexed, whether it follows along and

provides or resists. Anger too, when stirred, calls us to retaliation and does the same; so do the body's needs; and the affections make us hold one opinion and then another. So does ignorance of what is good, and the soul's having nothing definite to say as it is pulled in every direction; and from the mixture of these come still other opinions.

But does even the best part itself hold changing opinions? Or rather, the perplexity and the changing of opinions belong to the common part. From the best part comes right reason, given to the common part, and weak because it is in the mixture, not by its own nature. It is as in an assembly in great uproar: the best of the counselors speaks but does not prevail; the worse prevail, making an uproar and shouting, while he sits quietly, powerless, defeated by the uproar of the worse. In the worst man the common part is in charge, and the man is made up of everything, like a bad constitution. In the middling man it is like a city where something good might prevail, a democratic constitution that is not unmixed. In the better man, life is aristocratic, since he is already fleeing the common part of the human being and giving [himself] to the better. In the best, the one who separates himself, one thing rules, and order comes from it to the rest—as if there were a double city, one above, and one of those below, ordered according to what is above. But that in the Soul of the All there is what is one and the same and uniform, while in the others it is otherwise, and why, has been said. So much for that.

PAIN, PLEASURE AND DESIRE

Affections belong to the body qualified by a trace of soul; soul only perceives them.

4.4.18 As to whether the body has anything of its own, and lives, with soul present, already possessing something proper to it, or whether what it has is nature, and this is what consorts with the body, [must be considered]. Or rather, the body itself, in which there are soul and nature, must not be like what is soulless, nor

like air that has been lit up, but like air that has been heated. The body of an animal, and of a plant, has as it were a shadow of soul, and feeling pain and enjoying bodily pleasures belong to this kind of body; but to us its pain and this kind of pleasure come as a knowledge that is itself unaffected. By "us" I mean the other soul, since this kind of body is not alien to us but ours; that is why we care about it, as being ours. For we are not this body, nor are we free of it. It is attached to us and hangs from us; we are what is in control, and it is ours in a different way, but ours all the same. That is why we care when it feels pleasure and pain—the more so the weaker we are, and the less we separate ourselves.

But we regard this as the most precious part of us, and as the human being, and we as it were sink into it. We must say that affections of this kind do not belong to soul at all, but to a body of this kind, and to something common and composite. For when something is one, it is as it were self-sufficient in itself. What could body alone suffer, being soulless? For when it is divided, it is not the body that is affected but the unity in it. And soul alone is not affected even by this; being in this state, it escapes everything. But when two want to be one, using a oneness brought in from outside, then in not being allowed to be one they reasonably have the origin of pain. I don't mean two in the sense of two bodies, since these have one nature. I mean when one nature wants to associate with another, of a different kind, and the worse receives something from the better but cannot receive that itself, only a trace of it. And so it becomes two and one, having come to be between what it was and what it could not have, and it has bred trouble for itself, since the association it has been allotted is perishable and not secure, but is always borne in opposite directions. So, swinging between down and up, when it is borne downward it announces its pain, and when it is borne upward, [its pleasure, on account of] its aspiration to association.

4.4.19 This, then, is what is meant by pleasure and pain. Pain is the awareness of a body being drawn away as it is deprived of

the image of soul; pleasure is the awareness of the living being as the image of soul is fitted back into the body again. So the affection is there, in the body, while the awareness belongs to the perceptive soul, which perceives it in the neighborhood and reports it to that in which the perceptions end. And it is the body that was pained. By "was pained" I mean that it was affected. In a cut, for example, when the body is cut, the division is in the mass, but the distress is in the mass because it is not just a mass but a mass of a particular kind. The inflammation is there too. The soul perceived it, taking it over because it lies, as it were, next to it. The whole soul perceived the affection there without being affected itself. Since it perceives as a whole, it says the affection is there, where the blow and the pain are. If it had been affected itself, being whole in the entire body, it would not have said or indicated that the pain is there. The whole of it would have suffered the pain and the whole would have been in pain. It would not have said or shown that it is there; it would have said "there" of wherever it is, and it is everywhere. As it is, the finger is in pain, and the man is in pain because the finger is the man's. The man is said to be in pain in his finger, just as a man is called gray-eyed because of the gray in his eye. So what is in pain is what was affected, unless one includes in "being in pain" the perception that follows on it. And if one does include it, one plainly means this: pain together with the perception's not failing to notice the pain. Still, we must not call the perception itself pain. It is awareness of pain, and being awareness, it must be unaffected, so that it can know and report soundly. A messenger who has been affected and is taken up with his affection either fails to deliver the message or is not a sound messenger.

4.4.20 We should also posit that the origin of the bodily desires follows from this kind of common thing, this kind of bodily nature. We must not ascribe the origin of appetite and eagerness to body in any condition whatever. Nor must we ascribe the seeking of salty or sweet things to the soul itself. It belongs to what is body but wants to be not only body, and has acquired

more movements even than the soul has, and because of this acquisition is compelled to turn toward many things. So in one condition it wants salty things, in another sweet things, and it wants to be moistened and warmed. None of this would have mattered to it if it were alone. In the case of pain, the awareness came out of the pain, and the soul, wanting to draw the body away from what was producing the affection, brought about flight. The part first affected taught it this, and in a way fled too, by contracting. So it is here as well. Perception learns, and so does the soul that is near the body, which we call nature, the one that gave the trace. Nature learns the explicit desire, which is the completion of the desire that began in the body; perception learns the imagination of it. And from this the soul whose part it is to provide either provides, or resists, holds out, and pays no attention either to what started the desire or to what desired afterward.

But why two desires? Why is the body of this kind not the only thing that desires? Or rather: if nature is one thing, and the body of this kind, which comes from nature, is another—for nature exists before the body of this kind comes to be, since it makes that body, molding and shaping it—then nature cannot be what begins the desire. It is the body of this kind, affected in these ways and in pain, that longs for the opposite of what it suffers: pleasure after distress, filling after lack. Nature, like a mother, as if guessing at the wishes of the one affected, tries to set it right and bring it back to herself. In seeking what will heal it, she attaches herself, through that seeking, to the desire of the affected body, and the completion passes from the body to her. So one might call the desiring that comes from the body itself a pre-desire, and perhaps an eagerness. Nature desires from another and on account of another. And the soul that provides, or does not, is something else again.

4.4.21 That it is this body around which the origin of desire lies is attested also by the different ages of life. The bodily desires of children, young men and grown men are different, and so are those of the healthy and the sick, while the desiring part stays

the same. Clearly it is because it is bodily, a body of this kind undergoing every sort of change, that it has every sort of desire. Consider, too, that the full desire is not always aroused together with the so-called eagernesses, though the bodily one persists to the end; and that, even before reasoning comes in, one does not want to eat or drink, though the desire has gone some way. This tells us that the desire went as far as it was in the body of this kind, but nature did not attach herself to it, or give her assent, or want it—as though the desire were not in a natural condition for her to bring back to nature, since she is the one who presides over what is contrary to nature and what accords with it. Someone might reply to the earlier point that it is enough for the body to become different and produce different desires in the desiring part. But this does not adequately explain how, when one thing is affected in a different way, the desiring part should have different desires on behalf of another, since what is provided does not even come to it. The food, the heat and moisture, the movement, the relief of emptying and the filling of what is being filled do not go to the desiring part. They all belong to the body.

DOES THE EARTH PERCEIVE?

The earth is ensouled, a god, and may perceive even without organs like ours.

4.4.22 In the case of plants, is what is, as it were, echoed in their bodies one thing, and what supplied it another—what in us is the desiring part, and in them the vegetative part? Or is this in the earth, since there is soul in the earth, and what is in plants comes from it? But one might first ask what soul is in the earth. Does it come from the sphere of the All, which is the only thing Plato seems to make ensouled primarily, as a kind of illumination into the earth? Or, when he calls the earth "first and eldest of the gods within the heaven," does he give it too a soul like the one the stars have? For how could it be a god if it did not have that kind of soul? So it turns out both that how the matter stands

is [to be] hard to discover, and that what Plato has said makes the difficulty greater, or at least no smaller.[4] But first, how might the matter reasonably seem to stand? That the earth has a vegetative soul one could infer from the things that grow out of it. And if many animals are also seen to come from the earth, why should one not say it is a living being too? And if it is a living being of such size, no small portion of the All, why should one not say that it also has intellect and so is a god? If each of the stars is one, why not the earth, which is a living part of the living All? Surely we must not say that it is held together from outside by an alien soul and has none inside, as if it could not have one of its own. Why should the fiery bodies be able to have one, and the earthy body not? Both are bodies, and in the stars there are no sinews, no flesh, no blood, no liquid. Yet the earth is more varied and made of all the bodies.

If the objection is that it is hard to move, one could say that applies only to not moving from its place. But how does it perceive? Well, how do the stars? Perceiving does not belong to flesh either. In general, we must not give the soul a body in order that it may perceive; we must give the body a soul, in order that the body may exist and be preserved. But since the soul is able to judge, it can look toward the body and make its judgments on the basis of the body's affections. What, then, are the earth's affections, and what are its judgments of? Plants, after all, insofar as they belong to earth, do not perceive. Of what, then, are the perceptions, and through what? Or should we not dare to say that perceptions occur even without organs? And what use would perceiving be to the earth? Surely it is not for the sake of knowing. For beings that get no use from perceiving, the knowledge that comes from understanding is perhaps enough. Or rather, one would not grant this. Apart from use, there is in the objects of sense a kind of knowing that has its own grace—of the sun, for instance, and the other heavenly bodies, and of heaven and earth—for the perceptions of these are pleasant in themselves. But this must be considered later. For

4 Plato, *Timaeus* 40b–c.

now, back to the question: whether the earth has perceptions, what kind of living being's perceptions they are, and how. Or rather, we must first take up again the difficulties we raised and settle in general whether one can perceive without organs, and whether perceptions are for use, even if something else besides use comes of them.

4.4.23 We must lay it down that perception of sensible things is, for the soul or for the living being, an apprehension in which the soul understands the quality attached to bodies and takes an impression of their forms. Then either it will apprehend alone, by itself, or together with something else. But how could it do so alone and by itself? By itself it apprehends only what is within it, and that is thinking. If it apprehends other things too, it must first have come to possess them, either by being made like them or by being joined to what has been made like them. But it cannot be made like them while remaining by itself. How could a point be made like a line? Not even the intelligible line would fit the sensible line, nor would intelligible fire or man fit sensible fire or man. Not even the nature that makes the man is identical with the man who comes to be. The soul on its own, even if it could direct itself to the sensible, would end up in an understanding of the intelligible; the sensible would escape it, since it would have nothing to grasp it with. Take what is visible, too: when the soul sees something at a distance, however fully the form comes to it—beginning, as it comes toward the soul, as something without parts, as it were—it ends, for the soul that sees, in the underlying color and shape, as large as it is out there. So there must not be only these two, the external thing and the soul; otherwise there would be no affection at all. There must be a third thing that will be affected, and this is what will receive the shape.

So it must share the affection and be affected in the same way, and be of one matter with the object. One thing is affected, another knows. And the affection must be such as to preserve something of what produced it, without being identical with it. Being between what produced it and the soul, the affection must

lie between sensible and intelligible as a proportional mean, in a way joining the extremes to each other, both receptive and able to report, fit to be made like each. For since it is the organ of a kind of knowledge, it must be the same neither as what knows nor as what is to be known, but fit to be made like each: like the external thing by being affected, like the internal by its affection becoming form. If what we are saying is sound, perceptions must occur through bodily organs. This also follows from the fact that the soul, once it is wholly outside body, apprehends nothing sensible. The organ must be either the whole body or some part marked off for a particular task, as with touch and sight. One can see that the instruments made by art also stand between those who judge and what is judged, and report to the judge the particular character of the things before them. The ruler, placed in between and joined both to the straightness in the soul and to the straightness in the wood, gives the craftsman the power to judge his work. Does what is to be judged have to be in contact with the organ? Or can one perceive through some medium in between, at a distance from the sensible object —as when the fire is far from the flesh—[or even] with the medium affected not at all, as if there were a void between sight and color, so that it is possible to see with the organ present by its power? That belongs to another discussion. But it is clear that perception belongs to soul in body and comes about through body.

4.4.24 Whether perception exists only for use must be examined as follows. If perception could not occur for soul alone, and perceptions occur with body, then perception would exist on account of body, since that is where perceptions come from. It would have been given because of the partnership with body. Either it follows of necessity—for whatever the body undergoes, the affection, when it is great enough, reaches as far as the soul —or it has been contrived so that, before what acts on us becomes great enough to destroy us, [we may guard against it], or even guard against it before it comes near. If so, perceptions would be for use. Even if they are for knowledge, that would be

for one who is not in a state of knowledge but ignorant through misfortune, and for recollection by one who has forgotten—not for one who is neither in need nor in forgetfulness. But if so, we should have to inquire not only about the earth but about all the stars, and above all about the whole heaven and the cosmos. On the present account, parts might have perception of parts, since they are capable of being affected. But what perception could the whole have of itself, when it is unaffected in every part of itself in relation to itself? If the organ must belong to the perceiver, and what it perceives must be something other than the organ, and the All is a whole, then it could not have one thing through which there is perception and another of which there is perception. We must grant it self-awareness, just as we are aware of ourselves; but perception, which is always of something else, we must not grant it.

Even with us, when we apprehend something in the body that departs from its constant settled state, we apprehend it as having come in from outside. But in our case there is apprehension not only of external things but also of one part by another. So what prevents the All, too, from seeing the sphere of the planets with the sphere of the fixed stars, and the earth and what is on it with the sphere of the planets? And if these are not exempt from the other affections, what prevents them from having perceptions in other ways too, and sight not merely as belonging to the sphere of the fixed stars by itself, but as an eye reporting to the Soul of the All what it saw? Even if it is unaffected by everything else, why should it not see like an eye, since it is luminous and ensouled? But, he says, it "had no need of eyes." But if this is because nothing visible was left outside, still there was something inside, and nothing prevented it from seeing itself. If it is because seeing itself would have been pointless, let us grant that it was not made this way primarily for the sake of seeing, but that seeing follows of necessity from its being so. Why [then] should seeing not belong to a body of this kind?

4.4.25 Or rather, for seeing, and perceiving in general, it is not enough that there be something through which one perceives.

The soul must be so disposed as to incline toward sensible things. But it belongs to the soul [of the All] to be always turned toward the intelligibles. Even if it were able to perceive, this would not happen, because it is turned toward what is higher. Even we, when we are intensely turned toward the intelligibles, are unaware at such times of sights and the other perceptions; when one is wholly intent on one thing, everything else goes unnoticed. Besides, wanting to apprehend one part of oneself by another, as if one were to look down at oneself, is superfluous even in our case, and pointless unless it serves some purpose. And looking at something else as something beautiful is the mark of one who is affected and in need. Smelling and tasting flavors one might count as distractions and diversions of the soul. But one might suppose that the sun and the other stars see incidentally, and hear too. And if they also turn toward us through both senses, the position is not unreasonable. But if they turn toward us, they will also remember. Or rather, it would be absurd for them not to remember those they do good to. How do they do them good, if they will not remember?

4.4.26 Prayers come to be known through a kind of linking, as it were, and through a certain relation of things fitted together; and that is how their effects come about. In the arts of magicians, too, everything is directed toward this linking. These things happen through powers that follow in sympathy. If so, why shall we not grant that the earth perceives as well? But what kinds of perceptions? Why not, first of all, touch—both of part by part, with the perception passed up to the ruling part, and by the whole, of fire and the rest? Even if its body is hard to move, it is certainly not unmovable. But its perceptions will be not of small things but of great ones. Why? Or rather: because, since there is soul in it, the greatest movements cannot escape its notice. Nothing prevents perception from also arising for this purpose: that the earth may arrange well what concerns human beings, insofar as human affairs depend on it—and arrange them well in a sympathetic way, so to speak. It also hears those who pray and grants their prayers, though not in the way we

would. And through the other senses it is affected in relation to itself and to the rest, for instance with regard to smells and tastes—whatever is smelled through the smells of juices—for the care of animals and the building up and repair of their bodily part. We must not demand the organs we have; not all animals have the same ones. Not all have ears, for instance, and those without them still apprehend sounds. As for sight, if light is needed, how? Surely we must not demand eyes. If, then, once the vegetative part is granted, we could grant that it is like this, since the vegetative part is primarily in breath, why should we doubt that, being breath, it is also transparent? Or rather, if it is breath, it is transparent, and when it is illuminated by the circuit of heaven, transparent in actuality. So there is nothing absurd or impossible in the soul in the earth seeing. And we must also realize that this soul belongs to no mean body, so that it is also a god; in any case, the soul must always be good.[5]

4.4.27 If, then, the earth gives plants the generative soul itself—or rather, the generative soul is in the earth, and what is in plants is a trace of it—then the plant would be like flesh that is already ensouled and has received it, if plants also have the generative soul in them. Being present in the plant, it gives the plant's body what is better, that by which it differs from what has been cut off and is no longer a plant but only wood. But what does the soul give to the body of the earth itself? We must not think that an earthy body cut off from the earth is the same as one that remains continuous with it. Stones show this: they grow while they are attached, but once removed they stay the size they were when they were cut. We must think, then, that each part has a trace, and that over this runs the whole vegetative principle, which belongs no longer to this part or that but to the earth as a whole. Then comes the nature of the perceptive power, no longer mixed in with the body but riding upon it. Then the rest of soul, and intellect—which human beings call

5 In Aristotle's theory (*On the Soul* II.7), light is the actuality of the transparent medium, which makes seeing possible.

Hestia and Demeter, divining such things by a divine utterance and a natural gift.[6]

ANGER

Anger starts from the body's condition, but reason can enlist it as an ally.

4.4.28 So much for that. We must go back again and inquire about the spirited part. We placed the origin of the desires, and the pains and pleasures—the affections, not the perceptions—in the body so disposed, the body made alive, as it were. Shall we place the origin of anger there too? Or shall we place the whole of anger in the body so disposed, or in some part of the body—the heart so disposed, for example, or the bile, in a body that is not dead? And though what gives the trace of soul is something else, is anger here one particular thing, no longer coming from a spirited or perceptive part? In that case, the vegetative part, extending through the whole body, gave the trace to the whole body: pain was in all of it, and pleasure, and the origin of the desire for filling was in all of it. The origin of sexual desire was not discussed, but let it be in the parts that bring such things to completion. And let the region around the liver be the origin of desire, because the vegetative part is most active there, the part that supplies the trace of soul to the liver and to the body—there, because that is where its activity begins. But about anger: what is it, and what soul is it? Is there a trace from it around the heart? Or does something else supply the movement that ends in the compound? Or does it supply here not a trace but anger itself? First, then, we must consider what anger is. That we grow angry not only over what the body suffers, but also over what someone close to us suffers, and generally over whatever anyone does that is improper, is clear enough. So anger requires perception and some understanding as well. Looking at these

6 Hestia, goddess of the hearth, and Demeter, goddess of grain and harvest, were both linked with the earth in Greek religion and allegory.

facts, then, one would look for the origin of anger not in the vegetative part but somewhere else.

But readiness to anger follows the body's dispositions. Those who boil with blood and bile are quick to anger, while those called bile-less and chilled are slack toward anger. Wild animals get angry according to their temperaments, at nothing but what seemed to harm them. Given all this, one would trace anger back again to what is more bodily, and to what holds together the structure of the living being. And the same people are more irritable when ill than when healthy, and when they have not tasted food than when they have eaten. This shows that anger, or the origins of anger, belong to a body of a certain kind, and that the bile or the blood, ensouling it as it were, supplies such movements. So when the body of this kind is affected, the blood or the bile is at once set in motion; and when perception has occurred, the imagination, making the soul share in the condition of the body of this kind, at once launches it against what is causing the pain; and again, from above, the soul that uses reasoning, when a wrong has appeared—even one not concerning the body—has ready to hand the part that grows angry in that way, and since that part is naturally made to fight what has been shown to be hostile, it makes it its ally. So there is one anger that is aroused irrationally and drags reason after it by means of the imagination, and another that begins from reason and ends in what is naturally made to grow angry. Both come from the vegetative and generative part. It equips the body to be, so to speak, apprehensive of what is pleasant and painful; and by having made it bilious and bitter, it makes the trace of soul in such a body, because it is in such a body, move in this way—irritably and angrily. And having first been harmed itself, it seeks in a way to harm other things too, and, as it were, to make them like itself. Evidence that this is of the same substance as the other trace of soul: those who are less eager for bodily pleasures, and who in general despise the body, are less moved to anger and to irrational affections.

That trees have no anger, although they have the vegetative part, should not surprise us, since they have no share in blood or bile. If these were present without perception, there would only be a boiling and a kind of indignation. If perception were present too, there would then be an impulse against the wrongdoer, so as to retaliate. But suppose the irrational part of the soul were divided into the desiring part and [the] spirited part, and the one were the vegetative part, while the spirited part were a trace from it around the blood or bile or both. Then the division would not be a correct division into coordinate members, since one would be prior and the other posterior. Or rather, nothing prevents both from being posterior, and the division from being one of the things that arise from the same source. For the division is of the appetitive powers, as appetitive, not of the substance they came from. That substance is not, by itself, appetite. Perhaps it completes appetite by joining to it the activity that comes from itself. And it is not absurd to say that the trace that has fallen into anger is around the heart. Let us say that what is there is not the soul, but the source of blood of this kind.

4.4.29 How is it, then—if the body is like what has been warmed rather than what has been lit—that when the other soul has left it, it has nothing vital left? Or rather, it does have something for a little while, but it fades quickly, as warmed things do when they are taken away from the fire. Hair growing on dead bodies bears witness to this, and nails growing, and animals that have been cut up moving for a long time; perhaps this is what still remains in them. And if it departs along with the other soul, that is no proof that it is not something different. When the sun goes away, not only does the light next to it, belonging to it and attached to it, go away; the light that comes from this into what is beyond it, seen in the things nearby, which is different from the first, goes away with it too. Does it, then, go away with it, or does it perish? This must be asked about light of this kind, and also about the life in the body, which we say is the body's own. That nothing of the light remains in the things that were lit is clear. But the argument asks whether it passes back into what

produced it, or simply is no more. How could it simply be no more, when it was something before? But what was it, then, in short? It belongs to the bodies themselves from which the light comes; it is what is called their color. And when the bodies are perishable and change, it is no more, and no one asks where the color of a fire has gone when the fire has perished, any more than where its shape has gone. Or rather, shape is a kind of disposition, like the clenching and opening of the hand, but color is not like that; it is like sweetness. For what prevents the sweetness from not being destroyed when the sweet body perishes, or the fragrance when the fragrant body perishes, but coming to be in another body—though not perceptible, because the bodies that have received them are not such that the qualities in them press back against perception? In the same way, then, could the light of perished bodies remain, while the resistance, which came from all of them, does not remain? Unless one were to say that we see by convention, and that the so-called qualities are not in the substrates.

But if so, we shall make the qualities imperishable, not coming to be when bodies are formed. The rational principles in the seeds will not make the colors—in variegated birds, for example—but will gather colors that already exist; or they will make them, but also make use of those in the air, which is full of such things. For they exist in the air too, though not in the form in which they appear in bodies once they come to be there. But let this difficulty be left lying here. If the bodies remain, and the light is attached to them and not cut off, what prevents the light from moving along with the body when the body moves—both the adjacent light and whatever is attached to the adjacent light—even if it is not seen going away, just as it is not seen arriving either? But in the case of soul: do the secondary things follow the prior ones, and what comes next always follow what comes before it? Or is each on its own, deprived of what is before it and able to remain by itself? Or is no part of soul cut off at all, so that all souls are one and many—and in what way? That belongs elsewhere. But what is the trace of soul that has now become the

body's? Or rather: if it is soul, it will follow along, if it is not cut off, as our account of soul requires. If it is like a life of the body, the same argument applies here as the one raised about the image of light. And we must consider whether life can exist without soul—unless, of course, through the soul's being adjacent and active toward something else.

PRAYERS, STARS AND MAGIC

How can the stars answer prayers if they have neither memory nor choice?

4.4.30 Now, we laid it down that memories in the stars are superfluous, but granted them perceptions, hearing as well as sight, and said they listen to prayers—the prayers we make to the sun, and those that some other people make to the stars as well. It is also believed that many things are accomplished for people through the stars, and so easily that they are helpers not only in just deeds but in many unjust ones too. So we must inquire about these matters that have come up along the way. In themselves they raise very great difficulties, much talked about by those who object to the idea that gods become collaborators in and causes of outlandish deeds, among others even love affairs and the abetting of licentiousness. We must inquire for these reasons, then, and above all about what our discussion was about from the start: their memory. For clearly, if they act when people have prayed, and do not do it at once but later, very often after long periods, they have memory of what people pray to them for. But our earlier argument did not allow this. And yet something of this kind would be needed for their benefactions to human beings as well, such as those of Demeter and Hestia—unless one were to say that only the earth does good to human affairs. So we must try to show both things. First, how we shall treat memory in these beings—which is our concern, not what the others think, who face no obstacle to granting them memories. Second, concerning what seem to be strange happenings, which it is philosophy's task to examine: whether there is any

way of answering those [difficulties] raised against the gods in heaven, and also about the whole cosmos itself—since accusations of this kind reach it too—whether we should believe those who say that even the whole heaven is bewitched by human boldness and skill. Our discussion will also inquire about spirits, how they are said to serve such ends, unless what concerns them is settled as well through [the] solution of the earlier questions.

4.4.31 We must take, then, in general, all the actions and affections that occur in the whole cosmos, both those called natural and those that occur by art. Of the natural ones, we must say that some go from the All to the parts, and from the parts to the All, or from parts to parts. Of those that occur by art, either the art ends, as it began, in the products of art, or it makes use of natural powers to produce natural actions and affections. By the actions of the whole I mean whatever the whole revolution of heaven does to itself and to its parts. In moving, it disposes in a certain way both itself and its parts—those within the revolution itself and everything it gives to the things on earth. The affections of parts by parts are plain enough, I think, to everyone: the relations and actions of the sun toward the other heavenly bodies and toward the things on earth, and what happens in the other elements, from the sun itself, from the other heavenly bodies, and from the things on earth. Each of these must be examined. As for the arts, those that make a house and the other artifacts end in something of that kind. Medicine, farming and the like are subservient: they bring help to natural things, so that these may be in their natural state. Rhetoric, music and every art of swaying the soul alter people, leading them toward the better or the worse. Here we must ask how many the arts are and what power they have. And, if possible, in all these matters that bear on our present need, we must also work out, as far as we can, the reason why. That the revolution acts is clear in many ways. It disposes first itself, and the things within it, in different ways, and indisputably the things on earth, not only in their

bodies but also in the dispositions of the soul; and each of its parts acts on the things on earth and generally on what is below.

Whether these things, too, act on those above we shall see later. For now, let us leave as they are the things granted by all or most people, so far as argument will show them to be so, and try to state how the action works, taking it from the beginning. We must not say that only hot and cold and the like, which are called the primary qualities of the elements, act, or the qualities that arise from their mixture. Nor must we say that the sun does everything by heat, and some other star by cold—what cold could there be in heaven, in a fiery body?—or another by moist fire. That way one could not even grasp how they differ. And many of the things that happen cannot be traced back to any of these. Suppose someone were to ascribe to them the differences in people's characters, according to the mixtures of their bodies —characters being such because of a prevailing cold or heat. Even so, how could he trace envy or jealousy or villainy back to these? And even if he could, how could he trace back fortunes, worse and better, people being rich and poor, noble birth from one's fathers, or the finding of treasure? [And] one could name countless things that lead far away from the bodily quality that passes from the elements into the bodies and souls of animals. Nor, again, must we ascribe to the choice of the stars, to the will of the All and to their reasonings what befalls each of the things beneath them. It would be absurd for them to scheme over human affairs so that some become thieves, others kidnappers, housebreakers and temple-robbers, and others spineless and soft in what they do and in what they undergo, doing shameful things. To do and contrive such things, from which no benefit of any kind could come to them, is unworthy not only of gods but even of decent human beings—perhaps of anyone at all.

THE ALL AS ONE LIVING BEING

Everything in the All is in sympathy, like the limbs of one animal or a single dance.

4.4.32 If, then, we attribute neither to bodily causes nor to deliberate choices whatever comes from outside, from heaven, to us and to the other animals and in general to [the] things on earth, what reasonable cause would remain? First, we must posit that this All is a single living being encompassing all the living beings within it, with one soul that extends to all its parts, insofar as each is a part of it. Each thing in the sensible All is a part of it: wholly so with respect to its body, and with respect to soul to the extent that it participates in the Soul of the All. Those that participate in this soul alone are parts in every respect; those that participate in another soul as well are, to that extent, not parts in every respect. But they are affected no less by the others, insofar as they have something of the All, and in accordance with what they have. This one thing, then, is all in sympathy, like a single living being, and what is far is near. It is like a single individual animal, where a nail or a horn or a finger, or some other part, is not next to another: the part between leaves a gap and is not affected at all, while the part that is not near is affected. Like things do not lie next to one another, but are separated by others in between; yet they share affections through their likeness, and so what is done by what is not adjacent must reach what is far. And since it is a living being and contributes to one whole, nothing is so far away in place that it is not near, by the nature of the one living being, so as to share its affections. So what is like the agent receives an affection that is not alien to it, but when the agent is unlike it, what is affected receives an affection that is alien and unwelcome.

We should not be surprised that one thing acts harmfully on another, though there is one living being. In us too, in our own activities, one part might be harmed by another; bile and anger, it seems, press on something else and sting it. And in the All,

too, there is something analogous to anger and bile, and other things analogous to other things. Among plants too, one will obstruct another, even to the point of withering it. This All is seen to be not only one living being but also many. So insofar as each thing is one, it is preserved by the whole; but insofar as they are many and meet one another, they have often harmed each other through their difference. One has harmed another for its own need, and has even made it its food, since it is at once akin and different. Each strives for what is natural to it: it takes into itself as much of the other as is its own, and, out of good will toward itself, does away with as much as was alien. And each, doing its own work, has benefited whatever could enjoy something of its works, but whatever could not withstand the force of its work it has destroyed or harmed—as things wither when a fire passes by, or smaller animals are swept aside by the rush of larger ones, or even trampled. The coming to be and perishing of all these things, and their alteration for the worse or the better, brings to completion the unhindered, natural life of that one living being. For it was not possible for each thing to be as if it were alone, nor, since they are parts, for the end to be directed toward them or for them to look to themselves. They must look toward that of which they are parts. And since they are different, they cannot always keep everything that is theirs while being in one life. Nor could anything remain wholly the same, if the All was to remain, since it has its remaining in its movement.

4.4.33 Since the revolution is not random, but moves according to the rational principle of the living being, there had to be a concord between agent and patient, and an order arranging things in relation to one another and together, so that at each configuration of the revolution, and of the things under it, the disposition is different—as when many perform one dance in an intricate choral performance. Take the dances we know. Why mention the things outside the dance—how, at each movement, the things that contribute to it, the pipes and songs and everything connected with them, change in a different way?

These are obvious. But with the parts of the one who performs the dance, at each figure, one could not say the same thing, since the limbs of the body necessarily follow along with it and bend, one pressed, another relaxed, one laboring, another finding a kind of respite in the change of posture.

The dancer's choice looks to something else; the limbs are affected in accordance with the dance, serve the dance, and help to complete the whole of it. So an expert in dancing could say that in such a posture this limb of the body is raised high, that one bent, this one hidden, another lowered—not because the dancer independently chose to do this, but because in the dance of his whole body this part, which carries the dance through, holds this necessary position. In this way, then, we must say that the heavenly bodies act, in whatever they do act, and that they also signify some things. Or rather: the whole cosmos lives out its whole life as activity, moving its great parts within itself and always reshaping them; and the relations of the parts to one another and to the whole, and their different positions, bring about everything else as consequences, as in one living being in motion. Things are in this condition according to these relations, positions and configurations, and in that condition according to those. So it is not the configured things that act, but the one who configures them. Nor, again, does the one who configures do one thing and make another, for he is not acting on something else; he himself is all that comes to be. There are the configurations; here are the necessary affections that follow the configurations, affecting the living being that moves in this way, and again what is composed and constituted in this way by nature and acts and is acted on in relation to itself by necessities.

4.4.34 As for us, we give over to being affected the part of ourselves that belonged to that body, but we do not think the whole of us belongs to it, and so we are affected by it only in measure. We are like sensible hired servants, who serve their masters with one part of themselves and belong to themselves with another, and for that reason receive more moderate orders

from the master, since they are not slaves and do not wholly belong to another. The difference in the configurations was bound to arise, as it now does, since the heavenly bodies in their courses do not have equal speeds. And since they move according to a rational principle, and the relations of the living being become different, and since here in our world the things around us are in sympathy with what happens there, it is reasonable to ask whether we should say that these things follow in harmony with those, or that the configurations have the powers of what is brought about—and if so, whether configurations simply, or those of these particular bodies. For the same configuration does not produce the same signification or effect in the case of one body as in the case of another, and again of others; for each seems to have a different nature by itself. Or rather, it is right to say that the configuration of these bodies is this particular disposition, of this kind, while the configuration of others, though the same as a figure, is different. But if so, we shall attribute the effects no longer to the configurations but to the configured things themselves. Or rather, to both. At any rate, the same things produce different results when they take a different relation, and the same body produces different results merely in a different place. But results of what kind—effects or significations? Or rather: the combination, the configuration together with these bodies, produces both, effects and significations, in many cases, and elsewhere significations only. This account, then, gives powers to the configurations, and powers to the configured things as well. With dancers too, each hand has a certain power, and so do the other limbs, while the figures have great power. Third come the things that follow along: the parts of the limbs taken up into the dance, and what these are made of—the parts of the hand that are compressed, for example, and the sinews and veins that share the affection.

4.4.35 How, then, do these powers work? We must say it again, more clearly. How does one triangle differ from another? What does this one have in relation to that one, in virtue of what does it produce this effect, and how far? For we did not attribute the

actions either to their bodies or to their choices: not to their bodies, because what happened was not only the products of body; not to their choices, because it was absurd that gods should produce absurd things [by] choice. But let us remember that we posited it to be one living being, and that, being such, it necessarily had to be in sympathy with itself; that the whole course of its life is in accord with itself according to a rational principle; that there is nothing random in its life, but one harmony and order; that the configurations accord with a rational principle; and that each thing, including the dancing parts of the living being, accords with numbers. If we remember this, we must agree that both belong to the activity of the All: the configurations that come about in it, its configured parts, and what follows on them. In this way the All lives, and the powers contribute to this, just as they came to have them from the one who made them by rational principles. The configurations are, as it were, rational principles, or intervals of the living being, its rhythms and relations according to a rational principle, while the limbs, spaced out and configured, are something else. And the living being has powers apart from its choice, other ones, those it has as parts of a living being; for choice lies outside them and does not contribute to the nature of this living being.

A single living being has a single choice, but its other powers, set against it, are many. And whatever choices there are within it are directed to the same thing as the single choice of the All. Desire is one part's desire for another of the things within it: one part, lacking something, wants to take some other part. Anger is aimed at another part when something annoys it; growth comes from another part, and generation passes into another of the parts. The whole does these things in these parts, but itself seeks the good—or rather, looks at it. This, then, is what right choice also seeks, the choice that is above the passions, and in this way it contributes to the same end. It is the same with people who work for another as hired servants: many of their tasks look to what the master has ordered, but their desire for the good aims at the same thing the master's does. So if the sun and the other

stars do something to things here, we must suppose that the sun itself is looking upward—we should frame the argument on a single one of them—while something is produced from it. Just as things on earth are warmed by it, so too with anything that follows from this through a transmission of soul, as far as it has soul in it, since there is a great deal of vegetative soul in it. And another star in the same way gives a power from itself, shining it out, as it were, without any choice. And all of them together, once they have become a single thing configured in this way, give one disposition and then another, so that the figures too have powers: for depending on whether things are arranged this way or that, the results differ. And something also comes about through the configured bodies themselves: depending on these, one thing results, depending on others, another. That figures by themselves have something like powers can be seen in things here, too. Why is it that some figures frighten those who see them, though the people frightened have suffered nothing beforehand, while others cause no fear when seen? And why do some frighten these people, others those?

Or is it that these act on one kind of person and others on another—which could not be if they lacked the power to act on what is naturally suited to receive them? Shaped this way, a thing moved someone's sight; shaped that way, it did not move the same person. And if someone says that beauty is what moves us, why did this move one person and something else another, unless the difference in figure has the power? Why should we say that colors have power and act, and not say so of figures? It would be altogether absurd, in fact, for something to exist among the things that are and yet have nothing it can do. For being is such as either to act or to be acted on: to some things we must grant acting, to others both. There are powers in the substrates too, apart from the figures. Among the things around us there are many such powers that hot and cold things do not supply; they are supplied by things that have come to be with different qualities, given form by rational principles and

sharing in the power of nature. So the natures of stones and the activities of plants produce many wonderful effects.

4.4.36 For the All is supremely varied: all rational principles are in it, and its powers are unlimited and varied. They say, for instance, that in a human being the eye has one power, and this bone one, that bone another—this one of the hand, that one of the toe—and that there is no part without a power, and none with the same power as another. We don't know this, unless we have studied such things. So it is, and much more so, in the All—or rather, [since] these are a trace of those: in the All there must be an indescribable and wonderful variety of powers, and above all in the bodies that travel through the heavens. It was not supposed to become an ordered world in the way a lifeless house does—large and big as it may be—out of a few kinds of material, easily counted, like stones and timber and, if you like, a few other things. No: it is awake everywhere and alive, each thing in a different way, and nothing can exist that is not [in] it. This is also how the puzzle might be solved, how there can be something lifeless in an ensouled living being. For the argument says that different things live in different ways within the whole, while we refuse to say that things live unless they visibly move by themselves. But in fact each of them lives without our noticing, and what visibly lives is composed of things that do not visibly live, yet supply wonderful powers for the life of such a living being. A human being could never have been moved to so many things if the powers within him that moved him were utterly lifeless. Nor could the All live as it does unless each thing in it lived its own life, even if choice is not present in it. For it acts without needing choice, since it is prior to choice; that is also why many things are in service to their powers.

4.4.37 So nothing in the All is to be thrown away. Take fire, and the other things of this kind that we say act: if any of those who now think they know were to ask what their acting really is, he would be at a loss—unless he granted that fire has this power by being in the All, and said the same of the other things in common use. But familiar things we neither think worth investigat-

ing nor doubt; it is the powers outside the familiar that we doubt, each as it is, and we attach wonder to the unfamiliar. Yet we would wonder at the familiar ones as well, if we had no experience of them and someone brought each one forward and explained its powers to us. We must say, then, that each thing has some power proportionate to it, since it has been shaped and formed in the All and has in a way received a share of soul from the whole, which is ensouled; it is encompassed by something of that kind and is a part of something ensouled—for there is nothing in it that is not a part. But some things are more powerful than others for acting, and heavenly things more than those on earth, since they have a more vivid nature. And many things come about in accordance with these powers, not by the choice of those from which the effect seems to come—for such powers exist even in things that have no choice—nor because they have turned their attention to giving the power, even if something of soul does come from them. Living things can come from a living thing without its choice producing them, without its being diminished, and without its being conscious of it. For if it had choice, either the choice [would] itself have been the producing, or it was not the choice that produced. And if some living thing has no choice, all the less is it conscious of it.

4.4.38 So whatever comes from it out of the rest of its life when nothing has moved it, and in general all that comes from it, and whatever comes when something else has moved it—by prayers, for instance, whether simple ones or ones sung with art—all this must be referred not to each of those bodies individually, but to the nature of what is done. Whatever is useful and contributes to life or some other need must be referred to their giving, which passes from one, greater part to another, smaller one. And whatever harmful thing is said to come from them upon the generation of living beings comes about either because the substrate cannot receive the benefit—for what comes to be does not come to be without qualification, but into this particular thing and in this particular way, and both what is affected and what is going to be affected must have a particular underlying nature of

a certain kind. Mixtures too produce many effects, each ingredient giving something useful for life. It can also happen to someone that what is beneficial does not suit his nature; and the coordination of the whole does not always give each thing what it wants. We also add a great deal ourselves to what has been given. Yet all things are woven together into one and have a wonderful harmony; different things come from different things, even when they come from opposites, for all belong to one. And if something that comes to be falls short of the better, not fully given form because matter has not been mastered, it falls short, as it were, of nobility, and deprived of that it sinks into ugliness. So some things are produced by those heavenly bodies, some are brought in by the underlying nature, and others the beings themselves add. But since all things are always coordinated and all contribute to one, all things are signified. "Virtue has no master"; yet its works too are woven into the coordination, since the things here depend on what is There—the things in this All on what is more divine—and this All too has a share in those.

4.4.39 The things in the All, then, come about not according to seminal rational principles, but according to rational principles that are comprehensive and prior to those of the seeds. For the seminal principles contain nothing of what comes to be outside the seminal principles themselves, nothing of what matter contributes to the whole, and nothing of what the things that have come to be do to one another. The rational principle of the All is more like a man laying down the order and law of a city according to reason, who already knows what the citizens will do and why they will do it, legislates with all this in view, and weaves into the laws everything that happens to them, their actions, and the honors and dishonors their actions earn—so that everything moves into harmony as if of its own accord. Signification does not exist for its own sake, so as to signify as its primary purpose; rather, because things come about in this way, one thing is signified by another. Since it is one, and belongs to one, one thing can be known from another: the cause from the

effect, what follows from what went before, and the composite from one of its components, because the one and the other are together. If this is rightly said, the difficulties are now resolved. The difficulty about evils being given by gods is resolved because it is not choices that produce them: whatever comes from there comes by natural necessities, as from parts to parts, and as consequences of the life of a single being; also because beings add much of their own to what comes about; because, though what each gives is not bad, something different arises in the mixture; because the life [is] not for the sake of each individual but for the sake of the whole; and because the underlying nature receives one thing and experiences another, and cannot even master what is given.

HOW MAGIC WORKS

Spells work by natural sympathy; only contemplation, turned toward itself, is free of enchantment.

4.4.40 And how do spells work? By sympathy, and by the natural concord of like things and opposition of unlike, and by the variety of the many powers that contribute to a single living being. Many things are drawn and enchanted without anyone else contriving it. The true magic is the Love in the All, and the Strife too. This is the first wizard and sorcerer; people have understood him and use his drugs and spells on one another.[7] Because people are naturally given to love, and the things that make them love draw them to one another, an art of drawing by love through sorcery has arisen. Its practitioners apply by contact to different people different substances that draw them together and have love inherent in them. They join one soul to another, as if they were tying together plants that stood apart. They also make use of figures that have powers, and by putting themselves into certain postures they silently draw powers to themselves, since they are within one thing and act upon one thing. For if

7 Love and Strife are the two cosmic forces that unite and separate things in Empedocles.

you supposed such a man to be outside the All, he could neither draw nor bring down by spells of attraction or binding spells. As it is, since he does not draw, so to speak, from somewhere else, he is able to draw, knowing how one thing in the living being is drawn toward another. The soul is also naturally drawn by the melody of an incantation, by a certain tone, and by the posture of the one performing it—for such things draw it, as piteous postures and cries do. It is not choice or reason that is charmed by music, but the irrational soul; and no one is surprised at this kind of enchantment. Indeed, people love being charmed, even if that is not what they ask of those who make music. Nor must we think that other prayers are heard by choice. Those charmed by incantations are not charmed that way; nor, when a snake bewitches people, does the bewitched person understand or perceive it. He knows, once he has been affected, that he has been affected, while his ruling part itself remains unaffected. And from the being someone prayed to, something came to him —or to someone else. But the sun, or any other star, does not hear.

4.4.41 What is prayed for comes about because one part is in sympathy with another, as on a single stretched string: plucked at the bottom, it moves at the top as well. Often, too, when one string is plucked, another has, as it were, a perception of it, because of their concord and because they are tuned to a single harmony. And if the movement passes even from one lyre to another, as far as sympathy reaches, then in the All too there is a single harmony, even if it is made of opposites; it is also made of things that are alike, and all are akin, even the opposites. And the things that harm human beings—the spirited part, for instance, drawn along with bile into the substance of the liver—did not come in order to harm. It is as if someone took fire from a fire and harmed another without having contrived that it should go [to him]. Or rather, the man who took it does act, at least in that he gave something, transferring it, as it were, from one place to another; and so does what arrived, if the one to whom it was carried was unable to receive it.

4.4.42 So for this reason the stars will not need memory—which is why we went into all this—nor perceptions sent up to them. Nor, in this way, do they give nods of assent to prayers by some act of choice, as some people think. We must grant that something comes from them both with prayer and without prayer, insofar as they are [themselves] parts of one being; and that there are many powers, these too, without choice, both without contrivance and with art, as in a single living being. One thing benefits from another and is harmed by another because it is so by nature, and by the arts of doctors and of enchanters one thing has been compelled to give another something of its own power. And the All likewise gives to its parts, both of itself and when something else draws on it for some part of it—what lies laid up in its own parts—by the same natural process, since no one who asks is a stranger to it. If the one asking is bad, there is no need for surprise: bad people draw water from rivers too, and what gives does not know what it gives; it simply gives. Even so, this too has been coordinated and given within the nature of the All. So if someone has taken what he should not from what is set out for all, justice follows him by a necessary law. So we must not grant that the All is affected. Or rather, we must grant that its ruling part is wholly unaffected; when affections occur in its parts, the affection reaches those parts, but since nothing is contrary to nature for the All, what happens is no affection as far as it is concerned. The stars too have affections insofar as they are parts; yet they themselves are unaffected, because their choices are unaffected and their bodies and natures are unharmed; because, even if they give something through their soul, their soul is not diminished; and because their bodies remain the same—if anything flows away, it leaves imperceptibly, and what comes to them, if anything does, goes unnoticed.

4.4.43 And how is the good man affected by sorcery and drugs? Or rather, in his soul he is immune to enchantment: his rational part would not be affected or change its opinion. But in whatever of the All's irrational element is in him, he could be

affected in that respect—or rather, that part could be affected. Yet he would not fall in love because of drugs, if indeed loving requires that one soul also consent to what the other is undergoing. And just as the irrational part is affected by incantations, so he himself will undo the powers working there by counter-incantations. Death from such causes, though, or diseases, or anything bodily, he might suffer. For the part of the All might be affected by another part, or by the All, but he himself is unharmed. That the effect comes not at once but later is no departure from nature. Spirits too are not unaffected in their irrational part. It is not absurd to grant them memories and perceptions, and to say that they are charmed, being drawn by nature, and that they give ear to those who call on them—the ones of them that are nearer to things here, and in proportion as they are turned toward things here. For everything that is directed toward something else is enchanted by something else: what it is directed toward enchants and draws it. Only what is directed toward itself is free from enchantment. That is why every action is under a spell, and so is the whole life of the man of action: he is moved toward the things that charm him. Hence the saying, "For the people of great-hearted Erechtheus has a fair face." What makes anyone turn toward something else? He is drawn—not by the arts of magicians, but by nature, which supplies the deception and joins one thing to another, not in place, but by the love potions it has given.[8]

4.4.44 Only contemplation, then, is left free from enchantment, because no one is enchanted by himself. He is one; what he contemplates is himself; and his reason is not deceived but does what it should, producing its own life and its own work. But in the other case the work is not one's own, and reason does not supply the impulse; the irrational too is a starting point—the premises that passion supplies. Care for children and eagerness for marriage have an obvious pull, and so do all the pleasures

8 The line is from Plato's *Alcibiades I* (132a), where Socrates warns Alcibiades against being seduced by the Athenian people; Erechtheus was a legendary king of Athens.

that bait people through their desires. As for actions, some are set in motion irrationally by anger, others likewise by desires; political life and the craving for office have our love of power summoning them. Those done to avoid suffering have fear as their origin; those done to get more, desire. Actions done for the sake of necessities, seeking to fill up nature's lack, plainly have behind them the compulsion of nature, which has made living dear to us. But suppose someone says that actions aimed at fine things are free from enchantment—or else we would have to say that contemplation too, since it is of fine things, is enchanted. Then: if a man does even the so-called fine actions as necessary ones, while holding that what is truly fine is something else, he is not enchanted. For he knows the necessity, and does not look to what is here, nor is his life directed to other things. He acts under the compulsion of human nature and of attachment to life, the life of others or even his own—for it seems reasonable, perhaps, not to take himself out of life, because of that attachment—since to that extent he has been enchanted.

But if he has come to love the fine in actions and chooses actions because he is deceived by the traces of the fine, he is enchanted, pursuing the fine in the things below. In general, all concern with what resembles the true, and every pull toward it, belongs to someone deceived by the things that draw him toward them. This is what nature's enchantment does. To pursue what is not good as good, drawn by its appearance through irrational impulses—that is to be led, without knowing it, where one did not want to go. And what could anyone call this but enchantment? Only he, then, is free from enchantment who, though drawn by the other parts of himself, says that none of the things those parts call good is good, but only what he knows himself, not deceived and not pursuing, but possessing it. Such a man could not be drawn anywhere.

EACH SOUL FINDS ITS PLACE

Each soul is carried by the law of the whole to the place its nature deserves.

4.4.45 From all that has been said, this much is clear. Each thing in the All, according to the nature and disposition it has, contributes to the All, is affected and acts; just as in each living being each of the parts, according to its nature and structure, contributes to the whole, serves it, and has been assigned its rank and function. It gives what comes from itself and receives from the others whatever its nature can receive, and there is, as it were, a self-awareness of all with all. And if each of the parts were also a living being, it would also have the functions of a living being, which differ from those of a part. And it also becomes clear how things stand with us. We too do something in the All, not only what body does to body and undergoes from body in turn; we also bring in the rest of our nature, joined by what is akin to it in us to what is akin to it outside. And since by our souls and dispositions we become connected—or rather, are connected—with what comes next in the region of spirits and with what lies beyond them, there is no way we can hide what sort of people we are. So we do not all give the same things, nor do we receive the same. How could we share with another what we do not have—something good, for instance? Nor, again, shall we bring anything good to what is not receptive of good. So someone who has attached his own vice to the whole is known for who he is, and in accordance with his nature is thrust into what he already has; and when he is released from here, he is drawn by the pulls of nature into another place of the same sort. For the good man, the takings and givings and transfers are different, as though they were moved by certain pulls of nature, as if on cords.

So wonderful are the power and order of this All: all things go "on a silent path, according to justice," which no one can escape. The base man perceives nothing of it, but is led, without knowing it, to where in the All he must be carried. The good man

knows it, goes where he must, knows before he goes where he must dwell when he arrives, and has good hope that he will be with gods. In a small living being the changes in the parts and their self-awareness are small, and its parts cannot be living beings, except perhaps briefly in some cases. But in a being with such great distances in it, where each thing has room to move and there are many living beings, the movements and changes of place must be greater.[9] We see the sun and moon and the other stars changing place and moving in order. So it is not unreasonable that souls too should change place, not always keeping the same character, but ranked in proportion to what they have undergone and what they do, [some] taking the rank of a head, as it were, others of feet, in harmony with the All; for the All too has differences toward better and worse. A soul that neither chooses the better here nor has any share in the worse has exchanged this place for another, pure one, receiving the one it chose. Punishments are like the treatment of diseased parts: for some, astringent drugs; for others, removal, or alteration, so that the All may be healthy, with each thing put where it should be. And the All's health comes about as [one part] is altered and another removed from here, as being sick here, and placed where it will not be sick.

9 An echo of Euripides, *Trojan Women* 887–888, where Hecuba prays to Zeus as one who leads mortal affairs "on a silent path, according to justice."

IV.5 Problems About the Soul III, or On Sight

Περὶ ψυχῆς ἀποριῶν τρίτον ἢ περὶ ὄψεως
Plotinus argues that sight works by the soul's sympathy with what it sees, not by a medium carrying impressions.
no. 29 in order of writing

4.5.1 Since we put off the question whether one can see when there is nothing in between—such as air, or some other body called transparent—we must examine it now. That seeing, and perception in general, must take place through some body has already been said: without body, the soul is wholly in the intelligible. And since perceiving is the apprehension not of intelligibles but only of perceptibles, the soul must in a way come into contact with perceptibles and, through things like them, establish a kind of communion with them, of knowledge or of affection. That is why knowledge here comes through bodily organs: through these, which are as it were grown together with the perceptibles or continuous with them, it goes, so to speak, into a kind of unity with the perceptibles themselves, and in this way a kind of shared affection with them arises. So if there must be some contact with the things known, why would anyone ask about the things known by some kind of touch? But about sight—and whether about hearing too, we shall see later—about seeing, the question is whether there must be some body between the sight and the color. Or rather, the body in between might impinge on it incidentally, but contributes nothing to vision for those who see.

But if dense bodies, such as earthy ones, prevent seeing, and the finer the things in between, the better we see, one might set down what is in between as a hindrance to seeing—or, if not a hindrance, one might at least say it is no help. But suppose the medium receives the affection first and is, as it were, stamped by it. A sign of this would be that if someone stands in front of us looking toward the color, he sees it too: if no affection arose in the medium, it would not reach us either. Or rather, the medium need not be affected, if what is naturally fit to be affected is affected; or, if it is affected, it undergoes something different. For the rod between the electric ray and the hand does not [undergo] what the hand undergoes. And yet there too, if the rod and the line were not in between, the hand would not be affected.[1] Or rather, even this might be disputed: if the ray gets inside a net, the fisherman is said to feel the numbness. But the argument seems to be heading for the so-called sympathies. If this thing is naturally affected by that one sympathetically because it has some likeness to it, then the medium, being unlike, would not be affected, or not in the same way. [And] if so, what is naturally fit to be affected would be affected much more when there is nothing in between—even if the medium is such as to be affected itself in some way.

4.5.2 Now if seeing is of such a kind that the light of the eye joins with the light that stretches as far as the perceptible, then this light must be in between, and this hypothesis requires this medium. But if the colored underlying body produces an alteration, what prevents the alteration from going straight to the eye with nothing in between?—even if, as things are, when there is something in between, what lies in front of the eyes is necessarily altered in some way. Those who have sight pour out from the eyes would not be committed to there being anything in between at all, unless they feared the ray might fall; but it is a ray of light, and light travels straight. Those who make pressure

1 The electric ray (torpedo fish) was known to numb a fisherman's hand through the rod and line.

the cause would certainly need the medium.[2] The champions of images, who say they pass through the void, look for empty room so that the images won't be hindered; so if having nothing at all in between will hinder them still less, they have no quarrel with the hypothesis. Those who say seeing comes by sympathy will say we see less well if there is something in between, insofar as it hinders, obstructs, and weakens the sympathy. But it is more consistent to say that even what is akin always weakens it, insofar as it too is affected. For if a body continuous in depth were burned by the impact of fire, its inner part would still be less affected by the impact than its front part.

But if the parts of a single living being are in sympathy, would one be affected less because there is something in between? Or rather, it would be affected less, but the affection would be in due measure, as much as nature intended, the medium preventing excess—unless what is given is such that the medium is not affected at all. But if there is sympathy because it is one living being, and we are affected because we are in one and belong to one, how can there not need to be continuity when there is perception of something far away? Or rather, there is continuity and a medium because the living being must be continuous, but the affection belongs to what is continuous only incidentally—or else we shall say that everything is affected by everything. But if this is affected by that, and something else by something else, not in the same way, one would not need the medium everywhere. So if someone says it is needed in the case of sight, he must say why. For it does not appear that whatever goes through air always affects the air; it may only divide it. If a stone falls from above, for instance, what happens except that the air does not resist? Nor is it reasonable that it falls by the circular thrust of the air, since its motion is natural; on that account fire too would rise by circular thrust. But that is absurd, for fire, with its own swift motion, outruns the circular thrust of the air.

2 Plotinus runs through ancient theories of vision: rays pouring out of the eye, the Stoic account by pressure in tensed air, the atomists' "images" shed by objects (next paragraph), and sympathy.

And if someone says the circular thrust is quickened by the speed, that would happen incidentally, and not so as to drive anything upward; for even from burning logs the rush upward happens without their pushing. When we move, too, we cut the air, and the circular thrust does not push us; the air simply follows behind and fills what we leave empty. So if the air parts for such bodies without being affected, what prevents it from letting the forms that come to the sight pass through even without parting? And if the forms do not even pass through as in a flow, what necessity is there for the air to be affected, and for the affection to reach us through it by its being affected first? For if we perceived because the air was affected first, we would not see by looking at the visible object itself; we would get the perception from what lies next to us, as happens with being warmed. There it is not the distant fire but the adjacent air, once heated, that seems to warm us; for that is by touch, while in seeing it is not by touch. That is why a perceptible placed right on the eye does not make it see; the medium must be lit, because air is dark. If it were not dark, perhaps there would be no need of light at all. For the dark, being an obstacle to seeing, must be overcome by light. And perhaps an object brought right up to the sight is not seen because it brings with it the shadow of the air and its own.

4.5.3 The strongest evidence that we do not see the form of the perceptible through the air being affected, as if by a passing-on, is that at night, in darkness, a fire and the stars are seen, and their shapes. No one will say that the forms came to be in the darkness and so made contact with us; otherwise there would be no darkness, since the fire would have lit up its own form. Even when the darkness is very deep, and the stars (and the fire) are hidden, and their light does not shine out, the fire is seen from the beacon towers and from the towers that signal to ships. And if someone, contradicting perception, says that in these cases too the fire passes through, then the sight ought to apprehend the faint thing in the air, not the fire itself in all its brightness. And if what lies beyond is seen when darkness is in

between, much more will it be seen when nothing is. But one might stop over this: perhaps with nothing at all in between it will not be possible to see—not because there is nothing in between, but because the sympathy of the living being with the things, and that of its parts with one another by being one, would be abolished. For this seems to be what perceiving of any kind depends on: that this All is a living being in sympathy with itself.

If it were not, how could one thing share in the power of another, especially of what is far away? This, then, must be examined: if there were another cosmos and another living being, not contributing to this one, and there were an eye on the back of the heaven, would it see that other cosmos from a suitable distance, or would this one have nothing to do with that one? But this later. For now one could bring this further evidence that seeing does not come about through the medium being affected. If the air were affected, it would surely have to be affected bodily, and that means an impression made as in wax. Then a part of the visible object would have to be stamped on each portion of air, so that the portion in contact with the sight would carry only as much as the pupil could receive—the part of the visible object corresponding to its own size.[3] But in fact the whole is seen, and all who are in the air see it, from directly in front and from the sides, over a great distance, close up and from behind, as long as they are not blocked. So each portion of the air holds the whole of, say, the face being seen. And this happens not through a bodily affection, but through greater necessities, belonging to soul and to a single living being in sympathy with itself.

3 "The back of the heaven" is the outer surface of the cosmos, an image from Plato's *Phaedrus* (247b–c).

LIGHT AND THE MEDIUM

Plotinus argues that sight does not depend on an affected medium between eye and object.

4.5.4 But how does it work if the light of the sight joins with the light around the sight and reaches all the way to the perceptible? Or rather, first, it does not need the air in between—unless light cannot be spoken of without air, in which case the air is in between incidentally. The light itself would be in between without being affected; there is no need for affection here at all, but there is still need of the medium. And if light is not a body, there is no need of a body. Moreover, the sight would need external light in between not for seeing simply, but for seeing far off. Whether light could exist without air we shall see later; for now we must examine this. If this continuous light becomes ensouled, with soul traveling through it and present in it, as with the light inside, then in apprehending—which is what seeing is—it would not need the intervening light. Seeing would be like touch: the visual power apprehends in light, with nothing in between affected, and the sight simply travels there. Here we must ask whether the sight has to travel there because there is some distance, or because there is some body in the distance. If it is because there is a body in the distance, then if this obstruction were removed, it will see. But if it is simply because there is distance, we must suppose the nature of the visible to be idle and to do nothing at all.

But that is impossible. Touch does not merely say that something is near and touch it; it is affected, and reports the differences of what it touches, and if nothing intervened it would perceive what is far off too. For the air in between and we perceive fire at the same moment, without waiting for the air to be heated. At any rate a solid body is heated more than the air; so the heat comes rather through the air, but not because of it. If, then, one thing has the power to act and the other the power to be affected, in whatever way, why does it need another medium

for what it can do to have its effect? That would be needing an obstacle. When the sun's light approaches, it is not that the air must [perceive] first and then we; it happens simultaneously, and often before the light has come near the sight, while it is still elsewhere—so that we see without the air being affected, with what is unaffected in between and the light the sight must connect with not yet arrived. And seeing the stars at night, or fire in general, is hard to account for on this hypothesis. And if the soul remains in itself but needs the light like a walking stick to reach its object, the apprehension would have to be forcible, with the light stretched taut and pressing against the object, and the perceptible, as color, would itself have to push back; for that is how contacts through a medium work. Besides, in that case one has already been close to the object before, with nothing in between at the time; that is how touching through a medium later yields knowledge—as if by memory, and still more by inference. But this is not how it is now. And if the light next to the perceptible must be affected and then pass the affection on to the sight, this becomes the same hypothesis as the one in which the perceptible first alters the medium, against which difficulties have already been raised elsewhere.

4.5.5 As for hearing, must we grant here that the air is affected—the adjacent air receiving the first motion from what makes the sound—and that it reaches perception because the air all the way to the hearing is affected in the same way? Or is the medium there only incidentally, by being present in between, so that if the medium were removed, once the sound had occurred—when two bodies strike together, say—the perception would immediately reach us? Or rather, air is needed for the first stage, the air that is struck, but from there on the medium plays a different role. For here the air seems to be in charge of the sound: no sound would arise at all when two bodies clash unless the air, struck in their rapid coming together and driven out, struck in turn and passed it on to the next air, all the way to the ears and the hearing. But if the air is in charge of the sound, and the stroke is the stroke of this air being moved, what would account

for the differences between voices and sounds? Bronze struck against bronze sounds different from bronze against something else, and other things differently again; yet the air is one, and so is the stroke in it. For the differences are not only of loud and soft. And if we say that a stroke against the air produced a sound, we must say it is not insofar as it is air. For air sounds when it takes on the stability of a solid body, holding together like something solid before it disperses. So the colliding things and the collision would suffice, and this stroke, on reaching perception, is the sound. The sounds inside living beings bear witness to this: they occur not in air but when one thing collides with and strikes another—the bending of bones that grind against each other with no air in between, for instance, and grindings. But let the difficulty about this rest here, since the inquiry has become the same as what was said about sight: the affection of hearing too is a kind of self-awareness, as in a living being.

WHAT LIGHT IS

Light is an incorporeal activity of luminous bodies, not an affection of the air.

4.5.6 But could light exist even if there were no air—with the sun, say, shining on the surface of bodies, while what lies between is empty, whereas now it is lit only incidentally, because it is there? But if other things are lit because the air is affected, then light also owes its existence to the air, being an affection of it; and so the affection would not exist without the thing to be affected. Or rather, first, light does not belong primarily to the air, nor to it as air. It belongs also to every fiery and bright body in itself; and indeed some stones of this kind have a luminous color. But would what passes into something else from what has such a color exist without the air? Now if it is only a quality, the quality of something, then since every quality is in a substrate, light too must look for a body to be in. But if it is an activity coming from something else, why, when there is no body next to it

but something like a void in between—if that is possible—will it not exist and reach to what lies beyond? Since it stretches straight out, why will it not cross over without riding on anything? And if it is the kind of thing that can fall, it will be carried downward; for surely the air, or anything lit at all, will not be what draws it from the illuminator and forces it to go forward. It is not an accident, which would have to be entirely in something else, nor the affection of something else, which would require something to be affected. Otherwise it would have had to remain once the source had gone; but as it is, it goes away—so it could also arrive. Arrive where, then?

Or rather, there need only be place. Or else, on these terms, the sun's body will lose the activity that goes out from it—and that activity was light. If so, light will not even belong to anything. But the activity comes from a substrate, not into a substrate; though a substrate, if present, might be affected. Life is an activity, the activity of soul, and something—the body, for instance—would be affected by it if present; but it exists even when the body is not present. What would prevent the same being true of light, if it is an activity of what is luminous? Even as things are, it is not the darkness of the air that generates the light; rather, the air, mixed with earth, makes it dark and not really pure. So it would be like saying that something is sweet when it is mixed with something bitter. And if someone says that light is an alteration of the air, we must reply that the air itself would then have to be altered by the alteration, and its darkness would have to have changed into not-darkness. But in fact the air remains just as it is, as if it had undergone nothing. And an affection must belong to that of which it is an affection. So light is not even the air's color: it exists by itself on its own, and the air is simply present. Let this, then, be examined in this way.

4.5.7 Does light perish, or run back? Perhaps from this too we might gain something for the earlier question. Or rather, if it were inside, so that what has received a share of it already had it as its own, one might perhaps say it perishes. But if it is an activ-

ity that does not flow—for then it would flow around and pour inward beyond what was cast out by the active thing—it would not perish so long as the illuminator remains in existence. When the illuminator moves, the light is in another place, not because there has been a flowing back or a change of current, but because the activity belongs to that thing and is present as far as nothing prevents it. Indeed, if the sun were many times farther from us than it is now, there would be light even that far, as long as nothing prevented it or stood in the way in between. The activity within the luminous body is, as it were, its life, the greater activity, and, as it were, the origin and spring of the activity. The one beyond the boundary of the body, an image of what is within, is a second activity that does not separate from the first. For each of the things that are has an activity that is a likeness of it, so that while the thing exists, that exists too, and while the thing remains, it reaches out into the distance—some farther, some less far. Some activities are weak and faint, some even go unnoticed, while those of other things are greater and reach far. And when an activity reaches far, we must think of it as being there, where the active and powerful thing is, and also where it reaches. One can see this also with the eyes of animals whose eyes shine: light arises for them outside their eyes as well. And with animals that have fire concentrated inside them, which shine out into the darkness when they swell, while when they contract there is no light outside—nor has it perished: it either is outside or it is not. What, then? Has it gone inside? Or rather, it is not outside, because the fire too is no longer directed outward but has sunk inward. Did the light, then, sink in as well?

No: only the fire did. Once it has sunk in, the rest of the body stands in front of it, so that it does not act outward. The light from bodies, then, is the activity of a luminous body directed outward. But the light itself, the light in bodies of this kind (those that are such primarily), is wholly the being that corresponds to the form of the primarily luminous body. When a body of this kind is mixed with matter, it gives color. The activity

alone does not give color; it only, as it were, tints the surface, since it belongs to something else and is, as it were, suspended from it, so that whatever moves away from that thing moves away from its activity too. Still, it must certainly be counted as incorporeal, even if it belongs to a body. That is why "it has gone away" and "it is present" are not said of it in the strict sense, but in a different way: its reality is that of an activity. The image in a mirror, too, must be called an activity of the thing seen in it, acting on what is able to be affected, without flowing out. If the thing is present, the image appears there too, and exists in this way, as an image of color shaped like this. And if the thing goes away, the transparent surface no longer has what it had before, when the thing seen was there to act on it. So also with soul: insofar as it is the activity of another, prior soul, the subsequent activity remains as long as the prior one remains. But what about something that is not an activity but comes from an activity, like what we called the body's life, which is now its own, just as the light that is now mixed into bodies? Or rather, in that case there is color because what produces the color has been mixed in as well. But what about the life of the body? Perhaps it has it because another soul is present beside it. So when the body perishes—for nothing can be without a share in soul—when, then, the body perishes, and neither the soul that gave it life nor any other that may be beside it is enough for it any longer, how could life still remain? What then? Has this life perished? No, not this either: it too is an image of an illumination. It is simply no longer there.

4.5.8 Suppose there were a body outside the heaven, and sight from here, with nothing to block its view. Would it see what is not in sympathy with it, if sympathy, as things are, comes from the nature of a single living being? Or rather: if there is sympathy because perceivers and perceived belong to one living being, and perceptions work in this way, there would be no seeing unless this outside body were part of this living being; if it were, perhaps there would. But what if it were not a part, but a body that has color and the other qualities, like the bodies here,

being of the same kind as the organ? No, not even then, if the hypothesis is correct—unless someone tried to do away with the hypothesis on this very ground, saying it is absurd for sight not to see a color that is present, and for the other senses not to act on sense objects that are present to them. But where does this absurdity come from? we shall ask. Or rather, it is because here, being in one thing and belonging to one thing, we act and are affected in these ways. So we must look into this: whether it is because of this. If that is sufficient, the point has been shown; if not, it must be shown by other arguments too. That the living being is in sympathy with itself is clear, and if it is a living being, that is enough; so its parts are too, insofar as they belong to one living being. But what if someone were to say it is because of likeness?

Well, apprehension and perception belong to the living being, because one and the same thing shares in what is like: the organ is like its object. So perception will be the soul's apprehension through organs like the things apprehended. If, then, a living being perceives not the things within itself but things like those within itself, it will apprehend them insofar as it is a living being; but what makes the objects apprehensible [for it to apprehend] will be not that they are its own, but that they are like the things in it. Or rather, the apprehensible things are apprehensible as being alike in this way: because this soul has made them alike, so that they are not foreign to it. So if what made the things out there is an entirely different soul, then the things supposed to be alike out there have nothing to do with this one. But in fact the absurdity shows that the contradiction in the hypothesis is what causes it. For the hypothesis speaks at once of soul and not soul, of kindred and not kindred, of things that are the same and alike and yet unlike. So, containing opposites within itself, it would not even be a hypothesis. For it treats it as if soul were in that body too; so it posits all and not all, other and not other, nothing and not nothing, complete and not complete. So we must let the hypothesis go: there is no looking for what follows from a supposition that destroys itself from within.

IV.6 On Perception and Memory

Περὶ αἰσθήσεως καὶ μνήμης
Plotinus argues that perception and memory are activities of the soul, not imprints stored in it like seal marks.
no. 41 in order of writing

4.6.1 Since we say that perceptions are not impressions or seal-imprints made in the soul, we shall not say either—and this follows consistently—that memories are retentions of what was learned and perceived, with the impression remaining in the soul; for it never came about in the first place. That is why the two go together: either impressions are formed in the soul and remain, if something is remembered, or, if one denies either one of them, one must deny the other as well. Those of us, then, who affirm neither must necessarily inquire how each of them works, since we say neither that the impression of the sense object comes to be in the soul and imprints it, nor that memory exists through the impression's remaining. If we observe what happens in the clearest of the senses, perhaps by transferring the same to the other senses we might find what we are looking for.[1] It is surely clear in every case that when we perceive anything through sight, we see it out there, and direct our gaze to where the visible thing lies in a straight line. Evidently that is where the apprehension takes place, and the soul is looking outward, since no impression, I think, is formed in it, and it does not see by receiving a seal, the way wax receives one from a ring. For it would have no need to look outward if it already had

1 The view attacked is chiefly the Stoic one, which took perception to be an imprint on the soul, like a seal pressed into wax.

within itself the form of the thing seen, seeing by the mere fact that the impression had entered it.

And when the soul adds the distance to the object it sees and says how far away the sight is, how could it see what is in itself, not separated from it at all, as being far away? And as for the thing's size, how big it is out there—how could the soul say how big it is, or that it is large, like the size of the heaven, when the impression in it cannot be that large? And the greatest point of all: if we received impressions of what we see, it would not be possible to see the very things we see, but only reflections and shadows of them, so that the things themselves would be one thing and what we see another. In general, as people say, you cannot see a visible thing by placing it on the pupil; you must set it at a distance to see it that way. This must be transferred to the soul too, and much more so. For if we were to posit the impression of the visible thing in the soul, the part on which it was stamped would not see any object of sight: there must be two, the seer and the seen. So the seer must be something different, and the impression must lie somewhere else, not in the seer itself. So for sight to be sight, it must be of what is not lying in it, not of what is lying in it.

4.6.2 If not like this, then how? Or rather: the soul speaks about things it does not hold. That is what a power does: not to be affected in some way, but to be capable, and to accomplish the work it is assigned. This, I think, is how the soul can tell the visible from the audible: not if both are impressions, but if they are not impressions or affections but activities directed at the objects they are naturally concerned with. We, however, doubting whether each power can know its own object unless it is struck, make it be affected by what is near it rather than know it —when it has been given the power to master, not to be mastered. We must think the same happens with hearing. The impression is in the air, a kind of articulated blow, like letters written there by the one who made the sound; but the power and being of the soul, as it were, reads the impressions [the ones] written in the air when they come close, to the point

where they are naturally seen. As for taste and smell, there are the affections; but their perceptions and judgments, insofar as they are such, are knowledge of the affections, distinct from the affections. Knowledge of the intelligibles is still more free of affection and impression—for here, conversely, it comes forward, as it were, from within, while sense objects are contemplated from outside; and these are more truly activities, and activities in a more proper sense—for they belong to the soul, and the soul, when it is active, is each of them. Whether the soul sees itself [as] two, as something other, while it sees Intellect as one, and both together as one—that is for another place.

4.6.3 Now that this has been said, we must speak next about memory. But first we should say that it is not surprising—or rather, it is surprising, but one must not disbelieve in such a power of the soul—if, without taking anything into itself, it apprehends what it did not hold. For the soul is a rational principle of all things: the nature of soul is the last rational principle of the intelligibles and of what is in the intelligible world, and the first of those in the whole perceptible world. That is why it is related to both: by the one it is well affected and comes back to life; by the other, deceived by the likeness, it goes down as if under a spell. Being in the middle, it perceives both. It is said to think the intelligibles when it comes to remember them, if it turns toward them; for it knows them by being them, in a way. It knows them not by their settling into it, but by having them in a way, seeing them, and being them more dimly, and by becoming clearer out of the dimness through a kind of awakening, passing from potentiality into actuality. With sense objects it is the same: it links itself with them, as it were, and makes them, so to speak, shine out from itself, and sets them before its eyes, its power being ready and, as it were, in labor toward them. So whenever it has been strengthened toward any of the things that have appeared, it is disposed toward it as though it were present for a long time; and the more strongly, the more lastingly. That is also why children are said to have better memories: things do not stand off from them but lie before their eyes, since they are

not yet looking at a multitude but at a few things. Those whose thought and power are turned toward many things have them, as it were, running past and not staying. Yet if the impressions remained, the multitude would not have made people worse at remembering.

Further, if impressions remained, there would be no need to search in order to recall, nor to forget first and remember later things that were lying there. And the practice we do in order to retain things shows that what happens is a strengthening of the soul, just as the exercises of hands or feet aim at doing things easily—things that are not stored in the hands or feet, but which persistence has made them ready for. Why is it that, having heard something once or twice, one does not remember it, but when one has heard it many times, one remembers, long afterward, even what one did not retain on first hearing? Not, surely, because one had parts of the impression before—then one would have to remember those parts—but it happens, as it were, all at once, from some later hearing or practice. All this testifies to a calling forth of the soul's power by which we remember, as having been strengthened either in general or for this particular thing. And when the capacity to remember is present to us not only for what we have practiced, but people who have taken in a great deal, from being used to reciting, easily make the so-called recollections of other things too—what could one put memory down to, if not to the power's having been strengthened? Impressions that remained would point to weakness rather than power: what takes impressions most readily is so by yielding, and since the impression is an affection, what has been most affected would be what remembers best. But we see the opposite happen: nowhere does training for anything make the trained thing easily affected. With the senses too, it is not the weak eye, say, that sees, but the one with more power for activity. That is why old people are weaker both in their perceptions and likewise in their memories. So perception and memory are each a kind of strength.

Further, since perceptions are not impressions, how can memories be retentions of things that were never deposited in the first place? But if memory is a power, a preparedness to be ready, why do we come to recall the same things not at once but later? Perhaps because the power must, as it were, be set to it and made ready. We see this with the other powers too: they get ready to do what they can do, and some work at once, others only if they gather themselves. Generally the same people are not both good at remembering and quick-witted, since the power for each is not the same, just as the same man is often not both a boxer and a runner: different types prevail in different people. And yet, on their view, nothing would prevent someone with any superiority of soul at all from reading off what was stored; nor would someone who had slipped in that direction have acquired an incapacity for being affected and keeping the affection. The soul's being without magnitude (and in general) testifies that soul is a power. And in general it is a wonder how everything about soul is otherwise than people have assumed from not examining it, or otherwise than the ready notions that come to them from sense objects suggest, deceiving them through likenesses. For they think of perceiving and remembering as if they were letters written on tablets or writing-boards; and neither those who consider the soul a body see how many impossibilities follow from their hypothesis, nor those who consider it incorporeal.

IV.7 On the Immortality of the Soul

Περὶ ἀθανασίας ψυχῆς
Plotinus argues against materialist and Aristotelian views that the soul is bodiless, divine and immortal.
no. 2 in order of writing

4.7.1 Whether each of us is immortal, or perishes entirely, or some parts of us go off to dispersal and destruction while others, which are the self, remain forever—one could learn as follows, examining the question in accordance with nature. [The] human being would not be something simple: there is a soul in him, and he also has a body, whether it is an instrument for us or attached in some other way. Well, let it be divided like this, at any rate, and let us look at the nature and being of each. The body, being itself composite, cannot remain, as reason shows; and perception sees it dissolving, wasting away and suffering every kind of destruction, as each of its constituents moves toward its own kind, one destroying another, changing into something else and perishing—especially when soul, which makes them friends, is not present to the masses. And even if each component becomes isolated, it is not one, since it admits of dissolution into shape and matter, from which even the simple bodies must take their composition. Moreover, since they are bodies and have magnitude, they would be cut and broken into small pieces, and in that way too undergo destruction. So if this is a part of us, we are not immortal as a whole; and if it is an instrument, it had to be of such a nature, being given for a certain time. But the most important part, the man himself, would be either the form, related to matter (the body),

or the user, related to an instrument. Either way, the soul is the man himself.

THE SOUL IS NOT A BODY

Against the Stoics: no body can explain life, perception, thought or virtue.

4.7.2 What nature, then, does this have? If it is a body, it can certainly be dissolved, since every body is composite. If it is not a body but of another nature, that nature too must be examined, either [in] the same way or in another. But first we must consider into what this body, which they call soul, is to be dissolved. Since life is necessarily present to soul, this body, the soul, if it is made of two bodies or more, must either have innate life in both of them, or in each of them, or in one and not another, or in none. If living belongs to one of them, that one would be the soul. What body, then, could there be that has life from itself?[1] For fire, air, water and earth are soulless in themselves; whichever of them has soul present uses a life brought in from outside; and there are no other bodies besides these. Even those who think there are elements other than these have said they are bodies, not souls, and that they have no life. If none of them has life and their coming together has produced life, that is absurd—or rather, it is impossible that a heap of bodies should produce life, and that things without intellect should generate intellect. Besides, they will say that these do not come about by being mixed just any way. So there must be what orders them, the cause of the mixture; and this would hold the rank of soul. For not only would there be no composite body among the things that are without soul in the All; there would be no simple one either, if it is a rational principle coming to matter that makes body, and a rational principle could come from nowhere but soul.

4.7.3 Suppose someone says it is not like this, but that atoms or partless things coming together make soul by their union and

shared affection. He would be refuted (and by their juxtaposition too), since nothing wholly one, nor anything in sympathy with itself, comes from bodies that are unaffected and cannot unite; but soul is in sympathy with itself. And from partless things no body could come to be, not even a magnitude. Moreover, if body is simple, they will not say that its material part has life from itself—for matter is without quality—but that what is ordered by form brings life. Then if they say that this form is a substance, the soul will be not the compound but one of the two; and that would no longer be body. For this too is not made of matter; or else we shall analyze it again in the same way. But if they say it is an affection of matter and not a substance, they must tell us where the affection, and the life, came into matter from. For matter certainly does not shape itself, nor put soul into itself. So there must be something that supplies life, if the supplying belongs neither to matter nor to any body—something outside and beyond all bodily nature.

Indeed, there would not even be any body if there were no power of soul. For body flows, its nature is in motion, and it would perish very quickly if all things were bodies, even if one gave the name "soul" to one of them. That one would suffer the same as the other bodies, since they all have one matter. Or rather, it would not even come into being: everything would stop at matter, with nothing there to shape it. Perhaps matter itself would not exist at all; and this whole All would be dissolved, if one entrusted it to the binding of a body, granting it the rank of soul as far as names go—to air and breath, the most easily scattered of things, which does not have its unity from itself. When all bodies can be cut, how could anyone who attributes this All to any one of them fail to make it unintelligent and carried along at random? For what order is there in breath, which itself needs order from soul—or what rational principle, or intellect? But if soul exists, all these things serve it for the constitution of the cosmos and of each living being, each con-

1 "They" are chiefly the Stoics, who held that the soul is a body, a kind of "breath" (*pneuma*).

tributing a different power to the whole; if it is not present in the universe, these things would be nothing, let alone in order.

4.7.4 They themselves bear witness, led by the truth, that there must be, prior to bodies, some form of soul superior to them, when they posit breath as intelligent and fire as intellectual—as if the superior lot could not exist among the things that are without fire and breath, but needed a place to be settled in; whereas they should have asked where they will settle bodies, since bodies must be settled in the powers of soul. And if they posit life and soul as nothing besides breath, what is this "in a certain state" of theirs, which they keep repeating, and in which they take refuge when they are forced to posit another, active nature besides bodies? If, then, not every breath is soul, since there are countless soulless breaths, but they will say soul is breath "in a certain state," they will say that this "in a certain state," this disposition, is either one of the things that are, or nothing.[2] If it is nothing, there would be only breath, and "in a certain state" would be a mere name. And so it will follow that they say nothing else exists but matter, and that soul and god are all names, and only matter [is].

But if the disposition is one of the things that are, and something other than the substrate and matter—in matter, but itself immaterial, since it is not in turn composed of matter—it would be a rational principle, and not body, and a different nature. Further, it is no less clear from the following that the soul cannot be any body whatsoever. It would be either hot or cold, hard or soft, fluid or solid, black or white, and have all the qualities of bodies, different ones in different bodies. If it is hot, it will only heat; if cold, only cool; what is light, when it comes and is present, will make things light; what is heavy will make them heavy; what is black will blacken; and what is white will make them white. For it is not for fire to cool, nor for the cold to heat. But the soul produces different effects in different living beings, and opposite effects in the same one: solidifying some things,

2 "In a certain state" (*pōs echon*) is one of the Stoic categories: the soul, for them, is breath disposed in a particular way.

liquefying others, making some dense and others rare, [making them] black or white, light or heavy. Yet it should produce one effect, corresponding to the body's quality—both its other quality and its color too; but as it is, it produces many.

4.7.5 And motions: how can they be different, and not one, when every body has one motion? If they put some down to choices and others to rational principles, that is right; but choice does not belong to body, nor do rational principles, since they are different while body is one and simple, and has no share in a principle of that kind beyond what was given to it by its maker—to be hot or cold. And making things grow over time, up to such and such a measure: where could body itself get this? It is suited to be grown, but has no share in causing growth, except insofar as it might be taken up into a mass of matter as a servant of what produces growth through it. Indeed, if the soul, being a body, caused growth, it would have to grow itself, evidently by the addition of similar body, if it is to keep pace with what it makes grow. What is added will be either soul or soulless body. If soul, where does it come from, how does it enter, and how is it added? If what is added is soulless, how will it be ensouled, agree with what was there before, become one with it, and share the same opinions as the first, rather than being like a foreign soul, ignorant of what the other knows? And, like the rest of our bulk, will some of it flow away and some be added, with nothing remaining the same? How then do we have memories? And how do we recognize the people close to us, if we never have the same soul?

Moreover, if it is a body, and it is the nature of body, when divided into several pieces, that none of the parts is the same as the whole—if soul is a magnitude of a certain size, then if it becomes smaller it will not be soul, just as every quantity loses its former being by subtraction. But if something with magnitude, reduced in bulk, remains the same in quality, then as a body and as a quantity it is different, but it can keep its sameness through its quality, which is something other than quantity. What, then, will those who say the soul is body reply? First,

about each part of the soul in the same body: is each part soul, just as the whole is? And again, the part of the part? Then magnitude contributed nothing to its being—though it should have, if soul were a quantity. But it is also whole in many places, which cannot hold of a body: the same thing being whole in several places, and the part being exactly what the whole is. If they deny that each of the parts is soul, they will have soul made of soulless things. Besides, if the magnitude of each soul is fixed at both limits, then beyond it, toward the smaller or toward the greater, it will not be soul. So when twins are born from a single intercourse and a single seed—or, as in other animals, a great many offspring, the seed being divided into many places, each part of which is whole—how does this not teach those willing to learn that where the part is the same as the whole, this thing has, in its own being, gone beyond being a quantity, and must of necessity be itself without quantity? For in this way it could remain the same while its quantity was stolen away, since it has no concern with quantity or bulk, its being being something else. So the soul and the rational principles are without quantity.

4.7.6 That if the soul were a body there would be no perceiving, no thinking, no knowing, no virtue, nothing fine at all, is clear from the following. If something is going to perceive anything, it must itself be one, and apprehend everything with one and the same thing—even if many things come in through many sense organs, or there are many qualities belonging to one thing, or something complex comes in through one organ, a face, for instance. It is not one thing that perceives the nose and another the eyes, but the same thing perceives them all together. And if one thing comes through the eyes and another through hearing, there must be something one into which both come. Otherwise how could it say that they are different, if the sense impressions did not come together into the same thing? This, then, must be like a center, and the perceptions coming from all sides must end at it, like lines converging from the circumference of a circle; and what apprehends must be like this, truly one. If it were extended, and [the] perceptions struck it as at the two ends

of a line, then either they will run together again into one and the same point, the middle, say, or one end will perceive one thing and the other another, [and] each will have its own perception—just as if I perceived one thing and you another. And if the sense object is one, like a face, either it will be contracted into one—which is evidently what happens, for it is contracted even in the pupils themselves; otherwise how could the largest things be seen through them?— so that, all the more, when they reach the ruling part, they become, as it were, partless thoughts—and this will be partless; or, if it is a magnitude, the object would be divided up along with it, so that different parts would apprehend different parts and none of us would apprehend the sense object as a whole.

But in fact the whole is one: how could it be divided? Equal will not be fitted to equal, since the ruling part is not equal to every sense object. Into how many parts, then, will the division go? Or will it be divided into as many as the incoming sense object has in number, according to its variety? And will each of those parts of the soul perceive with its own subparts too? Or will the parts of the subparts be without perception? But that is impossible. And if any part whatever perceives the whole, then, since magnitude is naturally divisible to infinity, it will follow that each has infinitely many perceptions of each sense object—as if there were infinitely many images of the same thing in our ruling part. Moreover, if what perceives is a body, perceiving could happen in no other way than like seals stamped in wax by rings, the sense objects being stamped either into blood or into air. If it is as with fluid bodies, which is indeed reasonable, they will be blurred, as if into water, and there will be no memory. But if the impressions remain, either others cannot be stamped while those occupy the place—so that there will be no further perceptions—or, when others come, the earlier ones will be destroyed—so that [the] remembering will come to nothing. But if there is remembering, and perceiving some things after others without the earlier ones getting in the way, it is impossible for the soul to be a body.

4.7.7 One can see the same point from the perception of pain as well. When a man is said to have a pain in his finger, the pain is surely in the finger; but they will plainly agree that the perception of the pain occurs in the ruling part. So while the suffering part (of the breath) is a different one, the ruling part perceives, and the whole soul feels the same. How does this happen, then? By transmission, they will say: the soul-breath in the finger is affected first, passes it on to the next, and that to another, until it reaches the ruling part. Then, necessarily, if the first part in pain perceived it, the perception of the second would be another one, if perception happens by transmission, and that of the third [indeed] another; and there would be many perceptions, infinitely many, [the ones] concerning a single pain; and after all these the ruling part would perceive them, and its own as well. But the truth would be that none of those is a perception of the pain in the finger: the one next to the finger would perceive that the palm hurts, the third that another part farther up does; there would be many pains; and the ruling part would perceive not the pain in the finger but the one next to itself, and know only that, and let the rest go, without knowing that the finger hurts. If, then, perception of such a thing cannot come about by transmission, and if, in a body, which is a mass, one part cannot know when another is affected—for in every magnitude one part is one thing and another another—we must posit what perceives as something that is everywhere the same as itself. And to do this belongs to some other kind of being than body.

4.7.8 That thinking would not be possible either, if the soul were any body at all, must be shown from the following. If perceiving is the soul's apprehending sense objects by making use of the body, thinking cannot also be grasping through the body, or it will be the same as perceiving. If, then, thinking is apprehending without the body, much more must what thinks not be a body. For perception is of sense objects, thinking of intelligibles. If they won't have this, still there will at least be thoughts of some intelligibles and apprehensions of things without magnitude. How, then, will what is a magnitude think what is not a

magnitude? And think the indivisible with what is divisible? Perhaps with some partless part of itself. But if so, what thinks will not be body: there is no need of the whole to make contact; some one point is enough. If, then, they grant—as is true—that the primary thoughts are of things entirely pure of body, each of them itself by itself, then what thinks must necessarily know them by being, or becoming, pure of body. If they say that thoughts are of forms in matter, still these come about when the forms are separated from bodies, with intellect doing the separating. For the separating of circle, triangle, line and point is not done together with flesh or with matter at all. So the soul too must separate itself from body in such an act; so it too must not be a body. And the beautiful and the just, I think, are without magnitude; so the thinking of them is too. So when they approach, the soul will receive them with its partless part, and they will lie in it in something partless.

And how, if the soul were a body, could there be virtues of it—moderation and justice [courage and the others? For being moderate, or justice, or courage, [would] be some breath or some blood—unless courage were the breath's resistance to being affected, moderation its good blend, and beauty some shapeliness in its configurations, the kind by which we call people lovely and beautiful in body when we see them. Strength and beauty of configuration might well suit breath; but what need has breath of being moderate? On the contrary, it would want to be pleasantly affected by embraces and touches, where it will be warmed, or long for a moderate coolness, or come close to soft, tender, smooth things. And what would it care about distributing according to merit?[3] Does the soul make contact with the truths of virtue, which are eternal, and with the other intelligibles? Or does virtue come to someone, benefit him, and then perish again? But who makes it, and from where? For then that maker, in turn, would remain. So virtue must be of eternal and

3 The square bracket opened here closes only at the end of chapter 8^5: this whole stretch is missing from the manuscripts of the Enneads and is preserved through Eusebius' *Preparation for the Gospel*.

abiding things, like the truths of geometry. And if of eternal and abiding things, not of bodies. So that in which it will be must be of the same kind; so it must not be a body. For the whole nature of body does not remain, but flows.

4.7.8[1] And if, seeing the actions of bodies—heating, cooling, pushing, weighing down—they assign soul to this rank, settling it, as it were, in an active place, then, first, they fail to realize that bodies themselves accomplish these things by the incorporeal powers in them; and second, that these are not the powers we consider to belong to soul: thinking, perceiving, reasoning, desiring, caring for all things wisely and well—these call for a different kind of being. So, having transferred the powers of bodies to incorporeal things, they leave none for those. That bodies too can do what they can by incorporeal powers is clear from the following. They will agree that quality and quantity are different, that every body is a quantity, and further that not every body has quality—matter, for instance. Agreeing to this, they will agree that quality, being other than quantity, is other than body. For how will it be body if it is not a quantity, when every body is a quantity? And again, as was said somewhere above: if every body and every mass, when divided, loses what it was, while when the body is chopped up the same quality remains whole in each part—as [if] the sweetness of honey is no less sweetness in each bit—then [the] sweetness would not be body. The same goes for the other qualities. Next, if the powers were bodies, the strong powers would necessarily have to be large masses, and those able to do little, small masses. But if large masses have small powers, and a few of the very smallest masses have the greatest powers, acting must be attributed to something other than magnitude—so to what has no magnitude. And their saying that matter is the same, being body, as they claim, but produces different effects when it takes on qualities—how does this not make it clear that what is added is rational principles, and incorporeal? Nor let them say that animals die when breath or blood leaves them. For they cannot exist without these, nor without many other things, none of which would be

the soul. Besides, neither breath nor blood pervades everything; but soul does.

4.7.8[2] Further, if the soul, being a body, pervaded everything, it would be mixed, in the way other bodies are mixed. But if the mixture of bodies leaves none of the things mixed in actuality, then neither would the soul any longer be in the bodies in actuality, but only potentially, having lost its being as soul—just as, if sweet and bitter were mixed, the sweet no longer exists. So we have no soul. And for a body to be mixed with a body whole through whole, so that wherever [the one] is the other is too, both occupying an equal volume and the whole of it, with no increase in size when the other is added—this will leave nothing that it does not cut. For the mixing is not by alternating large parts—that, they say, would be juxtaposition—but the added body passes through the whole, even if it is smaller; which is impossible, for the smaller to become equal to the larger. Anyway, having passed through, it cuts the whole at every point. Necessarily, then, if it is at every point and there is no body in between that has not been cut, the body must have been divided down to points, which is impossible. And if the cutting goes on to infinity—for whatever body you take is divisible—the infinite will be not only potential but actual. So it is not possible for a body to go whole through a whole; but soul goes through wholes; so it is incorporeal.

4.7.8[3] And to say that this same breath was previously nature, and that on coming into the cold and being tempered it becomes soul, growing finer in the cold—which is itself absurd, since many animals come into being in heat and have a soul that has not been cooled—well, at any rate they do say that nature is prior to soul, which comes about through external chance events. So it turns out that they put the worse first, and before it something still lesser, which they call "tenor," while intellect comes last, evidently arising from soul. Or, if intellect is before everything, they should have put soul next, then nature, and always the later thing worse, in accordance with how things nat-

urally are.[4] If, then, their god too is later as regards intellect, and generated, and has his thinking brought in from outside, it would be possible for there to be neither soul nor intellect nor god—if what is potential could not come into being, nor arrive at actuality, unless what is actual existed first. For what will bring it there, if there is nothing other than it and prior to it? And if it brings itself into actuality—which is absurd—it will still do so by looking toward something that is not potential but actual. And yet if what is potential is to have the ability to remain always the same, it will come into actuality by itself, and this will be superior to what is potential, as being what it desires. So the superior, which has a nature other than body and is always in actuality, is prior; so intellect and soul are prior to nature. So soul does not exist in the way breath does, nor in the way body does. As for the case that it is not a body, others too have made other arguments; but these are enough as well.

NEITHER HARMONY NOR ENTELECHY

Soul is neither the harmony of the body nor its inseparable entelechy.

4.7.8[4] Since it is of another nature, we must ask what this nature is. Is it something other than body, yet something belonging to body, like a harmony? Since the Pythagoreans said this in a different sense, people thought it was something like the harmony of strings. Just as there, when the strings are stretched, something like an affection supervenes on them, which is called harmony, so, since our body consists of a blend of unlike things, the particular blend produces life, and the soul is the affection supervening on the blend. That this is impossible has already been argued at length against this opinion.[5] For it has been said that soul is prior, harmony posterior; that the one rules and commands the body and often fights against it, whereas, if it

4 In Stoic theory breath (*pneuma*) holds stones together as "tenor" (*hexis*), animates plants as "nature," and in animals becomes "soul," the newborn's nature being chilled and tempered into soul at birth.

5 The harmony theory is put forward by Simmias in Plato's *Phaedo* (85e–86d) and refuted there by Socrates; the objections that follow echo that refutation.

were a harmony, it could not do these things; that the one is a substance, while harmony is not a substance; that the blend of the bodies we are made of, being in due proportion, would be health; that each part, blended differently, would be a different soul, so that there would be many; and, most important, that before this soul there must be another soul which produces this harmony—as with instruments there is the musician who puts the harmony into the strings, having in himself the rational principle by which he will tune them. For neither there the strings, nor here the bodies, will be able to bring themselves into harmony on their own. In general, these people too make ensouled things out of soulless ones, and ordered things out of disordered ones by chance, and have order come not from soul, but soul itself get its existence from an order that arose spontaneously. That cannot happen either in particular things or in the wholes. So the soul is not a harmony.

4.7.8[5] As for entelechy, one might examine in this way how it is said of the soul. They say that in the composite the soul holds the rank of form, with [the] ensouled body as matter; yet form not of every body, nor of body as body, but of a natural organic body potentially having life. If, then, it has been made like the body in the way it is applied to it, as the shape of a statue is to the bronze, then when the body is divided the soul [must] be divided along with it, and when some part is cut off a portion of soul [too] goes with the part cut off; and the withdrawal in sleep would not happen, since the entelechy must be grown together with that of which it is the entelechy—in truth, there would be no sleep at all. And further, if soul is an entelechy, there would be no opposition of reason to desires; the whole would be affected in one and the same way throughout, without disagreeing with itself. Perceptions alone might perhaps be possible, but thoughts impossible. That is why they themselves bring in another soul, intellect, which they posit as immortal. So the reasoning soul must be an entelechy in some other way than this, if we must use the word at all. Nor is the perceiving soul an inseparable entelechy: if it too keeps the impressions of sense

objects when they are absent, it will keep them, then, not together with the body; if not, they will be in it as shapes and images. But it would be impossible to receive others, if they were in it that way. So it is not an inseparable entelechy. Nor, indeed, is the desiring part—desiring not food and drink but things other than those of the body—an inseparable entelechy either. There would remain the vegetative part, which might seem open to dispute: might it not be an inseparable entelechy in this way?

But this does not seem to be so either. The principle of every plant lies around the root, and in many plants, when the rest of the body withers, the soul around the root and lower parts has evidently left the other parts and contracted into a single place. So it was not in the whole as an inseparable entelechy. And again, before the plant has grown, the soul is there in a small bulk. If, then, it withdraws into a small space from a larger plant, and spreads from a small one over the whole, what prevents it from being separated altogether? And how could it, being without parts, become the divided entelechy of a divided body? Besides, the same soul comes to belong to one animal after another. How could the soul of the earlier animal become that of the next, if it were the entelechy of one? This is evident from animals that change into other animals.[6] So it does not have its being by being the form of something. It is a being that does not get its existence from being settled in a body; it exists even before it comes to belong to this particular thing, a living creature, say. It is not the body that will generate the soul. What, then, is its being? If it is neither body nor an affection of body, but action and making, and many things are both in it and from it, what sort of being is it, since it is other than bodies? Clearly, it is what we call being in the true sense. For everything bodily would be called becoming, not being: it comes into being and perishes and never really is, but is preserved by participation in being, to the extent that it participates in it.

6 "Withers" translates the widely accepted correction *auainomenou*; the printed text has *auxanomenou*, "grows."

4.7.9 The other nature, which has its being from itself, is all that really is, which neither comes into being nor perishes. Otherwise all other things will vanish, and could not come into being later once this had perished, since it is what provides their preservation: both to the other things and to this All, which is preserved and ordered through soul. For soul is the principle of motion. It supplies motion to the other things, while it is itself moved by itself, and it gives life to the ensouled body, while it has life from itself, a life it never loses, since it has it from itself. Not all things, after all, use a life brought in from outside; otherwise it will go on to infinity. There must be some nature that is primarily alive, which must of necessity be indestructible and immortal, since it is the principle of life for the other things as well. This, then, is where all that is divine and blessed must be situated, living from itself and being from itself, being primarily and living primarily, with no share in change in its being, neither coming into being nor perishing. For where would it come from, or into what would it perish? And if the name "being" is to apply truly, it will have to be not something that is at one time and is not at another. Just so white, the color itself, is not white at one time and not white at another. If white were also being, then along with being white it would be always. But it has only whiteness. Whatever has being present to it, from itself and primarily, will always be. This, then, which is primarily and always, must not be dead like a stone or a piece of wood; it must be alive, and enjoy a pure life so far as it remains alone by itself. Whatever of it is mixed with the worse has an obstacle in the way of the best things, but it has by no means lost its own nature, and it recovers its ancient state when it runs back up to what is its own.

THE SOUL SEES ITS OWN DIVINITY

A purified soul, looking at itself, finds that it is divine and immortal.

4.7.10 That the soul is akin to the more divine and eternal nature is shown, among other things, by the proof that it is not body. Nor,

indeed, does it have shape or color, and it cannot be touched. But it can also be shown from the following. Since we agree that all that is divine and really is enjoys a good and intelligent life, we must next consider, starting from our own soul, what it is like in its nature. Let us take a soul—not one in a body that has taken on irrational desires and passions and admitted other affections, but one that has wiped these off and, as far as possible, has no communion with the body. Such a soul makes it clear that evils are additions to the soul and come from elsewhere, while in it, once it is purified, the best things are present, understanding and the rest of virtue, which are its own. If, then, the soul is like this when it goes back up into itself, how can it not be of that nature which we say belongs to all that is divine and eternal? For understanding and true virtue, being divine things, could not come to be in some paltry mortal thing; such a thing must be divine, since it has a share in divine things through kinship and sameness of being. That is why any of us who is like this would differ little from the beings above in his soul itself, falling short only in this: in so far as he is in a body. And that is why, if every human being were like this, or a large number had souls like this, no one would be so incredulous as not to believe that the soul in them is altogether immortal.

As it is, seeing the soul in most people mutilated in many ways, people do not think of it as something divine or immortal. But one must consider the nature of each thing by looking at it in its pure state, since what has been added is always an obstacle to knowing that to which it was added. So look by taking away—or rather, let the one who has taken away look at himself, and he will believe he is immortal, when he contemplates himself having come to be in the intelligible and in the pure. For he will see an intellect that sees nothing perceptible, nothing of these mortal things, but grasps the eternal by the eternal, all the things in the intelligible, and himself become an intelligible world, full of light, illuminated by the truth that comes from the Good, which shines truth on all the intelligibles. So he will often think this was well said: "Farewell: to you I am an immortal

god," having gone up to the divine and fixed his gaze on his likeness to it. And if purification makes one be in knowledge of the best things, then the kinds of knowledge that are within also come to light, those that really are knowledge.[7] For it is not by running off somewhere outside that the soul catches sight of moderation and justice. It sees them by itself, within itself, in its understanding of itself and of what it was before, like statues set up in it, which it has cleaned of the rust, as it were, that time had filled them with. It is as if gold had a soul, and then, knocking off all the earthy matter in it, having before been ignorant of itself because it did not see gold, then at last it would admire itself for what it is, seeing itself on its own, and would reflect that it had no need after all of any imported beauty, being itself supreme, if one would only let it be by itself.

4.7.11 About a thing like this, who with any sense would dispute that it is immortal? It has life present to it from itself, a life that cannot be lost. For how could it be, since it is not acquired, nor again possessed in the way heat is present to fire? I do not mean that heat is something brought into fire from outside, but that, even if not to the fire, it is to the matter underlying the fire. That is how fire is dissolved. But the soul does not have life in such a way that the soul underlies as matter and life, coming upon it, makes it a soul. For either life is a substance, and such a substance is alive by itself—which is just what we are looking for—and they will agree that this is immortal; or they will analyze it, too, as composite, and so on again, until they come to something immortal, moved by itself, for which it is not lawful to receive the lot of death. Or, if they say life is an affection brought into matter, they will be compelled to admit that whatever this affection came into matter from is itself immortal, since it cannot receive the opposite of what it brings. But in fact there is one nature that is actually alive.

4.7.12 Further, if they say every soul is perishable, everything would long since have perished. If they say some souls are and

7 The line is from Empedocles' *Purifications* (fr. 112), where he greets his fellow citizens as a god.

some are not—that the soul of the All, say, is immortal, but ours is not—they must give the reason. For each is a principle of motion, each lives from itself, and each grasps the same things with the same faculty, thinking both what is in heaven and what is beyond heaven, seeking out everything that has being, and ascending as far as the first principle. And the understanding of each thing itself, which the soul has from itself out of the sights within it, arising from recollection, gives it being before the body, and shows that, since it possesses eternal kinds of knowledge, it is itself eternal too. And everything that is dissolved, having received composition in order to exist, is naturally dissolved in the way it was put together. But soul is one and simple, a nature whose being lies in the activity of living; so it will not perish in that way. Then perhaps it would perish by being divided [and] chopped into bits. But the soul, as has been shown, is not a mass or a quantity. Then it will come to destruction by alteration. But alteration, when it destroys, takes away the form and leaves the matter, and that is something that happens to a composite. If, then, it cannot be destroyed in any of these ways, it must be indestructible.

4.7.13 How, then, since the intelligible is separate, does this soul come into body? Like this: whatever is intellect alone remains always There among the intelligibles, unaffected, having only intellectual life—for in it there is no impulse or desire. But what takes on desire, coming next after that Intellect, by the addition of desire proceeds, as it were, further already. Desiring to order things according to what it saw in Intellect, as if pregnant by them and in labor to give birth, it is eager to make and to craft. And straining toward the perceptible with this eagerness, together with the whole Soul of the All it transcends what it governs outside, and shares in the care of the All; but when it wants to govern a part, it becomes isolated and comes to be in that part in which it is, not becoming wholly and entirely the body's, but keeping something outside the body as well. So its intellect, at least, is not subject to affection. The soul itself is sometimes in body, sometimes outside body. It started from the first things

and has proceeded to the third, by an activity of Intellect, while Intellect remains in the same and through soul fills all things with beauty and sets them in order—the immortal through the immortal—since it too, always being, will be through unceasing activity.

4.7.14 As for the soul of the other animals: those of them that have gone wrong and come as far as the bodies of beasts must also be immortal. If there is another kind of soul, it too must come from nowhere other than the living nature, since it too is the cause of life to animals; and the same holds for the soul in plants. For all of them started from the same principle, each with a life of its own, and these too are incorporeal, without parts, and substances. If [they say that] the human soul, being tripartite, will be dissolved as a composite, we too shall say that the pure souls, when they depart, will let go of what was molded on to them at birth, while the others will stay with it for a very long time; and that the worse part, once let go, will not itself perish either, as long as that from which it has its origin exists. For nothing that is will perish.

4.7.15 What had to be said to those who require demonstration has been said. What is to be said to those who require a belief mixed with perception must be selected from the abundant record of such matters: from the oracles the gods gave, ordering people to appease the anger of souls that had been wronged and to pay honors to the dead as still capable of perception, as in fact all human beings do toward those who have departed. And many souls that were formerly in human beings, after coming to be outside bodies, have not stopped doing good to human beings. They have established oracles and help by prophesying about other matters too, and they show through themselves that the other souls have not perished either.

IV.8 On the Descent of the Soul into Bodies

Περὶ τῆς εἰς τὰ σώματα καθόδου τῆς ψυχῆς
Opening with his own ascents to the divine, Plotinus reconciles Plato's accounts of the soul's fall into bodies.
no. 6 in order of writing

4.8.1 Often I have woken up out of the body into myself, and come to be outside everything else and inside myself, and seen a beauty of wonderful greatness, and been confident that then above all I belonged to the better part. I have lived the best life and come to be one with the divine, and, settled firmly in it, I have come into that activity, setting myself above all else in the intelligible. Then, after this rest in the divine, when I have come down from Intellect into reasoning, I am puzzled how I ever come down, even now, and how my soul has ever come to be inside the body, when it is what it showed itself to be by itself, even while it is in a body. Heraclitus, who urges us to seek this, posits necessary exchanges from opposites, and speaks of a way up and down, and says "changing it rests" and "it is weariness to toil for the same masters and be ruled by them"; he seems to speak in images, not troubling to make his meaning clear to us, as if perhaps we ought to seek within ourselves, just as he himself sought and found. And Empedocles, who said that it is a law for souls that err to fall here, and that he himself has come here "an exile from the gods, trusting in raving Strife," revealed no more than Pythagoras and his followers, I think, hinted at in riddles about this and many other things. In his case, besides,

writing in verse kept him from being clear.[1] We are left, then, with the divine Plato, who said many fine things about the soul and has spoken about its coming here in many places in his works, so that we can hope to get something clear from him.

What, then, does this philosopher say? He will not be found saying the same thing everywhere, so that one could easily have seen what the man means. But everywhere he disparages the whole perceptible world and blames the soul's communion with the body. He says the soul is in fetters and buried in it, and that the account told in the mysteries is a great one, which says that the soul is "under guard." And his cave, like Empedocles' grotto, seems to me to mean this All, since he says that the release from the fetters and the ascent from the cave is the soul's journey to the intelligible. In the *Phaedrus* he makes the loss of its wings the cause of its coming here; and in his account cycles bring the soul back here after it has gone up, and judgments send others down here, and so do lots and fortunes and necessities.[2] And while in all these passages he blames the soul's coming to body, in the *Timaeus*, speaking about this All, he praises the cosmos and calls it a blessed god, and says that soul was given by the good craftsman so that this All might be intelligent, since it had to be intelligent and this could not come about without soul. So the Soul of the All was sent into it by the god for this reason, and the soul of each of us too, so that the All might be complete; since the very same kinds of living beings that are in the intelligible world had to exist in the perceptible as well.

WHY SOULS COME INTO BODIES

Plotinus reconciles Plato's gloomy and hopeful accounts of the soul's coming to body.

4.8.2 So it turns out that, in seeking to learn from him about our own soul, we are necessarily led to take up the question of soul

1 The phrases quoted come from the fragments of Heraclitus and Empedocles.
2 Plotinus is alluding to the *Phaedo* (prison and burial of the soul), the cave of *Republic* VII, the *Phaedrus* myth of the winged soul, and the myth of Er in *Republic* X.

in general as well: how it is ever naturally fitted to associate with body. We must also ask about the nature of the cosmos—what sort of thing we should suppose it to be, in which soul makes its home, [whether] willingly or under compulsion or in some other way—and about its maker, whether he did rightly or ⟨...⟩ as perhaps our souls are, which, governing worse bodies, had to sink deep inside them if they were going to master them. For each of these bodies would scatter and be carried off to its own place—whereas in the All everything lies in its own place by nature—and they need much troublesome forethought, since many alien things are always falling upon them, and they are constantly gripped by need and require every kind of help, being in great difficulty. But what is complete, sufficient and self-sufficient, and has nothing in it contrary to its nature, needs only a brief command, as it were. And as soul naturally wishes, so it always is, having no desires and undergoing no affections, for nothing leaves it and nothing is added to it. That is why he says that our soul too, if it comes to be with that complete soul, is itself perfected and "walks on high and governs the whole cosmos." When it does not withdraw so as to be inside bodies or to belong to some particular one, then it too, like the Soul of the All, will easily share in governing the All; for it is in no way bad for soul to give body the power to exist, since not every kind of care for the worse prevents what cares for it from remaining in the best.

For there are two kinds of care for anything. Care for the universal orders it by command, with an effortless, kingly supervision; care for the particular works by a kind of hands-on making, which through its contact with what is done infects the doer with the nature of what is done. Now since the divine soul is said always to govern the whole heaven in the first way, transcending it with its better part and sending its lowest power into the interior, the god could no longer be said to be to blame for having put the Soul of the All in something worse. Nor is the soul deprived of what is natural to it, since it has had this from eternity and will always have it, and it cannot be contrary to its

nature; it belongs to it continuously and always, never having begun. And when he says that the souls of the stars are related to their bodies in the same way as the All is—for he places their bodies too in the circuits of soul—he would preserve for them, too, the happiness that befits them. For there are two reasons why the soul's association with bodies is objected to: that it becomes an obstacle to thinking, and that it fills the soul with pleasures, desires and pains. Neither of these could happen to a soul that has not sunk into the interior of the body and does not belong to anything—a soul that has not become the body's, but the body has become its—when the body is such as neither to need anything nor to be lacking in anything; so that the soul is not filled with desires or fears either. For it will never expect anything terrible concerning a body of that kind, nor does any preoccupation make it incline downward and draw it away from the better and blessed vision. It is always turned toward those things, ordering this All with an effortless power.

4.8.3 As for the human soul, which is said to suffer badly in the body in every way and to be miserable, coming to be among griefs and desires and fears and the other evils, the soul for which the body is a fetter and a tomb and the cosmos a cave and a grotto: let us now say what his view of it is, a view not inconsistent, since the causes of the descent are not the same. Since, then, Intellect as a whole is in the region of thought, whole and all—what we call the intelligible world—and since there also exist the intellectual powers contained in it and the individual intellects—for Intellect is not one only, but one and many—there had to be many souls and also one, and the many different souls had to come from the one, like species from one genus, some better and some worse, some more intellectual, others less actually so. For There too, in Intellect, there is Intellect, which contains the others potentially, like a great living being, and there are the others, each actually what the former contained potentially. It is as if a city were ensouled and contained other ensouled beings: the soul of the city would be more complete and more powerful, but nothing would prevent the others from

being of the same nature. Or it is as if from the universal fire there came a great fire and small fires; yet the whole being is that of the universal fire, or rather that from which the being of the universal fire also comes. The work of the more rational soul is to think, but not only to think—for then how would it differ from Intellect? In addition to being intellectual it took on something else, by which it acquired its own hypostasis, and it did not remain Intellect; and it too has a work, as does everything that exists. Looking to what is before it, it thinks; looking to itself, it preserves itself; looking to what comes after it, it orders, governs and rules it. For it was not possible for everything to come to a standstill in the intelligible, when something else could come next, something less, but necessary, given that what is before it exists.

4.8.4 The individual souls, then, have an intellectual desire in their return toward that from which they came, but they also have a power directed to the things here, like light that depends above on the sun but does not begrudge its supply to what comes after it. They [must] be free from harm while they remain with the whole Soul in the intelligible, and in heaven they share with the whole Soul in its governance, like kings who keep company with the ruler of all and share in his governance without themselves coming down from the royal places either; for at that point they are together in the same place. But when they change from the whole to being a part and belonging to themselves, and grow weary, as it were, of being with another, they each withdraw into what is their own. When a soul does this for a long time, fleeing the All and standing apart in its distinctness, and does not look toward the intelligible, it becomes a part and is isolated and weak, and busies itself with many things and looks toward a part. By its separation from the whole it alights on some one thing and flees all the rest, coming and turning to that one thing, which is battered by everything on every side. It has left the whole, and it governs the individual thing amid difficulties, by now touching and tending external things, present to it and sinking deep into its interior.

This is where what is spoken of happens to it: it "loses its wings" and comes to be in the fetters of the body, having missed the freedom from harm that it had with the whole Soul in governing the better; its earlier state is altogether better, if it runs back up to it. So it is caught, having fallen, and is at its fetter, and acts by perception because at the outset it is prevented from acting by intellect; and it is said to be buried and to be in a cave. But when it turns toward thinking, it is said to be freed from its fetters and to ascend, when it makes a beginning, from recollection, of contemplating the things that are. For it always, no less, has something that transcends. So souls become, as it were, amphibious, of necessity, living by turns the life There and the life here. Those that can be with Intellect more live more the life There; those to whom the opposite has fallen, by nature or by fortune, live more the life here. Plato indicates this quietly when he divides them from the second mixing bowl and makes them parts; then too he says that they must come into becoming, since they have become parts of this kind. And if he says the god sowed them, this is to be understood in the same way as when he makes him speak and, as it were, address an assembly. For what is in the nature of the All, the account generates and makes, bringing forward one after another, for the sake of exposition, things that always come to be and are in this way.[3]

4.8.5 So there is no discord between the sowing into becoming and the descent for the completion of the All, or between the justice and the cave, or between necessity and the voluntary—since necessity contains the voluntary—or with being in the body as in something bad. Nor is there discord with Empedocles' flight from the god and his wandering, nor with the error which justice follows, nor with Heraclitus' rest in the flight, nor, in general, between the voluntary character of the descent and its involuntary character. For everything that goes to the worse goes involuntarily; but since it goes by its own motion, when it

3 In the *Timaeus* (41d–42d) the craftsman mixes individual souls in a second, lesser mixing bowl, sows them into the heavenly bodies, and addresses the gods he has made.

suffers the worse it is said to pay the penalty for what it did. And when it is necessary to undergo and do these things by an eternal law of nature, and what happens, as it comes down from what is above it, meets in its procession the need of something else, then if one were to say that a god sent it down, he would be out of harmony neither with the truth nor with himself. For the last things too, even if there are many in between, are traced back to the principle from which each thing comes.

The error is twofold: one concerns the cause of coming down, the other doing evil once it has come here. The first is just what the soul has undergone by coming down. The penalty for the second, if it is lesser, is to enter other bodies, and quickly [to emerge again], by a judgment according to desert—and because this happens by divine ordinance it is indicated by the word "judgment"—while the measureless form of wickedness is deemed to deserve a greater penalty too, under the supervision of punishing spirits. So, then, although it is divine and comes from the regions above, the soul enters the body; and, being a god of the lower rank, it comes here by a self-determined inclination, because of its power and to set in order what comes after it. If it escapes quickly, it is not harmed at all; it has gained knowledge of evil and come to know the nature of wickedness, and has brought its powers into the open and displayed works and makings which, had they stayed quiet in the incorporeal, would have been in vain, never going into activity; and the soul itself would not have known what it had, if they had not come to light and gone forth. For everywhere activity has revealed the power, which would otherwise have been hidden altogether and, as it were, obliterated, and would not exist, since it would never really exist. As it is, everyone marvels at what is inside because of the variety of what is outside—at what it must be, judging from its having produced these elegant things.

WHY THERE MUST BE A WORLD BELOW

Every nature gives of itself, so procession reaches all the way down to matter.

4.8.6 If, then, there must not be one thing only—for then all things would have been hidden, having no shape in it, and none of the things that are would exist if the One had stood still in itself; nor would there be the multitude of these beings generated from the One, if the things after it, which have been allotted the rank of souls, had not gone forth in procession—then in the same way there must not be souls only, without the things that came to be through them appearing. For it is inherent in every nature to make what comes after it and to unfold, as if from a seed, from some partless principle, proceeding to the perceptible as its end, while what comes before always remains in its own seat, and what comes after it is, as it were, generated from an unspeakable power, as great as was in those higher things. That power should not have halted, as if drawing a boundary around itself out of jealousy, but must always go on, until all things reach the last possible point, by virtue of an immense power that sends from itself over all things and cannot allow anything to be without a share in it. For there was nothing to prevent anything whatever from having a share in the nature of the good, to the extent each was able to participate. So whether the nature of matter always existed, it was not possible for it, since it existed, not to participate in what supplies the good to all things as far as each can receive it; or whether its coming into being followed necessarily on the causes before it, not even so should it be apart, as though that which gave it even its being, as a kind of gift, had halted through lack of power before reaching it. So what is most beautiful in the perceptible is a manifestation of the best among the intelligibles, of their power and their goodness. And all things are held together forever, both those that exist intelligibly and those that exist perceptibly: the former existing from themselves, the latter receiving their being

forever by participation in them, imitating the intelligible nature as far as they can.

4.8.7 Since this nature is twofold, the one intelligible, the other perceptible, it is better for the soul to be in the intelligible; but, having the nature it has, it is necessarily bound to share in the perceptible as well. And it should not be resentful at not being in every respect the better, since it occupies a middle rank among the things that are. It is of the divine portion, but at the last edge of the intelligible, and, bordering on the perceptible nature, it gives it something of its own and receives something from it in return—if it does not keep itself safe while it orders it, but sinks inside with too much eagerness, not remaining whole with the whole. And all the more so since it can emerge again, having gained knowledge of what it saw and underwent here, and having learned what it is really like to be There, and having learned the better more clearly by comparing what are, as it were, opposites. For experience of evil is a clearer knowledge of the good for those whose power is too weak to know evil by knowledge before experiencing it. And just as the going-out of Intellect is a descent to the lowest, the worse—for it cannot go up to what is beyond; rather, having acted out of itself and being unable to stay in itself, it must, by the necessity and law of nature, come as far as soul, for that is its limit, and hand on what comes next to soul, and itself run back up—so it is with the activity of soul. What comes after it is the things here; what comes before it is the vision of the things that are. For some souls this happens partially and in time, and the return to the better takes place in the worse; but for the soul said to be the soul of the All it means never having come to be in the worse work, but, unaffected by evils, comprehending by contemplation what is below it and always depending on what is before it. Both at once are possible for it, receiving from There and at the same time supplying here, since, being soul, it could not avoid touching these things too.

PART OF THE SOUL STAYS ABOVE

Not all of our soul descends; a part of it always remains in the intelligible.

4.8.8 And if one must dare, against the opinion of others, to say more clearly what seems to be the case: not even our soul has sunk entirely; there is something of it always in the intelligible. But if the part in the perceptible gets the upper hand—or rather, if it is overpowered and thrown into confusion—it does not let us perceive what the upper part of the soul contemplates. For what is thought comes to us only when it comes down and reaches perception. We do not know everything that happens in any part of the soul until it reaches the whole soul. Desire, for example, while it remains in the desiring part, is [not] known to us, but only when we grasp it by the inner perceptive power, or by the power of discursive thought, or both. For every soul has something of the lower, toward the body, and something of the upper, toward Intellect. And the soul that is whole and belongs to the whole orders the whole with its part that faces the body, transcending it without toil, because it does not do so by reasoning, as we do, but by intellect—as art does not deliberate—with the lower part of it ordering the whole. The souls that have come to be partial and belong to a part also have the transcendent part, but they are occupied with perception, and through their apprehension they apprehend many things that are contrary to nature and pain and disturb them, since what they care for is a part, and deficient, with many alien things around it and many things it longs for. And it feels pleasure, and pleasure deceives it. But there is also a part that takes no pleasure in passing pleasures, and its way of life is similar.

IV.9 Whether All Souls Are One

Περὶ τοῦ εἰ πᾶσαι αἱ ψυχαὶ μία
Plotinus argues that all souls are one, as one soul is whole in every part of a body, yet still distinct.
no. 8 in order of writing

4.9.1 We say that the soul of each individual is one because it is present whole everywhere in the body, and that it really is one in this way, not having one part of it here in the body and another there; the perceptive soul is like this in perceiving beings, and in plants the soul is whole everywhere, in each part. In the same way, then, are my soul and yours one, and all souls one? And in the All, is the soul in all things one, not divided like a mass but the same everywhere? For why should the soul in me be one and the soul in the All not be one? There too, after all, there is no mass and no body. If, then, my soul and yours both come from the soul of the All, and that is one, these too must be one. And if both the soul of the All and mine come from one soul, then again all are one. What, then, is this one soul? But first we must say whether it is right to say that all souls are one, as the soul of each individual is. For it is absurd if mine and that of anyone else whatever are one. Then, when I perceived, someone else would have to perceive too; if I were good, he would be good; if I desired, he would desire; and in general we would share the same experiences, both with each other and with the All, so that when I was affected the All would perceive it with me. And how, if it is one, is one soul rational and another irrational, and one in animals and another in plants? Yet if we do

not posit it that way, the All will not be one, and a single principle of souls will not be found.

4.9.2 First, then, if my soul and another's are one, it does not immediately follow that the compound of each is the same as the other's. For the same thing in one and in another will not have the same affections in each; thus the man in me, when I am moving, and in you, when you are not, will be moving in me and standing still in you. And it is not absurd, or any more paradoxical, that what is in me and in you should be the same; nor is it necessary that when I perceive another should have exactly the same experience. Not even within a single body did one hand perceive what happened to the other; it was the soul in the whole that perceived it. If, then, you too had to know what is mine, there would have to be one body joined together from both; for joined in this way each soul would perceive the same thing. One should also bear in mind that the whole is unaware of many things even among those that happen in one and the same body, and the more so the larger the body is, as is said of great sea creatures: when something happens in a part of them, no perception of it reaches the whole, because the movement is so small. So when one part is affected, it is not necessary for the perception to arrive at the whole and entire with a distinct impression. It is not absurd for the whole to share in the affection, nor should that be ruled out, but a perceptual impression need not arise. And it is not absurd that the same soul should have virtue in me and vice in another, if it is not impossible for the same thing to be in motion in one and at rest in another. For we do not call it one in the sense of being wholly without multiplicity—that must be granted to the higher nature—but we say it is one and many, and that it participates both in the nature that becomes divided in bodies and in the undivided nature, so that, again, it is one. And just as in my case an affection arising in a part need not dominate the whole, while what happens in the more important part carries something to the part, so what comes from the All to each individual is clearer, since individuals in many ways share the affections of the whole; but it is

unclear whether what comes from us contributes anything to the whole.

4.9.3 Moreover, from the opposite side, the argument says that we do share each other's experiences, feeling pain together when we see pain, and delighting together, and being drawn by nature to love; for perhaps this is why there is love at all. And if incantations and magic arts in general bring people together and make them feel with one another at a distance, it is surely through one soul. A word spoken softly, too, has affected what is far away, and made what is separated by an immense distance hear it. From these things one can learn the unity of all things, since the soul is one. How, then, if soul is one, is one rational, another irrational, and some vegetative? Or rather, it is because the undivided part of it must be assigned to the rational, which is not divided in bodies, while the part divided in bodies—itself one, but divided in bodies, supplying perception everywhere—must be posited as another power of it, and its shaping, body-making part as yet another power. But having several powers does not make it not one. In the seed, too, there are several powers, and it is one, and from this one come many, which are one. Why, then, are not all the powers everywhere? Well, even with the one soul that is said to be everywhere, perception is not alike in all the parts, reason is not in the whole, and the vegetative is present even where there is no perception; and yet it runs back up into one when it leaves the body. And if it has the nutritive power from the whole, that too belongs to that soul. Why, then, does the nutritive not come from our soul as well? Because what is nourished is a part of the whole, which also perceives passively; but perception that judges each thing together with intellect is ours, and it had no need to shape what already has its shaping from the whole. For it would have done this itself, if it had not been necessary for it to be in this whole.

4.9.4 This has been said so that the reduction to one should not cause astonishment. But the argument asks: how is it one? Are all souls one as coming from one? And if from one, is that one divided, or does it remain whole and nonetheless make many

from itself? And how could a substance that remains make many out of itself? Let us, then, call on god to be our helper, and say that there must first be one, if there are many, and that the many must come from it. If, then, it were a body, the many would necessarily come about by its division, each becoming a wholly different substance; and if it were homogeneous, they would all be of the same form, each carrying one and the same form whole, but different in their masses. And if they had their being as souls by virtue of the underlying masses, they would be different from one another; if by virtue of the form, the souls would be one in form. But this means that one and the same soul exists in many bodies, and that before this one soul in many there is another, not in many, from which the one in many comes, being an image of the one in one carried to many places —as if many pieces of wax took impressions from one signet ring and bore the same imprint. In the first case, then, the soul would be used up in many imprints; in the second, it would turn out to be incorporeal. And if it were an affection, there would be nothing surprising in one quality, coming from some one thing, being in many; and if soul were the compound, nothing surprising either. But in fact we posit it as both incorporeal and a substance.

4.9.5 How, then, is one substance in many? Either the one is whole in all, or the many come from a whole and one, while that remains. That one, then, is one, and the many are related to it as to one that gives itself to multiplicity and yet does not give itself. For it is able to supply itself to all and remain one: it enters into all at once and is not entirely cut off from any. So it is the same thing in many. Let no one be incredulous. Knowledge, too, is a whole, and its parts are such that the whole remains and the parts come from it; and the seed is whole, and from it come the parts into which it naturally divides, and each is whole, and the whole remains whole, undiminished. It is matter that divided it, and all are one. But in knowledge, someone might say, the part is not the whole. Or rather, there too the part that has been brought forward because it is needed is actual, and it is placed

in front; but the others follow, potentially, unnoticed, and all are in the part. And perhaps this is the sense in which the whole is called the whole and the part the part. In the whole, all are, as it were, actual at once, so each one you want to bring forward is ready; but in the part, what is actual is what is ready. It is empowered, as it were, by coming near the whole. One must not think it is bereft of the other theorems; otherwise it will no longer be expert or scientific, but just as if a child were saying it. If, then, it is scientific, it potentially contains all the others too. At any rate, the knower, once he has stated it, brings in the others as by a kind of logical sequence; and the geometer shows in analysis that the one proposition contains all the ones before it, through which the analysis proceeds, and also those after it, which are generated from it. But we disbelieve these things because of our weakness, and they are obscured by the body. There, all things are clear, and each one.

V.1 On the Three Primary Hypostases

Περὶ τῶν τριῶν ἀρχικῶν ὑποστάσεων
Plotinus urges souls who have forgotten their origin to turn inward and recognize the One, Intellect and Soul.
no. 10 in order of writing

5.1.1 What is it, then, that has made the souls forget their father, god, and be ignorant both of themselves and of him, though they are portions from There and wholly his? The beginning of evil for them was audacity, and coming into becoming, and the first otherness, and the wish to belong to themselves. Since they evidently delighted in their self-determination, making great use of moving on their own, they ran the opposite way and went very far off, and so came to be ignorant even that they themselves came from There; like children who are torn away from their fathers right away and brought up far off for a long time, and are ignorant of themselves and of their fathers. So no longer seeing him or themselves, they despised themselves in ignorance of their lineage, and honored other things, and marveled at everything rather than at themselves, and, before these things, awestruck and delighted and hanging upon them, they broke themselves away, as far as they could, from what they had turned away from and despised. So it turns out that their honoring of the things here and their contempt for themselves is the cause of their utter ignorance of him. For whatever pursues and marvels at something else at the same time admits that it is worse. And once it takes itself to be worse than the things that come to be and perish, and supposes itself the most contemptible and most mortal of all the things it honors, it could never

conceive either the nature or the power of god. That is why the argument addressed to people in this state must be twofold, if one is to turn them back to what is opposite and first, and lead them up to the highest, the One and First. What, then, is each? One shows the worthlessness of the things the soul now honors; we treat this one more fully elsewhere. The other teaches the soul and reminds it, as it were, of its lineage and worth; this one comes before the first, and once it has been made clear it will make that one clear too. It is this one we must now discuss, for it is close to what we are seeking and useful toward it. For what seeks is soul, and it must know what it is that does the seeking, so that it may first learn about itself: whether it has the power to seek such things, whether it has an eye able to see them, and whether it is fitting for it to seek. For if these things are alien to it, what is the point? But if they are akin, it is both fitting and possible for it to find.

THE GREATNESS OF SOUL

Soul gives life and order to the whole heaven; seeing this, a soul learns its worth.

5.1.2 Let every soul, then, first consider this. Soul itself made all living things by breathing life into them: those the earth nourishes, those the sea nourishes, those in the air, and the divine stars in heaven. Soul itself made the sun, and itself made this great heaven, and itself set it in order. Soul itself drives it round in its ordered course, being a nature different from the things it orders, the things it moves, and the things it makes live. And soul must be more honorable than they are. They come to be and perish whenever soul, which supplies their life, leaves them; but soul itself always is, because it does not leave itself. As for how life is supplied, both in the whole universe and in each individual thing, let it reason as follows. Let another soul contemplate the great Soul. This other soul is no small one: it has become worthy to contemplate by being freed from deception and from the things that have bewitched the others, and by set-

tling into stillness. Let not only the body that surrounds it and the body's surging be still for it, but everything around it. Let earth be still, still the sea and the air, and heaven itself (the better). Then let it think of Soul as, so to speak, flowing into heaven, now at rest, from outside: pouring into it, entering it from every side, and shining into it. As the sun's rays light up a dark cloud and make it shine, giving it a golden look, so Soul, coming into the body of heaven, gave it life, gave it immortality, and woke it where it lay. Moved with an everlasting motion by a Soul that guides it with understanding, heaven became a blessed living being. Heaven gained its worth when Soul came to dwell in it. Before Soul, it was a dead body: earth and water, or rather the darkness of matter, non-being, and "what the gods hate," as someone says.[1]

Its power and nature would become clearer and more evident if one were to reflect at this point on how it encompasses heaven and drives it by its own will. Soul has given itself to the whole of this magnitude, however great it is, and every interval, large and small, has been ensouled. Yet one part of the body lies here and another there, some parts are opposite each other, and others are separated from each other in other ways. But Soul is not like this. It does not make things live by being chopped up and giving each part a piece of soul. Rather, all things live by the whole of it, and it is present whole everywhere. In this it is like the father who begot it, both in being one and in being everywhere. And heaven, though it is many and its parts are in different places, is one by the power of this Soul, and through Soul this cosmos is a god. The sun, too, is a god, because it is ensouled, and so are the other stars. And if we too are anything, it is for this same reason: "for corpses are more fit to be thrown out than dung." What causes the gods to be gods, then, must be (a god) older than they are. Our soul is of the same kind. When you look at it without what has been added to it, taking it in its purified state, you will find the same precious thing that soul was, more precious than anything bodily. For all bodies are

1 Homer, *Iliad* 20.65, describing the house of Hades.

earth. And even if they are fire, what would be the thing in it that burns? The same goes for everything compounded of these, even if you add water or air to them. But if something is worth pursuing because it is ensouled, why would anyone neglect himself and pursue something else? When you admire the soul in another, admire yourself.[2]

INTELLECT AND ITS FATHER

Soul is an image of Intellect, which holds all beings in eternity and points beyond itself.

5.1.3 Since soul, then, is something so precious and divine, trust now that by such a thing you can reach god, and with it go up to him. You will surely not have far to cast your sight, and the stages in between are not many. Take hold, then, of what is more divine than this divine thing: soul's neighbor above, which soul comes after and comes from. For although soul is the kind of thing the argument has shown, it is an image of Intellect. Just as the spoken word is an image of the word in the soul, so soul itself is the word of Intellect: the whole activity by which Intellect sends out life to form another hypostasis. It is like fire, which has both the heat that stays with it and the heat it gives off. But in the case of Intellect we must understand that the activity does not flow out of it. One activity remains in it, while the other comes into existence. Since soul comes from Intellect, then, it is intellectual, and its intellect is in its reasonings. Its perfection, too, comes from Intellect, like a father who raises a child he begot imperfect in comparison with himself. So its hypostasis comes from Intellect, and so does its being a rational principle in act, when Intellect is seen by it. For when it looks into Intellect, it has within it, as its own, the things it thinks and actively does. And only these should be called activities of soul: those it performs intellectually and from its own resources. The worse ones come from elsewhere and are affections of a soul of this kind. Intellect, then, makes it still more divine, both by

2 The quotation is from Heraclitus (fragment 96).

being its father and by being present to it. For there is nothing between them except their being different: soul, however, as next in order and as what receives, Intellect as form. And even the matter of Intellect is beautiful, being intellect-like and simple, as Intellect itself is. And from this alone it is clear that Intellect is superior to soul, soul being such as we have described.

5.1.4 One could also see it from the following. Suppose someone admires this perceptible cosmos, looking at its size and beauty and the order of its everlasting motion, and at the gods in it, some visible and some unseen, and the spirits, and all the animals and plants. Let him go up to its archetype, the truer one, and see there all things intelligible, eternal in their own right, with their own understanding and life. Let him see pure Intellect presiding over them, and wisdom beyond all reckoning, and the true life in the reign of Kronos, of a god who is fullness and Intellect. For it encompasses within itself all immortal things, every intellect, every god, every soul, all forever at rest. Why would it seek to change, when it is well as it is? Where would it go, when it has everything with it? Nor does it seek to grow, since it is most perfect.[3] That is why everything with it is perfect too, so that it may be perfect in every way. It has nothing that is not such, nothing in itself that it does not think; and it thinks not by seeking but by having. Its blessedness is not acquired: all things are in eternity, and it is the real eternity, which time imitates as it runs round soul, letting some things go and taking hold of others. For around soul there are always different things in turn: now Socrates, now a horse, always some one of the things that are. But Intellect is all things.

So it has all things in itself, at rest in the same place. It only is, and its "is" is forever. Nowhere is there a future in it, for then too it is; nor a past, for nothing there has passed away. Everything is always present, since it is always the same, as it were well pleased with itself as it is. Each of the things there is intellect and being, and the whole is all Intellect and all being. Intellect,

3 The "life under Kronos" is the mythical golden age.

by thinking, makes being exist; being, by being thought, gives Intellect its thinking and its being. But the cause of thinking is something else, which is also the cause of being. So there is another thing that causes both together. For Intellect and being are together, they coexist and do not leave each other. This one thing is two at once: Intellect and being, thinking and thought—Intellect as thinking, being as thought. For there could be no thinking without otherness, and without sameness too. So the first things are Intellect, being, otherness and sameness; and we must also include motion and rest. Motion, if it thinks; rest, so that it may stay the same. Otherness, so that there may be a thinker and something thought. Otherwise, if you take away otherness, it will become one and fall silent. The things thought must also be other in relation to one another. Sameness, since it is one with itself, and there is also something common to all of them; and their difference is otherness.[4] And these, as they become more than one, make number and quantity; and the distinctive character of each of them makes quality. From these, as from principles, come all the rest.

5.1.5 This god, then, is many, and the soul here is granted to be among these things once it has been joined to him, unless it chooses to desert. So, having drawn near to him and become, as it were, one with him, it asks: who, then, begot him? Who is the simple one, prior to [the] such a being, the cause both of his existing and of his being many, the one who makes number? For number is not first. The One is prior to [the] Dyad as well, and the Dyad is second. Having come from the One, the Dyad has the One as what defines it, while of itself it is indefinite; once it is defined, it is already number—number as substance. And soul too is number. For the first things are not masses or magnitudes. These gross things, which perception takes to be beings, come later. Even in seeds it is not the moisture that is precious, but what is not seen; and that is number and rational principle. So the number spoken of There, and the Dyad, are rational prin-

4 Being, sameness, otherness, motion and rest are the "greatest kinds" of Plato's *Sophist* (254d–255e).

ciples and Intellect. But the Dyad is indefinite when it is taken as, so to speak, the substrate. The number that comes from it and from the One is Form for each, as though it were shaped by the Forms that came to be in it. It is shaped in one way by the One and in another way by itself, like sight in act. ⟨...⟩ For thinking is sight that sees, [and] the two are one.

HOW ANYTHING COMES FROM THE ONE

Praying alone to the alone, Plotinus explains how the One generates while remaining still.

5.1.6 How, then, does it see, and whom does it see? And how did it come to exist at all, and come from that, so that it can see? For now soul grasps that these things must exist. But it longs for an answer to the question so much discussed even among the wise men of old: how, from the One, being such as we say the One is, anything came to have a hypostasis, whether a multiplicity or a dyad or a number. Why did it not remain by itself? Why did so great a multiplicity flow out of it—the multiplicity we see in the things that are, but think it right to trace back to it? Let us speak of it, then, in this way. First let us call on god himself, not with spoken words but by stretching ourselves out in soul toward him in prayer, since in this way we can pray alone to the alone. That one is by itself, within, as in the inner part of a temple, remaining still beyond all things. So whoever would see it must contemplate what are, as it were, the statues already standing toward the outside—or rather the first statue to come to light—and this has appeared in the following way. Everything that moves must have something toward which it moves. But since that has nothing toward which to move, let us not suppose that it moves. Rather, if something comes into being after it, it must have come into being while that is always turned toward itself. Let coming-to-be in time be out of our way, since we are discussing things that always are. When, in our account, we attribute coming-to-be to them, as a way of assigning cause and order, we must at any rate say that what comes from There comes without

that being moved. For if something came into being when it was moved, what came into being would come after the motion, and would be third from it, not second. So if there is something second after it, it must have come into existence while that remains unmoved: without its inclining toward it, without its willing it, without its being moved at all.

How, then? And what should we think surrounds it while it remains? A radiance from it—from it, while it remains—like the bright light that runs round the sun, always born from it while the sun remains. All the things that exist, as long as they remain, necessarily give off from their own being, out of the power present in them, a hypostasis around them, directed outward and dependent on them. It is an image, as it were, of the archetypes from which it grew. Fire gives off the heat that comes from it; snow does not keep its cold only inside; and fragrant things above all bear witness to this. For as long as they exist, something goes out from them and surrounds them, and whatever is near enjoys it, now that it exists. And all things, once they are perfect, generate. What is always perfect, then, generates always, and generates something eternal; and it generates something less than itself. What, then, should we say about the most perfect? That nothing comes from it except the greatest things after it. And the greatest after it is Intellect, which is second. For Intellect sees it and needs it alone; but it needs nothing of Intellect. What is generated from what is greater than Intellect must be Intellect, and Intellect is greater than all things, because the rest come after it. In the same way soul is a rational principle of Intellect and a kind of activity of it, as Intellect itself is of that. But the rational principle of soul is dim. Since soul is an image of Intellect, for that reason it must look to Intellect; and Intellect, in the same way, must look to that, in order to be Intellect. It sees it not as separated from it, but because it comes right after it and there is nothing in between—just as there is nothing between soul and Intellect either. Everything [begotten] longs for what begot it and loves it, especially when begetter and begotten are alone. And when the

begetter is also the best, the begotten is necessarily with it, so that they are separated only by otherness.

5.1.7 We say that Intellect is an image of that—for we must speak more clearly. First, because what is generated must in a way be that, and preserve much of it, and be like it, as the light of the sun is like the sun. But that is not Intellect. How, then, does it generate Intellect? Or rather: because in its return toward itself it saw; and this seeing is Intellect. For what grasps something else is either perception or intellect; ⟨...⟩ perception a line, and so on ⟨...⟩. But the circle is the sort of thing that can be divided; this is not so. Or rather: here too there is one, but the one is the power of all things. So the things of which it is the power are what thinking beholds, splitting itself off, as it were, from the power. Otherwise it would not be Intellect. For it already has from itself a kind of self-awareness of its power: that it is able, by itself, to generate being and to define its being for itself by the power that comes from that. It is aware that its being is, as it were, one part of what belongs to that, and comes from that, and is strengthened by that, and is perfected into being by that and out of that. From There it sees, for itself, as something divided coming from what is undivided, its living and its thinking and all things, because that is none of all things. For this is how all things come from it: because it was not held fast by any shape; that alone is one. And Intellect would be all things among the things that are ⟨...⟩. That is why that is none of the things in Intellect, but all things come from it.

That is why these are beings: each is already defined and has, as it were, a shape. Being must not be seen, as it were, in the indefinite; it must be fixed by limit and by rest. And rest, for intelligibles, is definition and shape, and by these they also receive their hypostasis. Of this lineage, then, is this Intellect, a lineage worthy of the purest Intellect. It springs from nowhere else than from the first principle; and once born, it generates together with itself all the things that are—all the beauty of the Forms, all the intelligible gods. Full of what it has generated, it swallows them down again, as it were, by keeping them within

itself, so that they do not fall out into matter or get raised by Rhea. This is what the mysteries and the myths about the gods hint at: that Kronos, the wisest god, existed before the birth of Zeus, [because he] holds again within himself what he generates —and in this respect he is full and is Intellect in fullness. After this, they say, he generates Zeus, being already full. For Intellect generates Soul, being perfect Intellect. Being perfect, it had to generate; being so great a power, it could not be barren.[5] But here too what is generated could not be greater. It had to be less, an image of it: indefinite in the same way, but defined by what generated it and, as it were, given form. The offspring of Intellect is a kind of rational principle and a hypostasis: what thinks discursively. This is what moves around Intellect, the light and trace of Intellect, dependent on it. On one side it is joined to Intellect, and so is filled, enjoying it, sharing in it and thinking. On the other side it touches what comes after it—or rather it generates these too, things that must be worse than soul. We must discuss them later. The divine extends this far.

THE THREE NATURES IN THE ANCIENTS

Plato, Parmenides and other early thinkers glimpsed the One, Intellect and Soul.

5.1.8 This is also why Plato's doctrines are threefold. He says that all things are around the king of all—he means the first things—and the second around the second, and the third around the third. He also speaks of the "father of the cause," meaning Intellect by the cause, since for him Intellect is the craftsman; and he says that the craftsman makes soul in that mixing bowl. And the father of the cause, which is Intellect, he says is the Good, what is beyond Intellect and beyond being. In many places, too, he calls being and Intellect the Form. So Plato knew that Intellect comes from the Good and soul from Intellect. These doctrines, then, are not new, not of the present day. They were stated long

5 In Hesiod's *Theogony* (453–491) Kronos swallows his children as they are born; Rhea saves Zeus by giving Kronos a stone to swallow in his place.

ago, though not explicitly, and our present doctrines are interpretations of those, relying on Plato's own writings as evidence that these views are ancient.[6] Parmenides, earlier, also touched on such a view, insofar as he identified being and intellect and did not place being among perceptible things. For when he says "thinking and being are the same," he also says that this is unmoved. Though he adds thinking to it, he takes all bodily motion away from it, so that it may remain the same; and he likens it to the mass of a sphere, because it holds all things enclosed and its thinking is not outside but within itself. But since he called it one in his own writings, he was open to criticism, because this one of his turns out to be many. The Parmenides in Plato speaks more precisely. He distinguishes from one another the first One, which is one in the more proper sense; a second, which he calls one-many; and a third, one and many. In this way he too agrees with the three natures.[7]

5.1.9 Anaxagoras too, in saying that Intellect is pure and unmixed, posits the first as simple and the One as separate; but because he lived so long ago he neglected precision. Heraclitus too knows the One as eternal and intelligible, for bodies are always coming to be and flowing away. For Empedocles, Strife divides and Love is the One—he too makes this incorporeal—and the elements serve as matter. Aristotle, later, makes the first separate and intelligible; but by saying that it thinks itself he in turn makes it not the first. And by positing many other intelligibles as well, as many as there are spheres in heaven, so that each may move one sphere, he describes the intelligible world differently from Plato; lacking a reasonable account, he posits necessity.[8] One might question whether he does so even reasonably. For it is more reasonable that all the spheres, contributing as they do to one coordinated system, should look toward one

6 The references are to Plato's *Second Letter* (312e), *Sixth Letter* (323d) and *Timaeus* (41d).

7 "The Parmenides in Plato" is the speaker of Plato's *Parmenides*, whose hypotheses about the one Plotinus reads as the three hypostases.

8 In *Metaphysics* XII.8 Aristotle posits a separate unmoved mover for each of the celestial spheres.

thing, the first. And one might ask whether, for him, the many intelligibles come from one, the first, or whether there are many principles in the intelligible world. If they come from one, the arrangement will clearly be analogous to that of the spheres among perceptible things, each enclosing another, with one, the outermost, in control. So There too the first would enclose the rest, and there will be an intelligible cosmos. And just as here the spheres are not empty—the first is full of stars, and the others have stars—so There too the movers will have many things in them, and the things there will be truer. But if each is a principle, the principles will be there by chance. Then why will they come together and agree, for one work, on the harmony of the whole heaven? And how can the perceptible things in heaven be equal in number to the intelligibles that move them? And how can these be many in this way, when they are incorporeal and there is no matter to separate them? So those of the ancients who most closely aligned themselves with the doctrines of Pythagoras and his followers, and of Pherecydes, kept to this nature. But some of them worked it out in their own writings, while others showed it not in writings but in unwritten teaching, or left it alone altogether.[9]

5.1.10 It has now been shown that we must think things are like this: that there is the One beyond being, of the kind the argument wanted to show, as far as it was possible to show anything about these matters; that next there are being and Intellect; and third, the nature of soul. And just as in nature there are these three we have mentioned, so we must think they are present in us too. I do not mean in perceptible things—for these three are separate—but in what lies outside the perceptible. And "outside" in the same sense: just as those are outside the whole heaven, so too are these in the human being, what Plato calls the inner man.[10] So our soul too is something divine and of another nature, like the whole nature of soul; and it is perfect when it

9 Pherecydes of Syros (sixth century BC), an early writer on the origin of the world, was said to have taught Pythagoras.
10 Plato, *Republic* 589a.

has intellect. One intellect reasons; another makes reasoning possible. Now this reasoning part of the soul needs no bodily organ for reasoning; it keeps its activity in purity, so that it can also reason purely. One would not be wrong to place it, separate and unmixed with body, in the first intelligible. For we must not look for a place to settle it in; we must put it outside all place. This is how what is by itself, outside, and immaterial is, when it is alone and has nothing from the nature of body. That is why he says of the All that "he wrapped soul around it from outside as well," pointing to the part of soul that remains in the intelligible; and of us he said that soul "raises its head" to the heights. And the injunction to separate soul from body is not meant spatially —this part is separate by nature—but in the sense of not inclining toward body, in our imaginings too, and of being estranged from the body. Perhaps then one might also lead up the rest of the soul and bring it together with what is above, even the part of it settled here, which alone is the craftsman and shaper of the body and is busy with it.[11]

5.1.11 Since there is a soul that reasons about what is just and beautiful, and reasoning that asks whether this is just and whether that is beautiful, there must also be something just that is stable, from which reasoning in the soul arises. How else could it reason? And if soul sometimes reasons about these things and sometimes does not, there must be in us an intellect that does [not] reason but always possesses what is just. There must also be the principle and cause of Intellect, and god. Not that it is divided; it remains. And while it remains, not in a place, it is seen in many, in each of those able to receive it, as if it were another one. So too the center is by itself, yet each of the radii in the circle has its point in the center, and the lines bring their own point to it. For it is by something of this kind in us that we too touch it, are with it, and depend on it; and those of us who converge toward it are settled There.

5.1.12 How is it, then, that we have such great things and do not apprehend them, but are mostly idle in these activities, and

some people are not active in them at all? [Or rather:] those things are always in their own activities. Intellect, and what is before Intellect, are always in themselves; and so, in this way, is soul, the ever-moving. For not everything in soul is immediately perceived; it reaches us when it enters perception. But when each part, though active, does not share its activity with what perceives, it has not yet passed through the whole soul. So we do not yet know it, because we are with the perceptive faculty, and we are not a part of soul but the whole soul. Moreover, each of soul's powers, being alive, is always active, each always doing its own work by itself; but knowing comes about when there is sharing and apprehension. If, then, there is to be apprehension of what is present in this way, what apprehends must also turn inward and keep its attention there. Think of someone waiting to hear a voice he longs for: he withdraws from other sounds and keeps his ear alert for the best of all the things to be heard, for whenever it comes. So here too one must let go of the sounds of sense, except so far as necessary, and keep the soul's power of apprehension pure and ready to hear the sounds from above.

11 Plato, *Timaeus* 36e and *Phaedrus* 248a; the injunction to separate soul from body is from the *Phaedo* (67c).

V.2 On the Origin and Order of What Comes After the First

Περὶ γενέσεως καὶ τάξεως τῶν μετὰ τὸ πρῶτον
A short sketch of how the perfect One overflows to produce Intellect, which produces Soul, which descends into plants.
no. 11 in order of writing

5.2.1 The One is all things and not a single one of them. For the principle of all things is not all things; but all things are its, for they have run back, as it were, to it—or rather they are not yet There, but will be. How, then, do they come from a simple One, in which there appears no variety, no doubleness of any kind? Or rather: because there was nothing in it, for that very reason all things come from it; and so that being may be, it is for that reason not being, but being's begetter. And this is, as it were, the first begetting. Being perfect—because it seeks nothing, has nothing, needs nothing—it overflowed, as it were, and its superabundance made something else. What came into being turned back toward it, was filled, and became Intellect by looking toward it. Its standing still in relation to that made being; its gaze toward that made Intellect. Since, then, it stood still in relation to that in order to see, it becomes Intellect and being at once. Being in this way like that, it makes things like itself, pouring out much power. This too is a form of it, just as what came before it had poured it out before. This activity from its being is Soul, which came to be while Intellect remained; for Intellect, too, came to be while what was before it remained. But Soul does not make while remaining; it was moved, and generated an image. Looking There, where it came from, it is filled; going out

into another, opposite motion, it generates an image of itself: perception, and the nature in plants. But nothing is detached or cut off from what is before it. That is why the human soul also seems to reach down as far as plants. In a way it does, since the soul in plants is its own. Not that it is all in plants; but having come to be in plants, it is there in this sense: it has advanced so far downward, making another hypostasis by its procession and by its eagerness for the worse. For even what is before this, the part dependent on Intellect, lets Intellect remain by itself.

5.2.2 So it proceeds from the beginning to the last, each thing always left in its own seat, while what is generated takes another, lower rank. Yet each becomes the same as what it follows, for as long as it follows. When soul comes to be in a plant, then, there is something else in the plant, as it were a part: the most reckless and senseless part, which has advanced so far. When it is in an irrational animal, the power of perception has prevailed and led it there. When it comes into a human being, the motion is either wholly in the rational part, or it comes from intellect, since soul has an intellect of its own and, of itself, the will to think, or in general to move. Let us turn back again. When someone cuts off a plant's side shoots or the tops of its branches, where has the soul in them gone? Or rather: back to where it came from, for it did not depart in place. So it is one with its principle. And if you cut through the root or burned it, where is what was in the root? In soul, which did not go to another place. But even if it stays in the same place, it is in something else, if it has run back up. If not, it is in another plant-soul, for it is not short of room. And if it has run back up, it is in the power before it. But where is that? In the one before it; and that one reaches up to Intellect—not in place, for none of it was in place. And Intellect, much more, is not in place, so that neither is soul. So it is nowhere, but in what is nowhere, and in this way it is everywhere as well. And if, going upward, it stops in between, before arriving altogether at the very highest, it has an intermediate life and is settled in that part of itself. All these things are that one and are not that one. They are that one

because they come from it; they are not that one because that one gave while remaining by itself. It is like a long life stretched out lengthwise: each of the successive parts is different, but the whole is continuous with itself; one part differs from another, yet the earlier is not lost in the later. What, then, of the soul that has come to be in plants? Does it generate nothing? Or rather, it generates that in which it is. But we must consider how, taking another starting point.

V.3 On the Knowing Hypostases and What Is Beyond

Περὶ τῶν γνωριστικῶν ὑποστάσεων καὶ τοῦ ἐπέκεινα
Plotinus argues that Intellect truly knows itself because it is identical with its objects, while the One is beyond knowing.
no. 49 in order of writing

5.3.1 Must what thinks itself be complex, so that it may be said to think itself by contemplating, with one of the things in it, the others—on the ground that what is altogether simple cannot turn back to itself and grasp itself in thought? Or is it possible for something that is not composite to have thinking of itself? For take what is said to think itself because it is composite, in that it thinks the other things in it by one of them—as if we were to grasp by perception our own shape and the rest of the body's nature. It would not truly think itself. For in such a case the whole will not be known, unless the part that has thought the others along with it has also thought itself. And we will not have what we are looking for, the self thinking itself, but one thing thinking another. We must, then, posit that what is simple also grasps itself in thought, and consider how, if it is possible; or else give up the view that anything really thinks itself. It is hardly possible to give up this view, since many absurdities follow. For even if we were not to grant this to soul, (on the ground that it is) quite absurd, it is utterly absurd not to grant it even to the nature of Intellect—if Intellect has knowledge of other things but will not come to have knowledge and science of itself. For external things will be apprehended by perception, not by intellect—and, if you like, by discursive thought and opinion.

Whether intellect has knowledge of these, we should examine. But intelligible things, clearly, intellect will know. Will it know only them, then, or also itself, the one who will know them? And will it know itself only in the sense that it knows these things, without knowing who it is? Will it know that it knows what is its own, but no longer who it is that knows? Or will it know both what is its own and itself? And we must consider in what way it knows, and how far.

5.3.2 But first we must inquire about soul: whether we should grant it knowledge of itself, and what it is in soul that knows, and how. Its perceptive part, we would say at once, is only of what is outside. For even if there is self-awareness of what happens inside, in the body, here too the apprehension is of things outside the perceptive part; for it perceives the affections in the body by itself. The reasoning part in soul makes its judgment on the basis of the images that perception sets before it, combining and dividing them. Or it also looks upon what comes from intellect—the impressions, so to speak—and has the same power over these too. It also gains understanding, as though recognizing the new impressions that have just arrived and fitting them to those it has long had within it. This is what we would call the soul's recollections. And is the intellect that belongs to soul one whose power stops here? Or does it also turn toward itself and know itself? Or must this be referred back to Intellect? For if we grant knowledge of itself to this part, we will say it is intellect, and we will inquire how it differs from the one above. If we do not grant it, we will come to that one as the argument proceeds, and consider what this self-thinking is. And if we grant it here too, in the lower part, we will consider how its self-thinking differs; for if there is no difference, this is already unmixed Intellect. Does this discursive part of soul, then, also turn back toward itself? Or no: it has understanding of the impressions it receives from either side. And how it has understanding we must inquire first.

DISCURSIVE THOUGHT AND INTELLECT

Our reasoning judges by standards from Intellect; we become Intellect only by rising to it.

5.3.3 Perception has seen a man and given the impression to discursive thought. What does discursive thought say? Or rather, it will not yet say anything; it has only recognized him and stopped there—unless it asks itself, "Who is this?" if it has met him before, and says, drawing on memory, that it is Socrates. If it unfolds his shape in detail, it is dividing what imagination has given it. If it says whether he is good, it has spoken from what it knew through perception; but what it has said about these things it would already have from itself, since it has in itself a standard of the good. [But] how does it have the good in itself? Or rather: it is good-like, and it has been strengthened for the perception of such a thing by Intellect shining upon it. For this pure part of soul also receives the traces of Intellect that are imprinted on it. Why, then, is this not intellect, and the rest soul, starting from the perceptive part? Or rather: because soul has to be in reasonings, and all these are works of a reasoning power. But why don't we grant self-thinking to this part and be done with it? Because we assigned it the task of examining what is outside and busying itself with it, whereas we think it right that Intellect should have what is its own and examine what is in itself. But if someone says, "What prevents this part from examining what is its own by another power?" he is not looking for the discursive or reasoning part, but is taking pure intellect.

What, then, prevents pure intellect from being in soul? Nothing, we will say. But must we still call it soul's? No, we will not say it is soul's; we will say it is our intellect. It is other than the part that thinks discursively and has gone up above it, yet it is still ours, even if we do not count it among the parts of soul. Or rather, it is ours and not ours. That is why we use it and do not use it, while we always use discursive thought; it is ours when we use it, not ours when we do not. What, then, is using it? Is it

our becoming it and speaking as it speaks? Or in accordance with it? For we are not intellect. In accordance with it, then, by the reasoning part, which receives it first. For we perceive through perception, and it is we who perceive. Do we, then, think discursively in the same way? Or rather: it is we ourselves who reason, and we ourselves who think the thoughts in discursive thought—for this is what we are. The activities of Intellect come from above, just as those from perception come from below. We are this, the chief part of soul, in the middle between a twofold power, a worse and a better: the worse is perception, the better is Intellect. But perception is agreed to be always ours, for we are always perceiving. Intellect is disputed, both because we do not always use it and because it is separate. It is separate in that it does not incline toward us; rather, we look up toward it. Perception is our messenger, but that is our king.

5.3.4 And we too are kings when we are in accord with it. We are in accord with it in two ways: either by something like letters, like laws written in us; or as though filled with it, or able to see it and perceive it as present. And we know ourselves by learning the other things through a vision of this kind; or by learning, by that very power, the power that knows such a thing; or by becoming it. So the one who knows himself is twofold. One knows the nature of the discursive thought that belongs to soul. The other is above him: he knows himself in accordance with that Intellect, having become it, and by it he thinks himself —not as a human being any longer, but having become altogether other and swept himself up to the heights, drawing up only the better part of soul, which alone can grow wings for thinking, so that one may store up There what one has seen. Does the discursive part, then, not know that it is discursive? Does it not know that it gains understanding of things outside, and that it judges what it judges by the standards within it, which it has from Intellect, and that there is something better than it, [which] it does not seek but surely has, altogether? But does it then not know what it itself is, while knowing what kind of thing it is and what its works are like? Suppose, then, it says

that it comes from Intellect, is second after Intellect, and is an image of Intellect, having all things in itself as though written, while the one who writes and has written them is There. Will one who knows himself in this way stop here? Shall we, using another power, behold Intellect knowing itself? Or, sharing in it —since it too is ours and we are its—shall we in this way know Intellect and ourselves? Or rather, this is necessary if we are to know what the self-thinking in Intellect is. One has really become intellect oneself when one lets go of everything else that is one's own and looks at this by this, and at oneself by oneself. So it is as intellect, then, that one sees oneself.

INTELLECT KNOWS ITSELF

In Intellect, thinker, thinking and thought are one, so it truly knows itself.

5.3.5 Does it, then, behold one part of itself with another part of itself? But in that case one part will be the seer and the other the seen; and that is not itself seeing itself. What, then, if the whole is such as to be, so to speak, made of like parts, so that the seer differs in no way from the seen? For then, in seeing that part of itself which is the same as itself, it has seen itself, since the seer does not differ at all from the seen. Or rather, first of all, dividing itself is absurd. How will it divide itself? Not at random, surely. And who is doing the dividing? The part that ranks itself as contemplating, or the part that ranks itself as contemplated? Then how will the contemplator know itself in what is contemplated, when it has ranked itself on the side of contemplating? For contemplating was not in what is contemplated. Or else it will think, knowing itself in this way as contemplated but not as contemplating. So it will not know itself entirely or as a whole. For what it saw, it saw as contemplated, not as contemplating; and in this way it will have seen something else, not itself. Or else it will add, from itself, the one who has contemplated as well, so that it may have thought itself completely. But if it adds the one who has contemplated, it adds the things seen along

with it. If, then, the things contemplated are present in the contemplation: if they are impressions of them, it does not have the things themselves; but if it has the things themselves, it does not have them by seeing them as a result of dividing itself. It was both contemplating and having them before it divided itself. If so, contemplation must be the same as what is contemplated, and intellect the same as the intelligible. For if they are not the same, there will be no truth: whoever has the things that are will have an impression different from the things that are, and that is not truth. Truth, then, must not be of something other than itself; it must be what it says. So in this way intellect, the intelligible, and being are one, and this is the first being. And indeed it is the first Intellect, having the things that are—or rather being the same as the things that are.

But if thinking and the intelligible are one, how will what thinks think itself because of this? For thinking will, as it were, encompass the intelligible, or be the same as the intelligible; but it is not yet clear that intellect thinks itself. But suppose thinking and the intelligible are the same. For the intelligible is a kind of activity: it is surely not a potentiality, nor without life; nor are living and thinking brought in from outside to something that is something else, like a stone or some lifeless thing; and the intelligible is the primary being. If, then, it is activity, and the first and most beautiful activity, it would be thinking, and thinking that is being—for it is also the truest. And thinking of this kind, being first, would be intellect in the primary sense, the first Intellect. For this Intellect is not potential, nor is it one thing and its thinking another; for then, again, its being would be potential. If, then, it is activity, and its being is activity, it would be one and the same with its activity. And being and the intelligible are one with activity. [So] all will be one together: Intellect, thinking, the intelligible. If, then, its thinking is the intelligible, and the intelligible is itself, it will itself think itself. For it will think by thinking, which was itself, and it will think the intelligible, which was itself. So in both respects it will think itself:

insofar as thinking was itself, and insofar as the intelligible was itself—the intelligible it thought by thinking, which was itself.

5.3.6 The argument, then, has shown that there is something that thinks itself in the proper sense. It thinks in one way when it is in soul, and more properly in Intellect. For soul thought itself as belonging to another, while Intellect thinks itself as itself, as what and who it is, from its own nature, and by turning back to itself. For in seeing the things that are, it saw itself, and in seeing it was in activity, and the activity was itself; for Intellect and thinking are one. And it sees itself whole by whole, not one part by another part. Has the argument, then, shown something such as to have persuasive force as well? Or rather, it has necessity in this way, but not persuasion; for necessity is in Intellect, persuasion in soul. It seems, then, that we are looking to be persuaded rather than to contemplate the truth with pure intellect. For as long as we were up there, in the nature of Intellect, we were content: we thought, and we saw, gathering all things into one. For it was Intellect that thought and spoke about itself, and soul kept still, yielding to the activity of Intellect. But since we have come to be here again, and in soul, we look for some persuasion to arise, as if we wished to contemplate the archetype in an image. Perhaps, then, we should teach our soul how Intellect contemplates itself. We should teach this to the part of soul that is in a way intellectual, calling it the discursive part, and indicating by the name that it is a kind of intellect, or that it has its power through Intellect and from Intellect.[1]

What we should recognize, then, is that this part too knows whatever it sees and knows what it says. If it were itself the things it says, it would know itself in this way. But the things it says are above, or come to it from There, from the same place it comes from. So it would follow that this part too, since it is a rational principle, takes in what is akin to it and fits it to the traces within itself, and in just this way knows itself. Let us carry the image over, then, to the true Intellect, which we said was the same as the things it thinks: the true things, the things

1 The Greek word for discursive thought, *dianoia*, contains *nous*, "intellect."

that really are, the first things. Let us carry over too the point that such an Intellect cannot possibly be outside itself. So if it is in itself and with itself, and what it is is Intellect—and an intellect that does not think could never exist—then knowledge of itself must accompany it. It must know that it is in itself, and that its work and its being are nothing other than simply being Intellect. For it is certainly not a practical intellect. A practical intellect looks outward and does not remain in itself. It might have some knowledge of outer things, but if it were wholly practical, there would be no necessity for it to know itself. Where there is no action, though—and pure Intellect does not even have desire for something absent—its turning back to itself shows that self-knowledge is not merely reasonable but necessary. For what would its life even be, freed from action and living in intellect?

5.3.7 "But it contemplates god," we might say. Well, if someone agrees that it knows god, he will be forced on that ground too to concede that it knows itself. For it will know everything it has from him, and what he gave, and what he is capable of. And having learned and come to know these things, it will in this way know itself too, since it is itself one of the things given—or rather, it is itself all the things given. If, then, it is to know him and his powers, in learning this it will know itself too, since it came from There and has received what it is capable of. But if it is unable to see him clearly—since seeing is perhaps the very thing seen—then in this way above all it would be left to it to see and know itself, if seeing is this: being the very thing seen. For what else could we give it? Stillness, of course! But for Intellect, stillness is not a departure from intellect. The stillness of Intellect is activity at leisure from other things. For other things too, when they are at rest from other things, are left with their own proper activity—especially those whose being is not potential but actual. Its being, then, is activity, and there is nothing toward which the activity is directed; so it is directed to itself. In thinking itself, then, it has its activity in this way toward itself and into itself. And if anything comes from it, that is because it

is in itself, directed toward itself. For it had first to be [in] itself, and then also toward something else, or for something else to come from it, made like it—just as fire, being first fire in itself and having the activity of fire, is thus able to produce a trace of itself in something else. And again: Intellect is activity in itself, while soul has one part, the part turned toward Intellect, which is, as it were, inside, and another, outside Intellect, turned toward what is outside. By the one it has been made like its source; by the other, though it has become unlike, it is nonetheless made like it here too, whether it acts or makes. For even when it acts it still contemplates, and when it makes it makes forms, like thoughts brought to completion. So all things are traces of thinking and of Intellect, proceeding according to the archetype and imitating it—the things near it more closely, while the last preserve only a dim image.

5.3.8 But what sort of thing does Intellect see the intelligible to be, and what sort of thing does it see itself to be? Or rather: with the intelligible we should not even look for something like the color or shape on bodies, for those exist before these do. Even the rational principle in the seeds that produce these is not the same as them; for these principles too are invisible by nature, and those intelligibles still more so. And the two have the same nature—those things and what possesses them—as the rational principle in the seed has the same nature as the soul that possesses these principles. But soul does not see what it has. For it did not generate them itself either; it too, like the rational principles, is an image. That from which it came is what is clear, true and primary, and is therefore its own and for itself. This image, though, unless it belongs to something else and is in something else, does not even remain; for an image, which is of something else, must come to be in something else, unless it hangs from its original. That is why it does not see: it does not have enough light. And even if it does see, it sees something other, completed in something other, and not itself. But none of this is the case There. There, vision and its object are together; the object is like the vision and the vision like the object. Who, then, will say

what it is like? The one who has seen. And it is Intellect that sees. Here too, sight, being light—or rather united with light—sees light, since it sees colors. But There it sees not through something else but through itself, because there is nothing outside. So it sees one light by another light, not through something else. Light, then, sees another light: so it sees itself.

This light, shining in soul, illuminated it—that is, made it intellectual—that is, made it like itself, the light above. So if you think of it as like the trace of light that has come to be in soul, only still more beautiful and greater and clearer, you would come close to the nature of Intellect and the intelligible. And again, this illumination gave soul a clearer life—not a generative life. On the contrary, it turned soul back toward itself, did not let it scatter, and made it content with the splendor within it. Nor yet a perceptive life, for that looks outward, to what it perceives. But someone who has taken in that light of the true things does [not], so to speak, see visible things better; quite the opposite. It remains, then, that soul has received an intellectual life, a trace of the life of Intellect; for that is where the true things are. The life and activity in Intellect is the first light, shining first of all for itself, a radiance turned toward itself, at once shining and shone upon. It is the truly intelligible, both thinking and thought, seen by itself and needing nothing else in order to see, sufficient to itself for seeing—for what it sees is itself. It is known even by us through that very thing, so that even for us the knowledge of it comes about through it. Otherwise, how could we have come to speak about it? It is such that it grasps itself more clearly, while we grasp it through it. And through reasonings like these our soul too is led up to it, positing itself as an image of it, so that its own life is a reflection and likeness of that one, and when it thinks it becomes godlike and Intellect-like. And if someone asks it what that perfect and complete Intellect is like, the one that knows itself primarily, it must first come to be in Intellect, or yield its activity to Intellect, and then, having in itself the very things of which it retained the memory, show itself—so that through it, since it is an image, one can in some

way see that Intellect: through the soul that has been made more exactly like it, as far as any part of soul can come into likeness with Intellect.

5.3.9 So whoever is going to know what Intellect is must, it seems, look closely at soul, and at what is most divine in soul. This might perhaps happen in this way too: if you first take the body away from the human being—and obviously from yourself—then also the soul that shapes the body, and very thoroughly perception too, and desires and angers and all the rest of that nonsense, since they lean toward the mortal, and very much so. What then remains of it is what we called an image of Intellect, preserving some of its light, like the light of the sun that, beyond the sphere of its mass, shines around it and from it. Now no one would grant that the sun's light is around the sun by itself, having set out from it and remained around it, with one part always proceeding from another, the one before it, until it reaches us and the earth. Rather, he will place all of it, even the part around the sun, in something else, so as not to allow an interval after the sun empty of body. But soul, which has come from Intellect as a kind of light around it, is attached to it; it is not in anything else, but around Intellect, and it has no place, for neither does Intellect.

So the sun's light is in air, but soul is pure, so that it can be seen by itself, both by itself and by any other soul of the same kind. And soul has to reason out what Intellect is like, investigating from its own case; but Intellect does not reason about itself, for it is always present to itself, while we are present to it when we turn to it. For our life is divided, and there are many lives, whereas Intellect needs no other life, or other lives. The lives it provides, it provides for others, not for itself. For it does not need what is inferior; nor does it provide itself with the lesser when it has the whole, nor with the traces when it has the first things—or rather, it does not have them, but is them itself. And if someone cannot grasp the first kind of soul, the one that thinks purely, let him take the soul that forms opinions, and then climb up from there. If not even that, let him take percep-

tion, which conveys the forms in a more spread-out way—perception on its own, with the powers it has, and already among the forms. And if he likes, let him go down to the generative soul too, as far as the things it makes. Then let him climb up again from there, from the last forms to the forms that are last in the other direction—or rather, to the first.

5.3.10 So much for that. If there were only things made, they would not be the last; but There the first things are the makers, which is also why they are first. So they must at the same time also be what makes, and the two must be one; otherwise there will again be need of something else. What then? Will there not again be need of [something else] beyond this? Or rather: Intellect is this. Why, then, does that not see itself? Or rather: that one needs no seeing. But this is for later; for now let us say it again, since the inquiry is not about some trivial matter. We must say again, then, that this Intellect needed to see itself—or rather, that it has the seeing of itself—first because it is many, then because it belongs to something else, and is of necessity capable of seeing, and of seeing that other, and its very being is seeing. For if there is something other, there must be seeing; if there is not, seeing is pointless. There must, then, be more than one for there to be seeing, and the seeing must coincide with the seen, and what it sees must be a multiplicity, [not] one in every way. For what is one in every way has nothing toward which it could be active; alone and solitary, it will stand completely still. For insofar as anything is active, there is one thing and another. And if there were not one thing and another, what will it even do? Or where will it advance to? That is why what is active must either be active in relation to something else, or itself be something many, if it is to be active within itself. If it is not going to go out to anything else, it will stand still; and when it is entirely at rest, it will not think. What thinks, then, must be in two when it thinks, and either one of the two is outside or both are in the same thing; and thinking must always be in otherness, and of necessity in sameness too. And the things that are thought in the

proper sense must be, in relation to Intellect, both the same and other.

And again, each of the things thought brings with it this sameness and this otherness. Or what will it think that does not contain one thing and another? For if each is a rational principle, it is many. So it comes to know itself by being a many-colored eye, or an eye of many colors. For if it applied itself to something one and partless, it would be left speechless: what would it have to say about it, or what to understand? Indeed, if what is wholly partless had to speak itself, it would first have to say what it is not; so in this way too it would be many, in order to be one. Then, when it says "I am this," if by "this" it means something other than itself, it will be lying; if it means an attribute of itself, it will be saying many things—or else it will say "am am" and "I I." What, then, if there were only two and it said "I and this"? Or rather: then there must already be many. For there is already their being other, and the way in which they are other, and number, and many other things. What thinks, then, must grasp one thing and another, and what is thought, as it is being thought through, must be complex. Otherwise there will be no thinking of it, but only a touching and, as it were, an inexpressible and unthinking contact, prior to thinking, since Intellect has not yet come to be and what touches does not think. And what thinks must not itself remain simple either, especially insofar as it thinks itself. For it will split itself in two, even if it makes its understanding a silent one. Then again, it will not need, as it were, to busy itself about itself: for what will it learn by thinking? It already is what it is to itself before Intellect thinks. And again, knowledge is a kind of longing, and as it were a finding by one who has searched. So what is wholly without difference remains itself in relation to itself and seeks nothing about itself; but what unfolds itself would be many.

WHY THE ONE DOES NOT THINK

Thinking involves multiplicity, so what is beyond Intellect does not think.

5.3.11 That is why this Intellect too is many when it wants to think what is beyond. It does think that very thing, but in wanting to apprehend it as simple it comes out always grasping something else, multiplied within itself. So it set out toward it not as Intellect but as sight that has not yet seen, and it came out having what it had itself multiplied. So it desired one thing, having within itself, indefinitely, a kind of image of it, and came out having grasped something else within itself, having made it many. For again, it has an impression of what it saw, or it would not have allowed it to come to be within it; but this impression became many out of one, and so, knowing, it saw it, and then it became sight that sees. This is already Intellect, when it has it and has it as Intellect; before this it is only desire, and sight without impression. This Intellect, then, applied itself to that, and in grasping it became Intellect, always settling it within itself and becoming Intellect and being and thinking—when it thought. For before this it was not thinking, since it did not have the intelligible, nor was it yet Intellect, since it had not yet thought. What is before these is their principle, but not as present within them; for the source things come from is not present in them—their constituents are. What each thing comes from is not each thing, but other than all of them. It is not, then, one of all things, but before all things, and so before Intellect too; for again, all things are within Intellect. So in this way too it is before Intellect; and if the things after it hold the rank of all things, in this way too it is before all things. What something is prior to, then, it must not be one of; and you will not call it Intellect either. Nor, then, the Good, if "the Good" signifies one of all things—(not that either); but if it signifies what is before all things, let it be so named. If, then, Intellect is what it is because it is many, and its thinking—something that, as it were, comes in

besides, even if it comes from itself—makes it many, then what is entirely simple and first of all must be beyond Intellect. For if it thinks, it will not be beyond Intellect but will be Intellect; and if it is Intellect, it too will be a multiplicity.

5.3.12 And what prevents it from being a multiplicity in this way, as long as it is one being? For the multiplicity does not come from composition; its activities are the multiplicity. But if its activities are not its being, and it passes from potentiality to activity, then it is not a multiplicity, but it is incomplete in its being before it is active. If its being is activity, and its activity is the multiplicity, its being will be as great as the multiplicity. This we grant to Intellect, to which we also gave self-thinking, but no longer to the principle of all things. The One must be before the many, as that from which the many comes; for in every number the one comes first. "But that," they say, "is how it is with number, since the numbers that follow are compositions. With beings, what necessity is there here too for there to be some one from which the many come?" Or rather: the many will be torn apart from one another, each coming to the composition from somewhere else, by chance. "But," they will say, "the activities proceeded from Intellect as from one, since it is simple." Well, then they are already positing something simple before the activities. Next they will make the activities permanent, and hypostases. But if they are hypostases, they will be other than that from which they come: that remains simple, while what comes from it is a multiplicity in its own right, and depends on it. For if these came into existence because that was somehow active, there will be multiplicity there too. But if these are the first activities, and they produced the second while letting what is prior to these activities remain by itself, then they ceded the activities to the second, which was constituted from them. For it is one thing, and the activities that come from it another, since they did not arise from its being active.

Otherwise, Intellect will not be the first activity. For it is not as if the One first desired Intellect to come to be, and then Intellect came to be, with the desire coming in between it and the

Intellect generated. Nor again did it desire at all; for then it would have been incomplete, and the desire would have had nothing to desire. Nor, again, did it have one part of the thing and not the other; for there was nothing toward which a reaching out could be directed. No: it is clear that if anything came into existence after it, it came into existence while that remained in its own character. For something else to come into existence, then, that must be at rest by itself in every way. Otherwise it will move before it moves and think before it thinks, [or] its first activity will be incomplete, being only an impulse. Toward what, then, would it rush like this, having hit upon what? Or rather, we shall reasonably posit the activity that, as it were, flows from it, like [light] from the sun. We shall posit, then, the whole intelligible nature as a kind of light, and the One, standing at the summit of the intelligible, as reigning over it, not having thrust away from itself what shone out from it. Or we shall make it another light before the light, always shining while remaining above the intelligible. For what comes from it is not cut off from it, nor again the same as it, nor such that it is not being, nor again something blind, as it were; it sees and knows itself, and is the first to know. But that, just as it is beyond Intellect, is also beyond knowing: just as it needs nothing, so it does not need knowing either. Knowing belongs to a second nature. For knowing too is one something; but that is one without the "something." For if it were one something, it would not be one itself; for the "itself" comes before the "something."

5.3.13 That is why it is in truth ineffable: whatever you say, you will be saying a "something." But what is beyond all things and beyond the most august Intellect, and alone among all things is true, is neither a something among all things, nor is there a name for it, because nothing can be said of it. Still, as far as we can, we try to signify something about it to ourselves. But when we raise the puzzle—"Then it has no perception of itself, is not conscious of itself, does not even know itself"—we must bear in mind that in saying this we are turning ourselves round to the opposite. For we make it many when we make it knowable; and

by attributing knowledge to it and granting it thinking, we make it need thinking. And even if thinking is with it, thinking will be superfluous for it. For it looks as if thinking, in general, is a self-awareness of the whole when many things come together into the same—when something thinks itself, which is thinking in the proper sense. But each single thing is just itself, something, and seeks nothing. If the thinking is of what is outside, it will be deficient and not thinking in the proper sense. What is entirely simple and truly self-sufficient needs nothing. But what is self-sufficient in a secondary way, and needs itself, needs to think itself. And being deficient in relation to itself, it has achieved self-sufficiency by being a whole, having become sufficient out of all its parts, being with itself and thinking toward itself.

For self-awareness too is a perception of something many—even the word bears witness to that. And thinking, which is prior, turns back inward to Intellect, which is clearly many. For even if it says only this, "I am being," it says it as one who has discovered something, and with good reason, for being is many. Since if it applied itself to something simple and said "I am being," it would have hit neither itself nor being. For when it speaks truly, it does not say "being" as one would say "stone"; it has said many things in a single word. For this being, which is said to be real being and not something that has only a trace of being—which for that reason would not even be called being, being related to it as an image to its archetype—contains many things. What then? Will each of them not be thought?[2] Or rather: if you want to take it solitary and alone, you will not think it. Being itself is many within itself, and whatever else you name, it has being. If so, then if there is something that is simplest of all, it will have no thinking of itself; for if it has, it will have being many. So it neither thinks itself, nor is there thinking of it.

2 The Greek word for self-awareness, *synaisthēsis*, means literally "perceiving together," hence the appeal to the word itself.

SPEAKING OF THE INEFFABLE

We speak about the One, never it, as the inspired speak of what moves them.

5.3.14 How, then, do we speak about it? Or rather: we say something about it, but we do not say it, and we have neither knowledge nor thinking of it. How then do we speak about it, if we do not have it? Or rather: if we do not have it by knowledge, we do not altogether fail to have it. We have it in such a way as to speak about it, but not to say it. For we say what it is not; what it is, we do not say. So we speak about it from what comes after it. But nothing prevents us from having it, even if we do not say it. Think of those who are inspired and possessed: they may know this much, that they have something greater within them, even if they do not know what; and from what has moved them and what they say, they get some perception of what moved them, though these things are other than what moved them. In the same way we too, it seems, stand in relation to that, when we have pure intellect and use it: we sense that this is the intellect within, the one that gave being and the other things of this order, but that it is itself such as not to be these, but something better than what we call being—indeed more, and greater, than what we call being—because it is itself greater than reason and intellect and perception, having provided these, not being them itself.

5.3.15 But how did it provide them? Either by having them or by not having them. But how did it provide what it does not have? Yet if it has them, it is not simple; and if it does not, how does multiplicity come from it? One might perhaps grant that one simple thing comes from it—though even this might be questioned, how it could come from what is entirely one; still, one can speak of it as the radiance that comes from a light and surrounds it—but how many? Or rather: what came from that was not going to be the same as it. If, then, not the same, then not better either; for what could be better than the One, or beyond it

at all? Worse, then—and that means more deficient. What, then, is more deficient than the One? What is not one: many, then; yet still aspiring to the One. So it is a one that is many. For everything that is not one is preserved by the one, and is what it is by it. If it has not become one, even if it is made of many parts, one could not yet say "it is." And if one can say of each thing what it is, one says it because each of them is one, and by that very same thing. But what does not have many within itself is one not by participation in one; it is one itself, not as said of something else, but because it is this, from which the other things too, in a way, are one—some by being near, others by being far. For what comes next makes plain both its sameness and the fact that it comes after it, by its multiplicity being one throughout. For though it is a multiplicity, it is still in the same, and you could not separate it out, because all things are together. Indeed, each of the things that come from it, as long as it shares in life, is one-many; for it cannot show itself as one-all.

But that itself is one-all, because it is a great principle; for a principle is really one and truly one. And what comes after the principle, since the One has, in a way, pressed its weight upon it, is all things by participating in the one, and any part of it is again all things and one. What, then, are "all things"? Those of which that is the principle. But how is that the principle of all things? Is it because it preserves them, making each of them be one? Or rather, also because it brought them into existence. How so? By having them beforehand. But it has been said that in this way it will be a multiplicity. Then did it have them in such a way that they were not distinguished, while in the second they were distinguished by rational principle? For that is already activity, whereas this is the power of all things. But what is the manner of this power? Not the way matter is said to be in potentiality, because it receives—for matter is passive—but in the opposite way, by making. How, then, does it make what it does not have? For it does not make at random, nor by reflecting on what it will make; and yet it will make. Now it has been said that if anything comes from the One, it must be other than it; and being other, it

is not one, for that was the One. And if not one but two, there must already be multiplicity too: for there is already other and same and quality and the rest. That what comes from that is not one, then, may be taken as shown. But that it is a multiplicity, and a multiplicity of the kind we observe in what comes after it, is worth puzzling over; and the necessity of what comes after it still has to be investigated.

5.3.16 That there must be something after the First has been said elsewhere, and in general that it is power, indeed an immeasurable power; and this must be believed on the evidence of all other things, because there is nothing, not even among the last things, that has no power to generate. What must be said now is this: since among generated things there is no going upward, only going downward and moving further into multiplicity, the principle of each set of things is simpler than they are. So what made the sensible cosmos would not itself be a sensible cosmos, but Intellect and the intelligible world. And what is before this, what generated it, is neither Intellect nor the intelligible world, but simpler than Intellect and simpler than the intelligible world. For many does not come from many; this many comes from what is not many. For if that too were many, it would not be the principle, but something else would be before it. There must, then, be a gathering into what is really one, outside all multiplicity and any simplicity whatsoever, if it is really simple. But how is what came from it a rational principle, many and complete, when that was obviously not a rational principle? And if it was not, how then does a rational principle come from what is not a rational principle? And how does what is good-like come from the Good? For what does it have of it, to be called good-like? Is it that it stays the same, in the same way? And what does that have to do with the good? For we want things to stay the same only if they are good.

Or rather: before that comes what one will not want to depart from because it is good; otherwise it would be better to leave it. Is it, then, living in the same way, remaining with this willingly? If, then, it is content to live, it clearly seeks nothing; so it seems

to stay the same because what is present suffices. But it is content to live because all things are already present to it—and present in such a way that they are not other than it. And if all life belongs to it, and a life that is clear and complete, then all soul and all intellect is in it, and nothing either of life or of intellect stands apart from it. It is self-sufficient, then, and seeks nothing; and if it seeks nothing, it has within itself what it would have sought if it were not present. So it has the good within itself, either by being such—what we called life and intellect—or as something else that is an attribute of these. But if this is the Good, there would be nothing beyond these. And if the Good is that, then clearly its life is directed toward that, depends on that, has its existence from that, and lives toward that; for that is its principle. That, then, must be greater than life and intellect. For in this way it will turn back toward that both the life in itself, an imitation of what is in that, by which it lives, and the intellect in itself, an imitation of what is in that, whatever this may be.

5.3.17 What, then, is greater than a life of the highest wisdom, unerring and without fault, and than an Intellect that has everything, all life and all intellect? If we say "what made them," then how did it make them? And unless something greater appears, reasoning will not go on to anything else, but will stop there. But we must go up, for many other reasons, and because its self-sufficiency comes from all things, from outside; and each of them is clearly deficient. And because each has received a share of the same one and participates in one, without being the One itself. What, then, is that in which it participates, which makes it be, and be all things together? But if it makes each thing be, and by the presence of one makes its multiplicity self-sufficient, and itself as well, then clearly that is productive of being and of self-sufficiency, while not itself being being, but beyond it and beyond self-sufficiency. Is it enough, then, to say this and be done?

TOUCHING THE LIGHT

Words fail; the soul sees when it is suddenly lit up. Cut away everything.

Or is the soul still in labor, and more than before? Perhaps, then, it must now give birth, having darted toward it, filled with birth pangs. Still, we must sing a charm over it again, in case we can find somewhere a charm for its labor. Perhaps it might come even from what has already been said, if one sang it over many times. What other charm is there, then, a new one, as it were? For though it runs over all the true things, even those we share in, it still escapes, if one wants to say it and think it through. For discursive thought, in order to say anything, must take one thing after another; that is what going through things is. But in what is entirely simple, what going through is there? It is enough, though, to touch it intellectually. And once one has touched it, while one is touching it, one is wholly unable to say anything and has no leisure to; only afterward does one reason about it.[3] We should believe we have seen, then, when the soul suddenly takes on light; for this comes from him and is him. And we should think he is present when, like some other god coming into a house at someone's call, he brings light; for had he not come, he would not have brought light. So the soul without light has no vision of him; but once lit up, it has what it was seeking. And this is the true end for the soul: to touch that light and to behold it by that light itself—not by another light, but by that very light through which it also sees. For what it must behold is that by which it was lit up; we do not see the sun by another light either. How, then, could this come about? Cut away everything.

3 The "charm" (*epōidē*) sung over the soul echoes Plato (*Charmides* 157a, *Phaedo* 77e).

V.4 How What Comes After the First Comes from the First, and On the One

Περὶ τοῦ πῶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πρώτου τὰ μετὰ τὸ πρῶτον καὶ περὶ τοῦ ἑνός
Plotinus explains how the One, wholly self-sufficient, gives rise to Intellect as an activity flowing from its being.
no. 7 in order of writing

5.4.1 If there is anything after the First, it must come from it, either directly or by tracing its ascent back to it through intermediaries; and there must be an order of second and third things, the second going back to the First, the third to the second. For there must be something simple before all things, and this must be other than all the things that come after it. It is by itself, not mixed with what comes from it, and yet able to be present to the others in a different way. It is really one, not something else that is then one; even to say of it that it is one is false; there is no account or knowledge of it; it is indeed said to be beyond being. For if it is not simple, outside all coming-together and composition, and really one, it would not be a principle. And it is most self-sufficient, because it is simple and first of all. For what is not first needs what is before it, and what is not simple needs the simple things in it, so as to be made up of them. Such a thing, then, must be one alone; for if there were another such, the two would be one. For we are certainly not talking about two bodies, or saying that the One is the first body. For no body is simple, and body comes into being and is not a principle, whereas the principle is ungenerated. And being not bodily but really one, it would be that First. If, then, there were

something else after the First, it would no longer be simple; it will therefore be one-many. Where, then, does this come from? From the First; for if it came by chance, that would no longer be the principle of all things.

How, then, from the First? [Or rather:] if the First is perfect, the most perfect of all, and the first power, it must be the most powerful of all beings, and the other powers must imitate it as far as they can. Now whatever else comes to perfection, we see generating and not content to remain by itself, but making something else—not only whatever has choice, but also whatever produces by nature without choice; and even lifeless things give of themselves as far as they can. Fire heats, snow chills, drugs act on something else—all things imitating the principle as far as they can, toward eternity and goodness. How then could the most perfect, the first Good, stand still within itself, as if begrudging itself, or powerless—it, the power of all things? And how would it still be a principle? Something must, then, come into being from it too, if there are going to be other things that came into existence from it; for that they come from it is necessary. And what generates must be most honorable, while what is generated, second after it, must be better than all the rest.

5.4.2 If what generates were Intellect itself, [what comes next] would have to be more deficient than Intellect, but closer to Intellect and like it. But since what generates is beyond Intellect, what is generated must be Intellect. And why is the generator not Intellect? Because the activity of Intellect is thinking; and thinking, which sees the intelligible, turns toward it and is, as it were, completed by it, is in itself indefinite, like sight, but is defined by the intelligible. That is why it has been said that the Forms and the numbers come from the indefinite dyad and the One; for this is Intellect. That is why it is not simple but many, displaying a composition—an intelligible one, to be sure—and already seeing many things. It is itself an intelligible, but also thinking: that is why it is already two. And there is also the other intelligible, the one after which it comes. But how does Intellect

come from [this] intelligible?[1] Like this. The intelligible remains by itself and is not deficient as what sees and thinks is—I call what thinks deficient in relation to that. But it is not, as it were, without awareness: everything that belongs to it is in it and with it; it is wholly able to discern itself; life is in it and all things are in it; and its comprehension of itself is itself, by a kind of self-awareness, in eternal rest and in a thinking different from the thinking of Intellect. If, then, something comes into being while it remains in itself, it comes into being from it when it is most of all what it is. So while it remains in its own character, what comes into being comes into being from it—but comes into being while it remains. Since that remains intelligible, then, what comes into being comes into being as thinking; and being thinking, and thinking that from which it came—for it has nothing else—it becomes Intellect: another intelligible, as it were, like that, an imitation and image of that.

But how, while that remains, does activity come into being? [Or rather:] in each thing there is an activity of the substance and an activity from the substance. The activity of the substance is each thing itself in activity; the activity from it must necessarily follow every thing, being other than it. So with fire: there is the heat that makes up its substance, and the heat that already comes from that, as the fire exercises the [activity] natural to its substance, by remaining fire. So it is There too—and much more so There. While it remains in its own character, out of the perfection within it and the activity that accompanies it, the generated activity took on existence, since it came from a great power—the greatest of all, in fact—and came to being and substance; for that was beyond being. And that is the power of all things, while this is already all things. If this is all things, that is beyond all things, and so beyond being. And if this is all things, and the One is before all things, not having equal standing with all things, in this way too it must be beyond being. And this means beyond Intellect too: so there is something beyond Intellect. For

1 The derivation of the Forms and numbers from the One and the "indefinite dyad" is Plato's unwritten doctrine as Aristotle reports it (*Metaphysics* A.6).

being is not dead, nor is it not life, nor not thinking: Intellect and being are the same. For Intellect is not of things in the way that perception is of sense objects that exist before it; Intellect itself is the things, if indeed it does not take in forms of them. For where would it get them from? No: here it is with the things, and the same as them, and one with them. And knowledge of what is without matter is, as a whole, the things themselves.

V.5 That the Intelligibles Are Not Outside Intellect, and On the Good

Ὅτι οὐκ ἔξω τοῦ νοῦ τὰ νοητὰ καὶ περὶ τἀγαθοῦ
Plotinus argues that the intelligibles live within Intellect, which grasps them without error, and that the Good lies beyond.
no. 32 in order of writing

5.5.1 Intellect—the true and real Intellect—would anyone say that it could ever be mistaken and believe what is not? Not at all. For how could it still be Intellect if it were unintelligent? It must, then, always know and never forget anything, and its knowing must not be guesswork or uncertain, nor again like something heard from someone else. Nor, then, through demonstration either. For even if one were to say it knows some things through demonstration, still some things will be immediately evident to it; and yet the argument says all things are. For how will anyone distinguish what is immediate from what is not? And even for the things they grant to be immediate, where will they say their evidence comes to it from? Where will it get its assurance that they are so? For even the objects of perception, which seem to carry the clearest conviction, are doubted: perhaps their apparent existence lies not in the underlying things but in our affections, and they need intellect or discursive thought to judge them. For even granting that they are in the underlying sensible things, which perception will apprehend, what is known through perception is an image of the thing, and perception does not grasp the thing itself; for that remains outside. Now Intellect, knowing and knowing the intelligibles—if it knows

them as other than itself, how would it meet with them? For it might not, so that it might not know them, or know them only when it has met them, and it will not always have knowledge.

And if they say the two are yoked together, what is this "yoked together"? Then too, the acts of thinking will be impressions; and if so, they will be imported from outside, and blows. And how will it be impressed, or what is the shape of such things? And thinking will be of what is outside, just as perception is. And how will it differ, except by apprehending smaller things? And how will it know that it has really apprehended them? And how will it know that this is good, or beautiful, or just? For each of these is other than it, and the principles of judgment it is to trust are not in it; they too are outside, and the truth is there. Then, too, those things are either without perception and without share in life and intellect, or they have intellect. And if they have intellect, both are here together, the truth is right here, and this is the first Intellect; and about it we shall inquire how the truth here stands, and the intelligible and Intellect—whether they are in the same and together, but two and different, or how. But if they are without intellect and without life, what are they? For they are certainly not propositions or axioms or "sayables"; for then they too would be saying things about other things, and would not be the beings themselves—as in "the just is beautiful," when the just and the beautiful are something else. And what if they say they are simple—the just by itself, and the beautiful? First of all, the intelligible will not be some one thing, nor in one thing; each will be scattered. And where, and over what places, has it been scattered? How will Intellect meet with them as it runs around? How will it stay?[1]

Or how will it stay in the same? And what shape or impression will it have at all? Unless they are like statues set up, made of gold or some other material by some sculptor or painter. But if so, the Intellect that contemplates them will be perception. And why is one of these justice and another something else? But

1 "Sayables" (*lekta*) is the Stoics' term for what is said or meant by a sentence, as distinct from the words and the things.

the biggest point of all is this: even if one were to grant, as fully as possible, that these are outside, and that Intellect contemplates them as they are, it necessarily follows that it does not possess their truth and is deceived in everything it contemplates. For those would be the true things; it will contemplate them, then, without having them, having taken in only images of them in a knowledge of this kind. Not having the true thing, then, but having taken images of the true into itself, it will have falsehoods and nothing true. If, then, it knows that it has falsehoods, it will admit that it has no share in truth. And if it does not know even this, and thinks it has the truth when it does not, the falsehood in it, now doubled, will set it far from the truth. That, I think, is also why there is no truth in perceptions, only opinion: because perception receives, and is opinion for that very reason, it receives something other, while that from which it has what it receives is something other again. If, then, there is no truth in Intellect, such an intellect will be neither truth, nor intellect in truth, nor intellect at all. But neither will truth be anywhere else.

5.5.2 So we must not look for the intelligibles outside, or say that Intellect holds impressions of the things that are, or strip it of truth. That would make the intelligibles unknowable and nonexistent, and abolish Intellect itself as well. If we are to bring in knowledge and truth, and keep the things that are safe, we need knowledge of what each thing is, not merely of what sort of thing it is. Otherwise we would hold an image and trace of each thing rather than the things themselves, being with them and blended with them. So everything must be given to the true Intellect. That way it would know, and know truly. It would neither forget nor go round searching. Truth will be in it, it will be a seat for the things that are, and it will live and think. All this must belong to the most blessed nature. Otherwise where will its dignity and majesty be? And again, if things are so, it needs no demonstration and no proof that it is so. It is so itself, and is evident to itself. If there is anything before it, it is evident to itself that it comes from that. If there is anything after

that, it is evident that this is itself. No one is more trustworthy to it about itself, or about the fact that it is so There, and really so. So real truth does not agree with something else but with itself. It says nothing besides itself: it is, and what it is, that is also what it says. Who, then, could refute it? And where would he bring the refutation from? The refutation brought forward comes to the same as what was said before. Even if he presents it as something different, it is carried back to the one who spoke at the start, and is one with it. For he could find nothing truer than the truth.

THE GREAT KING

Intellect is the beautiful pedestal of the One, like the procession before a great king.

5.5.3 So this one nature is, for us, (Intellect), all the things that are, (truth). If so, it is a great god. Or rather, not just "some" god: it claims to be all these things as a whole. And this nature is god, a second god, who shows himself before one sees that other. But that one sits above, enthroned upon this beautiful pedestal, as it were, which hangs from him. For when he advanced, he could not set foot on something soulless, nor even directly on soul. There had to be an inconceivable beauty going on ahead of him. Think of a great king. In his processions the lesser people go first, then always greater and more dignified ones after them. Those around the king are more royal still, and then come those honored next after him. After all of these, suddenly, the great king himself appears. The people pray and bow down—those of them, at least, who have not gone away beforehand, content with what they saw before the king. Here, then, the king is one person, and those who process before him are others. But the king There does not rule over what is alien to him. His rule is the most just, rule by nature, and his kingship is the true kingship, since he is king of truth and by nature lord of his own offspring, all of it together, and of the divine company. He is king of kings, and would more justly be called father of gods. Zeus imit-

ated him in this respect too: he did not rest content with the contemplation of his own father, but turned to his grandfather's —to his activity, so to speak, directed toward bringing being into existence.[2]

5.5.4 It has already been said that we must make the ascent to one, and to what is truly one. It is not one in the way the other things are one, which are many and are one by participation in one. We must grasp what is one without participation, not something that is no more one than many. And while the intelligible world and Intellect are more one than the other things, and nothing is nearer to the One itself, they are not the purely one. But what the purely and really one is, one not in virtue of something else, we now long to see, if it is in some way possible. Here, then, we must spring toward the one and add nothing more to it. We must stand completely still, afraid of departing from it even in the least, of going on even to two. Otherwise you have got two—two among which the One is not, but both of them later than it. For it will not be counted along with another, whether one or any number at all; it will not be counted at all. It is measure and not measured, and it is not equal to the others, so as to be with them. Otherwise there will be something common to it and to the things counted with it, and that common thing will be before it; but there must be nothing before it. Not even substantial number is predicated of it, nor, certainly, the number later than this, the number of quantity. Substantial number is the one that always provides being to thinking. Quantitative number is the one that provides quantity, along with other things or without other things—if that is number.

Consider the nature in the numbers of quantity. In relation to the one that is their principle, it imitates the nature in the prior numbers in relation to the really one. Even so, it has its existence without using up the one or breaking it into bits. When a two comes to be, there is the unit before the two, and that unit is not either of the units in the two, nor one of the pair. For why

2 In Plotinus' reading of Hesiod's succession myth, Ouranos, Kronos and Zeus stand for the One, Intellect and Soul, so Zeus' grandfather is the One.

should it be one rather than the other? If, then, it is neither of them but that unit, it remains and yet does not remain. How, then, are those units different? And how is the two one? And is it the same one as the one in each of the units it contains? Or rather, we must say that they participate in the first unit but are other than what they participate in. The two, too, insofar as it is one, participates, but not in the same way. For an army and a house are not one in the same way either. And the house, compared with what is continuous, is one neither in the sense of being one nor in the sense of quantity. Are the units in five and in ten, then, different, while the one in five is the same as the one in ten? Or rather: if every ship compared with every ship, small with large, and city with city, and army with army, is one in the same way, then the one is the same here too. And if it is not there, it is not here either. As for any difficulties about these matters, later.

5.5.5 But we must go back to that point and say that the First remains the same even if other things come to be from it. In numbers, then, while the one remains and something else does the making, number comes to be in accordance with it [the one]. But in what is before the things that are, the One remains far more. And while it remains, it is not something else that makes the things that are in accordance with it: it is enough for it to generate the things that are. And there, in numbers, the form of the unit was in all of them, primarily and secondarily, and not every number after it shares in it equally. In the same way, here too each of the things after the First has something of it in itself, a kind of form. There, participation brought their quantity into existence. Here, the trace of the One brought their being into existence, so that being is a trace of the One. And if someone were to say that this word *einai*, "being," has come from *hen*, "one," he might well hit on the truth. For what is called being, this first thing, came out from There and went only a little way forward, as it were. It did not want to go further, but turned inward and stood still, and became *ousia*, being, and *hestia*, hearth, of all things. It is as if a speaker pressed his voice into a

sound: there comes to be *hen*, revealing what comes from the One, and *on*, "being," signifying, as best it can, what uttered it.[3] So what came to be, and being, carry an imitation, having flowed from its power. And the soul that saw it and was stirred by the sight, imitating what it saw, broke into utterance: *on*, *einai*, *ousia*, *hestia*. These sounds aim to signify the coming into existence of what was generated, imitating, as far as they can, through the labor pains of the one who utters them, the birth of being.

5.5.6 But let this be taken as anyone likes. The substance that came to be is Form—one could not say that what came from there is anything else—and Form not of something in particular but of everything, so as to leave nothing else out. So that must be without form. And being without form, it is not substance. For a substance must be a "this," and a "this" is something defined. But it cannot be grasped as a "this": then it would no longer be the principle, but only that which you have said is "this." If, then, all things are in what came to be, which of the things in it will you say that is? Being none of them, it could only be said to be beyond them. But these are the things that are, and being. So it is beyond being. For "beyond being" does not say "this"—it posits nothing—nor does it say its name. It conveys only "not this." And in doing so it does not encompass it at all. It is ridiculous to try to encompass that boundless nature: whoever wants to do this has cut himself off from going even a little way, in any manner, toward its trace. Someone who wants to see the intelligible nature will contemplate what is beyond the perceptible by having no imagining of anything perceptible. In the same way, someone who wants to contemplate what is beyond the intelligible will contemplate it by letting go of everything intelligible. Through the intelligible he learns that it is; but as to what it is like, he lets the intelligible go.

And "what it is like" would signify "not like." For there can be no "what it is like" for something that has no "what it is" either.

3 Plotinus is punning on Greek words: *einai* (to be) and *hen* (one), *ousia* (being) and *hestia* (hearth), *on* (being) and *hen*.

But we, in our labor pains, are at a loss as to what we should say. We speak about what cannot be spoken, and we give it a name, wanting to signify it to ourselves as best we can. Perhaps this very name "One" contains a denial of the many. That is why the Pythagoreans, too, signified it to one another symbolically as Apollo, by negation of the many.[4] If the One—both the name and what it reveals—were something posited, it would be less clear than if one gave it no name at all. Perhaps this name was used so that the seeker, starting from what is [most of all] expressive of simplicity, might end by denying this too. It was posited as well as could be by the one who posited it, but even this is not worthy to reveal that nature. For that is not something heard, nor is it to be understood by the one who hears, but, if by anyone, by the one who sees. But if the one who sees seeks to see a form, he will not know even this.

LIGHT SEEN BY ITSELF

Intellect sees the One as the eye sees its own light, closed to everything else.

5.5.7 Or rather: seeing, too, as an activity, is twofold. Take the eye. One thing is what it sees, the form of the perceptible object. The other is that through which it sees the form. This too is perceptible to it; it is different from the form but is the cause of the form's being seen, and it is seen together with the form, in it and on it. That is why it does not then give a clear perception of itself, since the eye is turned toward what is illuminated. But when there is nothing else beside it, the eye sees it in a single, all-at-once apprehension. And yet even then it saw it resting on something else. When it has become alone by itself, not on something else, perception cannot grasp it. Even the light in the sun itself might escape perception if there were no more solid mass beneath it. But if someone were to say that the sun is all light, one could use this to illustrate what is being said. It will be light not in the form of any of the other visible things, and per-

4 The name *Apollōn* was read as *a-pollōn*, "not of many."

haps it alone is purely visible; for the other visible things are not light alone. In the same way, the sight of Intellect too sees, through another light, the things illuminated by that first nature, and in them it truly sees. But in leaning toward the nature of the things lit up, it sees that light itself less.

But if it lets go of the things seen and looks at that through which it saw, it would see light and the source of light. But since Intellect must not see this light as something outside it, we must go back to the eye. Sometimes the eye too will know a light that is not the outside light or someone else's, but one of its own, prior to the outside light and more brilliant, which it beholds in an instant. This happens at night in the dark, when that light leaps out from it in front of it. Or when, not wanting to see anything else, it draws the lids in front of itself and still brings the light forward. Or when its owner presses it and it sees the light within itself. Then it sees without seeing, and then most of all it sees: for it sees light. The other things were light-like, but they were not light. In just this way Intellect, veiling itself from the other things and drawing itself together inward, seeing nothing, will behold a light. It is not one thing in another, but light itself by itself, alone, pure, suddenly appearing on its own.

5.5.8 So one is at a loss as to where it appeared from, from outside or from within. And when it has gone, one says: "So it was within—and yet again it was not within." Or rather, one should not ask where it comes from, for there is no "where from." It neither comes nor goes away anywhere. It appears and does not appear. That is why one must not chase after it, but wait quietly until it appears, having prepared oneself to be a beholder, as the eye waits for the rising of the sun. And the sun, rising above the horizon—"out of Ocean," the poets say—gives itself to the eyes to behold. But this one, whom the sun imitates: what will he rise from? And what will he climb above when he appears? Perhaps this: above Intellect itself, the one that beholds. For Intellect will stand still for the vision, looking at nothing but the beautiful, turning and giving itself wholly there. Having stood still and been filled, as it were, with strength, it first saw itself becoming

more beautiful and gleaming, because he was near. But he did not come as one expected. He came as one who did not come. He was seen not as having come, but as present before everything, even before Intellect came. No: it is Intellect that [must be] the one that came, and the one that goes away too, because it does not know where it should remain, and where he remains—namely, in nothing. And if it were possible for Intellect itself to remain nowhere—not just not in place, since it is not in place either, but nowhere at all—it would always be seeing him. Or rather, not seeing, but being one with him and not two. As it is, because it is Intellect, it sees him in this way, when it sees, by that in itself which is not intellect. It is a marvel, then, how he is present without having come, and how, being nowhere, there is nowhere he is not. One may well marvel at this, taken just as it stands. But to someone who knows, it would be the opposite that would be marvelous, if it were so—or rather, it could not even be, for anyone to marvel at it. This is how it is.

EVERYWHERE AND NOWHERE

The One holds all things without being held, and so is nowhere and everywhere.

5.5.9 Everything that has come to be from another is either in what made it or in something else, if there is anything after its maker. For since it came to be from another and needed another in order to come to be, it needs another in every respect. That is why it is also in another. So it is natural for the last things to be in the last of those before them, and the things among the first to be in those prior to them, one thing in another, up to the First, the principle. But the principle, since it has nothing before it, has nothing else to be in. Having nothing to be in, while the other things are in those before them, it encompasses all the others itself. And having encompassed them, it was not scattered into them; it holds without being held. Holding, then, and not held, there is nowhere it is not. For if it is not there, it does not hold. But if it is not held, it is not there. So it both is and

is not: by not being contained, it is not there; by being free of everything, it is nowhere prevented from being. For if, in turn, it were prevented, it would be bounded by something else. The things that come next would have no share in it, the god would reach only that far, and he would no longer be by himself but a slave to what comes after him. So the things that are in something are where they are; but whatever is not anywhere—there is nowhere that it is not. For if it is not here, clearly another place holds it, and [if] it is here, it is in something else. So the "not anywhere" is false.

If, then, "not anywhere" is true and "somewhere" false, so that it is not in another, it would not stand apart from anything. And if it stands apart from nothing, being nowhere, it will be everywhere by itself. For it is not that one part of it is here and another there. Nor is the whole of it just here. So it is whole everywhere, with nothing holding it and, again, nothing not holding it: everything whatever, then, is held by it. Look at the cosmos too. Since there is no cosmos before it, it is not in a cosmos, nor again in a place: what place was there before the cosmos existed? Its parts depend on it and are in it. Soul is not in the cosmos; the cosmos is in Soul. For body is not a place for soul. Rather, Soul is in Intellect, body in Soul, and Intellect in something else. But beyond that there is nothing else for it to be in. So it is not in anything whatever, and in this sense it is nowhere. Where, then, are the other things? In it. So it neither stands apart from the other things nor is it in them. There is nothing that holds it; it holds all things. That is why, in this way too, it is the good of all things: because it is, and all things depend on it, each in its own way. And that is why some things are better than others: because some have more being than others too.

5.5.10 But you—please don't look at it through other things. Otherwise you would see a trace, not it. Think instead what this could be which can be grasped as being by itself, pure, mixed with nothing, with all things participating in it and nothing holding it. There is nothing else of that kind, but there must be

something of that kind. Who, then, could grasp its power all at once? If someone grasped all of it at once, how would he differ from it? In part, then. You who approach will approach it all at once, but you will not report it as a whole. Otherwise you will be an intellect thinking, and even if you reach it, it will escape you —or rather, you will escape it. But when you see, look at it whole. And when you think, whatever you remember of it, think that it is the Good. For it is the power that causes life endowed with understanding and intellect, since life and intellect come from it. It is the cause of being and of what is, because it is one; for it is simple and first, because it is the principle. All things come from it. From it comes the first motion, which is not in it. From it comes rest, because it itself had no need of it: it neither moves nor is at rest. It had nothing in which to rest or in which to be moved. Around what, toward what, in what? For it is first. But neither is it limited: by what? Nor is it unlimited as a magnitude is: where would it have had to go? Or to gain what, when it needs nothing? It is its power that has the unlimited. It could never be otherwise, nor will it fail, since even the things that never fail are unfailing through it.

5.5.11 And it is unlimited in this sense: it is no more than one, and has nothing against which it would set a limit to anything of its own. By being one it is not measured, and it does not enter into number. So it is limited neither in relation to something else nor in relation to itself; for then it would be two as well. So it has no figure either, since it has no parts, and no shape. Do not seek it, then, with mortal eyes, such as the argument declares it to be. Do not think it can be seen in the way someone might think fit, [who,] by assuming that everything is perceptible, does away with what most of all is. For the things people think most are, are most of all the things that are not (and what is large has less being). The First is the principle of being and, again, has more authority than being. So we must turn our opinion around. Otherwise you will be left bereft of god. You will be like people at festivals who, out of gluttony, stuff themselves with things that those who go in to the gods are not allowed to take.

They think these more evident than the vision of the god in whose honor they ought to celebrate, and so they had no part in the rites there. In these rites too, the god, not being seen, makes those who think evident only what they might see with the flesh disbelieve in him, as if he did not exist. It is as if people asleep their whole lives were to think the things in their dreams trustworthy and evident, and, if someone woke them, disbelieved what they saw with their eyes open and fell asleep again.

THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL

All desire the Good, often unknowingly; beauty comes second and brings pain with delight.

5.5.12 One must consider what each kind of thing is to be perceived with: some things with the eyes, others with the ears, and so on. And one must trust that Intellect sees other things, and not think that thinking is hearing or seeing. That would be like ordering the ears to see and saying that sounds do not exist because they are not seen. One must also bear in mind that they have forgotten what they have longed for and desired from the beginning until now. For all things reach out for it and desire it by a necessity of nature, as if they had divined that without it they cannot exist. Grasping the beautiful, the amazement at it, and the awakening of love belong to those who already know it, in a way, and are awake. But the Good, since it has long been present to an innate desire, is present even to those who are asleep. It does not amaze them when they see it at some point, because it is always with them, and recollection of it is not something that happens at a given time. Yet they do not see it, because it is present to them while they sleep. But love of the beautiful, when it is present, brings pain, because those who have seen it must desire it. This love, being second and belonging to those who already understand more, indicates that the beautiful is second. The more ancient desire, which is not perceived, declares that the Good too is more ancient, and prior to the beautiful. And everyone thinks that once they have the Good

it is enough for them; for they have reached the end. But not everyone has seen the beautiful. When it has come about, they think it exists for its own sake, not for them—like beauty here too, since beauty belongs to whoever has it. And it is enough to seem beautiful, even if one is not; but no one wants to have the good merely in seeming. For they lay claim above all to the first, and compete and quarrel with the beautiful, as if it had come to be just as they did. It is as if someone lower down from a king wanted to rise to the same rank as the one next to the king, as though born from one and the same source as he. He does not realize that he too depends on the king, but that the other is ahead of him.

Anyway, the cause of the error is that both share in the same thing, and the One is prior to both; and also that there too the Good itself does not need the beautiful, while the beautiful needs the Good. The Good is gentle and kindly and more delicate, and present to anyone whenever he wishes. The beautiful brings amazement and shock, and pleasure mixed with pain. And it even draws those who do not know away from the Good, as the beloved draws one away from a father; for it is younger. The Good is older, not in time but in truth, and its power is prior too, for it has all power. What comes after it does not have all of it, only as much as comes after it and from it; so the Good is lord of this power too. It did not need what came to be from it. It let the whole of what came to be go entirely, because it needed nothing of it, and it is the same as it was before generating it. It would not even have cared if it had not come to be. And if it had been possible for anything else to come to be from it, it would not have begrudged it. As it is, nothing more can come to be. For there is nothing that has not come to be, now that all things have come to be. It was not itself all things, so as to need them. Transcending all things, it was able both to make them and to let them be by themselves, being itself above them.

5.5.13 Since it is the Good itself and not a good, it must also have nothing in itself, since it does not even have good. For whatever it has, it has either as good or as not good. But the not-good is

not in what is good in the strict and primary sense, and the Good does not have the good. If, then, it has neither the not-good nor the good, it has nothing. [And] if it has nothing, it is alone and isolated from the others. The other things either are good and not the Good, or are not good. If it has neither of these, then, having nothing, it is the Good by having nothing. But if anyone adds anything at all to it, whether being or intellect or beauty, by the addition he takes away its being the Good. So whoever takes away everything and says nothing about it, not even falsely saying that anything belongs to it, lets it simply be, without charging it with any of the things that are not there. Compare people who make speeches of praise without knowledge. They diminish the reputation of those they praise by attributing to them things beneath their worth, because they are at a loss for true things to say about the persons in question. So let us too add nothing of what is later and lesser. Let it, as going beyond these, be their cause, without being these itself.

For again, it is the nature of the Good not to be all things, nor, again, any one of all things. Otherwise it would fall under one and the same heading as all of them. And falling under the same heading as all of them, it would differ only by what is peculiar to it, by a difference and an addition. Then it will be two, not one: one part not good, the common element, and the other good. So it will be a mixture of good and not good, and so not purely good, nor primarily. Primarily good would be that by participation in which, over and above the common element, it has become good. So it is good by participation, while what it participated in is none of all things. So the Good is none of all things. But suppose this good is in it—for it was a difference that made this composite good. Then it must come from something else. But that was simple and good alone; far [more], then, is what it comes from good alone. So what is primarily good, the Good, has been revealed to us as above all the things that are: good alone, having nothing in itself, unmixed with all things, above all things, and cause of all things. For the beautiful certainly does not come from evil, nor do the things that are, nor again do

they come from things indifferent. What makes is better than what is made, for it is more complete.

V.6 That What Is Beyond Being Does Not Think

Περὶ τοῦ τὸ ἐπέκεινα τοῦ ὄντος μὴ νοεῖν καὶ τί τὸ πρώτως νοοῦν καὶ τί τὸ δευτέρως
Plotinus argues that thinking requires duality, so the One, beyond being and wholly simple, does not think.
no. 24 in order of writing

5.6.1 One thing thinks something else; another thinks itself. The latter already escapes being two more than the former does. The former wants this too, but is less able to manage it. It has what it sees with itself, but that is different from it. The latter is not separated from its object in being; it is together with itself and sees itself. So the two become one. It thinks more, then, because it has its object, and it thinks primarily, because what thinks must be both one and two. For suppose it is not one. Then what thinks will be one thing and what is thought another—and then it would not be what thinks primarily. Receiving the thinking of something else, it will not be the primary thinker, because it does not have what it thinks as its own, and so does not have itself either. Or, if it has its object as itself, so as to think in the proper sense, the two will be one: so both must be one. But suppose it is one, but not, in turn, two. Then it will not have anything to think, so it will not even be a thinker. So it must be simple and not simple. One would grasp better that it is like this by going up from soul. For here it is easy to divide, and one could more easily see the doubleness. Suppose, then, someone were to make a double light: soul corresponding to the lesser light, its intelligible object to the purer. Then suppose he were to

make the light that sees equal to the light that is seen. No longer able to separate them by any difference, he will set the two down as one, thinking that they were two, but now seeing one. That is how he will grasp the thinker and the thought. In our argument, then, we have made one out of two. But in fact it is the reverse: from being one it is two, because it thinks, making itself two—or rather, being two because it thinks, and one because what it thinks is itself.

5.6.2 If, then, one thing thinks primarily and another thinks in a different way, what is beyond the primary thinker will no longer think. For it must become intellect in order to think. And being intellect, it must have an intelligible object, and, as primary thinker, have the intelligible in itself. But it is not necessary for everything intelligible to have a thinker in itself as well and to think. For then it will be not only intelligible but also a thinker, and, being two, it will not be first. And the Intellect that has the intelligible could not exist if there were no being that was purely intelligible. This will be intelligible in relation to Intellect, but in itself it will be neither a thinker nor intelligible in the proper sense. For the intelligible is intelligible for another. And Intellect's directing of its thought is empty unless it receives and grasps the intelligible that it thinks; it does not have thinking without the intelligible. So it is complete when it has it. But there had to be something complete in its being of itself, before thinking. So that to which completeness belongs will be complete before thinking. So it does not need thinking at all, for it is self-sufficient before this. So it will not think. One thing, then, does not think; another thinks primarily; and another will think secondarily. Further, if the First thinks, something will belong to it. So it is not first but also second, and not one but already many: all the things it will think. Even if it thinks only itself, it will be many.

5.6.3 But if they say that nothing prevents the same thing from being many, there will be a one underlying these many. There cannot be many unless there is a one from which or in which they are, or at least a one that is counted first, before the others.

That one must be grasped by itself, alone. If it is together with the others, one must take it together with the others, yet as different from them. One must leave it as it is with the others, and seek this that underlies the others no longer with the others, but itself by itself. For what is in the others would be like this, but would not be this. It must be alone, if it is also to be seen in others. Unless someone were to say that its being consists in having its existence with the others. Then it will not be simple, nor will what is composed of many exist. For what cannot be simple will have no existence, and what is composed of many will not exist either if the simple does not. Suppose each simple thing cannot be, because no single simple thing exists by itself. Then none of them can have existence by itself, or offer itself to be with another, since it does not exist at all. How, then, could the composite of all of them exist, made from things that are not—not things that are not something, but things that are not at all? So if there is a many, there must be a one before the many. If, then, the thinker is a multiplicity, thinking cannot be in what is not a multiplicity. But this was the First. So thinking and Intellect will be among the things that come after it.

5.6.4 Further, if the Good must be simple and without need, it would not need thinking either. And what it does not need will not be present to it, since nothing at all is present to it. So thinking is not present to it. And it thinks nothing, because there is nothing else either. Further, Intellect is other than the Good, for it is good-like by thinking the Good. Further, take two, where there is one and another. This one that is with another cannot be the One; there had to be one by itself before the one with another. In the same way, the one that is not with another must be simple, by itself, having in itself none of the things that are in the one with others. For how could one thing be in another unless there were first, separately, that from which the other comes? For the simple could not come from something else, but whatever is many, two, must depend on something else. So we should compare the first to light, the next to the sun, and the third to the moon, a star that gets its light from the sun. Soul has

intellect as something brought in from outside, which colors its surface when it is intellectual. Intellect has it in itself as its own: it is not light only, but what has been illuminated in its very being. And what provides it with light, not being anything else, is simple light, which gives Intellect the power to be what it is. What, then, could it need? For what is itself is not the same as what is in something else; what is in something else is different from what is itself by itself.

5.6.5 Further, what is many would seek itself, and would want to converge on itself and be aware of itself. But what is altogether one—where will it go to reach itself? Where would it need self-awareness? It is the same, and it is better than self-awareness and all thinking. For thinking is not first, either in being or in value. It is second, something that came to be, once the Good existed and set something moving toward itself, and that was moved and saw. This is what thinking is: a movement toward the Good on the part of what desires it. The desire generated thinking and brought it into existence along with itself; for the desire for sight is seeing. So the Good itself does not need to think at all; for the Good is not something other than itself. For even when what is other than the Good thinks itself, it does so by being good-like and having a likeness to the Good. It thinks itself as good and as desirable to itself, grasping, as it were, an imagining of the Good. If it is always so, it is always this. And again, in thinking itself it thinks itself incidentally: it thinks itself while looking toward the Good. For in being active, in turn, it thinks itself; and the activity of all things is directed toward the Good.

5.6.6 If this is rightly said, the Good would have no room for any thinking at all. For the good must be something other than what thinks it. So it is not active. And why should activity be active? In general, no activity has an activity of its own in turn. And even if we were to allow that to the other activities, those directed toward something else, the first of all, on which the others depend, must be just what it is, without our adding anything further to it. So such an activity is not thinking; for it has noth-

ing to think, since it is first. And then, it is not thinking that thinks, but what has thinking. So again two come about in what thinks; but this is in no way two. One would see this still better if one grasped more clearly how this double nature is present in everything that thinks. We say that the things that are, as things that are, each thing itself, and the things that truly are, are in the intelligible place. This is not only because some remain the same in their being, while others flow and do not remain—the things in perception (for perhaps there are things that remain in the perceptible world too). Rather, it is because they have the completeness of being from themselves.

For what is called being in the primary sense must not be a shadow of being, but must have being in its fullness. And being is full when it takes the form of thinking and living. So thinking, living and being are together in what is. If, then, it is being, it is also intellect; and if it is intellect, it is also being; and thinking is together with being. So thinking is many and not one. So necessarily what is not of this kind does not think either. And if we go through things one by one: [thought of man and] man, thought of horse and horse, thought of the just and the just. So all things are double, and the one is two, and again the two come together into one. But what is none of these is neither each one, nor made from all the twos, nor two at all. How the two come from the One is discussed elsewhere. But what is beyond being must also be beyond thinking. So it is not absurd either if it does not know itself. It has nothing with it to learn, being one. Nor must it know the other things. For it gives them something better and greater than its knowing them, [which] was the good of the other things—or rather, it gives them, as far as each is able, to be in the same with it by touching it.

V.7 Whether There Are Forms of Individuals

Περὶ τοῦ εἰ καὶ τῶν καθ' ἕκαστά ἐστιν εἴδη
Plotinus asks whether each individual person has its own Form, and argues that the cosmic cycle makes this possible.
no. 18 in order of writing

5.7.1 Is there a Form of the individual too? Perhaps: if I and each of us can be traced back to the intelligible, the principle of each of us is There too. Or perhaps: if Socrates, the soul of Socrates, exists always, there will be a Socrates-itself, as people say, There, insofar as souls are individual There too. But if not always—if the one who was formerly Socrates becomes a different person at different times, Pythagoras for instance, or someone else—then this individual is no longer There as well. But if the soul of each has the rational principles of all the individuals it passes through, then again they are all There. For we also say that each soul has as many rational principles as the cosmos has. If, then, the cosmos has the rational principles not only of man but also of the individual animals, so does the soul. So the number of rational principles will be unlimited—unless it comes back round in periods. In this way the unlimitedness will be limited, when the same things are given back again.[1] If, then, the things that come to be are on the whole more numerous than the model, why must there be rational principles and models of all the things that come to be in one period? One man

1 The "periods" are cosmic cycles after which, as the Stoics taught, the same things recur.

would be enough for all men, just as a limited number of souls produce an unlimited number of men. Or rather, different individuals cannot have the same rational principle. [One] man is not enough as a model for particular men who differ from one another not only in their matter but in countless differences of form. They are not like portraits of Socrates in relation to the original: different products must come from different rational principles. The whole period contains all the rational principles, and then the same things come round again according to the same rational principles. We need not fear the unlimitedness in the intelligible. All of it is in what is without parts, and it comes forth, as it were, when it is active.

5.7.2 But if the mixtures of the rational principles of male and female produce different individuals, there will no longer be a rational principle for each one that comes to be. And each of the two parents generating—the male, for instance—will not produce according to different rational principles, but according to one, his own or his father's. Or rather, nothing prevents him from producing according to different ones too, since he has them all, though different ones are always ready to hand. And when children come from the same parents, why are they different? Perhaps because of unequal dominance. But note this: it does not follow that, in appearance, the child takes mostly after the male at one time and after the female at another. Did each parent, then, give an equal share? No: each gave the whole, and it lies within; but it masters the matter in part, the matter of one or of the other. And how are those born in another region different? Is it, then, the matter that makes the difference, by being mastered unequally? Then all but one would be contrary to nature. But if difference is often beautiful, the form is not one. No: only ugliness should be put down to matter's prevailing [contrary to nature] over the complete rational principles, which are hidden but have been given whole. But let the rational principles be different. Why must there be as many as the individuals that come to be in one period, if it is possible for different individuals to appear outwardly when the same principles

are given? Or rather, it has been granted that this happens when the principles are given whole; the question is whether it happens when the same ones prevail. Is it, then, because in the next period the same is altogether the same, while within this period nothing is altogether the same?

5.7.3 How, then, shall we say the rational principles are different in the case of many twins? And what if one went on to the other animals, especially those that bear many young at once? Perhaps: where they are indistinguishable, there is one rational principle. But if so, there are not as many rational principles as there are individuals. Or rather, there are as many as there are individuals that differ, and differ not by falling short in form. Or what prevents it even where they do not differ—if indeed some things are altogether without difference? Think of a craftsman. Even if he makes indistinguishable things, he must still grasp what is the same by a rational difference, according to which he will make another by bringing some difference to the same. In nature, where the other does not come about by reasoning but by rational principles alone, the difference must be yoked to the form. It is we who are unable to grasp the difference. And if the production leaves it to chance how many there are, that is another matter. But if it is measured how many there are to be, the quantity will be fixed by the unrolling and unfolding of all the rational principles. So when everything comes to an end, there is another beginning. For how large the cosmos must be, and how many things it will pass through in its life, is laid down from the beginning in what has the rational principles. Then, in the case of the other animals too, where many come from one birth, are there as many rational principles? Or rather, we need not fear the unlimited in seeds and in rational principles, since Soul holds all things. Or perhaps, in Intellect too, as in Soul, there is the unlimited of these, ready to hand in their turn There.

V.8 On Intelligible Beauty

Περὶ τοῦ νοητοῦ κάλλους
Plotinus contrasts a sculptor's art with nature to show that intelligible beauty is wisdom itself, seen all at once.
no. 31 in order of writing

5.8.1 We say that one who has come to the vision of intelligible beauty, and has grasped the beauty of the true Intellect, will also be able to form some notion of its father, what is beyond Intellect. So let us try to see, and to say for ourselves, so far as such things can be said, how one might contemplate the beauty of Intellect and of that cosmos. Suppose, then, if you like, [two] blocks of stone lying near each other. One is unshaped and has had no part in art. The other has already been mastered by art into a statue of a god or even of some human being: of a god such as a Grace or one of the Muses; of a human being not any particular person, but one that art has made out of everything beautiful. The one that art has brought to the beauty of form would appear beautiful, not because it is stone (otherwise the other would be just as beautiful), but because of the form that art has put into it. Now the matter did not have this form. It was in the one who conceived it, even before it entered the stone. And it was in the craftsman not insofar as he had eyes or hands, but because he had a share in the art. So this beauty was in the art, and far better there. For the beauty in the art did not itself go into the stone. That beauty remains, and what went in is another, which comes from the art and is less than it. And not even this remained pure in the stone, or such as the art wished, but only so far as the stone yielded to the art.

If art makes something like what it is and what it has, and it makes the beautiful according to the rational principle of what it makes, then art is beautiful in a greater and truer way, since it has the beauty of art, which is certainly greater and finer than whatever is in the outer object. For the more beauty is extended by going into matter, the weaker it is than what remains in unity. Everything that spreads itself apart falls away from itself: strength, if it is strength, in strength; heat, if it is heat, in heat; power in general in power; and beauty in beauty. And everything that makes in the first place must be in itself superior to what is made. It is not lack of music that makes a musician, but music; and the music in the perceptible is made by the music before it. If anyone looks down on the arts because they produce by imitating nature, we must say, first, that natures too imitate other things. Next, one must realize that the arts do not simply imitate what is seen, but go back up to the rational principles from which nature comes. Then, too, they produce much on their own: they add whatever something lacks, since they possess beauty. Phidias, for instance, made his Zeus without looking to any perceptible model; he grasped what Zeus would be like if he were willing to appear to us before our eyes.[1]

BEAUTY IN NATURE

The beauty of natural things comes from form, not from mass or matter.

5.8.2 But let us leave the arts aside. Let us contemplate the things whose works the arts are said to imitate, the beauties that come to be by nature and are called beautiful: all living things, rational and non-rational, and especially those among them that have turned out well, where the one who shaped and crafted them has mastered the matter and supplied the form he wanted. What, then, is the beauty in these? Not the blood, surely, or the menstrual fluids. Their color is something different, and their

1 Phidias' colossal gold-and-ivory Zeus at Olympia (fifth century BC) was counted among the wonders of the world.

shape is either nothing or something unshapely, or like a simple thing that encloses, as matter does. Where, then, did the beauty of Helen, fought over so long, shine out from, or that of the women who were like Aphrodite in beauty? And where does the beauty of Aphrodite herself come from, or of any human being who is beautiful at all, or of a god, whether of those who have come before our eyes or of those who have not, but have in them a beauty that would be seen? Is this not form everywhere, which has come to what was made from the one who made it, just as in the arts we said it came from the arts to the works of art? What then? Are the things made, and the rational principle in matter, beautiful, while the rational principle that is not in matter but in the maker, the first and immaterial one, is not beauty, even though it is gathered into one? But if the mass were beautiful insofar as it was mass, then the rational principle that made it, since it was not mass, would have to be not beautiful. If, however, the same form, whether in something small or something large, moves and disposes the soul of the one who sees it in the same way by its own power, then beauty must not be attributed to the size of the mass.

Here is a further sign: so long as it is outside, we have not yet seen it; when it comes inside, it has affected us. But it enters through the eyes as form alone; how else could it pass through something so small? Its size is drawn in along with it, not as large in mass but as having become large in form. Then again, what makes must be either ugly, or indifferent, or beautiful. If it were ugly, it would not make its opposite; if indifferent, why should it make the beautiful rather than the ugly? No: the nature that crafts things so beautiful is itself beautiful, and far before them. But we, unused to seeing anything inside, and not knowing it, chase after the outside, unaware that it is what is inside that moves us—as if someone looking at his own image, and not knowing where it came from, were to chase after it. That what we pursue is something else, and that beauty is not in size, is shown also by the beauty in studies and in ways of life, and in general the beauty in souls. There, indeed, beauty is more truly

present: when you see understanding in someone and are delighted, not looking at his face—that might be ugly—but, letting go of every shape, you pursue his inner beauty. And if this does not yet move you to call such a person beautiful, then neither will you take delight in yourself as beautiful when you look within. So in that state you would search for that beauty in vain, for you will be searching with what is ugly and not pure. That is why talk about such things is not for everyone. But if you too have seen yourself as beautiful, remember.

5.8.3 There is, then, in nature too a rational principle of beauty, the archetype of the beauty in body; and more beautiful than the one in nature is the one in soul, from which the one in nature comes. Clearest of all is the one in a good soul, already advancing in beauty. For it adorns the soul and gives it light from a greater light, which is beauty in the primary sense; and being itself in the soul, it makes the soul infer what the one before it is like, the one that no longer comes to be in anything else, but is in itself. That is why it is not even a rational principle, but the maker of the first rational principle, which is beauty in soul as in a kind of matter. And this is Intellect, the one that is always Intellect and not intellect only at times, because it is not something brought in to itself from outside. What image of it, then, could one find? Any image will be taken from something worse. But the image must come from Intellect, so that we grasp it not through an image, but as one takes some piece of gold as a sample of all gold. And if the piece taken is not pure, one must purify it, either in practice or by argument, showing that not all of this is gold, but only this part of the lump. So here too: start from the intellect in us once it has been purified, or, if you like, from the gods, and see what kind of intellect is in them. For all the gods are majestic and beautiful, and their beauty is beyond measure.

But what is it that makes them so? Intellect, surely, and the fact that intellect is more active in them, so as to be seen. It is not, after all, that their bodies are beautiful—even for those who have bodies, their being gods does not lie in that—but these too

are gods by virtue of intellect. So the gods are beautiful. They do not have understanding at one moment and lose their wits the next; they have understanding always, in an intellect that is impassive, stable and pure. They know all things, and what they recognize is not human affairs but their own, and all that intellect sees.

LIFE IN THE INTELLIGIBLE WORLD

There all is transparent, each thing is all, and wisdom is the substance of things.

Of the gods, those who are in the heaven, since they have leisure, contemplate always, as though from afar, the things in that other heaven, by lifting their heads above it. Those who are in that heaven, all who have their dwelling on it and in it, dwell in the whole of the heaven There. For everything there is heaven: the earth is heaven, and the sea, and animals and plants and human beings; everything belongs to the heaven of that heaven. And the gods in it, not disdaining human beings or anything else There, since it belongs There, pass through the whole region and place There, at rest.[2]

5.8.4 For there is "living at ease" There. Truth is their mother and nurse, their being and their food. They see all things—not those to which becoming belongs, but those to which being belongs—and they see themselves in others. For everything there is transparent; nothing is dark or resistant; each is manifest to each, to its inmost depths, and all things are manifest: light to light. Each has everything in itself, and again sees everything in another, so that all is everywhere, and all is all, and each is all, and the glory is unlimited. Each of them is great, since even the small is great. The sun there is all the stars, and each star again is the sun and all of them. In each, a different one stands out, but each shows forth all.[3] Movement there is

2 The image of gods journeying through the heavens and gazing at what lies beyond them comes from Plato's *Phaedrus* (246e–248b).

3 "Living at ease" is Homer's phrase for the gods (*Iliad* 6.138).

pure, too, for what moves it, being something other than it, does not confuse it as it goes; and rest is not disturbed, because it is not mixed with what is not at rest; and the beautiful is beautiful because it is not in the beautiful. Each stands not on foreign ground, so to speak: for each, that in which it is is what it itself is, and as it goes, so to speak, upward, the place it comes from runs along with it. It is not that it is one thing and its place another. For the substrate is Intellect, and it is itself Intellect. It is as if someone were to think of this visible heaven, luminous as it is, and of the light that comes from it, as having grown from it. Here, one thing would come from another, part from part, and each would be only a part. There, each always comes from the whole and is at once each and whole. It appears as a part, but to sharp sight it is seen to be whole—as if someone had sight like that of Lynceus, who was said to see even what is inside the earth, the myth hinting at the eyes of those who are There.[4]

There is no weariness in the vision There, and no filling-up that would make the one contemplating stop. For there was no emptiness, such that he would be satisfied on reaching fullness and the end; nor is one thing one and another another, so that one of the things in him would be displeased with what belongs to another; and the things there are unwearying. Still, there is insatiability, in that being filled does not make one disdain what has filled one. For seeing, it sees more; and seeing itself, and what it sees, as unlimited, it follows its own nature. And life brings weariness to no one when it is pure; and what lives the best of lives—how could it grow weary? That life is wisdom, and wisdom not acquired by reasonings, because it was always all there and lacked nothing that would make it need to search. It is the first wisdom and does not come from another. Its being is itself wisdom; it is not that it is first itself and then wise. That is why no wisdom is greater, and why knowledge itself sits beside Intellect here, appearing along with it—as, in imitation of this, they say Justice sits beside Zeus. For all such things there are

4 Lynceus, one of the Argonauts, was famed for eyesight that could pierce even the earth.

like statues seen by their own light, so that it is a spectacle for spectators happy beyond happiness. One may see the greatness and power of wisdom from this: that it has with it, and has made, all the things that are, and they all followed; and it is itself the things that are, and they came to be together with it, and the two are one, and being there is wisdom. But we have failed to understand, because we have come to think that branches of knowledge are theorems and a heap of propositions —which is not so even of the kinds of knowledge here. If anyone disputes this about them, let us leave them aside for now. But as for the knowledge There, which Plato too had seen when he says it is "not one thing in another"—how this is, he left us to seek and discover, if we claim to be worthy of the name. Perhaps, then, it is better to make our start from here.[5]

WISDOM WITHOUT PROPOSITIONS

True wisdom is not propositions but beings, like the Egyptians' images in their temples.

5.8.5 All the things that come to be, whether products of art or of nature, are made by a kind of wisdom, and everywhere wisdom leads the making. But if anyone makes according to wisdom itself, let the arts be of this kind. Yet the craftsman in turn goes back to a natural wisdom, according to which he himself came to be—a wisdom no longer composed of theorems, but whole, a single thing: not put together from many into one, but rather resolved from one into multiplicity. If someone posits this as the first, that is enough, since it no longer comes from something else, nor is it in something else. But if they say the rational principle is in nature and that nature is its source, we will ask where nature will get it from; and if from something else, [what] is that? If from itself, we will stop there. But if they arrive at Intellect, then we must see whether Intellect generated wisdom. And if they say so: from where? If from itself, that is impossible

5 Plato, *Phaedrus* 247d–e: the knowledge seen beyond the heaven is not knowledge that is "one thing in another," but knowledge of what really is.

unless it is itself wisdom. True wisdom, then, is being, and true being is wisdom; the worth of being comes from wisdom, and it is because it comes from wisdom that it is true being. That is why beings that do not have wisdom are beings because they came to be through some wisdom, but are not true beings because they do not have wisdom in themselves. We must not think, then, that the gods There, or the beings There who are happy beyond happiness, look at propositions. Each of the things spoken of there is a beautiful statue, such as one might imagine to be in a wise man's soul—statues not painted, but real.[6] That is why the ancients said that the Forms are beings and substances.

5.8.6 The wise men of Egypt, too, seem to me—whether by exact knowledge or by something innate ⟨...⟩—not to have used, for what they wished to show through wisdom, the shapes of letters that run through words and propositions step by step, nor letters imitating sounds and the utterance of statements. Instead they drew images, and by carving in their temples a single image for each thing, they displayed its whole account at once: as if each image were a kind of knowledge and wisdom, a substrate, all at once, and not discursive thought or deliberation. Later, from this wisdom that is all at once, they found an image in something else, already unfolded and expressing it step by step, and giving the causes why things are so—so that one marvels that what has come to be is so beautifully arranged. Anyone who knows [this], he said, would marvel at that wisdom: how, without itself having causes of its being, why it is so, it supplies them to the things made according to it.[7] So the fact that things are beautifully so—which inquiry would bring to light only with difficulty, if at all, as "it must be so," supposing anyone ever did find it out—is there, just so, before inquiry and before reasoning.

6 An echo of Plato's *Symposium* (216e–217a), where Alcibiades says he once glimpsed divine statues inside Socrates.

7 Plotinus is thinking of hieroglyphs, which Greeks believed conveyed ideas directly in symbols rather than spelling out words.

For instance—let me take what I mean in one great case, and it will fit all of them—

HOW THE COSMOS WAS MADE

The cosmos was not planned step by step but appeared as an image of the intelligible.

5.8.7 this All. Since we agree that it comes from something else and is of such a kind, are we to think that its maker conceived in his own mind earth, and that it must stand in the middle; then water, and that it must lie on the earth; and the rest in order up to the heaven; then all the animals, and for each of them shapes like the ones they now have, and the organs inside each and the parts outside; and then, having arranged each of these in his mind, set about the work? No: such a conception is impossible. Where could it have come from, to one who had never seen them? Nor, if he had taken them from something else, would it have been possible to carry out the work the way craftsmen now do, using hands and tools. For hands and feet come later. What remains, then, is that all things are in something else, and that, since there is nothing in between, by the nearness in what is to something else, a reflection and image of that appeared, suddenly as it were—whether directly or through the service of soul (it makes no difference for now), or of some soul. In any case, all these things came from There, and are more beautiful There; for things here are mixed, and those there are not. Yet they are held fast by forms from beginning to end: first matter by the forms of the elements, then other forms upon forms, then others again. That is why it is hard to find matter, hidden as it is beneath many forms.

But since matter too is a kind of last form, this All is all form, and all forms; for its model was Form. It made this All silently, because the whole maker is both being and form; that is why the crafting was effortless in this way too. And it was the crafting of an All, by something that is all. So there was nothing to hinder it; and even now it prevails, though different things hinder each

other. But they do not hinder it, not even now; for it remains as all. It seems to me that if we too were at once archetypes and being and Forms, and the form that makes here were our being, our crafting too would prevail without toil. And yet a human being too crafts a form of himself—having become something other than what he is. For he has stood away from being the All, having now become a human being. But when he stops being a human being, he "travels on high," Plato says, "and governs the whole cosmos"; for having become part of the whole, he makes the whole. But the point of the argument is this: you can give the cause why the earth is in the middle, and why it is round, and why the ecliptic slants as it does. There, however, it is not that things were planned this way because they had to be so; rather, because things there are as they are, these things here are well. It is as if the conclusion came before the syllogism that gives the cause, and not from the premises. For it does not come from logical sequence or from planning; it is before sequence and before planning. All these come later: reasoning, demonstration, proof.[8] For since it is a principle, all these things come straight from it, and just so. And the saying that one should not look for the causes of a principle is well said—above all of a principle like this, the perfect one, which is the same as its end. What is both beginning and end is everything at once, lacking nothing.

5.8.8 It is beautiful, then, in the primary sense, and whole, and whole everywhere, so that it does not fall short in beauty even in any part. Who, then, will not call it beautiful? Surely what lacks beauty is not what is wholly itself, but what has only a part of it, or not even any of it. Or if that is not beautiful, what else could be? For what is before it does not even want to be beautiful. But what first came forth into view, by being Form and a spectacle for intellect, is for that very reason admirable to see. That is why Plato, wanting to indicate this by something clearer to us, makes the craftsman approve of what he had completed, wanting through this to show the beauty of the model and the

8 Plato, *Phaedrus* 246c, of the perfect, winged soul.

Form as admirable. For whenever someone admires a thing made after another, the admiration goes to that after which it was made. If he does not know what he is experiencing, that is no wonder: lovers too, and in general those who have admired beauty here, do not know that it is because of that beauty—and it is because of that. That Plato refers the "admired" to the model he makes clear by deliberately adding what follows in the text. For he said: "he admired it, and wished to make it still more like its model," showing what the beauty of the model is like by saying that what came from it is beautiful too, as an image of that. For if that were not supremely beautiful, with a beauty beyond measure, what could be more beautiful than this visible world? So those who find fault with it are wrong—except perhaps insofar as it is not that.[9]

THE TRANSPARENT SPHERE

An exercise: imagine the cosmos as a luminous sphere, then take away its mass.

5.8.9 So let us take this cosmos in discursive thought, with each of its parts remaining what it is and not merging, all together into one, so far as possible. Then, when any one part appears—say the outermost sphere—the imagined picture of the sun at once follows, and with it that of the other stars, and earth and sea and all living things are seen, as if on a transparent sphere; and in fact everything could be seen within it. Let there be, then, in the soul a luminous imagined picture of a sphere, containing everything in itself, whether moving or at rest, or some things moving and some at rest. Keep this, and take in your mind another, taking away the mass. Take away the places too, and the mental image of matter in you; and do not try to grasp another sphere smaller in mass than this one. Instead, call on the god who made the sphere whose mental image you have, and pray that he come. And may he come, bringing his own cos-

9 Plato, *Timaeus* 37c–d: the craftsman, seeing the cosmos he has made move and live, admires it and resolves to make it still more like its model.

mos, with all the gods in it, being one and all, and each all, coming together into one; different in their powers, but by that one manifold power all one—or rather the one is all of them. For he himself does not give out if all of them come to be. They are together, and again each is apart, in a rest without separation, having no perceptible shape—for then one would be in one place, another somewhere else, and each would not be wholly in himself. Nor does he have parts that are one thing for others and another for himself; nor is each whole a power cut into pieces, as great as its parts when they are measured.

That world is all power, going on to the unlimited and with power to the unlimited; and that god is so great that even his parts have become unlimited. Where can one name a place he has not already reached? This heaven too is great, and all the powers in it together; but it would be greater, too great even to say how great, were it not that a small bodily power is joined with it. And yet one might call the powers of fire and the other bodies great. But it is through inexperience of true power that they are imagined as great, burning and destroying and crushing, and serving the generation of living things. No: these destroy because they are themselves destroyed, and help generate because they themselves come to be. The power there has only being, and only being beautiful. For where would the beautiful be, deprived of being? And where would being be, deprived of being beautiful? In falling short of the beautiful, it falls short in being too. That is why being is longed for: because it is the same as the beautiful; and the beautiful is loved because it is being. Why should we ask which of them is the cause of which, when the nature is one? This false being here needs an image of beauty brought in from outside in order to appear beautiful, and to exist at all. It exists to the extent that it has a share in the beauty that comes from form; and the more it receives, the more complete it is. For being that is beautiful is more its own.

ZEUS LEADS THE VISION

Gods and souls follow Zeus to the vision of intelligible beauty and become beautiful.

5.8.10 That is why Zeus too, though he is the eldest of the other gods, whom he leads, goes first to the vision of this; and the other gods follow, and spirits and souls able to see these things. And it shows itself to them out of some invisible place, and rising high above them it shone down on everything and filled it with radiance. It struck those below with amazement, and they turned away, unable to look, as at the sun. Some are lifted up by it and look; others are thrown into confusion, the more so the farther they stand from it. Those who could see, as they see, all look at it and at what is its own; but not each always carries away the same vision. One, gazing intently, saw the source and nature of justice shining out; another was filled with the vision of moderation—not the kind human beings [have] among themselves, when they do have it, for that imitates this somehow. But what runs over all, across its whole—so to speak—magnitude, is seen last, by those who have already seen many clear visions. [So they contemplate:] the gods one by one and all together, [and] the souls that see everything There and have come to be from all of them, so that they too embrace everything from beginning to end. They are There insofar as it is their nature to be There; and often the whole of them is There, when they are not divided.

So Zeus, seeing these things—and any of us who is his fellow lover—sees last over all the whole of beauty, and has a share of the beauty There. For it shines on everything and fills those who have come There, so that they too become beautiful—just as people who climb to high places where the earth is golden-yellow are often filled with that color and become like the ground they walked on. But There the color that blooms on the surface is beauty; or rather, everything is color and beauty from the depths. For the beautiful is not something else, as if it bloomed

on the surface. But those who do not see the whole take the first impression alone for beauty; while for those who are wholly drunk, so to speak, and filled with the nectar, since the beauty has gone through their whole soul, it is not their lot to be mere spectators. For no longer is the one outside and what is contemplated outside too. The one who sees sharply has what is seen within himself. And though he has it, for the most part he does not know that he has it, and looks at it as if it were outside, because he looks at it as something seen and because he wants to look. But whatever one looks at as a spectacle, one looks at as outside. One must now carry it over into oneself and look at it as one, and look at it as oneself—just as someone possessed by a god, seized by Phoebus or by one of the Muses, would produce the vision of the god within himself, if he had the power to see the god within himself.

5.8.11 And if one of us, unable to see himself, is seized by that god and brings the vision forward for seeing, he brings himself forward and sees an embellished image of himself. But letting go of the image, beautiful though it is, he comes into unity with himself and no longer splits apart; he is one and all together with that god, who is silently present, and he is with him as far as he can and wishes. And if he should turn back into two, then, while he is pure, he stays close to him, so as to be present to him in that other way again, if he turns to him again. In this turning he gains this: at the start he perceives himself, so long as he is other; but running inward he has everything, and leaving perception behind for fear of being other, he is one There. And if he desires to see it as something other, he puts himself outside. While he is learning, he must stay within some impression of it and come to know it by seeking. Having learned in this way what sort of thing he is entering, and [having] conviction that he is entering upon something most blessed, he must at once give himself over to what is within and become, instead of a seer, a vision for another who contemplates, shining out with thoughts like one who has come from There. How, then, will someone be in beauty without seeing it?

Or rather: seeing it as something other, he is not yet in beauty; it is by becoming it that he is most of all in beauty. If, then, sight is of what is outside, there must be no sight—or only sight that is the same as the object seen. This is, as it were, an understanding and self-awareness of oneself, careful not to depart from itself by wanting to perceive more. We must keep this in mind too: perceptions of bad things strike harder, but the knowledge is less, knocked aside by the blow. Sickness gives more of a shock, while health, being quietly with us, would give more understanding of itself; for it settles in as something of our own and becomes one with us. Sickness is alien, not our own, and conspicuous for just that reason, in that it seems very different from us. Our own things, and ourselves, we do not perceive. And being like this, we understand ourselves best of all, having made our knowledge and ourselves one. So there too, when we know most of all by intellect, we seem not to know, because we wait for the experience of perception, which says it has not seen. And it has not seen, nor would it ever see such things. So what disbelieves is perception, while the one who has seen is the other in us. Or, if he too should disbelieve, he would not even believe that he himself exists; for he cannot either place himself outside as something perceptible and look at himself with the body's eyes.

5.8.12 But it has been said how he can do this as another, and how as himself. Having seen, then—whether as another or remaining himself—what does he report? That he has seen a god in labor with beautiful offspring, who has begotten everything within himself and keeps the labor painless within himself. For delighting in what he begot and admiring his children, he kept them all with himself, glad of his own splendor and of theirs. But though they are beautiful, and those who remained within are more beautiful, one child alone of them appeared outside. From him, the last child, one can see, as from an image of him, how great that father is, and the brothers who remained with the father. He says he did not come from his father for nothing: for through him there is another cosmos that has come to be,

beautiful, as an image of the beautiful; and it would not be right for there to be no beautiful image, either of the beautiful or of being. It imitates the archetype in every way: it has life and the character of being, as an imitation, and it has beauty, as coming from There; and it also has its everlastingness, as an image. Or will that have an image at one time and not at another, when the image has not come about by art? Every image that is by nature exists as long as its archetype remains. That is why they are wrong who destroy the cosmos while the intelligible remains, and make it come to be as if its maker had at some point deliberated to make it. They do not want to understand what sort of making this is, nor do they know that, as long as that shines, the other things will never fail: since it is, they too are. It always was and always will be—for we have to use these words out of the need to signify something.

5.8.13 So the god who is bound to remain as he is gave over to his son the rule of this All—for it was not in keeping with his character to give up the rule There and pursue a rule younger than himself and later, since he had his fill of beautiful things. Leaving these, he set his own father firmly by himself, and himself up to his father on the upper side. And again he set what began from his son to be after him on the other side, so that he came to be between the two, by the otherness of his severing from what is above, and by the bond that holds him back from what comes after him toward what is below: he is between a better father and a lesser son.[10] But since his father was too great to be measured by beauty, he himself remained the primary beauty—though Soul too is beautiful. Yet he is more beautiful even than Soul, because Soul is his trace; that is why it is beautiful by nature, and more beautiful when it looks There. If, then, the Soul of the All—to speak in more familiar terms—or Aphrodite herself, is beautiful, what is he? If she is beautiful of herself, how great would that be? And if from another, from whom does Soul have the beauty that is both brought in and grown together

10 The "severing" recalls Kronos' castration of his father Ouranos, and the "bond" his imprisonment by his son Zeus.

with its being? For we ourselves, when we are beautiful, are so by being ourselves, and ugly when we pass over into another nature; knowing ourselves, we are beautiful, and ugly when we do not. So the beautiful is There, and comes from There. Is what has been said enough, then, to lead us to a clear understanding of the intelligible place? Or must we go over it again by another road, as follows?

V.9 On Intellect, the Forms and Being

Περὶ νοῦ καὶ τῶν ἰδεῶν καὶ τοῦ ὄντος
Plotinus traces the ascent from perception to Intellect and argues that Intellect contains the Forms as its own being.
no. 5 in order of writing

5.9.1 All human beings, from the start, use perception before intellect, and of necessity encounter perceptible things first. Some stay down here and live out their lives thinking these things are first and last. Taking what is painful in them to be bad and what is pleasant to be good, they thought it enough to spend their lives pursuing the one and arranging to get away from the other. Those of them who lay claim to reason have made this their wisdom, like heavy birds that have taken in much from the earth and are weighed down, and cannot fly high, though nature gave them wings. Others have been lifted a little from what is below, because the better part of the soul moves them from the pleasant toward what is more beautiful. But, unable to see what is above, and having nowhere else to stand, they were carried back down, together with the name of virtue, to actions and choices among the things below, from which they had tried at first to rise. A third kind, of godlike men, by greater power and sharpness of eye, saw the radiance above, as if by keen sight, and rose There, as if above the clouds and the mist down here; and they stayed There, looking down on everything here, delighted with the place, which is true and their own—like a man who has come home after long wandering to a well-governed fatherland.

5.9.2 What, then, is this place? And how could one get there? One would get there who is by nature a lover, and from the outset truly a philosopher in disposition. In labor, as a lover is, with beauty, but not content with the beauty in body, he flees from there up to the beauties of soul—virtues, branches of knowledge, [fine] practices and laws—and then climbs again to the cause of the beauties in soul, and to whatever there may be before that again, until he reaches the last, which is the first, beautiful of itself. When he arrives there he will be free of his labor, but not before. But how will he climb? Where does his power come from, and what reasoning will guide this love?[1] Like this. The beauty on bodies is brought to them from outside, for these are shapes of bodies, as on matter. At any rate, the substrate changes and goes from beautiful to ugly. So it is by participation, the argument says. What, then, made the body beautiful? In one sense the presence of beauty; in another, soul, which shaped it and put such a shape into it. What then? Is soul beautiful of itself? No. Otherwise one soul would not have understanding and be beautiful, another be senseless and ugly. So beauty in soul comes by understanding. And who gave soul understanding? Intellect, necessarily—and an intellect that is not intellect at one time and mindless at another: the true one. So it is beautiful of itself. And must we stop here, as at the first, or must we go even beyond Intellect? Intellect stands before the first principle, as far as we are concerned, as if in the forecourt of the Good, announcing everything in itself, being rather, as it were, an impress of the Good in multiplicity, while the Good remains wholly in unity.

WHY THERE MUST BE INTELLECT

Analyzing composite things leads up through Soul to Intellect as their maker.

5.9.3 But we must examine this nature of Intellect, which the argument promises is what really is and true being, after first estab-

lishing, by going another road, that there must be some such nature. Perhaps it is ridiculous to ask whether there is intellect among the things that are; but some people might even dispute this. Rather, whether it is such as we say, and whether it is something separate, and whether it is the things that are, and whether the nature of the Forms is there—this is what we now propose to discuss. We see, then, that all the things said to be are composite, and not one of them is simple—both what each art produces and what is constituted by nature. Products of art have bronze or wood or stone, and are not yet complete from these until each art produces, one a statue, another a bed, another a house, by putting in the form that comes from it. And as for the things constituted by nature, those that are highly composite and called compounds you will analyze into [matter and] the form over all the things compounded: a human being, for example, into soul and body, and the body into the four elements. Finding each of these composed of matter and what shapes it—for the matter of the elements is shapeless of itself—you will look for where the form comes to the matter from.

You will also ask about soul, whether it is already one of the simple things, or whether there is something in it like matter and something like form, the intellect in it: one intellect like the shape on the bronze, the other like the one who made the shape in the bronze. Carrying these same points over to the All, one will climb up here too to Intellect, positing it as truly maker and craftsman. One will say that the substrate received shapes and became, in one part fire, in another water, in another air and earth, and that these shapes came from something else, and that this is Soul; that Soul in turn gave the four elements the shape of the cosmos; and that Intellect became for it the supplier of the rational principles—just as the souls of craftsmen get from their arts the rational principles for their activity. Of Intellect, one is like the form of soul, the one that corresponds to the shape; the other, which provides the shape, is like the maker of the statue,

1 The lover's ascent from bodily beauty to beauty itself follows Diotima's speech in Plato's *Symposium* (210a–212a).

in whom everything he gives is present. What it gives to soul is close to truth; what the body receives are already images and imitations.

5.9.4 Why, then, must we go up beyond Soul, instead of positing it as the first? First, Intellect is other than Soul and better, and the better is first by nature. For it is not, as they think, that Soul generates Intellect once it is perfected. How would what is potential become actual unless there were a cause to bring it to actuality? If it were by chance, it might never come to actuality. That is why we must posit the first things as actual, needing nothing, and perfect; the imperfect come after them, and are perfected by the very things that generated them, like fathers bringing to perfection what they at first begot imperfect: it is first like matter in relation to what made it, and then is itself brought to completion, with shape. And if Soul is subject to affection, and there must be something impassive—or everything will perish in time—there must be something before Soul. And if Soul is in the cosmos, and there must be something outside the cosmos, in this way too there must be something before Soul. For if what is in the cosmos is what is in body and matter, nothing remains the same; so that man, and all the rational principles, would not be eternal or the same. That Intellect must be before Soul, then, one may see from these and many other considerations.

INTELLECT IS THE BEINGS

Intellect does not think things outside itself; it is the Forms it thinks.

5.9.5 We must take Intellect, if we are to be true to the name, not as intellect in potentiality, nor as having come from folly to intellect—otherwise we shall have to look for yet another before it—but as actual and always intellect. And if its understanding is not brought in from outside, then if it thinks anything, it thinks it from itself, and if it has anything, it has it from itself. And if it thinks from itself and out of itself, it is itself what it thinks. For if its being were one thing, and what it thinks were other than it,

its very being would be unthinking—and, again, potential, not actual. So neither must be separated from the other. It is our habit, starting from things among us, to separate even those in our conceptions. What, then, is its activity, and what does it think, so that we may posit it as being what it thinks? Clearly, being truly Intellect, it thinks the things that are and gives them existence. So it is the things that are. For either it will think them as being elsewhere, or in itself as being itself. Elsewhere is impossible: where could that be? So it thinks itself, and in itself. Not, surely, in perceptible things, as they think. For the first of each thing is not the perceptible one: the form in them, on matter, is an image of what is, and every form in something else comes into it from something else and is an image of that. And if there must also be a maker of this All, he will not think the things in what does not yet exist in order to make it. So those things must be before the cosmos—not impressions from other things, but archetypes, primary, and the being of Intellect.

If they say that rational principles are enough, these are clearly eternal; and if eternal and impassive, they must be in an intellect—an intellect of this kind, prior to state, nature and soul, for these are potential. Intellect, then, is the things that really are, not thinking them as they are elsewhere; for they are neither before it nor after it. It is like a first lawgiver—or rather, it is itself the law of being. So it is rightly said that "thinking and being are the same," and that the knowledge of things without matter is the same as the thing; and "I searched myself," as one of the things that are; and the recollections too. For none of the things that are is outside, or in place; they remain always in themselves, admitting neither change nor destruction. That is why they really are.[2] Otherwise, coming to be and passing away, they will make use of being brought in from outside, and it will no longer be they that are, but that being. Perceptible things are what they are said to be by participation, the underlying nature taking its shape from elsewhere—as bronze from the sculptor's

2 "I searched myself" is Heraclitus (fragment 101); the "recollections" allude to Plato's doctrine that learning is recollection.

art and wood from the carpenter's, the art entering them through an image of itself, while the art itself remains outside matter, in its identity, and holds the true statue and the true bed. So it is with bodies too. And this All, sharing in reflections, shows that the things that are are other than it: they are unchanging, while it changes; they are set firm on themselves and do not need place, for they are not magnitudes; and they have an intellectual and self-sufficient hypostasis. For the nature of bodies needs to be preserved by something else, while Intellect, holding up by its wonderful nature things that would fall of themselves, does not look for a place where it is itself to be set.

5.9.6 Let Intellect, then, be the things that are. It holds them all within itself, not as in a place, but as holding itself, and it is one with them. All things are together There, and they are none the less distinct. For a soul, too, holds many branches of knowledge together within itself, and none of them is confused with the others. Each does its own work when it is needed, without dragging the others along, and each brings into activity a pure thought out of the thoughts lying stored within. In this way, then, and much more so, Intellect is all things together and yet again not together, because each is a power of its own. And the whole Intellect encompasses [all] as a genus encompasses its species and as a whole encompasses its parts. The powers in seeds also give an image of what we are saying. In the whole seed all things are undistinguished, and the rational principles are as though at a single center. Yet the principle of the eye is one thing and that of the hands another, and (the fact) that it is different is recognized from the perceptible thing it produces. So the powers in seeds: each of them is one whole rational principle together with the parts encompassed in it. [Of these] the bodily part has matter, such as whatever is moist, while the principle itself is form, the whole of it, and is the same rational principle as the generating form of soul, and this soul is an image of another, superior soul. Some people call this thing in the seeds "nature." Setting out from There, from what is prior to it, like light from fire, it turned and shaped matter—not by push-

ing, nor by using the levers people talk so much about, but by giving it a share of the rational principles.[3]

5.9.7 As for the branches of knowledge in the rational soul: those concerned with perceptible things—if one should call these knowledge at all; the name "opinion" suits them better—come after their objects and are images of them. But those concerned with intelligible things, which really are knowledge, come from Intellect into the rational soul and think nothing perceptible. Insofar as they are knowledge, they are each of the very things they think, and they have both the object of thought and the thinking within, because Intellect is within. Intellect is the first things themselves. It is always together with itself and exists as activity. It does not reach out to things as if it did not have them, or acquire them, or run through them as though they were not already at hand—these are experiences of soul. No: it stands still in itself, being all things at once, and it did not think each thing in order to bring it into existence. It was not when it thought god that god came to be, nor when it thought motion that motion came to be. So it is not right to say that the Forms are thoughts, if this is meant to imply that this or that came to be, or exists, at the moment Intellect thought it. What is thought must be prior to this thinking. Otherwise, how would Intellect come to think it? Certainly not by chance, nor did it light on it at random.

5.9.8 If, then, thinking is of something within, that inner thing is the form within, and this is the Form. What, then, is it? Intellect, and intellectual being. No Form is other than Intellect; each is intellect. Intellect as a whole is all the Forms, and each Form is an individual intellect, just as a science as a whole is all its theorems, and each theorem is a part of the whole—not separated from it in place, but each having its power within the whole. This Intellect, then, is in itself, and possessing itself in stillness it is forever fullness. Now if Intellect were conceived as prior to being, we would have to say that Intellect, by its activity

3 "Some people" are the Stoics, for whom "nature" is the formative power working in seeds.

and its thinking, completed and generated the things that are. But since being must be conceived as prior to Intellect, we must posit that the things that are lie within what thinks, and that the activity and the thinking rest upon the things that are, as the activity of fire already rests upon fire. In this way, being one, they have Intellect upon themselves as their own activity. But being, too, is activity. So there is one activity of both—or rather, the two are one. Being and Intellect, then, are one nature. That is why the things that are, and the activity of being, and Intellect of this kind are one; and thoughts of this kind are the form, the shape and the activity of being. Yet when we divide them, we conceive one before the other. For the intellect that divides is a different one; the other is undivided, and does not divide being and all things.

5.9.9 What, then, are the things in the one Intellect that we divide when we think them? We must bring them out while they stay at rest, as though we were surveying the contents of a knowledge that exists as a unity. This cosmos is a living being that encompasses all living beings; it has its being, and its being such as it is, from another; and that from which it comes is traced back to Intellect. So the archetype too must be wholly in Intellect, and this Intellect must be an intelligible cosmos—what Plato in the *Timaeus* calls "what Living Being is." Just as, when there is the rational principle of some living being, and also matter that has received the seminal rational principle, a living being must come to be, so in the same way, when there is a nature that is intellectual and all-powerful, with nothing hindering it and nothing between it and what is able to receive, the one must be ordered and the other must order. What has been ordered has the form divided: man in one place, sun in another. But the other has all things in one.

WHAT HAS A FORM THERE

Plotinus asks which things have Forms: natural kinds, the arts, individuals, soul itself.

5.9.10 Whatever exists as form in the perceptible world, then, comes from There; whatever does not, does not. That is why nothing contrary to nature is There, just as nothing contrary to art is in the arts, and lameness is not in the seeds. Lameness of the feet is [in one case] already there at birth, when the rational principle failed to prevail, or else it is damage to the form by chance. So harmonious qualities and quantities, numbers and magnitudes, comings-to-be and relations, actings and being-acted-upon that accord with nature, motions and rests, both universal and particular, are among the things There. Instead of time there is eternity; and place, There, is in an intellectual way one thing being in another. There, then, since all things are together, whatever you take of them is intellectual being, and each shares in life. It is same and other, motion and rest, moving and at rest, being and quality—and all is being. For each thing there is what it is actually, not potentially, so that the quality is not separated from each being. Are only the things in the perceptible world There, then, or more besides? But first we must consider the products of art. For [as regards] evil, there is none There: evil here comes from lack, privation and deficiency, and is an affection of matter that has fared badly and of what has been made like matter.

5.9.11 Of the arts, then, take the imitative ones—painting and sculpture, dancing and pantomime. They get their composition somewhere here, make use of a perceptible model, imitate shapes and movements, and transpose the proportions they see; so they could not reasonably be traced back There, except through the rational principle of man. But if some disposition, starting from the proportion in living things, were to study the proportion of whole living things, it would be a part of the power that, There too, studies and contemplates the proportion

that runs through all things in the intelligible world. And indeed all music, since its thoughts concern harmony and rhythm, would stand in the same way, as does the music concerned with intelligible rhythm. As for the arts that produce perceptible objects of art, such as architecture and carpentry: insofar as they make use of proportions, they would have their principles from There and from the kinds of understanding There. But since they mix these with the perceptible, they would not be There as a whole, except in man. Nor indeed would agriculture, which assists the perceptible plant, nor medicine, which studies health here, nor the art concerned with strength and fitness here. For there is another power and another health There, by which all living beings there are untroubled and sufficient. Rhetoric and generalship, household management and kingship —if any of them shares the beautiful with actions, if they contemplate that, they have a portion from There for their knowledge, from the knowledge There. Geometry, since it is about intelligibles, must be ranked There, and so must wisdom, which is highest and concerned with being. So much for the arts and the things produced by art.

5.9.12 If man is There, rational man is There too, and man the craftsman, and so are the arts, which are offspring of Intellect. We must also say that the Forms are of universals: not of Socrates, but of man. But we must inquire about man whether the individual man is There too. Individuality comes about because the same thing is not in one as in another—for instance, one man is snub-nosed and another hook-nosed. [So] hook-nosedness and snubness must be posited as differences within the form of man, just as there are differences of animal; but that one man [has] this sort of hook nose, and another that sort, comes from matter. And of differences of color, some are in the rational principle, while others are produced by matter and differing place.

5.9.13 It remains to say whether only the things in the perceptible world are There, or whether, just as man-itself is different from man, so soul-itself, different from soul, is There too, and

intellect-itself, different from intellect. First we must say that we should not think that everything here is an image of an archetype, nor that soul is an image of soul-itself. One soul differs from another in rank, and soul-itself is here too, though perhaps not in the way it is here. Each soul that really is soul has a kind of justice and moderation, and in our souls there is true knowledge—not images or likenesses of those things, as in the perceptible world, but those very things, existing here in another way. For they are not marked off in some place, so that wherever a soul has emerged from a body, there they are too. The perceptible world is in one place only; the intelligible world is everywhere. Whatever such a soul has here, then, is There. So if "the things in the perceptible world" were taken to mean the things among visible objects, then not only the things in the perceptible world are There, but more besides. But if it meant the things in the cosmos, including soul and what is in soul, then everything that is there is also here.

5.9.14 This nature, then, which has encompassed all things in the intelligible world, must be posited as a principle. And how, when the principle is truly one and simple in every way, while there is multiplicity among the things that are? How multiplicity comes from the One, how these are all things, why Intellect is these, and from where—this must be discussed starting from another starting point. As for things that come from putrefaction, and noxious things—whether there is a Form of these too, and whether of dirt and mud—we must say that whatever Intellect receives from the First is all of the best, and these things are not among them. Nor does Intellect come from them. It is soul, which comes from Intellect and has taken other things from matter, among which these are found. But we will speak about these more clearly when we return to the problem of how multiplicity comes from one. As for composite things that come about at random—not by Intellect, but perceptible things coming together on their own—they are not among the Forms. Things that come from putrefaction arise because soul is perhaps incapable of anything else; otherwise it would have made one of

the things that accord with nature. It does, at any rate, make these wherever it can. As for the arts: all the arts that relate to what is natural to man are contained in man-itself. And prior to this [there is] another, universal soul, and prior to the universal soul, soul-itself—or rather the life in Intellect before it became soul—so that it can also be called that soul-itself.

VI.1 On the Kinds of Being I

Περὶ τῶν γενῶν τοῦ ὄντος πρῶτον
Plotinus criticizes Aristotle's ten categories and the Stoics' four as unable to cover both sensible and intelligible being.
no. 42 in order of writing

6.1.1 How many the things that are, and what they are—this was investigated even by the very ancient thinkers. [Some] said one, others a definite number, others an unlimited number; and within each of these groups, some said the one was one thing and others another, and likewise with the limited and the unlimited numbers themselves. Since these opinions have been adequately examined by their successors, we may leave them aside. But those who examined their views and themselves posited definite kinds—these we must consider. They posited neither one, since they saw that there are many things even among the intelligibles, nor an unlimited number, since that is impossible and there could be no knowledge of it; nor a limited number in the sense of elements, since the underlying things are not rightly treated as elements. Instead they named certain kinds of the things that are—some ten, others fewer; and there may be some who say more.[1] There is also a difference about the kinds. Some take the kinds to be principles; others hold that the things that are are just so many in kind. First, then, we must take up the division of the things that are into ten and examine it: must we think they mean ten kinds that share the common

1 The ten are Aristotle's categories (*Categories* 4): substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, position, having, acting and being acted on. The Stoics posited four.

name "being," or ten categories? For they say—and rightly—that being is not synonymous in all cases. But rather, this must be asked first: are the ten found alike in the intelligibles and the perceptibles, or are all of them in the perceptibles, while in the intelligibles some are and some are not? Certainly not the reverse. Here we must examine which of the ten are also There, and whether the things that are There should be brought under one kind with those here, or whether substance There and substance here are so called homonymously.[2] But if homonymously, there are more kinds than ten. And if synonymously, it is absurd that "substance" should mean the same for the things that are primarily and for those that come after, since there is no common genus for things among which there is prior and posterior. But they say nothing about the intelligibles in their division. So they did not intend to divide all the things that are; they have left out the things that most truly are.

6.1.2 Once more, then: should we think they are kinds? And how is substance one kind? For we must certainly start with it. That "substance" cannot be one thing common to the intelligible and the perceptible has been said. Moreover, there would be something else prior to both intelligible and perceptible substance, something else predicated of both, which would be neither body nor bodiless; otherwise body would be bodiless, or the bodiless body. Nevertheless, in the case of the substances here themselves, we must ask what is common to matter, form, and what is composed of both. For they say all these are substances, but that they do not have an equal claim to substance, since form is said to be substance more than matter—and rightly. Others, though, would say matter is more so. And what would the so-called primary substances have in common with the secondary ones, when the secondary get from the prior the very fact of being called substances? In general, it is not possible to say what substance is. Even if one gave its distinctive property, one would not yet have what it is; and perhaps not even

2 Aristotle's terms: "synonymous" things share both name and definition; "homonymous" things share only the name.

"what is one and the same in number and receptive of contraries" will fit all cases.[3]

6.1.3 Should we, then, speak of a single category, taking together intelligible substance, matter, form, and the composite of both? As if someone called the family of the Heraclids one thing—not as something common to all, but as coming from one source. For that substance is substance primarily, and the others secondarily and less. But what prevents everything from being one category? All the other things that are said to be come from substance. Or rather, those are affections, whereas substances follow one another in a different way. But even so, we do not yet have anything to rest on in substance, nor have we grasped its most proper sense, so as to derive the others from it. So let all the things called substances be akin in this way, having something beyond the other kinds.[4] What, then, is this very "something," the "this," the underlying subject, which does not lie upon another, is not in another as in a subject, and is not what it is as belonging to another—as white is a quality of body, and quantity of substance, and time something of motion, and motion of what is moved? But secondary substance is predicated of another. Or rather, "of another" is meant here in a different way: as a genus inhering in it (and inhering as a part), and as its "what"; whereas white is predicated of another because it is in another. One might call these distinctive features in relation to the other kinds, and on that account gather them into one and call them substances; but one would not call them one kind, and they do not yet show the concept and nature of substance. Let this stand here; let us go on to the nature of quantity.

3 In Aristotle's *Categories* individuals (this man, this horse) are primary substances; their species and genera are secondary substances.

4 The Heraclids, descendants of Heracles, form one family by descent from a single ancestor.

QUANTITY

Only number is quantity in the strict sense; magnitudes, time and speech are quantities secondarily.

6.1.4 They say, then, that number is primarily quantity, and all continuous magnitude, place and time; the other things they call quantities they refer to these. Motion they call quantity because time is—though perhaps it is the reverse, time getting its continuity from motion. Now if they say that the continuous is a quantity insofar as it is continuous, the discrete would not be a quantity; but if the continuous is a quantity incidentally, what will be common to both that makes them quantities? Let it be granted that numbers are quantities—though this only gives them the name "quantities"; it does not yet show what nature it is in virtue of which they are so called. But line, surface and body are not even called quantities: they are called magnitudes, not quantities, if indeed they take on the name "quantity" only when they are brought to number, [as] two cubits or three. Even natural body becomes a quantity when it is measured, and place is a quantity incidentally, not insofar as it is place. We must not take quantity incidentally, but quantity in itself, such as quantitativeness. For not even the three oxen are a quantity, but the number on them: "three oxen" is already two categories. In the same way, then, "a line of such a length" is two categories, and "a surface of such a size" two. And its quantitativeness is a quantity, but why is the surface itself a quantity? At any rate, it is when it is bounded, say by three lines or four, that it is said to be a quantity. What then? Shall we say only numbers are quantity? But if we mean numbers in themselves, these are called substances, and especially because they exist in themselves. And if we mean the numbers in the things that participate in them, by which we count—not units, but ten horses and ten oxen—first, it will seem absurd that, if those numbers are substances, these are not; and then, that they measure the underlying things

while being present in them, and not from outside, the way rulers and measures measure.

But if they are taken as existing by themselves for the purpose of measuring, and not in the underlying things, then those underlying things are not quantities, since they do not participate in quantitativeness. And why are the numbers themselves a quantity? Because they are measures. But why are measures quantities, or quantitativeness? Perhaps because, since they are among the things that are, if they fit none of the other categories, they will be what they are called and will be placed in what is called quantitativeness. Their unit marks off one, then passes on to another, and number indicates how many, and the soul makes use of it to measure the multitude. In measuring, then, it does not measure what the thing is—it says "one" and "two" whatever sort of things they are, even contraries—nor what disposition it has, such as hot or beautiful, but how many. So it is number itself that belongs to quantity, whether it is considered by itself or in the things that participate in it—not the participants. So it is not "three cubits long" that is a quantity, but "three." Why, then, magnitudes too? Is it because they are close to quantity, and we call the things in which quantity comes to be quantities themselves—not by quantity in the strict sense—but we call a thing great as participating in much number, and small as participating in little? But the great itself and the small are not held to be quantities, but relatives; still, they call them relatives insofar as they seem to be quantities. This must be examined more precisely. So it will not be one kind: number alone is quantity, the others secondarily. So it is not strictly one kind, but one category that brings together the things close to quantity with what is quantity primarily, and secondarily. We, for our part, must inquire how numbers in themselves are substances, or whether they too are a sort of quantity. Whichever is the case, those numbers would have nothing in common with these, except the name alone.

6.1.5 What about speech, time and motion? First about speech, if you like. It is measured, yes; but it is of such a size insofar as it

is [sound], whereas insofar as it is speech it is not a quantity. For it signifies, as do the noun and the verb. Its matter is air, as is theirs, for it is composed of them. The impact is more truly speech—and not the impact simply, but the impression produced, which as it were gives shape. So it is rather an action, and an action that signifies. One could reasonably regard this motion and impact as action, and the opposite as affection; or each as the action of one thing and the affection of another; or as action upon the subject and affection in the subject. But if vocal sound is classed not by the impact but by the air, there would be two categories and not one, the signifying element coming in as something that co-signifies alongside that category. As for time, if it is taken as what measures, we must ask what the measuring thing is to be taken as: either soul or the now. If it is taken as what is measured, then insofar as it is of such a size—say, a year long—let it be a quantity; but insofar as it is time it is some other nature. For what is of such a size is of such a size by being something else. Time, surely, is not quantitativeness; and quantitativeness not attached to anything else would be this very thing, quantity in the strict sense. And if all the things that participate in quantity are to be counted quantities, substance too will be the same thing as quantity. That "equal" and "unequal" are distinctive of quantity must be taken of quantity itself, not of the things that participate in it—except incidentally, not insofar as they are what they are—as "three cubits long" is a quantity, this too being gathered not into one kind, but under one heading and one category.

RELATION

Plotinus asks whether relations are real or only our comparisons, and what reality they have.

6.1.6 As for the relative, we should examine it like this: whether there is some generic commonness in it, or it is one in some other way; and especially, in its case, whether this relation is some sort of reality—as with right and left, double and half—or

whether it is a reality in some cases, as in the last mentioned, but not at all in the first mentioned, or nowhere. What, then, of double and half, and in general of the exceeding and the exceeded; and again of state and disposition, reclining, sitting, standing; and again of father, son, master, slave; and again of like, unlike, equal, unequal; and of the active and the passive, and measure and measured? And knowledge and perception: the one relative to the knowable, the other to the perceptible. Knowledge might have, in relation to the knowable, a single reality consisting in activity, relative to the form of the knowable; and perception likewise relative to the perceptible; and the active relative to the passive, even if it produced a single work; and the measure relative to the measured. But what might the like have, relative to the like, that is generated from them? Or rather, nothing generated, but something already there: sameness in quality.

But beyond the quality in each, there is nothing. Nor with equals: sameness in quantity exists prior to the relation. And what is the relation other than our judgment, when we compare things that exist by themselves as what they are and say "this and this have the same size and the same quality," and "this man has made this one," and "this one rules that one"? And what would sitting and standing be beyond the one sitting and the one standing? As for state, when it is spoken of with reference to the one who has, it would rather signify having; when with reference to what is had, it would be a quality; and likewise with disposition. What, then, would there be beyond these terms related to one another, other than our thinking of them side by side? As for the exceeding: one thing is of such a magnitude, the other of such; this is one thing, that is another. The comparison comes from us; it is not in them. Right relative to left, and in front and behind, perhaps lie rather in position: one is here, the other there. It is we who have conceived right and left; in the things themselves there is nothing of the sort. Before and after are two times; but the "before" and the "after"—that, likewise, is us.

6.1.7 If, then, we are saying nothing, and lie when we speak, none of these would exist, and relation would be empty. But what if we speak truly when we say "this one is before that one, and that one after," comparing two times, and mean that the "before" is something other than the things underlying them? And likewise with right and left; and with magnitudes, that the relation is something beyond their quantity, in that one exceeds and the other is exceeded? And suppose that, even when we neither say nor think it, things are so—so that this is double that, and one has while the other is had, even before we notice; and equal things, prior to us, stand in relation to each other, and in the case of being qualified are in sameness with one another; and in all the things we call relative the relation to one another exists in addition to the underlying things, and we contemplate it as something that is; and knowledge stands relative to what is known—where the reality that comes from the relation is even plainer. Then we must stop asking whether relation exists. But we should note that among such things, in some cases the relation exists as long as the underlying things remain as they were, even if they come to be apart; in others it comes into being when they come together; and in others, even while they remain, the relation ceases altogether or becomes a different one—as with right and near. It is mostly from these that the suspicion arises that there is nothing in such cases. Having noted this, we must ask what is the same in all of them, and whether it is so as a genus and not as an accident; and then, once this sameness is found, what kind of reality it has.

We must say, then, that the relative is not whatever is simply said to be of another—like a state of soul or of body—nor is it so because a soul is this person's or is in something else. It is those things whose reality comes from nowhere but the relation; and the reality meant is not that of the underlying things, but the one that is called relative. For example, double relative to half gives its reality neither to the two-cubit length, or to two in general, nor to the one-cubit length, or to one in general. But when these exist, by virtue of their relation—in addition to the one

being two and the other one—the one came to be called and to be double, and the one itself came to be half. So the two together generated out of themselves something else, being double and half. These were generated relative to each other, and their being is nothing other than being for each other: for the double it comes from exceeding the half, for the half from being exceeded. So neither of them is prior and the other posterior; they come into existence together. But do they also remain together? Or rather, with father and son and the like, when the father has gone the son is still a son, and a brother still a brother; for we also say "this man is like the dead man."

6.1.8 But this has been a digression. Back where we were, we must ask why it is not the same with these cases. But let them tell us what common reality this being-from-one-another has. This common thing would not be a body. It remains, then, if it exists, that it is bodiless, and either in the things or outside them. And if the relation is the same, it is synonymous; if not, but different for different things, homonymous. For surely it would not have the same substance just because it is called relation. Should we, then, divide relations in this way? Some things have the relation inert, lying there, as it were, to be contemplated, and their reality is wholly simultaneous. Others have it with power and work: either they always had the relation in a way, and even before had the readiness, but came into reality in their meeting and activity; or, more generally, some have made while others have come into existence, and what has come into existence supplied only a name to the other, while the other supplied the reality. Father and son are of this sort; and the active and the passive have a kind of life, as it were, and activity. Should we, then, divide relation in this way—and divide it not as something the same and common within differences, but as relation being a wholly different nature in each case? Should we call homonymous, on the one side, the relation that produces action and affection, both as one, and on the other the relation that does not produce, but where something else produces it in both? For instance, equality, which makes things equal: things

are equal by equality, and in general the same by some sameness; and the great and the small are so, the one by the presence of greatness, the other of smallness. And when one is greater and the other smaller, the ones who have partaken are so—the one greater because the greatness in him has become manifest in activity, the other small because of the smallness.

6.1.9 So in the cases mentioned earlier—such as the agent and knowledge—we must posit the relation as active, and the activity, and the rational principle in the activity; in the others, participation in form and rational principle. For if the things that are had to be bodies, there would be no need to say that these so-called relations of the relative exist. But if we give the chief place also to bodiless things and rational principles, calling the relations rational principles and participations in forms causes —for of being double the double itself is the cause, and for the other the half—then some things are what they are said to be by the same form, others by opposite forms. So at the same moment the double came to this one and the half to another, and to this one greatness, to that one smallness; or both are in each, and likeness and unlikeness, and in general sameness and otherness. That is why the same thing is like and unlike, same and other. What, then, if one man is ugly and another uglier by participation in the same form? Or rather, if they are completely ugly, they are equal through the absence of form. But if there is more in one and less in the other, the less ugly is so by participation in a form that does not prevail, and the more ugly by one that prevails still less—or by privation, if one wanted to make the comparison, as though it were a form in them.

Perception is a form arising from both, and knowledge likewise a form from both. State, relative to what is had, is a kind of activity, holding together as it were, like a kind of action. Measuring, the activity of the measurer relative to the measured, is a kind of rational principle. If, then, someone posits the relation of the relative generically, as a form, as one thing, it is one kind and a reality, as a kind of rational principle everywhere. But if the rational principles are opposed and have the differences

mentioned, perhaps it would not be one kind; rather, all are brought back to some likeness and to one category. But even if the things mentioned could be brought back to one, the things they put under the same category cannot be brought back to one kind. For they bring back to one also their negations, and the things named derivatively from them, such as [double and not double] the double and doubling. How, then, could something and its negation—double and not double, relative and not relative—fall under one kind? It would be as if someone posited animal as a kind and put not-animal there too. And the double and doubling are like whiteness and the white man, not like one and the same thing.

QUALITY

No common power or shape unites the different kinds of quality Aristotle lists.

6.1.10 As for quality, from which the qualified gets its name, we must first grasp what it is that makes things what they are called, qualified; and whether, being one and the same in what is common, it supplies the species through differences; or whether, if qualities are spoken of in many senses, it would not be one kind. What, then, is common to state and disposition, affective quality, figure and shape? And to thin, thick, lean? If we say the common thing is power—which fits states, dispositions and natural powers, and by which the possessor can do what it can—incapacities will no longer fit. And then, how are the figure and the shape of each thing a power?[5] Then, too, being as being will have no power, but only when quality comes to it; and the activities of substances—those that are activities in the fullest sense—will belong to quality, even though they act of themselves and are what their own powers are. But perhaps they are powers that come after the substances? For instance, the power of boxing does not belong to man as man; but the rational does.

5 Aristotle (*Categories* 8) lists four kinds of quality: states and dispositions, natural capacities and incapacities, affective qualities, and figure and shape.

So "rational" in this sense is not a quality, but rather what one might acquire from virtue; so "rational" is homonymous. Quality, then, would be a power that adds to substances, after they are, their being qualified. The differences that distinguish substances from one another are qualities only homonymously: they are rather activities and rational principles, or parts of rational principles, and they show the "what" no less, even if they seem to speak of a qualified substance. But the qualities in the strict sense, by which things are qualified, and which we say are powers, would be, [in] what they have in common, rational principles of a sort, and shapes, as it were: beauties and uglinesses in the soul, and likewise in the body.

But how are they all powers? Let beauty and health, of both soul and body, be so; but ugliness and disease and weakness and incapacity in general—[how]? Or is it because things are called qualified by these too? But what prevents the things called qualified from being so called homonymously and not according to one account—and not only in four ways, but in each of the four in at least two? Or rather, first, quality does not concern acting or being acted upon, so that what can act is qualified in one way and what is acted upon in another. Things are qualified by health, by disposition and by state, and likewise by disease, by strength and by weakness. But if so, power is no longer the common element, and we must look for something else as common. Nor, again, are they all rational principles: how is disease that has become a settled state a rational principle? Are those, then, that consist in forms and powers qualities, while these are privations? Then it is not one kind, but they are brought to one as a single category—knowledge, for example, being form and power, ignorance privation and incapacity. Or rather, incapacity and disease are a kind of shape too; and disease and vice alike can do and make many things, though badly. But how can what is a missing of the mark be a power?

Perhaps each does its own work without looking to what is right; for it would not have done anything it is unable to do. Beauty too has a power for something. The triangle too, then? Or

rather, we should not look to power at all, but rather to how a thing is disposed. Then quality is according to shapes and characters, so to speak, and what is common is the shape and form that comes upon the substance, after the substance. But again, what about the powers? Perhaps the natural boxer too has this by being disposed in a certain way, and so does the one incapable of something; and in general quality is a character that is not of the substance. Whenever the same thing seems to contribute both to substance and to what is not substance—like heat and whiteness and color in general—the one that belongs to the substance is one thing, an activity of it, as it were, while the other is secondary, derived from that, one thing in another, an image of it and like it. But if quality consists in shaping and character and rational principle, what about the things that go with incapacity, and uglinesses? Perhaps they must be called incomplete rational principles, as in the ugly. And in disease, how is there a rational principle? Here too, perhaps, we should speak of the rational principle of health being disturbed. Or rather, not everything is in a rational principle; it is enough that what is common, besides being disposed in a certain way, is being outside the substance, and that what supervenes after the substance is a quality of the underlying thing. The triangle is a quality of the thing it is in—not triangle simply, but the triangle in this thing, insofar as it has shaped it. But humanity too has shaped it—or rather, made it a substance.

6.1.11 But if this is so, why are there several species of quality, and why are states and dispositions different? Permanence and impermanence are not a difference of quality: the disposition, however it is, suffices to make a thing qualified, and remaining is an addition from outside—unless someone says that dispositions are only incomplete shapes, as it were, and states complete ones. But if they are incomplete, they are not yet qualities; and if they are already qualities, permanence is an addition. And how are natural powers another species? If things are qualities by virtue of powers, the notion of power does not fit them all, as has been said. But if we call the natural boxer qualified by his

being disposed in a certain way, adding power does nothing, since there is power in states too. Then, why will the one who is so by power differ from the one who is so by knowledge? Or rather, if they are qualified, these are not differences of quality either—if one has it by practice and the other by nature; the difference is external. But in the form of boxing itself, how do they differ? And if some come from affection and others not: where a quality comes from makes no difference—I mean, to the variations and differences of quality.

There would also be a question whether, if these come from affection—some in this way, others not from the same things—they are in the same species; and if some are so by having come to be, others by producing, they would be so homonymously. And what about the shape of each thing? If it is that by which each thing is a form, it is not a quality; but if it is that by which a thing is beautiful or ugly, after the form of the underlying thing, that would make sense. And would rough and smooth, rare and dense, not rightly be called qualities? For rare and dense and roughness surely do not consist in the distances of parts from one another and their nearness, and they do not always come from unevenness and evenness of position; and even if they did come from these, nothing prevents them from being qualities as well. Light and heavy, once understood, will show where they should be placed. There might also be homonymy about "light," unless it is said by weight, of more and less—in which case lean and thin belong there too, which is in another species besides the four.

6.1.12 But if one did not see fit to divide quality in this way, how would one divide it? We must consider whether one should speak of some qualities as of the body and others as of the soul, and divide those of the body according to the senses, calling some qualities of sight, others of hearing or taste, others of smell or touch. And those of the soul—how? Qualities of the desiring, the spirited, the reasoning part. Or by the differences of the activities that come about in accordance with them, since they generate these. Or by the beneficial and the harmful; and

then the benefits and harms must in turn be divided. The same goes for bodily qualities: they differ in their action by being beneficial or harmful, for these are proper differences of quality. For either benefit and harm seem to come from quality and the qualified, or another way must be sought. We must also consider how the qualified, which is so by quality, will be in the same category; for surely there is not one kind for both. And if the boxer is in quality, why not also the man who is able to act? And if so, the active too; so there is no need to put the active in the relative, nor again the passive, if the man who can be acted upon is qualified. And perhaps the one able to act is better placed here, if he is so called by power, and power is a quality. But if the power belongs to substance as power, even so it is not relative, nor any longer qualified. For the active is not like the greater: the greater has its reality, insofar as it is greater, relative to the smaller, while the active is active already by being of a certain kind.

But perhaps it is a quality insofar as it is of such a kind, and a relative insofar as it is able to act on something else and is called "active." Why, then, isn't the boxer a relative too, and boxing itself? For boxing is directed entirely toward another: none of its principles is not related to another. And about the other arts too, or most of them, we should look into this and perhaps say: insofar as they dispose the soul, they are qualities; insofar as they act, they are active, and in this respect directed toward something else, and relatives. For they are relatives in another way too, insofar as they are called states. Is there, then, any other reality corresponding to the "active" in what is active, when it is nothing other than what it is insofar as it is qualified? Perhaps someone might say that in living things, and still more in those that have choice, there is a reality corresponding to the "active" as well, by their having inclined toward acting. But in the case of soulless powers, which we called qualities, what is "the active"? Or rather: when something else meets it, that other thing enjoys and receives a share of what it has. But if the same thing both acts on another and is affected, how is it still "the active"?

For the larger, too, though it is three cubits by itself, is both larger and smaller in its encounter with something else. But someone will say that larger and smaller come by participation in largeness and smallness. Then this too comes by participation in the active and the passive. And here too we must ask whether the qualities here and those There fall under one genus. This is addressed to those who posit qualities There as well. Or even if one does not grant Forms, but speaks of Intellect and calls it a state, we must ask whether there is anything common to that state and this one. And wisdom too is granted to be There. Or rather: if that state is homonymous with the state here, it is clearly not counted among these; but if synonymous, quality will be common to here and There—unless someone says that everything There is substance. And thinking too, then. But this question applies to the other categories as well: whether there is a double set, here and There, or both fall under one.

WHEN AND WHERE

Yesterday, last year and places add nothing that time, place and relation do not cover.

6.1.13 On "when," we should look at it this way. If yesterday, tomorrow, last year and the like are parts of time, why won't they be in the same category as time itself? Since "was," "is" and "will be" are species of time, it is surely right that they be placed where time is. And time is said to belong to quantity. So what need is there of another category? Suppose they say that not only are "was" and "will be" time, and yesterday and last year, which fall under "was"—for these must be subordinate to "was"—but that here it is not just time but time-when. First, if "when" is time, it will be time. Next, if yesterday is past time, it will be something composite, if the past is one thing and time another: so two categories, and not something simple. And if they say that "when" is what is in time, not time, then if by this "in time" they mean the thing—Socrates, for example, in that he was there last year—Socrates would be outside it, and they are not saying one thing.

But what could "Socrates, or his action, is in this time" be, other than "in a part of time"? And if they say it is because it is a part of time, and insofar as it is a part they claim to be saying not simply time but a past part of time, they are making it several things: they take in the part, which as a part is a relative, and the "past" will be something added on for them—or else the same as "was," which was a species of time. But if it is because "was" is indefinite, while yesterday and last year are determinate, first, where shall we place "was"? Then yesterday will be a determinate "was," so yesterday will be a determinate time. And this is a certain quantity of time; so, if time is a quantity, each of these will be a determinate quantity. And if, when they say "yesterday," they mean that this thing happened in a determinate past time, they are saying still more things, and more so. Next, if we must bring in other categories because one thing is put in another, as here with "in time," we shall find many others from putting one thing in another. This will be said more clearly in what follows, on "where."

6.1.14 "Where, [for example,] in the Lyceum and in the Academy." Now the Academy and the Lyceum are, in any case, places and parts of place, just as "above," "below" and "here" are species or parts of it. The difference is that they are more sharply marked off. If, then, above, below and the middle are places—Delphi, for example, is the middle—and so is what is beside the middle, like Athens, and the Lyceum of course, and the rest, why should we look for anything beyond place, when we ourselves say that in each of these cases place is meant? And if we say one thing is in another, we are not saying one thing, nor a simple one.[6] Next, if we say this man is here, we generate a relation, of this in that, of what receives to what it has received. So why isn't it a relative, if something has been generated from the relation of each to the other? Then, how does "here" differ from "at Athens"? They will say that "here," the demonstrative, signifies place. So does "at Athens," then; so "at Athens" belongs

6 The examples are Aristotle's (*Categories* 4); Delphi was traditionally held to be the center, the "navel," of the earth.

to place. Then, if "at Athens" means "is in Athens," "is" is predicated in addition to the place; but it shouldn't be—just as we don't say "quality is," but only "quality." Besides, if "in time" must be something other than time, and "in place" something other than place, why won't "in a vessel" make yet another category, and "in matter" another, and "in a subject" another, and a part in a whole, and the whole in its parts, and a genus in its species, and a species in its genus? And so we shall have more categories.

ACTING AND BEING AFFECTED

Acting and being affected are both motion, and motion itself deserves to be a genus.

6.1.15 In what is called acting, one might consider the following. It is said that, since after substance the things about substance were quantity and number, quantity was another genus; and since there is quality about it, quality is another genus; so too, since there is action, acting is another genus. Is it, then, acting, or action, from which acting comes—just as quality, from which the qualified comes? Or rather, here action, acting and agent should be taken together as one. "Acting" brings out the agent more, while "action" does not; and acting is being in some action, that is, in activity. So the category is rather activity, which is said to be observed about substance, as quality was in the other case; and activity too is about substance, as motion is. And motion is one genus of beings. For why should quality be one thing about substance, and quantity one thing, and relation one thing because of the relation of one thing to another, while motion, though it too is about substance, will not be something—motion as one genus?

6.1.16 If someone says that motion is incomplete activity, nothing would prevent placing activity first and subordinating motion to it as a species, as being incomplete—predicating activity of it, and adding "incomplete." For "incomplete" is said of it not because it is not activity at all: it is activity, entirely, but it also has the "again and again." And the "again" is not so that it

may arrive at activity—it is that already—but so that it may produce something that is other than it and comes after it. And then it is not motion itself that is completed, but the thing it was aiming at. Walking, for example, was walking from the start. If one had to cover a stade and had not yet covered it, what was lacking belonged not to walking, nor to motion, but to walking of a certain amount. It was walking, however much of it there was, and already motion. At any rate, someone moving has already moved, and someone cutting has already cut. And just as what is called activity does not need time, neither does motion; what needs time is motion to a certain extent. And if activity is in no time, so is motion—motion as such.

But if it is because, having taken on continuity, it is certainly in time, then seeing too, which does not interrupt its seeing, would be in continuity and in time. Evidence for this is also the argument from proportion, which says that one can always take a portion of any motion whatever, and that there is no beginning either of the time in which and from which it started, or of the motion itself, but that it can be divided backward. So it would turn out that the motion which has just begun has been moving from an unlimited time, and is itself unlimited toward its beginning. This follows from separating activity from motion, and claiming that the one occurs in no time while saying that the other needs time—and being forced to call not just motion of a certain amount but its very nature quantitative, even though they themselves agree that quantity belongs to it incidentally, if it lasts a day or any amount of time. So just as activity is in no time, nothing prevents motion too from having begun in no time, while time comes in through its having gone on for so long. For changes too are agreed to occur in no time, when it is said: "as if change did not also occur all at once." If, then, change, why not motion too? And change was not meant here as having changed: what it needed was not the change that consists in having changed.[7]

6.1.17 If someone says that neither activity nor motion needs a genus of its own, but refers them to relation, on the grounds that activity belongs to [the] potentially active and [motion] to what is potentially a mover, we must answer that relatives are generated by the relation itself, not by merely being spoken of with reference to another. But when there is some reality, even if it belongs to another or is directed toward another, it has been allotted its nature prior to the relation. So this activity and motion, and state too, though they belong to another, are not deprived of being, and being thought of, by themselves, prior to the relation. Otherwise everything will be relative, for anything whatever has some relation to anything whatever, as happens with the soul too. And why won't action itself and acting be referred to relation? For they will in any case be either motion or activity. And if they refer action to relation but posit acting as one genus, why won't they also refer motion to relation and posit being moved as one genus, and divide being moved, as one thing, in two, into the species of acting and being affected, instead of calling acting one genus and being affected another, as they do now?

6.1.18 We must also look into whether, within acting, they will say that some are activities and others motions, calling activities those that are all at once and motions the others, like cutting—for cutting takes time; or whether all are motions or involve motion; and whether all actions are related to being affected, or some are also absolute, like walking and speaking; and whether those related to being affected are all motions and the absolute ones activities, or each kind occurs in both. Walking, at any rate, though it is absolute, they would call motion; and thinking, which has nothing that is affected, they would call activity too, I think. Or else we must say that neither thinking nor walking is acting at all. But if they are not under acting, we must say where they belong. Perhaps thinking is related to the intelligible, as thought is; for perception, too, is related to the perceptible. But if in that case too perception is related to the perceptible, why

7 The quotation is from Aristotle, *Physics* 1.3 (186a15), against Melissus.

isn't perceiving itself related to the perceptible as well? And perception, which is directed to another, does have a relation to that, but it also has something besides the relation: being either an activity or an affection. If, then, an affection is something else besides belonging to something and being caused by something, so too is an activity. And walking, which itself has belonging to something (it belongs to feet) and being caused by something, has its being a motion. So thinking too would have, besides being relative, its being either a motion or an activity.

6.1.19 We must also look into whether some activities too will seem incomplete unless they take on time, so that they come to the same thing as motions—living, for example, and life. For each one's living takes a complete time, and happiness is an activity not in something partless but of the sort they claim motion to be. So both must be called motions, and motion something one, a single genus, observing besides the quantity and quality in substance the motion that is about it too. And, if you like, some motions are bodily and others belong to soul; or some come from the things themselves and others come into them from other things; or some originate from themselves and others from others—and those from themselves are actions, whether directed toward others or absolute, while those from others are affections. And yet the motions directed toward others are the same as those coming from others. For the cutting, both the one from the cutter and the one in what is being cut, is one; but cutting and being cut are different. But perhaps the cutting from the cutter and the one in what is cut are not even one; perhaps cutting is this: that from such an activity and motion another, successive motion arises in what is being cut. Or perhaps the difference lies not in being cut itself but in another motion that supervenes, like feeling pain; for being affected lies in this.

What, then, if nothing feels pain? What is there other than the activity of the agent, present in this thing? For that is how what is called acting in this way is too; and so acting is twofold, one kind not taking place in another, the other taking place in

another. And it is no longer that one is acting and the other being affected; rather, acting in another has made people think there are two, acting and being affected. Writing, for example, though it is in another, does not call for being affected, because it produces nothing in the writing tablet besides the writer's activity, nothing like pain. And if someone says the tablet has been written on, he is not speaking of being affected. And with walking, though there is earth on which one walks, nobody adds that it has been affected. But when someone steps on an animal's body, one thinks of being affected—reckoning in the pain, which supervenes—not of the walking; otherwise one would have thought of it before too. So in every case, as far as acting goes, we must speak of one thing, together with what is called being affected, its opposite. And what is called being affected is what comes about afterward, not the opposite—as being burned is to burning—but, burning and being burned being one, it is what arises on top of it: pain, or something else, like withering. What, then, if someone produced this very thing, so as to cause pain? Doesn't one act and the other is affected, and the two come from one activity? Or rather, in the activity there is no longer the element of willing to cause pain; he produces something else, by which he causes pain, and this, arising in the one who is going to be pained, being one and the same, has produced something else: being pained. What, then? Isn't that single thing that has come about, before it even produces pain, or if it produces no pain at all, an affection of the one it enters—hearing, for example? Or rather, hearing is not an affection, nor is perceiving at all; but to be pained is to come into an affection, and this is not the opposite of acting.

6.1.20 But grant that it is not the opposite; still, since it is other than acting, it is not in the same genus as action. Or rather, if both are motion, they are in the same genus, as alteration is motion with respect to quality. Then, when alteration proceeds from the qualified thing, is it action and acting, the thing itself being unaffected? Or rather, if it is unaffected, it will be under acting, but if, acting on another—striking, for example—it is also

affected, it no longer acts? Or rather, nothing prevents something that acts from also being affected. If, then, it is with respect to the being affected itself, as with rubbing, why is it acting rather than being affected? Or rather, because it is rubbed in return, it is also affected. Shall we say, then, that because it is moved in return there are two motions about it? And how two? It is one. And how is the same motion both action and affection? Or rather, it is action in this way, by being from one thing, and affection by being into another, while being the same. But shall we say it is different? And how does it dispose what is affected in a different way by altering it, while the agent is unaffected by that? For how could the agent be affected by what it produces in another? Is it, then, the motion's being in another that makes it being affected, when in the agent it was not being affected? But if the rational principle of the swan whitens, and the swan that is coming to be is whitened, shall we say it is affected as it proceeds to substance? And if it were whitened later too, once it had come to be? And if one thing caused growth and the other grew, is what grows affected? Or is affection only in quality? But if one thing made beautiful and the other were beautified, is what is beautified affected? If, then, what does the beautifying became worse or even disappeared, like tin, while the other became better—the copper—shall we say that the copper is affected and the tin acts? And how is the learner affected, when the agent's activity enters him? Or how could it be an affection, being one and the same activity? Rather, the activity itself is not an affection, but the one who has it will be affected, taking "being affected" in some sense—and not because he has not been active himself. For learning, which lies in apprehension and recognition, is not like being struck, any more than seeing is.

6.1.21 How, then, shall we recognize being affected? Not by the activity coming from another, if the one who received the activity took it over and made it his own. Is it, then, where there is no activity, but only affection? What, then, if the thing affected became finer, while the activity had the worse part? Or if someone acted viciously and took the initiative against another

without restraint? Or rather, nothing prevents an activity from being base and an affection fine. How, then, shall we distinguish them? Is it that the one goes from itself into another, while the other is from something else in another? What, then, if it is from oneself but not into another, like thinking or forming opinions? And what of being heated from oneself, having thought something or having become angry from an opinion, with nothing coming in from outside? Or rather, acting, whether it is in itself or directed into something else, is a motion from itself. What, then, is desire, and every appetite? Or rather, appetite is moved by its object, unless one leaves out what it was moved by and attends only to its having been aroused after it. Then how does it differ from having been struck, or pushed and knocked down? Should we, then, divide appetites, calling those that follow intellect actions and those that are pulls affections, and define being affected not by its coming from another or from oneself—for something might waste away within itself—but say that whenever a thing, contributing nothing itself, undergoes an alteration that does not lead to substance, one that displaces it toward the worse or not toward the better, such an alteration is affection and involves being affected? But if being heated is acquiring heat, and in one case this contributes to substance and in another does not, the same thing will be both being affected and not being affected. And how is being heated not twofold? Or rather, being heated, when it contributes to substance, will even then contribute to substance while something else is affected. The bronze, for example, is heated and affected, but the substance is the statue, which was not itself heated, except incidentally. If, then, the bronze is finer from being heated, or in being heated, nothing prevents us from saying it is affected; for being affected is twofold, one kind in becoming worse, the other in becoming better—or neither.

6.1.22 So being affected comes about by having in oneself the motion of being altered in any way whatever; and acting, then, is either having in oneself the absolute motion that comes from oneself, or the motion that sets out from what is called the agent

and ends in another. There is motion in both cases, but the difference that divides acting from being affected keeps acting, insofar as it is acting, unaffected, while being affected consists in being disposed otherwise than before, the substance of what is affected gaining nothing toward substance; rather, when some substance comes to be, it is something else that is affected. So the same thing turns out to be acting in one relation and being affected in another. For considered in relation to this thing it will be acting, being the same motion, and in relation to that thing, being affected, because those things are disposed in this way. So it looks as if both are relatives, insofar as acting is related to being affected (if in relation to this one, the same thing is acting; if in relation to that one, being affected), and each is considered not by itself but together with the agent and the patient: "this one moves and that one is moved," and each is two categories. And "this one gives motion to that one, and that one receives it," so that there is receiving and giving, and relation.

Or, if the receiver has it, as one is said to have a color, why doesn't he also have motion? And with absolute motion, like walking: one has walking, and one has thinking too. We must also look into whether exercising providence is acting, if receiving providence is being affected; for providence is directed toward another and concerns another. Or rather, exercising providence is not acting either, even if the thinking concerns another, nor is the other thing being affected. Or rather, thinking is not acting either; for it does not go into the object of thought, but concerns it. Nor is it action at all; and we need not call all activities actions, nor say that they do something: action is incidental. What, then? If someone walking made footprints, don't we say he has made them? Yes—but from his being something else. Or rather, he acts incidentally, and the activity is incidental, because he was not looking to that. For we speak of acting in the case of soulless things too—fire heats, for example, and "the drug has taken effect." But enough about these matters.

HAVING AND POSITION

These categories apply to few things and reduce to the other categories.

6.1.23 As for having: if having is said in many ways, why won't all the ways of having be referred to this category? Then quantity too, because it has magnitude, and quality, because it has color, and the father and the like, because he has [a son, and the son, because he has] a father, and in general possessions. But if the other kinds go under those other categories, while arms and shoes and what is on the body go here, one might first ask why. And why does having them make one further category, while burning them or cutting them or burying them or throwing them away does not make another, or others? If it is because they are placed around the body, then a cloak lying on a bed will be another category, and so will someone being covered. But if it is according to the holding itself and the having, then clearly all the other [things] said in terms of having must also be referred to having, wherever having belongs; for it will make no difference what is had. If, however, we must not speak of having a quality, because quality has already been mentioned, nor of having a quantity, because quantity has been, nor of having parts, because substance has been, why speak of having arms, when substance, to which these belong, has been mentioned? For a shoe and arms are substance. And how is "this man has arms" simple at all, and of a single category? For it signifies being armed. Then, is it only of a living being, or also if it is a statue that has them? For each seems to have them in a different way, and perhaps homonymously; for "stands," too, is not the same in both cases. And further, how is it reasonable for what occurs in few cases to have a separate generic category?

6.1.24 As for position, this too occurs in few cases ⟨...⟩ reclining, sitting. And yet these are not spoken of as "lying" without qualification, but "they lie in a certain way" and "it lies in such-and-such a posture." And posture is something else. And since "lies"

signifies nothing other than "is in a place," and posture and place have already been mentioned, why combine two categories into one? Next, if "sits" signifies an activity, it must be placed among activities; if an affection, under having been affected or being affected. And what is "reclines" but "lies up," just as there is "lies down" or "lies in between"? And since reclining position is among relatives, why isn't the one reclining there too? For since "right" is there, so are the one on the right and the one on the left. So much on these.

AGAINST THE STOIC CATEGORIES

The Stoics' one genus "something" and their placing of matter first are absurd.

6.1.25 Against those who posit four genera and divide fourfold, into substrates, qualified things, things in a certain state, and things in a certain state relative to something, and who posit something common over them and embrace everything in one genus, a great deal could be said about their taking something common, one genus, over all. For this "something" of theirs is unintelligible and irrational, and does not fit both bodiless things and bodies; and they have left no differences by which to divide the "something." And this "something" is either being or not-being. If being, it is one of the species; if not-being, being is not-being—and countless other objections. These we must leave for now, and examine the division itself.[8] For in ranking substrates first, and here placing matter before the rest, they set what they take to be the first principle in the same rank as the things that come after their principle. And first of all, they bring the prior together with the posterior into one, though it is impossible for one thing to be prior and another posterior in the same genus.

For where there is prior and posterior, the posterior receives its being from the prior; but among things under the same

genus, each has an equal share of being from the genus, if indeed a genus must be what is predicated in the what-it-is of its species. And they themselves, I think, will say that the others get their being from matter. Next, in counting the substrate as one, they are not enumerating the beings but looking for principles of the beings; and it is one thing to speak of principles, another to speak of the things themselves. And if they say that matter alone is being and the others are affections of matter, they ought not to have placed one genus before being and the others. Rather, it would have been better for them to say that the one is substance and the others affections, and to divide these. And as for speaking of some things as substrates and of the others as the remaining kinds, when the substrate is one and has no difference except by being divided, as a mass is into parts—and yet it is not even divided, since they call substance continuous—it would have been better to say "the substrate."

6.1.26 In general, to place first of all what is potential, instead of placing actuality before potentiality, is utterly absurd. For the potential can never come to actuality if the potential holds the first rank among beings. It will not bring itself; either the actual must be prior to it, and then this is no longer a principle, or, if they say the two are simultaneous, they will leave the principles to chance. Next, if they are simultaneous, why don't they rank the actual first? And why is this more being, and not that? And if the actual is later, how? For matter does not generate form, nor does what is without quality generate the qualified, nor does actuality come from the potential; for then the actual would have been in it already, and it would no longer be simple. And their god is second to matter; for he is a body, made of matter and form. And where does he get his form? But if he has it even without having matter, then, being principle-like and a rational principle, god would be bodiless, and the active principle bodiless. But if even without matter he is composite in his substance,

8 Plotinus turns to the Stoics, whom he does not name; their four genera were substrate, qualified, disposed ("in a certain state") and relatively disposed, all under the highest genus "something."

being a body, they will bring in another matter, god's. Next, how is matter a principle, if it is body? For there is no body that is not many; and every body is made of matter and quality.

And if this body is body in some other sense, they are calling matter body homonymously. If what is common to body is extension in three dimensions, they mean mathematical body; if three-dimensionality with resistance, they are not saying one thing. Next, resistance is a quality, or comes from quality. And where does resistance come from? Where does extension in three dimensions come from, or who extended it? For matter is not in the definition of the three-dimensionally extended, nor three-dimensional extension in that of matter. So, having taken part in magnitude, matter would no longer be simple. Next, where does its unification come from? For it is not itself unity, but unified by participation in oneness. They ought to have reasoned that it is impossible to place mass first of all; what comes first is what is without mass, the One. They should have begun from the One and ended in the many, and gone from what is without magnitude to magnitudes—since there cannot be many if there is not one, nor magnitude if there is not what is without magnitude, given that magnitude is one not by being one itself, but by participating in the one, and by combination. So what is one primarily and in the strict sense must exist before what is one by combination; otherwise how is there combination? And they should have asked what the manner of the combination is; perhaps they would have found what is one not incidentally. By "incidentally" I mean what is not one of itself, but from another.

6.1.27 They ought also, in any case, to have kept the principle of all things in its place of honor, and not to have made the shapeless, the passive, what has no share in life, what is mindless and dark and indefinite, the principle, and to have referred substance to it as well. For their god is brought in for the sake of appearances: he has his being from matter, is composite and posterior—or rather, he is matter in a certain state. Next, if matter is a substrate, there must be something else which, acting on

it from outside, makes it a substrate for what it sends into it. But if god too were in matter, being himself a substrate and having come to be together with it, he will no longer make matter a substrate, nor will he himself, together with matter, be a substrate. For to what will they be substrates, when there is no longer anything to make them substrates, everything having been used up in what is called the substrate? For the substrate is relative, not to what is in it, but to what acts on it as it lies there. And the substrate lies under in relation to what is not a substrate; [and] if so, in relation to what is outside; so this would have been left out. But if they need nothing else from outside, and the substrate can itself become all things by taking on shapes, like the dancer who makes himself everything in his dance, it would no longer be a substrate, but itself all things. For just as the dancer is not a substrate for his figures—the rest is his activity—so neither will what they call matter be a substrate for all things, if the rest comes from it. Or rather, the rest will not exist at all, if the rest is matter in a certain state, as the figures are the dancer in a certain state.

And if the rest will not exist, neither will this matter be a substrate at all, nor matter of beings; being matter only, by that very fact it is not even matter. For matter is a relative. And a relative is related to another, and to something of the same genus: double to half, for example, not substance to double. But how is being related to not-being, except incidentally? And what is by itself, matter included, is being related to being. For if it is potentiality, for what is going to be, and that is not substance, it would not be substance itself either. So it turns out that these people, who blame those who make substances out of non-substances, themselves make non-substance out of substance; for the cosmos, insofar as it is the cosmos, is not substance. It is absurd that matter, the substrate, should be substance, while bodies are not more substance; and, still more than these, that the cosmos should not be substance, except only in respect of a part of it; and that the living being should get its substance not from soul but from matter alone, soul being an affection of mat-

ter and posterior to it. From what, then, did matter get its ensoulment, and in general where does soul's existence come from? And how does matter sometimes become bodies, while another part of it becomes soul? For even if form came to it from elsewhere, soul would never come about when quality came to matter, only soulless bodies. And if something shapes it and makes soul, the soul that makes will be prior to the soul that comes to be.

6.1.28 But since there is much to be said against this hypothesis, let us stop here, lest it be absurd in itself to contend against so obvious an absurdity, showing that they rank not-being first, as if it were being in the highest degree, and the last first. The cause is that perception became their guide, and was trusted for positing principles and everything else. For having thought that bodies are the beings, and then, alarmed at their changing into one another, they took what remains beneath them to be being—as if someone were to think that place, rather than bodies, is being, because he thought place does not perish. And yet place too remains, on their view. But they ought not to have taken what remains in any way whatever as being; they should first have seen what must belong to what truly is—the characteristics whose presence also brings it permanence forever. For even if a shadow always remained, accompanying something else that alters, it would have no more being than that thing. And the perceptible thing, made of matter together with many other things, would by its multitude be being as a whole more than any one of the things in it. And if the whole is being, how could that underlay, which is not being, be being? Most astonishing of all is that people who trust perception for everything should posit as being what cannot be grasped by perception. For they are not right to assign resistance to matter; that is a quality. And if they say they grasp it by intellect, it is a strange intellect that ranks matter before itself and gives being to matter, not to itself. Since, then, on their view intellect has no being, how could it be trustworthy when it speaks about things more sovereign than itself,

and in no way akin to them? But enough has been said about this nature, and about substrates, elsewhere as well.[9]

6.1.29 Their qualified things must be different from the substrates, and they say so; otherwise they would not have counted them second. If, then, they are different, they must also be simple; if so, not composite; if so, they must not have matter, insofar as they are qualified; if so, they must be bodiless and active, since for them matter underlies in order to be affected. But if they are composite, first the division is absurd, setting simple and composite against each other under one genus, and then placing one of them within the other species—as if someone dividing knowledge were to call one kind grammar, and the other grammar plus something else. And if they say that qualified things are qualified matter, first, their rational principles, being enmattered but not coming to be in matter, will make something composite; yet they will exist before the composite that they make out of matter and form. So they are not themselves forms or rational principles. And if they say that the rational principles are nothing but matter in a certain state, they will clearly be saying that qualified things are things in a certain state, and these must be placed in the fourth genus. If this state is a different one, what is the difference? Or clearly the "in a certain state" is more of a reality here. And yet, if it is not a reality in that case too, why do they count it as one genus or species? For being and not-being cannot fall under the same.

But what is this "in a certain state" that is attached to matter? It is either being or not being. If being, it is certainly bodiless; if not being, it is said in vain, and there is only matter, and the qualified is nothing. Nor is the "in a certain state" anything; it is still more not-being. And what was called the fourth, much more so. So the only being is matter. Who, then, says this? Surely not matter itself. Unless it is matter after all—for intellect is matter in a certain state—though "in a certain state" is an empty addition. So it is matter that says these things and grasps them. And if what it said were sensible, it would be a wonder how it

9 Probably a reference to II.4, *On Matter*.

thinks and does the work of soul while having neither intellect nor soul. But if it spoke senselessly, positing itself as what it is not and cannot be, to whom should this senselessness be attributed? To matter, if it were matter that spoke. But as it is, matter does not speak. The one who speaks, speaks with much that comes from matter: he belongs wholly to it—though he does at least have a soul—in ignorance of himself and of the power that is able to speak the truth about such things.

6.1.30 As for things in a certain state, it is perhaps absurd to place them third, or in any rank at all, since everything is in a certain state with respect to matter. But they will say there is a difference among things in a certain state: matter is in a certain state in one way here, this way and that, and in another way in the things in a certain state; and further, the qualified things are in a certain state with respect to matter, while the things properly in a certain state are so with respect to the qualified. But since the qualified things themselves are nothing but matter in a certain state, on their view the things in a certain state run back again to matter and will be about matter. And how is "in a certain state" one thing, when there is so much difference within it? For how do three cubits and white come together into one, when one belongs to quantity and the other to quality? And how do "when" and "where"? And how at all are yesterday and last year, and in the Lyceum and in the Academy, things in a certain state? And in general, how is time in a certain state? Neither time itself is, nor what is in time, nor what is in place, nor place.

And how is acting "in a certain state"? The agent is not in a certain state either; rather, he is acting in a certain way—or not being at all, but only acting. And what is affected is not in a certain state, but rather affected in a certain way, or simply affected thus. Perhaps "in a certain state" (literally "having in a certain way") would fit only position and having—and with having, not "having in a certain way" but just "having." As for relation, if they had not placed it under one genus with the others, there would be another discussion, asking whether they grant any reality to such relations, since in many places they do not. Fur-

ther, it is absurd to rank a thing that supervenes on things already existing in the same genus as the things that existed before; for one and two must exist first, for there to be half and double. As for all those who have posited the beings, or the principles of the beings, in other ways—unlimited or limited in number, bodies or bodiless, or both together—one may investigate each of them separately, taking into account also what the ancients said against their opinions.

VI.2 On the Kinds of Being II

Περὶ τῶν γενῶν τοῦ ὄντος δεύτερον
Plotinus adopts Plato's five greatest kinds—being, motion, rest, sameness and otherness—as the genera of intelligible being.
no. 43 in order of writing

6.2.1 Since we have examined the so-called ten genera, and have also discussed those who bring everything together into one genus and place four under that one as, so to speak, its species, it would follow to say what our own view of these matters is, as we try to bring our opinions back to Plato's. If being had to be posited as one, there would be no need to ask whether there is one genus over all, or genera not under one, or principles; nor whether the principles and the genera must be posited as the same; nor whether the genera and principles are the same things; or whether all the principles are also genera, while the genera are not principles, or the reverse; or whether in each case some principles are also genera and some genera principles; or whether on one side all are also the other, while on the other side some are also the other. But since we say that being is not one—why, Plato and others have explained—it perhaps becomes necessary to examine these questions too, first setting before us what number we say there is, and how.

Since, then, we are inquiring into being or the beings, we must first distinguish for ourselves the following: what we call being, which our present inquiry would rightly concern, and what seems to others to be being but is, we say, coming to be, and never really is. These must be understood as divided from each other not as a genus, the "something," divided into them;

nor should we think that Plato did so. For it is ridiculous to put being under one genus with not-being, as if someone were to put Socrates and his image under the same. Here, to distinguish is to mark off and set apart, and to say that what seemed to be being is not being, showing them that what truly is is something else.[1] And by adding "always" to being, he showed that being must be such as never to be false to the nature of being. It is about this being, then, that we shall speak, and we shall examine it as not one. Later, if it seems right, we shall also say something about becoming, about what comes to be, and about the perceptible cosmos.

6.2.2 Since, then, we say it is not one, is it some number? Or is it unlimited? For in what sense do we call it not one, if not as one and many at once, a varied one that holds its many together in one? This thing that is one in this way, then, must be one of three things. It may be one in genus, with the beings as its species, through which it is many and one. Or there may be more than one genus, but all under one. Or there may be several genera, none under another, each embracing what falls under it, whether these are themselves lesser genera or species with individuals under them. In that case all of them contribute to one nature, and the intelligible world, which we call being, is constituted out of them all. If that is so, these will be not only genera but at the same time also principles of being. They are genera because under them are other, lesser genera, and after these species and individuals. They are principles if being is in this way made of many, and the whole exists out of these. If, however, there were several things out of which it is made, and these, coming together as wholes, made the All, but had nothing under them, they would be principles but not genera. Suppose someone made the perceptible world out of the four, fire and the rest: these would be principles, but not genera, unless "genus" is used homonymously. Then if we say that some are genera, and that these same are also principles, do we mix the genera with

1 The distinction is Plato's, *Timaeus* 27d–28a: "what always is and has no becoming, and what becomes and never is."

one another, each together with what falls under it, and so complete the whole and produce a blend of them all?

But then each will exist potentially, not actually, and none will be pure in itself. Then let us leave the genera alone and mix the particulars. What, then, will the genera be by themselves? Or rather: they too will exist by themselves and pure, and the mixtures will not destroy them. And how? That is for later. For now, since we have granted that there are genera, and further that they are principles of substance, and in another sense principles and compounds, we must first say which things we call genera, and how we distinguish them from one another instead of bringing them under one, as though they had come together by chance and made a single thing. And yet it would be far more reasonable to put them under one. Or rather: if all of them could be species of being, with individuals coming next after them and nothing outside these, it might perhaps be possible to do that. But since such a position does away with them—for the species will not be species, nor will there be many under one at all; everything will be one, since there will be no other thing, or other things, outside that one. How could the one have become many, so as to generate species as well, unless there were something else besides it? It is not of itself many, unless someone chops it up like a magnitude; but even then, what does the chopping is something else. And if it chops itself up, or divides itself in any way at all, it will be divided before it is divided. On this ground, then, and for many other reasons, we must give up the single genus; and also because it is not possible to call each thing you take, whatever it is, being or substance. And if someone did call it being, he would be saying so by accident, as if he called substance white: he is not saying that it is precisely what white is.

6.2.3 We say, then, that there are more than one, and not more than one by chance. So they come from one. Or rather: even if they come from one, as long as that one is not predicated of them in what they are, nothing prevents each of them, since it is not of the same species as another, from being a genus by itself.

Is this cause, then, outside the genera that came from it, their cause, yet not predicated of the others in their "what it is"? Or rather, one cause is outside: for the One is beyond, so as not to be counted along with the genera, if it is through it that the others exist, and these stand on an equal footing with one another as genera. And how is it not counted along with them? Or rather: we are looking for the beings, not for what is beyond. So much for that. But what about the one that is counted along with them? Here one might well wonder how it is counted along with the things it causes. Or rather: if it and the others are under one genus, that is absurd. But suppose it is counted along with the things whose cause it is, as being itself the genus, with the others coming after it; and the things after it differ from it, and it is not predicated of them as a genus, nor is anything else predicated of them. Then these too must be genera, having things under them. For if you produced walking, walking would not fall under you as under its genus; and if there were nothing else before it as its genus, but there were things after it, walking would be a genus among the things that are.

In general, perhaps we should not even say that the one is the cause of the others. Rather, they are, as it were, its parts, as it were its elements, and all of them one nature, divided up by our conceptions; while it, by a wonderful power, is one into all things, and appears many and becomes many, as it does, so to speak, when it moves; and the richness of its outpouring nature makes the one not one. We bring forward, as it were, these portions of it, posit each as one, and call it a genus, unaware that we have not seen the whole at once. We bring them forward part by part and then join them together again, unable to hold them down for long, since they hurry back toward one another. That is why we let them go again into the whole and allow it to become one, or rather to be one. But perhaps this will be clearer once those other matters are known too, if we grasp how many the genera are; for in that way we will grasp how as well. But since a speaker must not just make denials, but must also arrive

at a concept and a thought of what is being spoken of, we must proceed as follows.

SOUL AS ONE AND MANY

Taking soul as a model, Plotinus finds being, life and motion together in it.

6.2.4 Suppose we wanted to see the nature of body, what sort of thing the nature of body itself is in this All. Would we not learn it from one of its parts, say a stone? We would see that one aspect of it is like a substrate, another its how-much, its magnitude, another its what-sort, its color for instance. And we would say of every other body too that in the nature of body one thing is, as it were, substance, another quantity, another quality, all together, but divided into three by reason, and that body is the three as one. And if motion were also present in it, innate to its constitution, we would count that in too, and the four would be one, and the one body would be brought to completion as one, and in its own nature, by all of them. In the same way, since our discussion concerns intelligible substance and the genera and principles There, we must take away the coming-to-be found in bodies, apprehension through perception, and magnitudes—for that is what makes things separate and set apart from one another—and grasp an intelligible hypostasis, something that truly is and is more one.

And here lies the wonder: how what is one in this way is many and one. In the case of bodies it is granted that the same thing is one and many: the same body is divisible to infinity, and its color is one thing and its shape another, since they can be separated. But if someone takes a soul—one, without extension, without magnitude, utterly simple, as it will seem at the first glance of thought—how could he expect to find it many after all? And yet, when he divided the living creature into body and soul, he thought he had reached the end of this. He found body multiform, composite and varied, but soul he was confident he had found simple, and that he could rest from his journey, having

arrived at a principle. So let us take this soul, since it has been put before us from the intelligible region, as body was before from the perceptible one, and see how this one thing is many and how the many are one: not one composite made of many, but one nature that is many. For once this has been grasped and made clear, the truth about the genera in being too, as we said, will become clear.

6.2.5 First we must consider this. Bodies—those of animals and plants, for instance—are each of them many, in colors and shapes and sizes and kinds of parts, one here and another there; yet they all come from one. They come either from what is altogether one, or from what will be one wholly and in every respect; or at least from what is more one than what comes from it, and so more truly being than what has come to be: for the farther something stands from one, the farther it stands from being. Since, then, they come from one, but not from one in the sense of wholly one, or the one-itself—for that would not have made a divided multiplicity—it remains that they come from a one that is a multiplicity. And what made them was soul; so soul is a multiplicity that is one. What then? Is the multiplicity the rational principles of the things that come to be? Is soul itself, then, one thing, and the rational principles another? Or rather: soul itself is a rational principle, the sum of the rational principles, and the rational principles are its activity as it acts according to its substance; while its substance is the power of the rational principles. So this one has been shown to be many on the basis of what it produces in other things. But what if it were not producing, and someone took it as not producing, climbing up to the part of it that does not produce? Will he not find many powers here too? Everyone would grant that it is. But is this the same as saying that a stone is? Or rather, it is not the same. And yet even there, in the case of the stone, being for the stone was not just being but being a stone; so here too, being for soul includes, along with being, being soul. Is being, then, one thing, and the rest, which completes the substance of soul, another? So is there being, and a differentia that makes soul? Or

rather: soul is a particular being, though not in the way a man is white, but simply as a particular substance; and this is the same as not having what it has from outside its substance.

6.2.6 But does it not, after all, have something from outside its own substance, so that it is in one respect by its being, and in another by its being of a certain kind? But if it is soul by being of a certain kind, and this "certain kind" comes from outside, then soul will not be substance as a whole, but only in some respect: part of it will be substance, but not the whole. And then, what will its being be without the rest? A stone? No: this being of it must be within its being as a kind of spring and principle—or rather it must be all that soul is; and so life too; and the two together are one. Is it one, then, in the way a single account is one? Or rather: the substrate is one, but one in such a way as to be two again, or even more, as many as are the primary things that soul is. So it is either substance and life, or it has life. But if it has life, what has it is not, in itself, in life, and life is not in substance. But if neither has the other, we must say that both are one. Or rather: it is one and many, as many as appear in the one; it is one to itself, but many in relation to the others; it is one, but makes itself many in a kind of motion; it is one whole, but many as it tries, as it were, to contemplate itself. It is as though being cannot bear to be one, since it has the power to be all that it is. And contemplation is the cause of its appearing many, so that it may think; for if it appeared one, it would not have thought, but would already simply be that.

6.2.7 What, then, are the things seen in it, and how many? We have found in soul substance and life together. Substance is common to all soul, and life is common too; and there is life in Intellect as well. So let us bring in Intellect too, and its life, and posit what is common to all life, motion, as one genus; and substance and motion, which is the first life, we will posit as two genera. For even if they are one, thought separates them, finding that the one is not one; otherwise it could not separate them. Look too at other things, where motion or life is clearly separated from being—if not in true being, then in the shadow of

being, what shares only its name. Just as in the image of a man many things are missing, above all the most important, life, so in perceptible things being is a shadow of being, deprived of what is being in the fullest sense, which in the archetype was life. But at any rate this enabled us to separate being from living and living from being. Of being, then, there are many species, and [one] genus. But motion is to be ranked neither under being nor above being, but with being, found in it not as in a substrate. For motion is its activity, and neither exists without the other except in thought, and the two natures are one; for being is in actuality, not in potentiality. And yet if you take each of them separately, motion will appear in being and being in motion, just as in the "one being" each of the two, taken separately, had the other; but discursive thought nonetheless calls them two, and each a Form, a twofold one.[2]

Motion, then, has appeared around being, not displacing its nature but rather, as it were, making it perfect in its being, and such a nature always remains in moving in this way. If someone did not bring in rest as well, he would be more absurd than one who did not grant motion. For the concept and thought of rest in connection with being comes more readily than that of motion: what is in the same state, in the same way, and with a single account, is There. So let rest too be one genus, other than motion, since it might even appear to be its contrary. That it is other than being might be clear in many ways, and also because, if it were the same as being, it would be no more the same as being than motion is. For why should rest be the same as being, and motion not, when motion is a kind of life of it, the activity both of its substance and of its very being? No: just as we separated motion from being, as both the same as it and not the same, and called the two both two and one, in the same way we will separate rest from it and again not separate it, separating it with our intellect only so far as to posit it as another genus among the things that are. Otherwise, if we brought rest and being together

2 The "one being" of Plato's *Parmenides* (142d–e), each of whose parts, one and being, always contains the other.

into one altogether, saying they differ in no way at all, and did the same with being and motion, we would bring rest and motion together into the same thing, with being as the middle term, and for us motion and rest would be one.

THE FIVE KINDS OF BEING

Looking at Intellect reveals being, motion, rest, sameness and otherness as the primary genera.

6.2.8 No: we must posit these three, since Intellect thinks each of them separately. It thinks them together and posits them, if it thinks, and they are, if they have been thought. For things whose being is with matter do not have their being in Intellect; but these are immaterial, and for immaterial things being thought is their being. Look, then, at Intellect pure, and gaze at it intently—not seeing with these eyes. You see the hearth of substance, and a sleepless light in it, and how it stands still in itself and how it stands apart while being all together; you see life that remains, and thinking whose activity is directed not toward the future but toward the now—or rather the always-now, the ever-present—and how it thinks within itself and not outside. In its thinking, then, lie activity and motion; in its thinking itself, substance and being. For it thinks as being, and thinks itself as being, and the being on which it, so to speak, was resting. The activity directed toward itself is not substance; but that toward which it is directed, and from which it comes, is being: for what is seen is being, not the seeing. Yet the seeing too has being, because that from which it comes and toward which it goes is being. And being in actuality, not in potentiality, it joins the two together again and does not separate them, but makes itself that and that itself. Being, the most firmly seated of all things, around which the others are, brought rest into existence, and has it not as something brought in from outside, but from itself and in itself. And that in which thinking ends, though it never began, is rest; and that from which it set out, though it never set

out, is rest: for motion does not come from motion, nor does it go into motion.

Further, the Form, being at rest, is the limit of Intellect, and Intellect is its motion. So all are one, both motion and rest; they are genera running through all things, and each of the later things is a particular being, a particular rest and a particular motion. So someone who has seen these three, having come into contact with the nature of being, sees being by the being in himself, and the others by the others: the motion in it by the motion in himself, rest by rest; and he fits these to those. While they came together and were, as it were, fused, he mingled them without distinguishing; but then, setting them a little apart, as it were, holding them back and distinguishing them, he looks in and sees being, rest and motion—three, and each one. Has he not said they are other than one another? Has he not set them apart in otherness, and seen the otherness in being, positing three, and each one? And again, when he brings them back into one, in one, all one, gathering them into the same and looking, has he not seen sameness, both coming to be and being? So to those three we must add these two, the same and the other, so that there are five genera in all; and it is these that give the things after them their being other and the same: for each of those is a particular same and a particular other, since the same and the other simply, without the "particular," would belong to the genus. And these are primary genera, because you will predicate none of them of the others in their "what it is." You will predicate being of them, since they are beings, but not as a genus: for they are not precisely something that is being. Nor, again, will you predicate it so of motion or of rest, for they are not species of being: of beings, some are beings as its species, others by participating in it. Nor, again, does being participate in these as its genera; for they do not stand above it, and they are not prior to being.

WHY NOT THE ONE, OR QUANTITY?

The one, number, quality and the other categories cannot be primary genera There.

6.2.9 That these are primary genera, then, one could confirm from these considerations, and perhaps from others too. But how could one be convinced that these are the only ones, and that there are no others besides? Why not the one as well? Why not quantity? And quality? And relation and the rest, which others have already enumerated? As for the one: if it means what is altogether one, to which nothing else is added—not soul, not intellect, not anything—it would be predicated of nothing, and so it would not be a genus either. But if it means the one added to being, in virtue of which we speak of "one being," this is not primarily one. Further, being without differentiae in itself, how could it make species? And if it does not, it is not a genus. How will you even divide it? For in dividing it you will make many; so the one itself will be many and will destroy itself, if it wants to be a genus. Then, in dividing it into species, you will be adding something, for there could be no differentiae in the one as there are differentiae of substance. Intellect accepts that being has differentiae; but how could one? Then each time you posit two with the differentia, you abolish the one, since everywhere the addition of a unit makes the previous quantity disappear. Suppose someone were to say that the one in being, the one in motion and in the other things, is common: then he is bringing being and the one together into the same thing. But by the same reasoning by which being did not make a genus of the others—because they are not precisely [being] beings, but beings in another way—the one will not be common to them either; it will belong to one primarily, to another in a different way.

And if he says it does not make a genus of all, but is some one thing by itself, like the others, then if being and one are the same for him, he is bringing in a mere name, since being has already been counted among the genera. If each of the two is

one thing, he is speaking of some nature: if he adds something to it, he means a one; if nothing, he is again speaking of that which is predicated of nothing. And if he means the one that accompanies being, we have already said that he is not speaking of what is primarily one. But what prevents this from being primarily one, if we set aside that which is altogether one? After all, we call being, which comes after that, being, and primarily being. Or rather, that is because what comes before being is not being—or if it were, being would not be primarily [being]; whereas what comes before this one is itself one. Then again, separated in thought from being, it has no differentiae. Then again, within being: if it is a consequence of being, it is a consequence of all things, and later—but the genus is prior. If it is simultaneous, it belongs to all things—but the genus is not simultaneous. If it is prior, it is a principle, and of being alone; and if it is a principle of being, it is not its genus; and if it is not the genus of being, it is not the genus of the others either—or else being too would have to be the genus of all the others. In general, the one in being seems to be close to the One and, as it were, to coincide with being: being, insofar as it is turned toward the One, is one, and insofar as it comes after it, is being, which can also be many; while the one itself remains one, and does not wish to be divided or want to be a genus.

6.2.10 How, then, is each part of being one? Or rather: insofar as it is a particular one, it is not one, since a particular one is already many. Each of the species is one only homonymously; for the species is a multiplicity, so that "one" here is as an army or a chorus is one. So the one that is There is not in these. So the one is not common, nor would the same one be seen in being and in particular beings; so the one is not a genus. For every genus is such that its opposites are not also true of what it is truly said of; but since both one and its opposites are true of every being, whatever one is supposedly true of as a genus, it will be true of it not as a genus. So it will not be true as a genus of the primary genera, since even the one being is no more one than many, and none of the other genera is one in such a way as

not to be many; nor of the later things, which are many in every way. In short, no genus is one; so if the one is a genus, it will lose its being one. For the one is not a number; but once it has become a genus, it will be a number. Further, the one is one in number; if it were one in genus, it would not be one in the proper sense. Further, just as in numbers the one is not predicated of them as a genus, but is said to be present in them, not said to be a genus, so even if the one is in the things that are, it would be a genus neither of being nor of the others nor of all things.

Further, just as the simple would be a principle of the non-simple, but not also its genus—for then the non-simple would be simple too—so it is with the one: if the one is a principle, it will not be a genus of what comes after it. So it will be a genus neither of being nor of the others. If it is to be a genus at all, it will be of the things that are each one, as if someone thought fit to separate the one from substance. So it will be a genus of some things. For just as being is not a genus of all things, but of the species that are being, so the one too will be of the species that are each one. What, then, is the differentia of one from another insofar as each is one, as there is a differentia of one being from another? But if the one is divided along with being and substance, and being, by being divided and seen in many things, is the same genus, why should not the one too, appearing as many things as substance does and divided into as many parts, be a genus? Or rather: first of all, it is not necessary, if something is present in many things, that it be a genus either of those it is present in or of others; nor in general, if something is common, must it in every case be a genus. The point, at any rate, is present in lines but is not a genus, either of them or at all; nor, as we said, is the one in numbers a genus either of numbers or of anything else. For what is common and in many things must also employ its own differentiae, make species, and be in the "what it is." But what differentiae could the one have? Or what species does it generate? And if it makes the same species as

those around being, it would be the same as being, one of the two would be a mere name, and "being" is enough.

6.2.11 We must examine how the one is in being, and how the division we spoke of takes place, and in general the division of the genera, and whether the two divisions are the same or different. First, then: how in general is each thing whatever called one, and how is it one? Then: do we speak of it in the same way in the one being, and in what way is it spoken of There? The one is not the same in all things. It is not the same in perceptible and intelligible things—but then neither is being—nor in perceptible things compared with one another: it is not the same in a chorus, an army camp, a ship and a house, nor again in these and in what is continuous. And yet all imitate the same thing; some attain it from far off, others more nearly, and in Intellect already more truly: for soul is one, and Intellect still more so, and being is one. When we speak of the being of each thing, then, are we speaking of its one, and does it have one in the same measure as it has being? Or rather: that does happen, but it is not in the respect in which a thing is being that it is also one; something that is no less a being can be less one. An army or a chorus is no less a being than a house, but it is less one. So the one in each thing seems rather to look toward good, and to the extent that it attains good, to that extent it is also one, and the more and less of being one lies in this. For each thing wants not simply to be, but to be together with the good. That is why even things that are not one strive, as far as they can, to become one. Natural things, by their very nature, come together, wanting to be united with themselves: things do not strive away from one another, but toward one another and toward themselves. And all souls would wish to go into one, following their own substance.

And the One is on both sides: it is both that from which and that toward which. Things begin from the One and strive toward the One; for so it is with the Good too. Nothing whatever has come into existence among the things that are, or, having come into existence, could bear not to have its striving directed

toward the One. That is how it is with natural things. As for things in the arts, each art itself directs each of its works toward this, as far as it can and as far as they allow. But being attains it most of all, for it is near. That is why the other things are called only what they are called, for example "man": even if we sometimes say "one man," we say it in contrast to two; and if we call it one in some other way, we say it as an addition. But with being we call this whole "one being" and claim it as one, indicating its intense intimacy with the Good. So the one comes to be in it too, as beginning and end, though not in the same way but in another, so that there is prior and posterior in the one as well. What, then, is the one in it? Is it not seen alike in all its parts, as something common? Or rather: first, in lines too the point is common, and it is not a genus of lines; and in numbers the one—perhaps this very one—is common, and not a genus. For the one said of the one itself is not the same as the one said of the unit, the dyad and the other numbers. Then, in being too, nothing prevents some things from being first and others later, some simple and others composite. And even if the one is the same in all the parts of being, since it has no differentia it does not make species either; and if not species, it cannot be a genus either.

6.2.12 So much for that. But how does the good lie, for numbers, in each being one, when they are soulless? Or rather: this is common to the other soulless things too. And if someone says that numbers do not exist at all, we were speaking of beings, insofar as each is one. And if they ask how the point participates in good: if they say it exists by itself—if they say it is soulless—they are asking the same question they ask about other such things. But if it is in other things, a circle for instance, the good of that is its good, its desire is directed toward this, and through this it strives, as far as it can, toward what is There. But how do these genera exist? Is each of them chopped into pieces? Or rather: each is whole in each of the things of which it is the genus. And how is it still one? Or rather: what is one in genus is one as a whole in many. Is it, then, only in the things that parti-

cipate in it? Or rather, no: it is both by itself and in its participants. But perhaps this will become clearer later.

6.2.13 Now: why is quantity not among the primary genera, and quality too? Or rather: quantity is not primary along with the others, because those exist simultaneously with being. Motion goes with being, which is in actuality, since it is its life; and rest came in along with substance itself; or rather, being other and the same was there with them, so that these too are seen together. But number is later both than those and than itself: the later comes from the earlier, numbers follow one another in sequence, and the later are contained in the earlier. So it would not be counted among the first; whether it is a genus at all must be investigated. Magnitude, however, is still later, and composite: for there is number in it, and the line (a kind of two) and the plane (three). If, then, continuous magnitude too gets its quantity from number, how could it have it, if number is not a genus? There is also prior and posterior in magnitudes. And if being quantities is common to both, we must grasp what this is, and once we have found it, posit it as a later genus, not among the first; and if it is a genus not among the first, it must be traced back to one of the first, or to something that goes back to them. Perhaps, then, it is clear that the nature of quantity indicates an amount, and measures the amount of each thing, and is itself an amount. But if the amount is common to number and magnitude, then either number is first and magnitude comes from it, or, in general, number lies in a mixture of motion and rest, while magnitude is a kind of motion, or comes from motion: motion proceeds into the indefinite, and rest, by halting what proceeds, makes a unit. But the generation of number and magnitude—or rather their real existence and our conception of them—must be considered later. For perhaps number is among the primary genera, and magnitude later, in composition; and number belongs to things that stand still, while magnitude is in motion. But these matters are for later, as we say.

6.2.14 As for quality, why is it not among the first? Or rather: because it too is later and comes after substance. The first sub-

stance must have these as consequences, not have its constitution from them or be completed through them; otherwise it would be posterior to quality and quantity. In composite substances, made of many things, in which numbers and qualities have made them differ, there would be qualities, and some common feature will be seen in them. But in the primary genera the division must be made not between simple and composite, but between the simple and what completes substance—not a particular substance. That a particular substance should be completed also by quality is perhaps not absurd, since it already has substance before the quality, and its being of such a kind comes from outside; whereas substance itself must have what it has as belonging to its substance. And yet elsewhere we held that what completes substance is a quality only homonymously, while what comes from outside, after the substance, is quality; and that what is in substances is their activities, while what comes after them is by then affections. Now, however, we are saying that what belongs to a particular substance does not complete substance at all. For man, insofar as he is man, does not receive an addition of substance toward being substance: he is substance from higher up, before reaching the differentia, just as he is already an animal before he arrives at the rational.

6.2.15 How, then, do the four genera complete substance without yet making it qualified substance? For they do not make it a particular substance either. That being is first has been said; and it is clear that motion could not be anything else, nor rest, nor the other, nor the same. That this motion does not produce quality is perhaps evident, but saying so will make it clearer. If motion is the activity of substance, and being, and the first things in general, are activity, motion would not be an accident. Being the activity of what is in actuality, it could no longer even be called something that completes substance: it would be substance itself. So it has not entered into anything later, or into quality, but is ranked with what is simultaneous. For it is not that it is being and then is moved, nor that it is being and then comes to rest; nor is rest an affection. And the same and the

other are not later, because it did not become many later on, but was what it was, one-many; and if many, then there is otherness, and if one-many, there is sameness. And these suffice for substance. But when it is about to proceed to what is below, then other things come in, which no longer make substance but qualified substance and quantified substance; and let these be genera that are not primary.

6.2.16 As for relation, which is like an offshoot, how could it be among the first? The relation is of one thing to another, not to itself, and toward something else. Where and when are still farther off. "Where" is one thing in another, so two; but the genus must be one, not a composition; and besides, there is no place There; and our discussion now is about what truly is. Whether time is There must be investigated; more likely, perhaps, it is not. And if it is a measure, and not simply a measure but the measure of motion, it is two, the whole is composite and later than motion, so that it does not stand on an equal footing with motion in the division. Acting and being acted on lie in motion. If, then, acting and being acted on are There—but [acting] is two, and so likewise is being acted on—neither is simple. And having is two, and position is one thing in another in a particular way, so that it is three.

THE GOOD, BEAUTY AND THE VIRTUES

Good, beauty, knowledge and virtue are not primary genera but later or derived.

6.2.17 But why are the beautiful and the good and the virtues not among the first—knowledge, intellect? Or rather: the Good, if it is the First, which we call the nature of the Good, of which nothing is predicated, though we, having no other way of indicating it, speak of it so—would be the genus of nothing. It is not said of other things; otherwise each of the things it is said of would be that. And that is before substance, not in substance. If the good is meant as a quality, quality in general is not among the first. What then? Is the nature of being not good? Or rather: first, it is

good in another way, and not in the way the First is; and it is good not as a quality, but within itself. But we said the other genera too were in it, and that each was a genus because it was something common and seen in many things. If, then, the good too is seen in each part of substance or of being, or in most of them, why is it not a genus and among the first? Or rather: it is not the same in all the parts, but is there first, second and later. Either one comes from another, the later from the earlier, or all come from one, what is beyond, and they partake of it in different ways according to their own nature. And if someone did want to posit it as a genus, it would be a later one; for its very being good is later than substance and the "what it is," even if it is always with them; whereas those genera belonged to being as being and went into its substance. That is also why there is what is beyond being: being and substance cannot help being many, but must have these genera we have enumerated and be one-many. If, however, we did not shrink from saying that the good in being is its natural activity toward the One, that this is its good, so that from There it may have the form of good, then this good will be activity toward the Good; and this is its life; and this is motion, which is already one of the genera.

6.2.18 As for beauty: if it means that first beauty, the same things, or nearly the same, would be said as in our discussion of the good. If it is, as it were, a radiance shining on the Form, we would say that it is not the same in all, and that the shining comes later. If beauty is nothing other than substance itself, it has been dealt with under substance. If it exists in relation to us who see it, by producing an affection of a certain kind, this acting is motion; and if the activity is directed toward that beauty, it is motion. Knowledge too is self-motion, being a sight of being and an activity, not a state; so it too comes under motion—or, if you like, under rest, or even under both; and if under both, as a mixture; and if so, the mixture is later. Intellect, being thinking being and composed of all of them, is not one of the genera. The true Intellect is being with everything else, and already all the beings; while being alone, bare, taken as a genus, is an element

of it. Justice and moderation and virtue in general are all particular activities of intellect; so they are not among the first, and are later than a genus, and species.

HOW THE KINDS MAKE SPECIES

The great Intellect holds all Forms; numbers, figures and living beings arise from the kinds.

6.2.19 These four, then, being genera and primary: does each of them by itself make species? Could being, for instance, be divided by itself, without the others? Or rather not: the differentiae must be taken from outside the genus, and they are differentiae of being as being, yet not being itself. Where, then, will it get them? Not, surely, from what is not. If from beings, and the remaining beings were the other three genera, then clearly from these and with these, as they are added, paired with it, and come into being together. But by coming into being together they made exactly this: what is made of all. How, then, do the other things exist after what is made of all? And how do they make species, when all of them are genera? How does motion make species of motion? And rest, and the others? For we must also take care that each is not obliterated in its species, and again that the genus is not merely predicated, as something seen in them, but that it is [in] them and at the same time in itself; that, though mixed, it is pure and exists unmixed, and does not destroy itself by contributing along with others to substance. These things, then, must be examined. But since we said that what is made of all the beings is each intellect, and we posit being and substance as Intellect before all, as before species and parts, we say that the intellect that is already intellect comes later. So let us make this difficulty useful for our inquiry and, using it as a kind of example, set ourselves on the way to knowledge of what is being said.

6.2.20 Let us take it, then, that there is an intellect that touches none of the particulars and is not active about anything, so that it does not become a particular intellect. In the same way know-

ledge is prior to its particular species, and the knowledge of a species is prior to its own parts. Knowledge as a whole is none of the particular ones, but the power of all; each is actually that particular one, and potentially all; and with universal knowledge likewise. The specific knowledges, which lie potentially in the whole, and which, having taken on the specific, are potentially the whole—for it is the whole that is predicated, not a part of the whole; yet the whole itself must remain intact by itself—so, then, we must say that the universal Intellect exists in one way, prior to the particular intellects that are actual, and the particular ones in another way. The partial ones are filled from all, while the Intellect over all supplies the particulars, is their power, and holds them within what is universal; and they in turn, in what is partial, hold the universal, as a particular branch of knowledge holds knowledge. The great Intellect exists by itself, and the particular ones in turn exist in themselves; the partial are encompassed by the whole, and the whole by the partial. Each of them is by itself and in another, and that one is by itself and in them. All are in that one, which exists by itself, potentially: it is actually all things at once, but potentially each separately; while they are actually what they are, but potentially the whole. For insofar as they are what they are called, they are actually that which they are called; but insofar as they are in that genus, they are that potentially. And it, in turn, insofar as it is a genus, is the power of all the species under it, and actually none of them: all of them lie quiet in it. But insofar as it is what it is before the species, it is in actuality, as what is not particular. So if the particulars are to be actual, as in a species, the activity that comes from it must become the cause.

6.2.21 How, then, does it produce the partial ones while remaining one in its account? This is the same question as how, from those four, come the things said to follow in order. Look, then, in this great and immense Intellect, an intellect not of many words but of much mind, the Intellect that is all things, whole, and not a part or some particular intellect, at how all things are in it, coming from it. It certainly has number, then, in the things that

it sees. It is one and many, and these are powers: wonderful powers, not weak ones. Because they are pure, they are the greatest, bursting with vigor, as it were, and truly powers, not limited to a certain point. So they are unlimited: unlimitedness, and the great. This great, then, comes with the beauty of substance in it and the splendor and light around it, since all this is in Intellect. Once you have seen it, you see quality too, already blossoming on it. Along with the continuity of its activity you see magnitude, lying in stillness, showing itself to your gaze. And since one and two and three are there, magnitude is threefold too, and so is all quantity. And when quantity is seen in it, and quality, and both come together into one and, as it were, become one, see shape as well.

And when otherness falls in and divides both quantity and quality, there are differences of shapes, and other qualities. Sameness, being present, makes equality be, and otherness makes inequality, in quantity, both in number and in magnitude. From these come circles, and squares, and figures made of unequal sides, and numbers like and unlike, odd and even. For since it is life full of intellect, and activity that is not incomplete, it leaves out nothing of what we now find to be the work of intellect. It has all things in its own power, having them as they themselves are, and as Intellect would have them. Intellect has them as in thinking, but not in thinking that goes step by step. Nothing has been left out of all that rational principles are. It is one rational principle, as it were: great, complete, containing them all, proceeding outward from its own first principles. Or rather, it has always already proceeded, so that it is never true to say that it is proceeding. For in general, everywhere, whatever someone grasps by reasoning as existing in nature, he will find existing in Intellect without reasoning. So one would think that what is had been an intellect that worked things out by reasoning and made them accordingly. It is the same with the rational principles that make living things: just as the most precise reasoning would work things out in the best possible way, so all things are in the rational principles, which are prior to reason-

ing. What [then] should we expect to be the case in what is prior to nature and to the rational principles in it, higher up?

For in those things whose substance is nothing other than Intellect, and to which neither being nor Intellect is brought in from outside, things would be in the best state without toil, if indeed they are to be arranged according to Intellect and to be just what Intellect wills and is. That is why it is both true and first. For if it came from something else, that other would be Intellect. So all shapes were seen in being, and every quality. It was not some one particular quality, for there could not be just one, since the nature of otherness is in it. Rather, it was one and many, since sameness was There too. It was one and many, and such from the beginning, so that in all the Forms there is the one and many. So there are different magnitudes, different shapes, different qualities, for it was not even permitted that anything be left out: the All There is complete, or it would not be all. And with life running over it, or rather present with it everywhere, all things necessarily became living beings, and there were also bodies, since there were matter and quality. All things have come to be eternally and remain, embraced by eternity in their being. Each exists separately as what it is, and again all exist together in one. The interweaving, as it were, and composition of all of them in one is Intellect. Holding the beings in itself, it is the complete living being and "what living being is." By offering itself to be seen by what comes from it, becoming intelligible to that, it gives that the right to be correctly so called.

6.2.22 Plato puts this in a riddle: "just as Intellect sees the Forms present in the complete living being, what they are and how many." For Soul too, after Intellect, though insofar as it is soul it has them in itself, sees them better in what is prior to it. Our intellect, too, though it has them [in itself], sees them better in what is prior to it: in itself it only sees, but in what is prior to it, it also sees that it sees. This intellect, then, which we say sees, is not cut off from what is prior to it but comes from it. Since it is many from one and has the nature of otherness with it, it becomes a one that is many. And being one Intellect that is the

many, it also makes the many intellects, by a necessity of this kind.[3] In general, it is not possible to grasp there what is one in number and individual: whatever you grasp is a Form, since it is without matter. That is why Plato, hinting at this too, says that substance is chopped up into unlimited pieces. As long as it divides into another Form, as from a genus, it is not yet unlimited, since it is limited by the Forms it has generated. But the last Form, which is not divided into Forms, is more unlimited. And this is "then at last let it go into the unlimited, and say goodbye." As far as they themselves go, they are unlimited; but embraced by unity, they now come into number. Intellect, then, has soul as what comes after it, so that soul too is in number down to its last part, while its last part is now altogether unlimited.[4]

An intellect of this kind is a part, even though it has all things. So are the whole Intellect and its parts, which exist in actuality, since it itself is a part. Soul is a part of a part, but as an activity coming from it. When it is active within itself, the products of its activity are the other intellects; when it acts outward from itself, Soul. And when Soul is active as a genus or species, the other souls are like species. Their activities too are twofold. The one directed upward is intellect; the one directed downward is the other powers, in due proportion. The last, already touching matter and shaping it, is its lower part, and it does not prevent all the rest of it from being above. Or rather, what is called its lower part is an image of it. It is not cut off, but is like reflections in mirrors, which last as long as the original is present outside. We must grasp how it is "outside." Up to what comes before the image, the intelligible world is entire and complete, made of all intelligibles. This world, in turn, is an imitation of that one, and so is itself a living being, insofar as it can preserve the image of a living being. It is like a painted picture,

3 *Timaeus* 39e, where the cosmos is made to contain as many kinds of living things as Intellect sees in the eternal model.

4 Both quotations are from Plato: being "chopped up" is *Parmenides* 144b; "let it go into the unlimited" is *Philebus* 16e.

or a reflection in water, of what seems to be there before the water and the painting. But the imitation in the painting and in the water is not of the compound of the two, but of the one of the two that was shaped by the other. So it is a likeness of the intelligible, holding images not of the maker but of the things contained in the maker, among which are man and every other living being. This is a living being, and so is its maker, each in a different way, and both in the intelligible.

VI.3 On the Kinds of Being III

Περὶ τῶν γενῶν τοῦ ὄντος τρίτον
Plotinus proposes his own categories for the sensible world—substance, relation, quality, quantity and motion—and sorts sensible substance.
no. 44 in order of writing

6.3.1 We have said how we think about substance, and how this might agree with Plato's view. But we must also examine the other nature. Should we posit the same kinds that we posited There? Or more kinds here, adding others to those? Or altogether different ones, or some as There and others differently? We must, however, take "the same" by analogy and homonymously; this will become clear once they are known. Our starting point is this. Our discussion concerns sensible things, and everything sensible is embraced by this cosmos. So we must inquire about the cosmos, dividing its nature and what it is made of, and arranging these by kinds. We would be doing what we do when we divide vocal sound, which is unlimited, into definite parts. We bring what is the same in many back to one, then again another, and yet another, until we have set each of them in some number, calling what is over the individuals a species, and what is over the species a genus. In the case of sound, it was possible to bring each species, and all the ones that had appeared, together into one, and to predicate "letter" or "sound" of them all. But with what we are investigating, that is not possible, as has been shown.[1] So we must look for more kinds, and for kinds

1 The example of dividing speech sounds into letters comes from Plato, *Philebus* 17b–18d.

of this All that differ from those, since this is different from that: not synonymous with it, but homonymous, an image. Here too, in the mixture and composition, one part is body and the other soul, for the All is a living being. But the nature of soul is in that intelligible world and will not fit into the classification of what is here called substance. So we must mark it off from the present treatment, difficult as it is. It is just as if someone wanting to classify the citizens of some city, say by property assessments or crafts, were to leave the visiting foreigners aside. As for the affections that happen to the soul with the body or because of the body, we must examine later how they should be classified, when we inquire about the things here.

SENSIBLE SUBSTANCE

Bodily substance is substance only homonymously, a conglomeration of qualities upon matter.

6.3.2 First we must consider what is called substance. We grant that the nature associated with bodies is called substance only homonymously. Or rather, it is not substance at all, because the notion of things in flux fits it, and it is properly called becoming. Then, of becoming, some things are of one sort and others of another. The bodies, both simple and composite, are to be put into one class, and the accidents or concomitants into another, dividing these too from one another. Or one may call one thing matter and another the form upon it, and treat each separately as a genus, or both under one, each being homonymously substance (or becoming). But what is common to matter and form? How is matter a genus, and of what? What is a differentia of matter? And under which should we place the compound of both? And if the compound of both were itself bodily substance, while neither of those two is body, how could they be ranked in one and the same genus with the composite? How could the elements of something be ranked with it?

If we were to start from bodies, we would be starting from syllables. But why shouldn't we speak by analogy, even if the

division is not the same? Here, matter would take the place of being There, and form the place of motion There, as a kind of life and perfection of matter. Matter's not stepping out of itself would correspond to rest. And there would be the same and the other, since here too there is much otherness, or rather unlikeness. Or rather: first, matter does not have and receive form in this way, as its own life or its own activity. Form comes upon it from elsewhere and is nothing of its own. Next, There, form is activity and motion, while here motion is something else, an accident. Form is rather matter's rest and, as it were, its stillness, since it bounds matter, which is unbounded. There, the same and the other belong to one thing that is both same and other. Here, something is other by participation and in relation to something else, and a particular same and a particular other might exist among the later things, but not as There. And how could there be rest in matter? It is dragged into every magnitude, [has] its shapes from outside, and is not sufficient by itself to generate the other things along with them. So we must abandon this division.

6.3.3 How, then, should we put it? Let it be like this to begin with. There is matter, there is form, there is the mixture of both, and there are the things concerning these. Of the things concerning these, some are only predicated, others are also accidents. Of the accidents, some are in them, others are what they are in, some are their activities, some their affections, some their consequences. Matter is common, and in all substances, but it is not a genus, because it has no differentiae either. That holds unless one takes as differentiae the fact that one matter has the shape of fire and another that of air. But if one were content with what is common to all the things in which there is matter, namely their being matter, or with the relation of whole to parts, it would be a genus in another way. This would be one element, since the element too can be a genus. As for form, adding "concerned with matter" or "in matter" separates it from the other forms, but does not take in every substantial form. And if we call form what produces substance, and call the rational

principle that corresponds to the form substantial, we have not yet said how we should understand substance.

As for the compound of both: if this alone is substance, those two are not substances. If they are too, as well as this, we must look at what is common. The things that are only predicated would belong to relation, like being a cause or being an element. Of the accidents in them, one is being a quantity and another being a quality, and these are in them. Others are what they are in, like place and time. Others are their activities and affections, like motions. Others are consequences, like place and time: place of composites, time of motion. We have found the first three to come into one common thing, what is here homonymously called substance. Then come the others in order: relation, quantity, quality, in time, in place, motion, (place, time). Or, once place and time are taken, "in time" and "in place" are superfluous, so that there are five, counting the first three as one. If the three do not go into one, there will be matter, form, the compound, relation, quantity, quality, motion. Or these too go into relation, since it is more comprehensive.

6.3.4 What, then, is the same in the three? What will it be that makes them the substance that is in these things? Is it being a sort of base for the other things? But matter seems to be a base and seat for form, so that form will not fall under substance. The composite, too, is a base and seat for other things. So form, together with matter, will underlie the composites, or at any rate all the things that come after the composite, such as quantity, quality and motion. Then is it what is not said to be what it is of something else? White and black belong to something else, to what has been whitened, and the double belongs to something else. I don't mean being double of the half, but the piece of wood being double. A father is of another, insofar as he is a father; knowledge is of another, of that in which it is; place is the limit of something else; and time is the measure of something else. But fire is not of another, nor is wood, insofar as it is wood, nor is a man, nor Socrates, nor composite substance in general. Nor is the substantial form of another, because it was not an affec-

tion of another. It is not the form of the matter but part of the compound, and the form of man and man are the same. Matter is part of a whole, and is of another only as of the whole, not as though that of which it is said were something different. But white, what it is said to be, it is of something else.

So what is said to be what it is by belonging to something else is not substance. Substance, then, is what is just what it is of itself. Or it is what, being part of such a thing, helps to complete a composite. Each of these, or both of them, belongs to itself, but is said of the composite in another way: insofar as it is a part, it is said in relation to another. But by itself, by nature, in being what it is, it is not said to be of something else. Being a subject, something that underlies, is also common to matter, form and the compound. But matter is the subject of form in one way, and form and the compound are subjects of the affections in another. Or rather, matter is not the subject of form either, for form is its perfection insofar as it is matter and insofar as it is potential. Nor again is form in matter. When one thing, together with another, completes some one thing, neither will be in the other; both together underlie something else. In this way man, and some particular man, underlie the affections and exist prior to the activities and consequences. Substance is that from which the other things come, and because of which they exist, and about which being affected occurs, and from which acting comes.

6.3.5 These remarks should be understood as concerning what is called substance here. If they apply in some way to that substance too, perhaps it is by analogy and homonymously. For "first" too is said relative to what comes after it. It is not first absolutely: the last of those higher things are first relative to the others that come after them. Being a subject is meant differently There, and whether there is being affected There is disputed; if there is, being affected There is something else. Not being in a subject holds of all substance, if (being) in a subject must mean not belonging as a part to that in which it is, nor in such a way as to join with it in completing some one thing. For what joins with

something to complete a composite substance would not be in it as in a subject. So form is not in matter as in a subject, nor is man in Socrates, since he is part of Socrates. What is not in a subject, then, is substance. But if we say "neither in a subject nor said of a subject," we must add "as of something else." That way man, said of some particular man, is also covered by the definition, thanks to the addition "not of something else."[2]

When I predicate man of Socrates, I mean it like this: not as the wood is white, but as the white is white. In calling Socrates a man I am calling some particular man a man, and predicating man of the man in Socrates. That is the same as calling Socrates Socrates, and again as predicating animal of a rational animal of a certain kind. Someone might say that not being in a subject is not peculiar to substance, since the differentia too is not among the things in a subject. But he says that "two-footed" is not in a subject by taking it as part of substance. For if he took not "two-footed," which is substance of a certain kind, but two-footedness, speaking of a quality rather than a substance, then the two-footed will be in a subject. But neither time nor place is in a subject. But if the measure of motion is taken as what is measured, the measure will be in the motion as in a subject, and the motion in what is moving. If it is taken as what measures, the measure will be in what measures. And place, being the limit of what surrounds, is in that. With the substance under discussion, though, it works the other way round: substance of this kind can be grasped by one of these marks, or by several, or by all of them, since the marks mentioned fit matter, form and the compound alike.

6.3.6 Someone might say, "Granted, these points about substance have been observed, but what it is has not been said." He is perhaps still asking to see it as something sensible. But its "is," its being, could not be seen. What then? Are fire and water not substance? Is each of them substance, then, because it is seen? No. Because it has matter? No. Because it has form? Not that

2 Aristotle, *Categories* 2a11–14: substance in the primary sense is what is neither said of a subject nor in a subject.

either. Nor because it is the compound. Then by what? By being. But quantity also is, and quality is. So we shall say that "is" is used homonymously. But what is the "is" in the case of fire and earth and things like that, and how does this "is" differ from the one used of the others? Perhaps the difference is that the one is said to be simply, and is simply being, while the other is said to be white. What then? Is the being added to white the same as being without any addition? No. The latter is being primarily, the former by participation and secondarily. White added to being has made being white, and being added to white has made the white be. So white is an accident of being, and being is an accident of the white. We do not mean this in the way someone might say "Socrates is white" and "the white thing is Socrates," for in both, Socrates is the same.

But perhaps the white is not the same. In "the white is Socrates," Socrates is included in the white, while in "Socrates is white" the white is purely an accident. Here too, "being is white" has white as an accident, while in "the white is being" the white is taken together with being. In general, the white has its being because it is about being and in being, so its being comes from that. But being has being from itself, and white from the white: not because it is in the white, but because the white is in it. But since this being in the sensible does not have being from itself either, we must say that it has its being from what really is, and its being white from what is really white. That, in turn, has its whiteness by participation in what has its being There.

6.3.7 Suppose someone says that the things here that are upon matter have their being from matter. We shall demand to know where matter itself gets its being, its existing at all. That matter is not first has been said elsewhere. And if it is because the other things could not exist except upon matter, we shall say that this holds of sensible things. Nothing prevents matter, while prior to these, from being posterior to many things, to all those There. Its being is dim, and less than that of the things upon it, insofar as they are rational principles and come more from being, while it is wholly without rational principle: a shadow of rational prin-

ciple, and a falling away from it. Someone might say that matter gives being to the things upon it, as Socrates gives it to the white upon him. We must reply that what is more being could give being to what is less, but what is less could not give it to what is more. But if form is more being than matter, being is no longer something common to both. Nor is substance a genus with matter, form and the compound under it. They will have many things in common, the ones we mention, but their being is nevertheless different. For when what is more being comes upon what is less being, it would be first in order but later in substance. So if being does not belong equally to matter, form and the compound, substance would no longer be common as a genus. It will, however, relate in another way to what comes after them, as something common relative to those things, in that it belongs to them. In the same way, one kind of life is dim and another clearer, and among images one is an outline sketch and another more fully worked out.

If someone measured being by what is dim in being, and allowed more of it in the others, this again would make being something common. But perhaps we should not proceed this way. Each is a different whole, and the dimness is not something common, just as in the case of life there would be nothing common to the nutritive, the perceptive and the intellectual. So here too, the being of matter, of form and of the compound is different, flowing from one source in different ways. This is so not only if the second comes from the first and the third from the second, the one being more and the next worse and less. It is so even if both come from the same thing, but one has a greater share of fire, like a fired pot, and the other a lesser share, so that it does not become a fired pot. But perhaps matter and form do not even come from the same source, for there is difference among those things too.

6.3.8 But perhaps we should leave aside dividing into elements, especially when discussing sensible substance, which must be grasped by perception rather than by reason. Nor should we bring in what it is composed of, for those things are not sub-

stances, or at least not sensible substances. Instead we should embrace in one genus what is common to stone, earth, water and the plants that come from them, insofar as they are sensible, and to animals likewise. Matter and form will not be left out, since sensible substance has them: fire and earth and what lies between are matter and form, and the composites are already many substances in one. What is common to all these is that by which they are distinguished from the other things: they are subjects for the other things, and are not in a subject, nor of something else. And all the points mentioned apply to it. But if sensible substance is not without magnitude or without quality, how will we still separate off the accidents? If we separate these, magnitude, shape, color, dryness and wetness, what shall we posit as substance itself? These are qualified substances. Still, there is something to which the things occur that make it, instead of just substance, a qualified substance. And fire will not be wholly substance, but something of it, a part, as it were. What would that be?

Matter. But then is sensible substance a sort of conglomeration of qualities and matter? Are all these together, compacted upon one matter, a substance, while each taken separately will be a quality or a quantity, or many qualities? Is whatever, when lacking, keeps the thing's existence from becoming complete a part of this substance? And does whatever supervenes on the substance once it has come to be have its own rank, not hidden in the mixture that makes what is called substance? I do not mean that it is substance in that case, together with the others, completing one mass of such a size and kind, and a quality elsewhere, where it does not complete it. I mean that even in that case none of them is substance by itself; the whole made of them all is substance. We should not be troubled if we make sensible substance out of things that are not substances. Not even the whole is true substance; it imitates the true one. That one has being without the other things around it, and the other things come to be from it, because it truly was. Here, though, what underlies is barren and not sufficient to be being, because

the other things do not come from it either. It is a shadow, and upon it, itself a shadow, there is a painting: appearance.

6.3.9 So much for what is called sensible substance, and for its being one genus. What species might one posit for it, and how might one divide it? The whole must be posited as body. Of bodies, some are more material, some organic. The more material are fire, earth, water and air. The organic are the bodies of plants and animals, which vary according to their shapes. Then one should take the species of earth and of the other elements. Among organic bodies, one should divide plants according to their shapes, and the bodies of animals by whether they live on the earth or in the earth, and, for each element, by those that live in it. Or one may divide bodies into the light, the heavy and the intermediate; some standing in the middle, some surrounding from above, and some in between. In each of these there are bodies already distinguished by their shapes, so that some are the bodies of the heavenly living beings, others correspond to the other elements. Or, having separated the four into species, one may next combine them in another way, mixing their differences according to their places, their shapes and their mixtures. Things would then be called fiery or earthy, for instance, from the element that is greater and predominates in them.[3]

As for calling some substances first and others second, this fire and fire: that is a difference in another respect, because one is particular and the other universal, but it is not a difference of substance. In quality too there is this white and white, this literacy and literacy. And then, what does literacy have less than some particular literacy, or in general knowledge than some particular knowledge? Literacy is not posterior to a particular literacy. Rather, it is because literacy exists that the literacy in you exists too. The literacy in you is particular by being in you, but in itself it is the same as the universal. And it was not Socrates who gave being man to what is not man; it was man who gave it to Socrates. For the particular man is a man by parti-

3 The "heavenly living beings" are the stars and planets, which Plato and Plotinus regard as ensouled.

cipation in man. Then what would Socrates be but a man of a certain kind? And what would "of a certain kind" contribute toward being more substance? Suppose the reason is that man is form alone, while Socrates is form in matter. Then he would by this very fact be less man, for the rational principle in matter is inferior. And if man, too, is taken not as form but as in matter, what will it have less than the man in matter, since it is itself the rational principle of what is in some particular matter? Moreover, the more generic is prior by nature, so that the species is prior to the individual, and what is prior by nature is also prior absolutely. How then could it be less? But the particular is prior because it is more knowable to us. This, however, makes no difference in the things themselves. Besides, in this way there is not one account of substance. The account of what is primarily and of what is secondarily is not the same, and they do not fall under one genus.

6.3.10 One can also divide in this way: by hot and dry, dry and cold, cold and wet, or however one wants the pairing to go. Then one divides by the composition and mixture formed from these. Then either one stops here, at the composite, or one divides by being in the earth or on the earth, or by shapes and by the differences of animals. In that case one is not dividing the animals, but dividing according to their bodies, as instruments. Division by shapes is not out of place, if division by their qualities, heats, colds and the like, isn't either. If someone says, "But it is by these that bodies act," we shall say that they act by their mixtures too, and by their colors and shapes. Since the discussion is about sensible substance, it would not be out of place to take it by differences relative to perception. For it is not simply being: this whole is perceptible being. After all, we said that even its apparent existence is a coming together of perceptible things, and that the assurance of their being comes to them from perception. If the composition is unlimited, divide by the forms of animals, for example the form of man in a body. Such a form is a quality of body, and it is not out of place to divide by qualities. And if we spoke of some as simple and others as composite, con-

trasting the composite with the simple, we said "more material" and "organic" without bringing in the composite. But there is no contrasting division of the composite against the simple. Rather, one posits the simple bodies by a first division and mixes them. Then, starting from another principle laid down beneath, one differentiates the composites, either by places or by shapes: some heavenly, for instance, others earthly. So much for substance, or becoming, in sensible things.

QUANTITY IN THE SENSIBLE WORLD

Number and magnitude are quantities; great and small, many and few are contraries.

6.3.11 Concerning the quantitative and quantity, it should be placed in number and magnitude, insofar as each thing is so much. That is, it lies in the number of things in matter and in the extension of what underlies. The discussion is not about separate quantity, but about what makes the wood three cubits long, and the five that belongs to the horses. It has often been said that only these should be called quantities, and that place and time should not be thought of as quantity. Time, as the measure of motion, should be assigned to relation. Place contains body, so it too lies in a relationship, and so in relation. After all, motion too is continuous, and it was not placed in quantity. Why are great and small not in quantity? The great is great by a certain quantity, and magnitude does not belong to relation. But the greater and the less do, since they are relative to something else, like the double. Why, then, is a mountain called small and a millet seed large? Or rather, first of all, "small" is said in place of "smaller." If it is agreed, even by those people, that it is said relative to things of the same kind, it is agreed that it is said in place of "smaller." A large millet seed is not called large simply, but a large millet seed. This is the same as saying "[relative to] things of the same kind," and compared with things of the same kind it would naturally be called "larger." Then again, why shouldn't the beautiful also be called relat-

ive?[4] But we say that beautiful is a quality, by itself, while more beautiful is relative. And yet even what is called beautiful might appear ugly relative to something else, as human beauty does compared with that of the gods. "The most beautiful of apes," he says, "is ugly compared with another kind." By itself it is beautiful, and relative to something else either more beautiful or the opposite. So here too, the great is great by itself, by its magnitude, but relative to something else it may not be. Otherwise we must do away with the beautiful too, because something else is more beautiful than it. So we must not do away with the great either, just because there is something greater than it. There would be no greater at all if there were no great, just as there would be no more beautiful if there were no beautiful.[5]

6.3.12 We must allow, then, that there is contrariety in quantity too. Our notions admit the contrariety: when we say great and when we say small, they make contrary pictures in our imagination, as when we say many and few. Much the same must be said about few and many. "There are many in the house" is said in place of "more," and that is relative to something else. "Few in the theater" is said in place of "fewer." In general, "many" must be called a large multitude in number. And how is multitude relative? It is the same as an extension of number, and its contrary is a contraction. The same holds for the continuous, when the notion carries the continuous forward into the distance. There is quantity, then, when the unit goes forth, and the point too. If each of them stops quickly, the one is few and the other small. If the progression keeps going and does not stop quickly, the one is many and the other great. What, then, is the limit? What is the limit of the beautiful? Or of the hot? Here too there is a hotter. But hotter is said relatively, while hot is simply a quality. In general there [must] be a rational principle of great, as there is of beautiful, which, when something participates in it, makes it great, as the rational principle of the beautiful makes it beauti-

4 The mountain and the millet seed are Aristotle's examples (*Categories* 5b18) for treating "great" and "small" as relative.

5 Heraclitus (fragment B82), as quoted in Plato, *Hippias Major* 289a.

ful. So there is contrariety in quantity in these respects. There is none with respect to place, since place does not belong to quantity. Even if place did belong to quantity, "up" would not be contrary to anything, since there is no "down" in the All. In the parts, "up" and "down" would signify nothing but higher and lower, like right and left, and these are relative. The syllable and speech happen to be quantities, serving as subjects for quantity. For vocal sound is a quantity, but it is a kind of motion. So it should be brought back to motion altogether, as action should too.

6.3.13 The continuous has rightly been separated from the discrete, by the common and the proper boundary, as has been said. From here on, number is divided into odd and even. And again, if there are differences within each of these, either we should leave them to those who deal with number, or we should posit them as differences of the numbers made of units, but not of the numbers in sensible things. But if reason separates the numbers in sensible things from them, nothing prevents us from thinking the same differences for these too. But how is the continuous to be divided, if one kind is line, another surface, another solid? Or perhaps one extended in one direction, another in two, another in three, will look like the work of someone merely enumerating rather than dividing into species. In numbers taken this way, by prior and posterior, there is never a genus common to them. Nor will there be anything common to the first, second and third increase in dimension. But perhaps, insofar as they are quantity, they are on a par, and some are not more quantity and others less, even if some have dimensions in more directions and others in fewer. In the case of numbers, then, there would be something common insofar as all are numbers. For perhaps it is not the unit that makes the two, nor the two the three, but the same thing that makes them all. If they do not come to be but simply are, and it is we who conceive them as coming to be, let the smaller be prior and the larger posterior. But insofar as all are numbers, they fall under one. What holds for numbers must be carried over to magnitudes.

We separate line, surface and solid (which he has called body) from one another, because they are magnitudes different in species. Whether each of these should be divided further must be examined: line into straight, curved and spiral; surface [into] rectilinear and curved figure; solid into solid figures, the sphere and those [having] rectilinear sides; and these again, as geometers do, [into] triangles and quadrilaterals, and these again into others.[6]

6.3.14 What would we say a straight line is? Isn't it a magnitude? Or perhaps one would say that the straight is a qualified magnitude. What then prevents it from being a differentia of line, as line? Straightness belongs to nothing but line. After all, we also bring in differentiae of substance from quality. The straight line, then, is a quantity with a differentia, and it is not for that reason a composite of straightness and line. If it is a composite, it is so as having its own differentia. Why is the figure made of three lines not in quantity? Or rather: the triangle is not simply three lines, but three lines arranged in this particular way, and the quadrilateral is four arranged in this way. The straight line, too, is arranged in this way, and is a quantity. For if the straight line is not merely a quantity, what prevents us from saying that the bounded line is not merely a quantity either? But the limit of the line is a point, and it is not in anything else. The bounded surface, then, is also a quantity, since lines bound it, and they are much more in quantity. If, then, the bounded surface is in quantity, and it is square, six-sided or many-sided, all figures are in quantity too. And if we place triangle and square in quality because we call them qualities, nothing prevents placing the same thing in several categories. Insofar as it is a magnitude, and a magnitude of a certain kind, it is in quantity; insofar as it presents a certain shape, it is in quality. Or perhaps the triangle itself is a certain shape. What then prevents us from calling the sphere a quality too? And if one charged straight ahead with this, geometry would be concerned not with magnitudes but

6 "He" is Aristotle, whose *Categories* (4b20–25) lists line, surface and body among continuous quantities.

with quality. But that is not what people think: this discipline is about magnitudes. The differences among magnitudes do not abolish their being magnitudes, just as the differences among substances do not make substances not substances. Further, every surface is bounded, since no surface can be unlimited. Further, when I take a quality that concerns substance, I call it a substantial quality. In just the same way, and much more so, when I take figures, I am taking differences of quantity. And then, if we do not take these as differences of magnitudes, of what shall we make them differences? And if they are differences of magnitudes, the different magnitudes that result from the differences must be ranked as species of magnitude.

6.3.15 But how are equal and unequal peculiar to quantity? After all, triangles are called similar. Or rather, magnitudes too are called similar, and talk of similarity does not stop similar and dissimilar from being in quantity. Perhaps here, in magnitudes, similar is meant in another way, not as in quality. Then again, if he said that equal and unequal are peculiar to quantity, he did not thereby rule out predicating similar of some quantities. But if he said that similar and dissimilar belong to quality, then what is said of quantity must be meant differently, as we said. And if the similar is the same in both, then we must look here too for other properties peculiar to each genus, quantity and quality.[7] Or perhaps we should say that similar is said of quantity too, insofar as the differentiae are in it. In general, the differentiae that complete something must be ranked with what they are differentiae of, especially when the differentia belongs to that thing alone. If in one case it completes the substance and in another it does not, it must be ranked with what it completes, and taken by itself alone where it does not. By "completing the substance" I mean completing not substance simply, but substance of a certain kind, where the "of a certain kind" admits an addition that is not substantial.

We should also note this: we call triangles and squares equal, and likewise all figures, plane and solid. So let equal and

unequal be laid down as peculiar to quantity. Whether similar and dissimilar belong to quality must be examined.

QUALITY IN THE SENSIBLE WORLD

Qualities here are images of rational principles and are hard to divide into species.

About quality it was said that, mixed together with other things, matter and quantity, it brings sensible substance to completion. It was also said that this so-called substance is perhaps this thing made of many: not a "what" but rather a quality. The rational principle, of fire for instance, signifies rather the "what," while the shape it produces is rather a quality. The rational principle of man is the "what it is," while what is brought to completion in the nature of body, being an image of the rational principle, is rather a sort of quality. It is as if, Socrates being a man who is seen, his likeness in a painting, which is colors and pigments, were called Socrates. So too, since there is a rational principle by which Socrates is Socrates, [not] the sensible Socrates but colors and shapes are imitations of what is in the rational principle. And this rational principle in turn stands in the same relation to the truest rational principle, that of man. So much for that.

6.3.16 And each of the things involved in so-called substance, taken apart from the others, was said to be the quality in them. It signifies neither the "what" nor the quantity nor motion, but reveals the character, the "such-and-such," the "of what sort": [for example] beauty [and] ugliness in a body. For beauty here and beauty There share only a name, and so, then, does quality, since black and white are different There too. But what is in the seed and in a rational principle of that kind: is it the same as what appears, or does it share only its name? Should it be assigned to the things There or the things here? And what of ugliness in the soul? That beauty There is different is already

7 "He" is again Aristotle: in the *Categories* (6a26, 11a15) equal and unequal are peculiar to quantity, similar and dissimilar to quality.

clear. But if it is in this quality, virtue too is among the qualities here. Or perhaps some virtues are among the qualities here, others among those There. For one might also be at a loss about the arts, which are rational principles: are they among the things here? Even if they are rational principles in matter, their matter is the soul. But when they also involve matter, they are in a way here. Take singing to the lyre: it deals with strings, and the song, a sensible sound, is in a way part of the art—unless one regards these as activities rather than parts. Still, they are sensible activities. For beauty in a body is incorporeal too, yet since it is sensible we assigned it to what concerns body and belongs to body. As for geometry and arithmetic, we should take them as twofold: rank one kind here, in this quality, and the other, the soul's own occupations with the intelligible, There.

Plato says the same about music and astronomy. So the arts that deal with bodies and use sensible instruments and perception, even if they are dispositions of the soul, are to be placed in this quality, since they belong to a soul that inclines downward. And nothing prevents us from placing here the practical virtues as well—those that act in such a way that their action is civic, insofar as they do not separate the soul by leading it toward the things There, but act well here, setting this as their primary aim rather than treating it as merely necessary. Beauty in the seed, then, and much more black and white, belong among these. What then? Shall we also place such a soul, the one in which these rational principles are, in the substance here?[8] No: we did not call these bodies either. But since the rational principles concern body and the making of bodies, we placed them in the quality here. And having posited sensible substance as what is made of all the things mentioned, we shall in no way place incorporeal substance in it. In calling all qualities incorporeal, we counted them in it as affections that incline toward here, and as rational principles of a certain soul. For we divided the affection into two, what it concerns and what it is in, and assigned it

8 In *Republic* VII (529–531) Plato distinguishes the study of visible stars and audible harmonies from astronomy and harmonics pursued with the intellect alone.

to quality, which is not corporeal but concerns body. But we did not go on to assign the soul to this substance, since we had already given its affection toward body to quality. Soul thought of without the affection and the rational principle we have handed back to where it comes from, leaving here no intelligible substance of any kind whatever.

6.3.17 If this is our view, qualities are to be divided into those of the soul and the bodily ones, which are qualities of body. But if one wants all souls to be There, one can divide the qualities here by the senses: some through the eyes, some through the ears, some through touch, taste, smell; and, if there are differences within these, colors by sight, sounds by hearing, and so on for the other senses; and sounds, insofar as they are qualified, as sweet, harsh, smooth. We divide the differences in substance by qualities—and activities and actions too, as beautiful or ugly and in general of such-and-such a kind (for quantity enters into the differences that make species rarely or never)—and we divide quantity by the qualities proper to it. So one might be at a loss how to divide quality itself into species: using what differences, and taken from what genus? For it is absurd to divide it by itself or by something like it, just as if one said that the differences of substance were themselves substances again. By what, then, are white and black distinguished? By what are colors in general distinguished from flavors and the qualities of touch?

If by the different sense organs, the difference is not in the things underlying them. But how within the same sense? Suppose one says that one color contracts the eyes and another dilates them, and that one flavor dilates the tongue and another contracts it. First, there is dispute about the affections themselves, whether they are dilations and contractions. Second, he has not said what the things themselves differ by. If someone says they differ by what they can do—and "by what they can do" is not unreasonable—perhaps we should reply that it is the unseen things, such as the branches of knowledge, that are to be divided by what they can do. But these are perceptible: why divide them by their effects? Even with the branches of know-

ledge, when we divide them by what they can do, and in general when we distinguish the powers of the soul as different by what they produce, we are able to grasp their differences by reason, seeing not only what they deal with but also their rational principles. Or perhaps we can deal with the arts by their rational principles and their theorems; but how with the qualities in bodies? Or perhaps even there, with the different rational principles, one might ask how they are different. For white plainly differs from black; but what it differs by is just what we are asking.

6.3.18 But all these puzzles show that we must look for differences of the other things, by which we separate each from each; differences of differences, though, are both impossible and unreasonable. There cannot be substances of substances, quantities of quantity, qualities of qualities, or differences of differences. Rather, where possible, we must use external features, or productive ones, or the like. Where not even these are available —green as against pale yellow, for instance, since they say these come from white and black—what could one say? Rather, perception or intellect will say that they are different, and they will not give an account: perception, because giving an account is not its business, only making different reports; and intellect, because in its intuitive apprehensions it is simple and does not use accounts everywhere, so that it says of each thing "this is this." And there is an otherness in its motions that divides one thing from another, without itself needing otherness. Are all qualities, then, differences, or not? Whiteness, and colors in general, and the qualities of touch and of flavor, could be differences of other things while also being species; but how could grammar and music be?

Perhaps in this way: the one a grammatical soul, the other a musical one ⟨...⟩, especially if they were natural, so that they too become differences that make species. And then, whether a difference could come from this genus or from another as well; and if from this genus, it would be a difference of things in the same genus—qualities of qualities, for example. For virtue and

vice are, the one a state of this sort, the other of that sort; so, since states are qualities, their differences are qualities—unless one were to say that the state without the difference is not a quality, but that the difference makes the quality. But if the sweet is beneficial and the bitter harmful, this divides by relation, not by quality. What if the sweet is thick and the astringent thin? Perhaps he does not mean that [the] what-it-is of sweet is thick, but that what the sweetness is in is thick; and the same argument holds for the astringent. So we must consider whether a quality is never a difference of a quality, just as substance is not of substance, nor quantity of quantity. Or does five differ from three by two? No: it exceeds it by two; it is not said to differ. For how could it differ by a two that is within the three? Nor would one motion differ from another by a motion, nor would one find this in the other cases. In the case of virtue and vice, one must take whole against whole, and in this way they will differ by themselves. As for differences from the same genus, quality, and not from another: if someone divides virtues by one being concerned with pleasures, another with anger, another with acquiring income, [another with spending,] and accepts that they are well defined in this way, then clearly there can be differences that are not qualities.

6.3.19 With quality we should rank, as we decided, the things qualified by qualities as well, insofar as quality concerns them—not adding them on as something extra, so that there would be two categories, but going up from them to that from which they are named. "Not white," if it signifies another color, is a quality. But if it were merely a negation of things, or an enumeration, it would be nothing—unless it is a sound, or a name, or a phrase, which is itself a thing that comes to be. If a sound, it is a kind of motion; if a name or a phrase, it is relative, insofar as these signify. But if the enumeration by genus is not only of things, but must also cover what is said and what signifies, stating what genus each signifies, we shall say that some posit things, merely indicating them, while others deny them. Yet perhaps it is better not to count negations along with them, since we do not count

affirmations either, because they are composite. What about privations? [Or,] if the things of which they are privations are qualities, they are qualities too, like "toothless" or "blind." But "naked" and "clothed" are neither of them qualified; rather they are in a certain state, so they consist in a relation to something else. An affection that is still in the undergoing is not a quality but a kind of motion; when it consists in having undergone and in keeping the affection, which now stays, it is a quality. If the thing no longer has the affection but is said to have undergone it, it has been moved; and that is the same as "was in motion." But one should think of the motion alone, removing the time; it is not right to bring in even the "now." "Well" and the like must be referred to a single notion, that of the genus. Whether being red should be referred to quality, but the red man no longer, must be examined. Turning red is rightly not to be referred to it, for that is being affected, or in general being moved. But if he is no longer turning red but already is [red], why is he not qualified? Being qualified is not a matter of time. Or else, by what are we to define it? By being "such"; and in calling him red we call him qualified. Otherwise we shall say that only states are qualities, and dispositions no longer. Then "hot" is not what is being heated, and "sick" is not one who is falling ill.

6.3.20 We must see whether every quality may not have another quality contrary to it; for in the case of virtue and vice the mean seems to be contrary to the extremes. But with colors the intermediates are not like this. Now if this is because the intermediates are mixtures of the extremes, we should not have set them up as opposites, but only white and black, the others being compounds. Or else we set them in opposition because there is some single other quality in the intermediates, even if it can be seen to arise from combination. Or because contraries do not merely differ, but differ most. But "differing most" seems to be grasped only once these intermediates have already been posited; for if one took away this arrangement, by what would one define the "most"? Perhaps because gray is nearer to white than black is; and sight reports this. Likewise with flavors—and hot, cold, with

what is neither between them. That we are used to thinking this way is clear. But perhaps someone might grant us these points and yet say that white and yellow, and anything with respect to anything, are all alike different from one another in every way, and that, being different qualities, they are contraries. For their contrariety does not depend on there being other things between them: health and sickness, at any rate, have nothing falling between them, and they are contraries. Or perhaps because what comes from each shows the greatest variation. But how can one speak of "greatest" when there are no lesser ones in the middle? With health and sickness, then, one cannot speak of "greatest." So contrariety must be defined by something else, not by the "most."

If it is by "much," then if "much" stands for "more" as against "less," again the contraries without intermediates will escape; but if it is "much" simply, then, granting that each is by nature far removed, we should not measure the distance by the "more." But we must examine what contrariety is. Do things that have some similarity—I mean not in genus, nor at all by being mixed, more or less, with each other's shapes, so to speak—fail to be contraries, while those that have nothing the same in form are contraries? And we should add: in the genus of quality. For from this we get the contraries without intermediates—those that have nothing tending toward similarity, there being no other things that, as it were, lean both ways and have similarity to each other—while with others it is only certain ones that lack it. If [so], those colors that have something in common would not be contraries. But nothing will prevent it being the case that not every color is contrary to every other in this way, but one to another; and likewise with flavors. [So] let these puzzles be worked through like this. As for the "more," it seemed that it is present in the things that participate, but there was a puzzle about health itself and justice itself. If each of these has a range, we must grant it to the states themselves too; but There, each is the whole and does not admit of the more.

MOTION

Motion is the passage from potentiality into actuality; alteration and local motion are its kinds.

6.3.21 About motion, whether we should posit it as a genus, one might consider the matter like this. First, whether it should not rather be referred to another genus; next, whether nothing above it is predicated in its "what it is"; then, whether by taking on many differences it will produce species. To what genus will one refer it? It is neither the substance nor a quality of the things that have it. Nor indeed is it to be referred to acting, for in being affected there are many motions; nor again to being affected, because many motions are actings—rather, actings and affections are to be referred to it. Nor would it be right to refer it to relation on the ground that motion is of something and not by itself; for in that way quality too would be in relation, since quality is of something and in something; and quantity likewise. If one says that those are something by being what they are, even if they are of something, the one being called quality and the other quantity, then in the same way, since motion, even if it is of something, is something before being of something, it should be taken for what it is in itself. In general, one must count as relative not what is something and then belongs to another, but what the relation generates, there being nothing besides the relation in virtue of which it is so called. The double, for instance, in virtue of which a thing is called double, gets its origin and its existence in the comparison with the cubit-long; nothing is conceived prior to this, and it got its being called and being double from being compared with another. What, then, is this thing which, belonging to another, is something, so that it can also belong to another, as quality, quantity and substance do?

Or rather, we must first grasp that nothing is predicated before it as a genus. But if someone says change is prior to motion, then first, either he is saying the same thing, or, by call-

ing change a genus, he will make it another genus besides those already mentioned. Then clearly he will place motion as a species and set something else against motion—coming-to-be, perhaps—calling that too a change, but not a motion. Why, then, is coming-to-be not a motion? If it is because what comes to be does not yet exist, and motion does not concern what does not exist, then clearly coming-to-be would not be a change either. But if it is because coming-to-be is nothing but a kind of alteration and growth, since coming-to-be consists in certain things being altered and growing, he is taking what precedes coming-to-be. But in these cases we must take coming-to-be as a different species. For becoming and coming-to-be do not consist in being passively altered, like being heated or whitened: when these have happened, coming-to-be in the strict sense may not yet have happened, only this very being altered, in the sense of becoming such. Rather, it is when an animal or a plant comes to be, when something takes on a form. Someone might say that it suits change better than motion to be placed as a species, because the word "change" means to signify one thing in place of another, whereas "motion" also includes departure from what is one's own, as local motion does; and if one does not mean that, then learning and lyre-playing, or in general motion from a state. So alteration would rather be a species of motion, being a kind of motion that takes a thing out of itself.

6.3.22 But let alteration be understood as the same thing, in that otherness accompanies motion. What, then, are we to say motion is? Let motion be, to put it in outline, the passage from potentiality into that which the thing is said to be capable of. One thing is potentially something because it might come to a form—a potential statue, for example; another, because it might come to activity—what is able to walk, for example. When the first advances into a statue, the advance is motion; when the other is walking, the walking itself is motion; and dancing, in the case of what is able to dance, when it dances. Upon some motion another form supervenes, which the motion has produced; but the other kind of motion, being as it were a simple

form of the potentiality, has nothing after it once the motion stops. So if someone said that motion is a waking form, set against the other forms, which stand still—in that they remain and it does not—and the cause of the other forms whenever something comes about after it, he would not be absurd. And if someone also called this motion, the one we are now discussing, the life of bodies [, he would not be absurd]; for this motion must be said to share only its name with the motions of Intellect and Soul. That it is a genus one might be convinced no less from the fact that it is not easy, or even impossible, to grasp it by a definition. But how is it a form when the motion is toward the worse, or when the motion is passive? Perhaps it is like the way the heating that comes from the sun makes some things grow and leads others the opposite way. Insofar as it is something common, the motion is the same in both cases, and it gets its apparent difference from the things underlying it. Are getting well and getting sick, then, the same?

Insofar as they are motion, they are the same. But by what will they differ? By the underlying things, or by something else as well? But this later, when we examine alteration; now we must consider what is the same in every motion, for that is how it would be a genus. Or perhaps it will be said in many ways, and it will be like being. As for the puzzle: perhaps the motions that lead to what is natural, or act in things that are natural, should be counted as species, so to speak, as was said, while those that lead to what is unnatural should be placed in proportion to what they lead to. But what is common to alteration, growth, coming-to-be and their contraries, and further to change of place, in virtue of which these are all motions? Perhaps this: that each thing is not in the same state it was in before, nor quiet, nor in complete repose, but, insofar as motion is present, always has its direction toward something else; and its being other [lies in] not remaining in the same; for motion perishes when there is no "other." That is why otherness here is not in having become other and remaining in the other, but is perpetual otherness. Hence time too is always other, because motion makes it; for it is

motion measured, motion that does not stay. So it runs along with motion, as if riding on something that is carried along. And what is common to all is that there is an advance and passage from potentiality, from the potential, into activity. For everything moved by any motion whatever, existing beforehand with the capacity to do or undergo this, comes to do it in being moved.

6.3.23 And motion in the sensible world, sent in from something else, shakes and drives and wakes and pushes the things that share in it, so that they do not sleep or stay in sameness—so that by this unrest and, as it were, busyness they may be held together by an image of life. One should not think that the moved things are the motion: the feet are not the walking; walking is the activity, from a potentiality, in the feet. Since the potentiality is invisible, we necessarily see only the active feet: not feet simply, as they would be if at rest, but feet now with something else. This something is invisible, but it is seen incidentally, as being with something else, because we see the feet occupying now one place, now another, and not at rest. And with alteration, we see it from the thing being altered, because its quality is not the same. In what, then, is the motion, when one thing moves another, and also when something passes from the potentiality within it into activity? In the mover? Then how will what is moved and affected share in it? In the thing moved? Then why, once it has come, does it not remain? Or rather, it must neither be detached from the agent nor be in it; it must come from the agent and go into the other—not cut off and lodged in the other, but from the one to the other, like a breath blowing into something else. When the power of moving is a power of walking, it pushes, so to speak, and has made the other keep changing place; when it is a power of heating, it heats. When the power takes matter and builds it into a nature, that is growth; when another power takes away, that is diminution, as the thing capable of losing something is diminished. When the generating nature is active, that is coming-to-be; when it is powerless and the power capable of destroying prevails, that is

destruction—not the destruction in what has already come to be, but in what is on its way. Getting well works the same way, when the power capable of producing health is active and prevails; getting sick, when the contrary power produces the contrary. So it turns out that the motion depends not only on the things in which it is, but also on the things from which and through which it comes, and that the distinctive character of the motion lies in its being a motion qualified and of a certain kind in such cases.

6.3.24 As for local motion, if moving upward is contrary to moving downward, and circular motion differs from straight, how are we to understand the difference—as with throwing something over one's head and down at one's feet? For the pushing power is one—unless someone says that the power pushing upward is different from the one [pushing downward], and that downward travel differs from upward in a different way, especially if the motion is natural, the one being lightness, the other heaviness. But moving to one's proper place is common and the same, so that here the difference seems to come from external factors. As for circular and straight motion, if people ran in a circle just as they run on a straight line, how is the motion different? Perhaps by the shape of the path—unless one says that circular motion is mixed, as being neither entirely motion nor entirely a departure. But on the whole, local motion seems to be one, taking its differences from external things.

6.3.25 Combination and separation: how are we to think of them? Are they motions other than those mentioned—coming-to-be and destruction, growth and decay, change of place, alteration—or should they be referred to these, or should some of these be regarded as combinations and separations? Now if combination involves the approach of one thing to another, their drawing near, and separation in turn their withdrawal backward, one might call them local motions, speaking of two things moving toward one point, or withdrawing from each other. But if they take it as a blending, a mixture, a fusion, a formation into one out of one—the formation in the process of

coming together, not the one already complete—to which of the motions mentioned would one refer these? Local motion will begin it, but what comes about upon it would be something else. Just as with growth one would find local motion beginning and motion in quantity supervening, so here too being moved in place leads, and what follows, though not of necessity, is being combined or again being separated: when the things that met became intertwined, they were combined; when they were split apart by the encounter, they were separated. Often, too, when things are being separated, the motion of place would follow, or happen at the same time, while another affection is understood to concern the things being separated, not in respect of moving in place; and in combination, another affection and a formation follow, different from the local motion.

Should we, then, take these by themselves, and refer alteration to them? For a thing that has become dense has been altered, and that is the same as "has been combined"; a thing that has become rare has been altered, and that is the same as "has been separated"; and when wine and water are mixed, each becomes something other than it was before, and this is combination, which has produced the alteration. Or should we say that here too combinations and separations precede certain alterations, but that the alterations themselves are different from combinations and separations? For neither are the other alterations of this kind, nor are rarefaction and condensation combination and separation, or composed of these at all; for in that case one would also have to admit a void. And how would it be with blackness or whiteness? If someone disputes these, first, he does away with colors, and perhaps with qualities, or at least most of them—or rather all. For if he says every alteration, which we call change in respect of quality, is combination and separation, what comes about is nothing, only things lying close together and things standing apart. Second, how are learning and being taught combinations?

6.3.26 We must examine these matters, and now inquire again into the motions said to be species—local motion, for example:

whether it is divided not by up and down, straight and circular, as we puzzled over, but by the motion of living and lifeless things (for their motion is not alike), and these again by walking, swimming and flying. Or perhaps one might divide each species by natural and unnatural; but these are not external differences of motions. Or perhaps these produce the motions, and the motions would not exist without them. And nature seems to be their principle. Or perhaps some are by nature, some by art, some by choice: by nature growths and decays; by art building houses and building ships; by choice inquiring, learning, taking part in politics, and in general speaking and acting. As for growth, again, and alteration and coming-to-be: by natural or unnatural, or in general by the things underlying them.

STILLNESS

Stillness here is only the absence of motion; true rest belongs to the intelligibles.

6.3.27 About rest, which is set against motion, or stillness, what should we say? Should it too be posited as a single genus, or referred to one of the genera mentioned? Perhaps it is better to assign rest to the things There and to look for stillness here. So we must first inquire what this stillness is. If it should appear to be the same as rest, one would not be right to look for it here, where nothing stands still, and what appears to stand still is merely using a slower motion. If we say stillness is different from rest, in that rest concerns what is entirely unmoved, while stillness concerns what is stationary but naturally apt to move, when it is not moving, then: if one means by being still "coming to stillness," it is a motion that has not yet stopped but is still going on; but if one means a state that no longer concerns what is moving, we must first ask whether there is anything here that is not moving. If nothing can move with all the motions, but there must be some motions it does not move with, so that one can say that this is the thing moved, what else should one say of what is not moving in place, but is still with respect to this

motion, than that it is not moving? Stillness, then, will be a negation of being moved; and that is not in a genus. A thing is still with respect to nothing other than this motion—local motion, for example; so stillness means the removal of this. If someone says, "Why shall we not call motion the negation of rest?," we shall say: because motion comes bringing something; it is something else, active, as it were pushing the underlying thing, working countless effects on it and destroying it; whereas each thing's stillness is nothing beside the thing itself, but signifies only that it has no motion.

Why, then, did we not call rest a negation of motion in the case of the intelligibles too? Because There one cannot even call rest the abolition of motion: it is not there when motion has stopped, but exists while motion also exists. And rest There does not belong to something naturally apt to move insofar as it is not moving; rather, insofar as rest has taken hold of it, it stands still, and insofar as it is in motion, it will always move. That is why it stands still by rest and moves by motion. Here, though, a thing moves by motion and is still by absence, deprived of the motion it ought to have. Next we must see what rest itself is [that is spoken of here: in sickness and health, for example. The one being healed is moving,] and in this way, when he passes from sickness to health, he is being healed. What species of stillness, then, shall we set against this healing? If the "from which," that is sickness, not rest; if the "to which," that is health, which is not the same as rest. If someone says that health or sickness is a kind of rest, he will be saying that health and sickness are species of rest—which is absurd. If he says rest is an accident of health, then before the rest, health will not be health. But on these matters, let each think as he sees fit.

6.3.28 It has been said that acting and being affected are to be called motions, and that some motions can be called absolute, others actings, others affections. It has been said about the other so-called genera that they are referred to these; and about relation, that it is a condition of one thing toward another, and that both are present together at once; and that relation, when a con-

dition of a substance makes it, will be relative not insofar as it is substance, but insofar as it is a part—a hand, say, or a head—or a cause, a principle, an element. One can also divide relatives, as the ancients divided them: some as productive, some as measures, some in excess and deficiency, some separating things in general by likenesses and differences. That is what we have to say about these genera.[9]

9 The classification of relatives follows Aristotle, *Metaphysics* V.15.

VI.4 That Being, One and the Same, Is Everywhere as a Whole I

Περὶ τοῦ τὸ ὂν ἓν καὶ ταὐτὸν ὂν ἅμα πανταχοῦ εἶναι ὅλον πρῶτον

Plotinus argues that intelligible being is present everywhere as a whole, so bodies come to soul rather than soul to bodies.

no. 22 in order of writing

6.4.1 Is Soul present everywhere to the All because the body of the All is of a certain size, Soul having a nature that is divided among bodies? Or is it everywhere of itself—not wherever body has brought it, but with body finding it already everywhere before it? In that case, wherever body is placed, it finds soul there before it was itself placed in a part of the All, and the whole body of the All was placed in a Soul that already was. But if Soul extends that far before a body of that size arrives, filling the whole extent, how will it not have magnitude? Or what way could there be of its being in the All before the All came to be, when the All did not exist? And how could one accept that something said to be without parts and without magnitude is everywhere without having magnitude? And if it is said to be extended along with the body without being body, even so one does not escape the puzzle by giving it magnitude incidentally; for here too one might reasonably ask how it acquires magnitude incidentally. Soul is not spread throughout the whole body the way a quality is—sweetness or color, for example. These are affections of bodies, so that the whole thing affected has the affection, and the affection is nothing by itself, being something belonging to body and known only then. That is why it is neces-

sarily of that size, and the white of one part does not share the affection of another part. With white, what is in one part is the same in species as what is in another, but not the same in number; whereas with soul, what is in the foot and in the hand is the same in number, as our perceptions show. And yet in qualities the same thing is seen divided, while with soul the same thing is not divided, but is said to be divided in this sense, that it is everywhere. Let us, then, speak about these matters from the beginning, in case something clear and easy to accept may come to us: how, being incorporeal and without magnitude, it can reach to the greatest extent, whether before bodies or in bodies. Perhaps, if it should appear that it can do this even before bodies, it will become easy to accept the same in the case of bodies.

6.4.2 There is the true All, and there is the imitation of the All, the nature of this visible world. Now what really is the All is in nothing, for there is nothing before it. But whatever comes after it must necessarily be in the All, if it is to exist at all, especially since it depends on it and can neither remain nor move without it. One might not place such a thing in it as in a place—understanding place either as the limit of the containing body insofar as it contains, or as a kind of extension that previously belonged to the nature of the void and still does—but rather by its being, as it were, propped on it and resting on it, since that is everywhere and holds it together. Even so, let him set aside what the word implies and grasp with his mind what is meant. This has been said for the sake of something else: that that All, which is first and is being, does not seek place, nor is it in anything at all. The whole All, then, cannot possibly fall short of itself; it has filled itself and is equal to itself; and where the All is, there it is, for it is the All. And in general, if something other than it has been set in the All, it participates in it, meets it, and draws strength from it—not dividing it, but finding it in itself, having itself approached it, while that has not come outside itself. For being cannot be in non-being; rather, if anything, non-being is in being. So it meets being whole; for being could not be torn

away from itself. And its being said to be everywhere shows that it is in being; and so in itself.

And it is no wonder if what is everywhere is in being and in itself; for then "everywhere" comes to be in one. But we, having placed being in the sensible, place "everywhere" there too; and thinking the sensible great, we are puzzled how that nature extends over something great and so large. But what is called great is small, and what is thought small is great, if indeed it reaches whole to every part of this—or rather, this, coming to it from every side with its parts, finds it everywhere whole and greater than itself. So, since it would gain nothing more by extension—it would come outside the All as well—it wanted to circle round it. And since it could neither embrace it nor get inside it, it was content to have a place and a position where it might be kept safe, neighboring it, which is present and again not present; for that is by itself, even if something wants to be present to it. And there the body of the All, coming together, finds the All, so that it no longer needs what is far off, but turns in the same place, since this is the All of which it enjoys the whole in every part of itself. If that were itself in a place, the body would have to approach it and travel straight toward it, touching different parts of it with different parts of itself, and there would be far and near. But if there is neither far nor near, it must be present whole, if it is present at all. And it is present wholly to each of those things from which it (is) neither far nor near, but which are able to receive it.

6.4.3 Shall we say, then, that it is itself present? Or that it is by itself, while powers go out from it to all things, and in this way it is said to be everywhere? For this is how they say souls are like beams cast out, so that it is itself settled in itself, while the souls sent forth come to be in one living being after another. Or perhaps: in the cases where the one thing, because the recipient does not preserve the whole nature that is in that one itself, is present there as a power of it to what it is present to—even so it is not that that one is not wholly present, since even then it is not cut off from its power, which it gave to that thing; rather, the

recipient was able to receive only so much, though the whole was present. But where all the powers are, it is itself plainly present, though still separate. For if it had become the form of this particular thing, it would have ceased to be all and to be everywhere in itself, and would belong to anything else only incidentally. But belonging to none of the things that want it to belong to them, it draws near, as each is able, to whatever wants it, not becoming that thing's, but with that thing longing for it—nor anyone else's either. So it is no wonder that it is in all things in this way, because, again, it is in none of them in such a way as to belong to them. That is why it is perhaps not absurd to say that soul too shares the body's affections incidentally, in this sense: if it were said to be by itself, not having become matter's or body's, while the whole body is, as it were, illuminated by it throughout.

One should not wonder if it, not being in place, is present to everything that is in place. On the contrary, it would be a wonder—and impossible on top of being a wonder—if, having a place of its own, it were present to something else in place, or present at all, and present in the way we say. As it is, the argument says that, since it has been allotted no place, it must be present whole to whatever it is present to, and, being present to all, must be present whole to each. Otherwise one part of it will be here, another elsewhere, so that it will be divisible and will be body. And how in fact will you divide it? Will you divide its life? But if the whole was life, the part will not be life. Its intellect, then, so that one bit is in one thing, another in another? But neither of them will be intellect. Its being, then? But the part will not be being, if the whole was being. What if someone says that body too is divided, and its parts are bodies? But the division was not of body, but of a body of a certain size, and each part was called body by the form in virtue of which it is body; and this form had no particular size—indeed, no size of any kind.

MANY SOULS, ONE SOUL

Being and souls are many by otherness, not by place, and remain one.

6.4.4 How, then, are there being and beings, and many intellects and many souls, if being is everywhere one—and not as being of one species—and Intellect is one and Soul is one? And yet there is the Soul of the All, and there are the others. These facts seem to testify against us, and what has been said, even if it has some necessity, certainly does not carry persuasion, since the soul finds it unconvincing that the one is in this way the same everywhere. Perhaps it is better to divide the whole in such a way that what the division comes from is in no way diminished—or rather, to use better words, to generate from it—and so to let it be by itself, while the things that have come to be as its parts, so to speak, now fill up all things. But if that being remains by itself because it seems paradoxical for something whole to be present everywhere at once, the same argument will apply to souls too. In the bodies in which they are said to be whole in wholes, they will not be so; will they not either be divided, or, remaining whole somewhere in the body, give it their power? And with the powers the same puzzle will arise, whether the whole is everywhere. Further, one part of the body will have soul, another only power. But how are there many souls and many intellects, and being and beings? And indeed, proceeding from the prior things as numbers, not magnitudes, they will likewise raise the puzzle of how they fill the All. So we have found nothing in a multiplicity proceeding in this way that leads to a solution, since we too grant that being is many by otherness, not by place. For all being is together, even if it is many in this way: "for being draws near to being," and all is together. And Intellect is many by otherness, not by place, but is all together.[1]

Are souls, then, many in this way too? Yes, souls too. For what is called "divisible in bodies" is said to be undivided in its

1 "Being draws near to being" quotes Parmenides, fragment 8.25, on the unbroken continuity of what is.

nature. Bodies have magnitude, and when this nature of soul is present to them—or rather, when the bodies come to be there—then, insofar as the bodies are divided, and since that nature shows itself in every part, it came to be thought divisible in bodies. But the fact that it is not divided along with the parts, and is whole everywhere, makes plain that its nature is one and really undivided. So its being one does not abolish the many souls, any more than being abolishes the beings. Multiplicity There does not fight with unity. Bodies do not need a multiplicity of souls to fill them with life. Nor should we think that the multiplicity of souls arises because of the size of the body: before there are bodies, souls are both many and one.[2] For the many are already in the whole, not potentially but each one actually. The one whole soul does not prevent the many from being in it, and the many do not prevent the one. They are distinct without standing apart, and present to one another without becoming strangers. They are not marked off by boundaries, any more than the many branches of knowledge in one soul are; and the one soul is such that it holds them all in itself. That is how such a nature is unlimited.

6.4.5 And its greatness has to be understood in this way, not as bulk. Bulk is small: it goes to nothing if you keep taking from it. There, you cannot even take anything away; and if you did take something away, it would not run out. And if it will not run out, why fear that it might stand apart from anything? How could it stand apart, when it does not run out but is an ever-flowing nature that does not flow? If it flowed, it would go only as far as it could flow. But it does not flow—it would not even have anywhere to flow: it has taken possession of the All. Or rather, it is itself the All, since it is something greater than the nature of body allows. It would be reasonable, then, to think that it gives the All only a little: as much of itself as the All is able to bear. But we must not call that "smaller," nor, positing it as smaller in bulk, go on to disbelieve, as though the smaller could not extend

2 "Divisible in bodies" echoes Plato, *Timaeus* 35a, where the soul is blended from the undivided and "the divisible that comes to be in bodies."

over what is larger than itself. "Smaller" must not be predicated of it at all, and in measuring we must not set bulk beside what has no bulk—that would be like saying medicine is smaller than the doctor's body. Nor, on the other hand, should it be thought larger by a measure of quantity; for not even with soul do "great" and "greater than the body" mean that. A further witness to the greatness of soul is this: when the bulk becomes larger, the same soul that was in the smaller bulk reaches over the whole of it. It would be absurd in many ways to attribute bulk to soul as well.

6.4.6 Why, then, does it not go into another body? Because that body must come to it, if it can; and what has come and received it has it. What, then? Does the other body, having the soul it has, have the same soul? Where would the difference lie? Perhaps in the additions as well. And then, how is it the same soul in foot and hand, while the soul in this part of the All is not the same as the soul in that one? If the perceptions differ, we must say that the experiences that occur differ too. So it is the things judged that are different, not what judges. The one judging is the same judge, coming to be in one experience after another—though it is not the judge that is affected, but the nature of this or that body. It is as if the same one of us were judging both a pleasure in the finger and a pain in the head. Why, then, does one soul not share awareness of the other's judgment? Because it is a judgment, not an affection. Besides, the soul that judged does not say "I have judged"; it simply judged. Even in us, sight does not report to hearing, though both have judged; it is reasoning that presides over both, and reasoning is different from both. And often reasoning has seen the judgment made in another and has understood another's experience. This has been discussed elsewhere too.

6.4.7 But let us say again how the same thing extends over all things. This is the same as asking how each of the many perceptible things, lying in many places, is not without a share in the same thing. From what has been said, it is not right to divide that into the many. Rather, we should lead the divided many

back up to the one, and say that that has not come to them; it is because these are scattered that they have given us the impression that that too is cut up to match them—as if someone were to divide what masters and holds something together into parts equal to the thing it masters. Yet a hand can master a whole body, or a log many cubits long, or something else; the mastering extends over the whole, and yet it is not cut up in the hand into parts equal to what is mastered. The power seems to be limited to the extent of what the hand touches, but still the hand is bounded by its own quantity, not by that of the body it lifts and masters. And if you added another length to the body being held, and the hand could carry it, the power masters that too, without being cut up into as many parts as the body has. What, then, if one supposed the bodily bulk of the hand taken away, but left the same power that held up the body before, the power that was previously in the hand? Would that power not be the same, undivided, in the whole alike and in every part?

Or suppose you made a small luminous mass into a kind of center and placed around it a larger, transparent spherical body, so that the light within shone throughout all that surrounds it, the outer mass getting no light from anywhere else. Won't we say that the inner thing itself has suffered nothing, but, remaining as it is, has reached over the whole outer mass, and that the light we see in the small mass has taken possession of what lies outside? Now since the light did not come from that small bodily mass—it did not have the light insofar as it was a body, but insofar as it was a luminous body, by another power, one that is not bodily—come: if someone took away the bulk of the body but kept the power of the light, would you still say the light was somewhere? Or would it be equally [inside] and throughout the whole outer sphere? You will no longer fix your thought on where it lay before, and you will no longer say where it comes from or where it goes. You will be at a loss about this and filled with wonder, as you gaze at the light here in the spherical body and here, all at once. With the sun, too, you can say where the light that shines through all the air comes from, by looking at

the body of the sun; and yet you see the same light everywhere, and not divided either. Things that cut off the light show this: they do not let it be on the side opposite to where it came from, and yet they do not divide it. And so, if the sun were only a power existing apart from body and supplying light, the light would not begin from here, and you would not say where it came from. The light would be everywhere, one and the same, not having begun, with no origin anywhere.

6.4.8 Light, then, since it belongs to a body, you can say where it has come from, since you can say where the body is. But suppose something is immaterial and needs no body, being prior in nature to every body, established in itself—or rather not needing any such establishment at all. This thing, with such a nature, having no starting point from which it set out, coming from no place and belonging to no body: how will you say that part of it is here and part there? For then it would already have a point it set out from, and would belong to something. It remains, then, to say that if anything participates in it, it participates in the whole of it, by the power of the whole. So it is in no way either something else or divided. For what has a body might be affected, even if only incidentally, and in this respect could be called subject to affection and divisible, since it is something belonging to body, like an affection or a form. But what belongs to no body—rather, body wants to belong to it—must in no way suffer the other affections of body, and it cannot be divided. For this, too, is an affection of body, primarily so, and insofar as it is body. If what is divisible is so insofar as it is body, then what is not body is indivisible. How could you divide what has no magnitude? So if what has magnitude participates in some way in what has none, it would participate in it without its being divided; otherwise it will once again have magnitude. So when you say "one [in] many," you are not saying that it has itself become many. You are attaching the affection of the many to that one, because you see it in many at once.

The one [in] them must be understood like this: it has not become each of them, nor the whole of them; that belongs to

itself and is itself, and being itself it does not fall short of itself. Nor again is it as large as the whole perceptible All, or as some part of the All; it is not a quantity at all. How, then, could it be "so large"? "So large" belongs to body; to what is not body but of another nature we must in no way attach "so large." And where there is no "so large," there is no "where" either; and so no "here and here," for then it would be somewhere many times over. If, then, division goes by places, when one part of a thing is here and another there, how could what has no "here" be divided? So it must be undivided, together with itself, even if the many happen to aspire to it. If the many aspire to it, they clearly aspire to the whole of it; so whatever can participate would participate in the whole of it, as far as it can. Things that participate in it, then, must have it as though they had not participated, since it does not become their own. In this way it would remain whole by itself, and whole in the things in which it is seen. For if it is not whole, it will not be itself, and the participation will not be in what they aspire to but in something else, which was not the object of their aspiration.

6.4.9 And indeed, if the part that came to be in each thing were a whole, and each were like the first, then, since each would always be cut off, there would be many firsts and each would be first. Then what would keep these many firsts apart, so that they are not all one together? Not their bodies, surely; for they could not be forms of the bodies, if they too are like that first thing from which they come. And if the so-called parts in the many are its powers, then, first, each is no longer whole. Then, how did they come, cut off, leaving it behind? If they left it, clearly they left it to go somewhere. And then: are the powers that have come to be here in the perceptible still in it, or not? If they are not, it is absurd that that should have been diminished and become powerless, stripped of the powers it had before; and how could the powers exist apart from their own beings, cut off from them? If they are both in it and elsewhere, then either they will be here as wholes or parts of them will. But if parts, the remaining parts are There. If wholes, then either they are the

very ones that are There, here too, undivided—and once again the same thing will be everywhere undivided—or each power has become many wholes, alike to one another. Then with each being there will be only the one power that goes with that being, and the others will be mere powers. Yet just as there cannot be being without power, so there cannot be power without being. For power There is real existence and being, or greater than being.

But suppose the powers that come from it are different, being lesser and dim—like a dim light from a brighter one—and there are beings accompanying these powers, so that power does not occur without being. First of all: even in the case of such powers, since they are surely all of the same kind as one another, we must concede either that it is the same power everywhere, or, if not everywhere, at any rate the same whole in every part at once, undivided, as in one and the same body. And if so, why not in the whole All? But if each is divided to infinity, it will no longer be whole itself, and the division will bring powerlessness. And then, being different in different parts, it will leave no room for self-awareness. Then again, an image of something—a weaker light, for instance—would cease to exist if cut off from what it comes from. In general, everything that has its existence from another, being an image of that other, cannot be cut off from it and made to exist on its own. So neither could these powers that have come from that be cut off from it. And if so, wherever these are, that from which they came will be there at the same time; so once again it will be everywhere at once, undivided and whole.

6.4.10 But suppose someone says that an image need not be attached to its archetype: there can be an image when the archetype it comes from is absent, and heat in what has been heated when the fire has gone away. First, about archetype and image: if one means the image a painter makes, we shall say that it was not the archetype that made the image but the painter, and it is not his own image even if he paints himself; for what painted was not the painter's body, nor the form that was represented.

And it is not even the painter who should be said to produce such an image, but this particular arrangement of the colors. Nor is this, properly speaking, the making of an image and likeness, as happens in water and mirrors or in shadows. There [for] the image properly exists from what is prior and comes to be from it, and what has come to be cannot be cut off from it. It is in this way that they will claim the weaker powers come to be from the prior ones. As for the example of fire: we should not call heat an image of fire, unless one were to say that fire is in the heat too; for if so, it will produce heat without fire. Besides, even if not at once, the heated body does stop and grow cold when the fire has gone away. And if these people were to extinguish these powers too, then, first, they will say that only one thing is imperishable, and they will make souls and Intellect perishable. Then they will make what comes from a flowing being flowing too. And yet, if the sun stayed fixed anywhere at all, it would give the same light to the same places; and if someone said it was not the same light, he would be using this to argue that the body of the sun flows. But that what comes from that is not perishable, and that souls and every intellect are immortal, has been argued at greater length elsewhere.

SHARING BY FITNESS

Things receive the intelligible as far as they are fit, as many ears hear one voice.

6.4.11 But why, if it is whole everywhere, do not all things participate in the whole intelligible? How is one thing first in relation to it, another second, and others after that? Perhaps we should think that what is present is present according to the fitness of what receives it. Being is everywhere in being, never falling short of itself, but what can be present to it is present to it, and to the extent that it can be—not by place—as the transparent is present to light. For what is murky, participation is different. So first, second and third are so by rank, by power and by differences, not by places. Nothing prevents different things from

being together: soul and intellect, for example, and all the branches of knowledge, the higher and the lower. Indeed, from the same thing the eye has seen the color, smell the fragrance, and each other sense something else—all of them together, not apart. Is that, then, varied and many? Or rather the varied is in turn simple, and the many one. For a rational principle is one and many, and all being is one. For the different is in it, and difference belongs to it—it certainly does not belong to non-being. And being belongs to the one, which is not separated from it; wherever being is, its one is present to it too; and the one being, in turn, is by itself. For it is possible to be present while being separate. Perceptible things are present to intelligible ones in one way—those of them that are present, and to those to which they are present—and intelligible things to one another in another way. So too body is present to soul in one way, knowledge to soul in another, and one piece of knowledge to another, both being in the same subject, in another again; and body to body differently from all of these.

6.4.12 Think of a voice in the air, often carrying words. An ear that is present receives and perceives it; and if you placed another ear somewhere in between in the empty space, the words and the voice came to it as well—or rather, the ear came to the words. Many eyes have seen the same thing and all have been filled with the vision, though the object seen lies in a delimited place, because one is an eye and the other an ear. In just this way, what is able to have soul will have it, and another and yet another, from the same source. The voice was everywhere in the air, not one voice divided up but one whole everywhere. And as for sight: if the air, being affected, holds the shape, it holds it undivided; for wherever sight is placed, there it has the shape. Not every theory grants this; but let it be said all the same, for this reason: that the participation is from one and the same thing. The case of the voice is clearer: the whole form is in all the air. Everyone would not have heard the same thing unless the spoken words were whole in every place and each act of hearing received the whole alike. And if, even here, the whole

voice is not stretched out over the whole air—this part of it coupled with this part of the air, that one divided off along with that—why should we disbelieve that soul is not stretched out and divided along with the body, but is present wherever it is present, and is everywhere in the All, undivided? Once it has come into bodies—whichever it comes into—it will be analogous to a voice already spoken in the air; before bodies, to one who speaks and is about to speak. And yet even when it has come into a body, it has not ceased, even so, to be as it is in the speaker, who in speaking both has the voice and gives it.

The features of a voice are not identical with the things they are adduced to illustrate, but they do have a certain likeness. Those of soul, since it belongs to the other nature, must be understood not as though one part of it were in bodies and another by itself, but as though it were whole in itself and also appearing in many. And again, if something else has come to receive soul, it too has it out of the unseen—the same soul that was in the others. For it was not prepared beforehand so that a part of it, lying here, would come into this; rather, what is said to come was in the All, in itself, and is in itself, though it seems to have come here. For how could it have come? If, then, it did not come, but is now seen to be present—and present not by waiting for what is to participate in it—clearly it is present to this too while remaining by itself. And if, remaining by itself, it is present to this, then this has come to it. And if this, being outside what really is, came to what really is and came to be in the world of life—and the world of life was by itself, the whole of it by itself, not divided up into its own bulk, for it was not bulk at all, and so what came did not come into bulk—then it participated not in a part of it but in the whole. And if something else comes into such a world, it will participate in the whole of it. Likewise, then, if that is said to be whole in these things, it will be whole in each and every one. So everywhere it will be the same, one in number, not divided but whole.

6.4.13 Where, then, does its extension over the whole heaven and all living things come from? Or rather, it has not been exten-

ded. Perception, which we heed when we disbelieve what is said, tells us "here and here." But reason says that the "here and here" did not come about by its being extended here and here; rather, the whole extended thing has participated in it, while it is itself unextended. If something is to participate in something, clearly it will not participate in itself; otherwise it will not be participating, but will be that thing. So a body that participates in something must participate in something that is not body; for body it has already. Body, then, will not participate in body. Nor, then, will magnitude participate in magnitude; for that it has already. Even if it receives an addition, the magnitude that existed before will not participate in magnitude. The two-cubit length does not become three cubits; rather, the underlying thing, which had one quantity, has acquired another—otherwise two itself would become three. If, then, what is divided and extended to a certain size is to participate in another kind, or in general [one thing] in another, what it participates in must be neither divided nor extended, nor any quantity at all. What is to be present, then, must be present everywhere, itself whole, being without parts. But not without parts in the sense of being small: for then it would none the less be divisible, and would not fit the whole thing, nor would it stay with the thing as it grew. Nor without parts in the way a point is: for the mass is not one point but contains infinitely many; so this too would be infinitely many points, if it is anything, and not continuous; so it would not fit that way either. If, then, the whole mass is to have it whole, it will have it throughout the whole of itself.

WHO ARE WE?

We were There before birth; another man attached himself to us and made us double.

6.4.14 But if the same soul is everywhere, how is it each one's own? And how is one soul good and another bad? Or rather: it suffices for each, and holds all souls and all intellects. For it is one and also unlimited; it holds all things together and each one distinct,

and yet not separated apart—how else could it be unlimited? Or one might put it like this: it holds all things together, all life, all soul, every intellect; and each of them is not marked off by boundaries—which is why, again, it is also one. For it had to have not one life but an unlimited life, and yet one; and one in this way: all lives together, not heaped up into one, but beginning from one and remaining where they began—or rather they did not even begin, but were always so. Nothing comes to be There; nor, then, is anything divided; it only seems divided to what receives it. What is There is from of old and from the beginning; what comes to be draws near, seems to be joined to it, and hangs from it. But we—who are "we"? Are we that, or what draws near and comes to be in time? Or rather: even before this coming-to-be came about, we were There, other human beings, and some of us even gods—pure souls, and intellect joined to the whole of being, parts of the intelligible, not marked off or cut off but belonging to the whole. And not even now are we cut off. But now another human being has come up to that one, wanting to exist, and finding us—for we were not outside the All—he wrapped himself around us and attached himself to that human being that each of us was then. It is as if there were one voice and one speech, and someone put his ear to it from here, someone else from there, and heard and received it, and there came to be an actual hearing, with what acts on it present to it. And we have become the two together, and not the one we were before; and sometimes we become the other, the one we added later, when that former one is idle and in another sense not present.

6.4.15 But how has what came come? Since it had a fitness, it got that for which it was fit. It had come to be such as to receive soul. What comes to be such as not to receive all of it—though all of it is present, only not to that thing—the other animals, for example, and plants, has as much as it can take. Just so, when a voice conveys a meaning, some share in the meaning along with the sound of the voice, others only in the voice and the impact. So a living being has come about. It has soul present to it from

being, by which it hangs from all being. A body is present too, not empty, nor without a share in soul—a body that even before was not lying in the soulless, and has come still closer, so to speak, by its fitness. It has become no longer just a body but a living body, and by this neighborliness, as it were, has reaped a kind of trace of soul—not a part of that soul, but something like a warmth or an illumination that has come to it. Then the generation of desires, pleasures and pains sprang up in it. So the body of the living being that had come to be was not foreign to it.

The soul that comes from the divine was quiet, true to its own character, standing on itself. But the other part, thrown into turmoil by weakness, itself flowing, and battered by blows from outside, first itself [then] cried out to the common life of the living being and passed on its own disturbance to the whole. It is as if, in an assembly of elders sitting in quiet deliberation, a disorderly populace, wanting food and complaining about everything else it suffers, were to throw the whole assembly into unseemly uproar. When such people calm down and words reach them from someone of understanding, the crowd settles into a moderate order, and the worse has not prevailed. Otherwise the worse prevails while the better keeps quiet, because the disorderly element could not receive the word from above; and this is the badness of a city and an assembly. This is also the badness of a human being who has within himself a populace of pleasures, desires and fears that has gained the upper hand, when such a man gives himself up to such a populace. But whoever enslaves this mob and runs back up to the man he once was lives by that man and is that man, giving the body what he gives it as to something other than himself. Someone else lives now this way, now that, a mixed being, made up of a good self and a bad other.

6.4.16 But if that nature could not become bad, and this is how soul goes into body and is present to it, what are the descent in cycles and the ascent again, the judgments, and the entries into the bodies of other animals? For we have received these teachings from those who long ago philosophized best about soul,

and we ought to try to show that the present argument is in harmony with them, or at least not in discord. Since, then, participating in that nature was not that nature's coming to things here and departing from itself, but this nature's coming to be in that one and participating, clearly what those thinkers call "coming" must be taken to mean that the nature of body comes to be There and participates in life and soul. In general, "coming" is not spatial; it is whatever the manner of such communion is. So "descending" means coming to be in a body, in the sense in which we say that soul comes to be in a body: giving it something of itself, not becoming its possession. And "departing" means that the body no longer shares in it in any way. There is an order of such communion for the parts of this All, while soul, which is, as it were, in the last region of the intelligible, gives of itself more often, since it is close in power, and at shorter intervals, by the law of such a nature. And such communion is bad, and release from it good. Why? Because even if it does not belong to this body, still, being called the soul of this body, it becomes in some way partial, falling away from the All. Its activity is no longer directed to the whole, though it belongs to the whole—as if, the knowledge being whole, the knower were active in one single theorem; yet his good lay not in some piece of his knowledge but in the whole of what he has.

So too this soul, belonging to the whole intelligible world and hiding its part within the whole, has, as it were, leapt out of the whole into a part, in which it shuts itself up, being a part—as if a fire able to burn everything were forced to burn some small thing, though it has all its power. For soul, when it is entirely separate, is each and not each. But when it is distinguished—not by place, but by activity—and becomes the individual, it is a portion, not all; though even so it is all, in another way. When it presides over nothing, it is entirely all, being a part then only potentially, as it were. As for going to Hades: if this means going into the unseen, it refers to its separation; if to some worse place, what is surprising in that? Even now, wherever our body is and in whatever place, the soul too is said to be there. But

when the body no longer exists?[3] If the image has not been torn away, how is the soul not there where its image is? But if philosophy has released it completely, the image would go off alone to the worse place, while the soul itself is purely in the intelligible, with nothing of it taken away. That, then, is how the image that comes from such a thing comes to be. But when the soul itself, as it were, shines toward itself, by the inclination toward the other side it is drawn together into the whole, and is no longer active, yet it has not perished either. But enough on these matters; let us take up the argument again from the beginning.

3 Plotinus plays on the traditional derivation of Hades (Haidēs) from aidēs, "unseen," which Plato uses (*Phaedo* 80d, *Gorgias* 493b).

VI.5 That Being, One and the Same, Is Everywhere as a Whole II

Περὶ τοῦ τὸ ὂν ἓν καὶ ταὐτὸν ὂν ἅμα πανταχοῦ εἶναι ὅλον δεύτερον
Continuing the argument, Plotinus shows that the one and the same is everywhere whole, and urges us to turn toward it.
no. 23 in order of writing

6.5.1 That what is one and the same in number is everywhere at once as a whole is asserted by a common notion, when all people, moved by nature, speak of the god in each of us as one and the same. If one did not demand of them how, and had no wish to examine their opinion by argument, they would set it down just so; and with their thought active in this way, they would come to rest, leaning together, in a way, on what is one and the same, and they would not want to be split off from this unity. And this is the most secure principle of all, one our souls, as it were, cry out: [not] summed up from particulars, but coming before all particulars, and before that principle which posits and declares that all things desire the good. For that would be true in this way: if all things hasten toward one, and it is one, and this is what they desire. For this one, proceeding outward as far as it can proceed, would appear many, and in a way would be many. But the ancient nature, and the desire for the good—which is itself—leads back to what is really one, and every nature hastens toward this: toward itself. For the good for this one nature is to be its own and to be itself; and that is to be one. In this sense the good may rightly be called one's own, which is why we must not seek it outside. Where could it be, fallen out-

side being? Or how could anyone find it in non-being? Clearly it is in being, since it is not itself non-being. And if it is being and in being, it would be in itself, for each. So we have not departed from being but are in it, nor has it departed from us. All beings, then, are one.

6.5.2 Reasoning, setting out to examine this claim, is not something one but something divided. It brought the nature of bodies into the inquiry and took its principles from there; so it divided being, thinking being was like that, and disbelieved in its unity, because it did not launch its inquiry from the appropriate principles. We, for our account of what is one and is everywhere, must take principles appropriate to producing conviction: that is, intelligible principles for intelligible things, principles that hold fast to true being. There is, on the one hand, what is carried about, undergoes all sorts of changes and is spread out into every place, which it would be proper to call becoming rather than being. On the other hand, there is what always is, [not] divided, always the same in the same respects, neither coming to be nor perishing, having no region, no place, no seat, neither going out from anywhere nor entering into anything, but remaining in itself. Someone speaking about the former would reason from that nature and from what is held to be true of it, and would quite properly draw likely conclusions from likely premises, with likely arguments.[1] But when one gives accounts of intelligible things, one would rightly take the nature of the being one is dealing with and make it the starting point of the account, not straying off to another nature as if one had forgotten, but considering that being from itself. For everywhere the "what it is" is the starting point; and it is said that those who define well also come to know most of the accidental attributes. And in cases where everything is contained in the "what it is," one must hold to it all the more, look to it, and refer everything back to it.

6.5.3 If, then, what really is is this, and is always the same and does not stand outside itself, and there is no becoming about it,

and it was said not to be in place, then, being like this, it must always be with itself, and not stand apart from itself, nor have one part of it here and another there, nor have anything proceed from it. For then it would be in one thing after another, and in general in something, and not by itself, nor unaffected; it would be affected if it were in another. And if it is to remain in what is unaffected, it will not be in another. If, then, without departing from itself, without being divided, without itself undergoing any change at all, it were in many things at once, being one whole together with itself, then it would have its being in many by being the same with itself everywhere—that is, by being by itself and yet again not being by itself. It remains, then, to say that it is itself in nothing, while the other things participate in it: those that can be present to it, and to the extent that they can be present to it. So we must either abolish those hypotheses and principles, saying there is no such nature, or, if that is impossible and there necessarily is such a nature and being, accept the original thesis: that what is one and the same in number, not divided but whole, stands apart from none of the things beside it. It needs no pouring out to do so; nor does it happen by portions of it going out, nor again by its remaining whole in itself while something else that has come from it leaves it behind and reaches the other things in many places. For in that way it would be in one place and what comes from it in another, and it would have a place separate from the things that come from it. And again, with those things, there is the question whether each is a whole or a part. If a part, it will not preserve the nature of the whole, as has already been said. If each is a whole, either we shall divide each into parts equal to the thing it is in, or we shall grant that the same thing can be whole everywhere. This argument, then, is drawn from the thing itself and its being, bringing in nothing foreign, nothing from the other nature.

1 The play on "likely" recalls Plato, *Timaeus* 29c, where an account of the changing world can only be a "likely" one.

THE GOD EVERYWHERE

Many lines from one center and Man in many men show the intelligible whole everywhere.

6.5.4 Consider, if you like, this god as well. We do not say he is in one place and not in another. It is held by all who have any notion of gods to say, not only about him but about all gods, that they are present everywhere; and reason says that this is how it must be posited. If, then, he is everywhere, he cannot be divided. Otherwise it would no longer be he himself who is everywhere; each part of him would be, one here, one there, and he would no longer be one. It would be as if a magnitude were cut into many pieces: it would be destroyed, and all the parts together would no longer be that whole. On top of that, he would be a body. If these things are impossible, then once again what was disbelieved has come to light, present in every human nature along with belief in god: that the same thing is everywhere at once as a whole. And again, if we call that nature unlimited—for it is certainly not limited—what else could this mean than that it will not run out? And if it will not run out, that it is present to each thing. For if it cannot be present, it will run out, and there will be somewhere it is not. Indeed, even if we were to say that there is something else after the One, what comes after it is together with it, around it and directed toward it, a kind of offspring joined to it; so that what participates in what comes after it has participated in that too. For the things in the intelligible are many, first and second and third, attached, as it were, to the one center of a single sphere, not divided by intervals but all together with one another; so wherever the third are present, the second and the first are present too.

6.5.5 For the sake of clarity, the argument often draws, as it were, many lines from one center, wanting to lead us to a conception of the multiplicity that has come about. But we must keep in mind that all the things said to have become many are together. Even there, in the circle, one cannot take the lines as

marked off from each other: the plane is one. And where there is not even the one extension a plane has, but powers and beings without extension, all things could reasonably be said to be united, center by center, in one center together—as if the ends of the lines, lying at the center, had let the lines go; and then indeed all are one. Again, if you added the lines, they will each attach to their own centers, which they had left. Yet each center will none the less not be cut off from the one first center, but each will be together with it; and they will be as many as the lines to which they gave themselves as ends. So they appear as many as the lines they touch, yet all of them together are one. If, then, we have likened all the intelligibles to many centers referred back to one center and united in it, but appearing many because of the lines—the lines not generating them but revealing them—let the lines serve us for now as an analogy for the things touching which the intelligible nature appears to be many and present in many places.

6.5.6 For the intelligibles, being many, are one, and being one, they are many by their unlimited nature: many in one and one over many, and all together. It acts toward the whole with the whole, and toward the part, again, with the whole. The part receives into itself the activity first as the activity of a part, but the whole follows. It is as if Man, coming into a particular man, were to become a particular man while still being Man. The man in matter, then, has made from the one Man of the Form many men who are the same, and the same one thing is in many in this sense: there is one thing stamped, as it were, on many. But Man itself, and each thing itself, and the whole All, are not in many in that way; rather, the many are in it, or better, around it. For white is everywhere in one way, and the soul of each is the same in every part of the body in another; and it is in this latter way that being too is everywhere.

WE ARE ALL ONE

Turning inward, we find ourselves in being and one with all; matter's participation explains this.

6.5.7 For what is ours, and we ourselves, are led back up to being; we ascend to it and to what comes first from it, and we think those things, not by having images or impressions of them. And if not that way, then by being them. If we participate in true knowledge, we are those things—not by taking them into ourselves, but by being ourselves in them. And since others too, not only we, are those things, we all are those things. So being together with all, we are those things; so we are all one. When we look outside, then, rather than to that from which we hang, we do not know that we are one—like many faces turned outward, with a single crown of the head turned inward. But if someone could turn around—either by himself, or with the good luck of being pulled by Athena herself—he will see god, and himself, and the All. At first he will not see as the All. But then, having nowhere to set himself and fix how far he himself extends, he will give up marking himself off from all being and will come into the whole All, without going forward anywhere, but remaining right there where the All is established.[2]

6.5.8 I think, too, that if someone examined how matter participates in the Forms, he would come more readily to believe what is being said, and would no longer disbelieve it as impossible or be at a loss about it. For it is reasonable and necessary, I think, that it is not the case that the Forms lie apart, and matter again far off, and the illumination reaches it from somewhere above—I suspect that is empty talk. For what would "far" and "apart" mean among these? And participation would not have been called hard to express and most puzzling; it would have been stated very readily, being familiar from examples. Even if we sometimes speak of illumination, we shall not mean

2 In Homer, *Iliad* 1.197, Athena seizes Achilles by the hair from behind and he turns around to see her.

it as we speak, among perceptible things, of illuminations of one perceptible thing by another. We speak this way because the things in matter are images, while the Forms hold the rank of archetypes, and illumination is the kind of thing in which what is illuminated stands apart. But now, speaking more precisely, we must not suppose that the Form is apart in place and is then seen reflected in matter, as in water. Rather, matter, touching the Form from every side, as it were, and yet again not touching it, holds throughout the whole of itself, by its nearness to the Form, as much as it can receive, with nothing in between—the Form not passing through the whole of it and running over it, but remaining in itself. For if the Form of fire, for example, is not in matter—let the argument take the matter that underlies the elements—then Fire itself, without itself coming to be in the matter, will supply the shape of fire throughout all the matter that has been set on fire. Let us suppose that a great mass has come to be, the first fire in matter. The same argument will fit the other so-called elements too.

If, then, that one fire is contemplated in all things, providing an image of itself, and [not] being separate in place, it will not provide that image the way the visible illumination does. For [in that case] all this fire that is in perception would already be somewhere, if the whole of it were a plurality of itself while the Form itself remained in what has no place, having generated places out of itself. For the same thing, in becoming many, would have had to flee from itself, so as to be many in this way and to participate many times in the same thing. And the Form, being unscattered, gave nothing of itself to matter. Yet, being one, it has not been made incapable of shaping what is not one by its own oneness, and of being present to the whole of it in such a way as [not] to shape this with one part of itself and that with another, but each thing and the whole with the whole of itself. It would be absurd to bring in many Forms of fire, so that each fire is shaped by a different one, this by one and that by another; in that way the Forms would be unlimited in number. Then too, how will you even divide up what comes to be, when

the fire is one and continuous? And if we added more fire to this matter and made it bigger, we would have to say that in that part of matter too the same Form produced the same effects; certainly not a different one.

6.5.9 Further, suppose someone brought all the elements, once they had come to be, together in thought into a single spherical shape. We must not say that the sphere is made by many makers, part by part, each cutting off a different part for himself to make. Rather, the cause of the making is one, making with the whole of itself, not with one part of it making one thing and another another. For in that way there would again be many makers—unless you referred the making to one partless thing, or rather, unless what makes the sphere were [not] one partless thing, the maker not being poured out into the sphere, but the whole sphere hanging from the maker. So one life, the same life, holds the sphere, and the sphere in turn is set within one life. So too all the things in the sphere go back to one life; and so all souls are one—one in such a way as also to be unlimited. That is why some called its nature a number, and others something that increases itself. Perhaps they imagined it in this way: that it fails nothing, but reaches to all things while remaining what it is; and that if the cosmos were larger, its power would not fail to reach to all of it again—or rather, the cosmos would be in the whole of it.[3] The "increasing," then, must be taken not in the word's ordinary sense, but as meaning that soul never falls short of being one everywhere. For its oneness is of such a kind that it is not the sort of thing measured as a quantity. That belongs to another nature, one that only pretends to oneness and appears one by participation.

What is truly one, by contrast, is such as neither to be composed of many things—so that, if something were taken away from it, that whole one would [not] be destroyed—nor to be marked off by limits. Otherwise, when the other things were fitted to it, it would either be diminished, because they are bigger,

3 Xenocrates defined soul as a number that moves itself; Heraclitus (fr. B115) said that soul has a rational principle that increases itself.

or be torn apart in its wish to reach all of them; it would be present not as a whole to all things but by parts of itself to parts of them; and, as the saying goes, it would not know where on earth it is, unable to come together into any single whole, torn away from itself as it would be. If, then, this one is to be truly one—the one of which "one" can actually be predicated as its very being—it must be shown to possess, in a way, the nature opposite to it, that of multiplicity, in its power. And by having this multiplicity not from outside but from itself and out of itself, it must by that very fact be really one, and have its being unlimited and multiple within its oneness. Being such, it must appear everywhere as a whole, as a single rational principle that contains itself and is itself what contains it, nowhere standing apart from itself, but everywhere in itself. So it is not divided off from something else by place. For it existed before all the things in place and needed none of them; they needed it, in order to be set firmly in place. But once they were settled, it did not move from its own seat within itself. For if that seat were moved, they would perish, since their base and what supports them would have perished. Nor was it so foolish as to part from itself and be torn apart, and, though safe in itself, to hand itself over to an untrustworthy place, a place that needs it in order to be kept safe.

6.5.10 So it remains in itself, in its right mind, and could not come to be in something else. Those other things hang from it, as if by longing they had found out where it is. And this is the Love who lingers at the door, always present outside, longing for the beautiful and content always to share in it as far as he can. For the lover here too is in this condition: he does not take beauty into himself, but lies beside it. But it remains by itself; and the many lovers of the one, loving it whole, possess it whole in this way, when they do possess it, since it was the whole that was loved. How then could it fail to suffice for all while it remains? Indeed it suffices precisely because it remains, and is

beautiful because it is whole for all.[4] For understanding, too, is whole for all. That is why understanding is "common," not partly here and partly there; it would be absurd for understanding to need a place. Understanding is not like white, since understanding does not belong to body. If we really do participate in understanding, it must be one thing, the whole of it together with itself in the same place. [And] so we have it from There, not by taking portions of it, nor with me having a whole and you a whole, each torn away from the other. Assemblies, too, and every gathering imitate this, as people coming into one in their understanding. Each of them separately is weak at understanding, but when they all join into one, in their coming together and in true comprehension they have generated understanding and found it.[5] What, after all, will wall them off, so that one intellect is not in the same place as another [and another]?

But though they are together, they don't seem to us to be together—as if someone touching the same thing with many fingers thought he was touching different things, or struck the same string without seeing it. And yet we ought to have reflected on how we touch the Good with our souls. It isn't that I touch one thing and you another; it is the same thing. Nor is it the same thing while one stream from There reaches me and a different one reaches you, so that it is somewhere up above and what comes from it is here. [It gives:] the giver gives to those who receive, so that they really receive; and the giver gives not to strangers but to its own. For intellectual giving is not something sent along by escort. Even among bodies separated from one another in place, what one gives to another comes from their kinship, and the giving and the making are directed into the same whole; and the bodily part of the All acts and is acted on within itself, and nothing comes to it from outside. If, then, in the case of body, which by its nature flees, as it were, from itself, nothing comes from outside, how can there be an outside

4 In Plato's *Symposium* (203c–d), Love is described as homeless, sleeping out of doors at people's doorways.

5 "Common" echoes Heraclitus (fr. B113): "thinking is common to all."

in the case of something without extension? So it is by being in the same place that we both see the Good and touch it, being together with our own intelligibles. And there is one cosmos There, far more so than here. Otherwise there will be two perceptible cosmoses, divided in the same way; and the intelligible sphere, if it is one in the way this one is, will be no different from it—or rather it will be more absurd, since this one has bulk by necessity and for good reason, whereas that one, needing nothing, will stretch itself out and stand outside itself. And what is there to prevent them from being in one? One does not push the other out by leaving it no room—just as we see that every piece of learning and every theorem, and all branches of knowledge generally, are not cramped for space in the soul. "But with beings," someone will say, "it is not possible." It would not be possible—if true beings were bulks.

6.5.11 But how does what is without extension stretch across every body, when body has so great a size? And how is it not torn apart, being one and the same? This puzzle has been raised many times, as the argument in its eagerness tries to put an end to discursive thought's perplexity about [these matters]. It has already been demonstrated in many ways that it is so; but some encouragement is needed as well. And yet not the least but the greatest help toward persuasion would be to be taught what that nature is like: that it is not like a stone, like some big cube lying where it lies, taking up as much space as its size, unable to step beyond its own boundaries, measured to just so much both in its bulk and in the stone's power, which is circumscribed along with it. Rather, being a primary nature, not measured or defined as to how much it must be—for in that way it would in turn be measured by another—it is all power, nowhere of such and such a size. That is why it is not in time either, but outside all time. Time is always scattering into extension, while eternity remains in the same and is master, and by its everlasting power is greater than time, which seems to go on to many things. It is as it were a line that seems to go on to infinity, but hangs from a point and runs around it; wherever the line runs, the point

appears in it, though the point does not run, but the line circles around it.

If, then, time is analogous to what remains in the same in being, and that nature is unlimited not only by being "always" but also in power, then alongside this unlimitedness of power we must posit a nature that runs beside it in turn, poised opposite it and dependent on it. As this nature runs a course in a way equal to time, over against a power that remains and is greater by its making, it is as much as it has been stretched out. What, then, is this nature that participates in that one as far as it is able to participate, while the whole of that one is present, though the whole is not seen in everything because of the incapacity of the substrate? It is present everywhere as the same, not as the triangle in matter is the same while being numerically many in many things, but as the immaterial triangle itself, from which the triangles in matter also derive. Why then is there not a material triangle everywhere, if the immaterial one is everywhere? Because not all matter participated; [different] matter has something different, and not all matter is suited to everything. Not even the first matter is all suited to everything; it is suited to the first of the kinds, and then other things come on top of these. Still, it was present to all of it.

6.5.12 How, then, is it present? As one life. For life in a living thing does not reach up to a certain point and then prove unable to extend to the whole; it is everywhere. If someone asks again how, let him remember the power: that it is not a quantity, but that, dividing it to infinity in thought, one always holds the same power, unlimited from its depths. For it has no matter in it, such that it would give out along with the size of the bulk as it came down to something small. If, then, you grasp an ever-flowing unlimitedness in it—a nature unwearying and untiring, nowhere falling short, boiling over, as it were, with life within itself—then whether you fix your attention on some spot or gaze intently at something, you will not find it there; the opposite will happen to you. For you will not get past it and leave it behind, nor again will you come to a halt at something small, as though it had

nothing left to give because it gave out little by little. Rather, either you will be able to run along with it—or rather, having come to be in the whole, you will seek nothing further—or else you will give up and turn aside to something else and fall, not seeing what is present because you are looking at something else. But if you seek nothing further, how will you ever experience this?

Or rather: because you have come to the whole and did not stay in a part of it, and did not say, you too, "I am this much"; letting go of the "this much," you have become whole—though you were whole before as well. But because something else was added to you besides the whole, you became less by the addition; for the addition did not come from being—you will add nothing to that—but from non-being. And someone who has come to be also out of non-being is not whole, except when he lets non-being go. So you increase yourself by letting the other things go, and once you have let them go the whole is present to you; but while you are with other things it does not appear. Nor did it come in order to be present; it was you who went away (when it is not present). And if you went away, it was not away from it—for it is present—nor did you go anywhere: you were present, and turned toward the opposite. That is how the other gods, too, though present to many, often appear to one, because only that one is able to see them. But these gods, "in all kinds of shapes, roam the cities"; whereas toward him the cities turn, and all the earth and all the heaven, everywhere resting on him and in him and having their being from him; and the things that truly are, down to soul and life, hang from him and go into one, by virtue of his unlimitedness, which has no magnitude.[6]

6 Homer, *Odyssey* 17.485–486: the gods, in the likeness of strangers from abroad, "in all kinds of shapes roam the cities."

VI.6 On Numbers

Περὶ ἀριθμῶν
Plotinus investigates the nature of number, arguing that real number precedes the Forms and exists in Intellect before counting.
no. 34 in order of writing

6.6.1 Is multiplicity a falling away from the One, and unlimitedness a complete falling away, by being a multiplicity beyond number? And is that why unlimitedness is bad, and why we are bad when we are a multiplicity? For each thing becomes many when, unable to remain turned toward itself, it pours out and stretches, scattering. And when it is wholly deprived of unity in its outpouring, it becomes a multiplicity, since there is nothing to unite one part of it with another; but if something comes to be that remains while always pouring out, it becomes magnitude. But what is terrible about magnitude? Or rather, if it could perceive, there would be something terrible: it would perceive that it had come away from itself and stood off far away. For each thing seeks not something else but itself, and the journey outward is either futile or forced. Each thing is more fully itself not when it becomes many or large, but when it belongs to itself; and it belongs to itself when it is inclined toward itself. The aspiration to be great in this way belongs to someone who does not know what is really great and who hurries not where he should, but toward the outside; whereas what is turned toward itself was the inside. The evidence is what has come to be in magnitude. If it is broken up so that each of its parts exists on its own, then those parts are each things, but not the original

thing itself; if it is to be itself, all its parts must be directed toward one. So it is itself when it is in some way one, not great. Through magnitude, then, and to the extent of its magnitude, it comes to be lost to itself; but insofar as it has one, it has itself. And yet the All is surely great and beautiful. Or rather: it is because it was not let go to flee into unlimitedness, but was encompassed by one; and it is beautiful not by being great but by the beautiful; and it needed the beautiful because it had become great. For bereft of this, the greater it was, the uglier it would have appeared; and so magnitude is matter for the beautiful, because what needs ordering is much. So the great is more disordered and more ugly.

6.6.2 What, then, about what is called unlimitedness in number? But first: how can it be number, if it is unlimited? Perceptible things are not unlimited, so neither is the number applied to them; nor does the one who counts count unlimitedness. Even if he doubles or multiplies, he limits these; and whether he takes them toward the future or the past, or both together, he limits them. Is it, then, not unlimited simply, but in the sense that one can always take more? Or rather, generating it is not up to the one who counts; it is already limited and stands fixed. Or perhaps: in the intelligible world, number, like the beings, is limited, as many as the beings are. But just as we make man many by applying him many times—and beauty and the rest likewise—so along with each image we also generate an image of number; and just as we multiply a city that does not exist, in the same way we make the numbers many times greater. And if we count times, we bring to bear on the times the numbers we have, while those numbers remain in us.

6.6.3 But how does this unlimited exist, being unlimited? For what exists and is has already been grasped by number. But first: if there is multiplicity among the things that really are, how is multiplicity bad? Or rather: because the multiplicity there is unified, and prevented from being wholly multiplicity, being a multiplicity that is one. For this reason it falls short of the One, because it has multiplicity, and to that extent it is worse

in comparison with the One. Not having the nature of that, but having stepped out from it, it has been diminished; but by its oneness it has dignity from that, and it turned its multiplicity back into one and remained. But what about unlimitedness? The unlimitedness that is among the beings is already limited; or if it is not limited, it is not among the beings, but perhaps among the things that come to be, as it is also in time. Or rather, even if it is limited, it is for that very reason unlimited: for it is not the limit that is limited, but the unlimited, since there is nothing else between limit and unlimited to receive the nature of a boundary. This unlimited, for its part, flees the Form of limit, but it is caught when encompassed from outside. It does not flee from one place into another—it does not even have a place—but when it is caught, place came into existence. That is why we must not take its so-called motion to be motion in place, nor take any of the other motions attributed to it to belong to it of itself; so it would not move. But neither does it stand still: where would it stand, when the "where" comes later?

Its "motion" seems to be spoken of in the sense that it does not remain. Is it, then, such as to hang poised in the same spot, or to sway this way and that? Not at all. For both are judged by reference to the same place, both what hangs poised without tilting and what tilts. How then could one conceive it? By separating off the form in thought. What, then, will one think? Opposites at once, and not opposites: one will think of it as great and small, for it becomes both; and as standing and moving, for it becomes these too. But before it becomes them, it is clearly neither in a definite way; otherwise you have defined it. If, then, it is unlimited, and is these things too in an unlimited and indefinite way, it might appear as either of them. And if you come close without throwing some limit over it like a net, you will have it slipping out from under you, and you will find no single one; for then you [would] already have limited it. If you approach something in it as one, it will appear many; and if you say "many," you will be wrong again, for since each is not one, all of them together are not many either. And this nature of it is

motion in respect of one of its appearances, and rest in respect of the way imagination approached it. And its inability to see itself through itself is a motion away from intellect, a slipping away; while its having no way to escape, being fenced in from outside and all around and not allowed to advance, would be rest. So one cannot say that it only moves.

NUMBER THERE

Plotinus asks whether number precedes the beings, and argues for a substantial number.

6.6.4 We must consider how numbers stand in the intelligible world: whether they supervene on the other Forms, or always accompany them. For instance: since being is such as to be first, we thought of it as a unit; then, since motion and rest come from it, there are already three; and so with each of the others, each number. Or it is not so, but one unit was born together with each; or with the first being there is a unit, and with what follows it, if there is an order, a dyad, or as many as the multiplicity of each—a decad, for instance, if there are ten. Or it is not so either, but number was thought by itself; and if so, we must ask whether it is prior to the others or posterior.[1] Plato, when he says that human beings came to the notion of number through the alternation of days and nights, attributes the thinking of it to the otherness of things. He might, then, be saying that countable things first produce number through their otherness, and that number is constituted in the passage of a soul going on from one thing to another, and comes to be at the moment the soul counts—that is, when it goes through them and says to itself "this one," and then "that one," whereas so long as it thinks something the same, with nothing other after it, it says "one." But when he speaks of [being] in the true number, and of number in being, he would again be speaking of a certain existence of number by itself, one that does not come into existence in the

1 Dyad, triad, decad: Greek terms for "a two," "a three," "a ten" taken as single units.

counting soul; rather, the notion of number is stirred up in the soul by the alternation in perceptible things.[2]

6.6.5 What, then, is its nature? Is it a concomitant, something observed, as it were, in addition to each being? For example: man and one man, being and one being, and so with each of all the intelligibles, and all number? But how is there a dyad and a triad, and how would all of them, each taken as one, and such a number be brought together into one? For in this way there will be a multiplicity of unities, but no number that goes into one, apart from the simple one—unless someone were to say that a dyad is that thing, or rather what is observed in the thing, which has two powers comprehended together, like something composite made into one; or numbers of the kind the Pythagoreans spoke of, who seemed to speak of numbers by analogy, calling justice a tetrad, for instance, and so on in other cases. But rather in this way: to the multiplicity of the thing, though the thing is one, they paired a number too, a one of that size—a decad, for instance. And yet that is not how we speak of ten things; we bring together even things that are separate and call them ten. Or perhaps we call them "ten" in this way, but when one comes to be from many, we call it "a decad," as is the case There too. But if so, will number still have existence in things, if it is merely observed in them? "But what prevents," someone might say, "white too, observed in things, from having existence in the things? Motion too, observed in being, had existence as a motion that is in being." But number is not like motion. Rather, because motion is something, it is in this way that "one" was observed in it; so it is said. Then again, existence of this kind removes number from being a substance and makes it rather an accident.

Yet it is not an accident at all either. For the accident must be something before it accrues; even if it is inseparable, it must still be something by itself, a certain nature, like white, and when it is predicated of something else it must already be what will be predicated. So, if "one" belongs to each thing, and "one man" is

2 Plato, *Timaeus* 47a (compare *Epinomis* 978b–d): seeing day and night gave us number.

not the same as "man," but the one is different from the man, and the one is common, applying to each of the other things as well, then the one would be prior to man and to each of the others, so that man and each of the others might each obtain being one. And so it is prior to motion too, if motion too is one, and prior to being, so that being too may obtain being one. I don't mean that One which we say is beyond being, but this one which is predicated of each of the Forms. And so the decad, too, is prior to what "decad" is predicated of; and this will be the Decad itself, since the thing in which a decad is observed will not be the Decad itself. But was it born together with the beings, and did it come into existence together with them? If it was born together with them as an accident, like health in a man, it must also exist by itself; and if the one is like an element of a compound, there must first be one, the one itself, so that it can be with something else. Then, mixed with something else, it will make the product that came to be through it one falsely, making it two. And how is it with the decad? For what need of the decad will that thing have which is to be a decad by virtue of so great a power? But if the decad will give it form, as if it were matter, and the thing will be ten and a decad by the presence of a decad, then the decad must first exist by itself, being nothing other than a decad alone.

6.6.6 But if the one itself and the decad itself exist without the things, and then the intelligible things, after being what they are, will be some of them unities and others dyads and triads, what would their nature be, and how is it constituted? We must suppose that the generation we are giving them is one in thought. First, then, we must grasp the being of the Forms in general: it is not that the one who thought them thought each of them, and then by that very thinking provided their existence. Justice did not come to be because he thought what justice is, nor did motion come into existence because he thought what motion is. For in that case this thought would have to be both later than the very thing thought—the thinking of justice later than justice itself—and, again, the thinking would be prior to

what came into existence from the thinking, if it came into existence by being thought. And if justice is the same as a thinking of this kind, then, first, it is absurd that justice should be nothing but, as it were, its definition. For what is it to have thought justice or motion, except to grasp what they are? And this is the same as grasping the account of a thing that does not exist—which is impossible.

If someone says that in the case of things without matter knowledge is the same as the thing, we must understand the statement this way. It does not say that knowledge is the thing, nor that the account which contemplates the thing is the thing itself. Conversely, it says that the thing itself, being without matter, is both intelligible and thinking—not the kind of thinking that is an account of the thing or an act of attention directed at it, but the thing itself, being in the intelligible world, is nothing else than intellect and knowledge. For it is not that knowledge is directed toward itself; rather, the thing There made the knowledge different, not staying the way knowledge of a thing in matter is—that is, it made it true knowledge; and this is not an image of the thing, but the thing itself. So the thinking of motion did not make Motion Itself; Motion Itself made the thinking, so that it made itself both motion and thinking. For the motion There is also the thinking of that motion; and it is itself motion because it is first—there is no other before it—and real motion, because it is not an accident of something else, but the activity of what moves, which is in activity. So it is also substance, though the concept of being is different. And justice is not the thinking of justice, but, as it were, a disposition of Intellect—or rather an activity of a certain kind—whose face is truly beautiful, and "neither the evening star [nor the morning star is so beautiful]," nor anything at all among perceptible things. It is like an intellectual statue, standing, as it were, out of itself and appearing in itself—or rather, being in itself.[3]

6.6.7 In general, we must think of things as being in one [nature], a single nature that has them all and, as it were,

encompasses them—not each separately, as in perceptible things, the sun in one place and something else elsewhere, but all together in one. For this is the nature of Intellect. Soul too imitates it in this way, and so does what is called nature, according to which and by which each thing is generated, one in one place and another elsewhere, while nature itself is all together with itself. But though all are together, each in turn is separate. And the Intellect that has them sees the things in Intellect and in its being not by looking at them but by having them, and not by separating each; for they are always already separated in it. We convince those who are amazed at this by appeal to the things that participate in it. Its greatness and beauty are reflected in soul's love for it, in other things' love for soul because of a nature like this, and in soul's having been made like it in some respect by possessing it. And indeed it would be absurd for there to be a beautiful living being, while the Living Being Itself was not of wondrous and inexpressible beauty. The complete Living Being, then, is made up of all living beings—or rather contains all living beings in itself—and is one, as great as all of them together, just as this All too is one and, containing all the visible, contains all that is in the visible.[4]

6.6.8 Since, then, it is a living being primarily, and therefore Living Being Itself, and is Intellect and the being that really is, and we say that it contains all living beings and number in its entirety, and Justice Itself and Beauty Itself and all other such things—for we mean something different by Man Itself and Number Itself and Justice Itself—we must consider how each of these is and what it is, so far as it is possible to find something out about them. First, then, we must let go of all perception, and contemplate Intellect by intellect, and bear in mind that in us too life and intellect are not in bulk but in a power without bulk; and that true being has stripped these off and is a power stand-

3 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1129b28–29, quotes this line (perhaps from Euripides) in praise of justice.

4 Plato's *Timaeus* (30c–31b) calls the intelligible model of the cosmos "the complete living being," which contains all intelligible living beings.

ing on its own—not some feeble, shadowy thing, but the most living and most intellectual of all. Nothing is more living than it, nothing more intellectual, nothing more fully being; and whatever touches it has these qualities in proportion to the contact, what is near more nearly, what is far more distantly. If, then, being is desirable, what is most being is more so, and so is what is most intellect, if thinking is desirable at all; and likewise with life. If, then, we must take being first, as first, then Intellect, then the Living Being—for this already seems to contain all things—and Intellect is second, since it is the activity of being, then number would not correspond to the Living Being—for one and two existed already before it—nor to Intellect; for before Intellect there was being, which was one and many.

6.6.9 It remains, then, to consider whether being generated number by its own division, or number divided being; and further, whether being and motion and rest and sameness and otherness themselves generated number, or number generated these. The starting point of the inquiry is this: can number exist by itself, or must two be observed in two things, and three likewise? And what of the one that is among the numbers? For if it could exist by itself, without the things numbered, it could exist before the beings. Before being too, then? Or rather, for the present we must leave this aside, and what is prior to number as well, and grant that number comes from being. But if the one is one being and two are two beings, then the one will precede being, and number will precede the beings. In conception and in attention, then? Or in existence as well? Let us consider it this way. When someone thinks of a man who exists and is beautiful as one, he surely thinks the one afterwards, in each case; and likewise when he thinks of a horse and a dog—and clearly the two comes later here. But if he were to generate a man, and generate a horse and a dog, or bring them forth when they are in him, and neither generate nor bring them forth at random, will he not say: "I must go to one, then pass on to another one and make two, and make another along with myself"?

And indeed the beings were not counted when they came to be; how many had to come to be was clear when they were to come to be. So all number existed before the beings themselves. But if it existed before the beings, it was not beings. Or rather, it was in being, not as the number of being—for being was still one—but the power of number, having come into existence, divided being and made it, as it were, be in labor with multiplicity. For either the substance of being or its activity will be number, and the Living Being itself and Intellect will be number. Is being, then, unified number, the beings unfolded number, Intellect number moving within itself, and the Living Being number that contains? For since being came from the One, as that was one, being must in this way be number. That is why they called the Forms both unities and numbers. And this is substantial number; the other, called monadic number, is an image of it. Substantial number is, on the one hand, observed in the Forms and helps to generate them; but primarily it is the number in being, with being, and before the beings. The beings have in it their base, source, root and principle. For the one is principle for being, and being rests on it—otherwise it would be scattered; but the one does not rest on being. For then it would already be one before obtaining the one, and what obtains the decad would already be a decad before obtaining the decad.

6.6.10 So being, standing in multiplicity, was number when it was being roused to be many; it was, as it were, a preparation for the beings and a prefiguring, and, as it were, unities holding a place for the things that were to be set upon them. Even now someone says, "I want this much gold," or "this many houses." The gold is one; he wants not to make the number gold, but to make the gold number; and since he already has the number, he seeks to put it on the gold, so that the gold happens to become so much. But if the beings came to be before number, and number was observed in them when the counting nature was moved to as many as the countable things are, they would be as many as they are by chance and not by design. If, then, they are not so many at random, number, existing beforehand, is the cause of

their being so many. That is, number already existing, the things that came to be participated in "so many," and each participated in "one" in order to be one. Each is a being from being, since being too is being from itself; and one from the one. And each is one—if the one applied to them was many together—as a triad is one, and all the beings are one in this way: not as the one of the unit is one, but as ten thousand, or some other number, is one. For someone who speaks of ten thousand things that have already come to be—if the one counting said "ten thousand"—does not claim that the "ten thousand" is announced by the things themselves, displaying it as they display their colors, but that discursive thought says "so many." For if it did not say so, it would not know how great the multitude is. How then will it say so?

Or rather, by knowing how to count; and that it would do if it knew number; and it would know number if number existed. That that nature should not know how great its multiplicity is would be absurd, or rather impossible. Just as, then, someone who speaks of good things either means things that are such of themselves, or predicates the good of them as an accident—and if he means the first, he is speaking of the first hypostasis, but if he means things to which the good belongs as an accident, there must be a nature of the good, so that it can belong to others as an accident, or else the cause that made it be in another as well, being either Good Itself or what generated the good in its own nature—so too in the case of the beings: whoever speaks of number, a decad for instance, would either mean the decad itself as existing, or, speaking of things to which a decad belongs as an accident, would be compelled to posit the decad itself by itself, being nothing other than a decad. Necessarily, then, if he calls the beings a decad, either they themselves are a decad, or before them there is another decad which is nothing other than just this, a decad. In general, then, it must be shown that whatever is predicated of something else either has come into it from something else or is its activity. And if it is such as not to be present at one time and absent at another, but is always with it, then if that

thing is substance, it too is substance, and that thing is no more substance than it is; and if one will not grant that it is substance, at any rate it is among the beings and is a being. And if that thing can be thought without its activity, the activity is nonetheless simultaneous with it, but placed later in conception by us. But if it is not possible to think the thing without it—man without the one, for instance—then either it is not later than the thing but coexists with it, or it is prior to it, so that the thing exists through it. And we say that the one and number are prior.

6.6.11 But suppose someone said that the decad is nothing but so many unities. If he grants that the unity exists, why will he grant that one unity exists, but no longer the ten? As the one has existence, why not the others too? The one unity surely must not be yoked to some one of the beings, for in that case each of the others would no longer be one. But if each of the others must be one too, the one is common. And this is a single nature predicated of many, which, as we said, must exist by itself even before it is observed in many. But if there is a unity in this thing and again one observed in another, then if that one too exists, not just one unity will have existence, and so there will be a multiplicity of unities. But if only that first one exists, it is together either with what is most being or with what is in every way most one. If it is with what is most being, the other unities would be unities in name only and would not be ranked with the first; or else number will be made of unlike units, and there will be differences among units insofar as they are units. And if it is with what is most one, why would what is most one need this unit in order to be one? If these things are impossible, there must be a one that is nothing other than bare one, isolated in its own being, before each thing is called and thought one. If, then, the one exists There too without the thing that is called one, why will another one not come into existence as well? Taken separately, each of them gives many units, which are also many ones. But if nature were to generate in sequence, as it were—or rather, were to have generated, not stopping at each one of the things it generated, as though making a continuous one—then by mark-

ing off a boundary and stopping sooner in its procession it would generate the smaller numbers, and by moving further—not upon other things, but in the motions themselves—it would bring the larger numbers into existence. And so it would fit each multiplicity and each of the beings to each number, knowing that if each were not fitted to each number, it would either not exist at all, or would have stepped aside into something else, become numberless and irrational.

6.6.12 But suppose someone says that the one and the unit have no existence—since there is no "one" that is not some one thing—but are an affection of the soul in relation to each of the beings. First, what prevents him, when he says "being," from saying this too is an affection of the soul and that nothing is being? If he says it is because being prods and strikes the soul and produces an imagining of being, we see the soul being prodded and receiving an imagining in the case of the one as well. Then: is the affection, the thought of the soul, one or a multiplicity? And when we say "not one," we do not get the one from the thing itself, since we are saying that the one is not in it. So we have the one, and it is in the soul without being some one thing.

"But we have the one by taking from things outside a certain thought and impression, a concept derived from the thing." Those who posit numbers and the one as one kind among what they call "concepts" would be positing existences of that sort, if any such thing has existence, and one could argue against them on this point to good effect. But not so if they mean that it is the sort of affection or thought that arises in us later, from things—like "this" and "something," and indeed "crowd," "festival," "army" and "multitude." For just as "multitude" is nothing apart from the many things so called, nor the festival apart from the people gathered and making merry at the sacred rites, so neither do we think of the one as something alone and isolated from the other things when we say "one."[5] And there are many other such things, they say, like "right" and "above" and their

5 The Stoics called general notions "concepts" and denied that they have real existence.

opposites. For what is there in "right" that amounts to existence, except that one person stands or sits here and another there? And likewise with "above": one thing has a certain position and is more in that part of the All which we call "above," another in what is called "below." To arguments like these, the first thing to say is that there is some existence of what has been mentioned in each of these cases—though not the same in all of them, neither for these compared with one another nor for all of them compared with the one. But we must attend to each of the points made separately.

6.6.13 How, then, could it be reasonable for the thought of the one to arise from the substrate, from the one substrate: from the man present in perception, or any other living being, or even a stone? What appeared is one thing, and the one is another thing, not the same. Otherwise discursive thought would not predicate "one" of what is not a man as well. Then too: in the case of "right" and the like, discursive thought was not stirred for nothing but said "here" because it saw a different position. In the same way it sees something here when it says "one." It is surely not an empty affection, attached to nothing, when it says "one." Nor does it say "one" because the thing is "alone and nothing else," for in that very "and nothing else" it is speaking of another one. And then "other" and "different" come later. For unless discursive thought had first settled on one, it would say neither "other" nor "different." And when it says "alone," it says "one alone," so it says "one" before "alone." Then too, what speaks is one before it says "one" of anything else, and what it speaks about is one before anyone says or thinks anything about it. For it is either one, or more than one and many; and if many, one must exist before.

So when it says "multitude," it says "more than one"; and when it says "army," it thinks of many men under arms and marshaled into one. Even if discursive thought does not let it be a multitude, though a multitude is what it is, it is plainly doing something here too. Either it is giving the one that the multitude does not have, or it has keenly seen the one that comes from the

ordering and has gathered the nature of the many into one. Not even here is the "one" false, any more than with a house, which is one made from many stones, though "one" applies more to a house. If, then, "one" applies more to the continuous, and more still to what is not divisible, clearly this is because the one is a nature that really is and has real existence. For there cannot be a "more" among things that are not. We predicate substance of each perceptible thing, and predicate it of the intelligibles as well, but we make the predication more properly of the intelligibles, placing the "more" and the "more properly" among the things that are; and being belongs more to substance, even perceptible substance, than to the other kinds. In the same way, when we see the one present more and more properly, differing by degree both among the perceptibles themselves and among the intelligibles, we must say that it is there in all these ways, but always with reference to one. Just as substance and being are intelligible and not perceptible, even if the perceptible participates in them, so too the one might be contemplated in the perceptible by participation. But discursive thought grasps it as intelligible, and intelligibly. So from one thing it thinks another, which it does not see. Then it knew it beforehand.

And if it knew it beforehand, then, since it is a particular something, it is the same as being; and when it says "some one," it is again saying "one," just as when it says "some two" and "some many." If, then, it is impossible to think anything [or to say anything] without "one" or "two" or some number, how can that not exist without which it is impossible to think or say anything? To say that something does not exist when, without its existence, nothing at all could be thought or said is impossible. No: what is needed everywhere for every thought or statement to come into being must exist before both statement and thought; that is how it could be brought in to produce them. And if it is needed also for the real existence of each substance (for there is no being that is not one), it would be prior to substance and would generate substance. That is why it is one being, and not being first and then one. In "being and one" there would be

many, but in "one" being is not contained, unless the one should make it by inclining toward its generation. Nor is "this" empty. In place of the thing's name it speaks of a real existence being pointed out, a kind of presence, a substance or something else among the things that are. So "this" would signify nothing empty, nor is it an affection of discursive thought referring to nothing that is; there is a real underlying thing, just as if one were to say its proper name.

6.6.14 As for what was said about the relative, one could reasonably reply that the one is not the sort of thing that loses its own nature, without being affected itself, when something else is affected. If it is to depart from being one, it must have undergone the privation of the one by being divided into two or more. So if the same bulk, divided, becomes two without perishing as bulk, clearly the one was present in it as something besides the substrate, and the bulk lost it when the division destroyed it. Then what is sometimes present to the same thing and sometimes absent—how can we not rank it among the things that are, wherever it may be? We must also say that it is accidental to these things but exists by itself, both in the perceptibles, when it appears there, and in the intelligibles: an accident in the things that come later, but on its own in the intelligibles, in the first, when it is one and then being. If someone says that the one, too, will no longer be one but two when something else is added to it, though it has not been affected, he will be wrong. For the one did not become two, neither the thing to which something was added nor what was added. Each remains one, as it was. "Two" is predicated of both together, while "one" is predicated separately of each, which remains as it is. So two and the dyad are not by nature in relation. If they depended on coming together, and being in a coming-together were the same as making two, then perhaps such a relation would be two and the dyad. But as it is, the dyad is seen again in the opposite affection as well: when some one thing is split, it becomes two. So two is neither coming together nor splitting, as it would have to be if it were a relation. The same argument holds for every number. When it is a rela-

tion that generates something, the opposite relation cannot generate the same thing; only then could the thing be the relation.

What, then, is the proper cause? A thing is one by the presence of the one, and two by the presence of the dyad, just as it is white by the white, beautiful by the beautiful, just by the just. Or must we not posit even these, and make relations the cause in these cases too? Just, then, because of such and such a relation to these things; beautiful because we are disposed in a certain way, though nothing in the substrate itself is such as to dispose us so, and nothing has come from outside to what appears beautiful. Well, then: when you see something that you call one, it is surely also large and beautiful, and countless things could be said about it. So just as the large, and largeness, are in it, and the sweet and the bitter and other qualities, why not the one too? Surely it will not be that every quality whatever exists while quantity has no place among the things that are; nor that continuous quantity exists while discrete quantity does not, when the continuous uses the discrete as its measure. So just as a thing is large by the presence of largeness, it is one by the presence of the one and two by that of the dyad, and so on with the rest. To ask how things participate is to ask the question of participation common to all the Forms. But we must say that the decad is seen present in one way in discrete things, in another in continuous things, and in yet another in the powers that are so many and gathered into one. And we must say that we have now ascended to the intelligibles; and further, that There the numbers are no longer seen in other things but exist themselves by themselves, and these are the truest numbers: the decad itself, not a decad of some intelligibles.

NUMBER AND THE COMPLETE LIVING BEING

Being generates the beings according to number; unlimited number belongs to our counting.

6.6.15 Now that this has been said, let us start again from the beginning. The whole of being, the true being There, is being

and Intellect and the perfect living being, and is all living beings together. Its unity is imitated, as far as it could be, by the unity of this living being here, the All; for the nature of the perceptible escaped the oneness There, if it was to be perceptible at all. It must, then, be the whole of number. If it were not complete, it would fall short by some number; and if the whole number of living beings were not in it, it would not be an all-complete living being. So number is prior to every living being and to the all-complete living being. Man, then, is in the intelligible, and so are the other living beings, insofar as each is what it is, and insofar as that is an all-complete living being. For man here too, insofar as the All is a living being, is a part of it; and each, insofar as it is a living being, is There in the Living Being. But in Intellect, insofar as it is Intellect, all the individual intellects are like parts, and of these too there is a number. So number is not primarily in Intellect either. It is in Intellect in the way all the activities of Intellect are, and as Intellect's justice and moderation and the other virtues are, and knowledge, and all those things by having which Intellect really is Intellect. How, then, is knowledge not in something else?

Or rather, it is not, because there the knower, the known and the knowledge are the same and together, and likewise with the rest. That is why each is there primarily, and justice is not an accident; but in soul, insofar as it is soul, it is an accident. For in soul these things are rather potential, and actual when it turns to Intellect and is with it. After this, then, comes being, and in it number, with which being generates the beings, moving according to number and setting the numbers before itself as the ground of their real existence. In the same way its own one links being itself to the First, while the numbers do not go on to link the other things to the First: it is enough that being is linked. Being, once it has become number, links the beings to itself. For it is split not insofar as it is one; its one remains. But splitting according to its own nature into as many as it wished, it saw into how many, and so generated the number, which was, then, in it. For it was split by the powers of number, and generated as many

beings as the number was. So the first and true number is the principle and source of real existence for the beings. That is why here too the coming-to-be of each thing is with numbers, and if something takes on a different number, it either generates something else or comes to nothing. These are the first numbers, as numbered. The numbers in other things have both characters: insofar as they come from these, they are numbered; insofar as they are according to these, they measure other things by counting, both numbers and numbered things. For by what would they say "ten" except by the numbers in themselves?

6.6.16 "These numbers, then, which you call first and true," someone might say, "where would you place them, and in which kind of being? Everyone thinks they belong to quantity, and you yourselves mentioned quantity earlier, claiming that the discrete should be placed among the things that are just as the continuous is. Then again you say that these numbers belong to the first beings; and again you say there are other numbers besides those, which count. So tell us how you arrange all this, for it is full of difficulty. Take the one in perceptibles, too: is it some quantity? Or is the one, taken many times, a quantity, while by itself alone it is a principle of quantity and not a quantity? And if it is a principle, is it of the same kind as what it begins, or something else? You owe us a clear account of all this." We must begin from here, then, and say about these things that when—but first we must make the argument about perceptibles. When you take one thing with another and say "two," a dog and a man, say, or two men or more, and say "ten" and "a decad of men," this number is not a substance, not even in the way substance is among perceptibles, but purely a quantity. And when you divide it by ones and make the ones parts of this decad, you are making and positing the one as a principle of quantity; for one of the ten is not one by itself. But when you say that man himself, by himself, is a number, a dyad, say—living being and rational—then there is no longer a single mode here. Insofar as you go through them and count, you produce a quantity. But insofar as the

underlying things are two and each is one, if the one in each fills out the substance and the unity is in each, you are speaking of another number, a substantial one. This dyad is not posterior, and it does not merely state a quantity external to the thing; it is what is in the substance and holds the thing's nature together. For here it is not you who make the number, going through things that exist by themselves and do not come together by being counted.

For what would one man gain toward his substance by being counted with another? There is no unity there either, as there is in a chorus. This decad of men would have its real existence in you who count. In the ten you count, since they are not marshaled into one, it would not even be called a decad; you make them ten, counting and quantifying this ten. In the chorus and in the army, though, there is something outside as well. How is it in you? Or rather: the number that lies in you before you count is in you in another way. The number that arises when things outside appear in relation to the one in you is an activity, either of those numbers or according to them: you count and at the same time generate number, and in that activity you produce the real existence of a quantity, just as in walking you produce the real existence of a certain motion. How, then, is the number in us there in another way? Or rather, it is the number of our substance. "Participating in number and harmony," he says; and soul in turn is number and harmony. For it is neither body, someone says, nor magnitude; so soul is a number, if it is a substance. The number of body is substance in the way body is; the number of soul is substances in the way souls are. And in general, in the intelligibles, if the Living Being There is itself many—a triad, say—this triad, the one in the Living Being, is substantial. But the triad that does not yet belong to a living being, simply triad in being, is a principle of substance. If you count "living being" and "beautiful," each is one, but you generate number in yourself and produce by your activity a quantity,

a dyad.[6] If, however, you were to say that virtue is four, it is also a kind of tetrad, its parts gathered, as it were, into one; and, as substrate, it is a tetrad that is a unity; and you fit to it the tetrad in you.

6.6.17 What about the so-called unlimited number? These arguments give it a limit. And rightly so, if it is going to be a number, for the unlimited is at war with number. Why, then, do we say "number is unlimited"? Is it the way we call a line unlimited? We call a line unlimited not because there is any such line, but because beyond the greatest, that of the All, say, one can conceive a greater. Is it like this with number too? Once we know how great a number is, we can double it in thought, without adding anything to the number itself. For how could you attach to the things that are a thought and image that exists only in you? Or shall we say there is an unlimited line in the intelligibles? Then the line There would be a quantity. But if it is not some quantity, it would be unlimited in number. Or is it unlimited in another way, not as what cannot be traversed? But how is it unlimited? Perhaps in that, in the rational principle of the line itself, no limit is thought along with it. What, then, is a line There, and where is it? It is posterior to number, for the one is seen in it: it starts from one and runs in one dimension. But it does not have a quantity as the measure of its extension. Where, then, is this? Only in thought, as a kind of defining thought?

Or rather, it is also a thing, but an intellectual one. For all things There are like this: intellectual, and in a way the thing itself. And the same goes for plane and solid and all the figures: where and how they exist. For it is not we who invent the figures. The figure of the All bears witness, which is prior to us, and so do the other natural figures in things that exist by nature. These must exist before the bodies, There, unfigured, as primary figures. For they are not shapes in other things; being themselves their own, they had no need to be extended, since extended things belong to others. So in being, figure is always

6 The phrase adapts Plato, *Timaeus* 36e–37a, where soul "participates in reasoning and harmony."

one, and it was distinguished either in the Living Being or before the Living Being. When I say "distinguished," I do not mean that it acquired magnitude, but that each was apportioned to each, as to the living beings, and given to the bodies There: to the fire There, for instance, if you like, the pyramid There. That is why this fire here wants to imitate it, though it cannot because of matter; and the rest analogously, as is said about the things here. But is it in the Living Being insofar as it is a living being? Or rather, before that, in Intellect. It is indeed in the Living Being; so if the Living Being contained Intellect, it would be in the Living Being first, but if Intellect comes first in order, it is first in Intellect. But if there are souls too in the all-complete Living Being, Intellect is prior. Yet he says "Intellect, as many as it sees in the all-complete Living Being." If, then, it sees, it is posterior.[7] Or perhaps "sees" can be said in the sense that the real existence comes about in the seeing. For it is not something other; all is one. Thinking has the bare sphere, and the Living Being has the sphere of a living being.

6.6.18 But number There is limited. It is we who will conceive one greater than any put forward, and this is how the unlimited comes about, when we count. There one cannot conceive more than what has been conceived, for it already is. No number has been taken, nor will one be, such that something could be added to it. Yet it might be unlimited There too, in that it is not measured; for by what would it be measured? It is all that it is, being one and all together, and whole, and not enclosed by any limit but being for itself what it is. None of the things that are is in a limit at all. What is limited and measured is what has been prevented from running off into unlimitedness and needs measure. But those things are all measures, and that is why they are also all beautiful. For insofar as it is a living being, it is beautiful: it has the best life, lacks no life, and its life is not mixed with death; for nothing There is mortal or dying. Nor is the life of the Living Being itself feeble. It is the first life, the most vivid, with

7 The quotation is from Plato, *Timaeus* 39e; the pyramid as the figure of fire comes from *Timaeus* 56b.

all the clarity of living, like the first light, from which the souls There live and which the souls that come here bring with them. It also knows for whose sake it lives and toward what it lives, that from which it lives; for what it lives from it also lives toward. And the understanding of all things, the whole Intellect, which is upon it and with it and together with it, tinges it with greater goodness and mixes understanding into it, and so makes its beauty more majestic. For even here a life with understanding is what is truly majestic and beautiful, though it is seen dimly; There it is seen purely. It gives the one who sees sight, and the power to live more fully, and, living more intensely, to see more and to become what it sees.

Here much of our looking is directed at lifeless things, and when it is directed at living things, the lifeless part of them is in front, and the life within is mixed. There all are living beings, wholly alive and pure. Even if you take something as not a living being, at once it too flashes out its own life. Once you have contemplated the being that pervades them, granting them a life that does not move toward change, and the understanding and the wisdom and knowledge in them, you will laugh at the whole lower nature for its pretensions to being. For it is from this being that life remains, and Intellect remains, and the beings stand in eternity. Nothing displaces it, nothing alters it, nothing disturbs it; for there is no being after it that could touch it, and if there were, it would depend on it. And if there were something opposed to it, this would remain unaffected by the opposite itself. And if the opposite were itself being, it would not have made this being; there would be something else prior to it, common to both, and that would be being. So in this respect Parmenides was right to say that being is one. And it is unaffected not because nothing else is there, but because it is being. For to it alone belongs being from itself. How, then, could anyone take away from it being, or anything else of all that really is in activity and all that comes from it? For as long as it is, it supplies; and it always is; so those things always are too. It is so great in power and beauty that it enchants, and all things depend on it, and

having a trace of it from it they cherish it, and after that seek the Good. For being comes before that, as far as we are concerned. This whole cosmos wants to live and to understand in order to be; and every soul and every intellect wants to be what it is. And being is sufficient to itself.

VI.7 How the Multitude of Forms Came to Be, and On the Good

Περὶ τοῦ πῶς τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ἰδεῶν ὑπέστη καὶ περὶ τἀγαθοῦ
Plotinus explains why the Forms are complete and living in Intellect, and why the Good draws all things to it.
no. 38 in order of writing

6.7.1 When the god, or some god, was sending souls into becoming, he set light-bearing eyes about the face and gave the other organs to each of the senses, foreseeing that the creature would be preserved in this way: if it could see and hear in advance, and by touching could flee one thing and pursue another. But from what did he foresee this? It was not that other creatures came to be first and then perished for lack of senses, and so he later gave what humans and the other living beings would need to have in order to guard against harm. Or someone might say: he knew that the living being would be among hot and cold and the other affections of bodies; and knowing this, so that the bodies of living beings would not easily perish, he gave them perception and the organs through which the senses would be active. But either he gave the organs to souls that already had the powers, or he gave both.[1] But if he gave the senses too, then before that they were not perceptive, though they were souls. And if they had them when they came to be souls, and came to be in order to go into becoming, then going into becoming is innate to them. In that case it is against their nature to be away from becoming and

1 Plotinus is paraphrasing Plato, *Timaeus* 45a–b, where the gods fit the face with "light-bearing eyes."

in the intelligible; they have been made to belong to something else and to be in evil; providence exists so that they may be preserved in evil; and this is the god's reasoning, and reasoning as a whole. But what are the starting points of reasonings? Even if they come from other reasonings, we must in any case arrive at something, or some things, prior to reasoning. What, then, are the starting points? Either perception or intellect. But not perception, not yet. Intellect, then.

But if the premises are intellect, the conclusion is knowledge, and so it concerns nothing perceptible. Where the starting point comes from the intelligible and the end arrives at the intelligible, how could this state arrive at thinking about something perceptible? So neither the providence for a living being nor the providence for this All as a whole came from reasoning. For there is no reasoning There at all. It is called "reasoning" to show that all is as a wise man would arrange it by reasoning, among later things; and "foresight," because it is as a wise man would foresee it, among things that come later. Among things that did not come to be before reasoning, reasoning is useful for lack of the power that is prior to reasoning; and foresight is useful because the one who foresees did not have a power by which he would have no need of foresight. For foresight aims at this rather than that, and as it were fears what is not like this; but where there is only this, there is no foresight. Reasoning, too, is this instead of that. But if only one of the two exists, what is there to reason about? How, then, could what is alone and one and simple contain, unfolded, the "this, so as not to be that"? Or "this would have happened, if not this," and "this proved useful" and "this, once it came to be, preserved"? So he foresaw, then, and reasoned beforehand? And so too with what was said at the start, that he gave the senses and the powers for this reason, however perplexing the giving, and its manner, may be. All the same, if each activity must not be incomplete, and if it is not right to think that anything belonging to the god is anything but whole and all, then everything must be present in any one of his things. So it must belong [to what always is, and] to the future,

[as] already present. There is nothing later in that; what is already present There comes to be later in something else. If, then, the future is already present, it must be present as if foreseen for what comes later, that is, so as to need nothing then, that is, so as to lack nothing. So all things already were, and always were, and were in such a way that one could say later, "this because of this." Extended and, as it were, unfolded, it can show this after this; but being all together, it is all this; and that means having its cause in itself as well.

6.7.2 That is why one could learn the nature of Intellect from this no less than from anything else. Even if we see more of it than of other things, even so we do not see how great a thing Intellect is. We grant that it has the "that," but not the "why," or, if we do grant it, as something separate. And we see a man, or an eye, as it may be, as a statue or part of a statue. But what is There is man and the why of man, if indeed the man There must himself be intellectual; and eye and the why of eye—or it would not be There at all, without its why. Here, just as each of the parts is separate, so is the why. There all is in one, so that the thing and the why of the thing are the same. Often here too the thing and the why are the same: what an eclipse is, for example. What, then, prevents each thing in the other cases too from being its own why, and this from being the substance of each? Rather, it must be so; and those who try in this way turn out to grasp the essence correctly. For what each thing is, it is because of that. I do not mean that the Form is the cause of being for each thing—that is true—but that if you unfold each Form itself toward itself, you will find the why in it. If it were inert, even if it had life, it would not entirely have the why; but since it is a Form and belongs to Intellect, where would it get the why from?[2] If someone says "from Intellect," it is not separate from Intellect, if indeed it is Intellect itself. If, then, it must have these things lacking nothing, it must not lack the why either. Intellect has the why of each of the things in it in this way; and as for the things

2 Aristotle's example (*Posterior Analytics* II.2, 90a15): to know what an eclipse is, the earth blocking the moon's light, is already to know why it happens.

in it, it would itself be each of the things in it. So it needs no further why of its coming to be; it has come to be together with its why and has in itself the cause of its real existence.

Since it did not come to be at random, it could not have left out anything of the why; having all, it also has the "well" of its cause along with it. And so it gives to the things that participate in it in such a way that they have the why. Moreover, in this All, composed of many things, all things are linked to one another, and in their being all, the why of each is there too. In each thing, likewise, the part is seen to be related to the whole: not this coming to be and then that after it, but all establishing cause and caused together in relation to each other. Much more, then, must it be so There: all things, each of them, related to the whole, and each to itself. If, then, the co-existence of all things is all together and not random, and they must not be cut off from each other, the caused would have their causes in themselves, and each would be such as to have its cause, as it were, causelessly. If, then, they have no cause of their being, but are self-sufficient and isolated from any cause, they would be things that have their cause in themselves, with themselves. And again, if nothing There is in vain, and all the many things each has are in it, you could say why each is. So the why pre-existed and co-existed There, not as a why but as a that; or rather, both are one. For what could Intellect have that was superfluous, as if a thought of Intellect were not of this kind, as if it were an incomplete offspring? If, then, it is complete, one cannot say what it lacks, nor why this or that is not present. So, since it is present, you could say why it is present; the why, then, is in the real existence. In each thought and act, then—in the case of man, for instance—the whole man appeared beforehand, bringing himself along with himself, and having from the start all that he has together, he is ready, whole. Then, if he is not whole, and something must be added to him, he belongs to what is generated. But he is forever, so he is whole. The man who comes to be, though, is generated.

6.7.3 What, then, prevents deliberation about him beforehand? Or rather: he is in accordance with that man, so that nothing need be taken away or added. The deliberating and the having reasoned are due to the hypothesis: he supposed things as coming to be. In this sense there is deliberation and reasoning; but by indicating that they are "always coming to be," he did away with "he reasons" as well. There can be no reasoning in what always is; that would belong to someone who had forgotten how things were before as well. Then, if they are better later, they would not have been beautiful before; and if they were beautiful, they stay the same. And they are beautiful together with their cause; even now a thing is beautiful because it is all. For this is also form, being all, and because it masters the matter. It masters the matter if it leaves nothing of it unshaped; and it leaves something if some shape is missing, an eye, say, or something else. So in giving the cause you say everything.[3] Why, then, eyes? So that it may be all. And why eyebrows? So that it may be all. Even if you say "for the sake of preservation," you are speaking of something in the substance that guards the substance, and saying that it contributes to it. So the substance existed before this too, and the cause, then, is part of the substance. So this is something else, but what it is belongs to the substance. All things, then, are for one another; and the whole, complete, entire substance, and its being well, are with the cause and in the cause; and the substance and the essence and the why are one. Suppose, then, that being perceptive, and perceptive in this particular way, is contained in the Form by eternal necessity and completeness, since Intellect, if it is complete, has the causes in itself, so that we see afterward that it is rightly so. For There the cause is one with the thing and fills it out; and man There was not merely intellect, with the perceptive faculty added when he was being dispatched into becoming. In that case, how could that intellect not incline toward things here? For what would the perceptive be but what apprehends percept-

3 "He" is Plato: in the *Timaeus* the craftsman-god reasons and deliberates as he makes the cosmos, which is also described as "always coming to be."

ibles? And how is it not absurd that There it should be perceptive from eternity, while here it perceives, and the activity of the power There is fulfilled here, when the soul becomes worse?

THE THREE MEN

The man here, the higher man and the man in Intellect, and why perception exists There.

6.7.4 So to deal with this difficulty we must again take up from above the question of who that man is. Perhaps, though, we should first say who the man here is, in case we do not even know him exactly and are looking for that one as if we already had this one. Some might perhaps think this one and that one are the same. Let the inquiry start from here. Is this man a rational principle of soul, different from the soul that makes this man and gives him life and reasoning? Or is the soul of this kind the man? Or the soul that uses a body of this kind? But if man is a rational living being, and a living being is what is composed of soul and body, this rational principle would not be the same as the soul.[4] But if the rational principle of man is what is composed of rational soul and body, how could it be an eternal reality, when this rational principle of such a man comes to be when body and soul come together? This rational principle will indicate what is going to be, not of the kind we call man himself, but rather resembling a definition, and of a sort that does not even indicate the essence.

For it is not even of the form in matter; it indicates the composite, which already exists. If so, man has not yet been found, for man was the one corresponding to the rational principle. And if someone says, "the rational principle of such things must be something composite, this in this," he is not willing to say what it is that each thing is in virtue of. Yet even if one must speak above all of the rational principles of forms in matter, and

4 Greek *logos* here means both a definition (as in "man is a rational living being") and the formative principle that makes a thing; Plotinus plays on both senses in what follows.

with matter, one must still grasp the rational principle itself that made, say, the man—above all those who claim to define the essence in each case, when they define properly. What, then, is it to be a man? That is: what is it that has made this man, present in him, not separate? Is the rational principle itself a rational living being, or is the composite that, while the rational principle itself is something that produces a rational living being? Being what, itself? Or rather, "living being" in the rational principle stands for "rational life." Man, then, is rational life. Is it, then, life without soul? Either the soul will provide the rational life, and man will be an activity of soul and not a substance; or the soul will be man. But if the rational soul is man, then when the soul goes into another living being, how is it not man?

6.7.5 So man must be a rational principle other than the soul. What prevents man from being something composite, soul in a rational principle of a certain kind, the rational principle being, as it were, an activity of a certain kind, and the activity being unable to exist without what is active? That is how the rational principles in seeds are: they are neither without soul nor simply souls. The rational principles that make are not soulless, and there is nothing surprising in such substances being rational principles. Then the rational principles that do not make man: of what kind of soul are they activities? Of the vegetative soul? Or of the soul that makes a living being, a more vivid soul and for that very reason more full of life? Soul of this kind, coming to be in matter of this kind, is man, since it is this, disposed in this way, as it were, even without the body. In a body, it has shaped according to itself another image of man, as much as the body could receive, just as the painter, in turn, will make of this one a still lesser man. This image has the shape and the rational principles, or the characters, the dispositions, the powers, all dim, because this is not the first man. It also has forms of other perceptions, other perceptions that seem vivid but are dimmer compared with those before them, and are images. The man above this one belongs to a more divine soul, which has a better man and more vivid perceptions. And this would be the one

Plato defined, adding "using a body," because it rides upon the soul that uses a body primarily, while it uses it secondarily.[5] For when what had come to be was already perceptive, this soul followed it, giving it a clearer life. Or rather, it did not even follow, but as it were added itself. For it does not depart from the intelligible; linked with it, it holds the lower soul as it were suspended from it, mingling itself with it, rational principle with rational principle. That is why this man, dim as he was, became manifest through the illumination.

6.7.6 How, then, is the perceptive faculty in the higher soul? Or rather, it is perception of the perceptibles There, and in the way the perceptibles are There. That is why it perceives the perceptible harmony in this way too, while the perceptive man receives it by perception and attunes it, down to the last detail, to the harmony There, and attunes fire to the fire There; that soul had a perception of this fire analogous to the nature of the fire There. For if these bodies were There, the soul had perceptions and apprehensions of them; and the man There, that kind of soul, apprehends them. Hence the later man, the imitation, had the rational principles in imitation; and the man in Intellect had the man who is before all men. This one illuminates the second, and this one the third; and the last in a way has them all, not by becoming them but by lying alongside them. Some of us are active according to the last; for another, something of the activity comes also from the one before it; for another, the activity comes from the third as well. And each is the man according to whom he is active, though each has them all, and again does not have them.

When the third life, the third man, is separated from the body, if the second follows along—and it follows without being separated from those above—then where that one is, this too is said to be. When it takes on the body of a beast, people wonder how this can be, since it is the rational principle of a man. Or rather: it was all things, and is active now according to one, now according to another. When it is pure, before it has become bad,

5 Plato's definition of man as a soul using a body is in *Alcibiades I* 129e–130a.

it wants man, and is man. For this is finer, and it makes the finer. It also makes spirits, which are prior, of the same form as the ⟨...⟩ man; and the one before it is more of a spirit, or rather a god; and a spirit is an imitation of a god, suspended from a god, just as man is from man. For that on which man depends is not called a god. It has the kind of difference that souls have from one another, even if they are of the same rank. By spirits we must mean the kind of spirits that Plato calls spirits. And when the soul that was linked with the ⟨...⟩ when it was man follows along, having chosen a beast's nature, it gives the rational principle of that animal which was in it. For it has it, and this activity is worse.

6.7.7 But if it is when it has become bad and worse that it fashions a beast's nature, then what made an ox or a horse was not there from the start, and the rational principle of horse, and horse, are against nature. Or rather: less, but not against nature. That soul is also, in a way, horse or dog from the start. If it has the means, it makes the finer; if not, what it can—since it has, at any rate, been ordered to make. It is like craftsmen who know how to make many forms and then make this one, either what they were ordered to make or what the matter wants, by its suitability. For what prevents the power of the Soul of the All, since it is the whole rational principle, from sketching an outline in advance, even before the soul-powers come from it? The outline would be like illuminations running ahead into matter; and the soul that does the working, following such traces, would articulate the traces part by part and make them, each soul becoming what it came to by shaping itself to it, like the dancer to the drama given him. But we have been led on to this by following the sequence. Our question was how the perceptive faculty belongs to man, and how those things do not look toward becoming. And it became clear to us, and the argument showed, that those things do not look toward the things here, but these depend on those and imitate them; that this man has his powers from that one, directed toward those things; and that these perceptibles are yoked to this man, those to that one. For those per-

ceptibles, which we named so though they are incorporeal, are apprehended in a different way; and this perception here, which we called perception because it was of bodies, is dimmer than the apprehension There, which is clearer. That is why this man is perceptive: he is so in a lesser way, and apprehends lesser images of those things. So these perceptions are dim thinkings, and the thinkings There are clear perceptions.

WHY ANIMALS THERE?

The intelligible holds all animals, plants, earth and fire, a fullness seething with life.

6.7.8 So much for the perceptive faculty. But how is it that the horse There as a whole, and each of the living beings There, does not want to look toward the things here? Suppose it was in order that a horse, or some other living being, might come to be here that it devised the thought of horse. Yet how could it, wanting to make a horse, think a horse? Clearly the thought of horse already existed, if it wanted to make a horse. So it is not possible that it thought in order to make. Rather, the horse that did not come to be existed before the one that was to come later. If, then, it existed before coming to be, and was not thought in order that it might come to be, the one who had the horse There did not have it with him by looking toward the things here; nor did he have it, and the others, in order to make the things here. Those things simply were, and these followed on them of necessity; for it was not possible to stop at the things There. Who could have stopped a power able both to remain and to proceed?

But why are these living beings There? What are they doing in god? The rational ones, granted; but what dignity is there in such a multitude of irrational ones? Isn't it rather the opposite? Now, that this one must be many, since it comes after what is altogether one, is clear; otherwise it would not be after that, but would be that. And being after that, it could not go beyond it toward being more one, but fell short of it. Since the best was one, this had to be more than one; for multiplicity lies in falling

short. What, then, prevents it from being a dyad? Or rather: neither of the two in the dyad could be wholly one; each in turn had to be at least two, and so again with those. Then too, there was motion in the first dyad, and rest; there was Intellect too, and life was in it: complete Intellect and complete life. So it was not like one intellect, but all, containing all the individual intellects, as great as all of them together, and greater. And it lived not like one soul but like all, with greater power for making the individual souls. And it was an all-complete living being, not containing only man in itself; for [then] only man would be here.

6.7.9 "All right," someone will say, "let the noble animals be There. But how could the base and irrational ones be There too?" Clearly baseness goes with being irrational, if nobility goes with being rational; and if nobility goes with the intellectual, its opposite goes with what lacks intelligence. And yet how can anything lack intelligence or reason, when that in which each thing is, or from which it comes, is what it is? Before we say anything about these things or in answer to them, let us grasp this: the human being here is not like the one There, and so the other animals There are not like those here either. We must take them in a greater sense. Then, too, rationality is not There. Here, perhaps, a human being is rational, but There he is the one who comes before reasoning. Why, then, does this one reason here, while the others do not? Or rather: since thinking is different There in the human being and in the other animals, reasoning is different too. For in a way there are many works of discursive thought in the other animals as well. Why, then, are they not equally rational? And why are human beings not equally rational compared with one another? We must bear in mind that the many lives, which are, as it were, movements, and the many thoughts could not all be the same. The lives had to be different, and the thoughts likewise. And they differ, in a way, by being brighter and clearer, and, according to their nearness to the first things, as first, second and third. That is why, of the thoughts, some are gods, others are a second kind, in which what is here

called rational belongs, and after these comes what was called irrational. But There even what is called irrational was a rational principle, and what lacks intellect was intellect, since the one who thinks horse is intellect, and the thinking of horse was intellect.

But if it were only a thinking, there would be nothing strange in the thinking itself, while being thinking, being of something that lacks intelligence. As it is, though, if the thinking is the same as the thing, how can the thinking be a thinking while the thing lacks intelligence? That way Intellect would make itself unintelligent. Or rather, it is not unintelligent, but intellect of a particular kind; for it is life of a particular kind. Just as any life whatever is not released from being life, so neither is intellect of a particular kind released from being intellect. Indeed the intellect that corresponds to any animal whatever is not released from being the intellect of all things—of man too, for example—if indeed each part, whichever you take, is all things, though perhaps in a different way. For it is actually that, but potentially it is all things; and we take each one according to what it actually is. What it actually is is its last stage. So this intellect's last stage is horse: where it came to a halt, as it proceeded ever toward a lesser life, is horse, while another halted further down. For as the powers unfold, they always leave something behind, above. They proceed by letting something go; and in letting go, because of the deficiency of the animal that has appeared out of what is lacking, they find one thing after another to add. For example, since there is no longer enough for life, nails appeared, and curved claws, or jagged teeth, or the nature of horn. So wherever intellect came down, there it could lift its head again by the self-sufficiency of nature, and find lying within itself the cure for what is lacking.

6.7.10 But how could there be any lack There? What use are horns There, for defense? Or rather, they are There for self-sufficiency, as an animal, and for completeness. It had to be complete as an animal, complete as intellect, and complete as life; so that if not this, then that. And the difference lies in having one

thing instead of another, so that out of all of them come the most complete animal, the complete Intellect and the most complete life, while each is complete as what it is. And indeed, if it is made of many, it must also be one. But it cannot be made of many that are all the same; otherwise a single one would have been sufficient. It must therefore always be made of things that differ in form, as every composite is, with each of them preserved—as is the case with shapes and rational principles. Take shapes—a human being's, for example: out of how many differences it is made, and yet what stands over them all is one. They are better and worse than one another, eye and finger, but they belong to one thing; and a part is worse with respect to the whole, but it is better that it is so. The rational principle, too, is animal and also something else, which is not the same as animal. And virtue, too, is both what is common and what is particular, and the whole is fine, though the common element is undifferentiated.

6.7.11 It is said, too—and much makes it evident—that even heaven does not disdain the nature of all the animals, since this All also contains all things. Where, then, does it get them from? Do the things There, then, include everything that is here? Or rather, everything that has been made by a rational principle and according to a form. But if it has fire, it has water too, and it certainly has plants. How, then, are plants There? And how does fire live? And earth? Either it lives, or it will be There like something dead, so that not everything There lives. And what are these doing There at all? Now the plants could be fitted to the argument: for the plant here too is a rational principle set in life. If, then, the enmattered rational principle of the plant, by which the plant is what it is, is a particular kind of life and a kind of soul, and the rational principle is a single thing, then either this is the first plant, or it is not, and before it there is the first plant, from which this one too comes. For that one is one, while these are many and necessarily come from one. If so, that one must live far more primarily and be just this, plant, while these come from it and live in a second and third degree, following its trace.

But how is earth There? What is it to be earth? And what is the earth There that has life? Or rather, first: what is this earth here—that is, what is its being? There must be some shape and rational principle here too. Now in the case of the plant, even its rational principle here was alive.

Is it so, then, in this earth too? Or rather, if we took the most earthy things that are generated and shaped in it, we would find the nature of earth here as well. The growth and shaping of stones, then, and the forming of mountains as they rise up from within, must certainly be thought to come about through an ensouled rational principle crafting them from within and giving them form. This must be the form of earth that does the making, as what is called nature does in trees, while what is called earth corresponds to the wood of the tree. A stone cut out is in the same state as something cut from a tree; but if this has not happened to it, and it is still attached, it is like the uncut part of the living plant. Having found that the crafting nature seated in the earth is life in a rational principle, we could easily be convinced from there that the earth There lives far more primarily, and is a rational life of earth, earth itself and earth in the primary sense, from which the earth here also comes. And if fire too is a rational principle in matter, and so are the other things of this kind, and fire does not come about by chance—for where would it come from? Not from friction, as one might think: friction happens when there is already fire in the All, and the bodies rubbed together have it; nor is matter potentially fire in such a way that fire comes from matter itself—if, then, what makes it must act according to a rational principle, as what gives it shape, what could it be? Or rather, a soul able to make fire; and that is life and rational principle, both one and the same. That is why Plato too says that there is a soul in each of these, in no other way than as making this perceptible fire. So what makes fire here is a fiery life, a truer fire. Then the fire beyond, being more fire, would be more in life: so fire itself lives too. The same argument holds for the others, water and air.

But why are these not ensouled as earth is? That they too are in the living All is surely clear, and that they are parts of a living being. But life is not apparent in them, just as it is not in earth either; there, though, one could infer it from what comes to be in earth. Yet animals come to be in fire too, and still more evidently in water; and there are also formations of animals made of air. But each fire, as it comes to be and is quickly put out, slips past the soul in the whole; it has not settled into a lasting mass where it could have shown the soul in it. And the same with air and water. For if they were somehow solidified in the course of nature, they would show it; but because they had to be diffuse, they do not show the soul they have. And it is probably like what happens with the fluids in us, blood for instance. Flesh seems to have soul, and so does whatever becomes flesh from the blood; but blood, because it does not provide perception, seems not to have it. And yet it must be in it too, since nothing forcible happens to it; rather, it is ready to stand apart from the soul that is present in it—as we must suppose is the case with the three elements too. Indeed, those animals that are made of more compacted air have the property of not feeling it when something is done to them. And just as air passes through light, which is steady and stays as long as it stays itself, in this way they pass through the soul that surrounds them and do not pass through it; and the others likewise.

6.7.12 But let us put it again this way. Since we say that this All is made after that one as its model, the All must be a living being There too, and first; and, if its being is complete, it must be all things. So heaven There must be a living being, and not empty of stars—the things here called heaven—and this is what being heaven is. And there is clearly earth There too, not empty, but far more full of life; and in it are all the animals that here are called walking and land animals, and plants, obviously, rooted in living. And there is sea There too, and all water, in flow and abiding life, and all the animals in water; and the nature of air is a portion of the All There, and in it are aerial animals corresponding to the air itself. For how could what is in a living thing

not be living, when even here it is? How, then, could every animal not necessarily be There? For as each of the great parts is, so necessarily is the nature of the animals in them. So in whatever way heaven is and exists There, in that way all the animals in heaven are and exist There too, and it is impossible that they should not; otherwise that heaven will not be either. So whoever asks where the animals come from is asking where heaven There comes from; and that is asking where the living being comes from; and that is the same as asking where life comes from, and all life, and all soul, and the whole of Intellect—since there is no poverty or lack There, but all things are filled with life and, as it were, seething. Their flow, so to speak, is from one source—not like some single breath or single warmth, but as if there were one quality that held and preserved all qualities in itself: sweetness together with fragrance, and at the same time the quality of wine, the powers of every flavor, the sights of colors, and everything that touch knows. Let there also be everything that hearing hears, every melody and every rhythm.

THE WANDERING OF INTELLECT

Intellect wanders within itself over the plain of truth, always same and other.

6.7.13 For neither Intellect is simple, nor the soul that comes from it; rather, all things are varied in the measure that they are simple—that is, in that they are not composite, in that they are principles, and in that they are activities. The activity of what is last is simple, as it peters out; but that of the first is all activities. And Intellect, when it moves, moves always in the same way and in the same respect and alike; yet it is not one same thing in part, but all things—since what is in part, again, is not one either, but this too is divided without limit. We would say it moves from something and surely toward something, as its last term. But is all that lies between like a line, or like some other body, uniform and without variety? Then what would be majestic about it? For if it has no variation, and no otherness

wakes it to life, it would not be an activity either; such a state would not differ at all from non-activity. And even if there were motion of that kind, it would be life in only one way, not in every way. But everything must live, and from every side, and nothing must fail to live. So it must move toward all things—or rather, have moved. If something simple were to move, it has only that one thing: either it is itself and has not advanced to anything, or, if it has advanced, it is something else, while the first remains; so there are two. And if this is the same as that, it remains one and has not proceeded; but if it is different, it has proceeded with otherness and made, out of something same and something other, a third thing that is one.

Since what has come to be has come from the same and the other, it has the nature of being same and other—other not in some particular, but other entirely; for its sameness too is entire. Being entirely same and entirely other, there is nothing other that it leaves out. It has, then, the nature to become other in every direction. Now if all the other things existed before it, it would already be affected by them; but if they do not, this Intellect generated all things—or rather, was all things. So the beings cannot exist unless Intellect has been active—active always in one thing after another, and wandering, as it were, every wandering, and wandering within itself, as the true Intellect naturally wanders within itself. And it is its nature to wander among beings, the beings running along with its wanderings. But it is itself everywhere; so its wandering is a wandering that remains. Its wandering is in the plain of truth, from which it does not step out. It holds the whole of it, having taken possession of it and made it a sort of place for itself to move in; and the place is the same as that whose place it is. This plain is varied, so that it may also travel through it; and if it were not varied in every respect and always, then insofar as it was not varied, it would stand still.

And if it stands still, it does not think; so if it had come to a stop, it would not have thought; and if so, it would not even be. So it is a thinking. Its motion is entire, filling all being, and all being is all thinking, embracing all life, and always one thing

after another; and because what is the same in it is also other, as one divides, the other keeps appearing. All its journey is through life, and all through living beings—just as for someone traveling over land, everything he passes through is earth, even if the earth has differences. And There the life it passes through is the same, but because it is always different, it is not the same. It always keeps the same course through things that are not the same, because it does not change; its being "in the same way and in the same respect" goes along with the others. For if "in the same way and in the same respect" did not concern the others, it would be wholly idle, and what is active and its activity would be nowhere. But it is also itself the others, so that it is itself all. And if it is itself, it is all; if not, it is not itself. And if it is itself all, it is all because it is all things; and there is nothing that does not contribute to all things, nothing of it that is not other, so that, being other, this too may contribute. For if it were not other but the same, it would diminish its being by not contributing its own nature to its completion.

6.7.14 One can also see what Intellect is like by using intellectual examples, and see that it cannot bear to be, as it were, a unit, without otherness. Take whatever rational principle you like as an example, of a plant or an animal. If it were a single thing, and not a single thing that is varied, it would not be a rational principle, and what came to be would be matter, since the rational principle would not have become all things by entering every part of matter and allowing no part of it to stay the same. A face, for instance, is not one mass, but nose and eyes as well; and the nose is not one thing either, but has one part and another, and these in turn others, if it was to be a nose; for if it were simply one thing, it would be only a mass. And this is how the unlimited is in Intellect: because it is one-many—not like one house, but like a rational principle that is many within itself. Within the single figure of Intellect, as within an outline, it holds outlines inside, and figures again inside those, and powers and thoughts; and the division does not run in a straight line, but always inward—as the natures of animals are contained

in the whole living being, and again others, down to smaller animals and lesser powers, until it stops at an indivisible species. The division is present without their being confused, although they are directed toward one. Rather, this is what is called Friendship in the All—not the friendship in this All; for that one imitates, being a friendship of things that stand apart. The true one is all things being one and never being separated. And he says that what is in this heaven is separated.

6.7.15 Who, then, having seen this life—many, entire, first and one—would not long to be in it, disdaining every other? For the other lives, the ones below, are darkness: small, dim, mean, impure, and staining the pure ones. If you look at them, you no longer see the pure ones, nor do you live all those lives together in which there is nothing that does not live, and live purely, with nothing bad in it. For bad things are here, because here there is a trace of life and a trace of intellect; There is the archetype, "good-like," as he says, because it holds the good in the Forms.[6] For that is the Good, while Intellect is good by having its life in contemplating; and what it contemplates is good-like—the very things it acquired when it contemplated the nature of the Good. They came into it, though, not as they were There, but as it itself held them. For that is the principle, and it is from that that they are in this, and it is this that made them from that. For it was not lawful that, looking at that, it should think nothing; nor, again, that it should think the things in that, for then it would not itself be generating. So it had from that the power to generate, and to be filled with its own offspring, that one giving what it did not itself have. But from that, which is one, many things came to it; for the power it received it was unable to hold, so it broke it up and made the one many, so that it could bear it part by part. So whatever it generated came from the power of the Good and was good-like, and it is itself good, made of good-like things, a varied good. That is why, if someone were to liken it to a living, varied sphere, or to imagine it as a thing that is all faces, shining with

6 In the *Republic* (509a) Plato calls knowledge and truth "good-like" (agathoeidē), images of the Good but not the Good itself.

living faces, or as all the pure souls running together into the same place, not lacking but having all that is theirs, and the whole Intellect seated at their summit, so that the place is lit with intellectual light—imagining it so, he would see it as one who is, in a way, outside, seeing another. But one must become that oneself, and make oneself the vision.

WHAT MAKES THINGS GOOD?

Leaving Intellect's beauty, Plotinus asks what makes the intelligibles good and desired.

6.7.16 But one must not stay forever in this manifold beauty. One must move on still further, darting upward and leaving this behind—not out of this heaven, but out of that one—in wonder at who generated it, and how. Each Form is each, and has, as it were, its own stamp; but being good-like, it has in common what plays over them all. It has being over all of them, too, and each one has "living being," since a common life is present over all, and perhaps other things as well. But insofar as they are good, and because they are good, what would that be? For an inquiry of this kind it may be useful to start from here. When it looked toward the Good, did it think that One as many, and, being one itself, think it by dividing it into many within itself, because it could not think it whole all at once? But it was not yet Intellect when it looked at that; it looked without thinking.

Or rather, we should say that it never saw it at all, but lived toward it, hung on it and had turned back toward it; and this motion, filled by moving There and around that, filled it, and was no longer only motion, but motion sated and full. Next it became all things and knew this in its self-awareness, and was then Intellect: filled so as to have what it would see, and seeing them with light from the one who gave them, and receiving this light as well. That is why that is said to be the cause not only of being but also of its being seen.[7] Just as the sun, being the cause,

7 Plotinus is drawing on the *Republic* (508–509), where the Good, like the sun, gives the objects of knowledge both their being known and their being.

for perceptible things, of their being seen and of their coming to be, is in a way the cause of sight too—and so is neither sight nor the things that come to be—so the nature of the Good, being the cause of being and of Intellect, and light, by analogy, to the visible things There and to the one who sees, is neither the beings nor Intellect, but their cause, and gives them their being thought by its own light shed on the beings and on Intellect. So as it was being filled it was coming to be, and once filled it was, and in the same moment it was completed and saw. Its principle was what it was before it was filled; but there was another principle, as if from outside, the one that filled it, from which it was, as it were, stamped as it was filled.

6.7.17 But how are these in it, and how is it these, when they were not There in what filled it, nor in what was being filled? For when it was not yet filled, it did not have them. Or rather, one need not have what one gives. In cases like this we must think of the giver as greater and of what is given as less than the giver; for that is how generation goes among the beings. What is in act must come first, and the later things must be potentially what comes before them. The first is beyond what is second, and the giver was beyond what is given, for it is better. If, then, there is something prior to activity, it is beyond activity, and so beyond life too. If, then, there is life in this, the giver gave life, but is more beautiful and more precious than life. So it had life and did not need a giver that was varied; and the life was a trace of that, not that one's life. Looking toward that, it was unbounded; once it had looked There, it was bounded, though that has no bound. For as soon as it looks to something one, it is bounded by it and holds in itself bound, limit and form. The form was in what was shaped, while what shaped it was shapeless. The bound did not come from outside, like something laid around a magnitude; it was the bound of all that life, which is many and unlimited, as one would expect of what shone out from such a nature. And it was not the life of some particular thing; for then it would have been bounded already as that of an individual.

But it was bounded all the same; it was bounded, then, as the life of something one that is many. And each of the many was bounded too: through the multiplicity of life, bounded as many; through the bound, one. What, then, was bounded as one? Intellect: for bounded life is Intellect. And what as many? Many intellects. So all are intellects: the whole is Intellect, and the individual ones are intellects. But does the whole Intellect, containing each one, contain each one as the same? Then it would contain only one. If, then, they are many, there must be difference. Again, then: how did each come to have difference? Or rather, it had its difference in actually becoming one; for the whole is not the same as any intellect whatever. So the life was all power, the seeing from There was the power of all things, and Intellect, once it came to be, appeared as all things themselves. And it sits upon them, not to be established on them, but to establish them, having seen a form of the first things, which itself is formless. And Intellect in turn becomes light for soul, shining into it, as that is for Intellect; and when Intellect too bounds the soul, it makes it rational, giving it a trace of what it had. So Intellect too is a trace of that. But since Intellect is form, and is in extension and multiplicity, that is shapeless and formless; for that is how it gives form. If that were a form, Intellect would be a rational principle. But the First had to be in no way many; for its multiplicity would then have depended on something else again, prior to it.

6.7.18 But in what respect are the things in Intellect good-like? Is it insofar as each is a Form, or insofar as they are beautiful, or what? If everything that comes from the Good has a trace and imprint of it, or derived from it—as what comes from fire is a trace of fire, and what comes from something sweet is a trace of sweetness—and life comes to Intellect from that (for it came into existence out of the activity that comes from that), and Intellect too exists because of that, and the beauty of the Forms comes from There, then everything would be good-like, life and Intellect and Form. But what is the common element? For coming from that is not enough to make them the same; the common

element must be in the things themselves. Something not the same could come from the same source, or what is given in the same way could become different in those who receive it; since what goes into the first activity is one thing, what is given to the first activity is another, and what comes after these is different again. Or rather, nothing prevents each from being good-like, but more so in one respect. In what respect most, then? But first we must look at this: is life good insofar as it is just this, life, viewed bare and stripped? Or is it the life that comes from it—and is "from it" something other than life of that kind? Again, then, what is such life? Or rather: the Good's. But it was not the Good's; it came from it. But if in that life there is something from that, and it is the life that really is, and we must say that nothing that comes from that is worthless, and that insofar as it is life it is good, then of the true Intellect too, that first one, we must say that it is good; and it is clear that each Form too is good and good-like.

Then it has something good, whether common, or more in one than in another, or in one primarily and in another as next in order and secondarily. For since we have taken each as already having something good in its being, and as good for this reason—life was good not simply, but because it was called true and because it came from that, and so was the Intellect that really is—something of the same must be seen in them. For when the same thing is predicated of different things, nothing prevents it from being present in their being, but one can still take it separately in thought—as with "animal" in the case of man and horse, and "hot" in the case of water and fire: the first as a genus, the second as present primarily in one and secondarily in the other. Otherwise each of the two, or each one, would be called good only by homonymy. Is the good, then, present in their being? Or rather, each is good as a whole, not good in respect of some one thing. How, then? As parts? But the good is without parts. Or rather, it is itself one, but this is good in this way, that in that. For the first activity is good, and what is bounded upon it is good, and the two together: the first because

it came to be from it, the second because it is an ordering that comes from it, the third because it is both together. So they come from it, and none is the same—as if from the same person came voice and walking and something else, all done rightly. Or rather, here it is because there is order and rhythm; but There, what? But someone might say that here the "well" comes entirely from outside, since the things about which the order is are different, while There the things themselves are good too. But why are the things themselves good? We must not let the question go by trusting that they come from that. We must indeed grant that, coming from that, they are precious; but the argument longs to grasp in what respect their goodness lies.

6.7.19 Shall we, then, hand the judgment over to desire and to the soul, and, trusting its experience, call good what it desires, without asking why it desires it? And shall we bring demonstrations about what each thing is, but hand the good over to desire? Many absurdities appear in that. First, the good would be one of the things that are relative; next, the things that desire are many, and they desire different things—how, then, shall we judge by the desirer whether something is better? Perhaps we will not even know what is better if we do not know the good. Then shall we define the good according to the virtue of each thing? But that way we will lead it up to form and rational principle—and we would be going the right way. Yet when we get There, what shall we say when we ask about these very things, how they are good? For in worse things, it seems, we could recognize a nature of this kind, even though they do not have it purely, by setting it beside what is worse still. But There, where nothing is bad and the better things are by themselves, we will be at a loss. Is it, then, because reason seeks the "why," while these things are good of themselves, that it is at a loss for the "why," since the "that" is the "why"? For even if we named something else as cause, the same difficulty would arise, since reason does not get There. Still, we must not give up, in case something should appear to us if we travel by another road.

6.7.20 Since, then, for the present we distrust our appetites as a basis for positing what the good is or what it is like, should we turn to judgments and to the oppositions among things—order and disorder, proportion and disproportion, health and disease, form and shapelessness, being and destruction, in short, coming together and vanishing? Who would dispute that the first in each pair falls under the form of good? If so, the things that produce them must also be placed in the portion of the good. So virtue and intellect and life and soul—the intelligent soul, at any rate—fall under the form of good; and so do the things that intelligent life desires. "Why, then," someone will say, "shall we not stop at Intellect and posit this as the Good? For soul and life are traces of Intellect, and it is Intellect that soul desires." So soul judges, and it desires Intellect: it judges justice better than injustice and each form of virtue above each form of vice, and it ranks first the same things it chooses. But if it desired Intellect alone, perhaps more argument would have been needed from us to show that Intellect is not the ultimate, and that not all things desire Intellect, but all things desire the Good. Of the things that do not have intellect, not all seek to acquire intellect; while those that have intellect do not stop there, but go on seeking the Good. And they seek intellect by reasoning, but the Good even before reason. And if soul also desires life, and to be forever, and to be active, what it desires would not be desired as intellect, but as good, and from the good, and leading to the good; since life too is desired in this way.

6.7.21 What, then, is the one thing in all of these that makes each good? Let us be bold and say it like this. That Intellect and that life are good-like, and they are desired insofar as they are good-like. I call them good-like because life is the activity of the Good—or rather, an activity from the Good—while Intellect is that activity already bounded. They are full of splendor and pursued by soul, since soul comes from There and turns back to them; so they are pursued as its own, not as good—but, being good-like, they are not to be rejected on that score either. For what is one's own, if it is not good, is one's own, but one shuns it;

since other things too, far off and below, might move one. But the intense love for them arises not when they are just what they are, but when, being already what they are, they take on something else besides from There. For just as with bodies, though light is mixed into them, another light is still needed for the light in them to show, so too with the things There, though they have much light, another, better light is needed, so that they may be seen both by themselves and by another.

6.7.22 So when one sees this light, then one is truly moved toward them, and, longing for the light that plays over them, one rejoices—just as, with bodies here, love is not for the underlying things but for the beauty that appears upon them. For each is what it is by itself; but it becomes desirable when the Good colors it, as though giving them graces and giving those who desire them loves. And so the soul, receiving into itself the emanation from There, is moved and rapt in Bacchic frenzy, filled with stinging longings, and becomes love. Before that it is not moved even toward Intellect, beautiful as Intellect is; for its beauty is inert until it receives the light of the Good, and the soul by itself lies flat on its back, inert toward everything, and even when Intellect is present it is sluggish toward it. But when a kind of warmth comes into it from There, it gains strength and wakes up and truly grows wings; and though it is all aflutter over what lies close at hand, it is nonetheless lifted, as if by memory, toward something else, greater. And as long as there is anything higher than what is present, it rises, carried upward by nature, lifted by the one who gave the love.

It rises above Intellect, but it cannot run beyond the Good, because there is nothing lying above. If it stays in Intellect, it sees beautiful and majestic things, but it does not yet altogether have what it is seeking. It is like approaching a face that is beautiful but not yet able to stir the gaze, because no grace plays over its beauty. That is why here too we must say that beauty is rather what shines upon the proportion than the proportion itself, and that this is what is lovable. For why is the radiance of beauty greater on a living face, and only a trace of it on a dead one, even

when the face has not yet wasted away in its flesh and its proportions? And are not the more lifelike statues the more beautiful, even if the others are better proportioned? And is not an uglier living person more beautiful than the beautiful one in a statue? Or rather: because this one is more desirable; and that is because it has soul; and that is because it is more good-like; and that is because it is colored, somehow, by the light of the Good, and, so colored, has woken up and been lifted, and lifts what it has, and, as far as it can, makes it good and wakes it up.

6.7.23 That, then, which soul pursues, which provides light to Intellect, and whose trace, falling upon it, moves it—we must not be surprised that it has such power, drawing to itself and calling back from every wandering, so that one may come to rest in it. For if all things come from it, nothing is better than it; all things are less. How, then, could the best of beings not be the Good? And indeed, if the nature of the Good must be the most self-sufficient for itself and need nothing else at all, what nature could one find that is this other than this one? It was what it was before the other things, when there was not yet even evil. And if evils come later, in things that have not shared in it in any single respect, among the last things, and there is nothing beyond evils in the direction of the worse, then evils would stand opposed to it with nothing in between to temper the opposition. So this would be the Good. For either there is no good at all, or, if there must be one, it would be this and nothing else. And if someone were to say that it does not exist, then there would be no evil either; things would then be indifferent to choice by nature—and that is impossible. The other things people call goods are referred to this; but it is referred to nothing. What, then, does it do, being such? Or rather, it made Intellect, it made life, and from it came souls and the other things that share in reason or intellect or life. As for what is the source and principle of these, who could say how good it is, and how great? But what does it do now? Or rather, even now it keeps those things in being, and makes the thinking things think and the living things live,

breathing intellect into them, breathing life into them, and, if something cannot live, being.

6.7.24 And what does it do for us? Or should we speak again about the light, what the light is by which Intellect is illuminated and in which soul partakes? Or rather, let us leave this for later, as is reasonable, and first work through these difficulties. Is the good good, and called good, because it is desirable to something else—what is desirable to a thing being good to that thing, and what is so to all being what we call the Good? Or rather, one might take this as evidence that it is good, but what is desirable must itself have a nature such that it would rightly receive that name. And do the desiring things desire it by receiving something, or by rejoicing in it? If they receive something, what is it? If by rejoicing, why in this and not in something else? In this connection we must also ask whether the good is good by being one's own or by something else; and, further, whether the good belongs entirely to another, or the good is also good to itself. Or rather, whatever is good is not good to itself, but necessarily to another. And to what kind of nature is it good? For there is a nature to which nothing is good. And we must not pass over what some difficult person might perhaps say: You people, why do you put on such airs with your words, up and down calling life good and calling Intellect good, and yet saying it is beyond these? Why should Intellect be good? Or what good would the one who thinks the Forms themselves get from contemplating each of them? If he were deceived and taking pleasure in them, he might perhaps call them good, and life good because it is pleasant; but if he stood in a state without pleasure, why would he call them goods? Because he himself exists? But what fruit would he reap from existing? Or what difference would there be between existing and not existing at all, unless one made love of oneself the cause of these? So it is because of this deception, which is natural, and the fear of destruction, that people have come to believe in the positing of goods.

PLEASURE AND THE GOOD

Plato's Philebus mixes pleasure with intellect; the good is desired because it is good.

6.7.25 Now Plato, mixing pleasure into the end and making the good neither simple nor in Intellect alone, as is written in the *Philebus*, perhaps noticed this difficulty. He did not turn to placing the good wholly in the pleasant—and he was right not to—nor did he think he should posit Intellect, which is without pleasure, as the good, since he did not see in it what moves us. Or perhaps it was not for this reason, but because he thought that the good, having such a nature in itself, must necessarily be a source of joy, and that what is desired must bring joy to whoever attains it; so that what brings no joy is not good either; and so that, if joy belongs to the one who desires, it does not belong to the First—and so neither does the good. And this is not strange. For he was not seeking the first good, but ours; and in general, being the good of something else, it is for him something other than that thing, since that thing is deficient and perhaps composite. That is why what is solitary and alone has no good, but is good in another and greater way. So the good must be desirable; it does not, however, become good by being desirable, but becomes desirable by being good.

Is it, then, that for what is last among the beings, its good is what comes before it, and that the ascent always gives to what lies under each thing the thing above it as its good—provided the ascent does not depart from proportion, but always advances to the greater? Then it will stop at a last term, beyond which there is nothing higher to take, and this will be the first, the real good and the good most strictly so, and the cause for the others too. For matter, the good is form—for if it acquired perception, it would welcome it. For body, soul—for without it, body would neither exist nor be preserved. For soul, virtue. Higher again is Intellect, and above this what we call the first nature. And each of these does something for the things whose

goods they are: some give order and arrangement, others life, others understanding and living well; and for Intellect, the Good does something—the Good, which we say comes to it too, both because there is an activity from it and because even now it gives what is called light. What this is, we will see later.

6.7.26 And what is naturally able to perceive what is present to it recognizes the good, if it comes to it, and says it has it. What, then, if it is deceived? There must be some likeness by which it is deceived. If so, its good would be that which gave rise to the deception; for when that comes, it lets go of what deceived it. And the desire and the birth pangs of each thing testify that there is a good of each. For lifeless things, their good is given to them by another; but in what has soul, desire produces the pursuit—just as, for bodies that have died, the care and the funeral rites come from the living, while the living provide for themselves. That it has attained it is confirmed when it becomes better, and has no regret, and comes to be filled, and stays with it and seeks nothing else. That is why pleasure is not self-sufficient: one is not content with the same thing, for it is not the same just because it is pleasure again; what one takes pleasure in is always something different. The good one chooses, then, must not be the feeling that goes with attaining it. That is why whoever thinks this is the good remains empty, having only the feeling one might have had from the good. That is why no one would accept the feeling without having its object—taking pleasure, for example, in a child as present when the child is not present. Nor, I think, would those who find the good in bodily filling accept taking pleasure as if eating while not eating, or as if having sex while not being with the one he wanted, or, in general, while not doing it.

6.7.27 But what is it that comes to each thing and gives it what properly belongs to it? We shall say: a form. For matter too has form, and for soul virtue is a form. But is this form good for the thing because it is akin to it, and is desire directed toward what is akin? No. The similar is also akin, and even if a thing wants it and delights in what is similar, it does not yet have the good. So

we shall not say "akin" when we say a thing is good. Or rather, we must say that what is akin is to be judged by what is superior and better than the thing, toward which it is potentially. For being potentially what it is directed toward, it lacks it; and what it lacks, since that is superior, is its good. Matter is the most lacking of all things, and the last form is next to it: for it comes right after matter as one goes upward. And if a thing is also good for itself, then much more would its perfection be good for it, and its form, and what is better than it—that being such by its own nature, and good for the thing too, because it makes the thing good as well. But why will it be good for it? Because it is most akin to it? No: because it is a portion of good. That is why pure beings, and those that are better, have a greater affinity with themselves. It is absurd, then, to ask why something that is good is good for itself, as though it had to stand outside its own nature in relation to itself and not love itself as good. But in the case of the simple we must consider this: where there is no "one thing and another" at all, whether its affinity with itself is a good for itself. As it is, if this is rightly said, then the ascent also finds the good lying in a certain nature; it is not desire that makes the good, but desire arises because it is good. And those who acquire it get something, and something pleasant in the acquiring. But the good is to be chosen and sought for itself [even] if no pleasure followed.

6.7.28 Now we must see what follows from the argument. If what comes to each thing as good is everywhere form, and the good present in matter too is form, would matter—if it had the capacity to want—have wanted to become form alone? But if so, it will want to perish; and yet everything seeks its own good. But perhaps it will not seek to be matter, but simply to be; and once it has that, it will want to let go of its badness. But how will evil have a desire for the good? Or rather, we did not place desire in matter either. The argument was making a hypothesis: it granted matter perception—if indeed one could grant it that and still keep it matter—and supposed that when form came over it, like a good dream, it had come into a finer order. If, then, evil is mat-

ter, that has been dealt with. But if it is something else—vice, say—then if its being acquired perception, will the good still be what is akin, relative to the better? Or rather, it was not the vice that did the choosing, but what is made bad by it. And if being and evil are the same, how will this choose the good? But then, if evil acquired perception of itself, would it love itself? And how will what is not lovable be lovable? For we certainly did not place the good in what is akin. So much for that. But if the good is everywhere form, and the higher one climbs the more it is form—for soul is more form than the form of the body, and of soul one part is more so, another still more, and Intellect more than soul—then the good would advance toward the opposite of matter, toward what is, as it were, being purified and putting matter off: in each case as far as each can, but most of all for what puts off everything of matter. And so the nature of the Good, having fled all matter—or rather, never having come anywhere near it in any way at all—would have taken refuge in the formless nature, from which the first form comes. But about this later.

6.7.29 But if pleasure did not follow on the good, yet something came about before the pleasure, the reason for the pleasure, why would that not be welcome? Or rather, in saying "welcome" we have already said pleasure. But suppose it is present, and yet once present it can fail to be welcome? But if so, when the good is present, what has it, though it has perception, will not know that it has it. Or rather, what prevents it from knowing, and yet not being moved in any other way by having it? That would be more the case in someone more moderate, and more again in one who lacks nothing. That is why there is no pleasure in the First either: not only because it is simple, but because acquisition is pleasant to one who has been in need. But this too will become clear once we have cleared away whatever else remains and pushed aside that opposing argument. It is the argument of someone who is puzzled about what the possessor of intellect would gain toward his share of good—someone who is not struck at all when he hears these things, because he has no under-

standing of them: either he hears a mere name, or he takes each of them to be something else, or he is looking for something perceptible and places the good in money or the like. To him we must say that, in slighting these things, he admits that he himself posits some good, but is at a loss how these things fit the notion he has of it. For one cannot say "not this" while being entirely without experience of the thing and without any notion of it. Perhaps he even divines what is beyond Intellect. Then, if in approaching the Good, or what is close to it, he fails to recognize it, let him come to a notion of it from its opposites. Or will he not even count mindlessness as bad? And yet everyone chooses to think, and takes pride in thinking. The senses bear witness too, since they want to be knowledge. If, then, intellect is precious and fine, and the first Intellect most of all, what could anyone imagine—if anyone could—of its begetter and father? And whoever slights being and living testifies against himself and against all his own experiences. If someone is disgusted with life, it is life mixed with death that he is disgusted with, not true life.

6.7.30 But if pleasure must be mixed with the good, and life is not complete if one only contemplates divine things, and above all their principle, then we must by all means look into it now, as we lay hold of the good. To think that the good is made up of intellect as the substrate and of the soul's experience that arises from understanding is not to make the compound the end, or the good itself; rather, intellect would be the good, and we would be rejoicing in having the good. And this would be one opinion about the good. Another, different from this, would mix pleasure with intellect and posit this as a single substrate made of both, so that by acquiring, or even just seeing, an intellect of that kind, we would have the good; for what is solitary and alone, it says, can neither come to be nor be choosable as good. How, then, could intellect be mixed with pleasure into a single completed nature? That no one would think bodily pleasure

could be mixed with intellect is surely obvious to everyone; but neither could any irrational joys of the soul.[8]

But every activity, every disposition and every life must be followed, and as it were accompanied, by something that plays over it. In some, even as they go according to nature, there is something hindering, some admixture of the contrary, which does not let the life be its own; in another, the activity is pure and unalloyed and the life is in a bright disposition. So they posit this state of intellect as most welcome and most choiceworthy, and say it is mixed with pleasure for lack of a proper term—the way the poets transfer other words for things we love here, like "drunk on nectar," "to the feast and banquet," "the father smiled," and countless others like them.[9] For what is truly welcome is There, and what is most lovable and most longed for—not coming to be, not in motion; and its cause is what has tinged these things, lit them up and made them bright. That is why he adds truth to the mixture, and puts what will measure it before it; and he says that the proportion and beauty in the mixture came from There into the beautiful. So it is in this respect that we too would have our share in this. But what is truly desirable for us is, in one way, ourselves, for ourselves, as we lead ourselves up to the best of ourselves: this, namely, the proportioned and beautiful, a composite form, a life that is vivid, intellectual and beautiful.

THE SOUL IN LOVE

Lit by the Good, the soul grows wings and is carried up beyond Intellect.

6.7.31 But since all things were made beautiful by that which is before them, and received light—Intellect the radiance of its intellectual activity, by which it lit up its nature, while soul

8 The debate over whether the good is intellect, pleasure, or a mixture of the two follows Plato's *Philebus*.

9 "Drunk on nectar" recalls Plato's *Symposium* (203b); "the father smiled" is Homer's phrase for Zeus.

received power for living, as more life came into it—Intellect, then, was lifted up There and remained, content to be around him; and soul too, the soul that was able, turned back, and as it came to know and see, it delighted in the vision and, so far as it could see, was struck with amazement. It saw as if struck, and having something of him in itself it became aware of it, and being so affected it came to long for him, like those who are moved by the image of the one they love to want to see the beloved himself. And just as here lovers shape themselves to resemble the one they love, making their bodies more comely and bringing their souls into likeness, wanting not to fall short, as far as they can, of the beloved's moderation and the rest of his virtue—or they would be rejected by beloveds of that kind, and it is those who resemble them who are able to be with them—in the same way soul too loves him, moved to love by him from the beginning. And the soul that has its love ready to hand does not wait to be reminded by the beautiful things here. Having love, even if it does not know it has it, it is always searching, and wanting to be carried toward that, it looks down on the things here; and seeing the beautiful things in this All, it is suspicious of them, because it sees them in flesh and bodies, sullied by their present dwelling, divided up by magnitudes, and not the beautiful things themselves—for those, being what they are, would never dare to step into the mire of bodies and soil and obliterate themselves. And when it sees them flowing away as well, then it knows completely that what played over them they had from elsewhere. Then it is carried There, clever at finding what it loves, and it would not give up before it had taken hold of it—unless someone took away its love as well. There it saw all things beautiful and true, and it grew stronger, filled with the life of being; and having itself become what really is, and having truly gained understanding [of being], being near, it perceives what it has long been seeking.

6.7.32 Where, then, is the one who made such beauty and such life, and generated being? Do you see the beauty that lies over all of them, varied Forms as they are? It is fine to linger here; but

one who is in beauty must look to where these come from, and where their beauty comes from. And he must be none of these: otherwise he will be one of them, and a part. So he is not that kind of shape, nor any one power, nor again all the powers that have come to be and are here; he must be above all powers and above all shapes. The principle is the formless—not what needs shape, but that from which all intellectual shape comes. For what has come to be, if it came to be, had to become something, and had a shape of its own; but what no one made—who could make it? So this is none of the beings, and all things: none, because the beings come after; all, because they come from it. And what magnitude could something have that can make all things? It would be unlimited. But if unlimited, it would have no magnitude; for magnitude belongs among the last things, and if it is to make magnitude too, it must not have it itself. And the greatness of being is not a quantity; something else, after him, could have magnitude.

His greatness is that nothing is more powerful than he is, and nothing can equal him. For with which of the things that are his could anything come to equality, when it has nothing the same? "Forever" and "over all" do not give him measure, nor again measurelessness: how then would he measure the other things? So he has no figure either. And indeed, if something is longed for and you can grasp neither its figure nor its shape, it would be the most longed for and the most lovable, and the love for it would be measureless. For love is not bounded here, because the beloved is not; the love of this would be unlimited, so that its beauty too is of another kind: beauty beyond beauty. For being none of these things, what beauty is it? But being lovable, it would be what generates beauty. So, [being] the power of all that is beautiful, it is the flower of beauty, a beauty that makes beauty. For it generates beauty and makes it more beautiful by the superabundance of beauty that comes from it, so that it is the principle of beauty and the limit of beauty. Being the principle of beauty, it makes beautiful that of which it is the principle, and makes it beautiful not in shape: what has come to be

is itself shapeless, though in another way it is in shape. For what is called shape is shape only in something else; by itself it is shapeless. So it is what participates in beauty that is shaped, not beauty.

6.7.33 That is why, when beauty is spoken of, one must rather flee from shape of that kind and not set it before one's eyes, so as not to fall away from the beautiful into what is called beautiful by a dim participation. The shapeless form is beautiful, if it is a form at all—and the more so, the more you strip away all shape, even the shape in an account, by which we say one thing differs from another, as justice and moderation are different from each other, though both are beautiful. But since Intellect thinks something particular, it is diminished, even if it takes together all that is in the intelligible. If it takes each, it has one intelligible shape; if all together, a kind of varied shape, as it were—still in need, in need of the sort of thing one must contemplate as being above that all-beautiful one, varied and not varied: that which soul reaches for without saying why it longs for such a thing. But reason says that this is the real thing, if indeed the nature of the best and of the most lovable lies in what is entirely formless. That is why, whatever you bring to form and show to the soul, it seeks beyond it something else, what gave it shape. So reason says that what has shape, and shape, and form, are all measured; and this is not all, nor self-sufficient, nor beautiful of itself; this too is mixed.

So these must be beautiful, but what is truly beautiful, or rather the beyond-beautiful, must not be measured; and if so, it must not be shaped, nor be a form. So what is primarily and first is formless, and beauty There is the nature of the intelligible Good. The experience of lovers bears witness too. As long as a lover is caught up in what bears the perceptible imprint, he does not yet love; but when from it he generates in himself an imprint that is not perceptible, in the partless soul, then love springs up. He seeks to see the beloved so as to water that imprint as it withers. But if he understood that one must pass on to what is more shapeless, he would reach for that; for what he

experienced from the start was love of a great light kindled by a dim gleam. The trace of the shapeless is shape: it is the shapeless, then, that generates shape, not shape it; and it generates it when matter comes to it. And matter is necessarily furthest away, since of itself it has not even one of the last shapes. If, then, it is not matter that is lovable but what has been formed by the form, and the form on matter comes from soul, and soul is more form and more lovable, and Intellect is more form than soul and more lovable still, then we must posit that the first nature of beauty is formless.

ALONE WITH THE ALONE

The soul strips off every shape and meets the Good suddenly, with nothing between.

6.7.34 And we shall no longer be surprised if what produces those terrible longings is entirely free even of intelligible shape. For soul too, when it conceives an intense love for it, puts off every shape it has, even any shape of the intelligible that may be in it. It is not possible, while having something else and being active about it, either to see it or to be fitted to it. One must have nothing else ready to hand, neither bad nor again good, so that the soul, alone, may receive the alone. When the soul has this good fortune and it comes to the soul—or rather, being present, it appears—when the soul has turned away from the things present, having prepared itself to be as beautiful as possible and come into likeness (the preparation and the adornment are surely clear to those who prepare themselves), and sees it suddenly appearing within itself—for there is nothing between, and they are no longer two, but both are one; you could not tell them apart while it is present; lovers and beloveds here imitate this, wanting to fuse together—then the soul no longer perceives its body, that it is in it, nor calls itself anything else: not human, not living being, not being, not all. For looking at these would be, in a way, out of keeping; it has no leisure for them and does not want any. Having sought it, it meets it when it is present, and

looks at it instead of at itself; and who it is that looks, it has no leisure even to see.

Then it would exchange this for nothing at all, not even if someone offered it the whole heaven, since there is nothing else better, nothing more good. It runs no higher, and everything else is a descent for it, even if it is on high. So then it is able to judge rightly and to know that this is what it was longing for, and to hold that there is nothing better than it. For there is no deception There; or where would it find anything truer than the true? So what it says is: "It is that"; and it says it later, and says it in silence too; and in its joy it is not deceived that it is joyful. Nor does it say so because the body is tickled, but because it has become this—what it was long ago, when it was happy. And all the other things it used to delight in—offices, powers, wealth, beauty, sciences—it says it looks down on them; and it would not say so if it had not met with things better than these. Nor is it afraid that something may happen to it while it is with that, or even while merely seeing it. And if everything else around it were to perish, it would actually be glad, so as to be with this alone: such is the joy it has come to.

6.7.35 It is so disposed then that it even despises thinking, which at other times it welcomed, because thinking was a kind of motion and it does not want to be moved. For it says that he whom it sees does not move either—even though the soul, having become intellect, contemplates, having been, as it were, made intellect and come to be in the intelligible place. While it is in that place and has the intelligible around it, it thinks; but once it sees him, it lets go of everything at once. It is as if someone entered a richly decorated house, beautiful in this way, and contemplated each of the ornaments inside and admired them, before seeing the master of the house; but on seeing him and marveling at him—not of the same nature as the statues, but worthy of true vision—he would let those go and from then on look only at him. Then, looking and not taking his eye away, he would no longer see a sight, because the vision is continuous, but would blend his seeing with what he sees, so that in him

what was seen before has now become sight; and he would forget all other sights. And perhaps the image would preserve the analogy if it were not a human being who came upon the one contemplating the contents of the house, but a god—and a god who did not appear to sight, but filled the soul of the one contemplating. And so Intellect [must] have one power for thinking, by which it looks at what is in itself, and another by which it looks at what is beyond it, with a kind of direct apprehension and reception; by this it first only saw, and later, in seeing, acquired intellect and is one. The first is the vision of intellect in its right mind; the second is intellect in love.

[For] when it goes out of its mind, drunk on the nectar, then it becomes intellect in love, simplified into joy by its fullness; and it is better for it to be drunk than to be too dignified for such drunkenness. Does that intellect see different things in turn, some at one time, others at another? No: our account, in teaching, presents them as happening, but it always has thinking, and it also has not-thinking, which is looking at him in another way. For in seeing him it had offspring, and was aware both of their coming to be and of their being in it; and in seeing these it is said to think, but to see him by the power by which it was going to think. And the soul—as it were blending together and making vanish the intellect that remains in it—or rather, its intellect sees first, and the vision comes into the soul too, and the two become one. The Good, spread out over them and fitted to the union of both, running over them and uniting the two, is upon them, giving them a blessed perception and vision, lifting them so high that they are neither in place nor in anything else in which one thing naturally is in another. For he himself is not anywhere either: the intelligible place is in him, but he is not in another. That is why the soul does not move then either, because that does not; nor, then, is it soul, because that does not live, but is above living; nor is it intellect, because that does not think—for it must be made like it. And it does not think that one, because that one is not thought either.

6.7.36 The other points are clear, and something has been said about this one as well. Still, we must say a little about it now too, starting from there but proceeding by reasoning. Knowledge of the Good—or contact with it—is the greatest thing, and he says it is the "greatest study," not calling looking toward it a study, but learning something about it beforehand. We are taught by analogies and abstractions, by knowledge of the things that come from it, and by certain ascents; we are brought on our way toward it by purifications and virtues and adornments, by setting foot in the intelligible and settling ourselves There and feasting on what is There—so that one becomes at once spectator and spectacle, oneself of oneself and of the others, and, having become being and intellect and the complete living being, no longer looks at it from outside. Having become this, one is near, and that comes next, and it is already close, shining over all the intelligible. There one lets go of all study; having been educated up to this point and established in beauty, one goes on thinking, within the place where one is. But carried out by the very wave of intellect, as it were, and lifted on high by it as it swells, one suddenly saw, without seeing how. The vision filled the eyes with light and did not make them see something else through it: the light itself was what was seen. For in that there was not one thing seen and another its light, nor intellect and object of thought, but a radiance that generates these later and lets them be beside it. He himself is radiance only, generating Intellect, not quenching himself in generating it, but remaining himself, while that came to be because this is. For if this were not such, that would not have come into existence.

DOES THE GOOD THINK?

Against those who give the First self-thinking: it is beyond thought and needs nothing.

6.7.37 Those who granted him thinking did not grant him thinking of the lesser things, the things that come from him—although some say it is absurd for him not to know the other things. Any-

way, finding nothing else more honorable, they granted that his thinking is of himself, as if he would be more majestic through thinking, and thinking were better than what he is in himself, instead of his conferring majesty on thinking. For by what will he have his honor, by thinking or by himself? If by thinking, he is not honorable in himself, or less so; if by himself, he is perfect before thinking and is not perfected by thinking.[10] If they say he must think because he is actuality and not potentiality, then if he is a being that always thinks, and they call him actuality for this reason, they are still speaking of two things, the being and the thinking, and not of something simple; they are adding something different to him, as seeing in actuality is added to eyes, even if they always see. But if they say he is in actuality because he is actuality and thinking, then, being thinking, he would not think, just as motion would not move. "What, then? Don't you yourselves say that those things are being and actuality?" But we agree that these are many and different from one another, while the First is simple; and to what comes from another we grant thinking, and as it were the seeking of its own being, and of itself and of what made it, and say that, having turned back in the vision and come to recognize it, it is now rightly intellect. But what neither came to be nor has [anything else] before it, but always [is] what it is—what reason will it have to think? That is why Plato rightly says it is above intellect. For an intellect that does not think is mindless: where nature has given thinking, if a thing does not do this, it is mindless. But where there is no work, why would anyone bring in a work and, by way of privation, accuse it of not doing it? It is as if someone called him unskilled in medicine. He has no work, because there is nothing incumbent on him to do. He is sufficient himself and need seek nothing beyond himself, being above all things; he is sufficient to himself and to the others by being himself what he is.

6.7.38 He is not even "is": he has no need of this either. For not even "he is good" is said of him, but of that of which "is" is said;

and "is" not as one thing said of another, but as signifying what it is. We say "the Good" of him not predicating goodness of him, as something that belongs to him, but meaning that he is it. Then, since we do not think it right to say "is good," nor to put "the" in front of it, but cannot make ourselves clear if one takes it away altogether, we say "the Good" in this way, so as not to make one thing and then another, and so no longer to need "is." But who will accept a nature that has no perception or knowledge of itself? Well then, what will it [not] know? "I am"? But it is not. Why, then, will it not say "I am good"? Because again it will be predicating "is" of itself. Will it then say only "good"—adding what? For one might think "good" without "is," if one did not predicate it of something else; but one who thinks himself as good will certainly think "I am the Good"; otherwise he will think good, but the thought that he himself is this will not be present to him. So the thinking must be "I am good." And if [the] thinking itself is the Good, it will not be thinking of himself but of good, and he himself will not be the Good: the thinking will. But if the thinking of the Good is other than the Good, then the Good already exists before the thinking of it. And if the Good exists before the thinking, then, being self-sufficient for being good, it would have no need of the thinking about itself. So it does not think itself as good—then as what? Or rather, nothing else is present to it; there will be a kind of simple direct apprehension of itself by itself.

6.7.39 But since there is no interval, so to speak, and no difference in relation to itself, what would what apprehends itself be but itself? That is why he rightly takes otherness where there is intellect and being. For Intellect must always take otherness and sameness, if it is to think. It will not distinguish itself from the intelligible except by its relation to it as other, and it will not contemplate all things unless some otherness has arisen so that they can be all things; there would not even be two. Then, if it is to think, it will surely not think itself only, if it thinks at all: for

10 The target is Aristotle, whose god is thinking that thinks itself (*Metaphysics* XII.9).

why not everything? Or will it be unable to? In general, in thinking itself it does not stay simple; the thinking about itself must be of something other, if it could think itself at all. And we said that this is not thinking, unless it wanted to see itself as other.[11] And in thinking, he becomes many: intelligible, thinking, moving, and whatever else belongs to intellect. Besides this, it is fitting to see the point already made elsewhere: that every act of thinking, if it is to be thinking, must be something varied, while what is simple and entirely the same, like a single movement—if it were the sort of thing contact is—has nothing intellectual about it. What, then? Will he know neither the other things nor himself, but stand there in solemn majesty? The other things come after him, and he was what he was before them; and thinking of them would be acquired, and not always the same, and of things that do not stand still; and even if he thinks the things that stand still, he is many. For it surely won't be that the later things have being along with their thinking, while his thoughts are only empty contemplations. His providence consists sufficiently in his being the one from whom all things come. And his relation to himself—how, if he does not think himself? No: he will stand in solemn majesty. Plato, speaking about being, said that it will think and will not stand in solemn majesty—meaning that being thinks, while what does not think will stand in solemn majesty. He said "will stand" because he could not express it otherwise, but he held that what transcends thinking is more solemn, and truly solemn.[12]

6.7.40 That there must be no thinking in him, those who have touched such a thing would know. Still, we must bring some further encouragements besides what has been said, if it is somehow possible to indicate it in words; and the persuasion must have necessity mixed in. So one must attend and recognize that all thinking is from something and of something. The thinking that stays with what it comes from has as its substrate the thing

11 "He" is Plato (*Sophist* 254e–255e).

12 Plato, *Sophist* 248e–249a, where being cannot be "solemn and holy, without intellect, standing unmoved."

it is the thinking of, and itself becomes, as it were, something laid on top, being its activity and filling what was potential in it, generating nothing itself; for it belongs only to that whose it is, as a kind of perfection. But the thinking that is with being, and brought being into existence, could not be in that from which it came; for if it were in it, it would not have generated anything. Being a power of generating, it generated on its own, and its activity is being; it is together with being and in it, and thinking and this being are not different. Even if this nature thinks itself, the thought and the thinker are not different, except in account, being a multiplicity, as has been shown in many places. And this is the first activity, which brought a hypostasis into being; and being an image of something else, it is the image of something so great that it came to be being. If it belonged to that and did not come from that, it would be nothing other than something of that, and would not be a hypostasis on its own. Being the first activity and the first thinking, this could have neither activity nor thinking before it. So if one passes on from this being and thinking, one will arrive neither at being nor at thinking, but beyond being and thinking, at something wonderful, which has in itself neither being nor thinking, but is solitary, itself by itself, needing nothing of what comes from it. For it was not by first being active that it generated activity—then the activity would have existed before it came to be; nor by thinking did it generate thinking—then, already being, it would have thought before thinking came to be.

In general, thinking, if it is of the Good, is worse than it, so it would not belong to the Good. By "not of the Good" I don't mean that it is impossible to think the Good—let that be granted—but that there could be no thinking in the Good itself; otherwise the Good and what is less than it will be one together. And if it will be worse, thinking will be together with being. And if thinking is better, the object of thought will be worse. So thinking is not in the Good; being worse, and for that reason deemed worthy of the Good, it would be somewhere other than the Good, leaving it pure of itself, as of everything else. And being pure of thinking,

it is purely what it is, not hampered by the presence of thinking so as to be no longer pure and one. But if someone makes this too at once thinker and thought, being and thinking joined with being, and wants in this way to make it think itself, it will need something else, and this before it. For activity and thinking, being either the perfection of another substrate or something existing together with it, itself has another nature before it, which is why thinking is reasonable for it: it has something to think, because there is another before it; and when it thinks itself, it as it were learns what it got within itself from its vision of the other. But what has neither anything else before it nor anything with it that comes from another—what will it think, or how will it think itself? For what was it seeking? What was it longing for? Its own power, how great it is, as though that were outside it, in so far as it thought? I mean: if the power of it that it learned was one thing, and the power by which it learned another. But if they are one, what is it seeking?

6.7.41 It seems that thinking has been given as a help to natures that are more divine, yet lesser—an eye, as it were, for them, blind as they are. But what need would the eye have to see what is, if it were itself light? What needs to see through an eye has darkness in itself and seeks light. If, then, thinking is light, and light does not seek light, that radiance, not seeking light, would not seek to think, nor will it add thinking to itself. For what will it do, or what will it add, when even Intellect itself is in need in order to think? So it does not perceive itself—it has no need to. Nor is it two—or rather, more: itself, the thinking (for the thinking is surely not itself), and there must also be a third, the object of thought. But if intellect, thinking and intelligible are the same, by becoming entirely one they will make themselves vanish into one another; and if distinguished by otherness, it will once again not be that. So in the case of the best nature, which needs no help, we must leave everything else aside entirely; for whatever you add, you have diminished by the addition the nature that needs nothing. For us thinking was a fine thing, because soul needs to have intellect; and for Intellect, because

being is the same for it, and thinking made it. So it must be together with thinking and always grasp an understanding of itself: that this is this, that the two are one. But if it were only one, it would have sufficed for itself and would have had no need to grasp anything.

That is why "Know yourself" is said to those who, because of their multiplicity, have the task of counting themselves up and learning how many things and what kind of things they are—they do not know all of it, or know nothing—nor what rules in them, nor by what they are themselves. But if he is something, he is it in a greater way than by knowledge, thinking and self-awareness of himself; for he is nothing even to himself. He brings nothing into himself; he is sufficient to himself. So he is not good to himself either, but to the others: they need him, but he would not need himself—that would be ridiculous, for then he would be in want of himself. Nor does he see himself: for something must exist and come to be for him from the seeing. All these things he has handed over to those after him, and it seems that none of the things that belong to the others is present to him, just as being is not. Nor, then, is thinking, if being is here, and the first thinking in the proper sense and being are both together. That is why there is no account of him, no perception, no knowledge: because nothing can be predicated of him as present in him.

6.7.42 But when you are puzzled in a matter like this and ask where these things should be placed, then, as you set out toward them by reasoning, put aside the things you consider majestic in the second, and do not add the second to the First, nor the third to the second; place the second around the First and the third around the second. In this way you will leave each as it is, and attach the later ones to the earlier, as running around them, while those remain by themselves. That is why it is rightly said in this sense too: "Around the king of all are all things, and all things are for his sake." By "all things" he means the beings, and "for his sake" because he is the cause of their being and they reach out for him, as it were—he who is other than all things and

has nothing of what is present in them; or they would no longer be all things, if anything of the others that come after him were present to him. So if intellect too is one of all things, intellect is not in him either. In calling him the cause of all beautiful things, he evidently places beauty in the Forms, and him above all this beauty. Placing these second, he says that the things that come after them are attached to them as third; and placing around the third the things generated from the third, he clearly means this cosmos, attached to Soul. With Soul attached to Intellect, and Intellect to the Good, all things are thus attached to that through intermediaries—some near it, others neighbors of those near—while perceptible things, attached to Soul, stand at the furthest remove.

VI.8 On Free Will and the Will of the One

Περὶ τοῦ ἑκουσίου καὶ θελήματος τοῦ ἑνός
Plotinus asks what freedom means for humans and gods, and argues that the One is wholly self-caused and free.
no. 39 in order of writing

6.8.1 Can one ask, even in the case of gods, whether anything is up to them? Or is it fitting to ask such a thing only amid human incapacities and disputable powers, while to gods we must grant that they can do everything, and that not just something but everything is up to them? Or must we grant all power, and having everything up to it, to one alone, while for the others some things are one way, some the other, and for some both ways? Or must we ask about these things too, and also dare to ask such a thing about the first principles and about what is above, beyond all things: how is anything up to it, even if we agree that it can do everything? And yet this "can" must also be examined—how is it meant?—in case in this way we end up calling one thing power and another activity, and activity yet to come. But these questions must be postponed for the present. First we must ask about ourselves, where it is customary to ask, whether anything is in fact up to us. First [then] we must ask what we ought to mean by saying that something is up to us—that is, what the notion of such a thing is. For in this way we might somehow come to know whether it is fitting to transfer it to gods, and still more to god, or whether it should not be transferred; or whether it should be transferred, but we must ask how "up to them" applies both to the others and to the first principles. What, then,

do we have in mind when we say "up to us," and why are we asking?

I think it is this. Tossed about among opposing fortunes and necessities and violent assaults of passions that grip the soul, regarding all these things as in control, enslaved to them and carried wherever they lead, we became puzzled whether we are nothing and nothing is up to us—on the assumption that what would be up to us is whatever we would do by willing it, not enslaved to fortunes or necessities or violent passions, with nothing opposing our wishes. If so, the notion of "up to us" would be: what is subservient to our will, and would happen or not happen to the extent that we willed it. For everything is voluntary that is done without force and with knowledge, and "up to us" is what we are also in control of doing. The two would coincide in many cases, though their definitions are different; but there are cases where they would diverge. For instance, if someone were in control of killing, it would not be voluntary for him when he did it, if he did not know that this man was his father; and perhaps that would also be at odds with his having it up to himself. So the knowledge in the voluntary must be not only of the particulars but also in general. For why is it involuntary if he does not know that the man is one of his own, but not involuntary if he does not know that he ought not to do it? And if it is because he ought to have learned, then not knowing that he ought to have learned is not voluntary either, nor is what draws him away from learning.[1]

6.8.2 But we must ask this: this "up to us" that is referred to us—to what should we assign it? To impulse and to desire of any kind—for example, what is done, or not done, out of spirit or appetite, or out of calculation of advantage combined with desire? But if to spirit and appetite, we shall grant that something is up to them to children and wild animals, to the mad and the deranged, to those under the power of drugs and of the imaginations that come over them, which they do not control. And if to

1 The example (killing a man without knowing he is one's father, as Oedipus did) and the definitions follow Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* III.1.

reasoning combined with desire, then even to reasoning that has gone astray? Or rather, to right reasoning and right desire. And yet here too one might ask whether reasoning moved desire, or desire reasoning. For if desires are natural, then if they belong to the living being, the compound, the soul has followed the necessity of nature; and if to soul alone, many of the things now said to be up to us would fall outside this. Then again, what bare reasoning goes ahead of the affections? And imagination compelling, and desire dragging us toward whatever it leads to—how do these make us in control in such matters? How are we in control at all, where we are led? For what is in need, and of necessity desires to be filled, is not in control of what it is wholly led toward.

And how, in general, can something be its own, from itself, when it comes from another, has its origin in another, and has come to be from there such as it is? For it lives according to that, and as it has been shaped. Or rather, on these terms even soulless things will have received something that is up to them: for fire too acts as it came to be. But if it is because the living being and the soul know what they are doing: if they know it by perception, what does this add toward its being up to them? Perception does not make one master of the deed; it only sees. If by knowledge, and knowledge of what is being done, here too it only knows, and something else leads to the action. But if reason or knowledge acts even against desire, and prevails, we must ask what it refers this back to, and, in general, where this happens. If reason itself produces another desire, we must ask how to take this. But if it stops the desire and comes to rest, and this is where what is up to us lies, then this will not be in action. It will come to rest in intellect. For everything in action, even when reason prevails, is mixed, and cannot have what is up to us in a pure form.

FREEDOM AND INTELLECT

What is up to us lies in intellect and in virtue, not in outward action.

6.8.3 That is why we must examine these questions; for now we may be coming close to the account of the gods. We have, then, traced what is up to us back to will, then placed will in reason, then in right reason. Perhaps we should add knowledge to "right." For if someone has held a right opinion and acted on it, he would perhaps not have an undisputed claim to self-determination if he does not know why it is right, but was led to what he should do by chance or by some imagination. Since we say that imagination is not up to us, how could we class those who act by it as self-determining? But we, for our part—as for imagination, what one might call imagination in the strict sense, the kind aroused by the affections of the body: for being empty of food and drink molds images, as it were, and so does being full. Again, someone full of semen imagines other things, and so on according to the various qualities of the fluids in the body—those who act according to such images we shall not place under a self-determining principle. That is why we shall grant to bad people, who do most things by these, neither that their acts are up to them nor that they are voluntary. But to the one who, through intellect, is free in his activities from the affections of the body, we shall grant self-determination. Tracing what is up to us back to the finest principle, the activity of intellect, we shall grant that the premises that come from there are truly free; we shall grant that the desires aroused by thinking are not involuntary; and we shall say that it belongs to the gods who live in this way, those who live by intellect and by the desire that accords with intellect.

6.8.4 Yet someone might ask how what comes about by desire can ever be self-determined, when desire leads outward and implies lack. For what desires is led, even if it is led toward the good. And about Intellect itself we must raise the difficulty whether, acting as is its nature and in the way that is its nature,

it could be said to have freedom and to have something up to it, when it does not have it in its power not to act. Next, whether "up to them" can properly be said at all of those beings that have no action. Yet even for those that do have action, the necessity comes from outside: they will not act for nothing. But then how is there freedom, when these too are slaves to their own nature? Or rather, if a thing is not compelled to follow another, how could it be called a slave? And how could something carried toward the good be under compulsion, when its striving is voluntary, if it goes to the good knowing that it is good? For the involuntary is being led away from the good and toward what is compelled, if a thing is carried toward what is not good for it. And that is a slave which is not in control of going to the good, but, with something else stronger set over it, is led away from its own goods, serving that other. This is why slavery is condemned: not where someone has no power to go to evil, but where, instead of going to his own good, he is led to the good of another.

To speak of being a slave to one's own nature is to make two things: the one that serves, and the one it serves. But a nature that is simple, a single activity, not having one thing as potential and another as actual—how is it not free? Nor could it be said to act "as is its nature," as though its being were one thing and its activity another, since There being and acting are the same. If, then, it acts neither because of another nor at another's disposal, how is it not free? And if "up to itself" does not fit, here we have something greater than "up to itself." It is up to itself in this sense: it is not at another's disposal, nor is anything else master of its activity—nor of its being either, since it is a principle. And even if Intellect has another principle, that principle is not outside it, but in the Good. And if it is in accordance with that Good, it has what is up to it and freedom far more; for one seeks freedom and what is up to oneself for the sake of the good. If, then, it acts in accordance with the Good, it would have more of what is up to it: for it already has the movement toward the Good start-

ing from itself and remaining in itself, since it is directed toward the Good—and that would be better for it.

6.8.5 Is self-determination, then, and what is up to oneself, found only in intellect when it thinks, in pure intellect? Or also in soul when it is active according to intellect and acts according to virtue? If we are to grant it to soul in action, first we should perhaps not grant it with respect to success: we are not masters of attaining. If it is with respect to acting finely and doing everything that depends on oneself, that might perhaps be rightly said. But how is that up to us? For instance, if we are brave because there is a war. I mean: how is the activity at that moment up to us, when, if war had not come upon us, it would not have been possible to perform that activity? And likewise with all the other actions done according to virtue, since virtue is always compelled to do this or that in response to whatever befalls. For suppose someone offered virtue itself a choice: whether it wanted, in order to have something to do, that there be wars, so that it could be brave, and injustice, so that it could define and set in order what is just, and poverty, so that it could display generosity—or rather to be at rest, with everything going well. It would choose rest from actions, with no one needing its care—just as a doctor, Hippocrates for instance, would choose that no one needed his art.

If, then, virtue, when it is active in actions, is compelled to give help, how could it have what is up to it in a pure form? Shall we say, then, that the actions are necessary, but the will that precedes the actions, and the reasoning, are not compelled? But if so, by placing it in the bare stage before what is done, we shall place self-determination, and what is up to virtue itself, outside action. And what about virtue as a state and a disposition? Shall we not say that it came to set the soul in order when the soul was in a bad condition, bringing its affections and desires into due measure? In what way, then, do we say that being good is up to us, and that "virtue has no master"?[2] Or rather: it is up to

2 Plato, *Republic* 617e, from the myth of Er: "virtue has no master; each will have more or less of it as he honors or dishonors it."

those who have willed and chosen it. Or: because virtue, once it has come to be in us, establishes freedom and what is up to us, and no longer lets us be slaves to the things we were slaves to before. If, then, virtue is, as it were, a second intellect, a state that makes the soul, so to speak, become intellect, then again it turns out that what is up to us lies not in action, but in intellect at rest from actions.

6.8.6 How, then, did we earlier trace this back to will, when we said "what would come about through our willing it"? Or rather, there too it was said "or would not come about." If, then, what we are saying now is right, and what we said then agrees with it, we shall say that virtue and intellect are sovereign, and that what is up to us and freedom must be traced back to them. Since these have no master, intellect is its own; and virtue wants to be its own, presiding over the soul so that the soul may be good, and to this extent to be free itself and to make the soul free; but when necessary affections and actions befall it, it presides over them without having willed that they happen, and yet even in these it will preserve what is up to it, by referring this, here too, back to itself. For it will not follow events—saving the man in danger, say—but, if it sees fit, it will even give him up, and command that one give up life, and money, and children, and one's very country, keeping its own beauty as its aim, not the existence of what is below it. So self-determination in actions, and what is up to us, is traced back not to the doing, nor to the outer activity, but to the inner activity: the thinking and contemplation of virtue itself.

We must say that this virtue is a kind of intellect, not counting in the affections that have been enslaved or measured by reason. For these, he says, seem to verge somewhat on the body, being set right by habits and exercises. So it becomes clearer that the immaterial is what is free; that what is up to us is to be traced back to this; and that this is the will that is sovereign and its own, even if it of necessity gives some command concerning external things. Whatever, then, comes from this will and happens because of it is up to us, both outside and in itself: what it

itself wills and does without hindrance, that is primarily up to us.[3] But the contemplative, first Intellect has what is up to itself in this sense: its work is in no way at another's disposal; it is wholly turned back toward itself, and its work is itself; it rests in the Good, without need and full, living, as it were, according to will. And the will is the thinking. It was called will because it accords with intellect; for what is called will imitates what accords with intellect. Will wants the good, and thinking truly is in the Good. So Intellect has what will wants, that by attaining which will becomes thinking. If, then, we placed what is up to us in the will for the good, how can what is already settled in that where will wants to be not have what is up to itself? Or rather, if one is unwilling to raise "up to itself" this high, we must posit that what it has is greater.

6.8.7 Soul, then, becomes free when it presses on toward the Good through intellect without hindrance, and what it does because of this is up to it; Intellect is free through itself; and the nature of the Good is the very object of desire, that because of which the other things have what is up to them, when the one can attain it without hindrance and the other can possess it. How, then, could anyone bring that very thing—which is master of all the honored things after it, which sits in the first seat, toward which the others want to ascend, on which they depend and from which they have their powers, so that they can have what is up to them—how could anyone bring this down to "up to me" or "up to you"?

THE BOLD ARGUMENT

An objector says the First just happened to be as it is; Plotinus answers.

Even Intellect was drawn there only with difficulty, and by force. Unless some bold argument, launched from another quarter, should say this: since it happens to be the way it is, and

3 Plato, *Republic* 518d–e: the other so-called virtues of the soul seem close to those of the body, being produced by habits and exercises.

is not master of what it is, being what it is not from itself, it would have neither freedom nor what is up to it, doing or not doing what it is compelled to do or not do. Such an argument would be obstinate and intractable, and would utterly abolish the nature of the voluntary and of self-determination, and the very notion of what is up to us, so that these would be empty words, sounds for things that do not exist. For its proponent would have to say not only that nothing is up to anyone, but that he does not even think or understand this word. But if he agrees that he understands it, he could easily be refuted, since the notion of what is up to us fits the very things he said it did not fit. For the notion does not concern itself with the being of the thing, nor take that into account—it is impossible for anything to make itself and bring itself into existence. What the concept wants to consider is which of the things that are is a slave to others, which has self-determination, which is not under another but is itself master of its activity. This belongs purely to eternal beings, insofar as they are eternal, and to those that pursue or possess the good without hindrance. Since the Good itself is above these, it is absurd to look for some other good, as it were, besides it.

Nor is it right to say that it exists by chance: chance belongs among later things and among the many. We could not say that the First is by chance, nor that it is not master of its own coming-to-be, since it has not come to be at all. And the claim that it acts as it is, is absurd—if someone thinks freedom is present only when a thing acts or is active against its nature. Nor has what is only one way been stripped of power, if it is only one way not because it is hindered by another, but because it is just this, and, as it were, is pleasing to itself, and has nothing better than itself. Or rather, on this reasoning one will take self-determination away from what most attains the good. If this is absurd, it would be more absurd still to deprive the Good itself of self-determination, because it is good and because it remains by itself, not needing to move toward something else, while the other things move toward it, and needing nothing at all. And

when its existence, so to speak, is its activity, so to speak—for the one is not different from the other, since this is not so even with Intellect—then its activity is no more according to its being than its being according to its activity. So it does not have "acting as is its nature," nor will its activity and its life, so to speak, be referred back to its being, so to speak. Rather, its being, as it were, being with its activity and, as it were, united with it from eternity, makes itself itself from both: its own, and no one else's.

6.8.8 We, for our part, contemplate self-determination not as something incidental to it. Starting from the self-determinations found in other things, by taking away their opposites, we see it in itself, toward itself. Transferring lesser things from lesser beings, because we cannot attain what it would be fitting to say about it, these are the things we would say about it. And yet we could find nothing to say—not only nothing to say of it, but nothing to say even about it, properly speaking. For all things, even the beautiful and the venerable, come after it. It is their principle—and yet in another way it is not a principle. So we must set everything aside—including "up to itself," as something later, and self-determination. For this already speaks of activity directed toward another: that it acts without hindrance, and that there are other things toward which it acts unimpeded. We must say that it is in no relation to anything at all; for it is what it is even before them. We take away even "is," and so also any relation whatever to the things that are. Nor, then, "as is its nature": this too is later, and even if it is said of the things there, it would be said of those that come from another—so it would be said primarily of being, because being sprang by nature from that. And if "nature" belongs to things in time, it does not apply even to being. Nor, then, must we say "not being from itself": we have taken away "being," and "not from itself" would be said when something comes from another. So did it just happen this way? Or rather, we must not say "it happened" either: it did not happen to itself, nor in relation to another. "It happened" applies among many things, when some exist and something else happens in addition to them. How, then, could the First have

"happened"? For it did not come, so that you could ask, "How did it come, then? What chance brought it, or gave it existence?" There was not yet any chance, nor spontaneity either: for spontaneity too comes from another, and is found among things that come to be.

6.8.9 But if someone takes "it happened" with reference to it, we must not stop at the word, but understand what the speaker means. What does he mean, then? This: that it is the principle having this nature and this power; and that if it had had a different one, it would be that which it was, and if a worse one, it would have acted according to its own being. To this sort of claim we must reply that what is the principle of all things could not be just anything—not worse, certainly, but not even good-but-good-in-another-way, less complete, say. The principle of all things must be better than everything after it; so it is something determinate. By "determinate" I mean that it is uniquely so, and not by necessity: for there was no necessity. Necessity is found in what follows the principle, and even there it does not exert force; but this uniqueness is from itself. So it is this and nothing else, but what it had to be. It did not, then, just happen this way: it had to be this way, and this "had to" is the principle of all the things that had to be. This, then, would not be as it happened to be: for it is not what it chanced to be, but what it had to be—or rather, not even what it had to be. Rather, the other things must wait to see what the king will appear to them to be, and posit him as just what he is: not as having appeared as he happened to, but as truly king, truly principle, and truly the Good—not acting in accordance with the good, for then he would seem to follow another, but being one thing, what he is, so that he is not in accordance with that, but is that.

If, then, "it happened" does not apply even to being—for if anything happens to being, it happened to being, but being itself did not happen, nor did being chance to be this way, nor does being have its being this way, as it is, from another; this is the nature of being, to be being—how could anyone think of "it happened this way" in the case of what is beyond being, to

which it belongs to have generated being? Being did not happen this way: it is as being is, being what it is, and what Intellect is. For in this way someone might say of Intellect too that it happened to be Intellect, as if Intellect could be something other than this, which is the nature of Intellect. That which has not stepped out of itself, but is unswerving from itself, could most properly be said to be what it is. What, then, would someone say There, having gone up to what is above this and seen it? That it happened to be this way, since he saw it was this way? Or rather, neither "this way" nor "any way whatever" happened; there is no "it happened" at all, only "this way," and "not otherwise, but this way." But not even "this way": for then you would be defining it and making it a "this." For one who has seen, it is not possible to say even "this way," nor again "not this way": for you would be calling it one of the things that are, of which "this way" is said. It is, then, other than all that is "this way." But if you see it as undefined, you will be able to name all the things after it, and you will say that it is none of them; but, if anything, that it is all power, truly master of itself, being what it wills—or rather, having cast what it wills down into the things that are, while it is itself greater than all willing and has placed willing after itself. So it did not itself will "this way," in which case it would have been following, nor did another make it this way.

6.8.10 And then we must ask the one who says "it happened this way" how he would claim that "it happened" is false, if it ever is. And how could one remove "it happened"? If there were some nature, then he will say "it happened" does not apply. For if he ascribes to chance the very nature that removes "it happened this way" from the other things, where could not being from chance ever come about? But this principle of the other things does remove "as it chanced," by giving them form and limit and shape; and in things that come about this way, according to reason, one cannot ascribe them to chance—the cause is this very thing. Chance is found in what comes about not by prior design, nor in due sequence, but by coincidence. How, then, could anyone ascribe to chance the existence of the principle of

all reason, order and limit? Chance, certainly, is mistress of many things, but not of intellect, reason and order, so as to generate them. And when chance even seems to be the opposite of reason, how could it become its parent? If, then, chance does not generate intellect, neither does it generate what is before intellect and better than intellect. For it had nothing from which to generate it, nor did it exist at all, nor anywhere among eternal things.

If, then, there is nothing before it, and it is first, we must stop here and say nothing more about it, but inquire how the things after it came to be, and no longer how it did, because it truly did not come to be. What then? If it did not come to be, but is such as it is, not being master of its own being—and if, though not master of its being, it is what it is, not having brought itself into existence but making use of itself such as it is—then it would be what it is of necessity, and could not be otherwise. Or rather: it is not this way because it cannot be otherwise, but because what is best is this way. For not everything is self-determining with regard to going toward the better, but nothing is hindered by another from going toward the worse. But as for its not having gone there: it is of itself that it has not gone, not because it was hindered, but because it is itself that which has not gone. Its inability to go toward the worse does not signify powerlessness in what does not go; it means that its not going is from itself and because of itself. And its going toward nothing else contains the superabundance of power within it—not because it is held fast by necessity, but because it is itself the necessity and law of the other things. Did necessity, then, bring itself into existence? Or rather, it did not even come into existence, while the other things, those after it, came into existence because of it. How, then, could what is before existence have been brought into existence, either by another or by itself?

6.8.11 But this which did not come into existence—what is it? Or rather, we must go away in silence, leave our judgment in perplexity, and inquire no further. For what could one even seek, having nowhere further to go, when every inquiry goes toward a

principle and comes to a halt at something like this? Besides, we must bear in mind that every inquiry is about what something is, or what sort it is, or why it is, or whether it is. As for its being, in the sense in which we say it is, that comes from the things after it. The "why" seeks another principle, but there is no principle of the principle of all. To ask what sort it is would be to ask what is incidental to it, when nothing is incidental to it. And asking what it is shows rather that we must seek nothing about it, grasping it alone in intellect, if we can, having learned that it is not permitted to attach anything to it.

In general, we seem to have conceived this difficulty about this nature—if we did conceive it—from first positing space and place, like a kind of chaos, and then, once there is space, bringing this nature into the place that has come to be, or exists, in our imagination. Having brought it into such a place, we then inquire, as it were, where it has come from and how it got here; and as though it were a newcomer, we have inquired into its presence and, as it were, its being—as though it had been flung down here from some depth or some height. So we must remove the cause of the difficulty and put all place outside our attention to it, and not posit it in anything at all—neither lying and settled in it forever, nor having come into it—but only being, as it is, said to be because our arguments force us to, while place, like everything else, is later, and later than all things. Thinking of it, then, as placeless, so far as we can think of it, and positing nothing around it, as in a circle, and unable to grasp how great it is, we shall not say that quantity belongs to it; nor quality either, for there would be no shape around it, not even an intelligible one; nor relation to another, for it exists by itself, before there is another. What, then, would "it happened this way" still mean? Or how shall we even utter it, when everything else said of it is said by taking away? So what is truer is not "it happened this way" but "it did not even happen this way"—where in fact there is no "it happened" at all.

MASTER OF ITSELF

The One is what it wills; in a way it made itself and is cause of itself.

6.8.12 What then? Is it not what it is? And is it master of being what it is, or of being beyond? For the soul, not at all persuaded by what has been said, is again perplexed. To this, then, we must reply as follows. Each of us, as regards the body, would be far from being; but as regards the soul, and what we most are, we share in being and are a kind of being. But this is, as it were, a compound of differentia and being; so it is not being in the strict sense, nor being itself. That is why we are not masters of our own being either. For being is, in a way, one thing and we another; and it is not we who are masters of our own being, but our being itself that is master of us, since it is also what adds the differentia. But since what is master of us is, in a way, what we are, in this sense we could nonetheless be called masters of ourselves even here. But in the case of that which is completely what it is, where it is not itself one thing and its being another—there, what it is, that it is also as master, and it is no longer referred to something else insofar as it is and insofar as it is being. For again, it has been left free to be master of itself, insofar as it is what comes first into being. And that which has made being free—evidently by nature a maker of freedom, and which could be called the freedom-maker—to whom could it be a slave? If it is permitted to utter such a thing at all.

A slave to its own being, then? But this too is free because of it, and later; and it itself has no being. If, then, there is some activity in it, and we place it in the activity, it would not on that account be different from itself, and not master of itself, it from which the activity comes, because activity and it are not different. But if we do not grant that there is any activity in it at all, but say that the other things, being active around it, have their existence, we shall grant all the more that there is neither master nor mastered There. Not even "master of itself"—not because something else is its master, but because we have assigned

"master of itself" to being, and have placed it in something more honorable than this. What, then, is the more honorable thing than what is master of itself? Or rather: since There being and activity are, in a way, two, being gave the notion of mastery from its activity—and this was the same as its being—and that is why being master came to be separate, and it was said to be master of itself. But where there are not two as one, but one—for it is either activity alone or not activity at all—not even "master of itself" is correct.

6.8.13 But even if we must apply these words to what we are seeking, though not correctly, let it be said again that some things have been said correctly: that we must not make it two, not even for the sake of conception; whereas what we are saying now is for the sake of persuasion, and we must understand our words loosely. For if we grant it activities, and assign its activities to its will, as it were—for it is not active without willing—and its activities are its being, so to speak, then its will and its being will be the same. And if so, then as it willed, so it is. It does not, then, will and act as its nature is, any more than its being is as it wills and acts. It is, therefore, wholly master of itself, having even its being up to itself. Look at this too. Each of the things that are, aspiring to the Good, wants to be that rather than what it is, and thinks it most is when it shares in the Good; and in such a state each chooses being for itself insofar as it has it from the Good. The nature of the Good, then, is evidently far more choiceworthy to itself, if whatever share of good is in another is most choiceworthy; and it is a voluntary being, present by willing, one and the same with willing, and brought into existence through willing. As long as each thing did not have the good, it wanted something else; but insofar as it has it, it now wants itself; and such presence is not by chance, nor is its being outside its will; and by this it is defined, and by this it belongs to itself.

If, then, it is by this that each thing makes itself itself, it now becomes clear, surely, that that would be primarily such for itself—that by which the other things too are able to be them-

selves. With its being, so to speak, goes the willing to be, so to speak, such as it is; and it is impossible to grasp it without its willing for itself what it is. It coincides with itself, willing to be itself and being this which it wills; its willing and it are one—and no less one for this, that it is not one thing as it happened to be and another as it would have willed. For what else would it have willed than this, which it is? For even if we suppose that it could choose for itself what it wanted to become, and were allowed to change its nature into something else, it would not wish to become anything else, nor would it find fault with itself as being what it is by necessity—being this by being itself, which it has always willed and wills. For the nature of the Good is truly the willing of itself: not bribed, nor drawn along by its own nature, but having chosen itself, because there was nothing else for it to be drawn toward. And one might also say this: each of the other things does not include in its own being the ground for being pleased with itself—a thing might even be displeased with itself. But in the existence of the Good, choice and the willing of itself must be included; otherwise it would hardly belong to anything else to be pleasing to itself, since those things are pleased with themselves by participation in the Good or by an appearance of good. But we must make allowances for the words, if anyone speaking about that uses, of necessity, for the sake of pointing it out, words that, strictly, we do not allow to be said. And let him add "so to speak" to each. If, then, the Good exists, and choice and will help to make it exist—for without these it will not be—but it must not be many, then will and being must be brought together into one; its willing must be from itself, and so its being must be from itself for it. So the argument has discovered that it has made itself. For if its will is from itself and, as it were, its own work, and this is the same as its existence, then it would, in this way, have brought itself into existence. So it is not what it happened to be, but what it itself willed.

6.8.14 Further, we must look at it this way too. Each of the things said to be either is the same as its being or different from it. For example, this man is one thing and being a man another—

though the man does participate in what being a man is. But soul and being soul are the same, if soul is simple and not predicated of something else; and so are man himself and being man. The one for which being a man is different might come to be by chance, but being a man could not come to be by chance: and this is man himself, from itself. If, then, being a man is from itself, and not by chance, nor incidental, how could what is above man himself—what generates man himself, to which all the things that are belong—be said to be by chance, a nature simpler than being man, and than being, in general, being? If one cannot bring chance along as one goes up toward the simple, then it is impossible for chance to ascend to the simplest of all.

Further, it is fitting to recall what was said somewhere before: that each of the things that truly are, and have come into existence from that nature—and if anything among perceptible things is like this, it is so by coming from them—is of a certain kind. By this I mean that it has, together with its being, the cause of its existence too, so that a later observer of each can say why each of the things in it is there—why an eye, for instance, and why these creatures have such feet—and the cause brings each part of each thing into being together with it, and the parts are there because of one another. Why are the feet long? Because this other part is of such a kind, and because the face is of such a kind, the feet are of such a kind. In general, the harmony of all of them with one another is the cause for one another; and the reason why this is so is that this is what being a man is. So being and the cause are one and the same. These things came this way from a single source, which did not reason it out, but supplied the whole "why" and the "is" all at once. A source, then, of being and of the why of being, giving both together. But that from which these come is what the things that come to be are, far more archetypally and truly, and more so than they, in the direction of the better. If, then, nothing that has its causes in itself is random, or by chance, or a case of "for it just happened this way"—and all the things that come from it do have them—then,

since it is the father of reason and of cause and of causal being, all of which are far removed from chance, it would be the principle and, as it were, the model of all the things that have no share in chance: what truly and first is, unmixed with chances and spontaneity and happening, cause of itself, from itself and because of itself, itself. For it is primarily itself, and itself beyond being.

6.8.15 And it is at once lovable and love, and love of itself, since it is beautiful in no other way than from itself and in itself. For being with itself would not be possible either, unless what is with and what it is with were one and the same. And if what is with is one with what it is with, and what, as it were, desires is one with what is desired, and what is desired is on the side of existence and is, as it were, the substrate, then again desire and being have turned out to be the same. And if so, then again it is this one itself that makes itself and is master of itself, and did not come to be as something else willed, but as it itself wills. Moreover, in saying that it neither receives anything into itself nor is anything else, we would in this way too be placing it outside being such by chance—not only by making it alone and pure of all things, but for this reason: if we ourselves should ever see within ourselves some such nature, having none of the other things attached to us, by which we are subject to whatever happens and exist by chance—for all the other things that are ours are slaves, exposed to chances, and have come to us, as it were, by chance—to this alone belong mastery of itself and self-determination, by an activity of light that is good-like and good, and greater than what accords with intellect, an activity that has what is beyond thinking not as something brought in from outside. Having ascended to this and become this alone, letting the rest go, what could we say it is, except that we are more than free, and more than self-determining?

Who could then fasten us to chances, or to the random, or to "it happened," when we have become true life itself, or have come to be in that which has nothing else but is itself alone? The other things, when left alone, cannot be self-sufficient for being;

but this is what it is even when alone. The first existence is not in what is soulless, nor in irrational life: for this too is weak for being, a scattering of reason and an indefiniteness. But the further it advances toward reason, the more it leaves chance behind: what is according to reason is not by chance. And as we ascend, that is not reason, but more beautiful than reason: so far is it from having happened by chance. For it is the root of reason, from itself, and in it all things end—like the principle and base of a very great plant that lives according to reason, a base that remains itself by itself, while giving the plant its being according to the rational principle the plant received.

6.8.16 Since we say, and it seems so, that this is everywhere and again nowhere, we must reflect on this and think it through, to see what we should posit about the things we are inquiring into, looking at them from here too. For if it is nowhere, it has "happened" nowhere; and if everywhere, it is everywhere as great as it is. So it is itself the "everywhere" and the "in every way"—not being in that "everywhere," but being it, and granting the other things to lie alongside in the everywhere. And that which holds the highest rank—or rather does not hold it, but is itself the highest—has all things as its slaves. It has not happened to them; they have happened to it—or rather around it. It does not look toward them; they look toward it. It is carried, as it were, into its own inwardness, as it were loving itself, pure radiance, being itself what it loved. And this is to have brought itself into existence, if it is an activity that remains, and what is most lovable is like intellect. But Intellect is an act; so it is an act. But of nothing else; so it is the act of itself. It is not, then, as it happened to be, but as it itself acts.

Further, if it most is because it is, as it were, firmly fixed toward itself and, as it were, looks toward itself, and this looking toward itself is, as it were, its being, then it would, as it were, make itself. It is not, then, as it chanced, but as it itself wills; and its willing is not random either, nor did it happen this way: being the willing of the best, it is not random. That such an inclining of it toward itself—being, as it were, its activity and its

remaining in itself—makes it be what it is, is witnessed by supposing the opposite: if it inclined toward what is outside itself, it would lose being what it is. Being what it is, then, is its activity toward itself; and this is one thing, and is itself. It brought itself into existence, then, with its activity brought forth together with it. If, then, its activity did not come to be, but always was—a waking, as it were, where what is awake is nothing other than the waking, a waking and a thinking beyond thinking that always is—then it is as it woke. And the waking is beyond being and Intellect and intelligent life; and this is what it itself is. It is, then, an activity above Intellect and understanding and life; and these come from it and not from another. Its being, then, is for it from itself and out of itself. It is not, then, as it happened, but as it willed, so it is.

6.8.17 Again, look at it this way. We say that each of the things in the All, and this All itself, is as it would have been if its maker's choice had willed it, and as if he had made it so, having proposed and foreseen it in reasonings, by providence. But since these things always are so and always come to be so, the rational principles too always lie in the makers, standing in greater good order. So the things there are beyond providence and beyond choice, and all that is in being stands always in an intellectual way. So if anyone should call such a disposition providence, let him understand it this way: that before this All there stands Intellect, from which and according to which this All is. If, then, Intellect is before all things, and such an Intellect is a principle, it would not be as it chanced—being many, yet in harmony with itself and, as it were, ordered together into one. For nothing that is many, a multitude ordered together, all its rational principles embraced by one throughout, is as it chanced and as it happened. It is far from such a nature, and its opposite—as far as chance, lying in irrationality, is from reason. And if what is before such a thing is a principle, it is clearly close to this which is so permeated with reason; and this thing so permeated with reason is in accordance with that, participates in it, is, as it were, what that wills, and is its power. That, then, is without

extension: one rational principle that is all things, one number, and one, greater and more powerful than what came to be, and there is nothing greater or better than it. It does not, then, have from another either its being or its being such as it is. It is, then, what it is, itself for itself, toward itself and into itself, so that not even in this way is it directed toward what is outside or toward another, but wholly toward itself.

SEEK NOTHING OUTSIDE HIM

The One is center and father of Intellect; take away everything else.

6.8.18 And you, when you seek, seek nothing outside him. Seek within him all the things that come after him, but let him himself be. For he himself is the outside, the encompassing and the measure of all things. Or rather, he is inside, in the depth. What is outside him, touching him in a circle, as it were, and wholly dependent on him, is rational principle and Intellect. Or rather, it would be Intellect insofar as it touches him and in the way it touches him and depends on him, since it has its being Intellect from him. A circle that touches a center would be agreed to have its power from the center, and to be, as it were, center-shaped. The lines in the circle that converge on the one center make their ends at the center like that toward which they were carried and from which they, as it were, grew out, though the center is greater than these lines and their ends can show. The ends are, as it were, like it, but faint, and, as it were, traces of what has the power to produce them and the lines. The lines have it everywhere, and through the lines it shows what it is like: unrolled, as it were, without having been unrolled. In the same way we must take Intellect and being. Having come to be from that, and been, as it were, poured out and unrolled, and hanging from it, it bears witness by its own intellectual nature to what is, as it were, Intellect in the One, which is not Intellect, for it is one. Just so, in the circle too, the center is not lines or circle but the father of circle and lines. It gave traces of itself, and by a power

that remains it generated, with a certain strength, lines and circle that are not wholly cut off from it.

So too with that One. The intellectual power runs around it, an image, as it were, of which that is the archetype: an image that is many in one and has, as it were, moved into many and become Intellect because of this, while that One remained before Intellect and generated Intellect from its power. What coincidence, then, what chance, what "it just happened so" could come anywhere near such a power, the power that makes Intellect and produces being? For what is in that One is like what is in Intellect, [even if] many times greater. It is as with light spread far out from some one thing that is transparent in itself: what is spread out is an image, and that from which it comes is the true light. Yet Intellect, the image spread out, is not different in form. It is not by chance; each part of it is rational principle and cause. And that One is the cause of the cause. So it is, in a greater way, most causal, so to speak, and more truly cause. It holds together all the intellectual causes that were going to come from it, and it generates what is not as chance had it but as he himself willed. And his willing was not irrational, nor random, nor as the fancy took him, but as it had to be, since nothing There is random. That is why Plato too, aiming to signify this as far as was possible, spoke of "what ought to be" and "the right moment": it is far from "as chance had it"; whatever it is, that is what ought to be. If this is what ought to be, it is not so irrationally. And if it is the right moment, it is the most sovereign of all in the things that come after it, and before that in itself. It is not what it happened to be; it is what he, as it were, wanted, since he wants what ought to be, and what ought to be and the activity of what ought to be are one. And it is what ought to be not as a substrate but as first activity, which has shown itself to be what it had to be. For this is how one must speak of him, unable as one is to speak as one would wish.

6.8.19 So let anyone who has been stirred toward that by what has been said lay hold of that itself, and he will see it, and he too will be unable to say as much as he wants. Seeing it within him-

self, letting every argument go, he will hold that it is what it is from itself: so that, if it had being, its being would be its slave and would, as it were, come from it. Nor would anyone who has seen dare any longer to say "as it happened"; he could not utter a word at all. For if he dared, he would be struck dumb. He could not even dart off anywhere so as to speak about it, since that would be appearing, as it were, everywhere before the eyes of his soul, and wherever he fixed his gaze he would see him, unless he let the god go and fixed his gaze elsewhere, no longer thinking anything about him. And perhaps the "beyond being," which the ancients spoke in a riddle, should also be understood this way: not only that he generates being, but that he is no slave either to being or to himself, and his being is not his principle. Rather, he is the principle of being, and he did not make being for himself; having made it, he left it outside himself, since he has no need at all of being, he who made it. So it is not even insofar as he is that he makes "is."

6.8.20 What then? Someone might say: doesn't it follow that he had come to be before he came to be? For if he makes himself, then as regards "himself" he does not yet exist, but as regards "making" he exists already, before himself, the one being made. To this we must reply that he is not to be placed at all on the side of the one made but on the side of the maker, if we take his making as absolute. Nor is it so that something else may be accomplished out of his making: his activity does not produce a result, but the whole of him is this, for there are not two but one. Nor should we be afraid to posit the first activity without being; we must posit just this as his hypostasis, so to speak. If someone posited a hypostasis without activity, the principle would be deficient, and the most perfect of all would be imperfect. And if he added activity, he does not keep it one. If, then, activity is more perfect than being, and the First is most perfect, the First would be activity. So in having acted he already is this, and it is not that he was before he came to be: when he was, he was not before he came to be but already entire. Activity that was never slave to being is purely free, and so he himself is himself from

himself. For if he were kept in being by another, he would not be first from himself. But if he is rightly said to hold himself together, he is also the one who brings himself forth, since what he holds together by nature he has also made to be from the beginning.

Now if there were a time from which he began to be, "having made" would be said in the strictest sense. As it is, if he was what he is even before eternity was, let "having made himself" be understood to mean that his having made and he himself run together. For his being is one with his making and, as it were, his eternal generation. Hence too "master of himself": if there are two, in the strict sense; if one, there is only the master, for he has nothing that is mastered. How then is he master, when there is nothing for him to be master over? Or rather, "master" here is in relation to what is before him: that there was nothing. And if there was nothing, he is first; not first in order, but in sovereignty and in a power that is purely self-determining. And if purely, nothing can be found There that is not self-determined. So he is wholly self-determined within himself. What, then, is there of him that is not himself? What, then, is there that is not his activity? And what is there that is not his work? For if there were anything in him that was not his work, he would be neither purely self-determining nor all-powerful: he would not be master of that, and he would not have power over everything. At any rate, he has no power over what he is not master of making.

6.8.21 Could he, then, have made himself something other than what he made? Or, by that reasoning, we will also do away with his making the good, since he could not make evil. For "being able" There does not mean being able to do opposites; it means an unshakable, immovable power, which is power most of all when it does not depart from being one. Indeed, being able to do opposites belongs to an inability to remain with the best. And his making of himself, which we speak of, must also be once and for all, for it is fine. Who could divert what has come about by the will of god, and is will? By the will, then, of one who did not

yet exist? But what will can he have, if he is without will in his hypostasis? Where, then, will his will come from, from a being without activity? Or rather, there was will in his being; so nothing is other than his being. Or else, what was there that he was not—will, for instance? So all of him was will, and there is nothing in him that does not will. Nor, then, is there anything before will. So he himself is first of all will. And so he is as he willed and such as he willed, and also what follows on his will, what such will generated; but it generated nothing further in him, for he was this already. As for "holding himself together," if one were to put it correctly, it should be understood this way: all the other things that exist are upheld by him, for they exist by a certain participation in him, and all things are referred back to him. But he himself is already from himself, needing neither holding together nor participation; he is all things to himself—or rather, he needs nothing, not one of all things, for himself. When you speak of him or think of him, let all the other things go. When you have taken everything away and left only him, do not look for what you might add; look for whether there is something you have not yet taken away from him in your mind. For it is possible even for you to touch something about which nothing more can be said or grasped. It lies high above, and it alone is in truth free, because it is not even slave to itself; it is only itself and really itself, whereas each of the other things is itself and something else.

VI.9 On the Good, or the One

Περὶ τἀγαθοῦ ἢ τοῦ ἑνός
Plotinus argues that all things exist by being one, and describes the soul's ascent to union with the One beyond Intellect.
no. 9 in order of writing

6.9.1 All beings are beings by the One, both those that are beings primarily and those that are said in any sense to be among beings. For what could anything be, if it were not one? Deprived of the one they are said to be, they are not those things. An army will not exist unless it is one, nor a chorus or a herd unless they are one. Nor, again, a house or a ship, if they do not have unity, since a house is one and a ship is one, and if it lost this the house would no longer be a house, nor the ship a ship. So continuous magnitudes would not exist if unity were not present to them; at any rate, when they are cut, to the extent that they lose their unity, they change their being. So too the bodies of plants and animals, each of which is one: if they escape unity by being broken up into multiplicity, they have lost the being they had, and are no longer what they were but have become other things, and these too only insofar as each is one. Health, too, comes when the body is ordered into one, and beauty when the nature of the one holds the parts together; and virtue of soul, when it is unified into one, into a single agreement. Then, since soul brings all things into one, crafting and molding and shaping and ordering them, should we go up to soul and say that it supplies unity and that it is the One?

Or rather: when soul supplies the other things to bodies, it is not itself what it gives—shape and form, for instance—but these are other than it. In the same way, if it gives unity too, we must think that it gives it as something other than itself, and that it makes each thing one by looking to the One, just as it makes a man by looking to Man, grasping together with the man the one that is in him. For of the things called one, each is one in the way that it also has what it is. So things that are less have unity less, and things that are more have it more. Soul too, then, being other than the One, has unity more in proportion to its being more and really being; but it is not the One itself. For soul is one, and the one is in a way incidental to it, and these are two, soul and one, just as body and one are. What is spread apart, like a chorus, is furthest from the one; what is continuous is nearer. Soul shares in it still more, it too. But suppose someone identifies soul and the One on the ground that without being one soul would not exist either. First, the other things too each exist together with being one; but all the same the one is other than they are. Body and one are not the same; body participates in the one. Next, soul is many, even the single soul, even if it is not made of parts. For there are a great many powers in it—reasoning, desiring, apprehending—and these are held together by the one as by a bond. Soul, then, brings unity to something else, being itself one by something else; it too has this done to it by another.

6.9.2 Is it, then, that for each of the partial things that is one, its substance and its unity are not the same, whereas for being as a whole, and substance, its substance (and being) and its unity are the same? Then whoever had discovered being would have discovered the One, and substance itself would be the One itself. If, for instance, substance is Intellect, then Intellect is also the One, being primarily being and primarily one, and giving the other things a share of being, and in this way and to this degree a share of unity as well. For what could one say the one is, apart from being itself? Either it is the same as being—for "man" and "one man" are the same—or it is a sort of number of each thing:

as you might say "two" of some things, so "one" of some single thing. Now if number belongs among the things that are, clearly the one does too, and we must inquire what it is. But if it is a product of soul's activity as soul goes over things in counting, the one would be nothing in the things themselves. Yet the argument said that if each thing loses its one, it will not exist at all. So we must see whether each one and being are the same, and being in general and the One. But if the being of each thing is a multiplicity, and the one cannot be a multiplicity, each would be different from the other. A man, at any rate, is a rational living being, and many parts, and these many are bound together by a one. So man and one are different, if the one is divisible and the other without parts. And being as a whole, holding all beings within itself, would be still more many and other than the One, having the one by sharing and participation. Being has life and intellect too, for it is surely not dead. So being is many.

And if it is Intellect, in that way too it must be many; and still more so if it contains the Forms. For a Form is not one either, but rather a number, both each Form and the whole of them together, and is one in the way the cosmos would be one. In general, the One is first, but Intellect and the Forms and being are not first. For each Form is made of many, and is composite and later: the things each is made of are prior. That Intellect cannot be the First will also be clear from this. Intellect must be in its thinking, and the best Intellect, the one that does not look to things outside, must think what is before it; for in turning back to itself it turns back to its principle. And if it is itself both what thinks and what is thought, it will be double and not simple, nor the One. If it looks to something other, it looks in any case to what is better and before it. And if it looks both to itself and to what is better, in that way too it is second. We must posit Intellect as the kind of thing that is present to the Good and the First and looks toward that, but is also with itself and thinks itself as well, and thinks itself as being all things. So, being varied, it is far from being the One. Nor, then, will the One be all things, for then it would no longer be one; nor Intellect, for in that way too

it would be all things, since Intellect is all things; nor being, for being is all things.

WHAT IS THE ONE?

Neither Intellect nor being, the One is approached only by becoming one.

6.9.3 What, then, would the One be, and what nature does it have? Or rather, it is no wonder that it is not easy to say, when even being and Form are not easy; but we have a knowledge that leans on Forms. And the further the soul goes into the formless, the less able it is to grasp it, because it is not bounded and, as it were, stamped by a varied stamp: it slips away and fears it may be holding nothing. So it grows weary in such matters, and is often glad to come down, falling away from all of them, until it reaches the perceptible and rests, as it were, on solid ground; just as sight too, wearied by small things, is glad to light on large ones. But when the soul wants to see by itself, seeing only by being with it, and being one by being one with it, it does not think it has yet found what it seeks, because it is not other than what is thought. All the same, this is what anyone who is going to philosophize about the One must do. Since, then, what we seek is one, and we are examining the principle of all things, the Good and the First, one must not get far from the things around the first by falling to the last of all things. Striving toward the first, one must bring oneself back up from the things of perception, which are last, and be freed from all vice, since one is hastening toward the Good; one must have ascended to the principle within oneself and become one out of many, if one is going to behold the principle and the One. So one must become intellect, entrust one's soul to intellect and settle it firmly beneath it, so that it may be awake to receive what intellect sees; and with this one must contemplate the One, adding no perception and receiving nothing from perception into intellect, but with pure intellect contemplating what is purest, and with what is first in intellect. So when someone who has set out to view such a thing

imagines magnitude or shape or bulk in connection with this nature, it is not intellect that is guiding him in the vision, because intellect is not of a nature to see such things; the activity is that of perception and of the opinion that follows perception.

Instead we must take from intellect its promise of what it can do. Intellect can see either what is before it, or what is its own, or what comes from it. The things within it are pure and [simple], and still purer and simpler are the things before it—or rather, what is before it. So it is not Intellect, but before Intellect. For Intellect is something, one of the beings; but that is not something, but before each thing. Nor is it being: for being has, as it were, the shape of being, but that is shapeless, without even intelligible shape. For the nature of the One, being generative of all things, is none of them. So it is not something, nor a quality, nor a quantity, nor Intellect, nor Soul. It is not in motion, nor again at rest; not in place, not in time. It is itself by itself, single in form—or rather formless, being before all form, before motion, before rest. For these belong to being, and make it many. Why, then, if it is not in motion, is it not at rest? Because one or both of these must belong to being, and what is at rest is at rest by rest and is not the same as rest; so rest will be incidental to it, and it no longer remains simple. Indeed, even to call it "cause" is not to predicate something incidental of it, but of us: that we have something from it, while it is in itself. Speaking precisely, one should not even say "that" or "this." Rather we, running around it, as it were, from outside, try to interpret our own experiences, sometimes coming near, sometimes falling away because of the perplexities about it.

BEYOND KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge is many; one must run beyond it, and words only point the way.

6.9.4 The perplexity arises above all because our awareness of that does not come by knowledge or by thinking, as with the other

intelligibles, but by a presence superior to knowledge. The soul suffers a departure from being one, and is not altogether one, when it acquires knowledge of something; for knowledge is a rational account, and an account is many. So the soul passes the One by, falling into number and multiplicity. One must therefore run up beyond knowledge and never step out of being one. One must stand away from knowledge and the objects of knowledge, and from everything that belongs to that and comes from that, as all daylight comes from the sun. That is why he says it can be neither spoken nor written. But we speak and write to send people toward it, and to rouse them out of arguments to the vision, as if pointing out the road to someone who wants to see something.[1] For the teaching goes as far as the road and the journey; the vision itself is now the work of the one who has willed to see. But suppose someone has not come to the sight, and his soul has had no awareness of the splendor There, and has not felt and held within itself something like a lover's experience at the sight of the beloved, a lover coming to rest in what he loves. Or suppose he has received true light and lit up the whole soul all around, because he has come nearer, but has made the ascent still weighed down behind by what was hindering the vision; and has not ascended alone, but carrying what kept him apart from it; or has not yet been gathered into one— for that is absent from nothing and yet absent from all, so that though present it is not present except to those able to receive it and prepared, so as to fit themselves to it and, as it were, touch it and lay hold of it by likeness and by the power in them that is akin to what comes from it, so that, when it is in the state it was in when it came from it, it is then able to see, as that is by nature to be seen— if, then, he is not yet There, but is outside for these reasons, or for lack of an argument to guide him like a tutor and give him assurance about it, then for the former let him lay the blame on himself and try to stand away from everything and be

1 "He" is Plato: *Letter* VII 341c says the highest matters cannot be put into words like other studies.

alone; and where, falling short in the arguments, he is not convinced, let him think it through as follows.

6.9.5 Whoever thinks that the things that exist are governed by chance and spontaneity, and held together by bodily causes, has been driven far away from god and from any notion of the One. Our argument is not addressed to such people. It is addressed to those who posit another nature besides bodies and go up as far as soul. These people must have understood the nature of soul. Among other things, they must have understood that it comes from Intellect, and that it has virtue by sharing in reason from Intellect. After this they must grasp Intellect, which is other than what reasons, the part called the reasoning part. They must grasp that reasonings are already, as it were, in extension and motion. And they must grasp that the sciences, being rational principles in the soul, have now come out into the open, because Intellect, the cause of the sciences, has come to be in the soul. And having seen Intellect, as if it were perceptible, since it can be apprehended, mounted above soul and being its father, an intelligible world, one must call it a quiet Intellect and a motion without tremor. It has all things in itself and is all things, a multiplicity undivided and yet divided. For it is not divided as the rational principles are, which are already thought one at a time, nor are the things in it confused together. Each comes forth separately. So too in the sciences: all of them are present in something without parts, and yet each of them is separate. This multiplicity-all-together, then, the intelligible world, is next to the First. The argument says that it must necessarily exist, if one says that soul exists too. It is of higher rank than soul. Yet it is not first, because it is not one, or simple. But the One, the principle of all things, is simple.

There is something before what is most honored among the things that are, if there must be something before Intellect. Intellect wishes to be one, but is not one, only one-like, because it is not scattered but is truly together with itself. It has not dismembered itself, since it comes close after the One, and yet it has in a way dared to stand away from the One. What is before

this is the marvel of the One, which is not being, so that here too "one" is not said of something else. No name truly belongs to it. But if we must name it, it could fittingly be called, in the ordinary way, "one": not as though it were something else and then one. It is hard to know for this very reason, and is known rather through its offspring, being. And [for] it brings Intellect into being. Its nature is such that it is the source of the best things. It is a power that generates the things that are while remaining in itself and not being diminished, nor is it in the things that come into being from it, since it is before them too. [This] we name "one" out of necessity, to point it out to one another by the name, leading toward an undivided notion and wanting to unify the soul. But we do not call it one and partless in the way we call a point or a unit one. What is one in that way is a principle of quantity, and quantity would not have come to exist unless being came first, and what is before being. So we must not cast our thought there. Rather, we must liken these things to those by analogy, in their simplicity and their flight from multiplicity and division.

6.9.6 How, then, do we call it one, and how are we to fit it to our thinking? Or rather: by positing it as one more fully than a unit and a point are unified. In their case the soul takes away magnitude and numerical multiplicity, ends up at the smallest thing, and comes to rest on something. That thing is partless, but it was in something divisible and is in something else. But that is neither in something else nor in something divisible, nor partless in the way the smallest thing is. For it is the greatest of all things, not in magnitude but in power, so that its lack of magnitude also lies in its power. Even the things that come after it are indivisible and partless in their powers, not in their bulk. We must also take it as unlimited: not because it cannot be traversed, whether in magnitude or in number, but because its power cannot be encompassed. When you think of it as intellect or god, it is more. And again, when you unify it in your thought, even then it is more than god, if you imagine him as more unified than your own thinking. For it is by itself, with nothing

incidental to it. One might also conceive its oneness through its self-sufficiency. It must be the most adequate of all things, the most self-sufficient and the most free of need. But everything that is many and not one is in need, since it has come to be from many. So being needs it in order to be one. But it does not need itself, for it is itself. A thing that is many needs as many things as it is. Each of the things in it exists with the others and not by itself, and so is in need of the others. Such a thing, then, shows itself needy both in each of its parts and as a whole. If, then, there must be something supremely self-sufficient, it must be the One, since it alone is such as to be in need neither with respect to itself nor with respect to anything else. It seeks nothing in order to be, nor in order to be well, nor in order to be set in place there. Being the cause of the others, it does not have what it is from others. And its well-being: what could that be for it outside itself?

So its well-being is not incidental to it, for it is that itself. And it has no place. It does not need to be set on a foundation, as if it could not carry itself. What has to be set in place is lifeless, a mass that falls as long as it is not yet settled. The other things too are settled because of it: through it they came to exist and at the same time received the place to which they were assigned. What seeks a place is in need. But a principle is not in need of what comes after it, and the principle of all things is in need of none of them. For whatever is in need is in need because it aspires to its principle. If the One were in need, it would obviously be seeking not to be one, and so it would be in need of what would destroy it. Whatever is said to be in need of well-being is in need of what preserves it. So for the One nothing is good. Nor, then, does it will anything. It is beyond good, and is good not for itself but for the others, if anything can share in it. Nor does it think, so that there may be no otherness in it. Nor does it move: it is before motion and before thinking. What, after all, would it think? [Or] itself? Then before thinking it would be ignorant, and would need thinking in order to know itself—it, which is sufficient to itself! It does not follow, then,

that because it does not know or think itself there will be ignorance in it. Ignorance arises where there is something other, when one thing is ignorant of another. But what is alone neither knows nor has anything of which it is ignorant. Being one, together with itself, it does not need to think itself. Indeed, you should not even attach "being together with itself" to it, if you are to keep it one. You must take away thinking and being-together, both thinking of itself and thinking of other things. We should not rank it with what thinks, but rather with thinking. Thinking does not think. It is the cause of thinking, for something else, and the cause is not the same as what it causes. The cause of all things, then, is none of them. So it must not even be called good, the good that it provides. It is the Good in another way, beyond the other goods.

6.9.7 If your mind is left with nothing definite because it is none of these things, take your stand on these things and look from them. But look without throwing your thought outward. For it does not lie somewhere, leaving the other things empty of itself. It is present to whoever can touch it, and to whoever cannot, it is not present. In other cases you cannot think something while you are thinking something else and attending to something else. You must attach nothing to the object of thought, so that it may be the very thing thought. So here too you must understand this: you cannot think that while you have the impression of something else in your soul and that impression is active. Nor can the soul, seized and held by other things, be stamped with the impression of the opposite. It is said of matter that it must be without the qualities of all things if it is to receive the impressions of all. In the same way, and much more so, the soul must become formless, if nothing lodged in it is to hinder it from being filled and illuminated by the first nature. If so, one must let go of all outer things and turn wholly inward, not leaning toward any of the things outside. One must be unaware of all things, first in one's disposition and then in one's forms too, and unaware even of oneself, and so come to be in the vision of that. Having been with it and, as it were, kept it company enough,

one must come back and report, if one can, the communion There to another as well. Such perhaps was the communion Minos had, and so he was famed as "the familiar friend of Zeus." Remembering it, he laid down laws as images of it, filled by the touch of the divine for the making of laws. Or else, if one wishes, one may judge political affairs unworthy of oneself and remain above. That is what would happen to one who has seen much. [So god] is outside no one, he says, but is with all of them without their knowing it. For they themselves flee outside him, or rather outside themselves.[2] So they cannot catch the one they have fled, nor, having lost themselves, seek another. Nor, for that matter, will a child who has gone out of himself in madness know his father. But one who has learned to know himself will also know where he comes from.

THE DANCE AROUND THE CENTER

Souls circle the One; when they look to it, they dance in tune around it.

6.9.8 Suppose, then, that a soul knows itself at other times as well. Suppose it knows that its motion is not in a straight line, except when it suffers a break, and that its natural motion is like motion in a circle around something, not outside but around a center, and that the center is that from which the circle comes. Then it will move around this from which it comes and will hang upon it, bringing itself toward the same point to which all souls ought to move. But only the souls of the gods [alone] always move toward it, and moving toward it they are gods. For what is joined to that is a god, while what stands far off from it is the ordinary run of humanity, and beast. Is this, then, as it were the center of the soul, the thing we are seeking? Or rather, must we think it is something else, in which all centers, as it were, coincide, and that we call it a center by analogy with the center of this circle? For the soul is not a circle in the way the figure is.

2 Minos was the legendary king and lawgiver of Crete. Homer (*Odyssey* 19.179) calls him the "familiar friend" of Zeus, whom he was said to visit every nine years.

It is a circle because the ancient nature is in it and around it, and because it comes from such a source, and still more so when souls are wholly separated. But as it is, a part of us is held down by the body, as if someone had his feet in water while the rest of his body stood out above it. So we raise ourselves up by the part that is not submerged in the body, and by this part we join, at our own center, what is as it were the center of all things, just as the centers of the greatest circles coincide with the center of the sphere that contains them, and we come to rest.

If these were bodily circles and not circles of soul, they would be joined to the center in space, and the center would lie somewhere and they would be around it. But the souls themselves are intelligible, and that is beyond Intellect. So we must suppose that the joining comes about through other powers, in the way that what thinks naturally joins with what it thinks, and even more than that. What thinks is present by likeness and identity and joins with its kin, with nothing to separate them. Bodies are prevented by bodies from sharing in one another, but bodiless things are not kept apart by bodies. So they are not separated from one another by place, but by otherness and difference. When otherness is not present, then, things that are not other are present to one another. That, then, which has no otherness, is always present, and we are present when we have none. And that does not aspire to us, so as to be around us. We aspire to it, so as to be around it. We are always around it, but we do not always look toward it. Think of a chorus singing: though it stands around its leader, it may turn its gaze to what lies outside. But when it turns back, it sings beautifully and is truly around him. So we too are always around it, and if we were not, we would be utterly dissolved and would no longer exist. But we do not always look toward it. When we do look toward it, then we reach our goal and our rest. Then we sing no longer out of tune, as we truly dance around it a dance inspired by god.

6.9.9 In this dance the soul sees the source of life, the source of Intellect, the principle of being, the cause of good, the root of soul. These do not pour out from it and so diminish it, for it is

not a mass. Otherwise the things it generates would be perishable. As it is, they are eternal, because their principle remains the same. It is not divided up into them but remains whole, and that is why they too remain, just as the light remains as long as the sun remains. For we are not cut off from it or separated from it, even though the nature of body has intruded and dragged us toward itself. We breathe and are preserved, not because it gave and then went away, but because it always provides, as long as it is what it is. Yet we are more when we incline toward it, and our well-being lies There. [But] being far from it is simply being less. There the soul rests, outside evils, having run up to the place that is pure of evils. There it thinks, There it is free of affections, and There it truly lives. For our present life, the life without god, is a trace of life imitating that life. Life There is the activity of Intellect, and by that activity it begets gods too, in quiet contact with that. It begets beauty, it begets justice, it begets virtue. These are what the soul conceives when it is filled with god, and this is its beginning and its end. It is its beginning because the soul comes from There, and its end because the good is There. Coming to be There, it becomes itself, what it was. For to be here, among these things, is a falling away, an exile, a shedding of wings. That the good is There is shown also by the soul's inborn love. This is why Love is paired with souls in paintings and in myths.

Since the soul is other than god but comes from him, it loves him of necessity. When it is There, it has the heavenly love, but here it becomes common. There is a Heavenly Aphrodite There, but here she becomes Common, as though she had become a courtesan. And every soul is an Aphrodite. This is the hidden meaning of the birthday of Aphrodite, and of Love, who was born along with her. So the soul, in its natural state, loves god and wishes to be united with him, as a maiden loves her noble father with a noble love. But when she comes into becoming and is deceived, as it were, by suitors, she exchanges him for another, mortal love, and with her father gone she is abused. Then she comes to hate the outrages of this world, [and] purifies

herself of the things here, sets out once again toward her father, and is happy. Anyone to whom this experience is unknown should consider it starting from here, from the loves of this world: what it is like to win what one loves most. He should consider that these objects of love are mortal and harmful, loves of images, and that they change, because they were not what is truly loved, nor our good, nor what we seek. There is the true beloved, with whom one can be united, having a share in it and truly possessing it, not embracing it from outside in the flesh. Whoever has seen knows what I mean. The soul then has another life, as it approaches, as it has now come near and has a share in it, so that it is in a state to know that the giver of true life is present and that it needs nothing more. On the contrary, it must put away the other things and stand in this alone, and become this alone, cutting away everything else that we have wrapped around us. So we must hurry to get out of here, and chafe at being bound to the other things, so that we may embrace it with the whole of ourselves and have no part with which we do not touch god. There one can see both him and oneself, as it is lawful to see. One sees oneself made radiant, full of intelligible light, or rather light itself, pure, weightless, buoyant, having become a god, or rather being one: set alight then, but, if one grows heavy again, as it were dying down.

SEER AND SEEN

In the vision seer and seen become one; the sanctuary entered past the statues.

6.9.10 Why, then, does one not remain There? Because one has not yet come out entirely. But there will be a time when the vision is unbroken, when one is no longer troubled by any trouble from the body. What has seen is not what is troubled. It is the other part that is troubled, at the times when what has seen leaves off the vision but does not leave off the knowledge that lies in demonstrations, proofs, and the soul's reasoning things through. But the seeing, and what has seen, are no longer reason. They

are greater than reason, before reason and above reason, as is what is seen. When he sees himself then, at the moment of seeing, he will see himself as such. Or rather, he will be together with himself as such and perceive himself as such, having become simple. Perhaps we should not even say "he will see." As for what was seen, if we must say that these are two, the seer and the seen, and not that both are one (a bold thing to say): at that moment the seer neither sees nor distinguishes nor imagines two. He has become, as it were, someone else. He is not himself, nor his own, but belongs There. Having come to belong to that, he is one with it, like a center joined to a center. Here too, centers that have come together are one, and they are two when they are apart. That is how we, now, speak of it as other. That is also why the vision is hard to put into words. For how could one report it as something other, when one did not see it, at the time of the vision, as other, but as one with oneself?

6.9.11 This is what the injunction of the mysteries here means to make clear, the rule not to divulge them to the uninitiated. Since that is not to be divulged, it forbade revealing the divine to anyone who has not been fortunate enough to see it for himself. Since there were not two, then, but the seer himself was one with the seen, as with something not seen but united, whoever became this when he was mingled with that would, if he remembered, have within himself an image of that. He himself was one, with no difference within himself, neither in relation to himself nor in any other respect. Nothing in him was stirring. No anger, no desire for anything else was present in him once he had ascended. There was not even reason, nor any thinking, nor, if we must say this too, himself at all. As if snatched away, or possessed by a god, he has come to be quietly in a solitary calm, unshaken in his own being. He turns aside nowhere, does not even revolve around himself, but stands wholly still and has become, as it were, stillness. He is no longer among beautiful things. He has already run past beauty itself and passed beyond even the chorus of the virtues. He is like someone who has entered the inner sanctuary and left behind him the statues in

the temple. These become first again for him when he comes out of the sanctuary, after the vision within and the communion There, which was not with a statue or an image but with the thing itself. The statues, then, become secondary sights. But that, perhaps, was no sight. It was another way of seeing: ecstasy, simplification, a surrender of oneself, a reaching toward contact, stillness, and a thinking-around that seeks to fit itself to it, if one is to behold what is in the sanctuary.[3]

If one looks in some other way, nothing is present to him. These things, then, are imitations, and so they hint to the wise among the prophets how that god is seen. A wise priest who understands the riddle would make the vision real once he has come There, into the sanctuary. And even if he has not come There, he will consider this sanctuary something invisible and know it as source and principle. He will know that he sees principle by principle, and that like is united with like, neglecting none of the divine things the soul can have. Before the vision, he asks the vision for what still remains. And what remains, for one who has gone beyond all things, is what is before all things. For the nature of soul will not come to what is absolutely non-being. Going down, it will come to evil, and in that sense to non-being, but not to utter non-being. Running the opposite way, it will come not to something else but to itself. And so, not being in anything else, it is in nothing but in itself. And to be in itself alone, and not in being, is to be in that. For one becomes, oneself, not being but beyond being, in so far as one keeps company with it. If, then, one sees oneself become this, one has oneself as a likeness of that. And if one passes on from oneself, as an image to its archetype, one would reach the end of the journey. And when he falls away from the vision, he will rouse again the virtue within himself, see himself set in order in every part, and be lightened once more, going through virtue to Intellect and through wisdom to it. This is the life of gods and of godlike and blessed human beings: release from the other things of this

3 "Ecstasy" (*ekstasis*) means literally "standing outside" oneself.

world, a life that takes no pleasure in the things of this world, the flight of the alone to the alone.