

PLOTINUS: EDUCATION FOR ECSTASY

A thesis submitted by Dorothy Sly
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree
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BY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis looks at Plotinus as both educational theorist and practising educator. The problem addressed is whether Plotinus has a fully developed cohesive philosophy of education. Can his well-known Journey to the One be seen as an educational process? Can his highest mental/spiritual state, theoria, be attained through education?

The first step of the procedure was to become familiar with the Enneads in their entirety, principally in English translation, but with free recourse to the Greek text. Understanding of the Enneads required additional enquiry into Plotinus' philosophical and historical context. The next task was to draw out from Plotinus' writings his answers to the questions that are raised regarding any philosophy of education. What is man's place in the universe? What is the highest good? What is the goal of education? How does man learn? By what methods can education reach its goal?

A full philosophy of education emerged. In theory it pictured a man moving steadily up the educational path to theoria, the state where he can unite with God as nous, and where he can also stand ready for that higher union with the God beyond God, Plotinus' One. In practical detail, little was found regarding primary and secondary education. Higher education, on the other hand, was covered thoroughly.

The conclusion reached is that Plotinus has a rightful place in the history of educational thought. His philosophy of education is clearly developed and perennially valuable.

"The message of Plato, the purest and most luminous in all philosophy, has at last scattered the darkness of error, and now shines forth mainly in Plotinus, a Platonist so like his master that one would think they lived together, or rather--since so long a period of time separates them--that Plato is born again in Plotinus."

St. Augustine

'Contra Academicos'

"Teaching, as opposed to instruction, is the process of bringing a person, insofar as possible, to see: to see oneself as a human being; to see how human beings are essentially related to one another in an order of value; to see how each of us is an irreplaceable part of the universe in which we live, not because of what we do but of what we are; to see how if one human suffers, we all suffer; to see how if the earth is irreplaceably harmed, we are all harmed; to see organic unity in material multiplicity."

Frank R. Harrison III

in Chronicle of Higher Education, July 24, 1978,
p. 32. (Point of view)

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PLOTINUS: EDUCATION FOR ECSTASY

INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Method

The original title for this dissertation was "Plotinus' Philosophy of Education". Although I have changed the title, it was not because the first choice was a complete misnomer. Such being the case, an explanation is in order as to why it is being submitted to the Department of Religion and not the Faculty of Education.

It was after a number of years of teaching junior high school that I returned to formal studying, and I have continued to teach since then. I chose the study of religion for personal, not professional, satisfaction. That study eventually led to an interest in Plotinus, as a great religious thinker. As I proceeded in my reading of the *Enneads*, however, I found myself paying particular attention to Plotinus' discipline of the inner man, which struck me as being a theory about education. Being aware that many teachers, including myself, seem unable to articulate a philosophy of education, and sensing that I was basically in sympathy with Plotinus' views, I felt that further study in this direction would help me set my goals as a teacher, as indeed it has done.

Before I began to read Plotinus, I had been impressed by a lecture I heard in the spring of 1977 entitled "The Religion of Study".¹ For me Plotinus provided, among other things, an echo to the message of that lecture. Plotinus' religion was certainly one of study. The *Enneads* and Porphyry's *Life* lead us to believe that worship in the sense of participation in religious rites had no part in the life of this essentially religious man. It was through the discipline of the mind that he rose to the experiences of ecstatic union with the divine. In his school he taught his students how they might focus their eyes upon the reality of the universe. Even prayer was a discipline, as we see in the striking passage from *Enneads* V.1.6: "ὦδε οὖν λεγέσθω Θεὸν αὐτὸν ἐπικαλεσαμένοις σὺ λόγῳ γεγωνῶ, ἀλλὰ τῇ ψυχῇ ἐκτείναςιν ἑαυτοὺς εἰς εὐχὴν πρὸς ἐκεῖνον, εὐχεσθαι τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον δυναμένους μόνους πρὸς μόνον."

". . . we first invoke God Himself, not in loud word but in that way of prayer which is always within our power, leaning in soul towards Him by aspiration, alone towards the alone."² For these reasons I believe that Plotinus, as student and teacher, cannot be divorced from Plotinus as religious mystic.

Having chosen to concentrate upon this aspect of Plotinus' thought, the task I have set myself is to discover whether Plotinus had a fully developed philosophy of education and a clearly expressed method of attaining θεωρία, or contemplation.

¹ This was a lecture by Prof. K. Klostermaier, based on his article with the same title in *Tradition* 1-12.

² *Enneads*, V.1.6, trans. S. MacKenna, 4th edition revised by B. S. Page. London, 1969.

(*Θεωρία*, a word not easily defined as Plotinus uses it, is nevertheless popularly known as Plotinus' name for the highest activity of which man is capable. Its many facets are examined in R. Arnou's classic work, *Πράξις et Θεωρία*. For reasons which I shall explain more fully in the following paragraph, I shall study it from several angles in the course of this thesis.)

The task of trying to discover Plotinus' philosophy of education will not be a simple one, for it entails examination of the whole text of the *Enneads*. One might suggest that an easier approach, and an even safer one, would be to find an accepted interpretation of the *Enneads* and to extract therefrom all the material that seems pertinent to education. But although valuable studies do exist, there appears to be no one definitive interpretation. Indeed I have become convinced that there is truth in J. M. Rist's words of caution: "Perhaps no philosopher has been accorded more respect and less understanding than Plotinus."¹ And so it has seemed the far wiser course to muster all the resources available to me and try to come to terms with the primary material. In other words, I have tried to become involved in the hermeneutic circle with Plotinus himself. Regarding Plotinus' use of words, I have found validity in Rist's further warning against "misunderstanding engendered by a too literal-minded interpretation of key phrases"². Many of his terms, even

¹ J. M. Rist, *Plotinus, the Road to Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1967), p. 21.

² *Ibid.*

time-honoured philosophic terms, become for Plotinus like multi-faceted jewels. They defy definition, for their appearance changes as they turn in the light. Plotinus' repeated examination of such terms lays him open to the charge of being overly repetitious. I have found that this tendency towards repetition lies almost in the nature of the material and I have been unable to eliminate it entirely from this work.

Outline

The format of this thesis is very simple. I have based it on what I understand to be the generally accepted scope of any philosophy of education.¹ It entails first of all a study of man and his place in the world. Then there must be an examination of what is good and valuable and therefore worth directing education towards. There is also a need to look at knowledge: what is man capable of learning, and how does he do it? After establishing these matters, one is ready to move on to questions of method. I shall preface my study of Plotinus' philosophy of education with a chapter designed to give historical and biographical background. Thus the chapter headings will be as follows: The Historical Setting, Plotinus' World View, The Highest Good: the Goal of Education, Plotinus' Psychology, and Curriculum and Method. The concluding chapter will return to the more practical and personal note struck at the beginning of this introduction, in asking what relevance Plotinus may present to a person develop-

¹ See, for example, the opening pages to A. M. Dupuis, *Philosophy of Education in Historical Perspective* (Chicago: Rand McNally and Co., 1966).

ing a philosophy of education today.

Texts and Translations

We have one major source of information about Plotinus--the *Life* by his pupil Porphyry, who also collected and edited his writings, arranging them into six books of nine treatises each, called the *Enneads*. It is customary for the *Life* to be published as a preface to the *Enneads*. For the Greek text of the first five *Enneads* I have used P. Henry and H.-R. Schwyzer's version, published in 1964 (Books I-III) and 1977 (Books IV and V). The Loeb publication, which covers only the first three books, with translation by A. H. Armstrong, also relies on Henry and Schwyzer. Stephen MacKenna's first translation, which appeared between 1917 and 1930, used earlier versions of the Greek text. In revising the fourth edition of MacKenna in 1969, B. S. Page also made use of Henry and Schwyzer's work, which was then in the process of being published. Because the Henry-Schwyzer Sixth *Ennead* is not available, I have used an 1878 text by Mueller. I have not found any substantial difficulties rising out of the text itself. Many differences of opinion are noted with regard to isolated words, and there are a couple of places where the text is corrupt, but there is nothing I consider significant for the type of work I have undertaken here.

Most of my reading has been in English translations. The Bréhier French translation and the Harder German translation were available, but I seldom referred to them. In English there are the K. S. Guthrie translation of 1918, the MacKenna translation revised in 1969, and the A. H. Armstrong translation of the first

three *Enneads*, published by Loeb in 1966 and 1967. It is unfortunate that only these three volumes in Loeb have been published to date, because Armstrong's scholarship is sound and his English is clear. Guthrie is obscure and pedantic. Recognizing that MacKenna's work was designed as an English literary work, Page has refused to sacrifice style to content in his revision; he has retained nebulous terms like "the Supreme", which can refer to the higher world, the One or *νοῦς*, and this free handling of the text has necessitated careful checking of it by me. Nevertheless, for the sake of consistency, I originally planned to use MacKenna's translation throughout. However, as the work has progressed, I have modified that plan somewhat. Where I have quoted a passage in which I feel MacKenna has taken too many liberties, I have substituted my own translation, but have italicized the words that are my own. I have frequently included key Greek terms in parentheses, because the best translation often misses shades of meaning in the original language. Finally, where I have found that Armstrong's translation is far superior to MacKenna's, I have used it in making quotations from the first three books.

I. THE HISTORICAL SETTING

Plotinus in the Context of Greek Philosophy

We call Plotinus the great Neoplatonist--on the surface a simple term--namely, a teacher of a new Platonism. But how, precisely, are we to interpret that term? Was he a mere imitator? Surely not, for if that were so we would do better to discard the copy and consult the original itself. And that would be tantamount to denying the testimony of generations of scholars who have found Plotinus worth studying. Could it be, then, that Plotinus uses the name of Plato as a fashionable endorsement for his own original ideas? Or, again, is he offering us a new improved Plato? I am convinced that these two suggestions are as frivolous as the first.

What I do believe is that Plotinus, a man of extraordinary spiritual insight, recognized in Plato a kindred spirit. That is, what he found in Plato harmonized with what Plotinus knew, not only from speculation but also from inner experience, to be the truth.

Plotinus acknowledges his debt thus:

These teachings are . . . no novelties, no inventions of today, but long since stated, if not stressed; our doctrine here is the explanation of an earlier and can show the antiquity of these opinions on the testimony

of Plato himself.¹

Furthermore, throughout the *Enneads* he has scattered quotations from the master, prefaced by the simple word $\varphi\eta\sigma\acute{\iota}$ 'he says'--an indication of the authority Plato's words carry for him.

To be sure, if for no other reason than that no one writes in a vacuum, there were other sources. The debt to Aristotle is considered important; for example, A. H. Armstrong notes that Aristotle's "doctrine of the mind which becomes what it thinks was one of Plotinus' most powerful weapons in breaking down the rigid subject-object distinction in the spiritual world".² Shades of Stoicism are also easy to find. In fact, much scholarly work has been done in this area. Testimony to this is a 450-page volume, number V in *Entretiens Hardt*, entitled *Les Sources de Plotin*. Nevertheless, the common judgment has not been altered, that Plato was Plotinus' inspirational source and his spiritual father.

I have already suggested that Plotinus' recurrent references to Plato were made out of respect. I also believe that they display characteristics of a polemic, a challenge to those who called themselves Platonists but whose teachings went contrary to the spirit of Platonism as Plotinus saw it. The short passage quoted on the preceding page could certainly be read in that light.

What then was the spirit of Platonism as Plotinus saw it?

¹ *Enneads*, V.1.8, trans. MacKenna.

² A. H. Armstrong, "Plotinus and India," *The Classical Quarterly*, XXX (1936), p. 24.

It cannot be stated in a nutshell. Over the next few pages I shall try to help the reader develop an understanding of it.

Whether or not Plotinus was familiar with the whole corpus of Plato's works as we know it today is a moot point; we do know that he does not quote from all the dialogues. The ones which are now judged to be the earliest are ignored. It is doubtful that this happened because Plotinus had more respect for the more mature Plato; indeed, there is no indication that he was aware of a development in Plato's thought. It is more likely that, as H.-R. Schwyzer suggests, the subject matter of the earliest dialogues was of a localized nature and did not lend itself to Plotinus' time and place. Furthermore, Plotinus, who believed he already *had* the answers, was more at home with the dialogues that contained lengthy discourses than with those which served to stir up an assortment of opinions. Thus his fondness for the *Symposium*, the *Phaedrus*, the *Timaeus* and the *Parmenides*.¹ He also relied heavily upon the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*.

Our presuppositions flavor the way in which we read any author. We can imagine the widely divergent interpretations of Plato that might have prevailed in Plotinus' day if we look at a modern interpretation of a particular passage in the *Republic*, and then try to see the passage through Plotinian eyes. Plato has been describing the education of the Guardians. Paul Shorey says:

¹ H.-R. Schwyzer, "'Bewusst' und 'Unbewusst' bei Plotin", *Entretiens Hardt V* (Geneva, 1960).

. . . the consummation of it all is described poetically as the 'vision of the idea of the Good' (540 A)--which, however, . . . turns out to mean, for all practical purposes, the apprehension of some rational unified conception of the social aim and human well-being, and the consistent relating of all particular beliefs and measures to that ideal--a thing which can be achieved only by the most highly developed intelligence.¹

There is no hint of the transcendent in that interpretation. Yet imagine yourself as Plotinus reading the same passage in the *Republic*. (I quote from Cornford's translation.) "They must lift up the eye of the soul to gaze on that which sheds light on all things; and when they have seen the Good itself, take it as a pattern for the right ordering of the state and of the individual, themselves included." Since he equated the Good with the One, Plotinus would see here the prototype of the vision of the One which he himself had experienced.² As we shall see presently, all education was for him a focusing of the inner eye, culminating in an unspeakably beautiful vision of the source of all, an otherworldly sight. And these words of Plato would confirm his belief that the master has seen it too.

I present the foregoing material to illustrate how easily two incompatible interpretations could jostle for position under

¹ Paul Shorey, trans. *Republic*, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 2, p. xl.

² This point is made by J. M. Rist, *Plotinus, The Road to Reality* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1967), p. 65. "He [Plotinus] supposed, however, that the quest [of the philosopher] would terminate with the attainment of the Good beyond Being of the sixth book of the *Republic*."

the umbrella term Platonism. Let us look now to the various manners in which the Platonic tradition (or traditions) may have been transmitted.

The official organ of transmission was the Academy, which in Plotinus' time had already existed for over six centuries without a break, and which continued until A. D. 529. Porphyry's short biography, "On the Life of Plotinus and the Arrangement of his Work" (hereafter referred to as the *Vita*), affords us evidence that Plotinus bore no special allegiance to the teachings or the personnel of the Academy of his day. It seems that when the scholarch of the Academy, Eubulus, sent over some of his own material on Plato, Plotinus did not bother to read it himself; in chapter 15 Porphyry writes, "When Eubulus, the Platonic Successor, wrote from Athens, sending treatises on some questions in Platonism, Plotinus had the writings put into my hands with instructions to examine them and report to him upon them."¹ Hardly an attitude of deference! Nor did Plotinus waste compliments on Longinus, well-known philosopher who taught in Athens for thirty years. The comment Porphyry quotes is, "Longinus is a man of letters, but in no sense a philosopher."² Yet if we are to believe Porphyry, Longinus held Plotinus in high regard, higher than Eubulus himself and nearly all others.

. . . he ranks Plotinus and Amelius above all authors of his time in the multitude of ques-

¹ *Vita*, ch. 15, trans. MacKenna.

² *Vita*, ch. 14, trans. MacKenna.

tions they discuss; he credits them with an original method of investigation: in his judgment they by no means took their system from Numenius or gave a first place to his opinions, but followed the Pythagorean and Platonic schools; finally he declares the writings of Numenius, Cronius, Moderatus, and Thrasyllus greatly inferior in precision and fullness to those of Plotinus.¹

We may gather from his somewhat casual attitude to two of the leading representatives of the Academy that Plotinus did not regard it as the live bearer of the Platonic tradition. Further evidence could be taken from the simple biographical fact that Plotinus took all his schooling, presumably by choice, in Alexandria. In summation, let me quote Philip Merlan: "For Plotinus the New Academy simply does not exist."²

In his detailed study of Greek philosophy from Plato to Plotinus, Merlan shows how the mainstream of Platonism branched off into many rivulets of thought in the ancient world, some of them combined with teaching from the other great schools. Albinus, for example, represents a syncretistic Platonism, showing shades of Aristotle and the Stoics. There were some Platonists who taught at Alexandria. Of some of the diverse Platonists we have records and written teachings. But because of a peculiar tradition, in which Plato himself plays a major role, there were

¹ Porphyry, *Vita*, ch. 21, trans. MacKenna. Longinus is also mentioned in chapter 20.

² P. Merlan, "Greek Philosophy from Plato to Plotinus," ch. 4, *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A. H. Armstrong (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1967), p. 62.

probably many who refused to commit their thoughts to writing. According to this tradition, philosophy was too precious to be taught like any other subject; it needed person-to-person contact. Written words could too easily be misunderstood. For an example of this attitude we have the apparent lack of any writings of or about Plotinus' own revered teacher, Ammonius Saccas. It appears that he had even sworn his pupils to secrecy. Porphyry records: "Erennius, Origen, and Plotinus had made a compact not to disclose any of the doctrines which Ammonius had revealed to them. Plotinus kept faith, and in all his intercourse with his associates divulged nothing of Ammonius' system."¹ Given the prevalence of this mood of secrecy, we may safely conjecture that there were transmitters of Platonism of whom we may never know, precisely because they relied upon the spoken word alone. Perhaps Ammonius himself was one such teacher.

It is not difficult to find this same mistrust of the written word, perhaps ironically, in the writings of Plato himself. Take for example, Socrates' speech in 277 and 278 of the *Phaedrus*. I quote it in abbreviated form from Jowett's translation:

But he who thinks that in the written word, whatever its subject, there is necessarily much which is not serious . . . and who thinks that even the best of writings are but a memorandum for those who know, and that only in principles of justice and goodness and nobility taught and communicated orally for the sake of instruction and graven in the soul, which is the true way of writing, is there clearness and perfection and seriousness . . .

¹ *Vita*, ch. 3, trans. MacKenna.

--this is the right sort of man; and you and I, Phaedrus, would pray that we may become like him.¹

For several years after he had established his own school at Rome, Plotinus remained true to the spirit of Plato in that he refused to write. When he finally did succumb to pressure, Porphyry tells us that "the distribution was still grudging and secret; those that obtained them [the writings] had passed the strictest scrutiny."²

As I suggested earlier, the reason for this reluctance to write was a belief that something dynamic happens between the teacher and the learner of philosophy. There is something not merely to be taught, but rather to be caught. At this point it should be noted that the Platonic letters, which have at certain times since then been judged spurious, were considered authentic by Plotinus. In chapter 2 of his "Greek Philosophy . . ." Merlan notes that Plotinus drew particularly upon the 2nd, 6th and 7th. The notion of a live transmitter comes out in the 7th letter when the metaphor of two sticks being rubbed together to produce a spark suggests the person-to-person dialectic process. Plotinus must have felt a particular kinship to Plato on this point, for he quotes him verbatim in V.3.17: "We may know that we have had the vision when the Soul has suddenly taken light."³ "τότε δὲ

¹ B. Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 2 (London: Sphere Books, 1970), p. 298.

² *Vita*, ch. 4, trans. MacKenna.

³ *Enneads*, V.3.17, trans. MacKenna.

χρή ἐωρακέναι πιστεύειν, ὅταν ἡ ψυχὴ ἐξαίφνης φῶς λάβῃ."

Referring to the original passage in the 7th letter, Merlan says:

"The 7th teaches us that *what is obviously the core of Plato's thought cannot be taught in the same manner in which all other branches of knowledge can*, but, as a result of long endeavours, something like a spark is kindled in the soul . . ." ¹ W. W.

Jaeger's commentary on the same passage is this:

. . . the image of the spark which jumps across between two pieces of wood rubbed together: that is how the spark of knowledge kindles a soul which has gone through the long rubbing process of dialectic. The apprehension by the light of which it is kindled is a creative act of which few are capable, and they only through their own strength, with a little guidance.²

It must have been through his own contact with Ammonius Saccas that Plotinus had experienced the kindling of the spark.

At twenty-seven he was caught by the passion for philosophy: he was directed to the most highly reputed professors to be found at Alexandria; but he used to come from their lectures saddened and discouraged. A friend to whom he opened his heart divined his temperamental craving and suggested Ammonius, whom he had not yet tried. Plotinus went, heard a lecture, and exclaimed to his comrade: 'This was the man I was looking for.'³

¹ P. Merlan, "Greek Philosophy", p. 30.

² Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: the Ideals of Greek Culture*, trans. Gilbert Highet (Oxford, 1939-1944), vol. 3, p. 208.

³ Porphyry, *Vita*, ch. 3, trans. MacKenna.

In all probability, Plotinus became, through Ammonius, heir to one of the oral traditions of the teachings of Plato which by their very nature can be known to us only through conjecture. One fact we do know about the oral tradition is that it must have been the way word was passed on about Plato's series of lectures, "On the Good". Although we have no information about the content of those lectures, several writers of the ancient world refer to them; Plotinus may very well have learned about them from his teachers.

In the foregoing pages I have attempted to outline the Platonism that Plotinus knew. In summary, it appears that Plotinus barely considered some of the early dialogues which were addressed to a time and place foreign to him; on the other hand, he relied heavily on the dialogues which contain long monologues revealing a definite philosophical position. He drew upon several of Plato's letters. And he knew the "unwritten doctrines" of Plato, such as those delivered in the lecture series, "On the Good".

From my point of view Plotinus' educational philosophy bears many similarities to that of Plato. However, that opinion would not be shared by all. There are several reasons. One is that Plato has a detailed plan for each of the stages of education, whereas Plotinus concentrates on higher education. Another is that much of Plato's education is for everyone, while Plotinus admits that the majority of people would neither qualify, nor apply, for his. Furthermore, Plato can be read in a "mystical"

or "non-mystical" sense, but there is no doubt about Plotinus on that score. Thus it is possible to find an account of Plato's philosophy of education that bears no resemblance to the material that is going to be put forward in this thesis. Robin Barrow's *Plato and Education* is an example. Barrow sets out to make Plato palatable to twentieth-century logical-positivists; Plato's great achievement in education, according to Barrow, was the origination of conceptual analysis. Setting aside such an interpretation, I believe that in his educational philosophy Plotinus is true to the spirit of Plato; in particular, there are parallels well worth exploring between the education of the Guardians and the journey of the soul, between the Vision of the Good and Union with God.

Philosophies of Education in the Ancient World

Let us sketch out the philosophies that coloured education in the ancient world, paying particular attention to Plato's. Plato developed his thoughts in a situation in which the Sophists had monopolized Athenian education for one hundred years. They stressed rhetoric and practical politics; their aim was to educate leaders who would bring Athens hegemony in a panhellenic union. At its worst, sophism could degenerate into the teaching of empty words, but at its best it espoused an ideal that was practical and popular. Isocrates represents the flowering point of the sophistic movement in education. The strength of the attack Plato makes upon him and his movement may actually be an indication of the hold the Sophists had upon the Athenian populace. Nor did sophism die out after Plato's attacks. W. Jaeger

calls the conflict between Plato and Isocrates "the first battle in the centuries of war between philosophy and rhetoric".¹ For the most part, the sophists were agnostics who recognized practical success as the end of education. Plato, on the other hand, recognized an absolute truth to which he believed the human mind had access. Therefore education must not culminate in worldly success. He believed, certainly, that one of the aims of education was to give direct benefit to the state. Realizing that the majority of the people are more fit to be trained in right opinion than educated in underlying principles, he put a lot of effort into plans to amend current lower school practices to develop good citizens for the state. But he also believed that leaders must have a vision of truth, and the crowning glory of his system was the education for the Guardians.

The early schooling being finished at age eighteen, an Athenian youth would serve his compulsory two years of military service. Then, if he were going to pursue higher education, Plato suggested that the years from twenty to thirty be spent in study of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and harmonics. The study from ages thirty to fifty was dialectics, a term somewhat difficult to define. My understanding of its use in Plato is that it was a relentless searching after truth by two mature minds. The question once again rises whether the object of the search was a unifying principle of knowledge or something entirely transcendent. I quote only two passages in which Plato

¹ Jaeger, vol. 3, p. 46.

deals with dialectics, the first from Helmbold and Rabinowitz' translation of the *Phaedrus* and the second from Cornford's translation of the *Republic*:

Now I myself, Phaedrus, am a lover of these divisions and collections, in order that I may gain the ability both to think and to speak; and if I consider any other man capable of concentrating his vision on a unity that is natural and extending it to multiplicities that are natural, in his footsteps I follow just as though he were a god. And . . . up to the moment I have been calling them dialecticians.¹

So here, the summit of the intelligible world is reached in philosophic discussion by one who aspires, through the discourse of reason unaided by any of the senses, to make his way in every case to the essential reality and perseveres until he has grasped by pure intelligence the very nature of Goodness itself. This journey is what we call Dialectic.²

Some scholars, like Shorey and Barrow, who were mentioned earlier in this chapter, interpret dialectic as the search for a uniting principle. Others see it as aiming at a transcendent experience, of the same nature as that described in the 7th letter. Jaeger, for example, takes that interpretation from the *Republic* and sees it verified in the *Laws*, so that he concludes: ". . . in Plato's thought there is no possible educational knowledge which does not find its origin, its direction and its aim in the knowledge of

¹ *Phaedrus*, 266 b, trans. Helmbold and Rabinowitz (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), p. 55f.

² *Republic*, 532 a,b, trans. Cornford (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1941), p. 252.

God."¹ I am convinced that this was Plotinus' interpretation, which led to the development of his aim for education, union with the One.

Before leaving this discussion of Plato's philosophy I would like to quote from the *Republic* a fairly long passage on the meaning of education, a passage expressing thoughts that Plotinus revitalizes six centuries later. Here we see several themes which Plotinus develops: that education deals with what is already within and not with externals, that it is essentially a focusing of the vision of the soul, that it carries the learner away from this ordinary world, that the rewards are ineffably glorious:

. . . we must conclude that education is not what it is said to be by some, who profess to put knowledge into a soul which does not possess it, as if they could put sight into blind eyes. On the contrary, our own account signifies that the soul of every man does possess the power of learning the truth and the organ to see it with; and that, just as one might have to turn the whole body round in order that the eye should see light instead of darkness, so the entire soul must be turned away from this changing world, until its eye can bear to contemplate reality and that supreme splendour which we have called the Good. Hence there may well be an art whose aim would be to effect this very thing, the conversion of the soul, in the readiest way; not to put the power of sight into the soul's eye, which already has it, but to ensure that, instead of looking in the wrong direction, it is turned the way it ought to be.²

¹ Jaeger, vol. 3, p. 262.

² *Republic*, 518, trans. Cornford, p. 232.

For years Sophism and Platonism vied for position as educational philosophies. Eventually two other points of view emerged, those of Aristotle and of the Stoics. It is not to the point of this thesis to go into detail about these. It is sufficient to say that they sided with the educational philosophy of the Sophists insofar as they confined the purpose of education to this mundane life. Aristotle wanted first to mold moral character in the individual and the community and then to prepare the soul for the right enjoyment of leisure after practical needs had been satisfied.¹ The Stoics taught that a person needed education so that he would "know how to conform to nature and thus be happy and live wisely".² Now it is certainly true that Plotinus incorporated Aristotelian and Stoic elements into his general philosophy. But concerning education, these people were too short-sighted for him. Of course, one must learn to get along in this world, to keep the body alive and free from pain; but all that effort has meaning only insofar as it enables the soul to get on with the real business of living, which is to forget the body and find its true home in the world of the Mind. And so he developed a philosophy of education that was in harmony with Plato's.

The Age of Plotinus

Nevertheless, Plotinus lived in times vastly different from

¹ L. Kendzierski, "Aristotle and Pagan Education," *Some Philosophies of Education*, ed. D. Gallagher (Milwaukee, 1965), p. 31.

² Robert R. Sherman, *Democracy, Stoicism and Education* (Gainsville, 1973), p. 46.

Plato's. Let us look at third-century Rome, where Plotinus taught. The day of the city-state was long past, and Hellenistic culture pervaded the Roman Empire. So too did Roman rule. Established in the principate with the high intention "to assert afresh the ideal of justice alike against the powerful forces of monopoly and the excesses of mob-rule",¹ it had reached its fruition in the second century, the time called by Gibbon "the happiest and most prosperous period in the history of the human race".² The ensuing century, however, was one of disintegration and decay. It saw rapid social deterioration characterized by violence, destruction of private and public law, invasions by barbarian hordes, economic and social distress, plagues, famine and inflation. In such an age of disintegration, would even a Plato have dreamed of the wholesale reform of society that he had planned for the Athens of his day? Not likely. Even Plato had finally realized how remote was the chance of finding a society that could be ruled by philosophers, and had written in despair:

One . . . who has watched the frenzy of the multitude and seen that there is no soundness in the conduct of public life, nowhere an ally at whose side a champion of justice could hope to escape destruction; but that, like a man fallen among wild beasts, if he should refuse to take part in their misdeeds and could not hold out alone against the fury of all, he would be destined, before he could be of any service to his country or his friends, to perish, having done no good to

¹ C. N. Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture* (Oxford, 1940), p. 24.

² quoted by Cochrane, p. 144.

himself or to anyone else--one who has weighed all this keeps quiet and goes his own way, like the traveller who takes shelter under a wall from a driving storm of dust and hail; and seeing lawlessness spreading on all sides, is content if he can keep his hands clean from iniquity while this life lasts, and when the end comes take his departure, with good hopes, in serenity and peace.¹

No, in the third century political reform was out of the reach of an individual. In such an age two choices seemed to be open--passive conformity, which would tend towards the Stoic acceptance of one's lot in life, and escape. Escape could hardly be physical, but it could be spiritual. Cochrane notes that the third century saw a fascination with Orientalism; there was a study of, and a persistent belief in, luck as well as determinism, both astrological and solar; and there was a rise of Gnosticism.² Plotinus' detractors would charge him with escapism, too. Certainly he was a man of his age, but when we look at the details of his life we shall see that he was far more than an idle dreamer. He did not plan such grandiose schemes as Plato, but neither do we find in all of the *Enneads* the note of despair evident in the passage just quoted from Plato.

Plotinus: his Life and Work

It was in the imperial city of Rome, halfway through the tumultuous third century, that Plotinus began to teach. His life in Rome is chronicled for us by his disciple, Porphyry. Since

¹ *Republic*, 496, trans. Cornford, p. 204.

² Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture*, ch. 4.

we are concerned here with Plotinus' philosophy of education, let us concentrate first upon those details which will help us picture the setting in which Plotinus tried to put his educational theories into practice.

In 244 A. D., at about the age of forty, Plotinus came to Rome and remained there until shortly before his death in 270. We have already noted that for several years he did not write, and when he did begin, he carefully screened those who were to read his manuscripts. His lectures, however, were open to the public. He was a patient teacher who was easily diverted by his listeners' questions. When a question was asked, he refused to move on until the questioner was satisfied, though the answer might take a day or two and the rest of the class grow bored!

The lectures attracted a cosmopolitan audience. As well, some of his listeners were high-placed Romans. One such, a senator, Rogantianus, earned Plotinus' praise by giving up the luxuries of his social position and adopting his teacher's ascetic habits. Although Plotinus advocated detachment from political ambition, he had several friends in the senate and held the respect of the emperor and his wife. At one time there were plans afoot for him to obtain some land through his influence at court. The land was to be the site for a city of philosophers, aptly called Platonopolis. Unfortunately, the plan was scuttled by some lesser persons at court.

As well as the men, both Roman and foreign, there were several women who came to hear the lectures in philosophy, and who formed part of the household. Porphyry's work suggests that

Plotinus ran a sort of community or extended household. There were a number of children left in his care, and he tended to their schooling and kept scrupulous watch over their finances. He also had a leading role in the management of the servants.

Because Plotinus' teachings amounted to a way of life, it is possible that his school was a sort of spiritual community. In the first century, Philo had written about the communities of the Therapeutae, in his work, *Περὶ βίου Θεωρητικῶν*. These writings, and perhaps even extant communities, would have been well known in Alexandria, where Plotinus studied. Indeed, the school of Ammonius Saccas may have been such a community. That is the suggestion Bréhier puts forward in the introduction to his translation. If that were indeed so, there would be all the more likelihood of Plotinus and his followers forming a community withdrawn from the affairs of the world and dedicated to the study of philosophy. In that case, it was already a make-shift Platonopolis.

At all events, it was a school. In one particular it differed from other schools. That was in the age of its pupils. In the ancient world it was a general rule that formal education ended at an early age, and even difficult subjects like philosophy were taught to teenagers.¹ Plotinus, like Plato, seems to have broken with the rule and reserved philosophy for an older age group. The children's schooling in the community, which

¹ M. L. Clarke, *Higher Education in the Ancient World* (Albuquerque, 1971), p. 6.

Porphyry mentions, was not the curriculum that Plotinus taught, but something much more elementary. Plotinus' own followers appear to have been adults. For example, Porphyry came to him at the age of thirty and remained six years, while Amelius stayed on as a learner for twenty-four years.

The portrait Porphyry paints of Plotinus is that of a man who could live on two planes at once. We see him at his desk, committing his thoughts to paper, then interrupted to deal with some practical matter, but able to return without pause to his original train of thought. Thus he was able to balance the duties of a good citizen with his devotion to philosophy. Porphyry avers that Plotinus was held in such esteem by his fellow citizens that after twenty-six years he had not made a single enemy. As well as being chosen guardian to numerous boys and girls, he was invited to arbitrate in disputes. He attended to all his responsibilities with great care. Nevertheless, "all this labour and thought over the worldly interests of so many people never interrupted, during waking hours, his intention *towards the things of the spirit* (*πρὸς τὸν νοῦν*)." ¹

¹ *Vita*, ch. 9, trans. MacKenna. Modified where italicized.

II. PLOTINUS' WORLD VIEW

This chapter starts with a consideration of the mystical experience that appears to have led to Plotinus' sense of certainty about his metaphysics. Next I discuss the two worlds and the three hypostases. After that I examine man's place in the system. The chapter ends with a study of four separate topics that are significant for Plotinus' philosophy of education.

The Certainty Arising from Plotinus' Spiritual Experience

Plotinus claims to have a comprehensive picture of reality. He has the answers. It is true that the *Enneads* record objections raised by his pupils, and step-by-step working out of those objections; but Plotinus does not give ground. His lectures or seminars were not joint explorations of unknown pathways. He had already been to the end of the road. Now he was directing others along that same path. One cannot fail to recognize in reading the *Enneads* that the basis is empirical; or, as J. M. Rist puts it, "It must be the opinion of anyone who studies the *Enneads* that Plotinus' major motive for philosophizing is to rationalize his own intuitions and experiences."¹ We noted in chapter one, that Plotinus spent several years searching for a philosophy

¹ J. M. Rist, *The Road to Reality* (Cambridge, 1967), p. 185.

which rang true to his experience, and apparently found it with Ammonius Saccas. In its final form, as we meet it in the *Enneads*, it is an amalgam derived from several schools of thought, largely based on the Platonic system, but tested against the inner happenings of Plotinus' life. A. H. Armstrong puts it this way: "In Plotinus's description of the One we have, as elsewhere in the *Enneads*, a profound and sensitive, if at times somewhat confused, account of the spiritual life poured into the mould of an already complex metaphysical tradition."¹

And what is Plotinus' profound spiritual experience? It can be analyzed as both a seeing and a becoming identified with the source of all being. But those are the kinds of terms Plotinus uses to describe the experience after the event--when, indeed, he is not protesting that it is indescribable! Sometimes he resorts to metaphors, saying that it is the feeling of lovers for one another, the home-coming of a Ulysses, or the singing of a choir member in perfect contact with the choir leader. But what I am trying to establish here is the authenticity of the experience, the fact that it made a decisive impact upon the man's life and thought. For that we need to read his own words:

Suppose the soul to have attained: the highest has come to her, or rather has revealed its presence; . . . the soul has now no further awareness of being in body and will give herself no foreign name, not man, not living being, not being, not all; any observation of such things

¹ A. H. Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Cambridge, 1940), p. 28.

falls away; the soul has neither time nor taste for them; This she sought and This she has found and on This she looks and not upon herself; and who she is that looks she has not leisure to know. Once There she will barter for This nothing the universe holds; . . . In this happiness she knows beyond delusion that she is happy; for this is no affirmation of an excited body but of a soul become again what she was in the time of her early joy. All that she had welcomed of old--office, power, wealth, beauty, knowledge--of all she tells her scorn as she never could had she not found their better; linked to This she can fear no disaster, nor even once she has had the vision; let all about her fall to pieces, so she would have it that she may be wholly with This, so huge the happiness she has won to.¹

This is but one of many passages in the *Enneads* which convey the immediacy of Plotinus' mystical experience. Although we shall have occasion to try to analyze the experience later on, let us look now at some of its salient features. First, it seems to come from within, "the highest has come to her, *or rather has revealed its presence*" "μᾶλλον δὲ παρὸν φανήν". It is an experience that leaves behind the trappings of earthly life and of individuality. It carries with it a sense of having become what one ought to be, "a soul become again what she was in the time of her early joy", in fact, a type of homecoming. It compensates for all the disappointments of the earthly life. It is greater not only than power and wealth but also than intellectual and aesthetic attainment.

The metaphysical system Plotinus developed was one that

¹ *Enneads*, VI.7.34, trans. MacKenna.

would accommodate itself to this profound inner experience.

The Two Worlds and the Three Hypostases

The world we as bodily creatures experience is not the only world. There is another world, a non-material world, which is the pattern for this one. Plotinus uses two adverbs to designate these two worlds; ἐν ταῦθα, here, means in the material world, and ἐκεῖ, there, means in the non-material world. Similarly, ταῦτα refers to the things of this world, and ἐκεῖνα to the things of the upper world, while ἐκεῖνο, 'This', refers to God, as in the passage quoted above. Man can move through both worlds. If the body rules him, he must stay in the material world, but if the inner man can control the body, it (the inner man) can soar aloft and experience spiritual delights. There are degrees of spiritual joy, the highest being that described above in the quotation from the sixth *Ennead*.

There are three levels of being, although technically we should not use the term 'being' for the highest one, for it is transcendent, beyond being. Therefore the term hypostasis is preferred. The three hypostases are the One, νοῦς and ψυχή. Let us look at them in turn. The One is the source of all being, which, though giving of itself, is never diminished. Plotinus uses the metaphor of the sun shedding its rays. The One's perfection is expressed in its very name; it is the only true unity. It has no attributes, no limitations whatsoever, and, as we have said, it is beyond being. In this, Plotinus is breaking new ground for Greek philosophy. Aristotle's god had been the mind that thinks itself; but Plotinus argued that such a being was not

a true unity, for even though subject and object of thought be melded, yet they can be analyzed as two entities. Plotinus' *second* hypostasis is similar to Aristotle's god; the One is higher. It is totally other. This is the first instance in Greek thought, notes A. H. Armstrong, of a ground of being different in kind from that of which it is the ground.¹ It may seem surprising, then, that this distant god, the One, should evoke any response in man. Yet it does call forth intense devotion. Plotinus explains the phenomenon by saying that it is part of our nature to be drawn towards unity: ". . . it precedes even the principle by which we affirm unquestionably that all things seek their good; for this universal quest of good depends on the fact that all aim at unity and possess unity and that universally effort is towards unity."² The reader may still object that there appears to be some incongruity here; a rational explanation of our relation to the One does not fit in with ardent worship. Yet we find the two side by side in the *Enneads*--pages of dull, cold metaphysical explanation next to passages of fervent adoration. This may be another instance of the blending of several influences on Plotinus. Armstrong says:

It may, perhaps, be said that while the objectivity of Plotinus' devotion to the Supreme is Platonist-Aristotelian, its passion is Stoic, or at least is the result of that stream of intense religious feeling from the East which makes its first entry

¹ Armstrong, *The Architecture*, ch. 1.

² *Enneads*, VI.5.1, trans. MacKenna.

into the Graeco-Roman world with Stoicism.¹

Be that as it may, we need to recognize both these attitudes toward the One in Plotinus. A final important point to note about the One was hinted at in the passage above which contained the words "has revealed its presence". The One is present to man: "for all man instinctively affirm the god in each of us to be one, the same in all."² "From none is that Principle absent and yet from all: present, it remains absent save to those fit to receive . . ."³ "God--we read--is outside of none, present unperceived to all; we break away from Him, or rather from ourselves . . ."⁴ The One is present at the very heart of man, but for the most part we are unaware of its presence.

There is no difficulty in translating $\tau\omicron\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu$ as the One. However, the name for the second hypostasis, $\nu\omicron\delta\acute{\omicron}s$, does not have a rich enough counterpart in English, and usually the Greek term is retained. In German, *Geist* is used, and this seems to be a happier translation than the English words 'Intellect', 'Mind' and 'Spirit', which various translators use. The Ideas of Intellect and Spirit superimposed on one another would come close.

Mackenna translates $\nu\omicron\delta\acute{\omicron}s$ as Intellectual-Principle. $\Nu\omicron\delta\acute{\omicron}s$ belongs in the other world, $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\epsilon\iota$. It holds the highest rank of

¹ A. H. Armstrong, *The Architecture*, p. 33.

² *Enneads*, VI.5.1, trans. MacKenna.

³ *Enneads*, VI.9.4, trans. MacKenna.

⁴ *Enneads*, VI.9.7, trans. MacKenna.

being. It is almost a unity, but it must be considered a manifold because it contains both the thinking agent and the object of thought.

The Intellectual-Principle is established in multiplicity; its intellection, self-sprung though it be, is in the nature of something added to it (some accidental dualism) and makes it multiple: the utterly simplex, and therefore first of all beings, must, then, transcend the Intellectual-Principle; and obviously, if this had intellection it would no longer transcend the Intellectual-Principle but be it, and at once be a multiple.¹

Noûs is the overflowing, the exuberance of the One. It is intuitive understanding, beyond reason, totally divorced from sense and matter. It is a god, also, though not so great as the One.

Thus we have here one identical Principle, the Intellect, which is the universe of authentic beings, the Truth: as such it is a great god or, better, not a god among gods but the Godhead entire. It is a god, a secondary god manifesting before there is any vision of *that one* (πρὶν ὁρᾶν ἑκεῖνον), which rests over all, enthroned in transcendence upon that splendid pedestal, the nature following close upon it.²

Just as *noûs* is the overflowing of the One, *ψυχή*, Soul, is the outpouring of *noûs*. (Although Plotinus uses metaphors--shedding of the sun's rays, outpouring of water--which, strictly speaking, suggest that the source is diminished by whatever leaves it, he corrects his images by stating that this is a necessary

¹ *Enneads*, V.3.11, trans. MacKenna.

² *Enneads*, V.5.3, trans. MacKenna, revised where italicized.

outgoing which leaves the source intact.) Soul is the liaison between the two worlds, ἐκεῖ and ἐνταῦθα. As part of the superior world, it shares in the divine nature, and in unity, in the sense that it is undivided. Soul administers the cosmos, acting through the λόγοι, which are immaterial forces. Nature is directed by Soul. When Soul enters the lower world, it becomes locked into material bodies--trees, animals, humans. Thus in this world it is divided up, though at no point is a part of it broken off from its source. The tighter Soul is enmeshed in body, the fainter is the connection with the undivided Soul. Nevertheless, the connection is there, and is manifested, to give one example, by the sympathy (i.e., fellow-feeling) humans have for one another. It is this connection which enables an embodied soul to travel to the upper world, and thence to νοῦς and to the One.

With the three hypostases, we have Plotinus' explanation of the ordering of the world which we see and of that greater world, of which this one is the copy.

Just as the three hypostases are found in the macrocosm, so do they also belong in the microcosm which is man. Since this is so, then man is a resident not only of this lower, sense-perceptible world, but also of the upper, spiritual world. However, he may not be aware of his dual citizenship:

. . . even our human Soul has not sunk entire: something of it is continuously in the Intellectual Realm, though if that part, which is in this sphere of sense, hold the mastery, or rather be mastered here and troubled, it keeps us blind to

what the upper phase *looks upon* (θεῶται).¹

Man

Plotinus thinks of man as an uneasy combination of body and soul, a couplement. The embodied soul has a number of faculties, which he would arrange on a descending scale, according to the distance from the spiritual world. At the lowest point is the vegetative, reproductive soul, which is the dupe of the body. Farther up the scale is the sensitive soul, similar in that it believes everything told it by the bodily senses. Climbing farther yet, soul comes into her own at the level of reason. When man reasons, soul is the ruling force in the body-soul couplement. Man's soul at this point is on what Plotinus calls a middle ground, τὸ μέσον, the launching-off spot for the journey into the upper realm.

. . . one part of our soul is always directed to the intelligible realities, one to the things of this world, and one is in the middle between these; for since the soul is one nature in many powers, sometimes the whole of it is carried along with the best of itself and of real being, sometimes the worse part is dragged down and drags the middle with it; for it is not lawful for it to drag down the whole.²

To live with concern for "the things of this world" and to be "dragged down" by the demands of the body is, for Plotinus, to live at a less-than-human level. To occupy the middle ground is good. But there is a greater good, to be "carried along with

¹ *Enneads*, IV.8.8, trans. MacKenna, revised where italicized.

² *Enneads*, 11.9.2, trans. A. H. Armstrong, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, 1966).

the best of itself and of real being" and to be aware that one stands "directed to the intelligible realities". That is to leave this world and to enter the higher one. One does not need to experience bodily death to do so; however, the soul must experience emancipation from the body. In doing so, the soul enters *νοῦς*. At this stage of the journey into the true self, soul has intuitive knowledge, understanding that goes beyond reason. Soul sheds its "otherness" and becomes more and more godlike. There are degrees of perfection in *νοῦς* and when soul has reached the topmost peak, it waits, motionless, to be caught up into union with the One. "Intellectual-Principle, thus, has two powers, first that of grasping intellectually its own content, the second that of an advancing and receiving whereby to know its transcendent;"¹

Plotinus is well aware that the individual will vacillate from one world to the other. One must be constantly vigilant to keep the body from asserting its powers over the soul. Having made the journey into *νοῦς* once, the soul will more readily make that journey again, so that the *πρῶτος σοφός* or *σοφός*, 'Proficient', as Mackenna calls him, can live *almost* continuously in the realm of *νοῦς*. Union with the One is another matter. It appears to be a temporary ecstatic state, for Plotinus speaks of the total unawareness of self in this state, and of the ability to reflect upon the experience only after it is over. Porphyry, his pupil, certainly thought of it this way, for he spoke of specific

¹ *Enneads*, VI.7.35, trans. MacKenna.

occasions when it happened to his teacher and to him:

. . . the Term, the one end, of his life was to become Uniate, to approach to the God over all: and four times, during the period I passed with him, he achieved this term . . . To this God I also declare, I Porphyry, that in my sixty-eighth year I too was once admitted and entered into Union.¹

The soul, then, must initially make the move from concern with the body to the stage where reason rules. Once established there, it can begin the arduous climb through *νοῦς* up to the One. There will be times when it returns to its base camp of reason, but then only to gather its resources and move up once again to the peak. These advances and retreats of the soul are suggested in the oft-quoted words which end the sixth *Ennead*:

If a person sees himself having become thus, he has in himself a likeness of That One (ἐκείνου), and if he passes beyond himself, as an image to its archetype (ὡς εἰκῶν πρὸς ἀρχέτυπον), he has reached the goal (τέλος) of his journey. Falling back from the vision, he awakens the virtue within until he knows himself all order once more; once more lightened of the burden he moves by virtue towards *νοῦς* and through the wisdom in that to Him.

This is the life of gods and of the god-like and blessed among men, liberation from the alien that besets us here, a life taking no pleasure in the things of earth, the passing of solitary to solitary.²

¹ *Vita*, ch. 23, trans. MacKenna.

² *Enneads*, VI·9-11, trans. Mackenna. I have revised Mackenna here where he omits the verbs of "seeing", and uses for the One the term "the Supreme", which he uses elsewhere to denote either of the two higher hypostases.

Reincarnation, $\Theta\epsilon\omega\rho\acute{\iota}\alpha\sigma\iota\varsigma$ and the Material World

Plotinus' metaphysics is complex and not always consistent in detail. A full study would go far beyond the scope of this thesis. From the vast amount of additional material that could be covered, I have chosen four other separate topics, all of which play significant roles in Plotinus' thought as it relates to his philosophy of education.

First, reincarnation. It is evident that in speaking of the flights of the soul Plotinus is referring to experiences that the majority of people, in both his day and ours, simply do not have. He is quite aware of this. His elitist position is mitigated somewhat, however, by his underlying belief in reincarnation. The entrance of this belief into Greek thought is treated by E. R. Dodds, in *The Greeks and the Irrational*. Plato certainly accepted it. From the way in which Plotinus speaks of it, it appears to have been an accepted part of one's intellectual heritage. Armed with the belief in reincarnation, Plotinus can see the journey of the soul extending over several or many lifetimes. A soul may make very little progress in one life, it is true, but in the next life it will begin where it left off in this one, and eventually it should reach the Term. At least, the possibility to do so is open to it. In the following quotation Plotinus comments upon the observation that we do not all start at the same point on the upward journey; and he supports his position with a quotation from Plato. When he talks about the degrees of souls, he is thinking of the different faculties of the soul that can be dominant, from the vegetative right up to the reasoning.

We have investigated the different degrees existing within soul; we may now add, briefly, that differences might be induced, also, by the bodies with which the Soul has to do, and, even more, by the character and mental operations carried over from the conduct of the previous lives. 'The life-choice made by a soul has a correspondence'--we read-- 'with its former lives.'¹

The second of these four topics that we need to understand in order to appreciate Plotinus is *Θεωρία*. This word is translated, inadequately, as 'contemplation'. *Θεωρία* was in Plotinus' time a long-standing philosophical term. Like others of that kind, it had accumulated nuances of meaning. But we are concerned here with the meaning Plotinus gave it. It might be truer to Plotinus' meaning if we took its simple meaning, 'vision', and thought of it in a non-sensory sense, as the vision of the inner eye. Add to that connotations of pure concentration, and of the removal of all false perceptions. Increase it still further with suggestions of generative power. All of these meanings converge in Plotinus' use of the word, *Θεωρία*.

Θεωρία is a transforming power, for one of Plotinus' basic beliefs is that we become like whatever we look upon: ". . . καὶ ὡς περ (ἡ ψυχὴ) βλέπει εἶναι καὶ γίνεσθαι."² When the soul looks upon *νοῦς*, she becomes like *νοῦς*, and when she looks upon the One, she becomes like the One. Creativity is also released through *Θεωρία*. This is true both in the macrocosm and in the

¹ *Enneads*, IV.3.8, trans. MacKenna.

² *Enneads*, IV.3.8.

life of the individual soul. Through *Θεωρία* the One creates, followed by *νοῦς* and by Soul. Much of the eighth book of the third *Ennead* tells how Nature, as part of Soul, creates through *Θεωρία*.

In man, *Θεωρία* is the highest activity for which he strives, because it is the activity of God. In attaining *Θεωρία* man becomes godlike; conversely, in becoming godlike, man achieves *Θεωρία*. Because it is one of Plotinus' presuppositions (as we indicated on page 31) that all men are drawn towards the One, he believes that all human effort and activity is actually man's attempt at *Θεωρία*. Thus he says: "Everywhere, doing and making will be found to be either an attenuation or a complement of vision (*Θεωρίας*)."¹ We might say that Plotinus' purpose in education is to teach men how to 'see' aright, and when we talk of the education process *per se* we shall speak at length of *Θεωρία*.

The final two topics to be mentioned in this account of Plotinus' metaphysics are Matter, ἡ ὕλη, and the material world, ἐνταῦθα. These two must not be confused with one another. Matter is a negative concept. It is the absence of being. Wherever the rays emanating from the One do not shine, there is Matter. Devoid of any trace of Good, Matter is Evil, non-Being.

Evil is not in any and every lack; it is in absolute lack. What falls in some degree short of the Good is not Evil; considered in its own kind it might even be perfect, but where there is utter dearth, there we have Essential Evil, (τὸ ὄντως κακόν),

¹ *Enneads*, III.8.4, trans. MacKenna.

void of all share in Good; this is the meaning of Matter.¹

The material world, on the other hand, participates in forms; it is en-formed Matter. By virtue of this participation, it shares in Being. It is to this world that Plotinus gives the term *ἐνταῦθα*; it is a copy (*μίμημα*) of that perfect world *ἐκεῖ*. As such, it must be beautiful. In fact it is only in comparison with the upper world that we can see that this one holds a lesser beauty.

And indeed if the divine (*ἐκείνῳ*) did not exist, the transcendently beautiful, in a beauty beyond all thought, what could be lovelier than the things we see? Certainly no reproach can rightly be brought against this world (*τούτῳ*) save only that it is not That (*ἐκείνῳ*).²

Clearly, Plotinus was not one to despise this world. In the last chapter I cited examples of his good stewardship. And he had very little patience with the gnostics of his day who called the world an evil place. His treatise "Against the Gnostics" is a polemic against them. It points out that although our destiny is not of the world, yet our starting point is here:

Their error is that they know nothing good here: all they care for is something else to which they will at some future time apply themselves: yet, this world (*ἐντεῦθεν*), to those that have known it once, must be the starting-point of the pursuit: arrived here

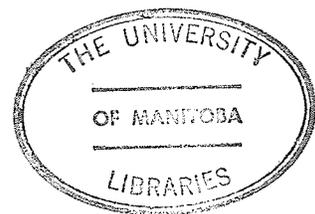
¹ *Enneads*, I.8.5, trans. MacKenna.

² *Enneads*, V.8.8, trans. MacKenna.

from out of the divine nature, they must inaugurate their effort by some earthly correction. The understanding of beauty is not given except to a nature scorning the delight of the body, and those that have no part in well-doing can make no steps towards the Supernal ($\pi\rho\acute{o}s \ \xi\kappa\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha$).¹

In these pages we have sketched out the salient features of Plotinus' metaphysics. From here we can look at the goal of his education and the means he employed to reach it.

¹ *Enneads*, II.9.15, trans. MacKenna.



III. THE HIGHEST GOOD: THE GOAL OF EDUCATION

I shall open this chapter by examining what I see as the unusual character of Plotinus' educational thought. Then, after naming *ἁεσιπία* as the ultimate goal of education, I shall turn to the lesser goals, those of early education and of the first step of Plotinus' educational journey. Regarding the latter, I shall expand upon two of Plotinus' ways of describing it. Moving on to the second stage of the journey, I shall examine the question whether union with the One can be controlled by man and should therefore replace *ἁεσιπία* as the final goal of education.

The Unusual Character of Plotinus' Educational Thought

I pointed out in chapter two that for Plotinus there are two real worlds instead of one. This sets him apart from most other educational theorists of the ancient world, and makes his thought somewhat more elusive. The Sophists, the Stoics and the followers of Aristotle all saw education as a preparation for good citizenship and happiness in, or accommodation to the sorrows of, this life. Their educational theories did not reach out to anything outside of ordinary experience. But when we turn to Plato and Plotinus we find an added dimension. I have already mentioned that Plato, in outlining the education of his Guardians, suggested that they would be going beyond the rational processes of this world. E. R. Dodds says that he believes Plato's Guardians were

to be similar to Pythagorean shamans, i.e. persons with *extra-rational* powers: ". . . his rationalism is quickened with ideas that once were magical . . ." ¹ Dodds is not suggesting here a power that goes beyond reason, a *supra-rational* power, but rather something that goes alongside of reason. However, in mentioning Plato's vision of the Good earlier, I pointed out that some believe that this means a journeying *through* reason and *beyond*, that is, into the *supra-rational*. Whatever the case, we may be certain Plotinus read into Plato the conviction that reason alone does not suffice. There is no question that with Plotinus advanced education means a journeying beyond reason.

The Goals, Ultimate and Lesser

What is good and valuable, and what dispositions should education foster? For Plotinus, the Good, the source of all good things, is synonymous with the One. Becoming reunited with that source is what is right for man. In preparation for that reunion, man must cultivate *θεωρία*. Education's task, then, is to foster *θεωρία*. (If we note that *θεωρία* is related to verbs of seeing and looking, *θεάομαι* and *θεωρέω*, we will note a remarkable similarity in Plato's purpose of education quoted from the *Republic* in Chapter 1.) I am speaking here, however, of the *ultimate* answers, the ultimate good and the ultimate goal. Since Plotinus speaks of the educational process as a long journey, an Odyssey of the Soul, might we not take any point along the journey as a legitimate lesser goal of education?

¹ E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, 1951), p. 212.

As a matter of fact, Plotinus himself provides us with some rough divisions. First of all, there is childhood education, which he virtually ignores; then there is the turning from the lower life, and finally higher education proper. Each of these warrants study as to the disposition it is to foster.

Plotinus says little about children's education. From his silence on the subject, we may gather that he felt the current curriculum was adequate. We know that he was aware of what was happening in the education of the young because he was guardian to a number of children and kept a close watch on them:

Not a few men and women of position, on the approach of death, had left their boys and girls, with all their property, in his care, feeling that with Plotinus for guardian the children would be in holy hands. His house therefore was filled with lads and lasses, amongst them Potamon, in whose education he took such interest as often to hear the boy recite verses of his own composition.¹

I think that we can safely infer that he valued early education and saw that it could not be rushed. Early education will start with a study of this world, ἐνταῦθα, but it should give the child a glimmering of that other world, ἐκεῖ, so that a restlessness will eventually set in. Along with the restlessness will be an awareness of the magnetism of the other world. At this point the individual, now fully mature, will feel the need for something more. And that, I think, is the disposition Plotinus hopes early education will foster.

¹ *Vita*, ch. 9, trans. MacKenna.

At this point, the individual is ready to embark on Plotinus' Odyssey, which has two parts, escape from Evil and movement towards the Good. The first step is for him to make a complete reversal of values, "declaring the dishonour of the objects which the Soul holds here in honour".¹ Plotinus has several suggestions as to what this first step entails. By formulating a clear picture of them, we will also see what is the particular goal of this step. One way he puts it is to say that man must let his reason predominate over the more body-influenced faculties of the Soul. Here we must recall that for Plotinus the individual is an oil-and-water type of combination of body and soul, by no means homogenized. The lowest faculties serve the body's needs almost exclusively, while the highest, the reasoning faculty, serves the soul's. Other faculties are ranged in between. Man can be compared to a group of people who are trying to hold a meeting by attempting to outshout one another.

. . . still, the right reason of that highest is weaker by being given over to inhabit this mingled mass; not that it sinks in its own nature: it is much as amid the tumult of a public meeting the best adviser speaks but fails to dominate; assent goes to the roughest of the brawlers and roarers, while the man of good counsel sits silent, ineffectual, overwhelmed by the uproar of his inferiors.²

Following this metaphor, we would say that the first step of the journey is to let the voice of reason be heard, and the voice of

¹ *Enneads*, V.1.1, trans. MacKenna.

² *Enneads*, IV.4.17, trans. MacKenna.

the body be stilled.

This same goal may be reached in what may seem to us a completely different way, by cultivating the virtues. In other words, for Plotinus the attainment of virtue is the same thing as listening to the voice of reason. How can this be? The traditional virtues are σωφροσύνη, φρόνησις, ἀνδρεία, and δικαιοσύνη, which can be translated as self-control, thoughtfulness, fortitude and justice. Occasionally Plotinus adds μεγαλοψυχία, magnanimity. He thinks of these virtues as appearing in two phases each, as Civic Virtues and as the Virtues of the Soul. The Civic Virtues are displayed in our dealings with our fellow men. Plotinus sees that they are good for a couple of reasons: they help us lead an orderly life here, and, once attained, they awaken a realization of their higher counterparts, the Virtues of the Soul.

The Civic Virtues . . . are a principle of order and beauty in us as long as we remain passing our life here: they ennoble us by setting bound and measure to our desires and to our entire sensibility, and dispelling false judgement . . . and they carry a trace of that Highest Good in the Supreme (καὶ ἔχουσιν ἴχνος τοῦ ἐκεῖ ἀρίστου) . . . This is the way in which men of the Civic Virtues attain Likeness.¹

The higher virtues are like purifications of the Soul, gained as the individual sheds his concerns for the body.

As the Soul is evil by being interfused with the body and by coming to share the body's

¹ *Enneads*, I.2.2, trans. MacKenna.

states and to think the body's thoughts, so it would be good, it would be possessed of virtue, if it threw off the body's moods and devoted itself to its own Act--the state of Intellection and Wisdom--never allowed the passions of the body to affect it--the virtue of Sophrosyny--knew no fear at the parting from the body--the virtue of Fortitude--and if reason and the Intellectual-Principle ruled without opposition--in which state is righteousness.¹

The crown of all the virtues of the Soul is Wisdom, which when it draws the soul up into *νοῦς* ceases to be a virtue and becomes the proper act of *νοῦς*.

Wisdom, theoretical and practical, consists in the contemplation (*ἐν θεωρίᾳ*) of that which intellect contains; but intellect has it by immediate contact. There are two kinds of wisdom, one in intellect, one in soul. That which is There (in intellect) is not virtue, that in the soul is virtue. What is it, then, There? The act of the self, what it really is; virtue is what comes Thence and exists here in another.²

In speaking of the virtues, I have described two of the possible steps along the journey to the Term. Attaining the civic virtues could lead to the higher virtues and so could be seen as a legitimate, though lesser, goal. And attaining the virtue of the Soul is the first major goal, the "conversion from the lower life" or "declaring the dishonour of the objects which the Soul holds here in honour". For Plotinus it is tantamount to allowing the reason to rule the body.

¹ *Enneads*, I.2.3, trans. MacKenna.

² *Enneads*, 1.2.6, trans. Armstrong.

The Limits of Education

When the Soul has reached this point, it is ready for the second, long stage of the journey. At this point it has entered *νοῦς*. But within *νοῦς* itself there is a long distance to traverse:

. . . the second--held by those that have already made their way to the sphere of the Intelligibles (τῷ νοητῷ), have set as it were a footprint there but must still advance--lasts until they reach the extreme hold of the place, the Term attained when the topmost peak of the Intellectual realm is won (ἔταν τις ἐπ' ἄκρῳ γένηται τῷ νοητῷ).¹

When the soul enters *νοῦς*, reason is in control of it, and it exercises logical thinking. Now this is a linear type of thinking, the type characteristic of this world. But once in *νοῦς* the soul gives up this type of thinking and grasps knowledge intuitively. It becomes one with the object of its knowledge, so that there is only a semantic difference between knower and known. ". . . reason as it teaches gives process; Intellectual-Principle has unbroken knowledge and has, moreover, an Act unattended by knowing, a vision by another approach (ὁ δὲ ἔχει τὸ νοεῖν αἰεὶ, ἔχει δὲ καὶ τὸ μὴ νοεῖν, ἀλλὰ ἄλλως ἐκεῖνον βλέπει)." ²

Plotinus' educational programme takes the traversing of *νοῦς* as its second major goal.

However, the journey is still not completely ended. The climax of it all is union with the One. Whereas in *νοῦς* the soul

¹ *Enneads*, I.3.1, trans. MacKenna.

² *Enneads*, VI.7.35, trans. MacKenna, revised where italicized.

maintains its distinctiveness, when it becomes Uniate it passes beyond *voûs* and beyond its identity as a self: ". . . the soul has now no further awareness of being in body and will give herself no foreign name, not man, not living being, not being, not all."¹ It is in his description of the nature of this final leg of the journey that we detect a certain inconsistency in Plotinus. Sometimes he speaks as though the vision of the One is the natural outcome of the completion of *voûs*. An example is the following: "As for soul, *she* attains that vision by--so to speak--confounding and annulling the Intellectual-Principle within *her*; or rather *her voûs* sees first and thence the vision penetrates to *her* and the two visions become one."² It is as though soul, having reached purity and concentration, in other words *θεωρία*, is guaranteed to be absorbed into the One. In that case we could cheerfully say that the ultimate goal of education is that absorption. However, other passages give one the distinct impression that life in *voûs* is goal enough and indeed is a form of ecstasy and that the final ecstatic experience is a bonus, something not dependent upon the human will: ". . . suddenly appears the Supreme Monarch himself . . . In that royal progress the King is of another order from those that go before him";³ "Only by a leap can we reach to the One which is to be pure of

¹ *Enneads*, VI.7.34, trans. MacKenna.

² *Enneads*, VI.7.35, trans. MacKenna, revised where italicized.

³ *Enneads*, V.5.3, trans. MacKenna.

all else . . ."1, ". . . now it is seen and now not seen. *One* must not run after it, but fit *himself to be a viewer* (θεατῆρ) and then wait tranquilly for its appearance, as the eye waits on the rising of the sun . . . This advent, still, is not by expectation; it is coming without approach . . ."2

Faced with this apparent inconsistency, I find A. H. Armstrong's explanation quite illuminating. He sees it as a matter of difference in emphasis. At times, says Armstrong, Plotinus is emphasizing that all three hypostases, including the One, can be found within man, and in those instances "the mystical union can be for the philosopher the culmination of a purely natural process, needing no grace, no raising or transforming of his nature into a supernatural way of life."³ At other times Plotinus stresses his conviction that the One is totally other, and then the emphasis is placed on "the shock, the 'sentiment d'une présence' (Bréhier), the intense perception at once of the Supreme as wholly other and yet of being united with that other, which is also a most vital element in the experience".⁴

When he is stressing the otherness of the One, Plotinus also points out that the means of attaining the One will not be entirely the same as, or of similar nature to, the means of

¹ *Enneads*, V.5.4, trans. MacKenna.

² *Enneads*, V.5.8, trans. MacKenna, revised where italicized.

³ A. H. Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Cambridge, 1940), p. 31.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

attaining *voûs*, namely through mental discipline and a prescribed course of study. Accordingly he teaches that man through his own efforts can indeed travel to and through *voûs*; but the final lap of the journey is made not through man's effort, but through the grace of God (in a non-Christian sense). Not that God's grace is spasmodic. Rather the state of pure *θεωρία*, necessary to union with the One, is such an actionless state that preparing for it is not a matter of "doing" but of being in readiness. It is the achievement of absolute stillness, of waiting in expectation, "as the eye waits on the rising of the sun". The One is always available to man, but man's eye must be perfectly focused upon it. When the moment does come, there is always an element of surprise.

Man's effort can take him as far as the edge of the chasm that separates him, together with the rest of being, from the One. Plotinus' educational programme, which I shall present in detail in chapter five, is designed to carry the individual up to that point.

In summary, the goals of education for Plotinus are two-fold. First he must allow reason to predominate; or he must purify his soul by developing the higher virtues. Then he must pass beyond reason into higher forms of thought, until he is ready for that moment when "stripped of its wisdom in the intoxication of the nectar"¹, the soul is drawn into union with the One. In a sense we can see similarities with the ancient educational goal, "know

¹ *Enneads*, VI.7.35, trans. MacKenna.

thyself", or the modern educator's "self-realization". The crux is the understanding of the self. For Plotinus, God is at the heart of the self; and so to know one's self is to see God.

IV. PLOTINUS' PSYCHOLOGY

In this chapter I make a detailed study of Soul. First, I examine the body-soul couplement of which each individual is comprised. Next, I list the faculties and their functions. Beginning a fairly lengthy study of learning, I show the balance that must be maintained in the couplement. There follows a short study of *ἐνέργησις*. Then, recalling Plato's illustration of The Line, I note how Plotinus follows a somewhat similar pattern in describing the changing qualities of thought. After mentioning the freedom of the Soul, I close by remarking upon some peculiarly modern insights in Plotinus' psychology, specifically his doctrine of the unconscious.

The Body-Soul Combination

The first topic to be investigated is the nature of the body-soul combination. And here we must grasp a basic point: the popular idea that the body is the container and the soul the contained must be reversed. Traditionally in Greek thought the soul was encased in the body¹; in fact, it was divided into three parts, each having its locale in a particular organ. Plotinus

¹ H. J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), p. 22.

refers to this belief as follows:

. . . the uppermost member of the living being was taken by the ancients to be obviously its seat; they lodged it in the brain, or not exactly in the brain but in that sensitive part which, they tell us, has its seat within the brain . . . the phase of the Soul, which has to do with desire, was allocated to the liver . . . the heart is taken as the fixed centre of the ebullition of the passionate nature.¹

Plotinus was aware of the central function the brain plays in the body² and because of this new knowledge of physiology he was able to discard the old tripartite division of the soul. But neither did he locate the soul within the brain, as is made abundantly clear in the earlier part of the chapter just quoted:

The brain . . . has been considered as the centre and seat of the principle which determines feeling and impulse and the entire act of the organism as a living thing . . . But it would be wiser to say only that there is situated the first activity of the operating faculty . . .³

So far we see that Plotinus rejects the notion that soul is

¹ *Enneads*, IV.3.23, trans. MacKenna.

² Blumenthal, p. 75. "Plotinus' careful separation of the original sensory stimulus and the subsequent processes was facilitated by the fact that he was able to take advantage of the discovery of the nerves by the physicians Herophilus and Erasistratus in the third century B.C. and the later elaboration of their work by Galen. The recognition of the nerves' function made it quite clear that there was transmission from the surface of the body to a central organ where the information could be, as it were, conveyed to the soul for it to note and evaluate."

³ *Enneads*, IV.3.23, trans. MacKenna.

divided up among three organs; he also denies that soul is located in the brain. In fact, he says that body should not be considered the container of the soul at all. Body is the lesser of the two; it exists in soul. However, one would encounter difficulties in stating baldly that soul is the container of body. For as well as existing in the material world where the dimensions of space are found, soul also belongs in the non-material world, where they are not. Therefore it is not entirely true to say that soul occupies space; yet at the same time Plotinus thinks of it as permeating this world, for its absence implies evil, raw matter. And so he resorts to the language of poetry, the metaphor, a beautiful figure of speech that pictures soul as a life force filling the universe:

The Cosmos is like a net which takes all its life, as far as ever it stretches, from being wet in the water; it is at the mercy of the sea which spreads out, taking the net with it just so far as it will go, for no mesh of it can strain beyond its set place; the soul is of so far-reaching a nature--a thing unbounded --as to embrace the entire body of the All in the one extension; so far as the universe extends, there soul is . . .¹

Seen in this way, soul is a unity in which all living things participate. Such a unity Plotinus finds to be congruent with, and substantiated by, the fellow-feeling humans experience with one another: ". . . the response between soul and soul is due to the mere fact that all spring from that self-same soul (the hypo-

¹ *Enneads*, IV.3.9, trans. MacKenna.

stasis Soul) from which springs the Soul of the All."¹ In accordance with his metaphysical system, he holds that the apparently differentiated souls of this world actually have a unity by virtue of their source in the undifferentiated soul of the upper world.

They are one soul by the fact that they do not belong unreservedly to any particular being; they meet, so to speak, fringe to fringe; they strike out here and there, but are held together at the source much as light is a divided thing upon earth, shining in this house and that, and yet remains uninterruptedly one identical substance.²

Finally, soul extends beyond the bounds of this world into the upper world. That means that for every individual in this world there is an unbroken connection with the unity of the real world.

. . . even our human Soul has not sunk entire; something of it is continuously in the Intellectual Realm (ἐν τῷ νοητῷ), though if that part, which is in this sphere of sense (ἐν τῷ αἰσθητῷ), hold the mastery, or rather be mastered here and troubled, it keeps us blind to what the upper phase holds in contemplation (οὐκ ἐστὶ αἰσθησιν ἡμῖν δὲν θεᾶται τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ἄνω).³

The Faculties

The passage just quoted may be used to illustrate a further

¹ *Enneads*, IV.3.8. See also IV.9.3. ". . . reflection tells us that we are in sympathetic relation to each other, suffering at the sight of pain, caught up in pleasure, naturally drawn to forming attachments; and all this can be due only to some unity among us." Both translations are MacKenna's.

² *Enneads*, IV.3.4, trans. MacKenna.

³ *Enneads*, IV.8.8, trans. MacKenna.

point in Plotinus' psychology, one that was mentioned in an earlier chapter but warrants closer examination now. The soul has a number of powers or faculties, *δυνάμεις*, most of which we 'tune out' when we concentrate our attention upon the operation of any other. In the example above, occupation with the sense world 'tunes out' the soul's higher functions. The determination of which faculty is going to dominate will play a large part in deciding the educability of the individual. Let us look at two matters here: first, what the faculties are, and, second, how it is determined that a certain faculty will dominate in a certain individual.

The faculties are not segments or sections of the soul. Rather, they are potential ways for the soul to act. They can be ranked, as it were, on a chart, each assigned a place according to its distance from the life of the Intellectual world. The lowest is the vegetative faculty, *τὸ φυτικόν*, which embraces nurture, *τὸ θρεπτικόν*, growth, *τὸ αὐξητικόν*, and reproduction, *τὸ γεννητικόν*. Next comes the appetitive faculty, *τὸ ὀρεκτικόν*, encompassing desire, *τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν*, anger, *τὸ θυμικόν* and impulse, *ἢ ὄρμη*. Next in rank is the sensitive faculty, *τὸ αἰσθητικόν*, which gives rise to opinion, *τὸ δοξαστικόν*. The highest, which was identified in an earlier chapter as *τὸ μέσον*, is the reasoning faculty, *τὸ διανοητικόν*, which employs judgment, *κρίσις*, and reason, *ὁ λογισμός*. Here we come to the line which marks off soul from *νοῦς*.

Table 1
THE FACULTIES

Φυτικά Vegetative	(Ὅρεκτόν) Appetitive	'Αισθητικόν Sensitive		Διαλογικόν Reasoning	(Νοῦς) Intellection
		External	Internal		
		κοινή αἰσθηταί Common Senses	ἑῶν αἰσθηταί Senses Internal Sensation φανταστικόν Imagination and Memory	κρίσις Judgment	
		←	←	λογισμός Reason	
θρεπτικόν ἀδύτητικόν γεννητικόν Nurture Growth Reproduction	ἐπιθυμητικόν θυμικόν ὀργή Desire Anger etc. Impulse				

Source: Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology*, p. 44.

The dominance of each of these four faculty types, from lowest to highest, is illustrated with a figure of speech drawn from government:

The lowest human type exhibits the baser nature; the man is a composit calling to mind some inferior political organization: in the mid-type we have a citizenship in which some better section sways a demotic constitution not out of control; in the superior type the life is aristocratic; it is the career of one emancipated from what is base in humanity and tractable to the better: in the finest type, where the man has brought himself to detachment, the ruler is one only, and from this master principle order is imposed upon the rest, so that we may think of a municipality in two sections, the superior city and, kept in hand by it, the city of the lower elements.¹

Plotinus insists that the individual soul has some responsibility for the type of person it will be upon incarnation, i.e. for the dominance of a particular faculty. One of the determining factors will certainly be the type of life lived in previous incarnations: ". . . differences might be induced also by the bodies with which the Soul has to do, and, even more, by the character and mental operation carried over from the conduct of the previous lives."² This is, of course, a Platonic argument, and Plotinus backs up his statement with a quotation from the Myth of Er: "'The life-choice made by a soul has correspondence'

¹ *Enneads*, IV.4.17, trans. MacKenna.

² *Enneads*, IV.3.8, trans. MacKenna.

--we read--'with its former lives'."¹ In not uncharacteristic fashion, however, Plotinus puts his own interpretation on the quotation. Whereas Plato's illustrations suggest that a man will choose a life that will compensate for the deficiencies of his previous one, Plotinus sticks to his conviction that like attracts like. Whatever stage man reached in one life will be the stage at which he is reincarnated: ". . . like is destined unflinchingly to like . . ."², ". . . each ranks according to its operative phase--one becoming Uniate in the achieved act, another in knowledge, another in desire, according to the distinct orientation by which each is, or tends to become, what it looks upon."³ For Plotinus, it is not in the periods between incarnations but during the earthly existence that the soul has the opportunity to raise its sights and to grow into the likeness of that upon which it looks. His educational programme is designed to help the soul to do just this.

Since Plotinus emphasizes the soul's need to subjugate the body, we might well ask whether the body is of any value at all. Is it actually evil? To answer that we should recall that in an earlier chapter we observed that Plotinus defends this world as a good place; being the reflection of that glorious other world, it could not be anything but good. So with the body. It can be put to good use. We use the body--our sense perceptions--in order to

¹ *Enneads*, IV.3.8, trans. MacKenna.

² *Enneads*, IV.3.13, trans. MacKenna.

³ *Enneads*, IV.3.8, trans. MacKenna.

advance in mental development. This is brought out in Plotinus' descriptions in I.3.1 and 2, of both the musician and the lover, who enjoy sensuous beauty; he sees them as ripe to discover the ideal form of beauty. Nevertheless, the body must always be kept subservient to the mind. If the body becomes the prime concern, then man is not living out his function as man. Plotinus makes this point with a number of vivid metaphors, pictures that bring out shades of meaning far better than dry argument. There is the figure borrowed from Plato, likening the man who lives by his lower faculties to a bird that is too heavy to fly.¹ In another passage such a man is compared to a termite burrowing in dead wood, whereas the rational man is likened to the gardener who controls such pests.² Again, the man who is ruled by his body is like a sea-captain so intent upon saving his ship that he inadvertently goes down with it.³ Or he is like a sick man wrapped up in his own illness, in contrast to the rational man who is like a healthy person with power to help others.⁴

In summary, then, although man is a body-soul complement, the soul must keep herself as pure of body as she possibly can. The soul that is truest to herself will be one that follows this advice:

¹ *Enneads*, V.9.1

² *Enneads*, IV.3.4

³ *Enneads*, IV.3.17

⁴ *Enneads*, IV.3.4

. . . to separate first, the man from the body--yourself, that is, from your body; next to put aside that Soul which moulded the body, and, very earnestly, the system of sense with desires and impulses and every such futility, all setting definitely towards the mortal: what is left is the phase of the Soul which we have declared to be an image of the Divine Intellect . . .¹

Learning

Having established the relationship body and soul have towards one another in Plotinus' thinking, we turn next to the role of each in learning or knowing. First let us recall just what learning or knowing means to Plotinus. What it certainly does not mean is an accumulation of information. It means, rather, a number of changes that must take place in the soul in preparation for union with the One. These changes in the soul can be thought of in terms of a focusing of the vision of the soul. Here we might bring to mind Plotinus' maxim that we become like that upon which we look. All men long to become like their source, the One, but if they are left unguided, their eyes dart hither and yon. Education directs the vision. And it has two results: it shows man how to look upon the divine, and through that looking it makes him godlike. Thus it provides him with that which he yearned for all along, but knew not how to attain. The concentration of the vision, the culmination of the educational process, is expressed by Plotinus in that powerful word, *ἄσκησις*.

As to the relative strengths of the roles of body and soul in learning, our understanding of Plotinus up to this point would

¹ *Enneads*, V.3.9, trans. MacKenna.

lead us to believe that soul's is the far greater. So let us start with soul's contribution. Far from being an empty slate upon which learning is written, soul possesses a great deal. Soul can reach deep down into herself, into that great undifferentiated soul which exists in the non-material world. From that world she can draw the Forms. Now, essentially, Plotinus' understanding of the Forms is Platonic. They are the real existences, of which we experience, through our senses, images or traces. The Forms are available to soul, if she chooses to use them. Meanwhile, the body's function is to perceive, through the senses, images of the Forms in the material world. Learning takes place when the soul matches up those images with the real Forms. Take, for example, the musician:

he must be drawn by the tone, rhythm, and design in things of sense: he must learn to distinguish the material forms from the Authentic-Existent which is the source of all these correspondences and of the entire reasoned scheme in the work of art: he must be led to the Beauty that manifests itself through these forms; he must be shown that what ravished him was no other than the Harmony of the Intellectual world and the Beauty in that sphere, not some one shape of beauty but the All-Beauty, the Absolute Beauty . . .¹

Often, of course, the soul is unaware of the Forms, because she is centring her attention elsewhere. She is acting in accordance with the lower, body-centred faculties and is oblivious to the treasure she actually possesses. We shall see later that the

¹ *Enneads*, 1.3.1, trans. MacKenna.

purpose of the whole first stage of Plotinus' educational system is to make the individual soul aware of the wealth within, so that she can put it to use. When that happens, "the science (αἰ ἐπιστήμαι) latent within becomes manifest, the only authentic knowing (ὄντως ἐπιστήμαί).¹

The belief that the soul already possesses understanding is familiar to us from Plato, for example, in the *Meno* and the *Phaedo*. Plato attributes it to recollection, ἀνάμνησις, the soul's inheritance from earlier existences, in a temporal sense. We find that Plotinus continues the use of the word, ἀνάμνησις, more or less as a convention, as in the following passages:

But in spite of all it [ψυχή] has, for ever, something transcendent: by a conversion towards the intellectual act, it is loosed from the shackles and soars--when only it makes its memories (ἐξ ἀναμνήσεως) the starting point of a new vision of essential being (θεᾶσθαι τὰ ὄντα).²

. . . the Soul's understanding of the Absolute Forms by means of the visions stored up in it is effected within itself; such perception is reminiscence (ἐξ ἀναμνήσεως); the soul then must have its being before embodiment, and drawing on an eternal science (αἰδίοις ἐπιστήμασι) must itself be eternal.³

Nevertheless, the doctrine of ἀνάμνησις is not essential to Plotinus, because in his metaphysical system soul has an unbroken

¹ *Enneads*, IV.7.10, trans. MacKenna.

² *Enneads*, IV.8.4, trans. MacKenna.

³ *Enneads*, IV.7.12 (17), trans. MacKenna.

connection with the world of Forms.¹ In the following sentences, both taken from IV.3.25, Plotinus speaks of the temporal nature of memory, and the atemporal way in which he uses the term

ἀνάμνησις.

Now a memory has to do with something brought into ken from without, something learned or experienced; the Memory-Principle, therefore, cannot belong to such beings as are immune from experience and from time.

The Soul-action which is to be observed seems to have induced the Ancients to ascribe memory, and 'Recollection' (the Platonic Anamnesis), to souls bringing into outward manifestation the ideas they contain: we see at once that the memory here indicated is another kind; it is a memory outside of time.²

We see, then, that Plotinus did not need the doctrine of ἀνάμνησις as an integral part of his system; perhaps he retained the use of the term as a convention; perhaps he used it out of deference to Plato; or perhaps P. Merlan is closest to the reason when he suggests that the word itself had changed in meaning:

¹ This point is made by Paul Henry in his introduction to the 1962 edition of MacKenna's translation, p. li f. "Atticus insists on Platonic views about transmigration of souls into new bodies and about knowledge as reminiscence--views which receive no prominence in the philosophy of Plotinus who apparently considers them dépassé." Blumenthal says on p. 96 f., "A reader familiar with Plato might be surprised at the absence in Plotinus of the doctrine of recollection (ἀνάμνησις) . . . There is no need to explain the possibility of knowledge of the intelligibles by thinking of memories of them somehow stored within us so that they can be elicited by the correct dialectical procedure. For Plotinus we need only look and we shall see (IV.7.10, 30-35). The Platonic doctrine of recollection is replaced by the doctrine of the undescended intelligence."

² Both translations are MacKenna's.

". . . the true meaning of recollection is that a knowledge which we have always possessed, though unconsciously, becomes conscious. Now it would be entirely possible that already Plotinus was on the verge of such a reinterpretation of Plato."¹

If we believe, like Plotinus, that the soul holds inestimable treasure within, then we will assign sense-perception only the role of a stimulus to learning. That is essentially what Plotinus does, and in doing so he is very close to Plato. To realize the similarity, let us recall the salient features of the Divided Line, found in the *Republic*, 509c5-d6, just preceding the Myth of the Cave. Types of thought are to be imagined as set out on a line which is bisected in such a way that the first section deals with knowledge derived from the physical world and the second section with knowledge of the intelligible world. The type of knowledge in the first section is called $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$, opinion, but it is broken down into a lower part, $\epsilonἰκασία$, conjecture, and $\piίσις$, knowledge of physical objects. $\Delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$ deals with the world of becoming, it is established through sense-perception, and it is subject to error. Turning to the second part of the line, we also find a division in two. First there is $\deltaιάνοια$ and, following that, $\νóησις$. Both of these types of thought have to do with the world of being rather than with the world of becoming. Nevertheless, $\deltaιάνοια$ retains a certain connection with the type of thought preceding it in rank. For $\deltaιάνοια$ deals

¹ Philip Merlan, *Monopsychism Mysticism Metaconsciousness* (The Hague, 1963), p. 58.

with mathematical and scientific thought, which involves the drawing of implications from objects perceived.¹ The highest type of all is νόσις, reasoning in which the use of images is reduced to nil. This is philosophic thought.²

Looking over these four subdivisions of thought, we see that sense perception is an adjunct to thought that is progressively rendered unnecessary. We also see a connection of each type of thought with the type above it.³

When we turn to Plotinus we see striking resemblances to Plato's teaching about thought in the *Republic*, though not a complete term-for-term parallelism. One feature common to both is the ambivalence toward sense perception. Sense-perception is necessary; it can lead to higher forms of knowing; it is also

¹ This interpretation leans heavily on Sir David Ross, in *Plato's Theory of Ideas*, especially p. 65: "I conclude that the objects of διανοια are . . . simply the mathematical Ideas, and those of νοσις the other Ideas. Plato divides Ideas into these two classes because he has found by experience that geometry has this peculiarity, that it is only by the use of constructions that it can progress."

² Of νόσις, Ross says, p. 65, ". . . (it is) progress from Ideas to Ideas without any use of images . . ." and, p. 67, "The distinction between νόσις and διανοια is not, as it is in Aristotle, a distinction between immediate and mediate apprehension. The work of philosophy no less than that of science was for Plato one of reasoning, the deduction of less general from more general propositions. Only it includes a 'moment' of direct apprehension--the apprehension of the unhypothetical first principle, which cannot be deduced from any other because it is higher than all others."

³ Ross, p. 65, "The chief interest of the section on διανοια lies, perhaps, in the advance it marks from earlier dialogues in which reason and sense-perception had been simply opposed to one another as the fallible to the infallible. Plato has come to see that in geometry, at least, the two are partners indispensable to each other."

deceptive. We have already seen this in the first section of Plato's line labeled δόξα. As for Plotinus, he stresses over and over again that man is an uneasy combination of body and soul. Sense-perception is like a wild horse that can very easily get out of control of its rider, the reasoning faculty. Such control is maintained when the highest faculty, the διάνοια or λογισμομένη, is in command. That is when Plotinus says 'We' exist. At this stage the bombardments upon the senses, the τυποί, are being worked upon by the reason, which draws upon the forms present to it by virtue of its unbroken connection with νοῦς. In order to maintain this position vigilance is required, for the senses are much more readily available to us than is the Intellectual principle.

. . . the We is the Soul at its highest, the mid-point between two powers, between the sensitive principle, inferior to us, and the intellectual principle superior. We think of the perceptive act as integral to ourselves because our sense-perception is uninterrupted; we hesitate as to the Intellectual-Principle both because we are not always occupied with it and because it exists apart, not a principle inclining to us but one to which we incline when we choose to look upwards.

The sensitive principle is our scout; the Intellectual-Principle our King.¹

When the reasoning faculty is in control, the thought process is διάνοια. When it is overruled by the lower faculties, the thought process is δόξα, and it is unreliable: ". . . for all this lower kind of knowledge is delusion (ψευσδῆς γὰρ δόξα) and

¹ *Enneads*, V.3.3, trans. MacKenna.

is the cause of much of what is evil."¹

When we move from *διάνοια* to *νοῦς* in Plotinus' system, we see a qualitative distinction that is not emphasized in Plato. It could almost be called a movement from reason to the beyond-reason. *Νοῦς* implies stillness and a unity, in all but name, of knower and known.

. . . intellect there is not the sort one might conceive on the analogy of our so-called intellects which get their content from premises and are able to understand what is said, and reason discursively and observe what follows, contemplating reality as the result of a process of reasoning since they did not have it before but were empty before they learnt, though they were intellects. Intellect there is not like this, but has all things and is all things, and is with them when it is with itself and has all things without having them.²

For what can reasoning (*το λογίζεσθαι*) be but a struggle, the effort to discover the wise course (*φρόνησις*), to attain the principle (*λόγον*) which is true and derives from real-being? To reason is like playing the cithara for the sake of achieving the art, like practising with a view to mastery, like any learning that aims at knowing. What reasoners seek, the wise (*φρόνιμος*) hold; wisdom (*το φρονεῖν*), in a word, is a condition in a being that possesses repose.³

And so we find in Plotinus *δόξα*, *διάνοια* and *νοῦς*, roughly parallel to *δόξα*, *διάνοια*, and *νόσις* in Plato; but in Plotinus

¹ *Enneads*, 1.1.9, trans. MacKenna.

² *Enneads*, 1.8.2, trans. Armstrong.

³ *Enneads*, IV.4.12, trans. MacKenna.

a much more clearly-drawn distinction is made between the quality of *noûs* and that of lower thought. Plotinus seems to be breaking new ground in expressing the potential of the human mind as something that moves far beyond logic and reason. Along with the movement away from the things of this world--sense-perception, sequential thinking--is movement towards purity of thought and ultimate truth.

To one dealing with a philosophy of education, which is after all our present subject, thought that goes beyond reason must sound quite esoteric. We in the West are accustomed to thinking of reason as the highest mental function. Our fascination with the scientific method has narrowed our emphasis to the collection of data and the working of reason upon them. A recent book called *The Psychology of Consciousness* by Robert E. Ornstein looks at the Western world's specialization with this one mode of thought and suggests that we must add to it the more meditative mode used in the East in order to develop our minds fully. Does not that suggestion cause us to reflect that Plotinus was closer to the mark than we are with our emphasis on "learning through doing"? As we harried teachers scramble about trying to provide our charges with suitably meaningful motivating experiences, we might pause to think of Plotinus' conviction that education comes not from without but from within. It does not *happen* to the learner through the manipulation of some skillful teacher, but depends largely on the quality of mind and the will that the learner brings.

Even in talking about the early stages of learning, making use of sense-perception, Plotinus evinces this attitude. We shall look at his understanding of what happens in sense-perception, but first we need to acknowledge a linguistic problem. Plotinus must use the word αἴσθησις to cover at least two meanings, sensation and perception. The problem is passed on to the reader, insofar as he is not always sure which interpretation Plotinus intends in a given instance.¹ A distinction is important because in its meaning of 'sensation' it has to allow for some degree of bodily input, whereas, as 'perception' it suggests more dependence on the soul. Fortunately we are usually able to discern his meaning through context. It is clear that Plotinus sees αἴσθησις as more than a one-step operation. This allows him to make the obvious statement ". . . for the moment we have one certainty, that perception (αἴσθησις) of things of sense belongs to the embodied soul and takes place through the body"², while emphatically denying that the soul is the passive recipient of sense-impressions: "Perceptions are no imprints . . . are not to be thought of as seal-impressions on soul or mind . . ."³ It is a Stoic idea that he is rejecting here, that impressions (τυπῶν)

¹ Although I must rely on secondary sources, I understand that this was not a new problem in Greek philosophy. Blumenthal (p. 67) notes that both Plato and Aristotle had "advanced some way towards a differentiation"; Dodds, in the discussions recorded in *Entretiens Hardt*, p. 385, indicates that this had been an on-going problem by saying "Plotinus distinguishes sensation from perception more clearly than any previous thinker."

² *Enneads*, IV.4.23, trans. MacKenna.

³ *Enneads*, IV.6.1, trans. MacKenna.

are made upon a passive recipient. Plotinus dislikes the implications of the word because it suggests that man has no choice over whether he will receive certain perceptions. He avoids it in IV.6.1 when he sets up vision as the model for all senses and then stresses man's activity rather than passivity by saying that in vision "the object is grasped". The mind reaches out to the object of vision and even the suggestion of a *τύπος* upon the organ of sight is avoided. In other passages where he uses the actual word, he stresses that the impress is upon the complement, the living creature (*το ζῶον*), rather than upon the "we", the mind. Consider in this regard this passage from I.1.7: "The faculty of perception in the Soul cannot act by the immediate grasping of sensible objects, but only by the discerning of impressions printed upon the Animate by sensation (*τῶν δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς αἰσθησεως ἐγγιγνομένων τῷ ζῶῳ τύπων*)."¹ Similarly he argues against calling a sensation a *πάθος*. Passages which demonstrate this are the following: "But hearing, with sensation in general, is in fact not a Passion (*οὐ πάθος*)"² and ". . . there must be no impressions, nothing to which the mind is passive; there can be only acts of that in which the objects become known."³ We must conclude with Blumenthal that ". . . as he [Plotinus] holds that perception is an activity (*ἐνέργεια*) exercised at the discretion of the soul, he would be able to argue that the soul only shares

¹ *Enneads*, I.1.7, trans. MacKenna.

² *Enneads*, VI.1.19, trans. MacKenna.

³ *Enneads*, IV.6.2, trans. MacKenna.

in the condition of the body when it feels so inclined."¹

The sense-organs are required as intermediaries between soul and sense-objects. Otherwise it would be impossible for the two to meet, for they are of two different natures. Since for Plotinus knowing something means becoming like that thing, we see that it is impossible for soul actually to know sense-objects. Thus Plotinus says in II.4.10 that the soul can "know" matter only by "spurious reasoning".

. . . therefore the representation of Matter must be spurious (νόθον), unreal . . .

This, we may take it, is Plato's meaning where he says that Matter is apprehended by a sort of spurious reasoning (νόθω λογισμῷ).²

The greatest concession he makes in this regard is to say, in IV.5.1, that the sense-organs build a sort of bridge between the two, so that some degree of identity (ὁμοπαθεία) is brought about. In V.5.1 he deals with the same problem (of how soul can grasp material objects) by saying ". . . what is thus known by the senses is an image (εἶδωλον): sense can never grasp the thing itself; this remains for ever outside."³

Despite the minor inconsistencies, the message is clear: the soul does not deal directly with the sense-objects; the body is an intermediary of some sort. After it picks up the impres-

¹ Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology*, p. 75.

² *Enneads*, II.4.10, trans. MacKenna.

³ *Enneads*, V.5.1, trans. MacKenna.

sion, the faculties of the soul come into play. The sensitive faculty must work on the data in order for perception to be completed. However, at the level of the sensitive faculty (τὸ αἰσθητικόν) error is possible. The higher, reasoning faculty, called variously διανοητικόν, διάνοια, λογισμός or κρίσις, must also be brought to bear. ". . . in matters of the sense-sphere (ἐπιτῆς αἰσθησεως) we sometimes see falsely because we credit only the lower perception (τῆ κοινῇ αἰσθησει), that of the Couplement, without applying the tests of the Reasoning-Faculty (πρὶν τῷ διανοητικῷ)." ¹ "Consider sense-knowledge: its objects seem most patently certified, yet the doubt returns whether the apparent reality may not lie in the states of the percipient rather than in the material before him; the decision demands intelligence or reasoning (καὶ νοῦ δεῖ ἢ διανοίας)." ² The reasoning faculty, as we have mentioned earlier, can make a true judgment because it has access to the Forms.

But how does it (διάνοια) thus contain the good within itself?

It is itself of the nature of the good and it has been strengthened still towards the perception of all that is good by the irradiation of the Intellectual-Principle upon it; for this pure phase of the Soul welcomes to itself the images implanted from its prior. ³

It can draw out the aspects of the sense-data that correspond to the Forms.

¹ *Enneads*, I.1.9, trans. MacKenna.

² *Enneads*, V.5.1, trans. MacKenna.

³ *Enneads*, V.3.3, trans. MacKenna.

Man as sense-percipient becomes aware of these correspondences and accommodates the sense-realm to the lowest extremity of its counterpart. There, proceeding from the fire here to the fire Intellectual which was perceptible to be the higher soul in a manner corresponding to its own nature as Intellectual fire.¹

So with the perceptive faculty: discerning in certain objects the Ideal-Form (εἶδος) which has bound and controlled shapeless matter, opposed in nature to Idea, seeing further stamped upon the common shapes some shape (μορφῆν) excellent above the common, it gathers into unity what still remains fragmentary, catches it up and carries it within, no longer a thing of parts and presents it to the inner *self* (τῷ ἑαυτοῦ) as something concordant and congenial, a natural friend: the joy here is like that of a good man who discerns in a youth the early signs of a virtue consonant with the achieved perfection within his own soul.²

Thus we see that it is when the highest faculty of the soul is working upon the sense-impression, true judgments can be made.

We have been considering at some length the respective roles of body and soul in gathering and interpreting sense data. A salient feature that we have already noted is that the soul is a free agent--free to regard or to disregard what is happening to or about the individual in the physical world. A question that deserves consideration now is whether Plotinus seriously believes this freedom belongs to all individual souls, or whether there are some which are, to all practical purposes, beyond the pale.

¹ *Enneads*, VI.7.6, trans. MacKenna.

² *Enneads*, I.6.3, trans. MacKenna, revised where italicized.

Obviously it would require a great amount of will-power for the individual not to be caught up by the allurements of the sense world. Plotinus agrees, that most people are not inclined to look any higher than this world. They are like fat over-fed birds that have lost the power to get off the ground. And we cannot make the charge that these souls have become enamoured of evil. After all, Plotinus sees the material world as the most beautiful place there could possibly be. How could it be otherwise, when it is a copy of the beauty above? But the situation is similar to that described by Plato in the analogy of the Cave, in that these people are accepting the shadow for the substance.

Implicit in the *Enneads* is the belief that in every individual there are moments of awareness of the existence and the accessibility of the higher world. This would mean then that no soul is utterly lost--that every soul has the power to lift itself up. Inside every soul $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ and the One are active, even though unobserved. This can be seen by a reading of the first book of the fifth *Ennead*. It is through self-will, $\tau\acute{o}\lambda\mu\alpha$, that the soul ignores its connection with its source and concentrates upon externals. Such a deliberate concentration, with its corollary of ignoring what is within the self draws down Plotinus' condemnation.

Admiring pursuit of the external is a confession of inferiority; and nothing thus holding itself inferior to things that rise and perish, nothing counting itself less honorable and less enduring than all else it admires could ever form any notion of either the

nature or the power of God.¹

Yet immediately following those lines is his offer of hope--in the form of the two-fold path which we shall examine in detail when we look at his curriculum: "A double discipline must be applied if human beings in this pass are to be reclaimed, and brought back to their origin, lifted once more toward the *Highest* and One and First (μέχρι τοῦ ἀκροτάτου καὶ ἐνὸς καὶ πρώτου)." ²

One reaches the conclusion that the two must be held in balance, namely his belief that most people do not have the will power to rise above the sense-world, and his optimism in offering them a two-fold way that will take them up. The educational implication is clear: that the task of education is to open doors for all, even in the face of the fact that very few will enter.

Plotinus as Precursor to Modern Psychologists

Before leaving this study of Plotinus' psychology, we need to acknowledge Plotinus as a precursor of some of the eminent psychologists of our own era. That is in his understanding of the subconscious. On the preceding page, we read of Plotinus' condemnation of "admiring pursuit of the external". For him the great "unexplored" is the world within one's own self. At the heart of the self is the One, and between it and the conscious self are all the gradations of being that emanate from the One.

¹ *Enneads*, V.1.1, trans. MacKenna.

² *Enneads*, V.1.1, trans. MacKenna, revised where italicized.

The continuum of the soul thus actually extends unbroken from the lowest faculty, the vegetative, to the highest, reasoning, and on into *νοῦς* and from *νοῦς* right up to the One. Man can bring into consciousness any section of this continuum. Of course less effort is required in order to live at the lower end; Plotinus' whole educational system is a detailed programme designed to focus man's attention upon the higher aspects of his own self. All that is worth knowing lies within. Plotinus' emphasis upon words that mean 'seeing' is thus understandable. One must learn to see the treasure within the self.

This matter is the subject of a good part of Philip Merlan's book *Monopsychism, Mysticism, Metaconsciousness*. He calls it the doctrine of the unconscious.

. . . what is distinctly Plotinus' own contribution is the doctrine of the unconscious, explaining the present absence or the absent presence of the divine in us. The mystical union consists in making conscious what is unconscious in us.¹

Merlan refers the reader specifically to IV·8, IV·9 and V·1. The same ideas are implicit in much of the *Enneads*. Some of the shorter, more poetic passages in which they are expressed are these:

It is beyond doubt that man when he commands not merely the life of sensation (τῆν αἰσθητικὴν) but also Reason (λογισμὸν) and Authentic Intellection (νοῦν ἀληθινόν) has realized the perfect life.

¹ Merlan, *Monopsychism*, etc., p. 83.

But are we to picture this kind of life as something foreign imported into his nature?

No: there exists no single human being that does not possess this thing either potentially or effectively; to possess it effectively is what we mean by happiness.¹

. . . even our human Soul has not sunk entire: something of it is continuously in the Intellectual Realm (ἐν τῷ νοητῷ), though if that part which is in the sphere of sense (ἐν τῷ αἰσθητῷ), hold the mastery, or rather be mastered here and troubled, it keeps us blind to what the upper phase holds in contemplation.²

If the purification puts the human into knowledge of the *best* (τῶν ἀρίστων) then, too, the science within becomes manifest, the only authentic knowing. For it is not by running hither and thither outside of itself that the Soul discerns Moral Wisdom (σωφροσύνην) and Justice (δικαιοσύνην), it learns them of its own nature, in its intellectual grasp (ἐν τῇ κατὰ νοῦσιν) of itself and of its primal state, seeing their images (εἰκόνες) deeply impressed upon itself--images which, one mass of rust from long neglect, it has restored to purity.³

A generation familiar with the psychology that regards the subconscious in a matter-of-fact manner does not find it difficult to grasp Plotinus' meaning. But when we realize that he was expressing these twentieth-century ideas in the third century, we should indeed be impressed by the originality of his thought! Little wonder that, in the discussion recorded on pages 385 and

¹ *Enneads*, I.4.4, trans. MacKenna.

² *Enneads*, IV.8.8, trans. MacKenna.

³ *Enneads*, IV.7.10, trans. MacKenna, revised where italicized.

386 of *Entretiens Hardt V*, E. R. Dodds calls Plotinus "primarily a great psychologist". Among other things, Dodds remarks that in a passage in which he implies "that those memories of which we are not aware are sometimes more powerful in their influence on our conduct than the memories of which we are conscious", Plotinus has made "a profound observation for a pre-Freudian thinker."

Other interesting parallels between Plotinus and modern psychology are discussed in Hazel Barnes' article, "Neo-Platonism and Analytical Psychology", where the author notes similarities between Plotinus and Carl G. Jung, especially with regard to the collective unconscious. The article "'Bewusst' und 'Unbewusst' Bei Plotin" by H.-R. Schwyzer goes into more detail than I consider applicable here, regarding Plotinus' understanding of consciousness; the same topic is treated in more readable form in the final chapter of Arnou's *Le Désir de Dieu dans la Philosophie de Plotin*, "Plotin et la Philosophie de l'Inconscient".

Here we come to the end of this study of Plotinus' psychology of learning. We move now to the actual details of his educational curriculum, which will be the subject of the next chapter.

V. CURRICULUM AND METHOD

I open the chapter by examining primary and secondary education in the ancient world, in order to provide a background for Plotinus' curriculum. Then I study reason, virtue and purification, three names for the journey into *νοῦς*. Next, I show how Mathematics and Dialectic lead to *θεωρία*. Finally, drawing examples from *Ennead* V.1, I study Plotinus' method.

Primary and Secondary Education in the Ancient World

I stated earlier that the subject of primary and secondary education is passed over in the *Enneads*. The comments about children that we do find suggest a familiarity with their ways of learning: "In childhood the main activity is in the Couplement and there is but little irradiation from the higher principles of our being"¹; "The relation of action to contemplation is indicated in the way duller children, inapt to study and speculation (*πρὸς τὰς μαθήσεις καὶ θεωρίας*), take to crafts and manual labour."² We also have the vignette in Porphyry's "life" showing Plotinus listening to a homework recitation by one of his charges. What are we to infer from this? Surely that Plotinus

¹ *Enneads*, I.1.11, trans. MacKenna.

² *Enneads*, III.8.4, trans. MacKenna.

was aware of what was going on at the primary and secondary levels, that he accepted it by and large, and that he was prepared to adapt his own instruction to its strengths and weaknesses.

A study of primary and secondary education in the ancient world sheds light on Plotinus' method and curriculum. Since Marrou's *A History of Education in Antiquity* is a respected authority, I have used it extensively and accepted the author's conclusions. According to Marrou, a fairly fixed type of education was established early and transported as part of Greek culture throughout the Mediterranean world. Once the initial tension between the Platonic and Sophistic (Isocratic) ideals had been settled, there were few changes. Marrou sees the Hellenic ideal, that is, the goal of Hellenic education, as humanism, the development of Man. But it was Man as a social being, not Man the philosopher-king. Plato's fine-tuning of the mind served too narrow a group. The socially practical aspirations of the Sophists were more acceptable to the general populace.

. . . ultimately, in the eyes of posterity, it was Isocrates who carried the day, not Plato: the culture that arose out of classical education was essentially aesthetic, artistic and literary, not scientific.¹

. . . this is the true humanism--this emphasis on the social aspect of culture, on the danger inherent in any activity that tends to be self-enclosed and aloof from the ordinary intercourse of daily life. Here we reach the really profound reason why the ancient tradition rejected

¹ H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. by George Lamb (London: Sheed and Ward, 1956), p. 224.

Plato's great idea of making mathematics the centre of all education.¹

From his positioning of Mathematics on The Line, as mentioned in the last chapter, we know that Plato had considered it valuable as preparation for higher learning. We are speaking here, of course, of pure, rather than applied mathematics. Its value was propaedeutic, not practical, and although philosophers of all schools deemed it important, it was given less and less importance as the years went on, while literature took up the slack.

Indeed, on the educational level I do not think it can be denied that in the end literature practically eliminated mathematics from the secondary-syllabus. Mathematics went on being studied, of course; but the people interested in the subject--mathematical specialists or philosophers for whom mathematics was an indispensable preliminary--got no new recruits from the secondary schools. The result was that it had to be included in the higher education.²

Using Marrou's findings, I conclude that the person of Plotinus' day in Rome who had completed secondary schooling would have had training, theoretically, in all seven "basics"--grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, arithmetic, music, geometry and astronomy. In practice, however, it was an education in literature--classical poets and writers generally: ". . . the four main pillars of classical culture were Homer--especially the *Iliad*--Euripides,

¹ Marrou, p. 223.

² Marrou, p. 183.

Menander and Demosthenes."¹ Now this study of literature had as one of its major functions the development of the moral fiber. It is quite a different approach to literature from that in our present day schools. Today we consider all the academic subjects, including literature, as contributing to the cognitive development of the pupil. If a school should teach 'values', that subject would probably be assigned to the Guidance Department, which concerns itself more with the social and affective development of the same child. We can conceive of an educated scoundrel, one who passed the cognitive courses with flying colours, but whose social and affective growth was stunted. That is a concept foreign to the Graeco-Roman schools. Marrou speaks of the secondary school teacher thus:

The grammarian's object was ultimately moral, and he was thus in the main stream of the old tradition, with its search for heroic examples of "human perfection" (to try once again to translate ἀρετή) in the annals of the past.²

The information that Marrou gives us about secondary schooling in Plotinus' day meshes quite remarkably with the facts we can infer from the text of the *Enneads*, regarding what Plotinus expected his hearers to be familiar with. Take, first of all, the matter we have just been discussing, moral development as an integral part of learning. This assumption permeated the school system. Thus when Plotinus seems to consider the development of

¹ Marrou, p. 164.

² Marrou, p. 169.

ἀρετή as simply another way of looking at the development of reason, we realize that he is expressing an attitude familiar to his students. Secondly, the close reasoning and the tortuous arguments that we find in parts of the *Enneads* presuppose, on the part of the learners, some skill and practice in the give and take of dialectics. According to Marrou, they would have had such training in their secondary education. Plotinus' catechetical style was similar to that used in the schools. A third point is that Plotinus assumes a certain degree of familiarity with the classics. Two matters should be noted in this regard. He casually weaves snippets of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* into his text, along with some Pindar, Hesiod and Euripides; and he illustrates his lessons with material from the lives of the gods and heroes. Finally, we shall note as we examine his curriculum that he requires some study of mathematics, perhaps to compensate for the shortcomings of the secondary school curriculum. Marrou has this to say about his successors, and the evidence of the *Enneads* suggests that Plotinus faced the same problem:

The evidence supplied by the neo-Platonists of the Late Empire is even more significant. They were too faithful to the *Republic* not to insist on the necessity for a "preliminary purification" of the mind--προκαθάρσις--by mathematics; but the young people who came to sit at their feet had had a purely literary training, so that science had to be taught inside the school itself.¹

Prerequisites for Plotinus' School

All of these points suggest to me that Plotinus deliberately

¹ Marrou, p. 184.

designed his material for the educated person of his day. Certainly he presented his students with challenging material, but as a good teacher he was aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their educational background. I would go so far as to say that the standard secondary education of the day must have been an unspoken prerequisite for Plotinus' inner circle, and indeed for all those of his following who dug at all deeply into his thought.

Was Plotinus a popular teacher? Or did he expect his type of teaching to attract the average man? Although Porphyry said that he had a "large following" (ch. 7), only a dozen are mentioned by name. Plotinus' own view seems to have been that, although there will always be dabblers and dilettantes, the number of true philosophers will be minute. His own model, Plato, had, according to Marrou, espoused an unpopular type of higher education. Perhaps it was because he realized that a very small percentage of children would grow up to share his love for the ideal and disdain for the material that Plotinus took considerable time off from his philosophical pursuits to be a down-to-earth practical guardian to his charges: Porphyry says in chapter 9 of the *Life* that he "always found time for those that came to submit returns of the children's property and he looked closely to the accuracy of the accounts" on the grounds that "until the young people take to philosophy, their fortunes and revenues must be kept intact for them"¹. As for "taking to philosophy", he

¹ *Vita*, ch. 9, trans. MacKenna.

realized that the interest that is engendered in many will be only fitful and short-lived, closer to wishful thinking than dedicated effort:

. . . human beings, when weak on the side of contemplation (εἰς τὸ θεωρεῖν), find in action their trace of vision (θεωρίας) and of reason (λόγου): their spiritual feebleness unfits them for contemplation (τὸ τῆς θεωρίας); they are left with a void, because they cannot adequately seize the vision (τὸ θέαμα); yet they long for it; they are hurried into action as their way to the vision which they cannot gain by intellection (ἴνα ἴδωσιν, ὃ μὴ νῶ ἔδύναντο).¹

The following is Plotinus' bluntest statement of the disregard for truth on the part of the common crowd, the φαῦλος ὄχλος:

. . . there are two kinds of life here below (ἐνθάδε), one for the good and wise (τοῖς σπουδαίοις) and one for the mass of men, that for the good and wise being directed to the highest point and the upper region (πρὸς τὸ ἀκρότατον καὶ τὸ ἕνω), and that for the more human sort being of two kinds again; one is mindful of virtue and has a share in some sort of good, but the common crowd is there, so to speak, to do manual work to provide for the necessities of the better sort (τοῖς ἐπιεικέστεροις).²

There is no question, then, that Plotinus' higher education was for a small minority. One might well ask why we should bother to study him as an educator. I think it is because a valid aim of education, at any stage, is human perfection. Public school

¹ *Enneads*, III.8.4, trans. MacKenna.

² *Enneads*, II.9.9, trans. Armstrong.

systems are for the most part concerned with the very early stages of the process, and how easy it is to become bogged down with the details of method and administration! But if we look farther down the road towards the closing stages of the journey, we are more apt to steer a straight course at the beginning. We certainly ought not to send any child off in the wrong direction, thereby barring his chance forever of reaching the goal. Those of us engaged in early education can benefit from an educator like Plotinus in the same way that people setting up a children's athletic programme would be enriched by watching the methods of an Olympic coach. It is really of little import that the numbers of students who reach that stage will be small. The way will at least be open for the ones who are able and willing.

The First Stage: Reason, Virtue and Purification

Let us look now in some detail at Plotinus' two-fold path. The reader will recall that the first stage of the journey is a withdrawal from the earth-bound life, and the second stage is progress in the other world. Let us start with the first. A surface reading of Plotinus would suggest that there are two separate ways of achieving detachment from the material world, the way of reason and the way of virtue. I believe this is a misconception, due in no small part to the vagaries of translation. MacKenna and Armstrong translate ἀρετή as virtue; this translation carries the suggestion that ἀρετή deals with a part of man quite separate from the reasoning part. That, in turn, might lead the reader to conclude that Plotinus prescribed a choice of either a moral path or a reasoning path for the first stage of

the journey. However, this is a mistake, caused by our imposing our own thought forms on Plotinus, indeed, on the whole age.

Ἄρετή is perfection, manhood, becoming what one ought to be. It involves the whole person. Its accepted outward forms in the ancient world were moderation, justice, courage, magnanimity and thoughtfulness. As we saw in the quotation from Marrou on page 85 above, the development of these qualities was considered the primary task of the schoolmaster. We must conclude that what we insist on dividing into two distinct types of development, moral and intellectual, was seen in the ancient world as the training of the whole person. The truth of the matter was expressed very well by Émile Bréhier in his book on Plotinus:

Intellectual virtues are moral values, as they are aesthetic values. It is only in the abstract that one may separate them. Moral activity and contemplation of the beautiful lead us to Intelligence quite as directly as does knowledge.¹

There are actually three different ways in which Plotinus speaks of the first step of the journey, the process of freeing oneself from undue concern with the demands of this world. Sometimes he refers to his division of the ψυχή into faculties, and the ways one can use to bring the highest faculty into play. Sometimes he talks about the two types of ἀρετή. And often he illustrates his point by drawing word pictures of the purification rites enacted in the mystery religions. I shall speak of these

¹ Émile Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, trans. Thomas, p. 88.

in turn.

First, the conversion from the lower life means listening to the voice of the highest faculty of the soul. For this faculty Plotinus uses two apparently interchangeable names, *διανοητικόν* and *λογιζόμενον*.¹ It makes proper use of the sense-perceptions, which by themselves may prove delusory. Now children, as well as many who are long past childhood, experience sensation as their most vivid faculty. In his treatise on Dialectic I-3, Plotinus shows how sense-perception can be put to its proper use. He names three types of person who are likely to make proper use of sense-perception, that is, as a step up the ladder to higher forms of thought. They are the philosopher, the musician and the lover. (This choice is taken from Plato, as we see in *Phaedrus* 248d: "The one which has seen the most Reality shall at birth enter into a future seeker for wisdom or beauty, a follower of the Muses or a lover."² Their 'vision' is more prone to development because of their pre-birth experiences.) Of the three, the philosopher is the least attached to material things. In fact, he seems to take to the journey instinctively, not needing to disengage himself from the allurements of the senses. The musician's love of the arts starts off being something sensual, but if he can draw the Ideal-forms out of what he perceives, then he is able to reach the proper balance of faculties. Thirdly,

¹ Blumenthal sees them as equal (p. 100, *Plotinus' Psychology*), but Schwyzer puts *διανοητικόν* higher (p. 366 and 390, *Entretiens Hardt V*).

² *Phaedrus*, trans. Helmbold and Rabinowitz.

the lover, who is no doubt fascinated by the things of this world, can, like the musician, put his love of beautiful objects to good use by discerning the essential beauty in them, and realizing that this same beauty can be found elsewhere--for example, in noble conduct and a good social structure. Thus he, too, is able to begin the journey. And so we see how sense-perception can lead up to the exercise of the λογιστικόν and so be the starting point for the spirit-intellectual venture. Plotinus returns to this theme more than once, notably in V.3.9:

Anyone not of the strength to lay hold of the first Soul, that possessing pure intellection (καθαρῶς νοοῦσαν), must grasp that which has to do with our *opinion* (δοξαστικῆν) and thence ascend; if even this prove too hard, let him turn to account *sensation* (αἴσθησιν) which carries the ideal-forms (τὰ εἶδη) of the less fine degree, that phase which, too, with its powers, is immaterial and lies just within the realm of *the forms* (ἐν τοῖς εἶδεσιν).

One may even, if it seem desirable, begin as low as the reproductive Soul and its very production and thence make the ascent, mounting from those ultimate *forms* (ἐσχάτων εἰδῶν) to the ultimate in the higher sense, that is to the primals (τὰ πρῶτα).¹

One cannot help noticing the similarity of that passage to these words in the *Symposium*:

And the true order of going, or being led by another, to the things of love, is to begin from the beauties of earth and mount upwards for the sake of that other beauty, using these as steps only, and from one going on to two, and from two to all fair bodily forms,

¹ *Enneads*, V.3.9, trans. MacKenna, revised where italicized.

and from fair bodily forms to fair practices,
and from fair practices to fair sciences, un-
til from fair sciences he arrives at the
science of which I have spoken, the science
that has no other object than absolute
beauty . . .¹

Now we shall look at the same part of the journey described by Plotinus in terms of ἀρετή. Developing ἀρετή can also begin while the soul is involved with this world. "Those virtues . . . which spring not from *thought* (φρονήσει) but from custom or practical discipline belong to the Couplement."² However, because the purpose of the practice of the virtues is not to become like another virtuous man, but to become like God, the process automatically escalates:

For instance, he will not make self-control (τὸ σωφρονεῖν) consist in that former observance of measure and limit, but will altogether separate himself, as far as possible, from his lower nature and will not live the life of the good man which civic virtue requires.³

Plotinus divides virtues into two classes, the civic virtues and the higher virtues. Let us look first at the civic virtues. Many people try to practise the virtues out of admiration for virtuous persons. For example, seeing a brave action they try to emulate that bravery. Or they may try to develop wisdom, justice

¹ *Symposium*, 211 b-c, trans. B. Jowett, vol. 2. The Dialogues of Plato (London: Sphere Books, 1970), p. 225.

² *Enneads*, I.1.10, trans. MacKenna, revised where italicized.

³ *Enneads*, I.2.7, trans. Armstrong.

or temperance for the same reason. Such persons are developing the civic virtues as ends in themselves. They are actually cheating themselves, for they are substituting a copy for the original. In modelling themselves after good people, they are, as it were, making an image of an image, *ὡς εἰκῶν εἰκόμι ὡμοίωται*.¹ Nevertheless, some higher good may come of such attempts, although these virtues belong to the here-and-now. Because of the measure of order, however small, they bring to life, they have a trace of the best in the other world, *ἔχουσιν ἴχνος τοῦ ἐκεῖ ἀρίστου*.² Thus they can give a person an inkling of what the higher virtues are, and so start him off in the right direction. He can match up the ideal-forms of the civic virtues he observes with those that are already present in his soul. The ideal-forms, which comprise *νοῦς*, spill over into the highest faculty of the soul, the reasoning faculty. Even in the most earth-bound man every faculty of the soul is present. This means that every man at some time has the opportunity to catch a glimmering of the ideal-forms. The sight of the ideal-forms sets up a yearning in man to return to his source. As the mind-picture of his homeland draws Ulysses to it, so the glimpse of the ideal-forms pulls the soul to what it knows to be its true identity.

Now the ideal-forms of the virtues belong to *νοῦς*. In *νοῦς* they are not virtues *per se*, for virtues belong in the world of diversity and choice, not in the stable world of *νοῦς*. But the

¹ *Enneads*, I.2.7, trans. Armstrong.

² *Ibid.*

ideal-forms serve as exemplars to man, and their this-world counterparts are the virtues. In reality, what a man does when he practises any one of the virtues is to attain that dominance of the reasoning faculty of which we spoke earlier:

Since the soul is evil when it is thoroughly mixed with the body and shares its experiences and has all the same opinions, it will be good and possess virtue when it no longer has the same opinions but acts alone--this is intelligence and wisdom--and does not share the body's experiences--this is self-control--and is not afraid of departing from the body--this is courage--and is ruled by reason and intellect, without opposition--and this is justice.¹

Developing the civic virtues belongs to the first stage of the path, the conversion from the lower life. As a person enters the second stage, progress within the world of *voûs*, he will advance beyond the civic virtues. ". . . he will live, no longer, the human life of the good man--such as Civic Virtue commends--but, leaving this beneath him, will take up instead another life, that of the Gods."²

The virtues as we know them belong in the world of the here-and-now, *ἐν τῷ αἰθέρι*, the world of time, decision and movement. As virtues they do not exist *ἐκεῖ*, in the world of *voûs*. What exist there are the forms or archetypes. Just as intellection here is totally different from intellection there, so is virtue here totally different from virtue there. One may wonder whether a

¹ *Enneads*, I.2.3, trans. Armstrong.

² *Enneads*, I.2.7, trans. MacKenna.

man who possesses the higher virtues would automatically be recognized for practising the civic virtues as well. For Plotinus there is not a necessary connection: ". . . whether with his possession of the major virtues he possesses the minor either actually or in some other mode, must be decided afresh in each several case."¹

In νοῦς the virtues become θεωρία, contemplation. Wisdom, both φρόνησις and σοφία, is a constituent of θεωρία. Thus we see that of all the earthly virtues, wisdom appears to be the crown, although, once again, it would differ in quality from ἐνταῦθα to ἐκεῖ. In the other world, wisdom implies complete stillness, which is one of the main qualities of θεωρία, and differs completely in kind from the movement implied in the civic virtues and earth-bound thought.

Life in the Supreme (το δὲ ἐκεῖ ζῆν) is the native activity of Intellect; in virtue of that silent converse (ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ τῇ πρὸς ἐκεῖνο ἐπαύση) it brings forth gods, brings forth beauty, brings forth righteousness, brings forth all moral good (ἀρετή); for of all these the soul is pregnant when it has been filled with God and this is its beginning and ending.²

Such life in the upper world is the life reached by following the path of reason, or of virtue, or, to use Plotinus' third way of describing it, that of purification. "For, as the ancient teaching was, moral-discipline and courage and every virtue, not even

¹ *Enneads*, I.2.7, trans. MacKenna.

² *Enneads*, VI.9.9, trans. MacKenna.

excepting Wisdom itself, all is purification."¹

Whether or not Plotinus participated in religious rituals with any sort of regularity we do not know. Because he spoke as though he had an intimate knowledge of the secret acts, we might conclude that he himself was an initiate. Whether or not he was, he saw in the rituals of the mystery religions a dramatic portrayal of the soul's freeing herself of the encumbrances of the body. Reading the *Enneads*, one often gets the impression that Plotinus feels hemmed in by words and reasoning; at those times he bursts into metaphor, or he compels his reader to imagine a picture. In the instance we are describing here, he wants the reader to experience in his mind the purification drama.

. . . to those that approach the Holy Celebrations of the Mysteries, there are appointed purifications and the laying aside of the garments worn before, and the entry in nakedness --until, passing, on the upward way, all that is other than the God, each in the solitude of himself shall behold that solitary dwelling Existence, the Apart, the Unmingled, the Pure, that from Which all things depend, for Which all look and live and act and know, the Source of Life and of Intellection and of Being.²

Coinciding with his call for the purification of the soul are his metaphors that picture the soul as a beautiful thing that is covered with filth until it is unrecognizable.

If a man has been immersed in filth or daubed with mud, his native comeliness disappears

¹ *Enneads*, I.6.6, trans. MacKenna.

² *Enneads*, I.6.7, trans. MacKenna.

and all that is seen is the foul stuff be-smearing him: . . . Gold is degraded when it is mixed with earthly particles; if these be worked out, the gold is left and is beautiful, isolated from all that is foreign, gold with gold alone. And so the Soul . . .¹

Purification is, in this sense, freeing the soul from the passions, the voices of the lower faculties. Plotinus shows, in I.6.6, how each of the virtues in turn is a freeing of the soul from the call of the body. The result of the purification is that a man finally sees the godliness within himself: ". . . let a man first purify himself and then observe: he will not doubt his immortality when he sees himself thus entered into the pure, the Intellectual . . ." ²

One might be tempted to see in Plotinus' references to the purification rites evidence of a tendency to draw non-Greek elements into his philosophy. Bréhier went to some length to do so, devoting several pages to his study of sources such as Reitzenstein and Cumont, showing that the mystery religions prevalent in the third century, such as the cult of Isis and that of Mithra, stressed rituals of purification in which the soul cast off its earthly accretions until it was fit to stand in the presence of the divine.³ Porphyry thought Plotinus had some interest in foreign ideas and practices, for he said that one of Plotinus'

¹ *Enneads*, I.6.5, trans. MacKenna.

² *Enneads*, IV.7.10, trans. MacKenna.

³ E. Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, trans. Thomas, pp. 34-42.

motives in his aborted journey to the East was to investigate the Persian methods of philosophy. Nevertheless, we find a long history of purification rituals in the Greek tradition, in, for example, the Eleusinian mysteries and the Orphic rites. Using these as an example enabled Plotinus to move away from wordy descriptions and to present this particular part of his teaching whole, in one vivid mind-picture. I think that that is the important point to note in studying Plotinus' references to the mysteries; because there was ample experience of this type within the Greek tradition, it is unnecessary to conjecture that he was deliberately drawing on foreign material.

Mathematics

In the preceding paragraphs we have seen the first step of the journey, the disengagement from this world, described in terms of the predominance of the reasoning faculty, the development of the virtues, and the purification of the soul. Now we turn to the steps to be covered in the second part of the journey. As was suggested earlier in the outline of the secondary school programme of the day, mathematics was needed at this point. Plotinus says very little about the subject, simply, "He must be given mathematical studies to train him in philosophical thought and accustom him to firm confidence (*πίστις*) in the existence of the immaterial."¹ I have already noted that it was a general rule in the ancient world that those who intended to pursue philosophy should study mathematics, not so much for its practical applications as for its intellectual training. Plotinus himself must

¹ *Enneads*, I.3.3, trans. Armstrong.

have undergone such training and found it a helpful discipline, for Porphyry says of him, "He had a thorough theoretical knowledge of Geometry, Mechanics, Optics and Music, though it was not in his temperament to go practically into these subjects."¹ His lack of further argument for the inclusion of mathematics in his own curriculum suggests that he felt the reasons advanced by Plato were still valid.

In the preceding chapter we referred to the gradation of mental functions that Plato set forth in his illustration called The Line-- εἰκασία, πίστις, διάνοια and νόησις. We also noted that Plotinus followed Plato fairly closely in this regard. We saw that the gradation indicates degrees of independence from sense-perception, and therefore intensity of pure thought. The first two have to do with visible objects, and the latter two with intelligible objects. Each lower operation is a step towards the next.

With Plotinus, in similar fashion, the soul, while it remains in this world, deals with sense objects. Even when the reasoning function (διάνοια, διανοητικόν, κρίσις, λογισμός or λογιζόμενον) is dominant, the mind is operating in the sense world. What happens in these operations is that the mind matches up the ideal-forms, which it possesses, with those drawn from its sense-perception: "Reasoning when it passes judgement on the impressions produced by sensation is at the same time contemplating forms and contemplating them by a kind of sympathy--I mean the reasoning

¹ *Vita*, ch. 14, trans. MacKenna.

which really belongs to the true soul."¹

Plotinus would see the thinking process of the mathematician as one step higher. Although examples of geometric forms abound in the sense world, the archetype of each can only be pictured in the mind. Further, mathematical "truths" exist quite independently of sense objects. Thus mathematics forms a transition stage between sense-oriented thinking and abstract thinking. This is what is suggested in Plotinus' words, "confidence in the existence of the immaterial" (πίστεως ἀσωμάτου), when he is explaining the purpose of mathematics as an object of study. Here we see that he is following Plato's thought, for Plato spoke of mathematics as the object of δίανοια, the first of his two higher mental functions, δίανοια and νόσις. His δίανοια was a type of linear thinking which moves from an hypothesis to a conclusion. It was neither pure inductive reasoning, which would mean drawing conclusions from observations of sensible figures, nor pure deductive reasoning, but a sort of middle type. It did not proceed totally without sense-images, yet it was not bound to them.²

Dialectic

In Plotinus' sequence, one moves from mathematics to the study of dialectic. The function of dialectic is this: ". . . and the truths of philosophy must be implanted in him to lead him to faith in that which, unknowing it, he possesses within himself."³ By following dialectic one can get very close to the

¹ *Enneads*, I.1.9, trans. Armstrong.

² See footnote 3, on page 68.

³ *Enneads*, I.3.1, trans. MacKenna.

heart of learning.

In Plato's system the two highest mental functions were $\delta\iota\lambda\acute{\omicron}\nu\omicron\iota\alpha$, the study of mathematics, and $\nu\omicron\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$, where dialectic took place. Plotinus adopts the same sequence, although he usually clothes it in the metaphorical language of a journey. On the journey, the disciple travels first from the world of appearances to the sphere of the Intelligibles. Merely arriving there is not the goal; rather, the virtue induced there, Wisdom, will lead the soul higher and higher until it does reach the term. In this connection, it is appropriate to repeat here the words already quoted on page 49,

The first degree is the conversion from the lower life; the second--held by those that have already made their way to the sphere of the Intelligibles, have set as it were a foot-print there but must still advance within the realm--lasts until they reach the extreme hold of the place, the Term attained when the top-most peak of the Intellectual realm is won.¹

Reasoning, mathematics and dialectics are three distinct sections of the journey. Reasoning belongs in the world of sensation, $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\tau\alpha\upsilon\theta\alpha$, mathematics gains a foothold in the Intelligible sphere, $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\epsilon\tilde{\iota}$, and dialectic carries the soul to its destination.

There is a notable distinction between dialectic as we interpret it from Plato's writing and dialectic as we interpret it from the *Enneads*. Plato's dialectic does not make so sharp a distinction in kind from the steps preceding it as does Plotinus'.

¹ *Enneads*, I.3.1, trans. MacKenna.

Plato's dialectic is a form of reasoning. I have already quoted from Ross, on page 68, regarding Plato's dialectic: "The distinction between *νόησις* and *διάνοια* is not, as it is in Aristotle, a distinction between immediate and mediate apprehension. The work of philosophy no less than that of science was for Plato one of reasoning . . ." The passages from Plato quoted earlier (p. 19 f.) concerning dialectic affirm this understanding.

Plato generally seems to consider dialectic a rational process; but when we turn to Plotinus we note quite a contrast. The following quotation leaves no doubt that the higher mental functions are supra-rational:

To reason is like playing the cithara for the sake of achieving the art, like practising with a view to mastery, like any learning that aims at knowing. What reasoners seek, the wise hold: wisdom, in a word, is a condition in a being that possesses repose.¹

Although there are times when dialectic uses reason in order to function, for the most part it belongs in that higher realm where linear thinking is no longer necessary. Plotinus' treatment of the reasoning side of dialectic is somewhat perfunctory: ". . . some of the matter of logic, no doubt, it considers necessary--to clear the ground."² Its more characteristic work is done in the realm of *νοῦς*. In that world, all is in a state of perfection; nothing is ever wanting, and consequently, there is no

¹ *Enneads*, IV.4.12, trans. MacKenna.

² *Enneads*, I.3.4, trans. MacKenna.

change, no process. The function of the soul there is intuitive thought. Blumenthal has noted the shift in the function of dialectic and has paraphrased Plotinus' descriptions of both the earlier and the later thus:

It can give an account of the nature of each thing, how it differs from others, and what it has in common with them. It can say in which class, and where in this class, it belongs, whether or not it is a real existent, and enumerate real existents and things that are of a different kind. It can discuss good and evil, and what is to be classed under each, and say what is eternal and what is not. It leaves behind the error attached to the sensible world, and uses the Platonic method of division to separate the Ideas, to make definitions and to reach the primary kinds (πρῶτα γένη). Then it makes combinations, and, analyzing these in turn, it can go through all intelligible reality till it returns to its starting point (I.3.4, 2-16). At this juncture the dialectic seems to pass from the province of reason to that of intellect, for it ceases to be a progress, and becomes a restful contemplation of a unity, and the logical method of dealing with premisses and syllogisms is left behind (ib. 16-20).¹

Θεωρία

Dialectic spills over from reasoning into vision. Plotinus uses here the word βλέπει, it sees: ". . . it has arrived at Unity and it contemplates (βλέπει): it leaves to another science all that coil of premisses and conclusions called the art of reasoning, much as it leaves the art of writing."² Here we have actually arrived at the goal of education, of which we spoke on page 44, for Θεωρία is basically 'seeing' and Plotinus uses it and its

¹ Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology*, p. 108f.

² *Enneads*, I.3.4, trans. MacKenna.

cognates interchangeably with $\beta\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\pi\omega$, 'I see'. This implies a change in consciousness, an effortless awareness of reality. As a result of dialectic, the eyes are opened.

Plotinus' development of dialectic over Plato's is captured by Paul Henry in these words:

Where Plato presents us with the stages of a thought for ever inquiring and for ever moving beyond itself, Plotinus finds achieved results. Dialectic becomes metaphysics; what was dynamic takes on the garb of fixity, though the breath of mystical aspiration which dominates the Enneads confers its own powerful impulse upon the whole.¹

Now that we have covered Plotinus' journey of the soul from its obsession with the body right through to its attainment of vision, some observations are in order. Firstly, the soul has been pulling itself away from everything external to itself. It has withdrawn from all but a fleeting concern with bodily appetites; it has curbed the passions; gradually it has dispensed with sensory stimuli, then with words, reason and logic; finally it has become one with the objects of its thoughts and it is ready to leave individual identity behind and be caught up into the One. Secondly, as it has been looking in upon itself, it has been moving from busyness to stillness. We observed earlier that Plotinus interpreted all human activity as an attempt to gain the vision implied in $\theta\epsilon\omega\rho\iota\alpha$, yet the farther one is from the goal, the more frantic and frenzied will be his activity. Conversely,

¹ Paul Henry, Introduction to the 1962 edition of MacKenna, p. xl.

progress towards that goal is marked by increasing stillness.

Θεωρία, then, is both pure and motionless.

Aristotle had seen *Θεωρία* as the most excellent activity. There is a notable difference, however, between his concept of *Θεωρία* and Plotinus', because for Plotinus *Θεωρία* was also the generative power of the whole universe. According to the *Enneads*, *Θεωρία*, in its purest form is contemplation of the One. However, its power is suffused throughout the universe so that in his treatise on *Θεωρία*, III.8, he attributes it to all the elements of nature--earth, trees and vegetation. Closest to its source, it is a generative type of stillness. Farther away it degenerates into busyness. Such busyness in the human sphere is, then, man's feeble attempt at *Θεωρία*: "Everywhere, doing and making will be found to be either an attenuation or a complement of vision."¹ This may help us understand why Plotinus sets so little store by human activity. It is of far less significance than the true action-less activity of the soul.

Murders, death in all its guises, the reduction and sacking of cities, all must be to us just such a spectacle as the changing scenes of a play; all is but the varied incident of a play, costume on and off, acted grief and lament. For on earth, in all the succession of life, it is not the Soul within but the Shadow outside of the authentic man, that grieves and complains and acts out the plot on this world stage which men have dotted with stages of their own constructing.²

¹ *Enneads*, III.8.4, trans. MacKenna.

² *Enneads*, III.2.15, trans. MacKenna.

There is no other way but *θεωρία*, and even the bravest man of mythology and legend does not measure up to the man who has achieved it:

Hercules was a hero of practical virtue. By his noble serviceableness he was worthy to be a God. On the other hand, his merit was action and not the Contemplation (*πρακτικός ἀλλ' οὐ θεωρητικὸς ἦν*) which would place him unreservedly in the higher realm. Therefore while he has place above, something of him remains below.¹

We have remarked more than once that when words and logic failed, Plotinus was wont to convey his meaning through metaphor. In his book, *Πρῶξις et Θεωρία*, Arnou presents his own metaphor to suggest the way in which *θεωρία* renders the soul receptive to the One. "Elle est comme un lieu de passage pour l'illumination supérieure. Elle s'oriente, et la lumière passe."²

As a final attempt to convey the rich meaning of *θεωρία*, I have chosen Plotinus' own metaphor. The normal human condition is like being in a choir but refusing to look at the conductor. Achieving *θεωρία* means being able to fix one's gaze on him.

We are ever before *him*--cut off is utter dissolution; we can no longer be--but we do not always attend: when we look our Term is attained; this is rest; this is the end of singing ill; effectively before Him, we lift a choral song full of God.³

¹ *Enneads*, I.1.12, trans. MacKenna.

² Arnou, *Πρῶξις et Θεωρία*, p. 55.

³ *Enneads*, VI.9.8, trans. MacKenna, revised where italicized.

Method

We now turn to some observations about method. Here there are actually two tasks which tend to overlap. First there is Plotinus' method of teaching, and second the method of learning he sets out for his hearers. In practice the two merge into one another, perhaps because the teacher-pupil relationship entails a certain degree of imitation. The student will tend to follow the thought patterns of his teacher. Therefore I shall deal with them under the one general topic.

The overarching principle of Plotinus' method was that in his teaching, spiritual discipline and philosophy met. I have already suggested that concern with the whole being of the learner was in the spirit of the schools of antiquity. As Marrou says,

School, for the Greeks, meant an enthusiastic little band of pupils centring around a well-known teacher and growing more deeply united as time went by as a result of living a more or less communal life and developing more and more intimate personal relationships.¹

This tendency was intensified in Plotinus' case, as his school seems to have been a sort of adult contemplative community, with members staying for long periods of time. Amelius, for example, remained for twenty-four years. We observe throughout the *Enneads*, then, a combination of methodical reasoning and missionary fervor. Plotinus' purpose as a teacher was to have his students experience the spiritual delights which he had known.

¹ Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, p. 221.

In dealing with the particular elements of his teaching style, I have taken a book at random, *Ennead* V.1, The Three Initial Hypostases.¹ Plotinus tends to begin a lecture with a question, probably one that has risen in discussion. Here it is, "What can it be that has brought the souls to forget the father, God, and though members of the Divine and entirely of that world, to ignore at once themselves and It?" In the course of the book he tends to wander somewhat from the question, establishing at some length that the soul is, indeed, divine; nevertheless, in the final chapter, he rephrases that same question thus, "Possessed of such powers, how does it happen that we do not lay hold of them, but for the most part, let these high activities go idle--some, even, of us never bringing them in any degree to effect?" This is an example of the organization of his thought. Although his reputation for unwieldy sentence structure is widespread, we do him a disservice to accuse him of having an untidy mind. He gives the impression of knowing from the start where he is going. In fact, Porphyry credits him with the ability to stop in mid-sentence to deal with some practical concern and then to take up his work exactly where he left off.²

Apart from the initial question, Plotinus does not really invite audience participation of the type we find in the Platonic dialogues. There are a few questions, but they are largely of a

¹ All the quotations from the *Enneads* in this analysis are from MacKenna.

² *Vita*, ch. 8, trans. MacKenna.

rhetorical nature. "If, then, it is the presence of soul that brings worth, how can a man slight himself and run after other things?" (ch. 2) "What happened then?" (ch. 6). The questions are merely springboards for Plotinus' own ideas.

Plotinus is particularly prone to using figurative language, the language of poetry. For example, in the first chapter, he likens the soul that does not know its own worth to a child taken at a tender age from its father. It appears to me that Plotinus' use of figures of speech, often one piled on top of another, indicates his constant struggle to let the mind expand beyond the limits of language and reason. Painting a word picture is a way of presenting material with an immediacy and wholeness that is a step closer to ultimate vision than is linear thought.

It has been remarked that Plotinus employs moving metaphors in the manner of the "spiritual exercises of contemplatives in other traditions"¹. We find an instance of this type of teaching in chapter 2. Before forming the mind picture the learner is instructed to prepare himself: "Let not merely the enveloping body be at peace, body's turmoil stilled, but all that lies around, earth at peace, and sea at peace, and air and the very heavens." When he has achieved this mental peace, he is to envision soul bringing life to the universe in this manner:

Into that heaven, all at rest, let the great soul be conceived to roll inward at every point, penetrating, permeating, from all sides pouring in its light. As the rays of the sun

¹ R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (New York: Scribner's, 1972), p. 42.

throwing their brilliance upon a lowering
 cloud make it gleam all gold, so the soul
 entering the material expanse of the heavens
 has given life, has given immortality: what
 was abject it has lifted up; and the heavenly
 system, moved now in endless motion by the
 soul that leads it in wisdom, has become a
 living and blessed thing . . .¹

In other treatises Plotinus employs yet more abstract moving images, involving changing lights and circles.² It appears that forming such mind pictures was a mental discipline he taught his followers.

Bréhier notes that a typical book of the *Enneads* combines questions, argument, persuasion and exhortation. We have already looked at Plotinus' use of questions. As for argument, a glance at *Ennead* V.1 will show how he will move forward, and then return to his starting point, either to follow another line of reasoning or to elaborate upon what he has said. Chapter 4 begins, "But there is yet another way to this knowledge", and chapter 7, "We must be more explicit." Chapter 10 begins with a review: "We have shown the inevitability of certain convictions as to the scheme of things."

Instances of persuasion and exhortation are to be found throughout the book, as the reader will note. Here is the high note on which the final chapter closes:

Hoping to hear a desired voice we let all
 others pass and are alert for the coming at

¹ *Enneads*, V.1.2, trans. MacKenna.

² See V.6.1 or VI.4.7.

last of that most welcome of sounds: so here, we must let the hearings of sense go by, save for sheer necessity, and keep the Soul's perception bright and quick to the sounds from above.

Finally, Plotinus teaches not as one who has discovered a new system, but as one expressing afresh truths that man has known, deep in his soul, from the beginning of time. In chapters 4 and 7, with a stretched type of etymology not unknown in his day, he says that Kronos is a veiled form of $\nu\omicron\delta\varsigma$, and the story that Zeus is the offspring of Kronos really means that Soul springs from $\nu\omicron\delta\varsigma$. In chapters 8 and 9 he lists an impressive number of ancient philosophers whose teachings anticipated many aspects of his own, foremost among them being, of course, Plato. And these same teachings are actually celebrated in the rituals of the mystery religions. "This is the meaning hidden in the Mysteries, and in the Myths of the gods." (ch. 7).

Plotinus' method appears, then, as a dynamic combination of meticulously organized thought, poetic imagination, and fervent persuasion. Imposed upon a background of sensitive awareness of the workings of the human mind, those proved to be the ingredients of superb teaching.

CONCLUSION

In commenting upon the manner in which Plotinus presents his thought in the *Enneads*, one scholar has said that it is like a continuous spiral that has no beginning and no ending. Anyone who tries to read the *Enneads* will be struck by the aptness of that remark. There is no real beginning point. There is no way to ease oneself in. Plotinus presents no neatly packaged units of thought. Any point of the *Enneads* is as good, or as difficult, as another to begin at. No matter where the reader starts, he will find that the initiation is difficult. It is similar to jumping onto a moving train.

Once the reader has surmounted the initial difficulties, he discovers that this same tight spiral of thought has a remarkable unity and consistency. This may be accounted for, in part, by the fact that there is no readily discernible 'early Plotinus' or 'late Plotinus'. All of his writing was done in the course of about fifteen years, after he had passed the age of fifty.¹ All that he wrote, too, was sifted through the sieve of his own experience. Although he had tossed into that sieve bits and pieces from numerous philosophies, the lumps that would not pass through

¹ One of the clearest detailed accounts of these matters is in the preface to Armstrong's translation.

were either discarded or altered in form until they would.

The present work, that of looking at Plotinus as educational practitioner-cum-philosopher, has been made both difficult and rewarding, in turn, by these characteristics of his writing. First, one cannot simply isolate the passages that deal with education and draw from them alone. Plotinus does not talk about education *per se*, but rather about journeying. To grasp his educational philosophy, one must develop an overall understanding of the *Enneads*, and then examine them specifically from the point of view of an educator. Secondly, however, there is the reward of finding a complete, unified philosophy of education.

In this thesis I have addressed my efforts to the question whether Plotinus had an adequate philosophy of education. I have tried to fit his teachings on education into a pattern which includes studies of man and the world, ultimate values, the purpose of education, the psychology of learning, the material to be studied and the method to be used. What has emerged appears to be a fully developed and unique philosophy of education.

Modern Relevance

The task that remains is to consider whether any of the foregoing is relevant to the educational scene today. I would suggest that two of Plotinus' convictions about education speak to our contemporary situation. The first is that education has a dimension that is ultimately religious. The second is that the mind is capable of a number of types of thought, some of which can be revealed only through mental discipline. Although emphasis on

these would run counter to the pragmatist tendencies of today, their unpopularity does not negate their validity. Let us look at each of them.

Plotinus believes that in his inner being man is infinitely rich. He holds that man can develop extra-rational powers. As we examined the second stage of the educational journey, we saw man moving beyond rational thought, even beyond intuition, up to the point where the learner becomes one with the object of his learning. In his study of Plotinus, Philip Merlan calls this point "rationalistic mysticism", and says of it:

In rationalistic mysticism we have absolute transparency, or, as we could also say, self-knowledge. In an ordinary act of knowledge the object of knowledge is something opaque which knowledge illuminates and makes visible. But in the ecstatic act of knowledge nothing opaque is left, because what is known is identical with what knows.¹

There is no doubt that for Plotinus this is a religious experience. In delving into his inner self man reaches the divine. That is the case both in man's experiencing the fullness of *voûs*, and in those rare occasions of being swept up into union with the One. Both are experiences of God.

In his well-known essay, "The Aims of Education", A. N. Whitehead suggests something along the same line when he says that it has been known since the beginning of civilization that the essence of education is religious. Surely that is what

¹ Merlan, *Monopsychism, etc.*, p. 21.

Plotinus both experienced and taught; that study is a road to God. In Plotinus education and religion meet.

A number of factors, which we need not enumerate here, have led to the current situation in which religion is virtually ignored in our schools. Yet the burgeoning of the so-called New Religions among our young people points to a long-standing religious hunger. Perhaps the religious dimension of life can be acknowledged, not by subservience to denominational limits, but by deepening our concept of education itself in the spirit of Plotinus. Such a hope was proffered by the educational philosopher Robert Ulich, writing in 1965:

. . . the secularists may discover that a religious outlook toward life is not necessarily identical with an established creed that is eager to strangle the freedom of teaching. They might acknowledge that one cannot call a person educated who is ignorant of the impact of religious thought on the minds of poets, artists, philosophers, and even scientists. Thus, the secularists will present to advocates of denominational instruction in public schools a much more serious challenge than they did at the time of dogmatic hostility toward ecclesiastical influences. Movements of thought that attempt to develop an authentic religious view of life without any connection with, sometimes even in opposition to, established churches appear today in many countries. These movements indicate that we live in an era of transformation of man's spiritual consciousness. The old polarity of formal piety and atheism has become obsolete.¹

When we turn our attention specifically to Plotinus' convic-

¹ Robert Ulich, *Education in Western Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965), p. 130.

tion that there are several different types of knowing, some being dependent upon practice in the earlier ones, we harken back to the old idea of mental discipline, which has been out of general favor for some time, as the following remarks suggest:

. . . just at the turn of the century the first substantial experiments on the transfer of training were reported. While neither the early "transfer experiments" nor those that followed were in any sense a product of the Progressive school of educational theory, the interpretation given to the findings as overthrowing the doctrine of mental discipline has been quite in line with the Progressive teachings.¹

Related to this same matter, the need for an expansion of our concept of what constitutes "knowing", is Robert Ornstein's argument, already referred to on page 71, that in relying so much on the scientific method, we in the West have neglected other modes of thought, for example, intuitive thought. And there is general concern that children, bombarded by audio-visual stimuli, are suffering from limited powers of concentration. I would say, then, that it would be a good thing, in the spirit of Plotinus, to move the emphasis away from the quantity of material to be experienced and assimilated, to the thought processes within the individual.

These two convictions of Plotinus that I have described as particularly relevant to education today are emphasized succinctly

¹ W. C. Bagley, "In Defence of the Exacting Studies," *The History of American Education Through Readings*, ed. C. H. Gross and C. C. Chandler (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1964), p. 394.

in R. T. Wallis' general observation about Neoplatonism:

That religious experience must be given its due the contemporary mystical revival makes clear; yet in their turn our present-day prophets, notably those of the psychedelic cults, too often ignore the necessity to the religious life of discrimination and self-discipline, and in this differ from the best mystics of all traditions, including the Orientals they profess to follow.¹

The message that Plotinus leaves us to ponder is surely this, that education is enriched by the depth of religion, just as religion is strengthened by the discipline of true education.

¹ Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, p. 178, italics mine.

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