

ON THE RETURN OF BEINGS TO THE FIRST

Of the universal and perfect hypostatic substances, none turns towards its product. All perfect hypostatic substances return to the principles that generated them. The very body of the world, by the mere fact of its perfection, is converted to the intelligent Soul, and that is the cause of its motion being circular. The Soul of the world is converted to Intelligence, and this to the First. All beings, therefore, aspire to the First, each in the measure of its ability, from the very lowest in the ranks of the universe up. This anagogical return of beings to the First is necessary, whether it be mediate or immediate. So we may say that beings not only aspire to the First, but that each being enjoys the First according to its capacity. The individual hypostatic substances, however, that are subject to declining towards manifoldness, naturally turn not only towards their author, but also towards their product. That is the cause of any subsequent fall and unfaithfulness. Matter perverts them because they possess the possibility of inclining towards it, though they are also able turn towards the divinity. That is how perfection makes second rank beings be born of the first principles, and then be converted towards them. It is, on the contrary, the result of imperfection, to turn higher entities to lower things, inspiring them with love for that which, before them, withdrew from the first principles in favour of matter.

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

ON THOUGHT

Thought is not the same everywhere; it differs according to the nature of every being. In intelligence, it is intellectual; in the soul it is rational; in the plant it is seminal; last, it is superior to intelligence and existence in the principle that surpasses all these, that is, the One.

ON LIFE

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

ON THE ONE

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

THE DIVINITY IS EVERYWHERE AND NOWHERE

The divinity is everywhere because it is nowhere. So also with intelligence and the soul. But it is in relation to all beings that it surpasses, that the divinity is everywhere and nowhere; its presence and its absence depend entirely on its nature and its will. Intelligence is in the divinity, but it is only in relation to the things that are subordinated to it that intelligence is everywhere and nowhere. The body is within the soul and in divinity. All things that possess or do not possess existence proceed from divinity, and are within divinity; but the divinity is none of them, nor in any of them. If the divinity were only present everywhere, it would be all things, and in all things; but, on the other hand, it is nowhere: everything, therefore, is begotten in it and by it, because it is everywhere, but nothing becomes confused with it, because it is nowhere. Likewise if intelligence be the principle of the souls and of the things that come after the souls, it is because it is everywhere and nowhere. This is because

it is neither soul, nor any of the things that come after the soul, nor in any of them; it is because it is not only everywhere, but also nowhere in respect to the beings that are inferior to it. Similarly the soul is neither a body, nor in the body, but is only the cause of the body, because she is simultaneously everywhere and nowhere in the body. So there is procession in the universe from what is everywhere and nowhere, down to what can neither simultaneously be everywhere and nowhere, and which limits itself to participating in this double property.

Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie: *Porphyry's Launching-Points to the Realm of Mind: An Introduction to the Neoplatonic Philosophy of Plotinus*; 1988