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PLOTINUS AND THE VALUE OF THE HUMAN PERSON

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Plotinus thinks of himself as a Platonist, but his philosophy differs from that of Plato in a great many ways,¹ of which the following are among the more important:

1. Plotinus' One, unlike Plato's Good, is the cause of all that is. Mind and matter both derive from it.
2. The goal of the human soul is union with the One, not a vision of the Form of Goodness or of Beauty.

As far as questions of value are concerned, the second of these points is particularly important, for it enables Plotinus to combine in an unusual way a version of what I want to call the "divine spark" theory with the traditional Platonic view that one's value depends on the degree with which one is qualified by the Form of the Good. It also gives man, despite Plotinus' tendency to deny the fact when treating of Gnosticism, a very particular position in this special kind of union with the One; he - or at least his soul - is, in the famous phrase of Dean Inge, the wanderer of the metaphysical world.²

The key to Plotinus' doctrine of human nature is to be found in particular in two treatises: 1.1 and 6.8. Both these tracts were composed fairly late in Plotinus' life and may certainly be regarded as products of his maturity. 6.8. may have been provoked by the reading of a treatise on the nature of God, possibly Christian or para-Christian, now lost to us. We shall return to this question shortly.

In 1.1 it could be argued that no specifically new theories about the human soul appear, but that the resulting synthesis is new in a number of very important respects. Here (and also elsewhere) Plotinus distinguishes between the empirical self (the "I", or "we", as he calls it),³ that is, the mode of consciousness we have at any particular time, and the soul, which is the totality of our psychic powers whether we are conscious of them or not. These psychic powers may be described, in value terms of Aristotelian origin, as either "above" or "below" the level of consciousness and the empirical self. Highest of them, of course, is the so-called undescended part of the soul, which is always in contact with the Divine Mind and the world of Forms, that

is, always characterized perfectly by the divine "archetypes" of things. Because of the existence of this aspect of the soul, we are able to learn, that is, to call into consciousness, facts and values of which we are not always aware, but which are the characteristics of that higher part of the soul. For in Plotinus' words, each of us is an intelligible world;⁴ not, that is, a potentially intelligible world in some Aristotelian sense, but an actual intelligible world; not, however, in respect of our conscious self, but of our "upper" soul, our real or true self. We shall have to consider the relationship between our "true self" and our "empirical self" later.

Below the level of consciousness there are other psychic activities, and subconscious desires, which may come to the surface as we "identify" with them from time to time. Plotinus does not specify much about the nature of these desires "locked up in the desiring faculty", except for a few isolated but important items of information: that they are irrational and thus tending to non-existence, and that within the lower part of the soul they resemble the upper soul in that they share in immortality.⁶ At the ontological level the problem that this seems to pose is of the nature of the existence of the "we", or of consciousness itself. It seems to be, though it is not, some kind of epiphenomenon of the soul when engaged in certain kinds of activity. Thus "we" would be merely a name given to the various functionings of the soul in so far as there is consciousness of them. But that does not seem to help very much, for the question obviously remains as to what is conscious. A more hopeful approach seems to be that the "we" is to be identified with our "outer" self and the soul (or rather the upper soul) with our "true self" or "inner self" - the inner man,⁷ as Plotinus sometimes says, making good use of basic (and Platonic) terminology. Now if this is the explanation, then the inner self is some kind of soul in the Platonic sense of the word, while the outer self, the "we" is inferior, but capable of rising above this inferiority. Somehow, therefore, when we identify with the upper soul, we do not change that upper soul of itself, but we realize our whole being in a kind of harmonious relationship. Thus the distinction between the inner and the outer self disappears.

This interpretation may be challenged on the ground that the "outer man" or "outer self" is usually identified in the text of Plotinus with the life of sensation and of the passions. How then can it be that it could be called the "we"? Because, it may be supposed, all that involves our individual life, our personal experiences, is mediated through the "outer self", which thus plays a role not dissimilar to that attributed by Aristotle to the Passive Intellect, the "soul", and the body over against the Active Intellect.

The Aristotelian Active Intellect cannot remember; that is why after death, when the Active Intellect alone survives, there is no memory. However, the Plotinian "upper soul", unlike the Aristotelian Active Intellect, is not devoid of thought-content. On the contrary its object of thought is the entire intelligible world. It does not need memory, therefore, for at the level of Form it has a constant and present awareness.

Whenever the "we" is identified with the upper soul, it is characterized by the Forms, and we know the Forms in some kind of immediate apprehension. At other times we lose this awareness and have "forgotten our origins".⁸ One can recognize in this Plotinian doctrine of the "we" something of the account of the unification of the parts of the tripartite soul by goodness that Plato describes in the Phaedrus.⁹ There is no "we" apart from the "upper soul" and the passions, etc. There are only different types of relationship between the inner and the outer man, between the upper soul and its lower manifestations. Such a theory, where the highest state for the man is the integration of his levels of activity, and the "completion" of the "we" by this kind of integration, would suggest that man in his highest "version" is more than any of his "parts", including the higher soul before it is brought to consciousness. It would also imply that each individual man is in some sense unique, not merely a man with the characteristics of men, but a man whose specially integrated personality is somehow "greater" than would be the case were he merely an example of the form of Man.

I believe it may now be assumed, for various reasons which we need not specify in detail here, that Plotinus was one of those Platonists who subscribed to a heretical version of Platonism according to which there are not only forms of species but also forms of individuals, at least in the case of individual men.¹⁰ If our account of the nature of the "integrated" human being is on the right lines, it becomes clear that here too there would be a further reason for maintaining such a thesis, though Plotinus does not allude to it in this context. Perhaps, in fact, he did not argue for it on these sorts of grounds, but for other reasons of his own (and because the Stoics had awakened him, and presumably other Platonists, to the problems of uniquely qualified individuals). Be that as it may, a belief in forms of individuals is consonant with the attitude towards the integration of the personality which I have just described.

If this approach is correct, however, a perhaps even more fundamental divergence from traditional Platonism than the theory of forms of individuals seems to emerge. For we take it as a dictum for Plato that "individuality" is something to outgrow, something which is merely the mark

of that imperfect realization of the Forms which all particulars exhibit. For Plotinus, therefore, individuality will be the necessary mark of the perfected self, at least of the self raised to the level of a conscious integration of the inner and the outer man.

"Many times have I woken up to myself out of the body", says Plotinus (4.8.1). The passage may not refer to union with the One, as Porphyry seems to have thought, and as I have interpreted it before,¹¹ but to the raising of the "we" to the level of the upper soul and the vision of the Forms. We note that it is "I" who am raised. The passage is one of the few "personal" sections of the Enneads, indicating that "personality" does not disappear at this level.

But it is not only at this level that the "I" remains. At the level of the union of the self with the One, we hear of the union of the "alone with the Alone", of the two becoming one, etc. These texts, as I have argued elsewhere, are to be interpreted theistically; they concern the relationship of the self with the One.¹² But even if they are to be read monistically, as dealing with a reassimilation of the self in which all individuality is lost, we should still have to say that at the level next to that of union with the One, there is something of "personality" that remains. It is not the form of Man that attains union with the One; it is I who attain to such union, just as it is I who awake out of the body to the eternal life of the forms (and beyond).¹³ Such ideas make it clear that if Plotinus did not posit forms of individuals, if, that is, he thought that the individual differs only in so far as he is inadequate, then he is wildly inconsistent. For the "I" that eventually attains union with the One is not an imperfect being, but a perfected being, living a life at the level of the intelligible world. Thus, if there are not forms of individuals in the Plotinian world, they would have to be invented; they ought to be there.

All this should leave us in no doubt that the question of the value of man in the Plotinian world must be considered quite separately from the view of Plato. Two other points should immediately reinforce this conclusion. The first arises from the "monistic" structure of the Plotinian world as a whole, a world, as we observed, in which everything that exists owes its existence and its nature to the mode of its derivation from the One. The human being is immortal; above all his soul is immortal. But his immortality depends on the nature of the One; were the One non-existent, there would be no human soul, no human being. Yet since the One exists, the human being is by nature metaphysically perfectable, able, when he wishes, to return to his Source without any kind of further divine intervention which would compromise the unchangeability of God. The human being is generated

as he is as a result of the One's nature. He is the only being that is able both to "fall" from perfection and to rise to it by his own actions. Above the level of the individual soul beings do not fall; there is no fall of the World Soul: for Plotinus such a fall would amount to dualism;¹⁴ the World-Soul would come to look like the Sophia (or one of her offspring) of the Gnostic myths. Yet nothing below the level of man is capable of rising, of being the "wanderer of the metaphysical world". All below can only "strive for contemplation" obliquely, in an "unseeing" or "unconscious" way.¹⁵ But the human being, with his unique powers of both ascent and descent, is in a position to exercise his will in a strange way, a way that, as Plotinus explains in the notorious Ennead 6.8, resembles most closely the "attitude" of the One itself. Man can learn to do what the One simply wills to do. We shall have to consider this in more detail later, but one point may be made at once: Plotinus could not have proposed a view of this kind were it not for the fact that he has merged the Platonic Good and the gods. Plotinus' One, as distinct from Plato's Good, is a living being from which both Forms and divine souls spring. Indeed Forms and divine souls (or at least divine Minds) are two aspects, both real, of the same phenomenon, the Intelligible World. This world, therefore, has to be partaken of rather than "seen" in the Platonic sense; and, through this partaking, the life of the One itself can be shared by the human soul.

The second of our two points leads on from the first. For Plato, although it is true that the Form of the Good provides the "existence" as well as the "knowability" of the Forms, and hence of the particulars which come to resemble the Forms, yet this existence in fact requires another element, the "great and small" in the case of the Forms, and "space" or "the receptacle" in the case of particulars. In other words, although in one sense it is true, and observed by Plato, that the Good is the cause of existence, at another level this truth is only partial, Plotinus, on the other hand, constantly emphasizes that the One alone is the cause of existence. For him, far more explicitly than for Plato, goodness is existence, evil is non-existence. The latter version of the equation, explicitly spelled out and worked out in at least two treatises of Plotinus (1.8 and 2.4), is only implied at best in Plato. Plotinus is to be regarded, therefore, despite many of his interpreters, as much more conscious of the significance of existence, and of the relation of the existence of particulars to the One's existence.

Nor is it from Aristotle that this emphasis has entered the Plotinian world. Like Plato, Aristotle assumes the existence of things, indeed more so than Plato in so far as he argues for the eternity of the world and of its species in a way which the Timaeus may now be seen to have rejected.

For Aristotle, and for those most influenced by him, what needs to be explained is the rest, and above all the movement, of natural objects, of particulars; their existence is taken for granted. For Plotinus it is their existence which first of all demands explanation. Hence there are no Aristotelian arguments in the Enneads about the origin of motion; the One is not introduced in such terms. It arises as a result of explaining why things are as they are; an Aristotelian question, as the opening of the Metaphysics makes clear. But Plotinus would place the emphasis differently; for him, the problem is why they are as they are.

The novelty of this position in the context of the major currents of thought in antiquity cannot be over-emphasized. But, it may be objected, surely it is merely another version of the old puzzle of the One and the Many? Surely Parmenides is an obvious precursor? In one sense that is true, but the problem is posed by Plotinus in quite a different way.¹⁷ In the world of Parmenides, what is real is the One, Being; all else is appearance or the deceitful ways of opinion. We are dealing with true and false ways of looking at the same phenomenon. But in Plotinus there is no problem of the illusion of material things, or of a false description of the world. We have a quite different problem of derivation and of causation. Certainly in some respects, the Stoics were Plotinus' predecessors in this regard, but for them we are still dealing with a restatement, a description of the contents of the world in different ways: either the one God or Matter - they are two ways of looking at the same thing. Certainly God (Reason) organizes and in a way generates the cosmos, but he is also to be identified with the cosmos. We have no problem of the origin of the existence of things, still only the problem of their organization, of their being something.

Perhaps we now seem to have veered far from our original problems of value, but, as we shall see, that is not the case. Plotinus has combined something of a "divine spark" theory of the soul with an unstoic principle that this divine spark is not the organizer, but is the product of a "transcendental" organizer to which it can return in a mystical union. In a way it is back to the pre-Socratics, for Plotinus is less worried by the Parmenidean dictum "Nothing can come from nothing" than are most of his predecessors. True the world does arise "from the One" in the Plotinian system; but once things are created, they are not parts of the One or transformations of the One.¹⁸ They are new beings; the One has left them to be "by themselves". This is the significance of Plotinus' teaching a monistic version of the Pythagorean theory of "first principles".¹⁹ The Dyad (matter or a material principle) does not exist alongside the One; it is generated from the One and returns to it to be formed. Among the Milesians and early Pythagoreans this notion of new beings arising from a First

was unknown; and Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics were still sufficiently under the spell of Parmenides for them to assume that not only could nothing be formed out of nothing, but that nothing wholly new could be formed from anything without that thing being itself diminished. There is a kind of metaphysical principle of conservation of energy. But although Plotinus would doubtless have accepted that in relation to being in time, he abandoned it in relation to eternal being and eternal generation. It is part of the One's "infinite power" to be able to leap over the Parmenidean hurdle.²⁰

We are confronted, then, in the Plotinian world with a fully developed thesis that at any time in the cosmos there exists the One, which is infinite being, and a number of beings which are generated from it. Of these latter we are concentrating on those (viz. human souls) which are capable of a determined return to the source and maker. It should not be surprising, therefore, if we assert that a relationship of this kind, of the "alone with the Alone", implies a new high valuation on the individual, or should so imply it, even if this implication is not specifically drawn by Plotinus.

Is the Plotinian concept "democratic" in the sense of "according some intrinsic value to all human beings? Here there seem to be certain ambiguities to be found in the Enneads. Theoretically there is no doubt that everyone is capable of the return to the One; and certainly all souls are generated in the same way and should be, at least ultimately, of similar value. But souls are apparently subject to reincarnation, and at least during any particular cycle of birth and death, some souls (lovers, musicians, dialecticians etc.)²¹ seem to be the more ready to make the "return". God is present to everyone who wishes, Plotinus says, but according to Porphyry he still paid some attention to the propaedeutic sciences of the Platonists - the mathematical sciences - which are supposed to prepare the mind for dialectic.²² Some of this may be dismissed as pious practice, following in the footsteps of the founder of the Academy; but Plotinus presumably did feel some uncertainty as to why it is that, although the One is present to those who look, it is only a very small minority who look. We can see something of the same problem in Plato, but Plotinus has at his disposal - though he does not necessarily use - more of the means to resolve it. For mathematical intellectual skill is not really important, despite Plato, in the Plotinian picture of man; other qualities of man, reflecting other qualities of "God", the One, are more important. To consider these we shall shortly have to consider the significance of Plotinus' challenged to Aristotle.

Before doing that, however, we should notice that in the case of Plotinus, and indeed of the Neoplatonists generally,

where we read of God's will (*διδωκα Βουλησεν*) to accomplish good, and in the *Timaeus* (29E), the famous passage in which it is said that God (the Demiurge) ordained the structure of the world because he wanted to make everything as like himself as possible. But these texts, of which the latter was popular with generations of Platonists, seem hardly an adequate catalyst for Plotinus' elaborate reflections. Perhaps more relevant may be the Aristotelian distinction - we know he uses the Nicomachean Ethics in this treatise, so why not other texts? - between actions which are natural and actions which are enforced;²⁵ and possibly also the further Aristotelian distinction between what is natural, identified perhaps in the case of eternal, circular motion with Mind and its choices, and what is merely random. All these distinctions occur in Ennead 6.8, though the latter seems to be directed against Epicurean or some other variety of atomism.

However, despite these possibilities, the basic inspiration of the study of will in Ennead 6.8 is neither Platonic nor Aristotelian. Plotinus in fact moves away from the Nicomachean Ethics and its discussion of choice to a quite unaristotelian discussion of the nature of God. Before considering again the reason why he did this at the particular point in time - and uniquely - at which it occurs in the Enneads, let us therefore look at the unplatonic and unaristotelian points which the approach makes in passing. We have observed already that Plotinus more or less neglects the Platonic emphasis on mathematics, even though the idea of grasping or seeing the answer to a problem is one of the metaphors he must constantly have kept in his mind when considering the sort of language with which the mystical union could usefully be described. But for Plato mathematical knowledge resembles Aristotelian knowledge in -eing some kind of relationship between subject and object. It maintains the subject-object dichotomy very strongly; and that kind of dichotomy, from Plotinus' point of view, both inhibits an understanding of the union of the soul with the *One*, and fails to approach the nature of the One itself, that nature which must be able to function as a first cause of all things in a wholly unaristotelian way.

In one important respect, however, Plotinus is aristotelian, though in the spirit of the Nicomachean Ethics - which he uses in Ennead 6.8 - rather than that of the Metaphysics. For it is Aristotle who first deliberately emphasizes the question of choice, who isolates the phenomenon of choosing as of peculiar importance and in particular as an especial mark of the good man. By moving from the particular to the general, from the human to the divine and cosmic, as he so often does, Plotinus has made choosing, the act of will, the primary feature of God, of the One itself. Hence, of course, those who share in this faculty are

peculiarly godlike - a fact which helps us understand the special position of man as our traveller in the metaphysical world.

At this point we should revert to the fact that when Plotinus is engaged in rejecting the Aristotelian doctrine of the identification of God as Mind, he frequently thinks of this thesis in the form in which it was presented by Alexander of Aphrodisias. But Alexander's assimilation of the Aristotelian God-Mind with the Platonic form of the Good is far from satisfactory to Plotinus and is not the source of the voluntarist approach of Ennead 6.8. Certainly it might be argued that Alexander propounds some kind of emanation-theory;²⁶ at any rate there are similarities between his treatment of a first principle and that of a number of "Middle Platonists" such as Albinus. But his God, even though also identified with the Aristotelian Active Intellect, is far from the Plotinian God of "love" and "will" as 6.8 presents him. For Plotinus he cannot, in a philosophically adequate sense, be viewed as an efficient as well as a final and formal cause of the universe.

What then is the origin of Plotinus' position? And why does he offer it in 6.8, and to all intents and purposes, only in 6.8? First of all we should not assume that he would have repudiated it later or rejected it earlier. As we have already suggested, it is far from out of keeping with his more general proposals about God and value. There are a number of possibilities; some or even all of them may be correct. The first is that Plotinus was influenced at this point in his career by an unplatonic, unaristotelian source in his search for clarification of the first principle, dissatisfied as he was with Aristotle's view and, de facto, though inadvertently, with Plato's also. The second possibility is that he worked, as we have already suggested, from Aristotle's conception of the morally good man to a new position about the nature of God. Against that is the fact that in his very latest treatises, which are peculiarly ethical in tone, the new concept of God is not developed - though that is worth no more than are most other arguments ex silentio. The third possibility is related to the second, but would be presented in a slightly different form. Dodds observed that Plotinus' greatest claim to philosophical importance may rest with his work in the field of psychology, and not only of philosophical psychology.²⁷ We have already observed that Plotinus is inclined to take psychological theories, perhaps drawn originally from Plato (as the famous "Being good is doing good" derives in some sense from the Timaeus), and makes them into cosmic rules - and what is more natural if man is a microcosm? In our present ease the position may well be similar: the starting point is the (Aristotelian) proposition that the good man is the man who regularly makes the right kind of choices. From there we

move, as does Plotinus himself in the course of 6.8, from the notion of a choice between good and evil, a moral choice, to the notion that the good man is disposed in a particular way and will always choose the right. In Platonic-Plotinian terms such a choice of the right is to be described as having the soul looking solely to the intelligible world, totally unattracted to matter and to non-being. But in Plotinus' world this is preferably to be described as not by nature, but by choice, by an act of the will. Such an act of will, directed towards the highest goal, is not entirely possible for "us", for the empirical self of man; and even in the case of the "upper soul" it cannot be directed entirely to the highest possible object, namely the One, but only to the world of Forms. But in the case of the One, a fortiori, it will be directed to the highest possible goal, which is itself.

Plotinus, in Ennead 6.8, views this specially important psychological phenomenon in two closely related ways, in terms of will (boulesis) and in terms of Eros, that is, of a kind of desire. The highest principle of the cosmos, the One, must be seen to will its existence and to desire the highest possible object, that is, itself (6.8.15). Beings therefore which possess this combination of will and desire, even in an inferior way, are to be viewed as especially like the One; hence the importance of the soul (from which Plotinus originally drew his idea) in the Plotinian system, despite those passages where Plotinus rebukes others (Gnostics in particular) for overestimating the significance of the human subject in the vastness and complexity of the cosmos. Plotinus was probably led to believe that this way of approaching the One is Platonic - which it manifestly is not - by his use of the concept of Eros, though the notion of a self-desiring principle has no true parallel in Platonism; and it is only formally influenced by the Aristotelian notion of a self-knowing mind and the Platonic concept of a self-moving mover.

We should further recognize that Plotinus' concept of both man and God as combinations of a certain kind of will and desire, though bearing certain resemblances to the Cynic idea of the value and nature of "freedom" is in many obvious ways very different from the position of Cynics. First of all, and most important, is the fact that Plotinus has solved the Cynic problem, derived in part from the Socratic search for goodness, of a lack of content in the highest principle. Whatever the One is, that it desires and wills to be; and the One is to be identified as infinite Being, as a Being of infinite power who has created the cosmos. To say, and it is sometimes said, that in the Plotinian world the One lacks content is thus to confuse it with its utterly formless and ineffectual opposite, namely matter. Goodness is thus to be seen not only as doing good, but more precisely as willing to do good. And although it is certainly true that

for Plato to know what is good entails to want to act in accordance with that goodness, the matter is brought out into the open by Plotinus in a way which goes far beyond what Plato presumably envisaged - though Plotinus doubtless thought that he was merely being Platonic. It can, of course, be argued that he is no more unplatonic in 6.8 than he is elsewhere when he treats in any detail of the nature of the One.

Nevertheless the shift in emphasis from Plato to Plotinus, in their conception of what it is to attain likeness to God, is of the utmost importance in considering the question of the value of human beings. For Plotinus is in a much better position than Plato to "democratize" his theory of human value. "God is always with us", he tells us, "but we are able to be with it when we put otherness away, and look towards him." The emphasis is not so much on knowing the Forms, though that certainly is required, but on turning, on reaching out, that is on choosing and desiring (ἐπιεταλ, 6.9.8.33 ff.). Of course Plotinus would say that this is merely the proper interpretation of the Platonic doctrine of conversion, but his new emphasis is guaranteed to identify the good man more clearly with the man who makes a special kind of moral determination for himself.

As I have already said, there is certainly Aristotelian influence on the new emphasis in 6.8; but are we justified in taking this treatise to represent a peculiarly Plotinian attitude towards the self and the One which he would have been willing to advocate at all times and in all his treatises. For if we are not, then we cannot perhaps so readily use his proposals in 6.8 to argue that he holds that the value of an individual depends on his being a certain kind of "thing", i.e., being like the One in respect of the "faculty" of desire and will. And again can we attach much importance to the remark in 6.9.8 that we are like the One when we desire it? Or is the possible coincidence of this with 6.8 merely accidental?

It might certainly be argued that Plotinus is carried on by the course of the argument in 6.8 to a position which cannot be squared with what we find elsewhere in the Enneads. This could be supported by the fact we have already observed, namely that there is virtually no reference to the notion of God as will in earlier or later parts of the Enneads. Thus one could perhaps say that Plotinus did not see the full implications of what he had presented in 6.8. Against this, however, can certainly be put the counter-argument that there is nothing in the rest of the Enneads which conflicts with what is to be found in Ennead 6.8. But that is obviously not an adequate response: 6.8 could be in accordance with the rest of the Enneads, but Plotinus could still not have worked out all the more general implications we have tried to draw. The sceptic could still

say that in 6.8 Plotinus is led on from point to point, in a somewhat Aristotelian manner, by his discussion of the doctrine of choice as presented in the Nicomachean Ethics.

In fact, unless we can progress on the question of what induced Plotinus to compose Ennead 6.8, we can probably advance no further with the problem of his conscious intentions. And the first point we should make in this connection is somewhat in favour of the agnostic. It is rather striking for Plotinus to take much direct interest in the Nicomachean Ethics at all; there is no other extended discussion of it in our text of the Enneads, and Porphyry, who alluded to the use Plotinus makes of the Metaphysics has nothing to say of the Ethics.²⁸ Nevertheless, various themes from the Ethics were known to Middle Platonic writers, and Albinus at least seems to know it first hand.²⁹ We may almost certainly assume that Plotinus knew Albinus' work,³⁰ and therefore it is just possible that he recalled that Albinus had also talked of God's will (Βούλησις).³¹ Yet it is hard to think that Albinus' vague echo of the Timaeus at this point was Plotinus' specific source; nor does the comment of Albinus suggest that God's will was particularly discussed, rather than occasionally mentioned, in Middle Platonism.

Despite the commentary of Aspasius, the Nicomachean Ethics seems to have received comparatively little study even among Aristotelians. Perhaps, however, the discussion of choice and will is an exception to this. At least Alexander was greatly interested in it, being desirous of using it to refute Stoic determinism. But interestingly Plotinus' discussion in 6.8 does not devote much time to the refutation of Stoicism. Rather it is concerned to move from human will to divine will, to the question of the nature of God which is quite unaristotelian, but always central to Plotinus.

The above points seem to indicate the high probability that although Plotinus may have read Aspasius on the Nicomachean Ethics,³² there was some particular set of circumstances which persuaded Plotinus to compose Ennead 6.8 when he did. Ennead 6.8 is number 39 in Porphyry's chronological order. The treatises immediately surrounding it are 6.7 and 2.1; and the "will of God" is mentioned twice in 2.1.1. It can be dated to approximately 265 A.D. Obviously our knowledge of the philosophical activity of this period is limited. We know of no significant treatise on the notion of the freedom of the will, or of the concept of the First Principle as Will, though such may have existed. What we do know, however, is that Christian writers throughout the third century were much concerned with theories about the will of God. Pantaenus may have discussed the matter, and both Clement of Alexandria³⁴ and Origen in On First Principles (2.9.1)

developed the same theme. The Christians were not imprisoned by the "Aristotelian" tradition which held that God must be identified with Mind, though they certainly held Mind to be one of his basic characteristics. They were, of course, concerned to think in the terms prescribed by Genesis of God's decisions.

Whether Plotinus was affected by a Christian text on the will of God we do not know. If he was, it may have been something obscure and quite unknown to us. It could have been composed in Rome, though the possibility also remains open that he was sent something from Alexandria. It seems unlikely, however, that it was anything of Origen's; Origen had by this time been dead for a considerable period, and it is most unlikely that the memory of some debate from his old Alexandrian days had suddenly stirred Plotinus to write or speak out. The only treatise available to us which could have been written during the relevant period is the work on Free Will of Methodius of Olympus, now surviving only in a translation into Church Slavonic,³⁵ but though this is certainly "Aristotelian" in some respect, it is concerned with human rather than divine will. Its date, indeed, is unknown, but a mid-third century one is certainly possible. In any case, we should insist that the possibility of Christian influence on Plotinus at this time cannot be ruled out. Indeed he need not even have had a specific treatise in mind. He could have discussed such ideas with friends from Egypt or Syria in Rome. At least some of his circle must have known something of the developing patterns of thought of an East now rapidly becoming Christianized.

Plotinus' dynamic conception of the One, clearly developed far beyond Platonic and Aristotelian notions, and indeed beyond the limits of classical thought in general, might have encouraged him to take an interest in such new speculations; and, though it is only a matter of opinion, such a solution seems more likely than that he suddenly stumbled on the "new" proposals of 6.8 solely as a result of thinking about the Nicomachean Ethics. If he was, in fact, led to compose his strange treatise by discussion or reading of a new set of ideas in a specific text about the nature of God, we can more readily understand why he hardly uses them in later (or earlier) treatises. Probably they were not fully integrated into his thought, though it is likely that what he says about Eros could have been assimilated more easily than what he says about will.

In brief, we conclude that Plotinus' views on man and his value must be closely related to his views of the One. His first principle is radically different from that of the Platonists, Aristotelians and Stoics who precede him. In many respects, as in all other areas of his thought, his conception is a synthesis of what went before; but it cannot be overemphasized at the same time that it is a new conception: a dynamic first principle whose

character as efficient cause is to be viewed in terms of Eros and of will as much as of mind and knowledge. That being so, and man being a microcosm, one should expect to find - and we do in fact find - a different conception of man, and, compared with Plato and Aristotle, a new intrinsic importance assigned to him. Man in Plotinus is created perfectible and valuable, but he may not live up to himself; if he does not do so, it is his own fault and neither man nor gods should be held responsible. Above all, for Plotinus, no saviour god is required to get us out of the troubles in which we immerse ourselves through crime and folly.³⁶

Finally, we should emphasize that this conception of man can be found in Plotinus, rather than that it is specifically taught. It is only occasionally - perhaps in 6.8 and a few other places - on the surface of his thought. He is on the edge of expressing it and consciously reflecting upon it, but in general he does not quite do so. On the other hand it must be stated clearly that the theory is there, that it in no way contradicts or conflicts with what we find widely in the Enneads, either on the question of the union with the One, or on Eros or on forms of individuals or on the general application of the doctrine of man as a wanderer in the metaphysical world. We are quite near the view that all men have intrinsic value, from which could flow a doctrine of intrinsic rights; but despite his doctrine of the self, his novel version of the theory of man as a "divine spark", with its special relationship between the soul and the One, Plotinus still holds to the ancient position that insists that value and rights must be claimed by mature human beings. If we neglect virtue, we neglect our value; and if we neglect our value we lose it.

NOTES

1. Enn. 5.1.8; cf. 4.4.22.12, 4.8.1.27 etc.
2. W.R. Inge, The Philosophy of Plotinus I (London 1921) 203.
3. For general questions of Plotinus' psychology see H.J. Blumenthal, Plotinus' Psychology (The Hague 1971).
4. Enn. 3.4.3; cf. 1.1.8.
5. Enn. 4.8.8.8 ff.
6. Enn. 3.4.6.
7. For "inner" and "outer" man see Enn. 1.4.8.3, 5.1.10.10, 6.4.14-15, 3.2.15; cf. Plato, Rep. 589A7 ff.
8. Enn. 5.1.1.1.
9. Cf. J.M. Rist, Eros and Psyche 107.
10. For discussion see especially J.M. Rist, "Forms of Individuals in Plotinus", CQ 13 (1963) 223-231 and "Ideas of Individuals in Plotinus", Rev. Int. de Phil. 92 (1970) 298-303; contra H.J. Blumenthal, "Did Plotinus believe in Ideas of Individuals?", Phronesis 11 (1966) 61-80.
11. J.M. Rist, Plotinus 56, 195. Contra P. Hadot in Annuaire, Ecole Prat. des Hautes Etudes V^e Section 78 (1970-1) 279, who thinks (I cannot agree) of the Active Intellect, See also D. O'Meara, "L'Experience mystique de Plotin", Mnem. 27 (1974) 238-244.
12. J.M. Rist, Plotinus chapter 16.
13. Enn. 4.8.1; 6.9.11.
14. J.M. Rist, Plotinus 116.
15. Enn. 3.8.1.
17. Fr. B2, 6, 8 etc. DK.
18. Enn. 5.5.12.47; 6.8.19.18.
19. For Pythagoreanism see Porph., V.P. 20.
20. Cf. J.M. Rist, Plotinus 29-36.
21. Enn. 1.3.
22. Porph., V.P. 14.

23. Enn. 6.7.37, 6.9.6, 5.5.9-10 etc.
24. Note the phrase $\nu\omicron\upsilon\nu \eta \theta\acute{\epsilon}\omicron\nu$ at Enn. 6.9.6.12;
and for Middle Platonism see Dillon, op.cit.
25. Cf. De Caelo 2.8-9 etc.
26. Cf. J.M. Rist, "The Indefinite Dyad and Intelligible Matter", CQ 12 (1962) 103, with Enn. 6.7.37, for the assimilation of Aristotelianism and Platonism.
27. In Les Sources de Plotin (Entretiens Hardt 5, Vandoeuvres-Geneva 1960) 385.
28. Porph., V.P. 4.
29. Cf. J. Dillon, The Middle Platonists esp. p. 303.
30. Cf. A.H. Armstrong, "The Background of the Doctrine", that the Intelligibles are not Outside the Intellect", Entretiens Hardt 5 (Vandoeuvres-Geneva 1960) 405.
31. Albinus, Did. 10, Cf Ps.-Plut., De Fato 573B.
32. Porph., V.P. 14.
33. Cf. H. Langerback, "The Philosophy of Ammonius Saccas", JHS 77 (1957) 71-72.
34. Fr. 7, p. 214. ll ff Koetschau; cf. J. Dillon, op.cit. 284, n. 2.
35. For a concise summary of the existence on the chronology of Methodius see H. Musurillo's edition of the Symposium (ACW, Washington 1958) 3-5.
36. Enn. 3.2.9.