

Body's Approach to Soul: An Examination of a Recurrent Theme in the *Enneads*

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In VI, 4-5 Plotinus' theory of the omnipresence of all Being, self-dependent and undiminished in itself, leads him to develop the notion of the 'capacity of the recipient'.¹ In particular, he uses the image of body's approach to soul — or rather, to be precise, the notion of an external nature which approaches² and wraps itself around an intelligible core. This external nature comprises everything from the whole sensible man, as sensible,³ to the bare notion of body as body.⁴ Since this function of the Recipient is found in treatises other than VI, 4-5, and since the image of 'approach' is in fact only one of a family of metaphors,⁵ it is of the greatest importance to any understanding of Plotinus' view of body (and thus its 'relation' to soul) to examine what is meant by 'approach' and to provide some firm basis of reference for the usage of these related metaphors in the *Enneads*.

1. Cf. A.H. Armstrong, *Architecture of the Intelligible Universe* (Cambridge, 1940), 59-61.

2. προσέρχεσθαι: VI, 4, 2, 20; 6, 2; 14, 23; VI, 5, 10, 29; 12, 17. πελάζειν: VI, 4, 3, 16; 14, 14-17. γειτονεῖν: VI, 4, 2, 38.

3. Eg., VI, 4, 14, 22-3: ἄλλος ἄνθρωπος. cp. VI, 7, 2-6.

4. Eg., VI, 4, 15, 13. In VI, 5, 8, 15-22 this even extends to the bare matter. On which see D. O'Meara, *Structures Hiérarchiques dans la pensée de Plotin* (Leiden, 1975), 56, note 15, and 60 and (against what is taken to be O'Meara's ascribing a causal role to matter), J. Scott Lee, "The Doctrine of Reception According to the Capacity of the Recipient in *Ennead* VI, 4-5", in *Dionysius* 3 (Halifax, 1981), 79-92. For O'Meara's reply see *Dionysius* 4 (1982), 61-73.

5. (A) For the varied function of the Recipient see I, 2, 2, 21-24; IV, 7, 8^s, 47-50; IV, 8, 6, 28; VI, 9, 4, 24-28.

(B) Some examples from the "family" are:

(1) προσέρχεσθαι: V, 1, 2, 44-47; VI, 3, 7, 16-17. The verb is even more characteristically used of the soul or logos "approaching" matter or body.

(2) πελάζειν: V, 1, 5, 3; VI, 3, 25, 4-7; for an interesting combination of ἦκειν, πλησίον and πελάζειν see VI, 7, 22, 14-24.

(3) πλησίαζειν and cognates: IV, 3, 20, 20-21; IV, 9, 5, 18-19; II, 3, 12, 26-29; III, 3, 7, 22; III, 9, 3, 6-7; IV, 3, 12, 32-35.

(4) γειτονεῖν and cognates: IV, 3, 9, 27; IV, 3, 23, 23; VI, 4, 2, 38; VI, 7, 42, 23; III, 9, 3, 2; II, 1, 8, 7-8; I, 2, 5, 25-27; III, 6, 14, 22; V, 1, 3, 4-6; IV, 4, 19, 5-7.

(5) ἐγγύς: V, 1, 3, 3; IV, 3, 6, 27ff.

A key passage is VI, 4, 15.⁶ How did this 'intruder' approach? Since there was a suitability present to it (ἐπιτηδειότης), Plotinus states, it held to that to which it was suited. In its nature it was capable of receiving soul. But not everything can receive soul entire, although soul is entirely present. The rest of the animals (sc. apart from human beings, heavenly bodies, etc.) and plants, for instance, simply have as much soul as they can take (3-6). Plotinus goes on to illustrate this idea of reception by the distinction between the spoken sound (φωνή) which can be received either as *meaning* (λόγος) or as physical noise alone (πληγή). And he continues in lines 8-18; a living being has come to be. From Being it has soul present to it by virtue of which it is attached to All Being, and a body is present too, a body not empty or without portion of soul (οὐ κενού οὐδὲ ψυχῆς ἀμοίρου), a body which did not lie in the unsouled even before this, but, in becoming near still more, as it were, by its suitability (οἶον ἐγγυὸς γενόμενον τῇ ἐπιτηδειότητι) it became no longer body alone (σώματος μόνου), but also living body; and by its neighbouring, so to speak, upon soul it reaped a trace — not a part — of soul, an illumination or warming coming. In this way a birth of desires, pleasures and pains developed in it; and the body of the living creature was no foreign element (οὐκ ἀλλότριον). In the rest of the chapter (as also in IV, 4, 17) Plotinus draws the picture of man as assembly, starting from the rabble which is the body, and its disturbance, and ascending to the tranquil, divine soul, the man of good sense who can give a word of reason from above (27-29, 35-38). We can live the two lives, the mixed or the pure.

6. For convenience I give the passage in toto. 15, 1-18:

Ἄλλα πῶς προσεληλυθε τὸ προσεληλυθός; ἢ ἐπειδὴ ἐπιτηδειότης αὐτῷ παρῆν, ἔσχε πρὸς ὃ ἦν ἐπιτήδειον. ἦν δὲ γενόμενον οὕτως, ὡς δέξασθαι ψυχὴν. Τὸ δὲ γίνεται ὡς μὴ δέξασθαι πᾶσαν καίτοι παροῦσαν πᾶσαν, ἀλλ' οὐχ αὐτῷ, οἶον καὶ ζῶα τὰ ἄλλα καὶ τὰ φυτὰ τοσοῦτον ἔχει, ὅσον δύναται λαβεῖν' οἶον φωνῆς λόγον σημαίνουσης τὰ μὲν καὶ τοῦ λόγου μετέσχε μετὰ τῆς κατὰ φωνὴν ἡχῆς, τὰ δὲ τῆς φωνῆς καὶ τῆς πληγῆς μόνου. Γενομένου δὴ ζώου, ὃ ἔχει μὲν παροῦσαν αὐτῷ ἐκ τοῦ ὄντος ψυχὴν, καθ' ἣν δὴ ἀνήρτηται εἰς πᾶν τὸ ὄν, παρόντος δὲ καὶ σώματος οὐ κενού οὐδὲ ψυχῆς ἀμοίρου, ὃ ἐκεῖτο μὲν οὐδὲ πρότερον ἐν τῷ ἀνύχῳ, ἔτι δὲ μᾶλλον οἶον ἐγγυὸς γενόμενον τῇ ἐπιτηδειότητι, καὶ γενομένου οὐκέτι σώματος μόνου, ἀλλὰ καὶ ζῶντος σώματος, καὶ τῇ οἶον γειτονεῖα καρπωσαμένου τι ἵχνος ψυχῆς, οὐκ ἐκείνης μέρους, ἀλλ' οἶον θερμασίας τινος ἢ ἐλλάμψεως ἐλθούσης, γένεσις ἐπιθυμιῶν καὶ ἡδονῶν καὶ ἀλγηδόνων ἐν αὐτῷ ἔξεψυ. ἦν δὲ οὐκ ἀλλότριον τὸ σῶμα τοῦ ζώου τοῦ γεγεννημένου.

This passage is difficult because of its metaphorical colouring⁷ and apparently abstract distinctions (eg., body alone - living body), which make it harder to give concrete significance to the ideas of 'approach' or 'nearness'. Harder-Theiler's "a spatial metaphor for the ultimately non-spatial"⁸ tells us very little. Plotinus himself makes it very clear that "approach" is not meant spatially (ὄλωσ οὐ τοπικῶς τὸ ἤκειν, VI, 4, 16, 12). In what way are these notions metaphorical? And how far do they represent an alternative explanation to the line of dynamic causality *from* the intelligible to the sensible? It is thought, for instance, that in VI, 4-5 the theory of reception according to the capacity of the recipient is substituted for, and renders superfluous, the idea of emanation.⁹ In the course of our argument it will become clear that this is not so.

There is a further problem in how one conceives the recipient and its relation to soul. H. J. Blumenthal, for instance, argues that Plotinus' position is inconsistent:¹⁰ All soul is responsible for the information of body, and in fact bodies are preformed by soul (cf. IV, 3, 6, 10-15; VI, 7, 7, 5-16); yet body also determines the type of soul a living creature is to receive. There is on the one hand, therefore, the preformed body, which is in some way part of the content of Nous, and on the other hand the extremely vague notion of a recipient, an X, which determines its appropriate 'type of soul', and it becomes impossible to see how the two can be brought together in the living creature. For Blumenthal this problem arises from his belief that Plotinus can not explain the differences between souls intrinsically, and therefore attempts to explain them simply in terms of body.

One may reply that Plotinus has no need to explain the differences between souls intrinsically, for soul, although one, already differs from herself by definition, which is to say, she already contains all real differences. Furthermore, what inconsistency is there in stating that determination of different kinds proceeds from the two poles of the living creature, All soul and the indeterminate substratum? Far from creating any inconsistency, *both* explanations are obviously required. Moreover, the way in which Blumenthal poses the problem actually helps to create the difficulty, for body

7. Witness the repetition of ὄλωσ (lines 6, 12, 14, 15), the image of the assembly and the 'reminiscences' of Plato's *Timaeus* and *Phaedrus*, not to mention *Aeneid* 1, 148-153 and *Iliad* 3, 149 (see Fontes ad textum in Henry-Schwyzler).

8. *Plotinus Schriften*, t. IB, 569 ad I, 2, 5, 24.

9. A. H. Armstrong (above, n. 1) 60.

10. H. J. Blumenthal, "Soul, World Soul and Individual Soul", in *Le Néoplatonisme* (Paris, 1971), 55-63.

becomes a ghost of itself if one makes an abstract separation of, and not a natural distinction between, its elements.¹¹

In this article, then, I shall examine Plotinus' complex vocabulary of body's approach to soul. My principal aim throughout is to demonstrate the precise significance of the conception in such a way that "body" does not become an empty abstraction, or a static idea, but rather something distinct from, yet not altogether devoid of, the meaning of soul. It will be my purpose to uncover a direct relation to Plato and Aristotle's use of similar terms.

Firstly, what does Plotinus mean in VI, 4, 15 by the "warming" or "illumination" which comes to body and belongs to body in its own right? This is characteristically Plotinian. For Plotinus the living body is not a fragmentation of substance, but a reflection or manifestation of its presence. If the highest physical expression of the power of soul is the light of the sun, then for Plotinus illumination and warmth will be the most natural images for this reflection of soul in body. However, the disjunction, illumination or warmth, may also be significant: illumination is an appropriate image for the manifestation of *soul's* pervasive, immaterial activity upon, and in, body, whereas warmth is a more descriptive metaphor for the effect on *body* of that activity.¹²

Secondly, what does Plotinus mean when he says that body did not lie in the "unsouled" even before it became living body? Here it is important to realize that for Plotinus body is never entirely outside the power of soul. Even the detached rock or branch has an existence provided by the world soul and by Nature.¹³ In the examination of supposedly inanimate objects Plotinus uncovers in their analysis either a necessary reference to soul or an implicit psychic structure. The nature of the elements, for instance, can not be disclosed by reference to indirect and spontaneous causes alone, but must include a reference to the principle which shapes them *κατὰ λόγον* and this form is in soul (VI, 7, 11, 40-45).¹⁴ A similar case are the moist substances in our constitution of which

11. Blumenthal's views are presented in the wider context of a discussion concerning soul. Since the present article is necessarily restricted to an examination of body's approach to soul, it is possible here to refute only that part of Blumenthal's thesis which touches upon the character of the recipient and its approach.

12. When discussing the presence of soul in body in IV, 3, 22 Plotinus proposes that the two may be related as light to air. Later in IV, 4, 14, 4-10 and 29, 1ff. when discussing the effect of soul's presence on body, he adopts instead a heat-air analogy. On this see H. J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology* (The Hague 1971), 18-19.

13. Cf. IV, 4, 27, 8-11; VI, 7, 11, 22-27; III, 2, 3, 31-41.

14. Cf. VI, 7, 11, 10ff.: Εἰ δὴ ὁ ἔνυλος λόγος ὁ τοῦ φυτοῦ, καθ'ὄν τὸ φυτόν ἐστι, ζῶη τις ἐστὶ τοιαύδε καὶ ψυχὴ τις κ.τ.λ.

we are unaware. Since the blood does not provide perception, it seems to be devoid of soul. Yet soul must be present, since the blood is not simply subject to compulsory motion. In other words, blood does not offer the same sort of evidence of form, soul, and life as do plants or animals. The unsouled exhibits a self-isolating tendency, a tendency which can never be fully realized. There is a tensional 'distance' between the object, isolated as itself alone, and that object as a *logos*, a *logos* in matter, revealing the necessary presence of the making soul to it. This is the outcome of the lengthy argument of VI, 7, 11 which starts from an examination of the *logos* in matter and proceeds to the conclusion that supposedly inanimate things can not be isolated from this *logos*, on the one hand, and yet, on the other hand, that they are "ready to stand apart from the indwelling soul" (11, 65-66: 'Ἄλλ' ἔτοιμόν ἐστι διστάναι τῆς ἐνυπαρχούσης ψυχῆς).

The unsouled, therefore, is not an empty abstraction. Nor is it found in isolation from soul. It inhabits a universe of psychic reference. When one descends analytically to the 'microscopic' examination of inanimate nature, one finds both a necessary reference to the psychic (just as matter can not exist without shape) and a self-isolating tendency. Conversely, when one looks to composition (rather than analytical dissolution) one is aware of movement towards, or an approach to, an organising principle in the opposite direction.

We may suggest, therefore, that the apparently abstract distinction between 'body' and 'living body' in VI, 4, 15 reflects a distinction between two different spheres of influence, the primary sphere of the individual soul in body and the secondary sphere of Nature in matter. At the impersonal, inanimate level body is a product of Nature and remains in this lowest power of the World Soul. At a higher level, body becomes capable of receiving an individual soul. In body's development towards this higher ensoulment the two spheres of influence are united in a new way. Body's approach to soul is an organic development from primitive elemental compound to tissue. Thus, there comes to be a body of a certain kind, capable of a higher degree of life.

Connected in an important way with this is the metaphor of approach to soul as an immediate means of ascent through the natural hierarchy of the universe. Here is reflected the familiar post-Platonic idea that the physical universe exhibits a natural order, starting from the sublunary sphere which is furthest removed from god, or from the soul, and ascending to the sphere of the fixed

stars which is closest to God.¹⁵ In the pseudo-Aristotelian *De Mundo*, for instance, the nature of capacity is said to be proportional to distance from God.¹⁶

We find a simple application of this way of thinking in IV, 3, 17. One might infer, Plotinus says, that when souls leave the intelligible they first enter the space (χώρα) of heaven. For if heaven is the better part of the region perceived by the senses, it borders upon the last and lowest parts of the intelligible. So these regions are first ensouled from there and participate in soul because they are better suited (ἐπιτηδειότερα) to participate. The earthy is last, less naturally able to participate in soul and far (πόρρω) from the incorporeal nature (1-7).¹⁷

However, the motion of body to soul in Plotinus is not restricted to the natural divisions of the universe (cp. III, 9, 3, 1-8). The spatial notion of ascent through a natural hierarchy is often eliminated in favor of the idea of power or capacity of an object as these can be intelligibly exhibited even to perception. When, for example, in IV, 4, 22, 24-25 the earth is compared to the stars, the analysis is based on the earth's power rather than its position. Plotinus concludes that the earth is a god "even though it is more varied in composition" than the stars "and made of all the primary bodies". And at IV, 4, 26 Plotinus grants that the earth is a god because the earth's soul is the soul "of no inferior body" (29-30).

From both these notions of body's capacity for soul we may conclude that to the degree body possesses the capacity for power, the closer is that body to soul, and the more capable is that body of manifesting a higher expression of soul.

The metaphor of approach in Plotinus' usage, therefore, is not simply an abstract notion or a literary device. It is an image which is substantiated in Plotinus' philosophical analysis of the world of things. In this sense it is a powerful and apt description. However, the metaphor possesses a still more important and comprehensive usage which relates the simple notion of physical capacity to the philosophical idea of power — potency, *dynamis*. This usage provides

15. Cf. Cicero, *Tusculans* I, 42ff. See also F. Cumont, *After Life in Roman Paganism* (New York, 1959), 91-109.

16. *De Mundo* 397B 30ff.: "So earth and things that are on earth being at the farthest remove from the help of God, seem to be feeble and discordant and full of confusion and diversity; but, nevertheless, in that it is the nature of the Divine to penetrate to everything, even the things around us occur in the same way as the things above us, each having a greater or smaller share of God's help in proportion to its distance from him" (trans. D. Furley. Loeb Classical Library).

17. For a combination of these ideas concerning the descent of the soul see Porphyry, *Sententiae* (ed. Lamberz) 19, 6-13, and E. R. Dodds, *Proclus' Elements of Theology* (Oxford, 1933, repr. 1963) 318-319.

an analytic 'approach' to the different meanings of the capacity for life, a method which also articulates the structure of the object in question. Here the metaphor of approach becomes a philosophically explanatory vehicle.

It makes a difference in each case what we mean, and refer to, by the terms we use. In VI, 4, 7, for instance, in the critique of the emanation metaphor as an example of how the same reality can extend to all, Plotinus tells us to imagine a small luminous mass as a centre to a great transparent sphere. The light within will appear in the whole container and is not dependent upon the mass of the illuminant *insofar as that is body*. For it was not as body that it held the light but as luminous body (φωτεινὸν σῶμα), that is, by virtue of an incorporeal power. Thus, if we suppress the bodily mass, but keep the light's power we can arrive at — or really *approach* — the notion of an immaterial, self-dependent power (8, 2ff.), by following the natural *distance* between the meanings, and references, of the terms in question. The essential difference, luminous, is the substantial activity of the physical object, not as body, but as an *ensouled body of a certain kind*.

There are three moments in this description of the luminous mass: body as bulk, or mass, body conceived as phenomenal activity and, thirdly, the immaterial power grasped in the specific difference and manifested in the determinate object. Clearly, these three different meanings, bulk, bodily activity, and power are distinct, but not abstractly separate. This is evident from Plotinus' analogy of the spoken sound (φωνή) in VI, 4, 15. He illustrates the idea of reception by the distinction between the voice which can be received either as meaning (λόγος) together with the noise in accordance with the voice (μετὰ τῆς κατὰ φωνὴν ἤχης) or as voice and physical impact alone (τῆς φωνῆς καὶ τῆς πληγῆς μόνον). In what follows, this distinction is woven into the approach of the *substrate* to intelligence: it becomes not simply body, but also living body and is capable of receiving the *logos* from above.

Out of the metaphor of approach, then, is developed a complex and flexible view of the subject. The subject can be seen in the familiar Platonic way in terms of the soul entering into historical existence. Conversely, it may be seen as a concrete subject developing towards a higher consciousness of, and capacity to make manifest, a substantial principle, which is intimately present to it. As the concrete subject develops, its range extends from a capacity for biological life to the capacity for a fuller expression of intellectual and spiritual life. It is a natural development of the metaphor of approach, therefore, that it should come to be applied also to the subject's inner experience of historical existence. Just as the crowd, in the passage from VI, 4, 5, can either be swayed by a multiplicity

of irrational demands or be calmed by a word of reason from above, so the human subject by his orientation to, and involvement with, any object (by his "approach" to it) can create either a universe of infinite spiritual dimensions or a prison house of miserable particularity. Plotinus, like Kant, holds that perception is both active and creative. Both these universes are universes of *embodied* experience. For Plotinus the more one "approaches" body, the less unified one becomes. The more one "moves away" from involvement on the same level as body, the more *unified* is the compound (cf. IV, 3, 4, 30-37) — to the degree, that is, that the body is not simply prey to the turbulence of material nature.

Both of these viewpoints, from above and from below, present different views of the same reality. What is, from the point of view of soul, the source of speech is, from another point of view, like the spoken sound already in the air and, from yet another point of view, the developing subject learning to make sense of a noise which can convey (and already has conveyed) meaning (cf. VI, 4, 12, 23-32). In another way of looking at the problem, the soul must illuminate body, but if the soul is substance, body must come to soul (VI, 4, 12, 32-41). The notion of emanation, therefore, is not superseded by the reception theory.

It is also important to emphasize that the term "body" for Plotinus has a rich and varied network of reference, that it is *not* just a static entity. "Body" extends from 'bulk' right into the Intelligible object (cf. VI, 2, 21, 52-53; VI, 7, 7, 8-31). This is inevitable to the degree that body is *logos*, definable and, therefore, in principle, intelligible. Blumenthal's thesis, namely that Plotinus' position is inconsistent because the way in which a body is besouled depends upon differences in the bodies although they have originally been preformed by illumination from the same source, neglects this natural polyvalence of the term 'body', and instead creates two separate abstractions, the preformed and the unformed body, which, as such can not be reconciled. I suggest rather that the hierarchy of soul power (by which I mean the content of soul) is reflected in, and not abstracted from, the approach of body to soul; differences in bodies spring both from the individuality — totality of the preformed *logos* — and the relative realization and focus of the form-power in the substratum; together these convey both particularization, and also substantial (i.e., *κατὰ λόγον*) individuality, when the object is seen in the light of its productive *logos*. We can *not*, however, observe these aspects in simple abstraction from one another, as though at one stage in the process we might have the

reflection only of the contents of Nous.¹⁸ Power and potency go together, which is why the term *dynamis* in the *Enneads* very often means both.¹⁹

Having established some of the principal meanings of approach in the context of body and soul in the *Enneads*, let us now turn to another important aspect of this problem: the heritage of the metaphor.

Clearly the metaphor is Platonic. In the dialogues generally it indicates affinity or likeness ("like always approaches like", *Symposium* 1958, cf. *Theaetetus* 1560) and often carries sexual overtones. Indeed the verb *πελάζειν*, which Plotinus uses in VI, 4, 14, and elsewhere, naturally bears a contextual memory of *Symposium* 206D, of the procreant approaching (*προσπελάζειν*) beauty in order to give birth²⁰ (cf. *Phaedrus* 255A-B). The stream of beauty which the lover approaches is also connected with the stream of perception: at *Theaetetus* 156A the subject draws near (*πλησιάζειν*) and unites with its appropriate object, and from this union sight and its object are born. Traces of this usage remain in Plotinus (eg., III, 6, 2, 33-37; IV, 6, 2, 13-16), and it is evidently from these cases of perception and procreation, together with the familiar Platonic notion of soul's undue involvement with body (cf. *Phaedo* 81), its earthly weight as opposed to the lightness of its wings, that Plotinus develops his own notion of the subject's orientation towards any object. But more important for him is Plato's application of 'approach' to intellectual and spiritual creativity. At *Republic* 490B the true lover of knowledge seeks to grasp the nature of each thing by that part of his soul which is fitted to this purpose; thereby he approaches, and mingles, with, true reality (*ᾧ πλησιάζσας καὶ μιγείς τῷ ὄντι ὄντως*), and gives birth to Intellect and Truth. Thus he knows true life, he is nourished and finds an end to the travail of giving birth (cf., V, 9, 2, 1-10, espec. lines 9-10). In Plotinus these concepts find their fullest application in Intellect's (and Soul's) approach to, and generation from, the Good.²¹ But in the more limited context of 'body' further Platonic examples are suggestive. At *Philebus* 26D

18. VI, 7, 7, 8-16 indicates *in one sentence* the priority of the World Soul's power and yet the 'simultaneity' of the 'descent' (*ἤδη* line 12; *ᾧ προσῆλθε σχηματίσασα ἑαυτήν*, 15).

19. Eg., VI, 3, 22, 46-23, 12; IV, 3, 23, 4-5, 17-21; IV, 6, 3 well illustrates the different nuances of the term: see lines 3, 15-16, 19, 58-67, 70-71.

20. Cf. also *Rep.* 518 D (and VI, 8, 6, 24-5). One might also cite here the curious epitaph purported to be by Simonides: *τὸ γὰρ σώμ' ἀνδρὶ τοιοῦτῳ ψυχὴν καὶ ψυχῇ σώμα θανόντι λίπεν* (Simonides, fr. 138 Edmonds). Cf. also Statius (*Thebaid* 8, 738f.), *'odi certus fragilemque hunc corporis usum desertorem animi'*.

21. Cf. VI, 9, 5, 24ff.; VI, 2, 9, 39; VI, 7, 22, *passim*; VI, 8, 18, 30ff., etc.

the phrase γένεσις εἰς οὐσίαν, although we should probably not read too much into it,²² does express a conceptual movement of generation from, and composition out of, the two classes, limit and the unlimited, a movement which culminates in the recognition of an intelligent cause responsible for the mixture at *Philebus* 27A. This methodological "approach" from the unlimited through the limit and mixture to the cause, significantly repeated in *Epistula VII* ("of all these four (name, description, image, knowledge) understanding approaches nearest in affinity and likeness to the fifth entity, while the others are more remote from it", 342D) and in *Republic* (eg., 515D 2-3; 517 B5), is evidently the source of Plotinus' analytic "approach".

But if we look again at the principal passage under discussion, VI, 4, 15, we will also notice that certain key phrases, notably "reception" and "suitableness", are familiar from another context. Alexander of Aphrodisias, for instance, states that when we give the Aristotelian definition of soul, we mean by 'body potentially having life' a body suited to reception (ἐπιτηδεῖον πρὸς τὸ δέξασθαι),²³ for body is not separate from soul earlier and then receives soul, but what has life potentially is *able* to live, which is to say that it is organic.²⁴ Or again, man is born without intellectual power, but has a δύναμις καὶ ἐπιτηδειότης τοῦ δέξασθαι αὐτήν (ibid., 81, 13). What I wish to point out is not the coincidence of terms, so much as the problem. The primary motif of VI, 4, 15, is that of development realized in a composite living creature. The implicit problem is to distinguish between body and soul without abstraction or subtraction of the meaning of body altogether, since body can have no meaning without soul, and yet physical life precisely as such is not, for Plotinus, substance. The problem for Alexander, on the other hand, is to retain the notion of potency, of matter

22. This is the conclusion of G.M.A. Grube in *Plato's Thought* (London 1958) 303. R. Hackforth, *Plato's Examination of Pleasure* (Cambridge 1945) 49, accordingly translates 'a coming into being'.

23. Cp. VI, 4, 15, 1-3, 12-13. There is a considerable literature on the influence of Alexander on Plotinus. For a discussion see F. M. Schroeder, "Light and the Active Intellect in Alexander and Plotinus" in *Hermes* 1984, 240-241. The present article is written in the belief that while exact linguistic parallels are undoubtedly important, they will not by themselves alone yield a proper analysis of Plotinus' thought and his use of his philosophical predecessors. I argue here that in Plotinus' use of certain important terms and phrases a philosophical history is already condensed and assimilated.

24. Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De Anima* (Bruns), 104, 11ff. Cf. VI, 4, 15, 10-12. Perhaps pertinent to both this use of ἐπιτηδειότης and the Platonic notion of likeness or affinity is Albinus' theory that body and soul have an affinity (οἰκειότης) with each other ὡς πῦρ καὶ ἄσφαλτος *Didaskalikos* C. 25, 178 (Hermann). On ἐπιτηδειότης cf. R. B. Todd, "Epitēdeiotēs in philosophical literature", *Acta Classica* 15 (1922) 25ff.

in definition, as distinct, but not abstracted, from the full actuality of substance. A connection of thought, then, — of course thoroughly assimilated already in Plotinus — is not absolutely out of the question.

Furthermore, the notion of reception indicated in VI, 4, 15 — whether according to mass, quality, *energeia* or power — a notion which is prevalent throughout the *Enneads*, is also familiar from Alexander's *De Anima*. The form is received, Alexander states, not insofar as the body possesses organs, but in as much as the organ has an immaterial power (*De Anima* 60, 10-16). One might compare Plotinus' statement that the heavenly bodies are gods not in having bodies, but *κατὰ τὸν νοῦν*, the intellect being manifest in their activity (V, 8, 3, 20-24), or the statement that walking is not feet, but 'an *energeia* around the feet *ἐκ δυνάμεως* (IV, 3, 23, 5ff.).

It becomes clearer, therefore, that the approach of body to soul is also the relative approach of 'matter' to form, a 'going from the dynamis to *energeia*', to borrow the phrase which Plotinus frequently uses (eg., IV, 6, 3, 15-16). For Aristotle, too, matter is potential in the sense that it comes to the form (*ὄτι ἔλθοι ἄν εἰς τὸ εἶδος*, *Metaphysics* 1050 A 15, cp. III, 5, 1, 9). Nature *ὡς γένεσις ὁδός . . . εἰς φύσιν* (*Physics* 193 B 12). What grows, grows into something (*ἔρχεται*, *ibid.*, 18ff.). The *ποιητικόν* and the *παθητικόν* 'draw near' to one another in action (*πλησιάζωσι*, *Metaph.* 1048 A 6-7).²⁵ The fuller actualisation or activity (*energeia*) or substance, leads (*ἄγειν*) the potential to its completion.²⁶ Or even more immediately it is a familiar Aristotelian way of speaking about causes or substance: one must give the "closest cause" (*Metaph.* 1044 B 1); "the form/species is nearer to primary substance" (*Categ.* 28, 8).²⁷

Here we come to the heart of the problem. Can Plotinus really be using Aristotelian or Peripatetic language in a serious and responsible way when his own theory of soul and body is so different? For Aristotle nature is an internal principle and soul the correlative of the matter it informs. The form-entelechy and the matter are simply different aspects of one reality. But Plotinus rejects

25. The act is the goal of becoming, the perfection towards which it tends (*Metaph.* 1050 A 7-10; *βαδίζειν εἰς ἐντελεχείαν*, *Phys.* 257 B 7-8; *De Caelo* 311 A 4).

26. Cf. *E.N.* 1153 A 11-12; 1170 A 17-18; 1113 A 6; *Metaph.* 1050 A 8ff.; 1051 A 29; Theophrastus, *Metaph.* 8 A 8ff. (Ross-Forbes) . . . *ἀγόμενον εἰς ἐνέργειαν*. II, 4, 3, 5; 16, 13; II, 5, 3, 28-31; IV, 6, 3, 12-16; V, 9, 4, 4-6; VI, 1, 26, 1-7; VI, 9, 5, 35; I, 6, 2, 20, 18-22.

27. See also for remote and proximate movers *Phys.* 260 B 3; remote and proximate accidental causes, *Phys.* 195 B 2; 197 A 24; cf. also *Metaph.* 1014 A 5. For related usage see *Topics* 116 B 23 *τὸ ἔγγιον τοῦ τελοῦς*, *Phys.* 192 A 5-6; *De Gen. An.*, 735 A 10.

Aristotle's entelechy theory. For him the soul cannot be the immediate form of body in the sense that the shape of the axe, or the eye, might be likened to soul's informing of body. Furthermore, there is a logical point at which body has to be seen as the product of nature, and another point at which the body is given life by the individual soul which informs it. When the problem is formulated in this way, I would suggest that we are already (in the third century, so to speak) in the presence of the Medieval problem of the plurality of forms. Is there only one substantial form of body, as Thomas Aquinas will maintain, or is there a form of body distinct from the nature of soul, as Bonaventure will maintain? If there is a plurality of forms, how can the unity of the composite be assured? The notion of approach through a plurality of forms was employed, for instance, by the Platonising Avicenna and it was this kind of Platonism which Thomas Aquinas found to be incompatible with the Aristotelian view that the soul is the form of the body.²⁸ Can we find any answer to this problem in the thought of Plotinus?

For Plotinus soul is not in matter as an accident in a substratum or as a shape in body. To be "in a substratum" is what Plotinus means by "body as body", that is, body as "bulk" or as the possessor of qualities actually vested in it. Neither is soul in matter in the sense that it belongs to matter, an *enulon eidos*, τὸ τινοῦς εἶδος,²⁹ as Alexander of Aphrodisias terms it. Substance is "in itself" and can not enter into another (V, 8, 3, 7-8). Now that which has soul or substance is an organic substratum, which is what Plotinus means by "living body", "luminous body", "ensouled body". If the organic substratum is to have soul, it cannot have it as "one thing in another". Therefore, substance or soul in this sense must be present to the substratum without being *in it*, which is to say that soul is present by remaining in itself. If one objects that substance *is* the substratum, then "is" must be used here in either an equivocal or a special sense. For the object can indeed be one without obliterating the necessary distinctions between the different meanings of the *synamphoteron* when viewed in the light of either its matter or its form.

Rather, in the notions of the substratum and its principle we can find different, overlapping views presented in the *Enneads*. On one view, "sensible substance", as such, is not true substance, but

28. Generally on this question see A. C. Pegis, *St. Thomas and The Problem of the Soul in the Thirteenth Century* (Toronto, 1934), Chapter 2 (For Bonaventure) and Chapter 4 (for Aquinas). For the position of Avicenna see the introduction of G. Verbeke to S. van Riet, *Avicenna Latinus, Liber De Anima seu Sextus de Naturalibus* 4-5 (Louvain/Leiden 1968), 3-73.

29. Alexander, *De Anima* 120, 10; *Quaestiones* 2, 10, 55, 9-13.

merely a collection of qualities in matter (VI, 3, 8, 19-20). Here Aristotle and Plotinus seem most to differ. But what Plotinus is emphasizing in this analysis is that when we look out towards the form in the substratum, substance simply eludes us and we grasp quality or quantity instead.³⁰ Rather, we have to proceed in the other direction to grasp substance and what is substantial. The most conspicuous corroboration that Plotinus means to interpret Aristotle in a reasonable (but still idiosyncratic) manner is in VI, 7, 4 where he asks what "this man" is. And he proceeds to argue that "this man", *this* determinate, historical individual can not be simply identified with soul or with the compound of rational soul and body, since the object to be defined has to be an eternal reality, and any ostensive definition can not indicate the τί ἦν εἶναι but only the particular compound. Nor, he continues, can man be a logical universal, "a compound of such things", and in this sense a τόδε ἐν τῷδε, since "that according to which *each thing* is" is not mentioned.³¹ If we are to define "this man", he argues, the only way we can do it is by searching for the *logos* which makes him what he is, and this, he states with Aristotle, is "indwelling, not separate."³² Plotinus, therefore, goes on to define man as a *synamphoton*, "soul in a *logos* of a certain kind, the *logos* being a specific *energeia*, and the *energeia* having no capacity to act without the acting subject."³³ The definition is, of course, all Plotinus' own, but he has arrived at it by invoking genuine Aristotelian principles and (implicitly) insisting on the fact that the Aristotelian form is neither an universal nor a particular thing *simpliciter*, but prior to both. In this way Plotinus believes that he defines both man and "this man", both species and particular. It will follow, therefore, that the union between soul and body, when seen κατὰ λόγον, must be substantial.

We may conclude, therefore, that Plotinus certainly can assimilate Aristotelian language to a Platonic purpose in the analysis of the "approach" of body to soul. What approaches from below is illuminated from above and the two different viewpoints coalesce in the real object of causal definition. Perhaps we may also suggest

30. Cf. VI, 3, 8; II, 6, 1, 42-48.

31. VI, 7, 4, 21-23: Εἰ δέ τις λέγοι "τὸν λόγον δεῖ τὸν τῶν τοιούτων εἶναι συναμφοτέρον τι, τόδ' ἐν τῷδε", καθ' ὃ ἕστιν ἕκαστον, οὐκ ἀξιοῖ λέγειν.

32. Cf. Aristotle. *De Anima* 413 A 13-16; *Post. An.* 2, 93A 4-5. Plotinus, VI, 7, 4, 23-30: χρηρὴ δέ, καὶ εἰ ὅτι μάλιστα τῶν ἐνύλων εἰδῶν καὶ μετὰ ἕλης τοὺς λόγους χρηρὴ λέγειν, ἀλλὰ τὸν λόγον αὐτὸν τὸν πεποιηκότα, οἷον τὸν ἄνθρωπον, λαμβάνειν καὶ μάλιστα, ὅσοι τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι ἀξιοῦσιν ἐφ' ἑκάστου ὀρίζεσθαι, ὅταν κυρίως ὀρίζωνται. Τί οὖν ἐστι τὸ εἶναι ἀνθρώπων; τοῦτο δ' ἐστὶ, τί ἐστι τὸ πεποιηκὸς τοῦτον τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐνυπάρχον, οὐ χωριστόν;

33. VI, 7, 5, 2-5: τί καλυεῖ συναμφοτέρον τι τὸν ἄνθρωπον εἶναι, ψυχὴν ἐν τοιῷδε λόγῳ, ὄντος τοῦ λόγου οἷον ἐνεργείας τοιαύτης, τῆς δὲ ἐνεργείας μὴ δυναμένης ἄνευ τοῦ ἐνεργοῦντος εἶναι;

that in the light of this causal definition it becomes quite clear that, as Bonaventure would also maintain, a plurality of forms does not destroy the unity of man; for "what makes this man is indwelling, not separate." Ostensive definition, however, does not include the cause and, therefore, operates at a lower level in which the unity disappears and the connection between "soul" and "body" seems accidental.

Not only then is body's approach to soul a metaphor which is philosophically apt: it is also a metaphor which comprises a condensed philosophical history.³⁴ In the juxtaposition of echoes we find in VI, 4, 15 and the surrounding chapters, of Plato, Alexander and Aristotle, we might even say that it contains a re-shaping of the Aristotelian organic substratum. The meaning of the substratum in Plotinus is twofold: on the one hand, the specific difference is a quality, an activity, a concept; on the other hand, as an *enulos logos* it is — in principle at least — intelligible. It is a *logos* of matter, not only an element in definition, but a *cause* whose reality is unfolded in definition. Thus, body's approach to soul as the pursuit — *κατὰ ὑποκειμένον* or *κατὰ συναμφότερον* — of the real 'distance' between basic compound, developed organic substratum and immaterial power, is equally, from the point of view of the form, an expression (a) from above of the same "distinction" between the three and yet (b) of the necessity that the immaterial power-substance be

34. There is no space here for an examination of possible Stoic influence. Clearly the Stoic distinction (suggested, I think by III, 6, 6, 33-64) between (a) *corpus* (*cohaerens sine qualitate patibile totum et commutabile*), (b) *corpus informe, sed compos qualitatis*, and (c) *corpus formatum* (see van Winden, *Calcidius on Matter: His Doctrine and Sources* (Leiden 1959), 93-4, para. 289) — derived from Aristotle's example of the statue — is relevant. Evidently the complex Stoic doctrines of the dynamic continuum, the connecting links between grades of reality (cf. Nemesius, *De Nat. Hom.* I, P.G. 40 col. 508 C-512 B) and the degrees of unity, etc., have a definite bearing upon Plotinus' way of thinking, which cannot be underestimated, and which on the other hand cannot be simply 'identified'. For example, in VI, 9, 1 Plotinus appears to make use of a Stoic opinion that distinguishes between three different degrees of unity (cf. also V, 5, 4, 31-38; VI, 2, 11, 3-4; VI, 6, 13, 1-5; 16, 31-32). But here A. Graeser argues — I think rightly — that although Plotinus comes close — in arguing about grades of unity in the sensible world — to the spirit of some Stoic expositions (eg., Seneca, *Epist. Mor.* 102, 5), "the problem itself is, strictly speaking, still a Platonic-Aristotelian one. For it is clear that the Stoics' view of degrees of value in the cosmos is, in fact, to be understood as an adaptation *sui generis* of the Aristotelian "argumentum ex gradibus entium" (*Plotinus and the Stoics*, Leiden 1972, 72-75). This also applies, I think, to the present discussion. Stoic thought is obviously of the greatest importance to the creation of this way of thinking; yet it stands in the wings of the major philosophical features and terminological characteristics of this thought in the *Enneads*.

intimately present even to the potency, while remaining entirely in itself.

I suggest then that VI, 4-5 (espec. VI, 4, 8) criticize a spatial or diagrammatic understanding of the image of emanation, but scarcely render the idea superfluous. And secondly, it is clear that the notion of body's approach, and nearness, to soul is a natural and philosophically realistic way, given Plotinus' view of soul, of transforming the abstraction of "potential life" into something that can really have movement, something which is a subject-substratum in its own right and yet only possesses life in its relative ability to receive *logos* from a *cause* which is naturally distinct.

Furthermore, it makes the notion of the substratum both precise and immensely flexible, precise in that all of the different meanings are retained, flexible inasmuch as what approaches soul can include all of historico-sensible existence, that is, the sensible man as a whole considered as a substratum, or it may simply refer to the matter (as in VI, 5, 8), which is the *locus* for the building of this compound.³⁵ In all of these cases it depends precisely upon what one means and how one will proceed with the analysis.

Thirdly, it becomes clearer that the procedure of working from the lowest to the highest in an unbroken, organic ascent, a procedure so often followed in the *Enneads* (eg., III, 8; V, 8; VI, 9; etc.) is perfectly formed in accordance with a natural and concrete "approach" to the *reality of the object* under discussion. In III, 8, 8 for instance Plotinus speaks of the ascent which contemplation makes from nature to

35. (Cf. I, 2, 2, 20-25; IV, 3, 9, 27). The problem of matter cannot be treated here. We can only indicate that, as far as a 'causal role' for matter is concerned (see J. Scott-Lee, note 4 above), *prime* matter does in fact have a positive function (although not 'causal' in the sense of 'form') in generation and composition cf. II, 4, 11, 40-12, 1), whilst being in itself nothing but pure negativity. And from the sense that prime matter is the 'foundation' for proximate matter, the term 'matter' comes also to have a more 'general' use in the *Enneads*, as for instance in the 'Platonic' antithesis, Idea and Matter. The "breaking of the law of non-contradiction" (ὅτιον ἐφαπτομένην καὶ αὐτὴ οὐκ ἐφαπτομένην VI, 5, 8, 18) is also Matter's function as the "Great and Small" (cf. II, 4, 11, 33ff.), an expression of matter's puzzling participation in form (cf. III, 6, 11, 1-8). On the one hand, it is self-evident that there can 'be nothing in between' form and matter. Hence, matter must 'border upon' form. On the other, since matter receives form, while not holding form "of itself" (cf. VI, 7, 33, 33), and since proximate matter is at root prime matter, matter can by its nearness "participate" to the degree of its capacity (which consists in being utterly dominated (eg., VI, 7, 3)), and can even "approach" (VI, 7, 33, 31-32, προσέλθη). It is drawn into all things (III, 6, 15, 30-31); This is a way of speaking about matter's 'presence' to form (cf. I, 8, 14, 44-54) and is legitimate if we consider the natural extension of the term 'matter', an extension founded upon the logic of its function.

soul, and thence to noūs. In this ascent our contemplations become more unified, more properly themselves (οἰκκειοτέρων, line 3), until in the soul of the good man (ἐπὶ τῆς οπουδαίας ψυχῆς) the things known are “going towards identity with the subject-substratum, since they are hastening to Intellect” (πρὸς τὸ αὐτὸ τῷ ὑποκειμένῳ ἰόντων τῶν ἐγνωσμένων ἅτε εἰς νοῦν σπευδόντων).³⁶ In other words, the ‘recipient’, in moving towards substance, finds substantial self-identity in the form, which in turn is a subject-substratum in a fuller, intelligible sense. This identity is living contemplation. Such a view of the sensible-intelligible adds concreteness to even the smallest details. For instance, at V, 3, 2, 19 we come to Intellect τῷ λόγῳ βαδίζοντες. Or in VI, 8, 3, 1-2 as the “logos” of the discussion ascends to soul, we are — in the examination of such matters — “near to the *logos* concerning gods.”

Finally, the notion of “body’s approach to soul” incorporates and develops several important motifs of Aristotle’s thought. In this, however, I do not wish to urge rigid identification of traditional motifs, but rather to highlight the richness and flexibility of a conception which can so acutely assimilate very diverse elements and give them new meaning. In the text that we started with, VI, 4, 15, the concluding lines (18-40) have a definite Platonic ring. Yet the image of the assembly,³⁷ and even more so the notion of the two lives, the one mixed, the other intelligible,³⁸ would hardly have been foreign to Peripatetic ears. It would appear, then, that what Plotinus most shared with Plato and Aristotle was also the root of a vision characteristically his own.

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36. VI, 4, 15, 23-40 and IV, 4, 17, 24-35 also reflect this concrete view of the subject. Plotinus applies the term *hypokeimenon* to intelligible reality. I translate it ‘subject-substratum’ here to catch two of its major meanings, not only the ground or basis of the self, but also what the self is most fully as a subject.

37. This turns effectively upon the notion of the *spoudaios*; cf. E.N. 1113 A 25-33; 1168 B 31-33.

38. VI, 4, 15, 36-40. Cf. especially E.N. 1177 A 12 — 1178 A 8 with its intentional reminiscence of *Timaeus* 90 BC. (1) In the activity of what is most divine in us, man experiences a happiness, a life which is more than human (1177 B 26-28; compare VI, 4, 15, 37-38: κατ’ ἐκεῖνόν τέ ζῆ καὶ ἔστιν ἐκεῖνος διδοὺς τῷ σώματι, ὅσα δίδωσιν ὡς ἐτέρῳ ὄντι ἑαυτοῦ with E.N. 1177 B 28-29: ὅσον δὲ διαφέρει τοῦτο τοῦ συνθέτου, . . . Plotinus’ “he who gives to body” corresponds to “he who gives the sound” in VI, 4, 12, 27-28). (2) This is the divine life; and for man what is best is the life κατὰ τὸν νοῦν, ἔπειρ τοῦτο μάλιστα ἀνθρώπος (1178 A 6-7). This passage lends itself well to a “two men” theory.