

# Plotinus' World

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The most salient feature of Plato's metaphysics is his dualism between Forms and things which participate in the Forms. In the Neoplatonic tradition, this dualism is given expression in two principal ways: in a distinction between archetypes and their images and in a distinction between the objects of our rational and/or intellectual activities (intelligibles) and the objects of our perceptual awareness (perceptibles). It is tempting to interpret these Neoplatonic distinctions as dividing reality into two distinct and, by themselves, separate kinds of entities.<sup>1</sup> I shall call this the TWI — the two worlds interpretation — and I shall argue against it in the case of the reputed founder of Neoplatonism, Plotinus (205-270 A.D.).<sup>2</sup>

The distinction between intelligibles and perceptibles is, I shall

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1. I say "by themselves separate" because on the TWI the resulting two sets of entities are connected with one another by soul, with images and perceptibles being "below" soul and archetypes and intelligibles being "above" soul. These notions of "above" and "below" derive from Plotinus' theory of the so-called *proodos*, or progression, of his three hypostases, or underlying principles in reality: the One, Intellect and Soul. As Plotinus sees it, all that exists and happens in the spatio-temporal world of our sense imagery (where the TWI normally locates images and perceptibles) comes to be as a result of Soul's activities. Soul's activities have determinate natures defined by Intellect's contents, which may be described as Forms, intelligibles, *beings*, or the like. And just as Soul's activities presuppose Intellect's content, so too do both the activities of Soul and the contents of Intellect presuppose the One — the single and absolutely simple principle and cause of all existence. For what I am about here, we can construe Intellect's contents as reified counterparts to the predicates used in a language for describing what things are. As we shall see in section III of this paper, our own conceptual activities — and hence the language we use to give them expression — are at most "unfoldings", images or, if you please, representations of the *beings* in Intellect. Nevertheless, it will suffice for here to refer to particular *beings* in Intellect by suffixing English predicates (e.g., 'man') or predicate abbreviations (e.g., 'F') to '*being*' — or, where perspicuous, by using the predicate or abbreviation alone since the prefix '*being*' indicates just that what we are referring to is ultimately an element in Intellect's content. For a standard account of Plotinus' *proodos*, see A. H. Armstrong, "Plotinus," Part III of *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, ed., Armstrong, Cambridge University Press (London, 1967), esp. 241 and 250-253.

2. For an initial criticism of what I call the TWI, see John Anton, "Plotinus' Approach to Categorical Theory," *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, ed., R. Baine Harris, State University of New York Press (Albany NY, 1976), pp. 83-99.

argue, the more complex and difficult of the two. It is also the one more commonly appealed to and discussed by Plotinus in his *Enneads* and by contemporary writers on Plotinus. Accordingly, the bulk of my discussion will focus on it. I shall argue that, while intelligibles and perceptibles are distinguishable from one another as objects for different modes of apprehension, they are not separate and distinct sets of entities. That they might *seem* separate from one another results from our common but mistaken belief that the objects of our perceptions exist among our sense images and from our misunderstanding the nature of perceptual apprehension itself.

I shall develop my argument in five sections. Section I will be an initial sketch of Plotinus' distinctions between archetypes and images and between intelligibles and perceptibles. Next, in sections II and III, I shall discuss Plotinus' views on the natures of perception, of imagination and of memory, as these will prove central to resolving my topic. Section IV will be a discussion of the so-called one-over-many problem and of Plotinus' understanding and handling of it. That discussion will develop further some main points of sections II and III and bring them to bear on resolving my topic. Finally, in section V, we shall see a clear statement of Plotinus' "one world" philosophy in his discussion of an alleged duality within the faculties of imagination and of memory.

### I

The outlines of Plotinus' dualism can be seen in *Ennead* VI. 4. 10 & 11.<sup>3</sup> In the first of these two chapters, Plotinus contrasts his (metaphysical) archetypes and images — or copies (εἰδῶλα or εἰκόνα) — with the sorts of archetypes and images we perceive around us. He considers three examples: first, a portrait, which is an image of whatever or whomever it is a portrait of; second, a reflection in a mirror, which is an image of whatever is causing it; and third, the heat in an object warmed by a fire, which may be viewed as an image of the fire that is producing it. Plotinus feels that the first of these three examples contrasts most sharply with his archetypes and their images for two reasons: first, because a portrait of someone is, strictly speaking, produced by an artist and his tools and not by its archetype and, second, because its status as an image depends heavily upon its possessing certain qualities (e.g., colors and shapes) in which it *resembles* its archetype.

The second and third examples have both strengths and

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3. All text references in this paper are to the Henry-Schwyzler edition of the *Enneads*.

weaknesses as analogues to Plotinus' (metaphysical) archetypes and their images. The strength of the heat example lies in that the heat is said to be an image of a fire just in virtue of its being caused by the fire. Its weakness lies in that, insofar as the heat exists in a warmed object and not in the archetypal fire itself, it exists separately from the fire. The strength of the reflection example lies in that, though a reflection does exist separately from its cause (say, in a mirror or in water), it exists only so long as its archetype is producing it. (Plotinus does note that the heat example is not completely unlike the reflection example in this regard because the heat will eventually dissipate once its fire is removed unless the warmed object itself contains fire; but then the heat is no longer an image of the original fire but of this second fire present in the warmed object itself.) The weakness of the reflection example lies in that, as in the portrait example, the relation between a reflection and its archetype includes *resemblance* as well as causation.

Plotinus' discussion in chapter 10 of the above examples has important implications for understanding his own distinction between archetypes and their images. The first is that his archetypes and their images are not related to one another through *resemblance* — or, if they are, that is not the basis for one being an image of the other. Rather, the closest common usage of 'archetype' and 'image' to Plotinus' technical usage of those terms would be one in which an effect is considered to be an image of its cause. Something is an image insofar as it is produced by something, or an archetype insofar as it produces something. If *A* is produced by *B*, for example, then *A* is an image and *B* is its archetype. Moreover, if *B* is itself produced by something — say, *C* — then *B* would also be an image — *viz.*, an image of *C* — as well as being *A*'s archetype. As a result, one and the same thing can be both an image and an archetype so long as it both is produced by something and produces something. Finally, nothing is entailed by this basic explication of archetypes and images concerning what type of item may (or must) function as an archetype, as an image, or perhaps as both. Anything — whether an individual, a Form, or whatever — would be *an image* if it is produced by something, or *an archetype* if it produces something.

Another implication of Plotinus' discussion in chapter 10 is that his archetypes and images must not be thought of as existing separate and distinct from one another. He is very explicit that the heat and the reflection examples both fall short on this score in that they both exist in something distinct from their archetypes — the heat existing in a warmed object and the reflection existing in a mirror. Plotinus' images are *causally* dependent upon their

archetypes without existing separately from them. Indeed, the initial motivation for chapter 10 was Plotinus' desire to reject wholly or in part all uses of 'image' and 'archetype' which imply that an image need not be "knit together with" (συναρτάω) its archetype, or which imply that an image may be "separate from" (ἀπόντος) its archetype (1.1-3). Plotinus' archetypes and images thus seem distinguishable from one another, the former being causes and the latter being effects, but they must not be thought to be therefore separable from one another.

The foregoing idea, that certain types of Plotinian items are distinguishable but not separable from one another, is a principal theme of chapter 11 as well. Plotinus there argues that, as we move from *one* to *intellect* (or *being*) and from intelligibles to perceptibles in his account of reality:

*"being* is not separate from the *one*: Wherever *being* presents itself, its *one* is present in it; and the *one* is *being* once again alone (by itself). For it is certainly possible for *being* to present itself as separate (from the *one*). In yet another way, perceptibles are present in intelligibles — in whatever way it is possible for them to be present in intelligibles, but in a different manner from that in which intelligibles are present in themselves." (VI.4.11,18-23)

The general context of this passage is Plotinus discussing how (indeed, if) beings and/or intelligibles can be both *ones* and *many*. I shall return to this general issue and Plotinus' handling of it in section IV. However, two related ambiguities in this passage should be noted. First, in claiming that "the *one* is *being* once again alone", is Plotinus referring to the first principle or hypostasis in his metaphysics called 'the One' or to that *one* said previously to be present *in-being*? The final clause, "[the manner] in which intelligibles are present in themselves" is also ambiguous, as it could refer either to intelligibles being present *among* themselves (or *in one another*) or to intelligibles being present "in themselves" in the sense of being present *qua intelligibles*. The discussion in section V will suggest the second alternative in both cases. But the important point for here is Plotinus' insistence that *being* cannot be sharply separated from *one* and that perceptibles cannot be sharply separated from intelligibles. Although *being* may present itself as separate from *one*, it is not really separate from *one*. Indeed, even when it presents itself as separate from *one*, it contains *one* within it. Likewise, perceptibles are not really separate from intelligibles. They are present in intelligibles — albeit in a different manner — etc. Accordingly, as with *being* and *one*, intelligibles and perceptibles are distinguishable but not separate from one another.

I shall close this section by calling attention to two related features of the above passage.

First, Plotinus' appeal in chapter 11 to the present-in relation is both more complex and less informative than was his appeal to causality in chapter 10. It is more complex in that it is said to obtain between several different pairs of items: *one* and *being*, perceptibles and intelligibles, and intelligibles themselves. As a result, it is also less informative about the natures of the items mentioned. Chapter 10 tells us that archetypes and images are causes and their effects. Chapter 11, in contrast, seems to shed little, if any, light on what *one*, *being*, intelligibles and perceptibles are. In this respect, its informational content seems more like that of "knit together with" in chapter 10. It tells us that the various pairs of items mentioned are not really separate from one another but its own sense, or manners of obtaining, requires a prior understanding on our part of those distinctions rather than clarifying them very much. Accordingly, while the above discussion suggests, *pace* the TWI, that *being an archetype* and *being an image* are not defining properties of sets of Plotinian entities, the same cannot be said about *being an intelligible* and *being a perceptible* on the basis of Plotinus' discussion in chapter 11.

A second feature of the above passage, which will become crucial in section IV, is the apparently congruent roles assigned to *being* and to intelligibles. Plotinus tells us that the *one* is present in *being* and that *being* can present itself as separate from the *one* but not that *being* is present in the *one* or that the *one* can present itself as separate from *being*. Likewise, he tells us that perceptibles are present in intelligibles and that intelligibles may be present in themselves but not that intelligibles are present in perceptibles or that perceptibles may be present in themselves. The one crucial point of incongruity is that, while Plotinus does say of the *one* that it is *being* once again by itself (as opposed to being present in *being* when *being* is presenting itself), he gives no indication that perceptibles are ever other than present in intelligibles. Nevertheless, the important point is that the roles assigned to *being* and to intelligibles are congruent in such a way that together they form the basis for Plotinus' handling of the one-over-many problem. Moreover, Plotinus' handling of that problem contains the key to understanding his distinction between intelligibles and perceptibles. But the key to understanding Plotinus' handling of the one-over-many problem is his views on the nature of perception and its relation to intellection.

Several times in the *Enneads*, Plotinus compares the perceiving soul to a craftsman. In *Ennead* IV.4.23, Plotinus bases his appeal to that analogy on three features of craft activities. (1) An act of craftsmanship requires three items: a craftsman, a subject (*ὑποκειμένον*) for the craftsman to act upon, and a tool by means of which the craftsman acts upon the subject. (2) Something is crafted out of a subject — say, a chair is crafted out of pieces of wood — by the craftsman using his tool(s) to relate a discernment (*κρίσις*) in his soul to the subject. (3) During the performance of this craft activity, the subject becomes an object of discernment (*κρινομένον*) which, as such, is united with (*συναψάμενος*) the discernment in the craftsman's soul. (See 1.37-42.)

An act of perception is analogous to a craft-activity in the first respect in that it also requires three items: a soul, a subject for the soul to perceive, and bodily sense organs by means of which the soul perceives the subject. Since many philosophers would use 'the subject of perception' for the percipient rather than for the item perceived, I shall henceforth use 'the object' for the item perceived, the *ὑποκειμένον*. The second point of analogy is a bit more complex. It can be broken down into three sub-claims about perception: (2a) A perception requires a discernment by the perceiving soul. (2b) That discernment is *of* that object to which our sense organs are relating it. (2c) In perception, something is thereby crafted or made out of the object. Of these three, (2c) is likely to be the most unclear. The intent of (2c) is, however, contained in the third point of analogy. So I shall turn directly to it.

The basic idea in (3) is that neither the object acted upon nor the tools by means of which it is acted upon determine *what* is made out of the object. This is determined solely by the soul's discernment. Consider a carpenter making a chair out of pieces of wood. By itself the object being acted upon is just pieces of wood, and as such it remains pieces of wood after a craftsman has used his tools to alter their sizes and shapes, to arrange them in a certain way, and to couple them together. *That* pieces of wood shaped, arranged and coupled together in a certain way *are a chair* is determined by the discernment (or, if you please, the idea) in the craftsman's soul. *What* the crafted object *is* (or has come *to be*) is determined by the discernment alone and not by the craftsman's tools or by the material nature of the object. Accordingly, we might say that, *qua* being the object of a discernment in the soul, the craft-object is united directly with the discernment itself. The object's matter may influence the chair's physical properties — say, whether it is smooth or rough, sturdy or flimsy — and it determines that the chair is a *physical* chair; and the tools used by

the craftsman effect the physical changes wrought in the object as the craftsman attempts to render it a satisfactory physical copy of his discernment. But *what* the object thereby *is* — *what* it is a physical copy *of* — depends solely upon the discernment, and that dependency is unmediated by the craftsman's tools or by the fact that he is discerning a *physical* object *to be a chair*.

If our craftsman were asked, "What are you making?", the appropriate response would be just an expression of his discernment's content — i.e., "A chair!" — and not a description of the material nature of his object, of the physical changes being wrought in the object, or of how his tools are effecting those changes. The first of these three alternates might answer, "What *type* of chair are you making?", or "What *materials* are you making the chair out of?"; the second might answer, "What characteristics do you intend for your (physical) chair to have?", or "When will your (physical) chair be finished?"; and the third might answer, "How does one make a (physical) chair?", or "How can I make another chair that would be like your (physical) chair?" But these questions and their answers are contingent upon the fact that the craftsman is making a *physical* image of his discernment or idea. That the object is wooden and that the craftsman is using physical tools to effect physical changes in the (external) object are accidental to *what* the object *is*, or to its *being* — i.e., its *being-a-chair*. In this sense, the discerned object's *what* or *being* is independent of its (in fact) material nature; it is unmediated by the activities of the craftsman's tools; and it is one with the contents of the craftsman's discernment or idea of it.

The analogous idea for perception would be that, while perception is an activity in which the percipient is aware of an external object by virtue of his soul using his sense organs to relate a discernment to that object, *what* the perceived object *is* depends solely on the soul's discernment. If I perceive something *to be a chicken*, for example, then — *qua* perceived-to-be-a-chicken — it just *is a chicken*. And this holds regardless of what *type* of chicken it is (e.g., a material chicken composed of organic molecules), regardless of what sense organs are used in discerning it, and even regardless of what the object *really is*. In this way, the object, though external and an independently existing thing, is — *qua what* it is discerned *to be* — united directly with my discernment of it. The object's nature, as independent of my discernment of it, accounts for the fact that I do not *create* things in perceiving them; and it determines what type of object I am discerning (e.g., that it is a *physical* object) and certain related properties an object of that type must have (e.g., that it obeys the law of gravity, that it would

die if not nourished, or that it can procreate other individuals of the same species). But, *qua* discerned, the object just *is* as I discern it *to be* and it *is* nothing beyond what I discern it *to be*. And whether, say, the perceived chicken is *really* a chicken or not is a separate issue, analogous to asking whether a certain physical object is *really* a chair (as intended by its craftsman) or whether, though it was crafted *to be a chair*, it simply does not meet the standards we would expect of a *physical* chair.<sup>4</sup>

Thus far, the main thing that has been said about the role of sense organs in perception is that they relate the soul to external objects. Prior to invoking the craftsman analogy in *Ennead* IV.4.23, however, Plotinus argues that a perceiving soul requires a body — more precisely, bodily sense organs — because by itself a soul has only intellection (νόησις). For an act of perception to occur, the soul needs a means for “fitting” (ἐφαρμόσειεν) intelligibles *onto perceptibles* (I.10). When we perceive something, according to Plotinus, the soul “fixes” (ἐπιβάλλειν) the object being perceived in such a way that it “comes into the presence of an intelligible” (I.14). But the fixing of a perceptible is made possible for the soul by our bodily sense organs. Our sense organs determine *which perceptible* is to be discerned while the soul’s discernment determines *what* that perceptible is discerned *to be*. When I perceive

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4. Though helpful at this stage in my discussion, this way of accounting for the possibility of perceptual error will, unfortunately, not work for Plotinus. I am here suggesting, in effect, (1) that we must distinguish what a perceptual object is (*qua* perceptual object) from what the *hypokeimenon* of the perceptual object is, and (2) that perceptual error occurs when the former does not match the latter — e.g., when a turkey “becomes”, *qua* perceived, a chicken. As we shall see, however, the *hypokeimenon* of a perceptual object is in fact an intelligible and as such it is in fact the cause of our perception’s content (hence, of *what* we are perceiving). The *hypokeimenon* of a perceptual object is distinguishable from the perceptual object it “becomes” just in that we do not *perceive* the *hypokeimenon* as it is in itself but as it reveals itself in an image or logos of itself that informs our “conjoint” perceptual awareness. Accordingly, it would seem that we can perceive something *to be a chicken*, for example, if and only if the *hypokeimenon* of the perceptual object is that intelligible whose logos may be expressed by ‘chicken’. I shall not pursue this matter here, except to say that I think Plotinus does indeed hold that our perceptions themselves are never in error. Descriptions or predications of perceptual objects which turn out to be erroneous — as when a person says, “Lo, chicken!” of a turkey — are as much mistakes about the true contents of our perceptual discernments themselves as they are mistakes about the objects being perceived. In a sense, there are no *perceptual* errors for Plotinus but errors on the part of our higher cognitive and reflective faculties when we attempt to think about and to describe what we are perceiving rather than just perceiving it.



a man, for example, my sense organs determine which external object I am perceiving — and also that I am *perceiving* (i.e., discerning a *perceptible*) — while my soul's discernment determines that *what* I am perceiving is a *man*. The soul fixes a perceptible by discerning it to be something and, in thus fixing its *being* (*what it is*), it is said by Plotinus to fit an intelligible onto the perceptible — to bring it into the presence of an intelligible.

Before the full significance of the foregoing can be exploited, more must be said about the role of our sense organs in perception. In particular, I shall close this section by expanding a bit on precisely how, as Plotinus sees it, perception is a "conjoint" activity in which a soul uses bodily sense organs as tools. In *Ennead* IV.3.26, for example, Plotinus summarizes his theory of perception as follows:

"If in actual perception the living thing functions as a conjoint, then perception in general must be of the same sort. Perception is thus said to be dual and common, analogous to boring or weaving, so that in perception the soul is like a craftsman and the body is like a tool. The body is passive and menial and the soul engages (*παραδεχομένης*) the bodily impression, whether as arising from the body or as a discernment made from the bodily undergoings." (IV.3.26,1-8)

The most important features of this passage for my purposes are three: (i) Its emphasis on the *passive* or *menial* nature of the body's role in perception. (ii) Its claim that, while a perception is a *single* act of the living thing, it nevertheless requires the *conjoint* functioning of soul and body. (iii) Its concluding suggestion concerning the relationship between perceptual discernments and our bodily undergoings or impressions.

(i) Plotinus calls the sensory analogues to the movements of a craftsman's tool 'impressions' (*τύποι* or *τύπωσιν*), and he maintains that, as a result of our sense organs undergoing impression, our discernments are related to external objects in a manner analogous to how a craftsman's discernment is related to his craft-object as a result of the movements of his tools. That is, like a craftsman's tools, our sense organs determine *which* external object our soul is to discern in virtue of *causal* connections obtaining between our sense organs and the object — though in the case of perception it is the *tools* (our sense organs) which are being affected (i.e., impressed) by the external object rather than *vice versa* (as in the case of a craft-activity). Perception is a "craft" activity in which no real alteration occurs in the object being acted upon. Unlike a craftsman's tool, our sense organs are passive tools only; but, like a

craftsman's tool, our sense organs do not provide the soul with its objects, say, by literally "pointing them out" or by "deciding" for our soul which objects it must perceive. Our sense organs provide the soul with its objects just by undergoing impressions which, on the one hand, are caused by external things and which, on the other hand, are "engaged" by the soul in its act of discerning something. Our sense organs are thus also passive in that they contribute *nothing* to the making or producing of the perceived external object.

A fundamental tenet of Plotinus' theory of perception is that, though the body is a necessary partner in our discerning *perceptibles*, it is a wholly passive *and menial* one. The soul alone has an active part in perception. It alone is responsible for the making or producing of something in perception. In my above example of my perceiving a man, for instance, I claimed that my soul's discernment alone determines that *what* I am perceiving is *a man*. Note, however, that the clause 'what I am perceiving is a man' could equally be used for describing the content (indeed, the object) of my perception (αἰσθήσις) as such as well as the content just of my discernment (κρίσις). Expressions describing the contents of our perceptual discernments and ones describing the contents of our perceptions themselves (or as a whole) coincide with one another. Thus, what I am discerning and what I am perceiving are the same, viz., *a man*. Though my sense organs in fact determine which object I am perceiving when I perceive a man, they add nothing to the *content* of my perception, nor to the external object *qua* perceived as I discern it to be. Their determination of which object I shall perceive is thus passive, not only in that they do this by undergoing impressions but also in that their determination is not an element in my act of perceptual consciousness as such — in my awareness or act of "fixing" an external object as *being*, e.g., *a man*.

(ii) The foregoing implies as well that the content of a perceptual discernment is not *derived from*, nor *dictated by*, our sensory undergoings. Plotinus compares the body to an unskilled laborer (ὑπηρέτου) — a menial assistant who supplies none of the skills or resources used by the soul in *discerning* an object. Whatever skills or resources are needed by the soul to discern its perceptible objects must be brought by the soul to perception. They are not somehow found by the soul in the body or in its impressions. The perceiving soul does not, for example, "read" what it is to discern off sense impressions. For one thing, the impressions are not objects for the soul's perceptual activities and nor do they contain *what* the soul is to discern its objects *to be*. The objects of the soul's

discernments are external objects and *what* it discerns those objects *to be* is determined by the soul alone. For another thing, a perception is not a *composite* episode made up of two (or more) sub-episodes — e.g., an impression, a soul's "looking" at the impression, and the soul's discerning a perceptible on the basis of what it "sees" in our sense organs. A perception is a *single* act which, however, is "conjoint" in that its content is produced by the percipient's soul at a time when his sense organs are undergoing impression. We might say that a perception is a single act which has two *aspects* — a sensory and a conceptual — but not that it contains two (or more) *parts* or sub-acts.

(iii) Plotinus does suggest at the end of this passage that, when we discern an external object, the discernment is made from the bodily impression.<sup>5</sup> In light of the foregoing, however, it seems clear that 'from' (ἐκ) here denotes the *matter* in which the discernment exists, from which it is formed. The soul does not derive its discernment (or the content of the perception) from the impression but "engages" the impression as the material base for the discernment's existence in the percipient. The perceiving soul does not take our sense impressions as objects for its perceptual awareness or some pre-perceptual awareness but just uses them as matter for the coming to be of acts of perception in the "living thing" (the percipient).

If the soul's discernment does not derive its content from impressions, from whence does this derive? What is responsible for *what* the content of a perceptual discernment *is*? From whence does the soul's resources for producing perceptual discernments (e.g., its ideas) come and how is the discernment "made from" undergoings in our sense organs? Plotinus' discussion of imagination and memory in *Ennead* IV.3.30 suggests the answer to these questions.

### III

It is natural to associate imagination with sense-imagery — as in the production of dreams and hallucinations — and to associate memory with recollections of past events and people, remembrances of once-learned facts and, in cooperation with imagination, reproductions of once-experienced sense-imagery. Plotinus, in contrast, associates imagination and memory with *intelligibles*,<sup>6</sup>

5. I shall not discuss the case where, in the above passage, the soul is said to engage impressions "as arising from the body" since I am interested only in the case where the soul uses sense organs to *discern* (perceive) something.

6. Cf. Henry J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology: His Doctrines of the Embodied Soul*, Marinus Nijhoff (The Hague, 1971).

suggesting in *Ennead* IV.3.30 that memory is:

“the reception in imagination of a logos following upon an intelligible. For the intelligible is simple and is not yet [complex] like that which comes to the surface in awareness; and the logos, unfolding and coming forth from the intelligible into the imagination, displays the intelligible as in a mirror; and the awareness of it as such is the abiding and the remembering. Thus, whenever awareness comes in this way to us, the soul is moving itself towards (its own) intellection. For the intellection is one thing and the awareness of the intellection is another, as we are always intellective but we are not always aware (of it) — this because the recipient not only receives intellections but also perceptions concerning other things.” (IV.3.30,6-16)

Plotinus began *Ennead* IV.3.30 discussing discursive thought (*διάνοια*) and the natures of imagination and memory vis-à-vis discursive thought; but he concludes, in the above passage, by relating what is said about imagination and memory to perception. The steps taken towards relating imagination and memory to perception may be summarized as follows: (1) Imagination is that faculty in which *logoi* — “expressions”, if you will — of intelligibles are received by the soul from Intellect. (2) *Logoi* are “unfoldings” of intelligibles which “display” them in the soul — as if the soul had a mirror-like surface on which intelligibles may display themselves in the form of *logoi*. (3) The soul’s awareness of these *logoi* is memory. For (4) in being aware of these *logoi*, the soul is aware of intelligibles — albeit in an “unfolded” form; but (5) though we are always intellective — i.e., always receiving *logoi* of intelligibles — we are not always aware of these *logoi* as such. In particular, (6) we are not aware of them when we are receiving not only *logoi* but also perceptions of other things.

This final move is, I think, the least clear. First, in what sense do we *receive* perceptions, or are we *passive* in regards to them? Section II argued that the perceiving soul is *not* passive vis-à-vis the perceived object nor vis-à-vis the impression(s) undergone by our sense organ(s). The soul is active and not at all passive in its relations both with the object and with the impression. It stands to the perceived object as a craftsman stands to the materials he is acting upon and to our sense organs as a craftsman stands to his tools or to an unskilled, menial assistant. Indeed, it is a general principle of Plotinus’ metaphysics that the soul is always active and never passive in its relations with the body or bodily things. The soul can be passive, or a recipient, only vis-à-vis the two higher hypostases in Plotinus’ metaphysics: Intellect and the One.<sup>7</sup> Of

course, insofar as 'we' refers in steps (5) and (6) to the conjoint (body and soul) percipient, we are passive vis-à-vis our sense organs undergoing impressions; but impressions *qua* undergoings of our sense organs are not perceptions. Acts of perception occur when a soul uses those impressions as matter for the existence of its discernments. It is thus clear in context that 'the recipient' in step (6) refers, if not just to the soul alone, to the soul using the body — i.e., to the individual who receives *logoi* from intelligibles and uses the impressions as already undergone by his body. Hence, the reception in question must be one holding vis-à-vis Intellect and not vis-à-vis sense impressions or external objects.

Second, step (6) might seem to imply that *logoi* of intelligibles (i.e., intellections) and perceptions of other things are separate and distinct items or episodes; but the claim that "the recipient receives not only intellections but also perceptions concerning other things" is ambiguous. It can either mean that we receive two separate items (*viz.*, intellections and perceptions), or it can mean that what the recipient receives is not always *just* an intellection but is sometimes *also* a perception. On the former reading, step (5) would seem to say that we are always receiving *logoi* but, on those occasions when we also receive perceptions, this somehow precludes or frustrates our being aware of those *logoi*. On the latter reading, step (5) would seem to say that we are always receiving *logoi* from Intellect but, on those occasions when our intellections are *also* perceptions, we are not aware of the *logoi* themselves; rather, we are aware of "other" (external) things. An intellection is a perception, in other words, when the soul receiving a *logos* is discerning an external object — is producing an act of perception by the conjoint percipient — and, in so doing, is not aware of the *logos* as such. Similarly, the percipient is aware of the external object of his perception and not the content or conceptual nature of the perception as such.

That perception is a species of intellection — that the latter reading of (6) is the correct one — is latent in Plotinus' aforementioned view that in perception the soul fits an intelligible onto a perceptible and also in the fact just mentioned that the soul is passive only vis-à-vis Intellect (and the One). For it would be in virtue of the conceptual aspect of a perception that the soul fits an intelligible onto a perceptible, and the above passage suggests a mechanism by which the soul does this — *viz.*, by its receiving *logoi* from Intellect. What I am suggesting, in other words, is that the soul fits an intelligible onto a perceptible by virtue of its

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7. See note 1 on Plotinus' three hypostases.

discernment (κρισις) itself just being a logos from an intelligible. The *logoi* of discursive thought and perceptual discernments have in common that they are both images of intelligibles. The latter differ from the former just in that, as a result of our soul having engaged the menial services of our sense organs, they are of perceptibles.

In light of the foregoing, we can add the following points to what was said in section II. First, discernments are made from sensory undergoings (impressions) through the faculty of imagination, so that the sources or archetypes of our perceptual discernments are intelligibles themselves. Second, impressions serve as matter for the soul's discernments by serving as matter for the imagination's reception of *logoi* from intelligibles — as “surfaces” on which intelligibles may display themselves in the form of *logoi*. Third, the soul thereby fits an intelligible onto a perceptible in virtue of its discernment of the perceptible — and hence the content of the living thing's perception — being an image or copy of an intelligible, and the perceptible itself is thereby brought into the presence of an intelligible because it is one with that image of an intelligible (the discernment).

When someone perceives something, two things occur simultaneously. On the one hand, the percipient receives a logos from an intelligible while, on the other hand, his sense organs are undergoing impressions. These two receptions — of a logos and of impressions — form a single act of perceptual awareness when the impressions serve as the matter for the existence of the logos in the percipient. As a result, the logos becomes the content or conceptual nature of an act of perception in which the percipient is aware of an external object *as being*, e.g., *a man*. Using ‘ $\phi$ ’ to designate a certain intelligible and ‘*man*’ to designate the sort of logos in which it unfolds or displays itself, for example, the idea would be that when someone perceives a man — when the conjoint percipient says “Lo, man!”, as it were, of some external object — his soul is receiving *man* from  $\phi$  and certain impressions in his sense organs are serving as matter for that reception. The percipient is not as such aware that this is going on, however, because his perceptual awareness consists just in his discerning an external object in the “Lo, man!” way being prescribed by  $\phi$  as  $\phi$  informs his awareness with *man*. Neither the fact that our perceptual awareness is being informed by a logos from an intelligible, nor the fact that this is being accomplished by our sense impressions being made into a discernment whose content is that logos, is as such a part of our *perceptual* awareness itself.

It takes little intelligence, of course, for percipients to recognize

early on that their sense organs play a crucial role in their being able to perceive external things and that their perceptions have a conceptual nature (e.g., that they can describe *what* they are perceiving in language); but this recognition is not itself a component of the simple act of being perceptually aware of an external object as, e.g., *a man*. Just as I emphasized in section II that perceptions do not contain sub-episodes in which the soul "looks" at sense impressions, so too does Plotinus' metaphor of the imagination displaying images of intelligibles on the mirror of sense impressions *not* mean that those images are literally displayed for the soul to "see", "read", or whatever. The metaphor serves only to introduce the idea that our perceptual discernments (and discursive thoughts) are in fact related to intelligibles as images to their archetypes — i.e., as effects to their causes. My suggestion that we represent a discernment by expressions like '*man*' must not be taken to imply *pace* my own insistence to the contrary, that a perception has two separable components — that an expression like '*man*' is just superimposed over sense impressions. As I read Plotinus, the idea is that, as a result of its (passive) relation to intelligibles, the faculty of imagination makes impressions function in such a way that they are no longer just sensory undergoings but conscious (though not self-conscious) representations of *what* something is (e.g., *of a man*). To say that impressions are made into representations which discern external objects is to say that they perform a cognitive role in awareness analogous to the cognitive role played by the term '*man*' in English when we use our language to express the contents of our more obviously cognitive activities (e.g., reasoning or discursive thoughts) or to describe the objects of our perceptions. Moreover, it is these cognitive roles that define the contents of our perceptual awareness — e.g., that we are perceptually aware *of a man* — and not the bodily or sensory natures of the impression filling those roles.<sup>8</sup>

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8. My use of the disjunction 'bodily or sensory natures of the impressions' reflects an unclarity in Plotinus' notion of *impressions* which to contemporary philosophers might seem inexcusable. In particular, Plotinus is not at all clear on how he conceives of the relationship between impressions in our sense organs and our sense-imagery. Though I shall describe their relationship loosely as one where sense-imagery "attends" or "is a by-product of" our sense organs, the *Enneads* do not rule out the possibility that sense-imagery is in fact identical with, or is at least reducible to, impressions. Insofar as our impressions are distinct from our sense-imagery — e.g., etchings on our eye or, in more contemporary terms, inverse patterns of retinal stimulation — it is obvious that we are not perceptually aware of them. When I perceive a man by means of my

## IV

In the last two sections, I have been discussing Plotinus' views on perception, imagination and memory and their relations to intellection and intelligibles. Why? What significance might discussing those faculties have for understanding Plotinus' distinction between intelligibles and perceptibles, how the latter are present in the former, and hence the nature of his alleged dualism? That discussing those faculties is not wholly irrelevant is evident, for we have seen that, in light of the imagination's relation to Intellect, the discerning soul uses our bodily sense organs to fit an intelligible onto a perceptible — to fix the perceived object in such a way that it comes into the presence of an intelligible. At the very least, this suggests that, from the point of view of a percipient, how perceptibles are related to intelligibles is to be accounted for in terms of the nature of perception itself. In particular, it suggests that a perceptible is present in an intelligible in that, *qua* perceptually discerned, the perceptible is one with a logos of an intelligible — that *what* a given perceptible is is prescribed by an intelligible informing our perceptual awareness. Plotinus' discussion of the so-called one-over-many problem in *Ennead* VI.4 suggests, however, that there is more to it than this.

Plotinus introduces the one-over-many problem in *Ennead* VI.4.7 by the question "How can the *same* be over all things?", which, he immediately says, "is the same as asking how it can be that each of the *many* perceptibles does not normally lie apart from the *same*?" (1.1-3). Plotinus' own initial answer to this question, moreover, is that each of the *many* perceptibles does not normally lie apart from the *same* because "we gather the *many* divided things into the *one*" (1.3-6). The remainder of chapter 7 attempts to clarify the relationship between the *one* and the *many* implicit in this answer by two analogies. The first compares their relationship to a hand using a tool. The second compares it to a light source propogating

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eyes, for example, I am not aware of what is going on in my eyes as such. I may, of course, be aware of the fact that I am perceiving the man by means of my eyes or I may be aware, say, of pains in my eyes that result from the bright sunlight. But I am not aware of the retinal stimulations or the chemical changes in my rods and cones themselves. We are, however, aware of our sense-imagery. Hence, we would be aware of our impressions if they were identical with our sense-imagery, or insofar as our sense-imagery was reducible to them. As we shall see, however, Plotinus denies that our sense-imagery contains the real objects of our perceptual awareness. Hence, we are not *perceptually* aware of our sense-imagery — though it may be a common phenomenon for us also to be aware in some other sense of our sense-imagery when we are perceptually aware, e.g., of a man.



itself through air or some other medium.

Chapter 8 of *Ennead* VI.4 builds upon the second of the two analogies in chapter 7 and contrasts a material light source (e.g., the sun) with an immaterial source or principle (ἀρχή). In the remainder of chapter 8, Plotinus argues that multiplicity, or the *many*, is a concomitant of extension, that extension is a concomitant of body, that an immaterial principle may thus be said to become *many* insofar as a body participates in its power, and hence that the immaterial principle itself remains *one*, becoming *many* only accidentally (κάτα συμβεβηκός) — i.e., in that a body is participating in its power. Chapter 9 focuses on the notion of a body participating in a principle's power and asks if a principle's power remains in the principle when the power comes into *perceptibles* (1.11-12) — and hence comes to be many. The remainder of chapter 9 discusses possible answers to this question, after which we come to chapters 10 and 11, which formed the basis for section I of this paper. Chapter 12 contains more illustrations and analogies.

Now the foregoing chapters (7-12) of *Ennead* VI.4 are sandwiched in between chapters 6 and 13, in which Plotinus makes some extremely important remarks. In chapter 6, Plotinus discusses the sense in which a soul can be both *one* and *many* — i.e., *one* in relation to itself, as a principle, and *many* in relation to bodies. Unlike his discussion in chapter 8 of how immaterial principles as such can be *many*, Plotinus' discussion in chapter 6 of how souls can be *many* does not appeal to *extension* as such as a source of multiplicity. Instead, he discusses *perception* and, in particular, the fact that the same soul can use different undergoings (impressions) in discerning its objects, with the result that different perceptions may be attributed to the same percipient.

For

“when perceptions are *different* ones, the undergoings are said to be occasioning their *difference*. But this has to do with the things being discerned and not with the (act of) discerning itself. As for the discernments, the same discerner becomes a judge over various undergoings . . .” (VI.4.6,7-10)

In other words, conjoint acts of perception are individuated or “multiplied” by reference to the undergoings that serve as their matter. The undergoings may also be taken in some sense to individuate or “multiply” the objects to be discerned; but this does not affect the natures of the discernments — indeed, of the perceptions — themselves, for these are determined by the soul alone — the discerner, who is like a judge that is “above” the

undergoings and their multiplicity. But our sensory undergoings do not render just our perceptions *many*, or (numerically) different from one another. The multiplicity which the use of sense impressions brings to acts of perception is the real basis for *all* multiplicity — including that attributed to souls and even the multiplicity associated with extended bodies. At the beginning of chapter 13, accordingly, Plotinus attributes *extension* “over all the heavens and all living things” to *perception* — which, he says, “tells of a here and a there” (1.1-3). That perceptibles — and bodies generally — are *many* is to be referred, first, to the sense impressions used by the soul in discerning them and, second, to the resulting fact that our perceptions therefore seem directed towards “here’s” and “there’s”, or towards “this object” and then “that object”. Whether this apparent multiplicity that sense impressions seem to add to perceptions and perceptibles contradicts my claims in sections II and III, that they add *nothing* to the contents of our perceptions nor to the objects we perceive will be addressed shortly. Let us first summarize what the foregoing seems to be telling us.

Plotinus presents the one-over-many problem as a question of why the *many* are not really apart from the *one*. When referring to the *many*, moreover, he is referring to “each of the *many* of perception”. Moreover, “the *many* of perception” would seem, in the first instance, to be the various undergoings used by the soul in discerning perceptibles and, in the second instance, to be perceptibles themselves insofar as our sensory undergoings play a role in our perceptions of them. Further, the reason why this *many* is not apart from the *one* is that in perception *we* in fact gather *many* into *one* — or as Plotinus also has it:

“When we say that a *one* is in a *many*, we are not saying that it becomes *many* but that from multiplicity the undergoing attains the unity which is *in-many* when we see it.” (VI.4.8,23-25)

The phrase ‘when we see it’ refers to our discerning a *one* as an object of perception, and Plotinus is claiming here that the *many* (of perception) is not apart from the *one* because a *one* is already just that into which we “gather” a perceptible by discerning it — alternatively, a *one* is just that to which our undergoings themselves attain when we perceive a *one* (albeit *in-many qua* percipients using sense organs). Indeed, that there is a *many* there at all seems to be *accidental*, deriving from the fact that *perceptual* discernments use sense organs and that, as a result, our perceptions seem directed towards a “here” or a “there”, a “this” or a “that”. Accordingly, souls (and immaterial principles generally), perceptions and perceptibles are all *many* just insofar as

they are related to the sensory undergoings used by the soul in perception. But souls, perceptions and perceptibles are all really *ones* or *sames*; none of them are really rendered *many* through their relations with sense impressions, despite the fact that the spatio-temporal expanse of sense images which attends our sense organs might suggest otherwise — i.e., that perceptibles, bodies generally, and bodily activities may differ from one another just in being “here” or “there”, “this one” or “that one”.

To fully understand the foregoing, we must recognize that Plotinus conceives of the one-over-many problem in a quite different manner from the way it is commonly presented. A common way of presenting the problem would be by the question: Given that *there are many* individual *F*'s, for example, how is each of them equally *F*? Where does their *sameness* — or *oneness-in-being-F* come from? How could there be *ones* or *sames* (*beings*) in a world of *many* (individuals)? Plotinus, however, takes the interesting and puzzling question to be a quite different one: Given that *there is*, say, *F*, how can there be individual *F*'s? Given that *there are ones* and *sames* (e.g., *F*), where does the *many* (individuals) come from? How can there be *many* in a world of *ones* or *sames*? That a soul can be aware of *beings* or intelligibles is not at all surprising to Plotinus because (conceptual) acts of the soul just are images or *logoi* of intelligibles in which the soul discerns objects as *beings* (e.g., as *being-F* or as *being-G*). What Plotinus finds puzzling is why in perception we might seem to apprehend individuals — e.g., why we might seem to apprehend *an individual man* rather than just *man* (a *logos* of  $\phi$ , the intelligible source of our discernment's content). According to Plotinus, the apparent multiplicity or (numerical) individuality of perceptibles results from the fact that the soul uses sense impressions as matter for the existence of our perceptual discernments together with the fact that, as a result of using sense impressions as their matter, perceptual discernments seem directed, not just to external objects which *are* as they are discerned *to be*, but to objects which occupy a spatio-temporal expanse present to our sense organs.

Crucial to Plotinus' understanding and handling of the one-over-many problem seems to be the idea that the multiplicity which we are tempted to attribute to perceptibles is apparent only and not real. The phenomenological source of this temptation is our tendency to identify the objects of our perceptions with the expanse of sense images that accompany our sense organs. In section V, we shall see that Plotinus denies that these are the real objects of our perceptions at all. The philosophical source of this temptation is the fact that something *is a perceptible* only insofar as it

bears a (causal) relation to our sense organs, in virtue of which it is the object of our perceptual awareness. Accordingly, when one and the same object is related to different sense organs, there might be a sense in which it is different (or *many*) *perceptual* objects — e.g., the-object-discerned-by-means-of-my-eyes and the-object-discerned-by-means-of-your-eyes.<sup>9</sup> Analogously, a piece of marble which is being simultaneously worked on by two craftsmen may be the same piece of marble but, in a sense, two craft-objects — e.g., the object of your chiseling and the object of my chiseling. Perceptibles may thus be said to be *many* in that *qua* related to our sense organs — and even more so, *qua* related to individual impressions — there are as many perceptual objects as there are sense organs (or impressions) used to discern them. But just as perceptibles may be said to be *many* relative to our sense organs and impressions, so too are they *sames* or *ones* (hence, *not-many*) relative to our discernments of them — i.e., to the conceptual aspect of our perceptions. Perhaps, then, we should say that *qua* related to perceptions as a whole (or as conjoint acts of souls using bodies), perceptibles are *ones-* or *sames-in-many*; but this is unacceptable to Plotinus. As he sees it, the idea that perceptibles are really *many at all* does not accord with the true nature of our perceptual awareness, despite the foregoing phenomenological and philosophical motivations for supposing that they are *many* (or at least are *in-many*).

Plotinus takes it for granted that we normally perceive *ones* or *sames* and not a *many* at all, that we apprehend *ones* or *sames* perceptually as well as intellectually. In an act of perceptual awareness, I am aware of an external object as a *one* or *same* of the sort prescribed in my discernment of it. My perceptual awareness says, as it were, “Lo, man!” or “Lo, tree!” and not, e.g., “Lo, this man I am perceiving here and now by means of my eyes!” or “Lo, that chicken I am now perceiving over there by means of my ears!” Even though perceptibles may be said to be *many* relative to various sense organs and impressions, we simply do not *perceive* them *as* relative to our sense organs or impressions but *as sames* or *ones* (in virtue of their *being*). Indeed, insofar as we go about just perceiving things *to be man* or *to be chicken*, we do not even consider questions such as “Is this really one and the same man I perceived

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9. Plotinus’ denial that the objects of our perceptions are really *many* in this sense together with my insistence at the end of section II of this paper that sensation is not a proper part or sub-episode of perception may be read, in more contemporary terms, as a rejection of theories of perception which invoke objects such as sense data or which analyze perceptions in terms of *appearings* or the like.

five minutes ago?" or "Is this man really a distinct individual from that chicken?" We simply discern objects as *being* in various manners (as *being-F*, or as *being-G*, etc.), and these discernings define or "make" *what* we are perceiving. Accordingly, perceptibles are *ones* or *sames* for Plotinus, not because they are *individuals*, but because we perceive them as *beings*. This *sameness* or *oneness* is thus a *sameness-in-being* or a *oneness-in-Being* (e.g., *-in-being-F*) — which, incidentally, is exactly the type of *sameness* or *oneness* that intelligibles themselves possess.

The full bearing of the foregoing on my principal topic can be more clearly discerned by clarifying two points. First, though we do not worry, as we go about just perceptually discerning things, about questions such as "Is this really the same man I perceived five minutes ago?", we certainly do discern objects of the type philosophers would call 'individuals' — e.g., Plato, Aristotle, or the tree outside my kitchen window. Perhaps, in other words, there are times when it would be appropriate to describe the contents of our perceptual awareness just as a "Lo, man!" awareness, for example, but there are also times when we are aware of *a* man or of *this* man as discernable from *some other* man or *that* man. Indeed, though we can think of ourselves as saying "Lo, man!" of some object when we perceive it, we would normally describe what we are perceiving as *a man* (as I have above) and not just as *man*. The appropriate Plotinian response to this is that situations in which we discriminate in perception between objects which, upon reflection, might be said to be individuals or to be instances of a *being* (rather than the *being* itself) must be accountable for in terms of the conceptual contents of the discernments in question. Every difference among things perceived must be due to some difference in kind (or *in-being*) among the discernments in virtue of which we perceptually apprehend those things.

In *Ennead* VI.2.2, Plotinus describes the nature of Intellect as a hierarchy of "higher" and "lower" *beings* (genera and species, if you will), and he tells us that the systematic generation of *beings* in Intellect continues "downwards" until it reaches *the uncutables* (ἀτομα) (VI.2.2,13).<sup>10</sup> Now the uncutables seem to be *beings* that are so specific they are intelligible counterparts to what we might normally call 'individuals' — e.g., to Plato, Aristotle, this tree, etc. Situations in which we discriminate in perception between two individuals of the same sort could thus be situations in which the *logoi* being received from Intellect either (1) are in fact

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10. Hence, see note 4.

more specific than the *being* which, upon reflection, we mention in describing our discernment, or else (2) are received just from the uncutables — the most specific *beings* — themselves. The former alternative would account for situations in which we would say that we are perceiving *a* (or *this*) *man*. The latter alternative would account for situations in which we would say that we are perceiving Plato, or whomever; and the reason why we would normally describe ourselves as perceiving *a man* rather than just *man* is our recognition that what we are discerning might always be more specific than just *being-man*, that we can (and often do) discern *beings* all the way down at the level of the uncutables.<sup>11</sup>

A second point in need of clarification is the intended reference of 'sames' and 'ones' throughout Plotinus' discussion of the one-over-many problem. Plotinus consistently refers the *many*, ultimately, to our sensory undergoings. Perceptibles are *many* only insofar as we are related to them by means of different undergoings; bodies are *many* only insofar as we identify them with items in the expanse of sense images that attends our sense organs; and all other existents are *many* only insofar as they are related to our undergoings, either directly (as in the case of our perceptions and the perceiving soul) or indirectly (through being related to perceptibles or to bodies). At first blush, however, the same consistency is not evident in Plotinus' discussions of *ones* and *sames*. Even in just the eight chapters I have mentioned earlier and in section I, Plotinus seems to refer to at least six different *sames* and/or *ones*: the (hypostasis) One, intelligibles, immaterial principles generally, souls, perceptions, and perceptibles themselves. Plotinus' discussion of *ones* and *sames* can be rendered consistent, however, if it is remembered that, just as all multiplicity is ultimately to be referred to our sense impressions, so too is all unity to be ultimately referred to the One itself and secondarily to other things only insofar as they are *beings* which proceed from the One; *sameness* is ultimately to be referred to the principle of Intellect (*being*) that Plotinus calls 'the same' (τὸ αὐτὸν) and secondarily to other things only insofar as they are *beings* which

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11. My allowing for these two alternative possibilities is not grounded in text. Perhaps the objects of our perceptions (or their *hypokeimena*) are always from among the *atoma* so that using general predicates in describing perceptibles always reflects an imprecision on our part as to the real contents of our perceptions (see note 4). If this is the case, then not all intelligibles would have perceptibles present in them. Only the uncutables — most specific or proper-nameable *beings* — would. This would also most effectively remove the strangeness of saying that we perceive something, e.g., as *being-man* rather than as being *a man*.

proceed from the One by means of the *same*.<sup>12</sup> Thus, all *ones* other than the hypostasis One itself are *ones-in-being* and all *sames* other than the principle of Intellect called 'the same' are *sames-in-being*. All things are *ones* and *sames*, in other words, just insofar as they are *beings* (e.g., *F* or *G* or whatever, down to the uncutables, or, if you please, proper-nameables). Accordingly, Plotinus is consistently referring to a single set of items whenever he refers to *ones* (other than the One itself) or to *sames* (other than *the same* itself). In particular, he is consistently referring just to *beings* — the items which proceed from the One; but those items play a variety of roles in Plotinus' metaphysics and epistemology, and Plotinus attempts to address them in all their roles in *Ennead* VI.4 and to show that in none of those roles do they really become *many*.

The foregoing has an obvious bearing on my topic. On the one hand, Plotinus holds that perceptibles are not really *many* — even when, e.g., "*many* eyes have all looked towards the *same* and are all thereby aware of it" (VI.4.12,5). Indeed, despite the multiplicity of our sense organs and their undergoings, we in fact are perceptually aware of perceptibles as *sames* or *ones* (i.e., *beings*) and not as *many*; and we discern perceptibles as *sames* or (or *ones*) because the content of our discernment is in fact produced by an intelligible (or *being*), and hence the discernment is just *of being* (as an effect is always *of* its cause). On the other hand, Plotinus does distinguish between perceptibles and intelligibles, and he maintains that perceptibles are present in intelligibles and not that they are identical with intelligibles; but these two apparent sides are

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12. In *Ennead* VI.2.7 & 8, Plotinus defines the nature of Intellect as it proceeds from the One in terms of the five Platonic genera: *being*, *same*, *difference*, *motion* and *rest*. The precise function of *same* is a bit unclear. Plotinus' discussion of it in chapter 8 (see esp. lines 35ff.) can be read as claiming either that *same* accounts for the fact that every *being* is the same as itself, though different from every other *being*, or that it functions along with the principle of *difference* in such a way that every difference in *being* is derived from a *same* in *being*. On the former reading, *same* functions as a principle of identity for *being* and, on the latter reading, it functions as principle for ordering species in *being* to their genera in *being*. But whichever way we interpret Plotinus' use of the Platonic principle of *same*, the relevant point is that insofar as we talk about something as a *same* other than the principle of *same* itself, we are referring just to a *being* — albeit to a *being* insofar as, *qua being*, it proceeds from the One by means of the principle of *same*. Accordingly, *ones* and *sames* are both always just *beings*, though the former are *beings* insofar as they derive from the One and the latter are *beings* insofar as they derive from the One by means of *same*, as we shall now see. Thus, when I have a "Lo, man!" awareness, I may be equally said to be aware of a *one*, or of a *same*, or of a *being* — viz., of that *one*, or *being*, or *same* whose logoi are expressible by the predicate 'man'.

compatible with one another when we remember that, on the one hand, an object *is a perceptible* only insofar as it is discerned *by means of sense organs* but that, on the other hand, we do *not* perceive things related to us by our sense organs *as related-to-us-by-our-sense-organs*. We discern things just as *ones* or *sames* — i.e., as *beings* (as *that-which-is-man*, *that-which-is-tree*, *that-which-is-Plato*, etc.). *Being a perceptible* is not a defining characteristic of a certain set of Plotinian entities but an accidental characteristic which *beings* possess insofar as we discern them by means of sense organs. An object's *being a perceptible* is thus distinguishable from its *being an intelligible* since we do not discern intelligibles as such by means of sense organs but, as seen in section III, by becoming reflectively aware of their *logoi* as informing our discursive thoughts and the contents of our perceptual discernments. Accordingly, while a perceptible is not *as such* identical with an intelligible, one and the same *being* (*-man*, *-tree*, *-Plato*, or whatever) may be both a perceptible and an intelligible insofar as we can discern it by means of sense organs and also apprehend it directly, as informing our perceptual awareness (or discursive thoughts).

There is a sense, moreover, in which even the objects of our perceptions *are perceptibles* only accidentally and are more properly already intelligibles. That is, perceptibles are not present in intelligibles just in that a perceptual discernment is a *logos* from an intelligible and in that what a percipient is thereby aware of is united with that *logos*. Since, as noted earlier, we perceptually discern *sames-* or *ones-in-being* (i.e., *beings*) and since *sameness-* and *oneness-in-being* define the nature (or at least part of the nature) of intelligibles as they proceed from the One, it would seem that the objects of our perceptions are themselves already more properly among the intelligibles proceeding from the One than they are perceptibles. Their status *as perceptibles* is latent in them — or is present in them — in that, as a result of sense impressions being the material basis of our perceptual awareness, we can identify them with the external causes of our sense impressions; but since our sense impressions add nothing to the contents of our perception (to what we are perceiving), we also could disregard our sense impressions as wholly accidental and fortuitous bases for our conceptual activities. Indeed, Plotinus argues in *Ennead* I.1.7 that, in a sense,

“the soul's faculty of perception need not be of perceptibles. It need only be receptive to these impressions produced by perception in the living thing (i.e., in the conjoint). For *these* impressions are already intelligibles, because that which is more true to the substance of the soul is a contemplation of Form



alone, without affection (i.e., bodily undergoing), and perception is just the outward image of this." (I.9-14)

What goes on in perception could, in other words, be accounted for solely in terms of (a) our having impressions which (b) are informed by *logoi* from intelligibles. We could disregard altogether the idea that those impressions are caused in our sense organs by perceptibles, taken as somehow distinct from intelligibles. We are tempted to separate the objects of our perceptions from the archetypal sources of our perceptual discernments and to suppose that the causes of our impressions are distinct from the intelligible sources of our discernments because perceptual awareness is "outward facing" — i.e., it is an awareness of objects that is not as such aware of its own nature as a species of intellection; and this temptation is mitigated by our sense-imagery, which seems to present us with an expanse of objects that we are looking at, hearing, or whatever. The "outward facing" character of perceptual awareness tempts us to look for perceptibles, the objects of our perceptions, as lying "out there" where our awareness is "pointing", and our sense-imagery suggests a location for those objects. Thus, when I perceive, say, Plato, the "outward facing" (or intentional) character of my "Lo, Plato!" awareness suggests to me that the object of my awareness, Plato, is some object towards which my awareness is "pointing"; and my sense-imagery provides me with a set of items that seem tailor-made for containing the object to which my awareness is "pointing". Accordingly, I am tempted to take the object of my "Lo, Plato!" awareness to be one of the phenomenal items present in my visual field. In reality, however, the real object of my perception is just a certain *being* (*viz.*, Plato) which I have mistakenly identified with a spatio-temporal individual in my sensory field. By itself, however, that object is just a certain *being* (*viz.*, Plato), which as such belongs to the order of *beings* which proceeds from the One (i.e., Intellect) — and which, incidentally, is also the cause of my sense organs undergoing impression.

The implications drawn in the last few paragraphs about the true natures of the objects of our perceptions are given clear expression by Plotinus in *Ennead* IV.3.31&32. I shall, accordingly, close with a brief discussion of those two chapters.

## V

*Ennead* IV.3.31 & 32 are prefaced by Plotinus putatively distinguishing two sets of faculties of imagination and memory — one set dealing with perceptibles and the other dealing with

intelligibles. Chapter 31 then discusses this distinction in the case of imagination, and chapter 32 discusses this distinction in the case of memory. In regard to imagination, Plotinus argues in chapter 31 that

“when each of the imaginations is in harmony with the other one, they are no longer in any way separate. The stronger one prevailing, the phantasms become one — the weaker being like a shadow cast by the stronger one, like a dimmer light under a stronger light. When there is a battle and a disharmony, the stronger still shines upon the weaker and comes into it, lying hidden within it. But then the duality lies completely hidden from souls. For the two (imagination) have become as one, the weaker bearing the stronger along with it; and the stronger one, having thus seen all things, may in one sense retain them while in another sense dismissing them.” (IV.3.31,9-18)

The principal theme of this passage is that, however one looks at it, the “two” imaginations are never really separate from one another. When they are in harmony (συμφωνῆ), the stronger — the imagination that deals with intelligibles — absorbs the weaker; but even when they are in disharmony, the weaker bears the stronger along with it, as if it were lying within it. The true natures of the two imaginations and of their relationship to one another is, however, then hidden from the soul — that is, their disharmony is only apparent, a matter of ignorance on the part of the soul. To believe that the imagination that deals with perceptibles may be separated from the other imagination and follow its own tune, as it were, is a mistake. In line with the long passage that began section III of this paper, it would seem that Plotinus has in mind that this state of ignorance especially obtains while we are engaged in perceiving “other” (external) things and are not reflecting upon the content of our perception and upon its true nature; for we are then aware just of the object as it is being discerned and not of the soul’s activities in virtue of which it is being discerned. This ignorance would also seem to obtain when we do reflect upon the content of our perception, but without a proper understanding of its true nature and of the true nature of the imagination — in particular, when we artificially and mistakenly distinguish two separate faculties of imagination — and suppose that discerning perceptibles is a separate matter from apprehending intelligibles.

The two (alleged) imaginations are always in fact one and in harmony. Insofar as they are in harmony, moreover, the imagination which deals with intelligibles — i.e., in which *logoi* of intelligibles come to be — is the true one. The other imagination

can be retained in a manner similar to the way in which perception can be retained as a special activity — as an “outward image” of an intellection rather than as itself an intellection. Thus, we might view its phantasms (or products) as shadows cast by the *logoi* of the higher imagination, or as dimmer lights contained within those *logoi*; and, insofar as the imaginations are thought to be separate and distinct, the stronger still supplies the weaker with its content and thereby lies hidden within it — just as an intellection supplies a perception with its content and is thus in it as a *logos* from an intelligible. As a result, the higher imagination “sees” all that we would say the lower one “sees”, though it retains only the lower’s conceptual content and not the spatio-temporal images of sense to which we normally relate the lower imagination.

The foregoing does read a bit more into chapter 31 than is explicitly stated there. In particular, the idea that the “lower” faculties of the soul come about *only* as a result of our insisting upon relating the activities of our soul to our sense-imagery as containing the objects of our discernments does not become an explicit theme in Plotinus’ discussion until chapter 32 (on memory). The most interesting feature of chapter 32 is that Plotinus makes perfectly clear at the start that in discussing “two” kinds of memories he is *in both cases* discussing our memories of friends, children, wives and country. The alleged distinction, say, between memories of perceptibles and memories of intelligibles is not a distinction between our memories of friends, *etc.*, on the one hand, and memories of some other kind of entities, on the other hand. The distinction is between our memories of our friends, *etc.*, as lying “among the undergoings” (μετὰ πάθους) and memories of them as possessed impassively (ἀπαθῶς) by us. These two sets of memories are related to one another in that

“the undergoing is in the first instance in the lower, but the honorable parts of the undergoings are also in the higher to whatever degree each shares with the other.” (IV.3.32,3-6)

The reference in this passage to undergoings already having “honorable parts” as they exist in our memories of perceptibles relates to a distinction seen at the end of my section IV — that between undergoings *qua* bodily undergoings and undergoings *qua* informed by *logoi* from intelligibles. This passage refers to undergoings in the latter sense — as having been given their cognitive roles in our consciousness — and it claims that the “honorable parts” of such undergoings already fall within the scope of our faculty for memory of intelligibles. All that is needed for us to move to that memory is for us to become aware of those “honorable parts” (i.e., cognitive roles or conceptual contents) and

for us thereby to disregard our impressions *qua* sensory undergoings.

Now Plotinus seems especially concerned in chapter 32 with maintaining that we do not somehow lose our friends, *etc.*, when our soul moves towards having memories of intelligibles. Perhaps he has in mind an interlocuter who might object to his views on the grounds that a person remembering "impassively" has lost those things which are most important to his life here on earth, that such a person has forsaken his own loved ones. Plotinus' reply to such an objection is that we do not lose our friends, *etc.*, in moving to memories of intelligibles except insofar as we view our loved ones as things which exist "among the undergoings"; but, insofar as we view them in this way, we are mistaken about their true natures anyway — which is to be already intelligibles. A person who moves to memories of intelligibles, or who remembers impassively (or without undergoings), has in a sense lost his loved ones — *viz.*, as things which exist "among the undergoings" — but in so doing he is remembering them in their true form — *viz.*, as intelligibles.

Whatever Plotinus' motivation is in chapter 32, the most important point of his discussion is that the "two" memories are not really separate from one another. The higher memory already possesses the "honorable parts" of our undergoings. Plotinus explains the move to impassive memory by mobilizing some themes from section IV of this paper, telling us that a soul making this move

"flees from the many; it gathers the many into a *one*, discharging the indefinite. For only thus is it no longer among the many, but is unburdened throughout." (IV.3.32,19-21)

Recall, however, that "fleeing" in this way is what the soul in fact already does in perception. The move to impassive memories is a matter of understanding what has been true about our perceptions and their objects all along. What we perceive — the true objects of our perceptions — are united with the conceptual aspect of our perceptions and not with their sensory aspects or with the expanse of sense images that attends their sensory aspect.<sup>13</sup> There is something fundamentally mistaken about memories which view their real objects as things which exist "among the undergoings" — i.e., within the expanse of our sense-imagery.

Underlying Plotinus' critique of our alleged memories of perceptibles seems to be the idea that we commonly take perceptibles to exist among our sense-imagery; but this common belief is mistaken. In taking the real objects of our perceptions to

13. Again, see note 8.

exist among our sense-imagery, we are (illicitly) placing perceptibles "among the undergoings". It is a mistake to look upon our friends, *etc.*, as somehow existing in or among our sense-imagery because that imagery does not contain the real objects of our perceptions at all. While sense-imagery *accompanies* sense organs undergoing impressions, it does not really contain those objects to which our sense organs in fact relate our soul in perception. As Plotinus sees it, the real causes of our sense impressions are in fact one and the same with those items that would clearly be the objects of our apprehension were we to reflect upon the conceptual aspects or contents of our perceptual awareness and to "dismiss" sense-imagery as an accidental concomitant of our sense organs. Our sense impressions "tell" us nothing about the objects of our perceptions. To discover anything about the objects of our perceptions we must reflect upon our discernments of them; but our discernments are images of intelligibles, and so when we become aware of the contents of our discernments we are in fact becoming aware of images of intelligibles (i.e., we are having memory of intelligibles). Moreover, as seen in our initial discussion of imagination in section III, when we become aware of an image of an intelligible, we thereby become aware of its intelligible source. Accordingly, when we become aware of the contents of our perceptions, we become aware of what both is the real object of the perception and is also the intelligible source of the perceptual discernment. The real object of the perception and the source of the discernment are in fact one and the same thing — *viz.*, that *being* which our discernment is both a discernment *of* and also an image or logos *of*. In light of this, moreover, we can also dismiss our sense impressions as such altogether, as seen at the end of section IV, for they in fact just relate us to (or are caused by) the very same *being* which is also the archetypal cause of the conceptual content of our perceptual awareness.

As I see it, then, the "honorable parts" of our impressions referred to earlier must be just the *logoi* informing our perceptions when we use our sense organs to discern things. Hence, these "honorable parts" are already in the scope of the higher memory, which recollects intelligibles by becoming aware of their *logoi*; but, in perception, we are not aware of those "honorable parts" as such. We are aware of their intelligible sources as just external objects — objects which, we are tempted to suppose, are related to us *solely* by means of causing impressions in our sense organs and which exist among our sense-imagery; but further clarification of this would, however, require a detailed discussion of what might be called Plotinus' Idealism, according to which body or matter is

not a principle in reality (a fourth hypostasis) in addition to the One, Intellect and Soul. Roughly, the point would be that Intellect is the ultimate source and cause of everything that occurs "in" or "below" the realm of Soul, the difference between bodily undergoings and (conceptual) activities being a difference between Intellect acting by means of world soul and its acting by means of the human soul. Accordingly, the real causes even of our sensory undergoings are not material things but intelligibles acting by means of world soul. The conceptual aspect of our perceptions would thus differ from the sensory aspect in regards to their causal aetiology just in that the conceptual aspect of our perceptions is received directly from intelligibles into our soul, whereas the sensory aspects of our perceptions are received by way of the world soul.<sup>14</sup>

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14. For more details on Soul's function in Plotinus' *proodos*, see my "Vertical Causation in Plotinus," *The Structure of Being*, ed., R. Baine Harris, State University of New York Press (Albany NY, 1982), pp. 51-72.