

**PLOTINUS ON MATTER AND EVIL:  
A COMMENTARY ON PLOTINUS' *ENNEADS* I.8  
"ON WHAT ARE AND WHENCE COME EVILS?"**

VOL 2

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## COMMENTARY

## 5 COMMENTARY

- Title -

### I.8. (51) ON WHAT ARE AND WHENCE COME EVILS

#### Commentary:

The title is composed of two questions, seen in *Vita* 6.18 and *Vita* 24.32 respectively, which are separately asked but are in effect the same in Plotinus' philosophy. Maximus of Tyre also wrote a treatise which was the first connected treatment of the problem of evil: "*tou theou ta agatha poiountos pothen ta kaka;*" (*Maximi Tyrii: Philosophumena*. ed. H. Hobein, Leipzig 1910, pp.472-84) The similarity is near enough to provoke some thinking on possible influence. Maximus' *tou theou ta agatha poiountos* implies that an entity of higher ontological position can cause an entity of lower position only if they are of the same nature, that is, only good (as god is supposed to be) can cause good and, implicitly, only evil can cause evil. This might be the reason for Maximus' awkward juxtaposition with *pothen ta kaka* immediately after *tou theou ta agatha poiountos*: if the providential god can only create good then whence comes evil? In Plotinus the whole of reality, including evils, emanates from the One or the Good and it is therefore legitimate to ask the nature of evils and whence come evils in a supposedly providential world.

The question of what an entity is is a question of definition (*horismos* or *logos horistikos*) and essence (*ti en eina*) about a particular object or event which it is: "in virtue of its form that each thing is what it is" (cp. Alexander *In Meta.* 983a27.20.5-11). It is typical of the Socratic

maieutic method in eliciting responses. Harder says that this search for essence by means of definition could be a common school practice (Harder<sup>2</sup> Vb p.405). In considering Plotinus' hypostatic reality, to ask such a question is to decide the essence of an entity, but the determination of a hypostatic entity is its *theoria* of its prior *hypostasis*, that is, its origin or its 'whence'. Therefore the question of what an entity is is the same as whence it comes: *ousia* is the same as *theoria* in Plotinus' philosophy. However, it is not clear whether this equation of *ousia* and *theoria* fits into anhypostatic matter and evil, because both of them are said to be *mē on* while the hypostatic reality is commensurate with *on*. The treatise I.8 as a whole is an attempt to explain the relation between hypostatic reality as a whole (or *on simpliciter*) and anhypostatic matter and evil (or *mē on*).

The nature of the questions asked in terms of "what" and "whence" shows that Plotinus' research on evil is basically ontological and *a priori* by nature ("*das Böse als zum Wesen des Seins zugehörig zu denken*," Volkmann-Schluck 1967 p.1), and the empirical side of evil arouses very little enthusiasm in Plotinus; even if it has been mentioned it is always rationalised away. His strategy for the search of what and whence evil is to link its related questions to his metaphysics as a whole and to locate evil, both of primary and secondary kinds, in his ontological map. This explains why he has to give a brief account of the gist of his philosophy in I.8.2 and again, partially, in I.8.14 after his programmatic I.8.1. Evil as *mē on* has to rely on *on* to be meaningful and only with this parasitic relationship defined can Plotinus start to deal with evil proper from I.8.3 onwards.

- 1.8.1-

1.8.1 is programmatic in setting down the topics Plotinus would like to consider for the rest of 1.8. 1.8.1.[1] explains the rationalistic approach towards evil. 1.8.1.[2] breaks this rationalistic approach into these parts: (i) whence it came, (ii) where its seat is, and (iii) what it affects. These three parts correspond to the three phases of a hypostatic reality in its history of self-constitution: *proōdos*, *monē* and *epistrophē*. Both 1.8.1.[1] and [2] lay down the ontological questions to be asked but 1.8.1.[3] turns to the epistemological question: how can we know evil as non-being or anhypostatic if everything is known by likeness and we the knowers as the individual souls are supposed to be beings and hypostatic. 1.8.1.[3] will receive its full treatment in 1.8.9. This epistemological difficulty in knowing evil or non-being prompts the next passage 1.8.1.[4] which asks in what sense we can say that evil exists and this receives its answer primarily in 1.8.3. If hypostatic reality exists and evil, as anhypostatic reality, also exists, then this will cause a crisis in defining what conceptual framework we need in order to reason about evil and Plotinus hence in 1.8.1.[5] proposes this possibility: if "opposites are known by one and the same knowledge" then knowledge of good can be extended to cover the knowledge of evil; implicitly, the conceptual framework imposed on hypostatic reality can, by parity of reasoning, cover anhypostatic reality. 1.8.1.[6] defines this suggested relationship between hypostatic and anhypostatic reality in terms of "opposite" (*enantion*) and Plotinus promises to consider it and does this in 1.8.6 and 1.8.7 where I shall argue that Plotinus has distinguished an *enantion* in the sense of *sterēsis* and another in the sense of antithesis, corresponding to the different sets of principles for the derivation of reality in both sections.

Despite the very programmatic attempt announced in 1.8.1 I feel that these agenda are neither followed in order, nor are they followed throughout 1.8, especially in the alleged "apologetic"

sections of I.8.8 - 15 (with the exception of I.8.9) which are mostly composed of a series of implicit dialogues in which the interlocutors repeatedly question the Plotinian thesis of matter as evil, the thesis which has been expounded in I.8.1 - 6. This second half of *Enneads* I.8 recommends instead a psychic source of evil, a Middle Platonic thesis. Thedinga (Thedinga 1919) and Heinemann (Heinemann 1921) suspect, not without good reasons, different authorships (Plotinus and Numenius according to Thedinga; Plotinus, a recorder of his seminar and a medical handbook according to Heinemann) of I.8. Stylistically, Thedinga thinks, from the authentic part (I.8.1-5, 7 and 9) to the interpolation (the rest of I.8) we can witness a change from "*eine knappe, festgeschlossene, abgerundete und planmässige Darstellung*" (which he thinks is typical of Plotinus) to "*grosser Wortschwall, behägliche Breite und überflüssige Wiederholungen*" which is typical of Numenius according to Thedinga who quotes as evidence *Vita* 17 and 20 (Thedinga pp.277-8). Thedinga's position has been refuted by Heinemann (Heinemann 1921) but Heinemann's position is not an improvement. I, however, will leave this specific question to the commentary in the relevant sections.

It is also necessary to mention here that, considering the consistently rationalistic and *a priori* approach to the problem of evil in Plotinus as a whole, I find it difficult to accept the alleged development or evolution, proposed by Puech in *Les Sources de Plotin*, in Plotinus from a pre-polemic (i.e., pre-II.9), gnostic, pessimistic and dualistic on evil to a post-polemic positive and pro-cosmic position. Puech's opinion has been refuted by Fr. Henry in *Les Sources*, Rist (Rist 1961) and Costello. Chronology cannot solve the problem Puech detected. I will explain why these conflicting positions on evil are rooted in a more philosophical reason when we come to I.8.7 and I also hope that my Interpretative Essay 4 has said enough to pave the way of solution.

[1] Translation I.8.1.1-4:

Those who enquire whence evils come, either into reality as a whole or to a particular kind of reality, would make an appropriate beginning of their enquiry if they proposed the question first, what evil is and what is its nature.

Commentary:

This passage, I.8.1.[1], restates the title and relates explicitly the question of the origin of evil to the question of its definition and essence. It is therefore an announcement of the methodology for I.8 as a whole. The relation of what an entity is (*ousia*) to its genealogy (*via theoria*) is both applicable to reality as whole (*ta onta*) and to a particular kind of reality (*genos tōn ontōn*). The reality as a whole means the hypostatic reality or being in general, which is derived from the One. With this approach Plotinus tries to see the problem of evil as a general problem of being, that is, to see evil as kind of being, quasi-being or non-being. The apparent originality of Plotinus is a reinterpretation of an ethical concept in metaphysical terms within a comprehensive conceptual framework. The moral quality, which characterises a moral agent in his activity, is now seen as a kind of substance (or quasi-substance) (cp. 4.5.7; for the theodical implication of this approach, see 4.3.9-16). This approach inevitably tends to conceive evil as an *a priori* problem and one unrelated to individual experience of it; it is an inquiry into an ethical issue with a very strong emphasis on its metaphysical dimension. This perception of evil as a kind of "me-ontology" is Plotinus' general approach in I.8. On the other hand, the 'particular' approach which confines itself to "*genos tōn ontōn*" is to see the exemplification of this general and *a priori* approach in a certain particular area of reality. Aristotle in *Categories* 12a28-30 says:

"...we say that anything capable of receiving a possession is deprived (*esteresthai*) of it when it is entirely absent from that which naturally has it, at the time when it is natural for it to have it."

For example, the blindness is a *sterēsis* (and therefore, an evil) for a man who is supposedly naturally able to see (II.4.13.11). It would be a gross mistake to think that this 'particular' and 'local' approach towards evil, which is based on consideration of a limited area of reality, is more 'empirical' in attitude. All Plotinus' contribution on this topic is derived from his interest in the me-ontology of evil and there is no sign in his work that he takes any step to formulate a phenomenology of evil, even in the particular examples.

"What evil is" (*ti pot' esti to kakon*) and "what is its nature" (*hē kakou physis*) are juxtaposed and the suspicion that they might well be the same question is not unfounded. The '*ti esti*' again reminds one of the attempt to see evil as a metaphysical and existential question; the '*physis*' is mainly about its definition, that is, what characterises it for it to be evil. Since evil is later defined as a *mē on*, the nature of evil has to related to the problem of *on* or existence as well. The predominant interest in the existential status of evil explains the assumed equation among the *pothen, esti* and *physis* of evil. This is consistent with Plotinus' approach to other ethical questions. However, this predominant interest might well prejudice his inquiry into evil as a whole and close other possible doors which are not oriented towards its existential status.

The plural *ta kaka* in I.1 is presumably meant to indicate all sorts of evil in the sensible world and correspond to the *ta onta* and *tōn ontōn* in II.1-2. The singular *to kakon* (and *kakou*) is about the philosophical topic of evil which will be discussed in I.8, not the primary evil as alleged by Volkmann-Schluck (1967 p.1: "*als das eine und selbe an...*"). The change of *ta kaka*



to *to kakon* is therefore a change of reference.

*hypotheinto: hypotithemi* in its middle form means "to lay down as a principle or rule for oneself, presuppose, premise." (L.& S.)

[2] Translation I.8.1.4-6:

In this way one would know whence it came and where its seat is and what it affects, and one would be able to decide the general question whether it really exists.

Commentary:

I.8.1.[1] is focused on the general methodology about the problem of evil, that is, to treat it as an existential problem. To say that Plotinus sees evil as an existential problem does not indicate that the question whether evil as an entity is existent or not is therefore settled. This has to be decided after an inquiry into what evil is and what is its nature (II.3-5). An inquiry into what evil is and what is its nature is supposed to be composed of (a) whence it (= evil) came, (b) where its seat is and (c) what it affects. This procedure should be applied to any entity of the hypostatic reality in (a) its generation from a higher entity, in (b) its self-constitution (*via* its first *theoria*) and in (c) its generation of another lower entity (as a consequence of its second *theoria* or *poiēsis*). This procedure is now being applied to evil. Hence to determine what evil is is to locate the place of evil in the ontological map whereby the hypostatic reality is structured. *Hidrutai* has spatial metaphoricity and means to locate the place where an entity is set up (cp. "*hedra*" in *Tim.* 52b1).

This determination of the ontological position for a hypostatic entity has to be achieved through *theoria* of its prior *hypostasis* and this means its origin, and therefore (a). In Plotinus we have often seen that the *theoria* in the determination of the essence of an entity is expressed as a kind of inward-looking but this inward-looking must imply an upward-looking, that is, looking towards its superior *hypostasis* (VI.9.2.35ff.). This inward- (or upward-) looking is the *theoria* of a hypostatic entity and this *theoria* determines the essence of this entity; according to Plotinus' 'double act' of an entity, this *theoria* is also productive because it generates the lower reality and therefore (c); (c) as *poiēsis* is the expression of *energeia* belonging to the *ousia*. Therefore, one can say (b) has to imply both (a) and (c). These three conditions express the three different phases of an hypostatic entity in its history of self-constitution. This equation is presumably applicable to evil but one cannot be sure until later.

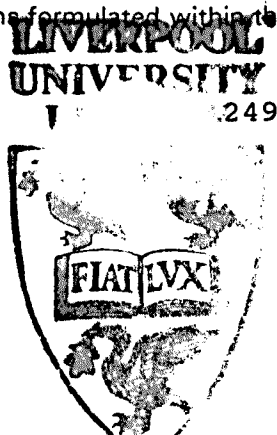
What it affects (*hotōi sumbebēke*) would be extremely odd if we understood it in the Aristotelian way here because the context simply does not allow this kind of interpretation, that is, a *sumbebēkos* is an accidental feature of an entity and its presence contributes nothing at all to the *ousia* of the entity this feature is accidental to. In VI.1.26.32-7 Plotinus expresses his idea of *sumbebēkos*:

"...if that is, size is one not by being itself but by participation (*metechein*) in the one and a coming together. There must therefore be the primarily and properly [existent] before that [which exists] by coming together or how does the coming together occur? ... By 'incidentally one' (*kata sumbebēkos*) I mean that which is one not by being the one itself, but from another."

Meijer has said that in Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism every property of a being comes to

the bearer from a higher being and this *sumbebēkos* is thus characteristic of all generated reality from the One (cp. Fielder 1980 and 1982 on Plotinus' eidetic predication). This *kata sumbebēkos* has to be understood together with *metechein* (Meijer pp.81-3). This means that in Plotinus' "double act" of an entity in its *theoria* and *poiēsis* the nature of an entity is vertically and eidetically determined (cp. Wagner 1982). Since this *sumbebēkos* can happen to a entity in the intelligible world and be constitutive of its being (II.6.3.2-6) and become its *energeia*, it is unlike Aristotelian accidental being. By parity of reasoning, when we come to the concept of *dynamis* in Plotinus, this Aristotelian overtone has to be purged, too (Beierwaltes 1961 pp.102-3). This opinion is, I think, generally correct in the intelligible cosmos but in II.6 Plotinus is very carefully to distinguish between, on the one hand, the quality which merely characterises the sensible entities in an accidental way and is thus applicable to part of the sensible world in the Aristotelian sense and, on the other, the quality (which he calls *poia ousia*) which contributes to essence in the sensible world; such *poia ousia* is the norm in the intelligible cosmos. Therefore, the Aristotelian *sumbebēkos* is not totally eliminated from Plotinus' world although it is now restricted to a very minor role in his philosophy. This is consistent with Plotinus' criticism of Aristotle's theory of categories in VI.1.1-25 where they are said to be valid only in the sensible order of reality (cp. Evangelidou 1983). Armstrong's non-committal translation what it affects has escaped this possible mistake. MacKenna's "where it is present merely as an accident" is acceptable provided this revised use of *sumbebēkos* in Plotinus is born in mind. I will argue later that because Plotinus has defined evil, of both the primary and secondary kinds, as *mē on* this means whatever entities are characterised by evil their existential authenticity has been delimited, in other words, evil as a feature of an entity is its *poia ousia*. In this sense, Meijer is quite correct to see that the Aristotelian use of *sumbebēkos* has to be prevented here.

(a), (b) and (c) are questions formulated within the context of hypostatic reality with regard to



a particular hypostatic entity in its history of self-constitution but it is not clear if these three questions are applicable to an entity like evil which is anhypostatic. Therefore Plotinus recommends that we should go further to the more fundamental question one can ask about evil: whether it really exists or whether it is hypostatic. A reply to this last question can help us, in turn, to understand (a), (b) and (c). If evil is a sort of being then these three questions are proper; if it is not, then these three questions might have to be reformulated or extended in order to cover such an anhypostatic entity.

[3] Translation I.8.1.7-9:

**But there would be no way to decide by which of the powers in us we know evil, if knowledge of everything comes by likeness.**

Commentary:

The last two passages are about the ontological status of evil, and the next three passages (including the present one) will be about the epistemological status of evil, i.e., how one can have knowledge of it. Apart from II.8, IV.5 and IV.6, Plotinus is not particularly enthusiastic about the problem of how we can know an entity in a certain condition, despite the contribution to this topic by Emilsson; his epistemology, like his ethics, is in my view no more than a variation of ontology. Even though Plotinus does not say by which of the powers in us we know evil, the postulation of this question has presupposed that such a knowledge is possible for human beings as knowers, and the question now is by which of the powers. The rationale for this postulation is Plotinus' epistemology, which is a kind of 'correspondence' theory (knowledge of everything comes by likeness), a correspondence between the subject

and object and between the microcosmos and macrocosmos.

This "theory of knowledge" is based on his metaphysics and can never be detached from it; all the problems related to knowledge can be solved by the identification of subject (the knower) and object (the knowable) and by a constant application of this identification we can reach the state of individual's identification with the One: "*dass eine Verähnlichung, ja vollig Gleichwerdung des Subjekts mit dem Objekt erforderlich ist, das Gut zu erfassen*" (Schröder p.122). Plotinus' argument for this correspondence is his assumption of the individual soul as a floating ego, within which Plotinus has designated a duplication of the whole spectrum of reality; the individual's striving for knowledge is seen as an effort to identify himself (*homoiothēnai*, cp. I.2.1.4) with a particular *hypostasis* of reality. The power in us (*dynamis en hemin*) indicates this duplication of the whole hypostatic reality in us and our ability to establish ourselves at any point along this spectrum. This 'correspondence' theory of knowledge is valid in the hypostatic reality, but it is not clear in the case of evil because evil might be an anhypostatic entity and thus fall outwith the range of possibility established within us. Therefore, Plotinus wonders if there is any way to know it.

The object of knowledge is *kakou physis* ("nature of evil", Armstrong translates it merely as evil) and, according to our exegesis of I.4, it means the essence of evil. The essence of evil will involve its origin, its nature and its effect and all of these presuppose its ontological status, whether it is a being or not. The *physis, esti, pothen* and *sumbebēkos* (that is, the *energeia*) of evil mutually implicate one another.

"Knowledge of everything comes by likeness" (*tēs gnōseōs hekaston di' homoiotētos gignomēnes*). This is a typical doctrine of Presocratic epistemology: like by like, such as Empedocles (K.R.S. 388, 392 and 393), Anaxagoras (K.R.S. 492), and Parmenides (K.R.S.

311); it is also seen in Plato's *Timaeus* (45b-46c): "whenever the stream of vision is surrounded by mid-day light it flows out *homoion pros homoion*" (cp. Sextus, *Against the Logicians* I.119), and Alcinous *Didasc.* XIV p.169.27-31: "For either the like is known by like (*tōi homoiōi to homoion gnōrizetai*), which is the favourite doctrine of Pythagoras, or the unlike by the unlike (*tōi anomoiōi to anomoion*), which is that of Heraclitus...." Most significantly Aristotle in his *de Anima* 431b26-8 said: "within the soul the faculties of knowledge and sensation are potentially these objects" and in 432a2 soul is said to be "the form of forms (*eidos eidōn*)" (Cp. *de Anima* 404b7ff., 415b24, 416b33ff. and *de Gen. et Corr.* 323b4ff.).

G.E.R. Lloyd has detected the potential ambiguity of *homoios* which is ruthlessly exploited in *Protagoras*, because *homoios* can mean either 'like' or 'the same as (*tauton*)' (G.E.R. Lloyd pp.129-31). This potential ambiguity of *homoiotēs* is, perhaps, seized by Plotinus but he does not use it as two different, although easily confused, kinds of meaning, but uses it as different nuances of a pregnant concept. The knowledge, which comes by likeness, has its *par excellence* exemplification in *Nous hypostasis* where *nous*, *noēsis* and *noēton* are identical (*tauton*, V.4.2.43ff.; V.1.8, III.8.8.8, V.9.5.29ff.; Beierwaltes 1961 pp.81-3) and for this he has not only the Parmenidean "*to gar auto noein esti te kai eina*" (cp. V.1.8.15-6: "*Parmenidēs... sunēgen on kai noun...*") and the Aristotelian *poiētikos nous* and *pathetikos nous* for precedent but also Alcinous' thesis that forms are thoughts of god (cp. Rich 1954) and, furthermore, it is the thoughts themselves. Beierwaltes has summarised this identity of *noēsis* and *ousia* (= *noēton*) very well:

*"Dass das Selbst des Denkens, das noēton des nous seiend ist, weil nur Seiendes gedacht werden kann. Das Selbstdenken des nous gründet in der gegenseitigen Bezogenheit von Denken und sein, darin dass Denkendes is und Seiendes denkend ist oder Denkendes Seiendes denkt."* (Beierwaltes 1961 p.81)

In the lower hypostatic reality of soul this *tauton* is replaced by *homoios* (likeness) and this *homoiotēs* can be exemplified in different degrees because the soul is a vertical plenitude (cp. III.6.18.24ff.). However, to stress again, this doctrine of knowledge by likeness is applicable only in the hypostatic reality and it is not known whether it is applicable to an anhypostatic entity like evil and therefore Plotinus says there would be no ways to decide.

The interest in the knowledge of evil is first discussed by Plato in his *Timaeus* on the "*met' anaisthēsiās haptōn logismōi tini nothōi, mogis piston, pros ho dē oneiropoloumen blepontes*" (*Tim.* 52b, my underlining) related to the concept of *hypodochē* (cp. Taylor 1928 pp.343-6; *Didasc.* p.162 29-32 with slight variation; I underline those words which appear most frequently in *Enneads* I.8). Plotinus improves this situation by putting this problem of knowledge of evil within a conceptual framework in which the ontological nature of evil is discussed. The *an* of *an-aisthēsiās* and *nothos* indicate that the knowledge of evil follows the "correspondence" theory in the hypostatic reality but it is a false version of it. We will say more about this latter when we come to the concept of *enantion*.

[4] Translation I.8.1.9-12:

For intellect and soul, since they are Forms, would produce knowledge of Forms and have a natural tendency towards them. But how could anyone imagine that evil is a Form when it appears in the absence of every sort of good?

Commentary:

Cp. V.3.8.16-8: "(in the intelligible world) there seeing (*horasis*) and the seen (*to horaton*)

coincide, and the seen is like (*hoion*) the seeing, and the seeing like the seen...." Also II.4.5.8-12, I.6.9.29-34, VI.7.21.14-7, IV.4.24 and V.5.7 as a whole. Both intellect and soul belong to the intelligible world and it is the noetic *topos* of forms (*eidē*).

In the last passage we said that in *Nous hypostasis* (and the undescended part of soul) *nous*, *noēsis* and *noēton* are identical (*tauton*) while in the soul *hypostasis* the knower, the knowledge (*eidōn hē gnosis*) and the known object are like (*homoios*) one another. Therefore, Plotinus says (a) intellect and soul, since they are (b) Forms, would produce (c) knowledge of Forms, because (a) (= knower), (b) (= known object) and (c) (= knowledge) are identical in *Nous hypostasis* and the undescended part of soul, and are closely related in the *hypostasis* of Soul. Considering this identity and close relationship Plotinus can be justified in saying that the knowers have a natural tendency towards them. Natural tendency (*orexis*) is a neutral translation, meaning 'affinity', and to have *orexis* translated in desiderative terms (which happens, vertically, between entities at different *hypostases*) would spoil the horizontal relationship which obtains in *Nous* and Soul *hypostasis* respectively.

The clause For... them is balanced by the following clause But... good with the presence of *men* (I.9) and *de* (I.11). Both are in conditional forms mainly because of the tentative nature of the inquiry into the unknown evil. Since it has been said that *Nous* and Soul in the hypostatic reality have a natural affinity to their objects of knowledge - forms that is - , the anhypostatic entity, evil, as the epistemic object and as the absence of every sort of good, might not be able to obtain this kind of affinity between its knower and the knowledge of it. Therefore Plotinus asks this question.

How could anyone imagine that evil is a Form seems to prejudice the question because this would force the inquirer into a search for a conceptual framework which is Platonic and



hypostatic. However, Plotinus could say that his hypostatic reality includes the whole of reality within which all kinds of questions are conceived and therefore the question whether evil is a Form is reasonable. The reason why Plotinus is not very sure if one should put the question in this way is because evil seems to be seen in the absence of every sort of good (*en apousiai pantos agathou indallomenon*). It has been said that the hypostatic reality is the *parousia* of the One and the Good, and the anhypostatic evil is now said to be *apousia* of every sort of good. For Plotinus the 'good' in question is a possession of being (*on*) and therefore the *apousia* of good, in the case of evil, is in effect the *apousia* of being.

The *ap-ousia* in question has the same nuances of meaning as *homoios*: it can mean total absence as well as lack and deficiency. In I.8 Plotinus tries to prove the existence of a pure evil which is at the furthest remove from the One and *apousia* in this situation means a total absence and deficiency; however, evil as a deficiency of being and good admits difference of degrees and, like matter as *mē on*, it is characteristic of all the hypostatic reality in its departure from the One. These two kinds of *apousia* constitute the basis for the distinction between primary evil and secondary evil, the former of which is absolute and unique while the latter admits of degrees. *Apousia*, strictly speaking, is, like *heterotēs*, characteristic and constitutive of these different *hypostases* in their relation to the One, but it has no independent ontological existence once detached from that which it characterises and constitutes. Evil as *apousia* of being and goodness cannot exist as a pure *parousia* of nothing at all; in the same way, evil as an anhypostatic entity cannot exist as a pure privative (*an-*) without the hypostatic reality to which it is added.

*Phantazoito* (imagine) and *indallomenon* (appears) are both Platonic and are closely related to image-making. The juxtaposition of these two words with *apousia pantos agathou* seems to indicate what kind of *apousia* Plotinus might have in his mind: he could have conceived the

*apousia* of *on* opposed to *parousia* of the One in the image-archetype relationship. This is indeed the pattern which defines the hierarchical relationship. (I.8.3.[3])

[5] Translation I.8.1.12-17:

But if, because opposites are known by one and the same kind of knowledge and evil is opposite to good, the knowledge of good will also be knowledge of evil, then those who mean to know evils must have a clear perception of good, since the better precedes the worse, and the better is Form, and the worse is not, but rather privation of form.

Commentary:

Cp. Aristotle *Met.* 1004a9-22:

"Now since it is the work of one science to investigate opposites and plurality is opposite to unity - and it belongs to one science to investigate negation and privation....

This passage, I.8.1.[5], is intended to justify the last two passages where Plotinus seems to have in mind a distinction between the hypostatic reality and anhypostatic reality and to impose those concepts and relations proper to the former on the anhypostatic evil in order to understand "what evil is and what is its nature". There is, in other words, no way of attacking the problem of evil from the front; we have to tackle this anhypostatic entity *via* hypostatic reality. He therefore has to argue that in fact the concepts and relations in the hypostatic reality are also applicable to the anhypostatic evil because opposites are known by one and the

same kind of knowledge. (cp. *Resp.* 504c and 524a, *de Anima* 411a3)

The last passage has proved that evil as *apousia* of *on* and good cannot exist on its own but has to depend on the *parousia* of being and goodness. The parasitic relation between anhypostatic evil and hypostatic reality extends to the respective knowledge relevant to each of them: the knowledge of evil and *mē on* has to depend on the knowledge of good and *on*. These two kinds of knowledge, like these two kinds of reality, are not mutually implicated because the hypostatic reality and the knowledge derived therefrom do not necessarily imply the anhypostatic evil and the knowledge of it but, on the other hand, the existence of evil and the knowledge of it have to presuppose them. That is why I use the term, "parasitic" and not, say, "symbiotic", in naming their relationship. Plotinus is therefore justified in saying the knowledge of good will also be knowledge of evil but not *vice versa*. Evil is opposite to good does not mean evil and good are on the same ontological level because good is full being while evil is a privation of it. In fact the knowledge of form precedes the knowledge of lack of it: the better precedes the worse. This careful stress on the precedence of hypostatic reality over anhypostatic evil is an indication of Plotinus' monism. In order to preserve this monism Plotinus has to analyse and revise the vital concept of *enantion* from the sense of antithetical opposition (which implies dualism and is used in I.8.7) to the sense of *sterēsis* by which an entity is characterised with regard to its prior entity in the aspect of its ontological deficiency (with the One as the unique entity to which the rest of reality stand in the relation of *sterēsis* in different degrees).

The *enantion* (II.12 and 14), translated by Armstrong as 'opposite,' is defined by Plotinus in I.8.6.36-41 as "if by contraries we mean things that are furthest of all removed from each other (*eiper enantia ta pleiston allelōn apestēkota*)" (my underlining). In Presocratic philosophy qualities in an object always comes in a pair and the appearance of one implies the other (cp.

*Met.* 1075a28 and 1087a36). This spatial image in the quotation from I.8.6 (*aphestēkota*) seems to imply that both good and evil assume hypostatic reality as its genus (cp. Aristotle 123b4-5: "contraries (*ta enantia*) ought to be found in the same genus if there is no contrary to (*enantion*) the genus" and the hypostatic reality, for Plotinus, is the greatest genus) and their relationship is the greatest distance which separates them. This is correct because both good and evil are related to the being of which the Good is a full realisation and the absolute evil is a complete privation; while *on* is what underlies both the Good and evil and so *on* is the genus. However, the Good is not only the full realisation of the *on* but the source of *on* itself and in this sense the Good underlies *on* and its deprivation (= evil) and is the genus; the Good and evil therefore shares no common genus; the relation between the Good and evil remains unilateral. Let us go back to Aristotle to see what more we can learn from the vital concepts of *enantion* and *sterēsis*.

Aristotle in 190b10-17 has used *antikeimenon* to describe the relationship between musical and unmusical, between the possession and deprivation of a quality; Aristotle's use of *antikeimenon* is probably influenced by the *hypokeimenon* in the same passage. In 190b27 and 191a14 Aristotle introduces *sterēsis* (cp. 12a27-30) to describe this absence, rather than negation, of properties. Graham has suggested that Aristotle has on purpose used *antikeimenon* and shunned *enantion* (Graham 1987 pp.145-7) but there is no proof that Aristotle thinks this way. (In 190b28 there appears *hē enantiōsis sumbebēkos*.) The importance of *sterēsis* in Plotinus' thinking on evil can hardly be exaggerated and I think Aristotle's discussion in 192a3-6 is contributory to Plotinus' inquiry into evil. Nevertheless, there are two points of difference: one is that the *sterēsis* in Aristotle is a *sterēsis* of a particular and accidental quality, not of the being of matter; secondly, even if matter is said to be in the condition of *sterēsis* but it is only *kata sumbebēkos*, that is, matter has no nature of its own but is defined by the qualities it underlies. Both are unacceptable to Plotinus because the *sterēsis* he has in mind is a *sterēsis*

of being, either this being is hypostatic entity or anhypostatic matter (Schwyzer 1973 p.273). More discussion on *enantion* in the commentary on I.8.6 will illuminate what is under consideration here. As far as Plotinus in I.8 is concerned, he uses *enantion* to express the relation between the hypostatic reality and the anhypostatic evil, and he says that evil is *sterēsis* of being and goodness, and evil as an existent is anhypostatic, i.e., a privative of hypostatic reality. From all of these it is possible to see the close relationship among these concepts: *enantion* (between hypostatic reality and anhypostatic evil), *sterēsis* (which characterises the anhypostatic evil or matter in relation to the hypostatic reality) and the privative (*a* or *an* which characterises the deprivative feature said of evil). To this we may add the important concept of *heterotēs* which is what matter symbolises. I am very sure that there is a close association of ideas among *sterēsis*, *enantia*, *a(n)*- the prefix, *heterotēs* and matter, all of which define the relationship between different levels of reality.

Must have a perception of good (*anankaion peri agathou diidein*). The knowledge of good in Plato and in Plotinus has to be achieved in a non-discursive way; hence the use of *dioran*. In Plotinus the knowledge of the One and the Good even escapes the 'sober seeing' of *nous* in VI.7.35.23-7; it becomes a kind of drunken contact or touch.

[6] Translation I.8.1.17-20:

How good is the opposite of evil is also something to investigate - perhaps one is the beginning, the other the end, and one is Form the other privation. But we shall discuss this later.

Commentary:

There are three pairs of contrasting entities here. On the one side we have good (*agathon*), beginning (*archē*) and form (*eidos*), and on the other side we have evil (*to kakon*), end (*to eschaton*) and privation (*sterēsis*) of form. The relationship between these two groups is defined in terms of opposition (cp. *enantion* in I.12 and I.3). We have seen in I.8.1.[4] that there is association of ideas in the hypostatic reality and there is now another association of ideas in the anhypostatic evil. The contrast of these two groups is reinforced by the repeated *men - de* syntactic structure in II.18-9. The search for what evil is and what is its nature is intimately dependent on a clarification of this *enantion* which defines the relationship between evil and good and their related ideas. Because *enantion* is such an important concept in relating the anhypostatic evil to the hypostatic reality, one is not surprised that Plotinus went into detail in I.8.6 to clarify this concept and therefore the suspicion of Thedinga that this detailed exposition in I.8.6 is unnecessary and could be an interpolation has to be rejected (Thedinga pp.264-5).

-1.8.2-

If 1.8.1 has set the agenda for the rest of 1.8 and suggests the dependency of evil, as an anhypostatic reality, in relation to hypostatic reality, it is logical that Plotinus should begin to give a *résumé* of his hypostatic reality as the conceptual framework for the problem of evil. This is exactly what 1.8.2. does. 1.8.2.[1] announces the limited scope for this exposition; 1.8.2.[2] attacks directly the pivotal concept which supports and guarantees the whole conceptual framework of hypostatic reality, that is, the One. The first half of 1.8.2.[3] continues the transcendent nature of the One but the second half begins to descend to *nous* and consider the nature of *nous* and its difference from our discursive reasoning. 1.8.2.[4] and [5] stress the simultaneous co-presence of *nous* and the mutual implication of the individual *nous* within this *hypostasis*. 1.8.2.[6] explains why *nous* cannot be like the One and this introduces the well known doctrine of reception according to the capacity of the receiver. 1.8.2.[7], [8] and [9] illuminate the dependency relationship Soul has in relation to *Nous* and *Nous* to the One; Plotinus strengthens authenticity of his metaphysics by repeated allusions to Plato's works.

[1] Translation 1.8.2.1-2:

Now we must state what is the nature of the Good, as far as the present argument requires.

Commentary:

1.8.1 has indicated the dependency of anhypostatic entity, evil, on the hypostatic reality which

is derived from the One. I.8.2 follows this clue and begins to deal with information necessary for the hypostatic reality. The question to be asked is the supreme principle which generates the hypostatic reality as it is: what is the nature of the Good (*hē tou agathou physis*). This is meant to balance "what evil is and what is its nature (*hē kakou physis*)" in I.8.1.3-4. It is the nature of the One as such that makes hypostatic reality such as it is. Furthermore, as the anhypostatic evil is dependent on the hypostatic reality for any ontological worth it has, the search for the nature of the One is therefore vital to the anhypostatic nature of evil.

The Good (*ho agathos*) here is apparently the same as the One (*to hen*) but Plotinus here as in other places does not always use the One to indicate this supra-existential principle. Meijer has said very cogently that students of Plotinus often fail to recognise that "the name 'One' is less used than a superficial glance, fed by habit, would suggest," and "Plotinus did not use the name 'One' exclusively or by preference" (Meijer p.58) because that which is designated in the name of the One or the Good transcends names and categorial predications, and different aspects of it, if possible, require different names to express it. These names are about the consequences derived from the One. Schröder says very well:

*"vielmehr treffen sie nur die Funktionsbeziehungen, die zwischen dem Guten und der übrigen Welt und umgekehrt zwischen dieser und ihm obwalten."* (Schröder p.125)

It is, however, difficult to agree with him that the One's transcendence of names is related to the personal and deistic characteristic of the One (Schröder p.128). The name of the One or of the Good is most of all decided by the context in which it appears. This is apparently the case here because the topic under investigation, evil, is opposite (*enantion*) to the Good (cp. I.8.1.15 and the commentary on I.8.6.[6]). In I.8 it is the axiological and aesthetic aspects of the supreme One that are stressed although all the discussions will inevitably involve the



problem of being. From the perspective of the history of philosophy, Meijer argues, the One and the Good are rival concepts in pre-Plotinian philosophy and in Alcinous (according to Whittaker 1987; or Albinus, according to Meijer) the One is subordinated to the Good as its attribute and in Numenius this tendency still prevails (Meijer pp.11-2 note 29; *ibid.* p.61). In order to make his philosophy more acceptable to his Platonic contemporaries Plotinus might have tried to placate them by a very restrained display of his innovative henology. As his conclusion on this question Meijer says that "the concept of the 'One' and the name 'One', although important, were of far less significance and importance for Plotinus than they are for our traditional view" (Meijer p.62). It is necessary to register a complaint here: that the use of the name, One, might not be as important as we have always thought but the concept itself is so vital to the whole philosophy of Plotinus that without the concept of the One nothing in our research on Plotinus would be the same.

Both Inge (vol.I. p.131), Bréhier (p.178) and others (such as Rist in his 1961) have tried to distinguish sharply the judgement of existence from the judgement of value. Inge has even visualised a contrast between the "existential scale" and "value scale" as a contrast between a spectrum running from a positive point to a zero point and another spectrum running from the same positive point but to a minus point. Inge therefore says that "the moral standard is essentially dualistic" (Inge vol.I. p.131) To conceive evil as a kind of minus (if understood in the sense of deficiency or lack) is indeed Plotinus' view but the question is minus of what and what the "minus" is meant by Inge. Inge apparently thinks evil as matter and *mē on* is simply another, perhaps somehow strange, use of evil in our ordinary language. This is not an incorrect observation on the restraint the linguistic - and so conceptual - conventions impose on us for to think evil merely in terms of *sterēsis* of goodness sometimes seems to go against our intuition about evil. To imply that Plotinus therefore thinks and conceives the problem of evil in this conventional sense is however misleading, because Plotinus in his equation of

matter to evil has revised our conception of evil as a kind of moral quality with a kind of active and maleficent force; instead, it is now a kind of *ousia* or *quasi-ousia*. Evil is a loss of being and absolute evil is an absolute loss of being, and secondary evil, in so far as it is evil, has its potentially full being (= form) deprived to various extents by the added presence (*prosthēkē*) of non-being. For Plotinus there are different degrees of secondary evil (= losses of being) just like different degrees of being. The parallel between the ontological scale and the axiological scale is exact:

"[T]hese two scales are different ways of looking at the same metaphysical facts, for metaphysics in the *Enneads* is, strictly speaking, an indivisible synthesis of ontology and ethics." (Rist 1961 p.160)

In our view this comment is largely correct although we have but to say that ethics seems more subordinate to - in the sense that it is a derivative from - ontology. For him evil, seen as a loss of *on*, is a problem of ontology or, more correctly, me-ontology. That is why Plotinus in the rest of I.8.2 has to give a review of his conceptual framework of reality before starting to tackle evil itself because evil as *mē on* has to rely on *on* to become understandable. In I.8.14 I will argue that the thesis of evil as *mē on* is in fact a kind of meta-ethics, a kind of discipline which explains the nature of ethics as we know it. See commentary *ad loc.*.

It is my belief that Plotinus' theory of evil is basically a me-ontology so that it is impossible to accept Costello's attempt to change the character of I.8 from a rationalistic discourse about the concept of evil into a persuasive discourse (characterised with his alleged and ambiguous "stylistic generalisation") on the encouragement of ethical behaviour (Costello pp.493-7). His excuse for doing so is based on the very shaky idea of "stylistic generalisation" which he derives from II.9.6 and this means that a slightly more extravagant expression of some

philosophical argument, such as the employment of spatial metaphor (*aphestēkota*) for the complete separation or furthest removal of the One from absolute evil in I.8.6, is nothing but rhetorical. The effect, so he says, is to be persuasive and therefore ethical. We appeal to our commentary in I.8.6 as a reply to this ill-considered argument because I think that Plotinus tries to do something philosophically relevant there. Another reason he alleges is Porphyry's allocation of I.8 to the first *Ennead*, the *Ennead* devoted to ethical problems. This is misconceived if Costello means that ethical discourse cannot be pursued in a rationalistic way but only in a rhetorical, apodeictic and persuasive fashion. Based on these replies we therefore have to dismiss Costello's case. We maintain that I.8 is a rationalistic discourse on evil.

As far as the present argument requires (*kath' hoson tois parousi logois prosēkei*) Plotinus tries to give the basic contour of his philosophy within the space of 32 lines and this imposes a strict limitation on the choice of main points for a proper background knowledge for the inquiry into evil (cp. Schröder pp.123-4). A fine comparison would be the first three chapters of II.9 which sets out a clear gist of his philosophy - in particular of his III.8, V.8 and V.5 - for the polemic against the Gnostics (Alt pp.15-20). The choice he has made in I.8.2 includes:

- (a) the absolute self-sufficiency of the Good;
- (b) the One as the source of axiological and aesthetical concepts;
- (c) the nature of *nous'* thinking and its contrast to the discursive reasoning in soul or in human being;
- (d) the hierarchical structure of the generated reality;
- (e) the strong Platonic link.

(a), (b) and (d) correspond to I.8.1.[1]-[2] on the interest in the ontological problem; (c) correspond to I.8.1.[3]-[5] on the interest in epistemological problems. As for the Platonic link

we shall see the re-interpretation by Plotinus of Plato's *Epistle II*.

[2] Translation 1.8.2.2-7:

It is that on which everything depends and "to which all beings aspire"; they have it as their principle and need it: but it is without need, sufficient to itself, lacking nothing, the measure and bound of all things, giving from itself intellect and real being and soul and life and intellectual activity.

Commentary:

This passage says that the One is both the *archē* and *telos* of the generated reality and how reality is generated and completed.

The *anērtētai* (*anartan*) is the term to describe the vertical dependence between two hypostatic entities on different levels. This dependence assumes the forms of desire or aspiration (*ephetai*) because the generated reality has to return to its source, the higher reality, in order to have itself constituted and determined. The generation from the One alone cannot account for hypostatic reality in the form it now has; furthermore, there has to be a 'dependence relationship' to have the amorphous condition of the generated reality determined and confirmed and this anticipates the introduction of "reception doctrine" in 1.8.2.[6]. These, *proōdos*, *monē* and then *epistrophē*, are the three moments in the history of the generated reality in its self-constitution; they do not belong to the One because the One is ungenerated. The necessity of these three steps on the part of the generated reality explains why the One is that to which all beings aspire (*ephetai*) and they have it as their principle (*archē*) and need

it, that is, the One is both the *archē* and *telos* of reality (cp. Beierwaltes 1961 pp.80-1) as I.7.1.20ff. says:

"One must assume the Good to be that on which everything depends (*anērtētai*) and which itself depends on nothing; for so the statement is true that it is that "to which everything aspires" (*to hou panta ephietai*)." (cp. *Met.* 1072b13ff. and 1094a3)

Because the relationship between generated reality and the One is asymmetrical and unilateral the characteristics which qualify the generated reality are consequently not applicable to the One. The generated reality needs the One (*ekeinou deomena*) but the One is said to be without need (*anendees*), sufficient to itself (*hikanon heautōi*), lacking nothing (*medenos deomenon*). (cp. VI.9.6.18-20) It is further characterised by its being the measure and bound of all things (*metron pantōn kai peras*, cp. *Philebus* 25b; cp. VI.8.18.3; the mention of Protagoras' man-is-the-measure by Harder<sup>2</sup> and Schröder is far-fetched.) It is necessary to make clear that the careful diction is intended to show that the One is the source of measure and bound because it transcends them and it is also the source of reality for the same reason. It by itself is not measure and bound; *Nous hypostasis* as a system of forms is. Absolute evil as "unmeasuredness", "unboundness" and "always undefined" is therefore strictly speaking antithetically opposed to *Nous*, the system of forms.

If this is true then the contrast in I.8.3.12-4 is meant to be a contrast between evil and *Nous* or hypostatic reality proper as a whole (with the exception of the One): "...arrive at some conception of evil as a kind of unmeasuredness (*ametrian*) in relation to measure (*metron*), and unboundedness (*apeiron*) in relation to limit (*peras*)..." Thus, to take *metron* as an example, we can say that the One transcends *metron* (cp. *hyperkalos* in I.8), *Nous* is *metron* and evil or matter is the *sterēsis* of *metron*. If this is accepted then we can define their relationship in

these ways:

(a) the One (the ungenerated source of reality) is opposed to the generated hypostatic reality;  
(b) the One is opposed to matter (both the One and matter are not predicated but the One is beyond predication while matter is too weak to receive any positive characterisation; they are the extremes that define the conceptual framework that includes both hypostatic reality and anhypostatic reality); besides, the One is the giver of *on* while matter is the *sterēsis* of *on*;  
(c) hypostatic reality (of which positive features are characteristics) is opposed to anhypostatic matter (of which their negations are characteristics). (cp. Schlette p.128)

The One as the measure and bound of all things has another layer of meaning. In VI.9.1.3-4 Plotinus has recognised unity as the principle of organisation and the One is said to make all hypostatic entities what they are:

"For what could anything be if it was not one? For if things are deprived of the one which is predicated of them they are not those things."

The idea of a *scala naturae* is a *locus communis* in Greek philosophy and received its most explicit formulation in the Stoics who sees the increase and decrease of unity as the increase and decrease of *pneuma* or *logos*. However, this could be said to have been anticipated by Plato's degrees of being and Aristotle's hierarchical structure of the "materiate form - proximate matter" relationship (see 2.1). In Plotinus, because he believes the hierarchical structure is governed by a Platonic "archetype-image" relationship, it is Platonic degrees of being and so of oneness, not Stoic *pneuma* or *logos*, that dominates his henology.

Giving from itself intellect (*noun*) and real being (*ousian*) and soul (*psychēn*) and life (*zōēn*) and

intellectual activity (*peri noun energeian*). The generation from the One is necessary and hierarchical. All the items enumerated here are in the noetic world. Together with the One they constitute a First and the second and third goods, that is, the three *hypostases*. (I.8.2.28) It is therefore reasonable to distinguish these five items and place them in the *Nous hypostasis* and *Soul hypostasis* separately. However, apart from the obvious *Nous* and *Soul* as separate *hypostases*, the other three seem to characterise the noetic world as a whole. *Nous*, *ousia* and *zōē* are the famous trinity accorded to *Nous hypostasis* (V.6.6.21ff., III.8.8.17; cp. Beierwaltes 1961 p.83) but *Soul hypostasis* is primarily a principle of life in the generation of the sensible universe. Nevertheless, despite the prominent role of soul as the principle for the generation of the sensible universe, I think the *zōē* here means the kind of life as described in Armstrong's article: "*Eternity, Life and Movement in Plotinus' Account of Nous*." It is to see the whole noetic cosmos as alive because it is filled with spirit and divinity, or in short, it is to see the cosmos as a "*plerōma* of life." (Markus p.201) The intellectual activity, as it is translated by Armstrong, is quite a muddle but perhaps necessary. It is not very clear whether *peri noun energeia* is an *energeia*, belonging to soul, directed about *nous*, or of *nous* in its self-thinking. In the following passages both kinds of thinking, the unmediated thinking of *nous* and the discursive thinking of soul, are mentioned and formulated as contrast. II.22-3 have three "*peri*"s and all of them seem to indicate the existence of two different entities, with the *peri* defining their relationship. The *peri* in the *peri noun energeia* could mean the same and so the *energeia* belongs to the soul and so it is soul's discursive reasoning that is mentioned here. This is how Harder sees it, as his translation shows: "*Betätigung auf den Geist*"; so does Schröder's: "*ihr Wirken um den Intellekt*." This interpretation does not bring out anything significant and Armstrong's intellectual activity, either of *nous* or of soul, should be accepted.

To understand *energeia* in Plotinus' philosophy one has to resist the Aristotelian contrast between *energeia* and *dynamis*. In the noetic world of Plotinus there is no unrealised *dynamis*,

and if there is it will never be realised because *dynamis* implies a process and time while the intelligible cosmos is simultaneously co-present and timeless (II.5.1.7-10 and 3.7-8). That is why Szlezák thinks the concept of intelligible matter is itself a contradiction for does not intelligible matter imply intelligible potentiality? Especially the intelligible matter characterises the pre-noetic condition which is going to be turned into *Nous* proper, and thus a process is implied (Szlezák p.79; cp. note 52 of chapter 4). Even though this *energeia* means purely, in Plotinus, the activity of a hypostatic entity - in particular the *poiēsis* of the creative *theoria* - and is a word without any Aristotelian implication, the contradiction has to remain because the moves of *proōdos* and *epistrophē* imply a process in a noetic world whose mode of existence is supposedly of simultaneous co-presence.

Life (cp. V.6.6.21 and III.8.8.17) here, together with beauty in the next passage and love, have been described by A.C. Lloyd (A.C. Lloyd 1987) as that kind of concept which never establishes itself as a *hypostasis* but appears pervasively in the interstices between the *hypostases* and gives the philosophy of Plotinus a dimension in addition to his generally rationalistic outlook.

The *dous* in I.5 is expected to be *don* instead (with the *to*, that is, the One, in I.4 as subject). However, Harder quotes the chronologically near V.3.14.15 "*ho dous ousian*" to justify *dous* here. If that is the case then the subject of *dous* is *autos* in I.7. (Harder Vb p.406)

[3] Translation I.8.2.7-15:

Up to it all things are beautiful. But he is beautiful beyond all beauty, and is king in the intelligible realm, transcending the best - intellect there is not the sort one might conceive on the analogy of our so called intellects which get their content from premises and are able to understand what is said, and reason discursively and observe what follows, contemplating



reality as the result of a process of reasoning since they did not have it before but were empty before they learnt, though they were intellects.

Commentary:

Up to it all things are beautiful. The it is apparently the One, the generator of hypostatic reality. For the relation between the One and beauty, cp. VI.9.4. The hypostatic reality as a whole is beautiful because the One is beautiful beyond all beauty and only what is beyond beauty can be productive of all beauty. This is an expression of Plotinus' deep faith in cosmism because the hypostatic reality, which constitutes the universe, is the *parousia* of the One. (cp. von Balthasar pp.306-7)

He is beautiful beyond all beauty (*hyperkalos*, cp. *hypernoēsis* in VI.8.16.32)... transcending the best (*epekeina tōn aristōn*). The hypostatic reality is beautiful because the One is *hyperkalos*, just as the hypostatic reality is noetic because the One is beyond (*epekeina*) all noetic reality (Beierwaltes 1986 pp.300-2). The *hyper* has the same function as *epekeina* in indicating the absolutely transcendent status of the One in relation to the generated hypostatic reality (Beierwaltes 1961 p.92), while this transcendence also implies the first *heterotēs* in the generated hypostatic reality in relation to the One. This raises the question of predicating the One (cp. Beierwaltes 1961 p.92-4, Wolfson 1952 and 1973, and Zandee pp.8-13). The *locus classicus* on this question is Alcinous' *Didasc.* X.165.16ff.. Alcinous distinguishes three ways of 'predicating' the One:

(a) *kata aphairesin* (*via remotionis*); *Didasc.* X p.165.17-19.

(b) *kata analogiai* (*via analogiae*): II.20-26.

(c) *hyperoche* (*via eminentiae*): II.27-34.

It is said that the One transcends names and categorial predications (I.8.2.[1]) but this does not mean that all routes to a knowledge of it are closed. There are positive and negative ways to approach it. The *via negativa* includes *aphairesis* and *apophasis*. It is easy to become confused about these two. Roughly speaking, *apophasis* stresses the linguistic aspect of the *via negativa* and *aphairesis* is a kind of ontological or thought experiment which consists in removing those categorial predications supposedly said (but in fact rejected) of the One. (cp. Zeller p.601; cp. *aphairesis* in I.8.3.[14] with commentary *ad loc.*) This *via negativa*, however, does not really tell us anything about the One; it tells us what the One is not. On the other hand, *via analogiae* and *via eminentiae* are positive in searching for the knowledge one can have of the One. The rationale for this positive approach is the thesis that the generated hypostatic reality is a trace (*ichnos*) and *energeia* of the One, and, by having a knowledge of the generated, one can have a knowledge of the generator because the One is the source of *homoiotēs* which guarantees the continuity of reality. The *via analogiae* takes it as given that there exists a similar structural relationship - the principle of like by like (I.8.1.[3]) - on different levels of reality and so Alcinoüs gives the example of a parallel between sun and *nous*:

Sun - things seen - seeing faculty

*Nous* - *noēton* - *noēsis*

In this passage under discussion we are immediately given a *via analogiae* by which our so called intellects (*tous par hemin legomenous nous*) imply the existence of real *nous* (*nou ekeinou*).

The *via eminentiae*, on the other hand, is based on the aspiration of love in Diotima's speech in *Symposium*. Alcinoüs' example - a paraphrase of *Symposium* - is particularly relevant here because it is about beauty:

"A person, after contemplating the beauty in bodies, will then proceed to (*meteisin*) the beauty of the soul; and afterwards to that, which is in pursuits (*en epitedeumasī*) and laws; and then to the good itself, and the lovely and the desirable (*to agathon noei kai to prōton eraston kai epheton*), as it were a light that has appeared, and is shining upon the ascending soul (*tēi ... aniousēi psychēi*). In this way he thinks too upon god...."  
(*Didasc. X.165.27-33*)

In my view, the beautiful beyond all beauty... transcending the best is an attempt to know the One *via eminentias*; it is meant to encourage one to go beyond one's present horizon and aspire to a higher one. It is positive because it tells us, indirectly though, that the One is the source of beauty and *nous*, not that he is 'not' beauty or 'not' *nous*; ultimately, however, this gives us an approach in a way very similar to that of *via negativa*. This is not desperate. We can still talk about and know about the One and these limitations do not prevent us from having the One. V.3.14.1-8:

"...we have it in such a way that we speak about it, but do not speak it. For we say what it is not, but we do not say what it is: so that we speak about it from what comes after it. But we are not prevented from having it, even if we do not speak it."

(my underlining; cp. Schlette p.66)

The One is the king in the intelligible realm. This looks forward to the "King of all" in passage I.8.2.[19]. Schröder mentions the precedent of "King of the World" in Plato (*Laws* 904b, cp. *Cratylus* 369a, *Philebus* 28c and *Resp.* 509d), Apuleius and Numenius (Schröder p.133, notes 7,8 and 9). However, the more likely 'inspiration' for the analogy of One as king is the Persian King. The Persian King with his vast entourage of different ranks becomes a favourite analogy for the hierarchical structure of hypostatic reality with the One (= the Persian King) at the top

and behind the veil. See V.5.3.8ff.. This implication for hierarchy (of reality) cannot be clearly seen in those examples mentioned by Schröder.

The rest of I.8.2.[3] (II.9-15) is about the discursive reasoning of our so called intellects. Considering what Plotinus says in I.8.2.[4]-[5] about *noēsis* in *Nous hypostasis* this discursive reasoning (*logizomenous* in I.12) is apparently of Soul *hypostasis* with the exception of its undescended part. The discursive reasoning of soul is characterised by its linear process, a process from premises (*protaseōn*), from what is not previously obtained (*proteron ouk echontas* I.14) and empty (*kenous* I.14) to a fulfilled (*sumpleromenous* I.11) knowledge. What characterises this process *ex akolouthias* is the distinction between what happens before and what happens after, and this distinction implies a certain ignorance on the part of soul (like the deliberation implied in *poiēsis* or the Platonic *dēmiourgos*) in contrast to the simultaneous co-presence of all in the *Nous hypostasis*. This is because the activity and life of soul is closely related to the factor of time. III.7.11 ascribes to soul "an unquiet power" (*tis dynamis ouch hesuchos*) and this unquiet power is in fact a "restless active nature (*physeōs polypragmonos*) which wanted to control itself and be on its own, and chose to seek for more than its present state" (III.7.11.15-7) to make up deficiency and this desire to search for more is the beginning of time: "this [search for more] moved, and time moved with it" (ibid. I.17). This temporal factor is recognised as a linear process (*diexodos*, cp. IV.3.12.28, IV.4.1.15; a contrast to *noēsis*, cp. VI.2.21.28, and VI.7.13.48): "... always moving on to the 'next' and the 'after'" (III.7.11.17-8). This linear process of soul's activity is meant as an imitation of eternity in the *Nous hypostasis* which is unchanging, identical, unbounded, inward-concentrated and simultaneously present (cp. Manchester 1978). Soul has to employ discursive reasoning because its receptive capacity is limited (I.8.2.[6]) and because it lives in time, and this life in time also involves it in the sensible world and so involves it in generation, division and dispersal. This life in time and the outward dispersal of itself make soul the principle of life in "her making

and production (*en poiēsei kai genesēi*)" (III.7.12.7-8). The superiority of *noēsis* in *Nous* to the *logismos* and *logistikon* in Soul (Blumenthal 1971 p.105) can be compared to the superiority of *theoria* to *poiēsis*. *Theoria* is an inward and immediate concentration in the interest of inner coherence while *poiēsis* implies deliberations (therefore different alternatives) and external factors it has to compromise with. It is thus a temporal process from what is not to what is.

[4] Translation I.8.2.15-7:

**Intellect there is not like this, but has all things and is all things, and is with them when it is with itself and has all things without having them.**

[5] Translation I.8.2.17-9:

**For it is not one thing and they another; nor is each individual thing in it separate; for each is the whole and in all ways all, and yet they are not confused, but each is in a different sense separate;**

Commentary:

The introduction of two kinds of thinking, *noēsis* of *Nous* and *logismos* of Soul, aims to point out the essential difference between these two *hypostases*; the thinking of *Nous* is regarded as thinking *par excellence* and thinking of Soul as an imitation of it; this causes no surprise because, as Reale has said, *Nous* is mainly defined as the thinking principle (*theoria*) while Soul as the life principle (*poiēsis*). However, the very fact that in the vertical plenitude of the Soul *hypostasis* there is always an undescended part of it which is co-substantial with *Nous* means

the *logismos* of soul can be transcended and transformed into the *noēsis* of *Nous hypostasis*. This link is vital because it anticipates I.8.2.[8] where soul is said to contemplate the interior of *Nous* and sees the One; because ontologically only the *Nous hypostasis* is next to the One, soul has to transform itself into *Nous* before reaching the One.

I.8.2.[4]-[5] also try to give a brief discussion on the structure of forms in the *Nous hypostasis*. Because this *hypostasis* is eternal, all the entities in it are simultaneously co-present. There are two kinds of relationship among these co-present forms. First, subject (knower) - object (knowable) relationship. We have mentioned the identification among the knower (*nous*), knowledge (*noēsis*) and knowable (*noēton*) in the *Nous hypostasis* because of the "like by like" principle (*di' homoiotētos*) in I.8.1.[3]. The second kind of relationship is of part (*nous hekastos*) - whole (the *Nous hypostasis* as a structure of these units of individual *nous*, or *noun ton sympanta*). The analogy Plotinus uses in describing this part - whole relationship is *epistēmē*. (VI.2.20.4-16 and V.9.8.4-7) The superiority of the *epistēmē* analogy is evident in VI.2.20.4-16 because it stresses not only the structural relationship between parts and whole, it also stresses the co-presence of them while preserving the identity of each of them. VI.2.20.4-16 is the best exegesis of I.8.2.[4]-[5].

From I.8.2.[3]-[5] one can see Plotinus tries to develop the difference between the *Nous hypostasis* and Soul *hypostasis* in terms of knowledge appropriate to each of them and this problem of knowledge inevitably involves some metaphysical problems. The difference he has drawn here includes:

- (1) the linear nature of soul's *logismos* as opposed to the simultaneous co-presence of all reality in *Nous*, with the implication of time opposed to eternity;
- (2) the greater inner coherence of *Nous* as compared with Soul;

(3) Soul's *logismos* as an imitation of *Nous'* unmediated *noēsis* with the implication that Soul *hypostasis* is both connected with but differentiated from *Nous*, i.e., an application of the Platonic image-archetype pattern. It is perhaps because of the inferior status of *logismos* as a mode of thinking that one sees Plato uses a *nothos* version of it with *ἄν-αἰσθησία* (another epistemological function proper to the descended soul) as the way to know evil.

**Has all things and is all things** (*echei panta kai esti panta* I.16) I refer to the *epistēmē* analogy just mentioned. MacKenna's "for what It possesses is still itself" sounds more intelligible. The juxtaposition of *echei* and *esti* is significant because Aristotle has discussed together *hexis* and *sterēsis* as a pair of opposite concepts in *Categories* 12b26 and in Plotinus *sterēsis* in evil is later said to be *sterēsis* of *on* (= *esti*), that is *mē on*. Therefore, *esti* (is) and *echei* (has) are ontologically closely related (just like *sterēsis* and *mē on*) and so has all things is is all things.

**Is with them when it is with itself** (*sunesti autōi sunōn*). See F. M. Schroeder (1987) pp.677-99 and Graeser pp.126-37 on *sunesti* .

**Has all things without having them** (*echei panta ouk echōn*). The *panta* here could only mean all the particular *noi* in the *Nous hypostasis*. The universal *nous* and the particular *nous*, according to the *epistēmē* analogy, are mutually implicated but they are not identical. The *echei panta ouk echōn* tries to describes this delicate balance between identification and distinction. Plotinus wavers between each is the whole and in all ways all and each is in a different sense separate.

Harder<sup>2</sup> does not end the sentence in *chōris* but goes further, to *metalambanei* in I.21. In my view Harder<sup>2</sup> would then have to include two unrelated doctrines in one sentence. We opt for H.& S. (and Armstrong's) punctuation.

[6] Translation I.8.2.19-21:

at any rate what participates in it does not participate in everything at once, but in what it is capable of.

Commentary:

This passage is the famous doctrine: reception according to the capacity (*epitēdeiotēs*) of the receptor. The 'reception' doctrine has been accepted by Armstrong as the only doctrine which explains the generation of reality from the One but this has been refuted (cp. J.S. Lee 1979, see note 24 of Interpretative Essay 4) It and the emanation theory are two sides of the same coin.

I have said that the generation of hypostatic reality, as it is derived from the One, alone cannot explain why the generated reality exists in the hierarchical and differentiated way as it does. Because of this Plotinus needs a dependence theory for the formation of hypostatic reality in its hierarchical form, and the reception doctrine is the doctrine that meets this need because it can explain the variety of each *hypostasis*. It is a *post facto* reconstruction of reality from the perspective of the generated reality and therefore it stressed the *heterotēs* of the entity from what is prior to it. Such *heterotēs* has to presuppose the *homoiotēs* of the One and the discontinuity of reality has to presuppose its continuity guaranteed by the One.

I.8.2.[6] can then be seen as a theoretical summary of I.8.2.[3]-[5] and explains why the Soul *hypostasis* and *Nous hypostasis* are as they are and are unlike the unicity of the One they came from. This is attributed to the inner limitation of the *hypostasis* itself. The limited vision which



*Nous* has of the One is said in VI.7.15.20-2:

"...from the Good himself who is one there were many for this Intellect; for it was unable to hold the power which it received and broke it up (*sunethraue*) and made the one power many (*polla epoiēse ten mian*), that it might be able so to bear it part by part."

This limitation on the part of *Nous* in relation to the One is not mentioned in I.8 but Plotinus in I.8.2.[4]-[5] does suggest the limitation which Soul has in relation to *Nous*. III.7.11.27-9 again offers us a further elaboration:

"...Soul, making the world of sense in imitation of that other world, moving with a motion (*kinoumenon kinesis*) which is not that which exists There (*ekei*), but like it (*homoion de tēi ekei*), and intending to be an image of it...." (my underlining)

The emanation from the One explains the continuum of hypostatic reality but the reception doctrine, which stresses the inner limitation of *hypostases*, contributes to the hierarchical differentiation. The delicate balance between continuity and differentiation in the hierarchical structure of reality can be achieved by the Platonic image-archetype relationship between different levels of reality, and the use of *metalambanon* (I.20) and *metalambanei* (I.21) indicates Plotinus' determination to take this scheme.

[7] Translation I.8.2.21-3:

That Intellect is the first act of the Good and the first substance; the Good stays in himself;

but intellect moves about him in its activity, as also it lives around him.

Commentary:

I.8.2.[6] introduces the reception doctrine which sees the generation of reality from the perspective of the generated *hypostases*. In this passage the perspective is shifted to the generator, the One. This is anticipated in passage I.8.2.[2]: "giving from itself intellect and real being and soul and life and intellectual activity". The *Nous hypostasis* is said to be the first act (*protē energeia*) and first substance (*protē ousia*) coming from the One (= *ekeinos*). The reason why the One begets *Nous* is said to be his staying in himself (*ekeinou menontos en heautōi*) (cp. V.3.12.34: *menontos ekeinou en tōi hautou ethēi*) and keeping quiet. (Ibid. I.35) It has been said above that the generation of the hypostatic reality is the spontaneous and necessary consequence of the One in its free self-creation. This self-creation is an inwards directed *theoria* because the One is said to be *autarkes* in I.8.2.[2]. The double act of the One thus governs the generation of *Nous*. Since the One has no higher entity to refer to, its double act consists only in *monē* and *proōdos* while for the generated reality there are three moments: *proōdos*, *monē* and *epistrophē*. In V.4 Plotinus explicitly expresses this double act in creation:

"When... the intelligible abides (*menontos*) 'in its own proper ways of life' (*en tōi oikeiōi ethēi*, cp. *Tim.* 42e5-6), that which comes into being does come into being from it, but from it as it abides (*menontos*) unchanged." (V.4.2.21-3)

This *monē* of a hypostatic reality can create lower reality because this *monē* or self-concentration "in its own proper way of life" is the perfection or completion of itself (*ek tēs teleotētos*, Ibid. II.34-5). Both self-directed act and other-directed act are called *energeia*, and the self-directed *energeia* is said to be the same as the *ousia* from which the *energeia* comes

and the other-directed *energeia* must be different from them but, it is logical to say, the same as the *ousia* which thus comes into existence later (ibid. II.27-30). Therefore in this passage Plotinus could say that *Nous* as the first-born of the One is the first *ousia* and first *energeia*. The genitive case *ekeinou* in "*protē energeia ekeinou kai protē ousia*" should be understood as "from that", i.e., the One, not as "of that", because the One has been complete and required no presence of *ousia* and *energeia* (cp. V.3.12.27; in VI.8.12.22-37 the *ousia* and *energeia* are said to be separate in the *Nous* but the same in the One; cp. Schlette p.71). This *protē ousia* and *energeia* of *Nous* remain amorphous and have to return to receive affirmation from the One. Plotinus thus continues saying that the new-born *Nous* has to move about him (= the One) in its activity as if it lives around him. (cp. I.7.1.23-5: "So it (= the One) must stay still (*dei oun menein auto*), and all things turn back to it, as a circle does to the centre from which the radii come.") Plotinus describes this return as the *energeia* of *Nous* and so for *Nous* its search for a confirmation of its bestowed *ousia* is by means of its own *energeia*. This *energeia* is thus the *theoria*. Both *energeia* (or *theoria*) and *ousia* have the same reference but they describes different conditions of a hypostatic entity.

[8] Translation I.8.2.23-5:

And soul dances round intellect outside, and looks to it, and in contemplating its interior sees God through it.

Commentary:

The perfection of the One generates *Nous* and *Nous* by its return to the One becomes perfect and so generates soul. "Intellect by coming to active actuality (*energesanta*) in its thinking (*noesanta*) perfected (*apotelesai*) and produced (*gennesai*) real beings." (V.9.8.10-1) However,

in this passage this generation of Soul from *Nous* seems to be taken for granted; what is stressed instead is the return of Soul in order to be confirmed. Both the "*peri*"s in dances round (*peri*) and in the moves about him in its activity (*energei peri ekeinon*) in I.8.2.[7] seem to invoke the analogy of concentric circles in describing the relationship among the One, *Nous* and Soul in, for example, I.7.1.23-5, quoted above.

The *energeia* of Soul in relation to *Nous* adopts the analogy of "seeing" (*blepousa, blepei* and *theomenē*, like the noetic seeing related to the One: "*ho nous estin opsis tis kai opsis horosa*", III.8.11.1-2) and the analogy of dancing (*choreuousa*), but in the *energeia* of *Nous* in relation to the One this is left unclear by the abstract *energei* here. The adoption of "seeing" by Soul in its contemplation of *Nous* is perhaps meant to surpass the discursive and linear reasoning proper to the Soul and to adopt whichever method - proper to *Nous* - can preserve the simultaneous co-presence of all reality and thus become nearer to the One. However, this seeing is not meant to see *Nous* and its content alone, but is meant to see God through it (*di' autou*). (cp. VI.7.31.1-19; IV.4.4.1; I.7.2.1-2: "Soulless things are directed towards soul, and soul to the Good through Intellect (*di' nou*).") This indicates a kind of mystical experience of soul in its unification with the One: "it is carried out of it by the surge of the wave of Intellect itself and lifted on high by a kind of swell." (VI.7.36.17-8, my underlining) The "wave of Intellect" indicates that soul as the subject for this mystical experience has to be mediated through *Nous* for *Nous* is the ontological entity next to the One and it can establish a *rapprochement* with the One in its "drunken" and "loving" *theoria* (*noun erōn*, VI.7.35.24; Beierwaltes 1986 p.305) of the One. This again means that "the summit of the mystical experience of the soul is the mystical experience of the Intellect itself with which the soul has succeeded, for a moment, in identifying." (Hadot 1986 pp.243-6; cp. "*ein überrationales Geschehen*" Schwyzer 1944 p.95; I.6.8.1ff.) It is also important that the mention of the *hyperkalos* of the One in I.8.2.[3] and the mystical experience of Soul here together evoke the

ascent to the Beautiful, described by Diotima, in *Symposium* 210-1.

Furthermore, there is *choreuouosa* as well and one may ask what its function is here? There is an exact parallel to this combination of *blepouosa* and *choreuouosa* in VI.9.8.34ff.:

"That One... since it has no otherness is always present, and we are present to it when we have no otherness: and the One does not desire us, so as to be around us, but we desire it, so that we are around it. And we are always around it but do not always look to (*blepomen*) it; it is like a choral dance (*chorus*): in the order of its singing the choir keeps round its conductor but may sometimes turn away, so that he is out of their sight (*exō tēs theas*), but when it turns back to him it sings beautifully and is truly with him; so we too are always around him... but not always turned to him; but when we do look to him, then we are at our goal and at rest and do not sing out of tune as we truly dance our god-inspired dance around him (*choreuouin ontōs peri auton choreian entheon*)."

This passage gives us the piece of evidence that the juxtaposition of *blepouosa* and *choreuouosa* is not without purpose: it is a short hand in I.8 to invoke the complex simile in VI.9. The message to be conveyed in the simile in VI.9 is to relate us as souls to the One. In I.8 this relation has to be mediated by our looking into the inside of *Nous* (*eisō autou*) - a system of multiple forms - and sees the One through it (*di' autou*) or, more concretely, transcends this multiplicity, as is the case in VI.9.8 in its advice that thinker has to be "naturally united to the thought" so that "the thinker is present more completely by similarity and sameness" (*homoiotēti kai tautotēti*). (VI.9.8.26-9; Armstrong's 'sameness and otherness' is clearly a mistake.) The combination of seeing and the dancing analogy for the ascent of soul in I.8.2 therefore conforms to the more elaborate exposition in VI.9.8.

[9] Translation I.8.2.25-32:

"This is the life of the gods," without sorrow and blessed; evil is nowhere here, and if things had stopped here there would not have been any evil, only a First and the second and third goods. "All things are around the King of all, and That is the cause of all good and beautiful things, and all things belong to That, and the second things are around the Second and the third around the Third."

Commentary:

Cp. V.1.8.1ff., VI.7.42.9ff. and III.5.8.8. I.8.2.[2], [7] and [8] have told us that there are three kinds of reality arranged in a hierarchical order: the One, *Nous* and Soul, and these three orders of reality are said to be gods (*theon*, I.25) and the *theoria* which confirms the constitution of the hypostatic reality and the consequent generation of lower reality are said to be in life (*bios*, I.26). The quotation from *Phaedrus* 248a1 is not exact but close enough to invite readers to associate I.8.2.[9] with the *mythopoiēsis* in *Phaedrus*. This is a necessary economy if Plotinus wishes to use 32 lines to give the gist of his whole philosophy relevant to the inquiry into evil. The quotations from Plato, apart from their contextually philosophical functions, can have the further purpose of confirming his Platonic credentials. These three kinds of reality constitute the hypostatic reality as a whole and, moreover, for Platonists being (*on*) not only has ontological value but also has axiological and aesthetic connotations, and therefore the ascription of without sorrow (*apēmon*) and blessed (*makarios*) is understandable; in another word, the divine *mundus intelligibilis* has no evil (which is *mē on*) because it is hypostatic and a full plenitude of *on*.

Evil is nowhere here. This is because evil is an anhypostatic entity and is thus excluded from the hypostatic reality. The here (*entautha*) means the conceptual framework defined by the hypostatic reality, from the One to Soul *hypostasis* before the latter descends further; in short, the noetic world. However, the further descent is necessary for otherwise we will face a paradox. We 'know' (probably empirically) that evil 'exists' but it is said to be excluded from the hypostatic reality generated from the One; how can we explain the co-presence of two sorts of entity, anhypostatic evil and hypostatic reality? The One is said to be the only source of reality and goodness and, if so, how can an omnipotent One allow such an anhypostatic entity to exist? How can we reconcile the *physis tou agathou* and *physis tou kakou*? To find a way out of this paradox becomes the task Plotinus has to undertake in the rest of I.8.

It has been argued in the Interpretative Essay 3 on Neopythagoreanism and Middle Platonism that two kinds of solution are possible. Both of them presuppose that good comes from a good source and evil from an evil origin. However, the Neopythagoreans hold on to the monistic solution and the supreme principle can generate only goods and thus they explain evil as a kind of non-existence or an absence of goodness or of being. The Middle Platonists take the existence of evil as something real and try to find it a second principle - rivalling the first one - in order to explain evils. In general Plotinus' evil is nowhere here suggests that he sides with the Neopythagorean interpretation because the hypostatic reality is a plenitude of being and, for him, only deficiency of being can be called evil and therefore his definition of evil as anhypostatic and as *mē on* - which relies on the hypostatic reality and goodness to become meaningful - can be said to be Neopythagorean by inspiration. On the other hand, because he has contrasted the hypostatic reality and anhypostatic reality and thought that only anhypostatic reality could explain evil, he, in this sense, can be said to follow the Middle Platonist strategy in segregating another principle, rivalling the noetic principle and called matter, in order to explain evil. The whole Plotinian solution therefore hangs on the very

delicate relationship between hypostatic reality and anhypostatic reality. His solution is to propose the concept of *mē on* in defining this anhypostatic reality. The strategy is this: if evil or matter as *mē on* is susceptible to the analysis based on the concepts which are used in the analysis of hypostatic reality, then evil or matter in a sense can be incorporated into the providential world generated from the One; the 'an'-hypostatic reality will not be completely 'non'-hypostatic but, in a limited sense, hypostatic.

"if things had stopped here (*entautha este*) there would not have been any evil, only a First and the second and the third goods." cp. the very dramatic and tolmatic III.8.8.35-6. This seems a second thought on his categorical statement that evil is nowhere here. If things had stopped here implies that this emanation from the One down to the stage of Soul hypostasis has begun to lose control, presumably because of the decreasing intensity in *theoria* or self-concentration, and it is hinted here that this failure of control on the part of Soul *hypostasis* explains the presence of evil and this failure brings forth anhypostatic reality outwith *entautha*, i.e., the ontological framework defined by the hypostatic reality. What comes after soul is presumably the sensibles (the secondary evils) and matter (the primal evil). Moderatus, in Simplicius' *In Phys.* p.231.2-5, has first put forth this idea:

"...of the last nature (which is that of the sensibles) derived from it that it does not even participate (*metechein*) but rather receives its order as a reflection of the others, matter in them being a shadow cast by the primary non-being...." (trans. by Merlan 1967, p.91; cp. 3.2.6)

The image-archetype relationship which defines the hierarchical structure has suddenly come to an end in the descent of soul to the sensible. What characterises the reality which comes after the failed control of soul is its incapacity to participate in its prior reality, that is, it lacks



*theoria* to return (cp. I.8.2.20-21). This incapacity loosens the connection between hypostatic reality and anhypostatic reality below the level of soul. There will be more about this later.

The failed control of soul in its further descent can be seen as an expression of its ontological mission as a productive principle of reality below it. Then it could be conceived as a continuation of the emanation from the One. On the other hand, it could be an expression of self-will by soul in its desire for the lower reality, then we have the tolmatic theme. This consideration is based on what motivates the descent of soul outwith the hypostatic reality. Soul as a productive principle *en poiēsei kai genesei* can be both the source of absolute generation (= *genesis*) and the source for the imposition of order (= *poiēsis* = a generation of reconstructed intelligibility) in relation to the reality below it (cp. 0.2 and 4.0.4). In my view Plotinus intends the descent of soul in I.8.2.[9] to be the first descent, while in the rest of I.8 wherever the soul's descent is mentioned it is about the second descent.

There is another description for the distinction between the two descents of soul: (a) there is the first moment of descent in the creation of matter which is a kind of Platonic *ichnē*; (2) there is the second descent of soul which works up from this existent matter (created in the first descent) into the sensible universe, including bodies. I have already discussed how this distinction has its precedent in Plato's distinction between *hypodochē* and *ichnē* in *Timaeus* and I refer to my discussion in the Interpretative Essays 1 and 3 and the commentary on I.8.14.

These second thoughts on the presence of evil in reality indicates that if one wishes to have an adequate consideration of evil then to confine oneself to the hypostatic reality is merely futile because no evil is said to be there for it is a plenitude of being. Plotinus is therefore forced to extend the conceptual framework, originally based on the hypostatic reality, to

include the anhypostatic reality - namely the sensible and matter - and sees the anhypostatic reality not as a complete discontinuity from hypostatic reality but, in a limited sense, a continuation of it because it is the further descent of soul - a creation from the One - that creates it. From now on the conceptual framework Plotinus applies in I.8 includes both kinds of reality. Evil can be explained within this expanded definition of reality while it cannot be if Plotinus remains committed to the purely hypostatic reality. This involves a dilemma for Plotinus: if he remains committed to the hypostatic reality then the existence of evil is inexplicable; if he extends his conceptual framework to include both the hypostatic and anhypostatic reality and thereby succeeds in a rationalisation or justification of evil then the reality, ultimately derived from the unique and simple One, will be diluted in its purity and, moreover, evil will become necessarily constitutive of reality and the One becomes somehow responsible for the presence of evil.

"All things are around (*peri*) the King (*basilea*) of all, and That (*ekeino*) is the cause of all good and beautiful things, and all things belong to That (*ekeinou*), and the second things are around the Second and the third around the Third." Cp. Plato's *Epistles* II. 312e1-4, one of the key texts for Plotinus' three *hypostases* of reality (cp. the application of it in V.I.8.1-4; Thedinga pp.254-6). *Epistle* II is probably not by Plato according to some scholars, such as L. Edelstein and H. Cherniss, but I think it has to be taken as authentic. It was used as proof-text by Plotinus for his picture of reality. The around (*peri*) echoes the three "*peri*"s in I.8.2.[7] and [8] and is a term defining the relationship the lower reality has with its prior. The King (*basilea*) echoes the *basileuon* in I.8.2.[3] and again invokes the elaborate simile of Persian King and his vast entourage of different ranks in V.5 (cp. II.9.9.35; [Aristotle] *de Mundo* 398a29-31, Bos 1985 p.28). The use of *ekeino* (cp. *epekeina* in I.8.2.[3]) has the implication of the One's transcendence. The plural forms of the second things (*deutera*) and third things (*trita*) indicate the inner differentiations within the *Nous* (one-many) and Soul *hypostases* (one-and-many).

This use of Platonic authority by Plotinus in confirming his own philosophy is apparently selective. This is because Plotinus has a very different perception of Plato's *opus* as a whole. First, Plotinus has no idea that Plato's *opus* represents a kind of development; the *opus*, for him, is a complete and finished piece of philosophical reasoning (Schwyzer, 1973 p.266). Secondly, Plotinus as a philosopher and not philologist, does not have to take into account every bit of Plato's *opus*; he is selective enough so that W. Theiler has said his Plato is *Plato dimidiatus* (Theiler, *Les Sources de Plotin in Entretiens Hardt 5*, 1960 p.67). Roughly speaking, because of Plotinus' predominant interest in metaphysics it is dialogues, such as *Timaeus* and *Parmenides*) or parts of dialogues (such as Books 5, 6 and 10 of *Republic*) of that nature that interested Plotinus. I have mentioned in 4.3.19 that the common concern of political and social intent is denigrated to the level of *poēsis*, a weakened form of *theoria*, in his philosophy.

- 1.8.3 -

1.8.3 is the section which introduces evil after the brief exposition of hypostatic reality in 1.8.2 and this arrangement has the important effect of putting evil within the proper context, for without it the thesis of evil as *mē on* is without significance. 1.8.3.[1] says that evil cannot exist in the hypostatic reality as it was just defined in 1.8.2. 1.8.3.[2] then tries to define what evil really is; it is said to be *mē on*. 1.8.3.[3] specifies this definition by having it compared with the *pantelōs mē on* of Parmenides and with the law of communion of Plato in his *Sophist*. 1.8.3.[4] discusses the sensible world and suggests in what sense the sensible world is non-existent. The establishment of the non-existence of the sensible world is meant to take us one step further to that metaphysical condition that makes it so, and this is the topic for 1.8.3.[5]; 1.8.3.[5] also gives us a string of contrasts which are meant to illustrate the nature of this elusive matter or evil. 1.8.3.[6]-[13] then try to formalise the distinction between absolute evil and secondary evil by the application of a similar distinction between the absolute good and secondary good; this is an application of the "archetype-image" concept, proper to the hypostatic reality, to the anhypostatic reality. 1.8.3.[14] adds another function to absolute evil (or matter), that is, matter is the substrate which supports the sensible world and all the forms, which are imposed onto it, are alien to its nature. 1.8.3 is pivotal because it not only defines the nature (or substance) of evil (*kakou ousia*, 1.38) but also introduces the distinction of absolute evil which is the metaphysical condition and the secondary evil which is the consequence of two-way participation by embodied souls in the hypostatic reality (which accounts for its existence) and in the absolute evil (which accounts for its evil nature, or more precisely, its limited realisation of *on*); the question of secondary evil will occupy most of Plotinus attention from 1.8.8 - 1.8.15.

[1] Translation I.8.3.1-3:

If, then, these are what really exists and what is beyond existence, then evil cannot be included in what really exists or in what is beyond existence; for these are good.

Commentary:

I.8.2.[9] has established the existence of three *hypostases* of reality and the One, because it is beyond existence (*to epekeina tōn ontōn*), can generate the existence of *Nous* and then Soul and these generated *hypostases* together with the generator, the One, constitute what really exists (*ta onta*). Because in I.8.1 evil has been said to be *sterēsis* of form (and so, of *on*) and is opposite to (*enantion*) to the good (so, also, to *on*), and evil in I.8.2 is said to be nowhere here (*entautha*) in the conceptual framework defined by hypostatic reality, evil cannot be in being (*ta onta*) nor in what is beyond being (*to epekeina tōn ontōn*). The I.8.3 is to begin the search for evil '*di' enantiotētos*' of the hypostatic reality which was sketched in I.8.2.

for these are good. This switch from a metaphysical discussion on existence to an assertion of axiological concept, good, indicates again the equation Plotinus makes between being and goodness. The goodness of hypostatic reality is its fecundity of being and the goodness of the One is its bestowal of being.

[2] Translation I.8.3.3-6:

So it remains that if evil exists, it must be among non-existent things, as a sort of form of non-existence, and pertains to one of the things that are mingled with non-being or somehow

shares in non-being.

Commentary:

if evil exists (*eiper estin*). Plotinus does not use conditional form here and this indicates his concession that the empirical facts about evil are accepted in his discussion. The things Plotinus here can do are two: one is to adopt the Middle Platonic alternative in positing another first principle of evil nature to explain the existence of evil; the other alternative is Neopythagorean, and sees evil as a 'residue' of being, that is, discusses evil within an expanded framework of reality so that evil as anhypostatic entity can be accommodated within a revised and extended hypostatic reality. The latter is the option Plotinus adopts here. That is the reason why Plotinus can say if evil exists (*estin*), as a sort of form (*hoion eidos ti*) and somehow share (*hopōsoun koinōnontōn*) in non-being because *esti*, *eidos* and *koinōnontōn* are terms proper only to hypostatic reality but are now applied to anhypostatic reality. This attempt to broaden hypostatic reality in its scope and to apply the concepts proper to hypostatic reality to the anhypostatic evil is Plotinus' strategy to meet the basic contradiction we have pointed out in our commentary in I.8.2.[9]: the presence of evils in a providential universe generated by the all good One.

This strategy for an expanded reality has its rationale in the condition of Soul *hypostasis* because it has a vertical plenitude which cannot be totally contained within the hypostatic reality but goes further in its generation of even lower reality which is anhypostatic: "If things had stopped here there would not have been any evil." (I.8.2.27; see commentary above *ad loc.*) It is because of the failed control on the part of soul in its further production that one has to accept a broader concept of reality and this broader concept of reality includes the anhypostatic evil. Despite its inclusion evil remains at the lower and anhypostatic reach of

emanation and is said to be among non-existent things (*en tōis mē ousin*).

This *mē on* is then divided into two kinds: (a) a sort of form of non-existence (*eidōs to tou mē ontos*) and (b) one of the things that are mingled with non-being or somehow share in non-being (*ti ton memigmenōn tōi mē onti ē hopōsoun koinōnontōn tōi mē onti*). These two kinds of evil as *mē on* are in short (a) evil *simpliciter* (that is, matter) and (b) things which participate in evil and are characterised thereby as such (that is, sensibles). The *koinōnontōn* is a Platonic word which describes the archetype-image relationship, like the *metalambanon* and *metalambanei* in I.8.2.20-1, but is used now to describe the archetype-image relationship of the prime *mē on* (= matter or prime evil) in regard to the secondary *mē on* (= sensibles or secondary evils).

[3] Translation I.8.3.6-9:

**Non-being does not mean absolute non-being but only something other than being; not non-being in the same way as the movement and rest which affect being, but like an image of being or something still more non-existent.**

Commentary:

I.8.3.[2] announces two kinds of *mē on*; I.8.3.[3] defines what is exactly *mē on*. There are three kinds of *mē on* Plotinus has in view. The first kind is *pantelōs mē on* or *to mēdamōs on* (*Sophist* 273b); the second kind is *mē on* in the sense of *heteron tou ontos*; the third kind of *mē on* is *eikon tou ontos ē kai eti mallon mē on*. (For a division into five kinds of *mē on*, see Meijer p.287 note 813, but they do not bring anything other than what we are going to say

here.) The first kind of *mē on* is rejected because it is totally outwith the expanded conceptual framework including matter; what this could indicate is the impossibility of conceiving it at all. This absolute non-being has the authority of Parmenides:

"the other, that [it] is not and that it is needful that [it] not be, that I declare to you is an altogether indiscernible: for you could not know what is not - that cannot be done - nor indicate it." (K.R.S. 291; cp. the accompanying commentary *ad loc.*)

The second kind of *mē on*, which is also rejected, is Platonic. In *Sophist* Plato establishes five *megista genē* and the law of their communion in order to refute Parmenides' *mē on*; what Plato achieves is his argument for the pervasive disposition of otherness (*thateron*) in defining the relationship among the five *megista genē*:

"the nature of the other (*thaterou*) exists and is distributed in small bits throughout all existing things in their relation to one another (*katakekermatismenēn epi panta ta onta pros allēla*), and we have ventured to say that each part of the other which is contrasted with being (*to pros to on hekaston morion autēs* (= *hē physis thaterou*)), really is exactly not-being (*ontōs to mē on*)." (258de)

Plato in a difficult passage concludes his findings about the *mē* of the *mē on*:

"Then when we are told that the negative (*apophasis*) signifies the opposite (*enantion*), we shall not admit it (= against Parmenides); we shall admit only that the particle 'not' (*to mē kai to ou*) indicates something different from the words to which it is prefixed, or rather from the things denoted by the words that follow the negative." (257bc; N.B.: those terms I have underlined.)



Plato criticises Parmenides' *mē on* (258d) because of Parmenides' misidentification of *apophasis* with antithetical *enantion*, and this misidentification would make reality fragmented and mean "the utterly final obliteration of all discourse." (259e; cp. *Enneads* II.5.5.9 and III.6.7.11)

These two kinds of *mē on* represent two pictures of reality: from Parmenides we have a dichotomy of being and absolute non-being; from Plato we have a picture of being organised by a complex relationship defined by *megista genē*, the *genos* of *thateron* in particular; the sensible reality reflects this relation which obtains in the intelligible world. The vital concept of *thateron*, however, does not tell us anything about the relationship between these two orders of reality. Plotinus' *mē on* envisages another picture of reality: it is a compromise between the Parmenidean and Platonic ones. Plato's *thateros* is effective in its definition of the inner relationship among the five *megista genē* which exist on the same ontological level but for Plotinus his alternative of *heterotēs* means not only an inner differentiation within a *hypostasis* but also an alienation from its prior reality; it is thus a certain degree of deprivation of being in the hypostatic entity of which the *heterotēs* is predicated. For Parmenides, on the other hand, such a *heterotēs* or *thateros*, once predicated of an entity, means a total elimination of its being. This middle way between Plato and Parmenides is accounted for by (1) Plotinus' hierarchical structure of reality and (2) his introduction of the anhypostatic sensibles and evil (or matter), together with the hypostatic reality, to form a broader concept of reality. The *heterotēs* characterises every level of hypostatic reality in relation to its prior and it also characterises the anhypostatic reality in relation to the hypostatic reality. *Heterotēs*, unlike Plato's *thateron*, indicates a deficiency of being in the entity of which *heterotēs* is predicated; unlike Parmenides' absolute non-being, this *heterotēs* does not mean a total negation of being but only an indication of its deficiency. With this compromise we can understand why Plotinus refuses the interpretation of *mē on* based on either Parmenides'

*pantelōs mē on* or Plato's *thateron tou ontos* in *Sophist* (cp. Hager 1962 pp.86-7).

Some commentators, such as Rist (Rist 1961 p.157) gives one the impression that Plotinus is satisfied with *Sophist's* solution in terms of *thateron tou ontos* in defeating the ontological monolithism of Parmenides and then the story is over. In I.8.3.[3] the first half is about the unworkable doctrine of Parmenides and 'implicitly' this doctrine is defeated by Plato in his *Sophist's* law of communion among *megista genē* in terms of *heteron tou ontos*; Plotinus does not attack Parmenides' doctrine of *pantelōs mē on* from the front and perhaps feels satisfied with Plato's effort in *Sophist*. The second half of [3] is about Plato's doctrine which is rejected by Plotinus explicitly: "not non-being in the same way as the movement and rest (= two of the five *megista genē* in *Sophist*) which affect being and this." At the end of I.8.3.[3] Plotinus tells us that the correct method of reaching *mē on* is in terms of archetypal-image relationship. This option has very limited relevance to the doctrine of *thateron* in *Sophist*.

Non-being here does not mean absolute non-being (*pantelōs mē on*). This is Parmenides' rejected doctrine. Then Plotinus swiftly introduces Plato's "something other than being" (*heteron... tou ontos*) to prove that Parmenides' *mē on* is invalid. Plato's *mē on*, however, in terms of the pervasive *thateron* does not imply any diminution of being in the entity of which *thateron* is predicated, and this would make invalid Plotinus' hierarchical structure of hypostatic reality and the distinction between anhypostatic and hypostatic reality. He therefore claims that this *thateron* is as neutral as "movement and rest" are related to being (*hōs kinesis kai stasis hē peri to on*) but Plotinus wants his *heterotēs* to express a kind of ontological deficiency and to function in the vertical relationship between different levels of reality in addition to the horizontal relationship among the inner self-differentiation of hypostatic reality.

Armstrong's translation "as the movement and rest which affect being" (my underlining) is too

interpretative and probably wrong. The *peri* is about the metaphysical disposition of the *megista genē* and does not imply anything which is interactive in the sense of 'affect'. On the contrary, the differentiation of movement and rest from being and from each other is stressed in *Sophist* and therefore Harder's translation seems better: "*wie Bewegung und Ruhe des Seienden von ihm verschieden sind.*" (my underlining) Plotinus, as I have said, instead turns to the image-archetype pattern as the proper way of interpreting *mē on*. This choice is correct because it expresses both the connection and separation between different levels of reality (my underlining) which is not found in *Sophist*'s argument for *mē on* in terms of *heteron tou ontos*. It is also consistent with the *metalepsis* in I.8.2.20-1 and the *koinōnia* in I.8.3.6 which define the relationship between different levels of reality. The thesis that evil is not absolute non-being but simply other than being could mean this: Plotinus decides that evil or *mē on* is derived, in the ontological sense, from the One and therefore cannot stand apart from, let alone on an equal footing with, the One as another rival principle. Schröder says this very well: "*Das bedeutet, dass das Schlechte nicht absolutes Prinzip neben dem Guten, unabhängig von ihm, ist, sondern, wenn auch noch so fern, in einer gewissen Beziehung zu ihm steht*" (Schröder p.136).

Image of being (*eikon tou ontos*) means the sensibles which participate in evil; something still more non-existent (*eti mallon me on*) means matter or evil *simpliciter* (cp. I.8.3.[12]; Zandee pp.19-22).

[4] Translation I.8.3.9-12:

The whole world of sense is non-existent in this way, and also sense-experience and whatever is posterior or incidental to this, or its principle, or one of the elements which go to make up

the whole which is of this non-existent kind.

Commentary:

Plotinus has argued that his *mē on* can be understood in terms of the image-archetype relationship, and the anhypostatic reality as a whole is an image of hypostatic reality and of soul *hypostasis* in particular because it is soul that is the neighbour of anhypostatic reality and generates it.

One of the two kinds of anhypostatic reality is the whole world of sense (*to aisthēton pan*) and the sensible is therefore *mē on* in a relative sense. Whatever has affinity to the sensibles has affinity to *mē on*. This includes (1) all sense-experience (*hosa peri to aisthēton pathē*), (2) what is posterior or (3) incidental to this (*hysteron ti toutōn kai hōs sumbebēkos toutois*) (cp. I.8.4.10ff.), (4) its principle (*archē toutōn*) and (5) one of the elements which go to make up the whole which is of this non-existent kind (*hen ti tōn sumplerountōn touto toiouton on*) (cp. *Timaeus* 53). Armstrong's translation of this passage as a whole is too interpretative and there is something unsatisfactory in it. A transliteration of this passage is this:

*"Touto d' esti to aisthēton pan kai hosa peri to aisthēton pathē ē hysteron ti toutōn ē hen ti tōn sumplerountōn touto toiouton on."*

His translation of this passage could be improved in this way:

*"mē on (touto) is the whole sensible world and whatever affections are related to the sensible (to aisthēton) and such affections are either (ē) something (ti) which comes after them (touton\*, the reference is very vague; probably the sensibles), or something*

(read *tī*) as incidental to them (*toutois\**), or the source (*archē*) of them (*toutōn\**) or any one (*hen tī*) of those that constitute (*sumplerountōn\**) such a kind of being (= the sensible universe)."

This translation is confirmed by Hager (1962 Hager p.86) who regards those marked with \* as about *peri to aisthēton pathē*, not about the singular *pan to aisthēton*.

What Plotinus tries to do in this passage after *hosa peri aisthēton pathē* is to give a list of those factors related to the sensible world and, as the sensible world is *mē on*, so are those related factors. There is no systematic method behind this enumeration (cp. Hager 1962 pp.86-7).

The *sumbebēkos* in I.12 can be interpreted in the Aristotelian sense as a quality predicated incidentally of a substance because this *sumbebēkos* is about the sensibles; this is different from I.8.1.5 where *sumbebēke* is used to predicate the noetic world.

[5] Translation I.8.3.12-20:

At this point one might be able to arrive at some conception of evil as a kind of unmeasuredness in relation to measure, and unboundedness in relation to limit, and formlessness in relation to formative principle, and perpetual neediness in relation to what is self-sufficient; always undefined, nowhere stable, subject to every sort of influence, insatiate, complete poverty: and all this is not accidental to it but in a sort of way its essence; whatever part of it you see, it is all this; and everything which participates in it and is made like it becomes evil, though not essentially evil.

Commentary:

The other kind of anhypostatic reality, primary evil, is now introduced through the *via eminentiai* but this *via eminentiai* is used in a reverse way. The whole picture Plotinus invokes here aims to let us envisage the broader concept of reality as a vertical spectrum. After the descent from hypostatic reality you come to the sensible kind of anhypostatic reality which has just been mentioned in I.8.3.[4] and then, *via eminentiai*, you descend further to the lowest kind of anhypostatic reality. For this final and radical descent you have to understand first what the sensible is and radicalise your conception of it and you then arrive at some conception of evil (*ennoian autou*). In I.8.9.[6]-[12] Plotinus proposes a methodology for one to grasp the primary and secondary evils (see commentary *ad loc.*). This is an inferential method of having knowledge of an abstract concept; the same procedure as that used in *Timaeus* in reaching the concept of *hypodochē*. Plotinus lists those features which characterise this newly grasped concept of absolute evil in terms of pairs of binary oppositions: (a) unmeasuredness (*ametria*) - measure (*metron*); (b) unboundedness (*apeiron*) - limit (*peras*); (c) formlessness (*aneideos*) - formative principle (*eidopoiētikos*); (d) perpetual neediness (*aei endees*) - self-sufficiency (*autarkes*); and then in terms of another five negative descriptions; (e) always undefined (*aei aoristos*) (f) nowhere stable (*oudamēi hestōs*) (g) subject to every sort of influence (*pampathes*) (h) insatiate (*akorēton*) and (i) complete poverty (*penia pantelēs*). (a) to (d) have been mentioned in I.8.1.[6] and I.8.2.[2], where evil is posited as an entity opposite to (*enantion*) hypostatic reality (mainly to *Nous* which is the system of these forms) and that may be the reason why Plotinus presents them in the form of a binary opposition. (e) to (i) are introduced for the first time here and therefore require some discussion.

All of these negative descriptions can have their opposite and positive descriptions found and predicated of hypostatic reality. *Aoristos*, for example, has its opposite in *hōrismenos* and it

is easy to think that *aoristos* is merely another variation of *ametria*, *apeiron* and *aneideos*, and *penia pantelēs* variation of *aei endees*. However, since different words more or less express different meanings in Plotinus we wish to know if these new expressions give us any new clues to the nature of evil. Plotinus in II.4.13.5-6 has said:

"... if the quality is defined, how is it matter? But if it is something indefinite (*aoriston*), it is not a quality (*poiotēs*) but the substrate (*to hypokeimenon*) and the matter (*hylē*) we are looking for."

This shows that *aoriston*, despite its being a quality (*poiotēs*), becomes a substantive when it is said of the substrate or matter; but why does the addition of privative *a* or *an* to a positive *hōrismos* create a substantiative (or rather, pseudo-substantive)? This could be understood if we pay attention to the fact that Plotinus in this passage has consistently used very general descriptive terms to be predicated of the hypostatic reality and matter. Therefore in II.4.13 when one imagined that the questioner raises a question about the problem of the privative in general the questioner uses (or Plotinus makes him use) the blind man, a particular case, as example (*tuphos*, *ibid.* I.12). If we use privative as a kind of negation then a negation of a certain quality means affirmation of the rest of reality minus that particular quality (like blindness), so argues the questioner. This forces Plotinus to generalise, as far as possible, the term he wishes to negate as universally as possible and have its privative form predicated of matter (*ibid.* II.21-3). By this he denies the questioner this opportunity and by this he indicates the general nature of the matter or absolute evil; this general nature of evil is, in addition, indicative of the *a priori* nature of his inquest into this problem. These privatives, characteristic of matter or absolute evil, are not accidental to it but are its "*poia ousia*", which constitute the nature of absolute evil.

Plotinus could think so because he in I.8.1-2 has suggested the applicability of the concepts valid in the hypostatic reality to anhypostatic reality. In the hypostatic reality qualities, according to II.6, "must be assumed to be activities (*energeias*)" (II.6.2.4) and "as a kind of part of substance." (II.6.2.13) These qualities such as *eidōs*, *hōrismos*, *metron* and *peras* are the so called substantial quality (*poia ousia*, II.6.1.26). Anhypostatic reality incorporates this use of *poia ousia* and therefore Plotinus can say "matter must be called unlimited of itself (*apeiron men dē par' autēs ten hylēn lekton*)" (II.4.15.33), although unlimitedness is characteristic of it. This means even if Plotinus says that matter or evil is 'unlimited' he does not use 'unlimited' in any ordinarily predicative way but he uses it as an *energeia* of - and is essential to - matter or evil: "the unlimited is not an accidental attribute of matter; matter itself, then is the unlimited" (II.4.15.16-7). The privatives of those "substantial qualities" (*poiai ousiai*) in the hypostatic reality are the very *energeiai* or *poia ousia* of anhypostatic evil itself (cp. Zeller p.602).

*oudamēi hestōs*. This implies that *stasis* is a *poia ousia* in hypostatic reality. (cp. V.1.7.24-6; cp. I.8.2.[2] with commentary *ad loc.*) On the other hand, II.4.11.40ff. gives us the unstable nature of matter:

"matter is indefinite and not yet stable by itself, and is carried about here and there into every form, and since it is altogether adaptable becomes many by being brought into everything and becoming everything, and in this way acquires the nature of mass."

Since *stasis* (= *monē*) is a *poia ousia* in the hypostatic reality so a negation of it is predicated as *energeia* of evil and is evil. However, in III.6.7.14 Plotinus says that this negation of *stasis* is not pure *kinēsis* in matter but is a kind of impotent inertia: "it is static without being stable (*hestēkos ouk en stasei*)."



subject to every sort of influence (*pampathes*). The hypostatic reality is called *apathēs* because there is no matter there. (III.6.2.49-53) For evil, the pure matter, although it is subject to all kinds of affections, this *pampathes* nature remains extremely special because the affections will never change the nature of evil. Matter can participate in all forms (because of its *pampathes* and *pandeches*) but it is a "participation without affection" (*apathous metalepseos*, III.6.17.7; cp. III.6.11.31-45) for with any affection the nature of matter would then be destroyed. This is so because Plotinus accepts Plato's *hypodochē* and Aristotle's *hypokeimenon* which have to be bare and featureless in order to be the substrate to sustain and underlie 'all' change and becoming, but, at the same time, not totally different (i.e., with no participation at all) from those which it underlies, for the substrate would then completely dissociate itself from the becoming. Again a very delicate balance for matter. In III.6.9 Plotinus compares this special nature of evil to mirrors (*katoptra*) because a mirror seemingly accepts all things without possessing any of them.

Whatever affections come to matter the matter only provides the substrate for the affections while it is the affections themselves that interact. "...that which is 'single and set apart' from all other things and in every way simple would be unaffected (*apathēs*) by everything and set apart in the midst of all the things which act on each other" (III.6.9.37-40). This has to be so for otherwise matter would cease to be a metaphysical condition for becoming but easily be changed into another nature (III.6.10.23-9). This makes *pampathes* rather like all-receiving *pandeches* (III.6.10.9), and this makes Plotinus interpret the *hypodochē* of *Timaeus* as a neutral *tithēnē* rather than a productive *mēter* (III.6.19.19-22 and 37-8).

insatiate, complete poverty (*akorēton, penia pantelēs*). The opposite of *akorēton* (which appears only once in Plotinus' *Enneads*) is *koros* and that of *penia* is *poros*. These two terms used of evil bring new dimensions to the nature of evil. It is related to desire, a desire because

of lack and deficiency. III.5.9.48-53:

"his (= love's) mother is Poverty (= personalised *penia*), because aspiration (*hē ephesis*) belongs to that which is in need. And Poverty is matter, because matter, too, is in every way in need, and because the indefiniteness of the desire for the good (*to aoriston tēs tou agathou epithumias*) - for there is no shape or rational forming principle in that which desires it - makes the aspiring thing more like matter in so far as it aspires." (Cp. II.4.16.20 and I.8.14.[9]-[10].)

While sensibles which are a mixture of hypostatic reality and matter can have their desire for completion and replacement of innate deficiency eliminated by a full realisation of form; for matter or evil this elimination of deficiency would be a destruction of its nature and *penia* thus has to be constitutive of the *kakou ousia*. Therefore, *penia* has to be one *poia ousia* of matter.

III.6.14.7-10:

"this other thing by its presence and its self-assertion (*tēi... parousiai kai tēi tolmēi*) and a kind of begging (*prosaitesēi*) and its poverty (*peniai*) makes a sort of violent attempt to grasp and is cheated by not grasping, so that its poverty may remain and it may be always begging (*menēi hē penia kai aei prosaitēi*)."

This should have given us the idea that there is a certain dynamic tension, in desiderative terms, within matter in its aspiration for form but there is also a perpetual frustration of this desire, and this tension is understandable for otherwise matter would cease to be. I should add this observation that in Origen the *koros* implies a satiety, among the divine substances, with the divinity, and the love for the divinity becomes cool because of *superbia*, *ameleia* and *koros* (Zandee p.27).

This *pampathes* (matter as all-receiving) and *aei prosaitēi* (the perpetual *epheisis* of matter) of evil prove that evil is one of the links in the emanative process of *proōdos*, *monē* and *epistrophē* but it is without *proōdos* for nothing is lower than it for it to generate.

and all this is not accidental to it but in a sort of way its essence; We have said that all the predications used of evil are not accidental qualities predicated of a substance as such are in the sensible world. The anhypostatic Matter emulates the hypostatic reality in the relationship between *ousia* and *poia ousia* - a *poia ousia* is an *energeia* of *ousia* - and so the privative predications (= privations of positive *poia ousia*) are not accidental (*sumbebēkota*) to evil but in a sort of way (*hoion*) its essence. (The *hoion* is interesting for it reveals Plotinus' consciousness of this transplantation of hypostatic concepts to anhypostatic reality.) The presence of different kinds of *poia ousia* expresses the different aspects of the nature of evil; they are the '*energeiai*' of the '*ousia*' of matter.

whatever part of it you see, it is all this; Each privation is an essential expression of the nature of evil and therefore by the presence of one kind of privation it implies the presence of evil as a whole; this is rather like the part-whole relationship in the *Nous hypostasis*. (I.8.2.[4])

and everything which participates (*metabēi*) in it and is made like (*homoiōthēi*) it becomes evil (*kakā*), though not essential (*kata to einaī*) evil. The *metabēi* echoes the *metambanei* and *metambanon* in I.8.2.20-1 and the *homoiōthēi* echoes the *koinōnountōn* in I.8.3.6. This seems to indicate that the anhypostatic sensible forms an image-archetype relationship with the absolute evil or matter. This formulation of image-archetype relationship within the anhypostatic reality, again, is an emulation of the image-archetype relation which obtains in the hypostatic reality. In this way, the evil and its different aspects (in the forms of privative *poia ousia*) can be described as *hoion eidos ti tou mē ontos* (I.8.3.4-5).

[6] Translation I.8.3.20-1:

What sort of entity, then, is it, in which all this is present, not as something different from itself but as itself?

Commentary:

What sort of entity (*tini oun hypostasei*). This *hypostasis* used of evil is another example of the conceptual transplantation from the hypostatic reality to the anhypostatic evil, a symbol of Plotinus' effort to understand and accommodate the problem of evil within his conceptual framework of hypostatic reality. This is similar to the *ti eidos* used of absolute evil in I.8.3.4, *kakou ousian* in I.8.3.38 and the *kat' ousian* in I.8.6.47, all of which are used of absolute evil.

This passage says things that we have already said above. These privations which are characteristic of evil are not understood as the Aristotelian definition of *sumbebēkos*, something extrinsic to the nature of the entity they are predicated of. These privations are the *energeiai* of the '*ousia*' of evil. As in the hypostatic reality *energeia* is related to the *ousia* of which it is the *energeia* in the way of *poiēsis* related to *theoria* and in I.8.1.[2] we have said that in a sense they are closely related. So the situation is similar in the anhypostatic evil because, as we have said, evil emulates the relationship in the hypostatic reality. The privative features as the *energeiai* of evil are in a sort of way (*hoion*) the essence of evil (*ousia autou*). (I.8.3.17)

[7] Translation I.8.3.21-2:

**For if evil occurs accidentally in something else, it must be something itself first, even if it is not a substance.**

**Commentary:**

**The even if it is not a substance (*kan mē ousia tis ēi*) is posed as a concession but this does not prejudice the question whether evil is *ousia* because in a sense it is not. What Plotinus tries to emphasise in this passage is the problem of participation, the participation by an entity, characterised as evil, in 'evil' which exists independently. The next passage will say that even evil is *mē on*, the image-archetype relationship between the secondary evil and the absolute evil still obtains in the anhypostatic reality.**

**[8] Translation I.8.3.22-5:**

**Just as there is absolute good and good as a quality so there must be absolute evil and the evil derived from it which inheres in something else.**

**Commentary:**

**This is another piece of evidence for conceptual transplantation. This is expressed in the balance of the two clauses in this passage and the same kind of diction applied to the absolute good as well as to the absolute evil, and to the secondary good and secondary evil. Another point to be noted here is that from the secondary good, that is something we call good, we can 'infer' (that is, "not experience") the existence of good by itself, so the inference on the existence of absolute evil cannot be empirical. Its existence is a matter for rationalistic**

argument and deduction *via* the secondary evils. (Himmerich p.121)

There are mentioned absolute good (*agathon to auto*) and absolute evil (*kakon to auto*) and for the sensibles they seem to form two poles, by participation in which sensibles become partly good and partly evil. (cp. I.8.15.[3]) Here one has to be reminded again that the partly good and partly evil nature of the sensible means the sensible is limited in the full realisation of its being and only indirectly indicates its moral or aesthetical significance.

I believe the absolute good here means the hypostatic reality as a whole, not the One in particular. However, to picture the absolute good and absolute evil as two extreme poles could well lead into dualism but this is natural from the limited perspective of the sensibles which participates in both. However, we have to remind ourselves that the alleged primary evil is in itself defined by a reference to the primary good and *mē on* has to rely on *on* to become meaningful. Hager sees this as a Plotinus' monism and an improvement on Plato's dualism (Hager 1962 p.86).

[9] Translation I.8.3.25:

What then is unmeasuredness, if it is not in what is unmeasured?

[10] Translation I.8.3.25-6:

[But what about 'measure which is not in that which is measured?']

[11] Translation I.8.3.26-7:

But just as there is measure which is not in that which is measured, so there is unmeasuredness which is not in the unmeasured.

Commentary:

1.8.3.[9]-[11] say things which have already been said in 1.8.3.[8]. It is not clear why measure (*metron*) and unmeasuredness (*ametria*) are here placed in such a privileged position because later in [13] Plotinus returns to the battalion of descriptions which he gave us in [5]. There is perhaps no deep meaning for his choosing *metron* and *ametria* as example for illustration apart from the association of *eidos* (which is the main feature of *nous* and soul) with *metron*.

Müller deletes [10] as '*glossa ad 26-7*'. Armstrong bases his rejection on the fact that the absolute One is beyond measure so that it can be the source of measure (Armstrong's Loeb note to 1.8.3.25-6). This is philosophically alright but [10] is used to describe the relationship between the form of measure, which is primarily about *Nous hypostasis*, and what participates in it; the absolute One as beyond measure is not envisaged here for the moment. Admittedly the presence of [10] is stylistically clumsy because it reads somewhat like an enforced attempt to achieve a syntactical balance together with [9] in order to repeat the balances seen in [8] and, again, in [11]. However, apart from this impression there is no more nor less reason to delete [10]. (Cp. Harder<sup>2</sup> Vb p.407 note 3.25; Thedinga in his paraphrase of 1.8.3 kept it; see his p.257.)

(12) Translation 1.8.3.27-30:

If it is in something else, it is either in something unmeasured - and then this something will

have no need of unmeasuredness if it is unmeasured itself - or in something measured; but it is not possible for that which is measured to have unmeasuredness in the respect in which it is measured.

Commentary:

Plotinus now wishes to establish the causal relation which unmeasuredness itself has in regard to something unmeasured and, by parity of reasoning, absolute evil to secondary evil. The principle he implicitly adopts here is, firstly, 'like by like', and, secondly, the cause and the caused must be not only of the same nature (that is 'like by like') but also belong to two different orders of reality (that is, one is the cause and the other the caused and the cause is 'greater' than the caused, cp. A.C. Lloyd 1976). It is the same as the Platonic eidetic causation the form has in relation to the sensible which is informed.

Plotinus therefore could have two choices:

- (a) unmeasuredness - something unmeasured;
- (b) unmeasuredness - something measured;

(b) has to be rejected because "it is not possible for that which is measured to have unmeasuredness in the respect in which it is measured (*ouch hoion te to memetrēmenon ametrian echein kath' ho memetrētai*)." The careful specification, *kath' ho*, is rather Aristotelian because this is to isolate a particular aspect of a sensible, that is, measured, and have it related to the universal and reified form of unmeasuredness. In Plotinus this is more complicated because it is not known what that which is measured is supposed to refer to. Is it to the hypostatic reality which has no connection with matter (= unlimitedness) whatsoever? Or is



it the sensible world, a complex made out of the hypostatic soul and the anhypostatic matter, and that which is measured means that aspect of the sensible which is informed and becomes measured. I think the second possibility is more likely because Plotinus has said explicitly in I.8.2.[9] that no evil (= unmeasuredness) is found in the hypostatic reality. What it means here is that in the search for the absolute good and absolute evil one has to start from the empirical sensibles and abstract therefrom the relevant data and deduct the non-sensible entity, which in this case is evil.

Plotinus adopts (a) instead and this is understandable. Plotinus further divides (a) into (a1) unmeasuredness opposed to something unmeasured and (a2) unmeasuredness opposed to unmeasured(ness) itself. Plotinus denies (a2) because this would mean the unmeasuredness is predicated of unmeasuredness, that is, self-predication. Plotinus does not tell us why self-predication is unacceptable here (cp. Fielder 1980 and 1982 which argue, based on texts from VI.2-3, for its acceptance by Plotinus). What he is prepared to accept is the participation by sensibles in unmeasuredness itself or in matter. We have said that the participation by something unmeasured or enmattered in the unmeasuredness itself or matter has to be of like nature but of different orders of reality. (a2) is rejected because self-predication means the two parties are on the same ontological level although it fulfills the 'like by like' principle; (b) is rejected because it fails the 'like by like' test although there is no problem with their belonging to two different orders of reality. Only (a1) satisfies both principles and that may be the reason why Plotinus chooses (a1).

[13] Translation I.8.3.30-4:

**So there must be something which is unbounded in itself and absolutely formless and has all**

the other attributes which we mentioned before as characterising the nature of evil; and if there is anything of the same sort posterior to this, it either has an admixture of this or is of the same sort because it directs its attention towards it, or because it is productive of something of this kind.

Commentary:

I.8.3.[12] has proved that there is an image-archetype relation between something unmeasured and the unmeasuredness itself, and [13] means to make formal statements about this feature. The archetype, evil, is said to possess all the qualities which are predicated of it in [5]; these qualities are not extrinsic to the nature of evil but are the '*energeiai*' of the '*ousia*' of evil (i.e., they are the *poiai ousiai* without which evil would not be evil). Therefore the unmeasuredness (*ametria*) used in [9]-[12] could be replaced by evil itself. When the sensible participates in *ametria* and, as *ametria* is one *poia ousia* of evil, the sensible can be said to participate in evil.

As for something unmeasured, there is a point to make about its image status. This something unmeasured stands in the relation of being an image to two kinds of archetype: it is related to evil (the unmeasuredness) in so far as it is unmeasured, and it is related to the form of measure in so far as it is not totally unmeasured but participates in some form of measure. For the moment the archetype of unmeasuredness in question is evil. This something unmeasured is said to be posterior to (*met' ekeino*) evil and what this could mean is that evil obtains a kind of causative relation to the unmeasured thing. Moreover, the sensible is the consequence of the second descent into matter (which is the consequence of its first descent) and is composed by soul and matter and is therefore ontologically inferior to matter and is therefore posterior to matter. On the other hand, in Plotinus' hierarchical picture of reality the sensibles come before matter because it is nearer to the source of being, and matter in this sense is posterior

to the sensible in the aspect of existential authenticity. It is, nevertheless, certain that Plotinus intends only the first possibility here. Therefore, what Plotinus could mean here is the causative-explanatory precedence of matter (= unmeasuredness itself) of the very quality which characterises the sensible as evil. One has to be reminded again that, because of the *mē on* nature of matter (or evil), the unmeasured quality of the sensible always indicates its limited realisation of being. Therefore, when we say that the sensibles are of the secondary evil we mean not only that this secondary evil is a feature predicative of the sensibles but also mean that this secondary evil points out the limits of the existential authenticity in the sensibles.

After the clarification of the causal-explanatory precedence of evil over things evil, Plotinus explains why there are things which are evil. He enumerates three reasons:

- (a) the evil thing has an admixture (*memigmenon*) of this (= absolute evil);
- (b) it directs its attention towards it (*blepon pros auto*);
- (c) it is productive of something of this kind (*poiētikon esti toioutou*).

Both (a) and (b) echo the *peri ti memigmenon tōi mē onti ē hopōsoun koinōnounton tōi mē onti* in I.8.3.[2]. It is difficult to see (a) and (b) as anything other than variations of the 'participation' which the evil thing has in absolute evil; the *blepon* is certainly reminiscent of the hypostatic entities looking above to have their nature confirmed (cp. I.8.9.[1]-[5] with commentary *ad loc.*). (c) is trickier because it is unclear whether the subject it is evil or the evil thing. Both (a) and (b) apparently have the evil thing as subject and the *toioutou* in (b) is the same as *toioutou* in (c) but this would make (c) a rather strange reading: the evil thing produces absolute evil! On the other hand, if we adopt evil as the implied subject of *esti* in (c), then that evil is productive of things evil might sound reasonable, especially after we have discussed the causal-explanatory precedence of absolute evil over evil things; this interpretation

also gives evil or matter a more 'positive' outlook (in the sense of independent character) in its production of things evil. Nevertheless, (c) in this interpretation seems rather out of step with the (a) and (b) and thus with the second half (beginning with the *ka*) of this sentence and I.8.3.[14], which gives us a picture of evil which is an all-receiving and passive *hypokeimenon* accepting incoming affections. All of these are very confusing because we can say both that (with it in (c) as evil thing) absolute evil, in so far as hypostatic *ousia* is concerned, is an image of the evil things (because in the hierarchy the absolute evil comes after the evil things) and that (with it\* as absolute evil) evil things are images of evil in so far as the nature of evil is concerned. The context of [13], presumably, accepts both kinds of image-archetype relationship. We register the possibility of primary evil as the implicit subject of *esti* (it\*) in (c) without insisting on its correctness.

[14] Translation I.8.3.35-40:

So that which underlies figures and forms and shapes and measures and limits, decked out with an adornment which belongs to something else, having no good of its own, only a shadow in comparison with real being, is the substance of evil (if there really can be a substance of evil); this is what our argument discovers to be the primal evil, absolute evil.

Commentary:

Cp. II.4.5.18 and I.8.15.[9]. This is the conclusion of the argument for the existence of absolute evil. The argument for the existence of absolute evil, which starts from a series of privative forms of *poiai ousiai* which are characteristic of the hypostatic reality, leads us rather unexpectedly (Thedinga p.258: "überraschend schnell") to the conclusion that this absolute

evil is something like a substrate (*hypokeimenē*), underlying those *poiai ousiai*. Privation of *poia ousia* is understood as a substrate underlying the *poia ousia*! Unexpectedly? It is only when we say that *poia ousia* is the *energeia* of matter (or evil) that we do not have impassible matter in our vision; on the other hand, the present passage shifts its attention to matter or evil as an impassible substrate underlying opposite, contradictory and interacting elements. Perhaps not totally unexpected, because the *pampathes* (and so *pandechēs*) in I.8.3.[5] has been interpreted by us as somewhat like an all-receiving *hypodochē* and Plotinus understands *hypodochē* as a kind passive container without any power of further generation. This means that whatever comes into it will not change the nature of it, for otherwise absolute evil will perish. That is why Plotinus could say that these figures, shapes, measures, limits and all kinds of adornment do not belong to it but live in absolute evil as in mirrors (*katoptra*) only "matter is still less liable to affections than are mirrors (*kai haute eti mallon apathesteron ē ta katoptra*)" (III.6.9.20). The affections we have seen in absolute evil are in fact the interactions among those incoming qualities because only they can have opposites (III.6.9.33-5).

Since we have mentioned matter as a neutral substrate underlying opposite elements, I will make a short diversion on this issue, complementary to what I have already said and also in anticipation of what I will say in I.8.6 where the concept of *enantion* is discussed. This postulation of a neutral substrate underlying the interactions among opposite qualities can be said to be Aristotelian in inspiration; whether Aristotle regards as existent an amorphous and characterless prime matter is debatable but Plotinus undoubtedly does think there is such a matter. In *Phys.* 191a5 Aristotle says:

"There must be something underlying the contraries, and that the contraries must be two."

Plotinus, however, identifies this prime matter with *sterēsis* in itself; for Aristotle the *sterēsis* in question is opposite to the possession of a character and the underlying matter can be said to be *sterēsis* only accidentally:

"Now we distinguish matter and privation, and hold that one of these, namely the matter, is not accidentally, while the privation is not in its own nature; and that the matter is nearly, in a sense *is*, substance, while the privation in no sense is." (*Phys.* 192a3-6; with a slight change of Oxford translation)

It is the pure *sterēsis*, that is, *sterēsis* of a quality, that is said by Aristotle to be "an evil agent, not to exist at all" (*Phys.* 192a15) and the accidental *sterēsis*, matter, is said to desire the form (*ibid.* 192a23). It is difficult to assess the significance of Aristotle's opinion on evil because it is not formulated as part of a theory of evil. What is clear is that Plotinus ontologises what is quality in Aristotle and treats the *sterēsis* of it as the *sterēsis* of being because, as I have just said, Plotinus has the tendency to ontologise *poia* into *poia ousia*. Aristotle insists, on the other hand, on the distinction of the essence and accidental attributes of an object and separates them in different levels of reality. Being is innocent and neutral for Aristotle; it is what characterises being that is to blame. For Plotinus being is good and the lack of it evil and the quality, especially that of good and evil, is the factor that decides "the degree of being" a characterised sensible can enjoy. Everything is related to being. The more being an existent has the more ontologically authentic it is and the morally better it is.

which belongs to something else, having no good of its own. This is because of the nature of evil as neutral *hypokeimenon*, impassible to all imposition of forms.

only a shadow (*eidolon*) in comparison with real being. It has been said that the image-

archetype relationship defines the relationship between successive levels of reality and in I.8.3.[3] the anhypostatic reality is said to be "like an image (*eikon*) of being (= sensibles or relatively evil things) or something still more non-existent (= absolute evil)." This description of evil as only a shadow of being makes evil live in metaphysical limbo: it is not *on simpliciter*, neither is it *to mēdamōs on* because it is a reflection or shadow of being. It lives between *on* and *to mēdamōs on*.

the substance of evil (if there really can be a substance of evil). To speak of the substance (*ousia*) of evil seems to make evil a kind of substance but to deny it to evil seems to make evil non-existent. This is the metaphysical limbo of evil because it is *on* but *on* in its minimal degree. This is the reason why Plotinus adds the caveat: if (*eī*)..., a clear indication of matter as *mē on* delicately balanced between *on* and *pantelōs mē on*, and a clear indication of Plotinus' dilemma on whether to call evil a substance or not.

This is what our argument (*ho logos*) discovers to be the primal evil, absolute evil. This is in contrast to Plato's *mythopoiēsis* in inventing *hypodochē* and *dēmiourgos* in *Timaeus*. The reason why Plotinus employed *logos* is that *logos* is proper for the hypostatic reality and Plotinus, in conducting his argument for the quasi-existence of absolute evil, adopted a top-down approach because the anhypostatic reality has most, if not all, concepts borrowed from the hypostatic reality and one can go downward by a process of *sterēsis* of positive *poia ousia* and reach to the bottom of anhypostatic reality, that is, the primal evil, absolute evil. *Logos* is proper to the inquiry of hypostatic reality and is the starting point for this search of evil. Nevertheless, this reveals a kind of confidence in rationalistic argument in an area where, Plato says, only *mythopoiēsis*, *nothos logismos* and *anaisthēsia* probably work.

To conclude the commentary on I.8.3 I wish to discuss an opinion of Pistorius who thinks that

the primary evil or absolute evil is nothing more than the "logical postulation of absolute negation" rather than an entity or quasi-entity:

"evil remains but a logical postulate. We see it only in the things in which it is present"

and

"We know that there is such a thing, not because we know it or can see it, but because without it we can find no explanation of the evil that we see in those entities of which we have knowledge." (Pistorius p.128)

Accompanying his logical postulation of evil is the epistemological impossibility of us having any knowledge of this absolute absence (ibid.). Based on these Pistorius reaches this conclusion on primary evil:

"To ask for the author of evil is a *petitio principii*, because it presupposes that evil has an author. Lack can have no author. It is the primal condition. It is a cosmic necessity." (Ibid. p.129)

I do not deny that this logical nature of matter is pervasive and, in my view, prominent in Plotinus' work and a presupposition of the logical function of *heterotēs* has to be assumed throughout the generation of reality from the One, but one cannot but complain that he has never said anything systematically about this logical nature except the assertion in the quotations I have made. To reply to his opinion I have these things to say. Pistorius' opinion on the logical postulation, rather than ontological entity, of primary evil is based on a misconception of Plotinus' *mē on* as *pantelōs mē on* (Ibid. p.122), a total absence of being and



with no link whatsoever with the rest of reality. (I do not understand how he can give this *pantelōs mē on* the logical nature he claims for his matter.) I have already commented on this Parmenidean *pantelōs mē on* in I.8.3.[3]. Plotinus, on the other hand, conceives *mē on* or evil as part of the conceptual framework determined by emanation of which matter is the terminal stage. This conceptual framework is a full plenitude of *on* and the deficiency in matter has nevertheless to be determined by a reference to the One which is generative of this plenitude; it is therefore an entity and a constitutive part of the emanation. It is not a purely logical postulation with purely operational functions and no existential status at all. It is its almost complete absence of being that explains its evil nature because the goodness in Plotinus is understood as a plenitude of being and a bestowal of being. It is a kind of entity (or quasi-entity) in which the secondary evil can take part in and this means Platonic realism is at work here. Because it is an entity and we can have a knowledge by removal (*aphairesis*): "in the process of taking away all form we apprehend formlessness in ourselves, if we propose to look at matter" (I.8.9.[10]; see commentary *ad loc.*). The epistemological difficulty is real indeed but an indirect approach, in terms of inference *di' enantiotētos*, remains open nevertheless and this should clear Pistorius' epistemological objection for the existence of primary evil. The last thing to say is this: if we follow Pistorius then we will have the difficulty of explaining the physical function of matter which acts as the *hypokeimenon* sustaining the becoming; a mere logical postulation of it can not explain to us what that which underlies becoming is. On this point Pistorius is refuted by Plotinus' belief in the physical function of matter such as in I.8.7. Pistorius' opinion on matter as a purely logical postulation is therefore incorrect and has to be rejected.

- 1.8.4 -

1.8.4 tackles a very important point on the relationship between matter and soul after the establishment of matter as absolute evil and the distinction between the absolute and secondary evil in 1.8.3. 1.8.4 begins to link this absolute evil to its realisation as secondary evil in the cosmos in the form of moral activity performed by moral agents who are defined as individual souls. The same kind of concern will be picked up again in full from 1.8.8 - 1.8.15 (with the exception of 1.8.9.), the so called apologetic part of 1.8. It is 1.8.4 that confirms that the apologetic part is an intrinsic part of 1.8.

1.8.4.[1] will introduce, first of all, the factor of body which is blamed for all the disorder in soul. 1.8.4.[2] then delves into the "irrational part of the soul" which accounts for all the unrestrained affection and ill-informed opinions. 1.8.4.[3] asks whence comes all of these evils in soul; 1.8.4.[4] replies that this is because soul is not outwith matter for soul, if it stays within the hypostatic reality, can never become evil. With this metaphysical condition dictated by matter soul is said to participate in matter or in *ametria via* body and this is the topic for 1.8.4.[5]. The main effect of this involvement with body is that it will cause a kind of epistemological misdirection by looking downwards at becoming of which matter is the principle, not upwards to the *stasis* of being (1.8.4.[6]). This principle of becoming is said to possess a power of infecting whoever directs his thinking towards it (1.8.4.[7]). On the other hand, as 1.8.4.[8] says, a perfect and good soul will only look up to *Nous* to have itself defined and confirmed; not all souls, however, can remain directed upwards and stay in this condition, and if they go downwards it is because they are not yet perfect and are still infected with the influence from matter; this is the topic for 1.8.4.[9].

[1] Translation I.8.4.1-6:

The nature of bodies, in so far as it participates in matter, will be an evil, not the primal evil. For bodies have a sort of form which is not true form, and they are deprived of life, and in their disorderly motion they destroy each other, and they hinder the soul in its proper activity, and they evade reality in their continual flow, being secondary evil. The soul is not itself evil, nor is it all evil.

Commentary:

Theiler in Harder<sup>2</sup> adds *deuteron* after *hyles* in I.1 and follows two deletions by Müller (*ou prōton* after *an* in I.2 and *deuteron kakon* after *rheonta* in I.5); these changes do not bring anything significant to what the original text has already given us, and so we follow H. & S. and Armstrong.

In I.8.2.[9] Plotinus says that there would be no evil in the universe had the Soul *hypostasis* stayed in the hypostatic reality and not gone further. The fact is that it had already done so and evil had inevitably come as a consequence. The rationale for this generation of anhypostatic reality by soul is because of the vertical plenitude Plotinus has assigned to the soul - it has various powers, "a beginning, a middle and an end" (I.8.14.[9]) within itself or in the words of Reale: "in the sphere of the soul a hierarchical multiplicity is also present" (Reale 1990 p.356). In the Soul *hypostasis* Plotinus distinguishes (a) the undescended part of soul which is almost identical with *Nous*; (b) the sister souls: the world soul and individual souls. The world soul has a definite relationship with the sensible world but does not descend (cp. I.8.5.[10]: "though there is matter with the visible gods, evil is not there") while individual souls do descend and the extent of this descent depends on the individual souls themselves

and can be varied (ibid.):

"The Soul of the All, abiding in itself makes, and the things which it makes come to it, but the particular souls themselves go to the things, so they have departed to the depths; or rather, a great part of them has been dragged down and has dragged them with it by their thoughts to the lower existence." (IV.3.6.24-7)

This extreme edge of individual soul is *physis* (IV.4.13.2-3), the principle of life, which is responsible for the production of even lower reality and for the functions related to sensations, and it is this part of soul that creates the *mundus sensibilis* of the anhypostatic reality; because it is what *physis* has created and it becomes a kind of narcissistic attraction to *physis*. Its creation is said to be the reflection of the hypostatic reality on the anhypostatic evil or mirror:

"intellect itself is origin and activity which comes from the active principle itself. Intellect, then possesses, and the soul of the All receives from it for ever and had always received, and this is its life (*autēi to zēn*), and what appears at each successive time is its consciousness (*sunesis*) as it thinks (*noousēs*); and that which is reflected from it into matter is nature (*to de ex autēs emphantasthen eis hylēn physis*), in which, or indeed before it, the real beings come to a stop, and there are the last and lowest realities of the intelligible world (*en hēi histatai ta onta, ē kai pro toutou, kai estin eschata tauta tou noetou*); for what comes after at this point is imitation (*ta mimemata*). But nature acts on matter and is affected by it (*hē physis eis autēn poiouσα kai paschouσα*), but that soul which is before nature and close to it without being affected, and that which is still higher does not act on bodies or matter." (IV.4.13.17-25; my underlining)

The importance of this passage justifies its full quotation. If we add this one:

"there is need of matter on which nature can work and which it forms" (III.8.2.2-3)

and

"nature, which people say has no power of forming mental images or reasoning, has contemplation in itself and makes what it makes by contemplation" (III.8.1.21-4)

then I.8.4.[1] would become fully clear. The bodies (*sōmata*) in question are the consequence of *physis'* contemplation in matter (like a reflection on to a mirror - N.B.: the archetype-image relationship -) and in so far as the *ousia* of bodies is concerned it is *physis* that contributes to it, but as for the evil essence of bodies it is matter that is responsible for. The bodies are the product of the acts by *physis* on matter. Thus they, as we have said, have two kinds of image-archetype relationship with regard to *physis* and matter, and matter as evil is the archetype in which the bodies, in so far as they are secondarily evil, participate. Therefore Plotinus says that the nature of bodies is evil but they are not evil itself because there remain in them traces of hypostatic reality.

For bodies have a sort of form which is not true form (*eidōs ti ouk alēthinon*). The *eidōs* in question here is not the *eidōs* of evil, i.e., primal evil, but the form which comes from *physis* and the hypostatic reality. It is not true because the reflection of *physis* on matter only creates imitations (*ta mimēmata*); true form ends with *physis*, the terminal end of hypostatic reality, and survives after it only in an imitated and distorted way.

they are deprived of life. Because, according to the quotation from IV.4.13, life is the activity

of *theoria* and *theoria* means the capacity to receive from higher reality and to generate a lower one; bodies as the products of *physis* - the last of hypostatic reality and the end of *theoria* - acting on the all receiving matter, because they are after *physis*, cannot have real life, the life of *theoria*.

in their disorderly motion they destroy each other. This echoes the I.8.3.[14] where primal evil is said to be the substrate which underlies the opposite qualities which act on one another; the disorderly motion happens because the bodies can only have a form which is not true. It also anticipates I.8.14.[1]. Cp. III.2.2.1-8 and 19-28 and III.2.4.37-8. This disorderly motion is, furthermore, an echo of the motion in the primordial *ichnē* before the intervention from the *dēmiourgos* in *Timaeus*; in other words, this disorderly motion found in matter is the object for the *diacosmesis* of *physis*, that is, the generation of *physis* into matter should not be seen as a kind of absolute generation but a generation of order out of a given disorder, that is, a generation of reconstructed intelligibility. This *diacosmesis* and the consequent corruption of *physis* are what happen to the second descent of soul.

they hinder the soul in its proper activity (*empodia tēs psychēs pros tēn autēs energeian*). cp. I.8.13.[1]: "... vice is an impediment (*empodion*) to the soul..."; cp. also IV.3.10.3ff.: "In the things that come after one often hinders another and they are deprived of the attainment of their proper form..." (cp. IV.8.3). The proper activity of soul is its double act: *theoria* of its prior reality and the necessary *poiēsis* as a consequence of this *theoria*. Plotinus has said in the quotation from IV.4.13 that *physis* - this is what the soul specifically means here - acts on matter but is affected by what it acts on. In the quotation from IV.3.6 the individual souls are dragged downwards by their thought of the lower reality. This seems to indicate that the further generation by soul into anhypostatic reality is the cause of evil and this again is attributed in the next sentence, I.8.4.[2], to the vertical plenitude of soul and, furthermore, to

the double act of every hypostatic entity in its *theoria* - *genesis* (or *poiēsis*) mechanism. The generation by *physis* into matter is the cause for this *empodia*. For soul the proper activity (*energeia*) is looking upwards to the *Nous* and staying in the noetic world (IV.3.5.15-9) and generating its posterior reality without being thereby dragged downwards, but this is impossible for *physis* because *physis* is too weak in *theoria*. This seems to make Plotinus ascribe the existence of evil to the inexorable logic implied in the emanation of reality from the One because *physis* is one of the indispensable links in this great chain of being, but is too weak to complete it and to make the hypostatic reality a self-sufficient system.

From this, together with I.8.2.[9], we begin to see that there are two series of causations in the emanation of reality with regard to matter: the first is its absolute generation and the second is the generation of sensible cosmos by the reflection of *physis* on to this pre-existent matter and this sensible cosmos can be said to be the result of an imposition of order upon a pre-existent disorder; this is the reason why I have repeatedly said that the second descent of soul is responsible for the generation of reconstructed intelligibility. The absolute generation of matter will stress its utter lack of ontic authenticity (i.e., matter as *mē on*) while the second descent of soul in its imposition of order will stress the lack of essence or forms in matter (such as matter as impediment).

they evade (*pheugei*) reality (*ousian*) in their continual flow (*aei rheonta*), being secondary evil (*deuteron kakon*). This echoes Heraclitean *panta rhei* and Plato's description of sensible world as in permanent instability and is already anticipated by the *oudamēi hestōs* said of primal evil in I.8.3.[4]. Bodies are the reflection of *physis* on matter and are not truly real because *physis* has been affected by matter in their permanent instability. The word "*pheugei*" seems to echo Moderatus (see 3.2.8).

The soul is not in itself (*kath' heautēn*) evil, nor is it all evil (*oud' au pasa kakē*). It is the consequence of soul's (or *physis'*) generation into matter that drags soul downwards; before the descent, soul on her own, including *physis*, is a true hypostatic entity. This passage is therefore a repetition of the regrets expressed in I.8.2.[9]: "if things had stopped here...", i.e., if soul does not generate any further reality, but in the present passage the stress is on the second descent of soul. The soul *kath' heautēn* means the hypostatic entity which has not descended and which belongs totally to the noetic world. nor is it all evil is a concession in that Plotinus recognises only some parts of individual soul are liable to the lower reality and become contaminated with evil. This, however, does not make soul, even in its vertical plenitude, all evil. The background to the thesis that soul is not the source of evil is that it is the existence of matter instead that creates the metaphysical condition for soul to descend and to err and this existence of matter is ontologically prior to the second descent of soul which creates evil in the descended soul and in the sensible.

[2] Translation I.8.4.6-12:

Which, then, is evil soul? It is the sort of thing which Plato means when he says "those in whom the part of the soul in which evil naturally resides has been brought into subjection," that is, it is the irrational part of the soul which is receptive of evil, that is of unmeasuredness and excess and defect, from which come unrestrained wickedness and cowardice and all the rest of the soul's evil, involuntary affections which produce false opinions, making it think that the things which it shuns and seeks after are evil and good respectively.

Commentary:



The last passage has just announced that "the soul is not in itself evil, nor is it all evil," and Plotinus in this passage tries to pin down the evil part of soul which is susceptible to the real source of evil, matter. This is because the bodies discussed in [1] are said to "have a sort of form which is not true form" and this means that it is the *alogon* in soul which informs bodies. I.8.4.[2] is therefore an extension of the discussion about the evils, caused by "bodies" in I.8.4.[1], with the attention shifted to "the irrational part of the soul." (Cp. *Chalcidius In Tim.* 297) The pattern of thinking behind this is: soul will become evil only when soul creates body in matter and body becomes the medium through which matter infects soul.

Plotinus adapts, not accurately, Plato's *Phaedrus* 258b2-3 to his use, but the alleged text is not exactly appropriate to the question. Nevertheless the text leads to the typically Platonic definition of evil soul: evil soul is irrational soul and irrational soul is that part of soul which is naturally receptive of evil (*hōs tou alogou tēs psychēs eidous to kakon dechomenou*); this reception of evil is mainly concerned with the embodiment of soul. What does Plotinus refer to when he makes such an identification? *Physis*, which generates and is dragged towards the sensible, is the most likely candidate. One has, however, to register a puzzle here. In other places Plotinus would not hesitate in announcing that *physis* and any part of soul are impassible and rational (cp. Reale 1990 p.359), but now we have an explicit text which denies this thesis. Plotinus has the alternative of explaining the existence of sensibles by the reflection of the system of forms on matter; he nevertheless introduces *physis* to do this job of mediation. This makes *physis* a link between the hypostatic reality and anhypostatic reality, and *physis* might therefore be required to share the features of both sides for it is to be the necessary connection: it is the *alogon* of a *logistikē psychē*. Plotinus, however, does not make it share features from both sides; he makes *physis* deprived of the typical characteristic of hypostatic reality, the power of *theoria* and the power to return. *Physis* is only a power of *poiēsis par excellence*, not of *theoria*:

"...nature (*physis*) is an image of intelligence.... it does not know, but only makes; for since it gives what it has spontaneously to what comes after it, it has its giving to the corporeal and material as a making.... Nature has no grasp or consciousness of anything." (IV.4.13.3-15; my underlining)

It is this lack of *theoria* or the power to return to the higher reality that makes *physis* subject to being affected when it projects itself on matter and becomes the source of secondary evils. Therefore when Plotinus in this passage says *physis* or those affected parts of soul are the *alogon tes psyches eidos*, the *a-logon* does not mean an antithetical opposition to but a deprivation of *logos*, a natural feature of Soul *hypostasis*, which turns *physis* into a neutral and defenseless entity specified for generation. It is this deprivation of *logos* or *theoria* that makes it receptive of evil influence from matter.

The evil in soul is like matter in its lack of *metron* (*ametria*) and excess (*hyperbolē*) and defect (*elleipsis*), *poiiai ousiai* similar to the *apeiron* and *aneideon* in I.8.3.[5]. This is a kind of *a-logon*. However, what is derived from (*ex hōn*) the evil soul is said to be unrestrained wickedness (*akolasia*) and cowardice (*deilia*) and all the rest of soul's evil (*hē allē psychēs kakia*) and involuntary affections (*akousia pathemata*) (cp. III.2.10.1ff.). All of these seem to show that Plotinus here, hypothetically, tries to make the evil soul the primary source of evil since all the evils mentioned are secondary and can only be regarded as derived from a primary source which is soul. Harder<sup>2</sup> holds this view:

"Plotin vermag das *prōton kakon* auch als Ursache seelischer Bosheit zu erweisen, insofern es im unvernünftigen Seelenteil wirkt." (Harder<sup>2</sup> Vb p.408 note 4.7).

I say "hypothetically" because this thesis of evil soul as primary evil is going to be refuted in the apologetic part of I.8 but even this opinion of Harder<sup>2</sup> might be wrong here. More about this immediately.

The involuntary affection is said to cause false opinions and confuse rights and wrongs, and this seems to attribute to soul - and so ultimately to matter - epistemological failure in moral judgement. Hager seizes this involuntary and claims that this is a replication of *die platonische Lehre von der Unfreiwilligkeit des Unrechttuns* (Hager p.88).

An additional point about evil soul and a reply to Harder<sup>2</sup>. We can see there is a certain balance of "input" and "output" in the evil soul: the evil part of soul is said to be receptive of evil, that is of unmeasuredness and excess and defect, but derived from the soul we can see unrestrained wickedness and cowardice and all the rest of the soul's evil. The 'input' is the very abstract and general kind of evil and the 'output' is the more specific ones. The evil soul seems in control of this transformation from the, say, *ametria* (as the *energeia* or *poia ousia* of prime evil), to the specific *ametria* which characterises the secondary evil. Perhaps it is because of this role of mediation that evil soul is said to be the source of unrestrained wickedness and cowardice and all the rest of soul's evil and involuntary affections. Soul in this case is to be understood as the *causa efficiens* of secondary evil, and, as for an eidetic explanation, one nevertheless has to go back to the prime evil, that is, matter. In this sense then what Harder has said, that I.8.4.[2] proposes, hypothetically, that evil soul is the primary source of evil is incorrect; it is simply that the primary evil, that is matter, cannot "cause" secondary evil in a direct and efficacious way but has to require the mediation of a susceptible soul, that is, an already contaminated soul, to make this happen.

A question now arises. There is an ontology of evil which sees matter as the primary source

of secondary evil and evil as *mē on*; there is a psychology of evil which sees secondary evils as derived from soul without claiming soul as the primary source of them. How much weight can we give to this soul in this causal-explanatory relationship in regard to the secondary evils? Is it merely a mediation without any independent contribution made by soul? My answer is yes. In my Interpretative Essay 4.3.20-24 I have supported an over-determination of psychology of evil (which I make Plotinus call folk-psychology in commentary on I.8.14) by the ontology or "me-ontology" of evil. I refer to my arguments in those mentioned places. Plotinus, moreover, in I.8.4.[2], seems to mean the term 'soul' in a narrower sense than we have expected and this narrow sense of soul in terms of human soul (as witnessed by the kinds of vices Plotinus gives as examples: "unrestrained wickedness and cowardice... involuntary affections... false opinions") cannot cover other kinds of secondary evils, such as diseases or natural disasters, which are beyond the efficacy of an evil human soul.

Finally about the translation of the *kakia psychēs* in I.7 and also *allēn tina kakian* in I.8.5.15 and *allēs kakias* in I.8.6.6 which both refer to *adikia*. O'Brien in his 1971 p.133 has clearly distinguished *kakon* and *kakia* and seems to attribute to the latter a kind of evil with an internal motivation in a person and thus call it 'sin', in contrast to the *kakon* which expresses the ontological limitation of an existent:

"...that association with the body is evil (*kakon*). But this is not the same as to say that association with the body entails sin (*kakia*)." (my underlining)

This is also the position of Rist (1974 p.497). *Adikia*, admittedly, is a species of evil and is related to human being in the texts, but, as we will see later Plotinus treats it in a very abstract way, as no more than a specification of absolute evil itself. He is, in general, not interested in the motivation which impels a man to be unjust and to do unjust things; he is more interested

in the ontological nature of *adikia* or *kakia*. The thesis of matter as *mē on* should put in doubt this interpretation of evil in terms of an inner and personal attribute of a person because there is not much room for this sort of internal phenomenon within a comprehensive deterministic outlook as dictated by his emanation scheme of reality. Schwyzer (Schwyzer 1973 p.272 note 28) has denied just such a distinction although his argument there is directed against Fuller:

*"Das griechische Wort kakon unterscheidet nicht zwischen dem objektiven Übel und dem subjektiven Bösen, was B.A.G. Fuller, ... als 'physical and moral evil' bezeichnet."*

(my underlining)

As we think that Plotinus' ethics or theory of evil is no other than a version of his ontology - ontology based on the emanation from the One - Schwyzer's observation seem correct enough to put in question O'Brien's distinction between sin and evil. Schwyzer continues:

*"Dies ist aber für die Betrachtung der Schrift I 8 bedeutungslos, da hier weder die äussern kaka noch die moralisch verwerflichen Taten untersucht werden, sondern das autokakon, das Schlechte oder Böse an sich, Hauptthema der Schrift ist, von Fuller 'metaphysical evil' genannt. Bei dieser ontologischen Fragestellung verschwindet der Unterschied zwischen 'schlecht' und 'böse'."* (my underlining)

Moreover, Schwyzer's observation here conforms to his disagreement (Ibid. p.274) with O'Brien's conclusion in his 1971 which makes the activity of individual soul a sufficient condition for the existence of evil.

[3] Translation I.8.4.12-4:

**But what is it which produces this evil, and how are you going to trace it back to the source and cause of evil which you have just described?**

**Commentary:**

The last passage has shown that the kinds of evil normally associated with evil soul, such as "unrestrained wickedness, cowardice and all the rest of the soul's evil (and) involuntary affections," are derived from a metaphysical base, matter or prime evil. These psychological evils are known to us in a more direct way in that we, as individual souls, are supposed to be their immediate origin and therefore Plotinus asks us how we can search back to its **source and cause** (*archēn... kai aitian*) which is apparently not obvious to us. To pose the question in this way has implied a denial that secondary evils are psychic in origin.

It was said above that there is an image-archetype relationship obtaining between secondary evil and primal evil and this relationship is eidetic in that it is explanatory. Here in this passage Plotinus decides to ask what is the efficacious (*pepoiēkos*) relationship the primal evil exerts on the secondary evil. In the light of *pepoiēkos* the *archē* and *aitia* have to be understood in the sense of efficacy as well, although this efficacy, as has been said, has to be mediated.

[4] Translation I.8.4.14-5:

**First of all, this kind of soul is not outside matter or by itself.**

[5] Translation I.8.4.15-7:

So it is mixed with unmeasuredness and without a share in the form which brings order and reduces to measure, since it is fused with a body which has matter.

Commentary:

To trace the psychological evil back to its metaphysical origin, for Plotinus, is to examine the relationship of this evil soul with matter. He finds how evil soul - unlike the world soul which "abiding in itself makes and the things which it makes come to it" - goes to sensible things and is dragged down (IV.3.6.24-7). These sensible things, in which the individual souls are embodied, are said in I.8.3.[3] to be images of being, that is a kind of *mē on*, because these sensible beings have been contaminated with the absolute *mē on*. It is the sensible things which *physis*, the lower part of soul, has created and with which it is now engrossed, that account for individual souls' involvement in matter: it is fused with a body that has matter (*sōmati gar enkekratei hylēn echonti*). This embodied soul is therefore not outside matter or by itself. In brief, the relationship between matter and soul has to be mediated through body which *physis* in its descent has created and which is in turn affected by matter (*mē on*) because body, compared with *physis*, is in a greater deficiency of being.

Individual soul, *via* body, is now mixed with primal evil and the primal evil is said in I.8.3.[5] to be unmeasuredness, unboundedness and formlessness itself, so the individual soul is contaminated, because of body, with unmeasuredness and without a share in form. This contamination means the individual soul has lost its transcendent contact with the system of forms that is *Nous* and can no longer carry out the mission of *epimeleia* originally imposed on it: "our souls would come down because they would have their part marked off for them in this sphere, and by the turning to them of that which needs their care" (IV.3.4.23-5), because the contamination by matter has deprived the individual soul of a share in the form which brings

order and reduces to measure. The descended soul is now assimilated to matter and becomes the source of secondary evil on behalf of the absolute evil, matter.

[6] Translation I.8.4.17-22:

And then its reasoning part, if that is damaged, is hindered in its seeing by the passions and by being darkened by matter, and inclined to matter, and altogether by looking towards becoming, not being; and the principle of becoming is the nature of matter, which is so evil that it infects with its own evil that which is not in it but only directs its gaze to it.

Commentary:

This passage explains the exact reason why soul is corrupted by matter into an evil condition and the cause is attributed to the epistemological failure of soul and this in turn is attributed to the infectious nature of matter (cp. *pepoiēkos* in I.12).

The Soul in its hypostatic existence has a noetic capacity of intuition similar to *noēsis* in the *Nous*, a kind of simultaneous co-presence of the knower and the knowable, but when it is embodied this intuitive capacity is replaced by reasoning (*logismos*). The reasoning part of soul (*to logizomenon*) is connected with temporality (III.7.11-2) and can have access to knowledge in a discursive way (I.8.2.[3]). Despite this limitation, when soul looks upwards (seeing, *horan*) to *Nous* its discursive *logismos* can be an imitation of "the being of the intelligible world" (III.7.11.58). Thus when soul goes downwards and becomes evil the *logismos*, the defining feature of soul, is damaged (*blaptoito*). The reason why the *logismos* is damaged is because of passions (or emotions) (*tois pathesi*) and matter. Passions should be understood as the kind



of passion that is involved in the intimate relationship soul establishes with body; matter means the real cause for these passions. It is the involvement in body that brings soul within the striking distance (*darkened, episkoteisthai*) of matter. (In contrast to the *perilampusis* of the hypostatic reality in its procession.) It is by this over-involvement in the body that soul is contaminated and thereafter soul is inclined (*neneukenai*) to matter and its vision (*horan*) is totally diverted from being to becoming (*genesin*) which is the nature of matter. The epistemological failure of soul is thus a turn (*neusis*) in the wrong direction.

The clause from And to being is a history of soul's lapse into evil. Plotinus' account gives the logical steps of what would happen to soul should this moral lapse happen. These are four in number:

- (a) it is involved in body and passions which prevent *logismos* from exercising its normal function;
- (b) because of this involvement it is darkened by primal evil; (c) it produces within itself a *neusis* and is inclined to matter; (d) fixed looking towards becoming of which matter is the principle.

the principle of becoming is the nature of matter: this could refer to the function of matter as the substrate (*hypokeimenon*) which underlies change and becoming. cp. the *oudamēi hestōs* in I.8.3.[5].

The defining feature of the soul, *logismos*, is maintained by its turning to see the higher hypostatic reality. When it lapses it is because it looks (*blepsan*) to matter. The repeated appearance of the words related to seeing (*horan* twice and *blepsan* once), either in its upwards looking to *Nous* or downwards to matter, makes soul (and strictly speaking, *physis*) a rather Janus-like entity, an entity which connects but also separates the hypostatic and

anhypostatic reality:

"...it occupies a middle rank among realities, belonging to that divine part but being on the lowest edge of the intelligible, and, having a common boundary with the perceptible nature, gives something to it of what it has in itself and receives something from it in return...." (IV.8.7.5-7; cp. IV.4.3.10-2)

Its own nature is largely defined by the directions it turns to. If this is the case, then the nature of primal evil, to which the soul is now turning, would determine the nature of soul and infect it with its own evil (*anapimplanai kakou heautēs*; cp. *ti to pepoiēkos tēn kakian autēn* in II.12-3). Schröder describes this very dramatically: "*den zerstörenden Wirkungen dieser gorgonenhaften Macht anheimzufallen*" (Schröder p.143). The soul which directs its gaze to primal evil and descends towards it but will not be completely identified with it for otherwise primal evil, which is defined as all-receiving *hypokeimenon* but is in fact too weak to receive any incoming affections (*to mepo en autei*), would then be changed in its absolute nature and destroyed; this in turn implies that the descended soul will never be totally assimilated to matter.

It would be convenient if the relationship between matter and soul could be listed in a schematic way:

- (1) soul in its first descent generates matter (this is, perhaps, mentioned only once in I.8.2.[9], but has to be assumed throughout I.8);
- (2) soul in its second descent, together with matter, creates the sensible (see 5.3.21);
- (3) soul is contaminated by matter *via* the sensible;
- (4) soul, now evil, is the medium through which the absolute evil is related to secondary evils and in this sense evil soul is the origin of secondary evils;
- (5) soul is merely an instrument to relate the absolute evil to the secondary evils and so the

ontology of evil overdetermines the psychology of evil.

(7) Translation I.8.4.22-5:

For since it is altogether without any share in good and is a privation of good and a pure lack of it, it makes everything which comes into contact with it in any way like itself.

Commentary:

I.8.4.[6] mentions the infectious nature of matter and [7] explains why.

Matter is said to be *mē on*, the image of the image of being; it is because of the image-archetype relationship (= image at two removes from its archetype) that it retains some connection with being but, as the terminal end of the emanation, it is the weakest possible *parousia* of being and exists only at the very edge of reality, an "almost" *apousia*. (I.8.1.[4]) It has a kind of negative nature in the sense of *sterēsis* but not negative in the sense of antithetical opposition; it has no share (*amoiros*) and is a privation (*sterēsis*) and pure lack (*akratos elleipsis*) of good. Plotinus, with this interpretation of *sterēsis* and its related terms, tries to give us a neutral matter totally deprived of character.

It is therefore quite startling to see that this neutral matter seems to have the capacity to affect the incoming soul and assimilate it to itself (*exomoioi heautēi*), a behaviour quite out of its all-passive character. One possible way to explain this is to understand that the whole Plotinian emanation, which is derived from the supra-existential One, is an existential plenitude and Plotinus sees, like Plato, that this plenitude exists in degrees. Moreover, this existential

plenitude in degrees is visualised in a vertical way and soul who becomes evil is seen as approaching (*autēs prosapsetai*) to the least being, matter. Therefore from the perspective of the individual soul, it is less that matter assimilates soul to its evil nature than that soul has its nature degraded by its choice of involvement in sensibles and matter. Matter therefore remains "neutral" but by its position in the vertical scheme of existential plenitude maintains a kind of fatal attraction to the soul which approaches it. In this sense matter is efficacious (*pepoiēkos*) but this efficacy requires the willing co-operation of soul. However, this is a perspective from the limited and subjective soul; in an objective description matter is neutral and passive. The two "it"s refer to matter as subject but the perspective is from the descended soul.

[8] Translation I.8.4.25-8:

The perfect soul, then, which directs itself to intellect is always pure and turns away from matter and neither sees nor approaches anything undefined and unmeasured and evil. It remains, therefore, pure, completely defined by intellect.

Commentary:

The last passage has discussed soul's turning downwards to matter; this passage discusses soul's turning in the upward direction. It has been said that every hypostatic entity has a double act in self-constitution: it has to look upwards to the immediately higher reality to be defined and from this *theoria* there is a necessary consequence of *poiēsis* or *genesis*. *Physis*, said in the next passage I.8.4.[9] to be "a sort of ghost of the first soul", is supposed to have only the power of *poiēsis*, without a *theoria* strong enough to make it return, so that it is liable to the influence from matter. It is the source of all sorts of passions, impulses, wishes and

desires but it has nothing to do with the rest of the soul which is the true soul and "the true man":

"the lower parts of it are something mixed, the part which begins on thought is, I suppose, the true man." (I.1.7.19-20)

"the nature of that higher soul of ours will be free from all responsibility for the evils that man does and suffers...." (I.1.9.1-3)

These upper parts of individual soul are not only capable of rationality but also have an undescended part which is always transcendent. These upper parts can, theoretically, draw on the guaranteed freedom in its upward aspiration and can also master the lower enticements, whatever the amount of them (Westra p.183). The door is therefore always open to the individual soul for it to turn to *Nous* however contaminated the soul has been.

Soul, by turning (*neuouōsa*) to *Nous*, can thus preserve its hypostatic integrity and remains pure (*kathara*) and defined (*horisthesthai*) by *Nous* since only by doing this can soul be stabilised. Because of its hypostatic origin the soul can refrain from the downward looking (*apestraptai*). The downward consequence of *poiēsis* is, though, a natural necessity but it is soul's choice that determines the nature of this involvement. It can keep away from matter and whatever is enmattered, and thereby turn away from (*apestraptai*) complete indefiniteness (*to aoriston hapan*), unmeasuredness (*to ametron*) and evil.

[9] Translation I.8.4.28-32:

That which does not stay like this, but goes out from itself because it is not perfect or primary but is a sort of ghost of the first soul, because of its deficiency, as far as it extends, is filled with indefiniteness and sees darkness, and has matter by looking at that which it does not look at (as we say that we see darkness as well as the things we really see).

Commentary:

If the soul's legitimate habitat is in the noetic world, as I.8.4.[8] has shown, then it is necessary to know why there is evil soul. Plotinus analyses this problem by positing different levels of soul's activity, organised in a hierarchical and vertical way; the lower levels are the images of the higher ones. The soul which goes out of its noetic habitat (*ex autēs proelthousa*) is not perfect or primary but is a sort of ghost of the first soul (*hoion indalma ekeinēs*). It is the lower reach of the Soul *hypostasis*, which exists at the edge of reality and borders on anhypostatic reality, that has a deficiency of *theoria* and because of this deficiency (*elleimmati*) it makes this lower soul less able to be self-integrated by upward looking: it has a greater urge to go down than to go up and it can lapse to such an extent that it becomes filled with indefiniteness (*aoristias plerōtheisa*) and unable to avert its vision from matter. (Cp. the *poiētikon toutou*, that is, evil as impediment in soul to its exercise of normal functions in I.8.13.4ff..)

Matter is said to be darkness (*skotos*); this echoes the *episkoteisthai* of I.19. and a most appropriate image when it is related to seeing (*horai*, *blepousa* and *blepei*) because the generation of hypostatic reality is normally related to the analogy of emanation (*perilampsis*), and the end of it is darkness, i.e., the analogy for matter. (cp. I.8.9.[12] with commentary *ad loc.*; Schlette p.107; Beierwaltes 1961 p.102, for the darkness of the sensible and p.106 for matter.) The lapsed soul in contact with matter is said to look at darkness and looking at

darkness is looking at what in fact it does not see. This epistemological proposition of soul looking at matter can be understood in an ontological way: the lapsed soul becomes assimilated to matter, another entity, but this entity is *mē on* and soul has to become what is not truly *on* - that is a change of its nature - in order to see matter. (N.B.: the like by like principle in I.8.1.(3).)

Plotinus adds an exegesis to this puzzling statement: "*hōs legometha horan kai to skotos*". Armstrong's translation: as we say that we see darkness as well as the things we really see. This translation is interpretation, but an apparently correct one. Plotinus wishes to say that matter, despite the ontological limbo of *mē on*, is still somehow an *on* and is the proper topic for epistemological inquiry. When we see darkness, it does not mean we see nothing at all: we do see something because of what we are seeing remains a kind of *on*, however strange it is.

This section continues, thematically speaking, the discussion in 1.8.4 on the nature of evil and on the distinction between absolute evil and secondary evil. 1.8.5.[1] proposes a hypothesis that the primary source of evil is not evil but some entity even before matter. This objection is an anticipation of the more systematic objections in the apologetic part of 1.8. This is rejected by 1.8.5.[2] with a further clarification that primary evil, as *sterēsis* of *on*, is an absolute *sterēsis* while secondary evil, in so far as it participates both in good (i.e. hypostatic reality) and in matter, can be perfect "on the level of its own nature." Such an absolute *sterēsis* of *on* can only be matter (1.8.5.[3]) and to say that matter, as *mē on*, "is" is ambiguous (1.8.5.[4]). This absolute *sterēsis* of *on* is something like an absolute and objective standard which the secondary evil as relative *sterēsis* tends to move towards or away from and become more or less evil (1.8.5.[6]). 1.8.5.[7] says that such an absolute *sterēsis* of *on* is a general metaphysical condition and is not any particular vice; these particular vices are the consequences of "external additions." Then in 1.8.5.[8], Plotinus asks again how we can trace these particular vices or secondary evils back to that primary evil, a repetition of 1.8.4.[3] and an anticipation of 1.8.9.[6]-[11]. In 1.8.5.[9] Plotinus uses 'illness', 'ugliness' and 'poverty' (i.e., evils not directly related to soul) as examples and gives an analysis which seems rather conceptual and semantic by nature. If the absolute evil is a kind of metaphysical condition for the existence of these secondary evils, then we, who are the *prima facie* creators of these secondary evils are in fact only the medium through which that metaphysical condition is specified and embodied, that is, the absolute evil and even the secondary "evils are prior to us" (1.8.5.[10]); this is a very clear declaration of the ontology of evil as an objective order of reality and not a subjective perception and feeling. Then, in 1.8.5.[11] Plotinus tries to modify his sweeping statement in 1.8.5.[10] by some fine-tuning: enmattered object, such as astral



body, does not necessarily imply the existence of vice and even in the human beings who are enmattered there exist ways to master matter and conquer evil. This seems to be a caveat on the thesis that evil is matter, that is, not all that is enmattered has to be evil.

[1] Translation I.8.5.1-5:

**But if lack of good is the cause of seeing and keeping company with darkness, the evil for the soul will lie in the lack [or the darkness] and this will be primary evil - the darkness can be put second - and the nature of evil will no longer in matter but before matter.**

Commentary:

This passage continues the discussion conducted in I.8.4.[9]. The lapsed soul is already assimilated to matter and sees and keeps company with darkness (*horan kai suneinai tōi skotei*) and all of these are attributed to the lack of goodness (*hē ellipseis tou agathou*). I.8.5.[1] is a hypothesis ('*eiē*' *an* in I.2), a hypothetical objection against the Plotinian position that matter is absolute evil, with the purpose of clarifying some difficult points.

The hypothesis is rejected by Plotinus because it is meant to deny the thesis of matter as prime matter and in intention, if not in doctrine, it is a precursor of the apologetic part of I.8. The hypothesis is formulated this way: because matter, evil soul and secondary evil can all be defined as lack of good (*hē elleipsis tou agathou*), *elleipsis* can be seen as the genus of which the other three are species and therefore *elleipsis* is more primary than matter as evil. The gist of this proposed hypothesis is to dissociate primary evil from matter, a position which Plotinus certainly will not accept.

[for the darkness], this gloss is not only unnecessary but mistaken because the lack (*hē elleipsis*) (supposedly = primary evil) is already said, *ex hypothesi*, to be different from darkness which is secondary evil.

[2] Translation I.8.5.5-8:

**Yes, but evil is not in any sort of deficiency but in absolute deficiency; a thing which is only slightly deficient in good is not evil, for it can even be perfect on the level of its own nature.**

[3] Translation I.8.5.8-9:

**But when something is absolutely deficient - and this is matter - this is essential evil without any share in good.**

Commentary:

The hypothetical objection in I.8.5.[1] is not formulated in a satisfactory way (Schröder p.146) and in [2]-[3] Plotinus has to deal with the key concept of *elleipsis* in order to clarify the correct relationship between evil, matter and deficiency of good.

Deficiency (*elleipsis*, = *sterēsis*) of good is said either in an absolute way or in a relative way. A relative *elleipsis* of good means an entity which is not matter itself but an entity - the embodied soul or sensible - which is in contact with it and is thereby contaminated but which also participates in the hypostatic reality in a limited way. This relative *sterēsis* of being and

goodness, i.e., secondary evil, can exist in the soul in different degrees because being and goodness can also exist in different degrees and so the secondary evil can present itself in various degrees of intensity as well, depending on 'the amount of *sterēsis* of being' or *mē on* it possesses (Hager 1962 p.90). As the Soul *hypostasis* is a vertical plenitude and is susceptible to the influence of matter and therefore, in so far as the embodied soul is contaminated to the extent it is 'naturally' susceptible to, it is 'perfect,' in the sense that this degree of contamination (and this degree of participation in hypostatic reality) is a part of its nature. So Plotinus can say it can even be perfect on the level of its own nature (*dynatai gar kai teleon einai pros physin ten hautou*; cp. the "reception doctrine" in I.8.2.[6]). This implies that the potentiality of the lower reach of the soul, which is susceptible to influence from matter, can cover all nuances of secondary evil and this means secondary evil can exist in degrees. This seems a justification for the existence of secondary evils in that their presence can be explained ontologically as proper to their natures.

Evil soul, with relative deficiency in good, forms an image-archetype relationship with absolute deficiency and this absolute deficiency is matter and essential evil. Because this matter is the *eidos* in which these secondary evils participate it has to exist in an absolute and unique sense, like Platonic *eidē*, and so there is only one absolute or primary evil, in contrast to the infinite degrees and kinds of secondary evil. These three concepts: absolute *elleipsis* of good, matter and essential evil share a common feature in that they are totally deprived of good and they all refer to the same entity. Evil is the axiological term; matter is the ontological term; absolute deficiency (*hē pantelēs elleipsis*) describes the emptiness of the content in regard to goodness and being. Therefore the genus-species relationship in I.8.5.[1] should be understood in this way instead: absolute *elleipsis* of good is the genus of which the various kinds of secondary evils - which are of relative *elleipsis* - are species.

[4] Translation I.8.5.9-12:

For matter has not even being - if it had it would by this means have a share in good; when we say it "is" we are just using the same word for two different things, and the true way of speaking is to say it "is not."

Commentary:

The distinction between absolute deficiency of good and relative deficiency in [1]-[3] leads to the question of how we can speak of matter, the entity said to be *mē on*. It is possible to say that matter (or *mē on*) is and is not. Why?

When we say "*mē on* is" what we mean is that *mē on* is an entity and it is possible to 'mention' it; we can speak of "unicorn is" without implying that there is an actual existence of it. On the other hand, if we say *mē on* is not, we ask about the existential status of *mē on*; when we say "unicorn is not" we mean there is no actual existence of it. This is the reason why Plotinus says when we say it "is" we are just using the same word for two different things (*homōnymon autēi to einaī*). It means that we can use the same word for two different situations or references. The lesson is that Plotinus, by exploiting this ambiguity, can conduct his argument by mentioning *mē on* but at the same time denies its existential status. This strategy could be conceived as a reply to Parmenides's thesis that whatever is non-existent is inconceivable and unspeakable (K.R.S. 291).

It is right to doubt whether Plotinus developed the idea of a distinction between the 'use' of a name and the 'mention' of it. Another more acceptable explanation is the ontological ambiguity of Plotinus' *mē on*. It is on the borderline between the *on*, which is ultimately derived

from the omnipotent One, and the *to mēdamōs on*, which is totally outwith *on* as defined by emanation; it is the point where the emanation of reality is terminated and the *to mēdamōs on* (*per impossible*) begins and is as much on the side of *on* as on the side of *pantelōs mē on*. It is conceptually necessary to have *mē on* because the whole framework of reality can thereby be defined. On the other hand, because Plotinus' conceptual framework is a plenitude of being, the existence of an ambiguous *mē on* is bound to be extremely embarrassing. When Plotinus says that the true way of speaking matter or *mē on* is to say it "is not", what he stresses is the ontological side of matter or *mē on* as the termination of the emanation. It is also correct to speak of 'matter as *mē on* is' because it is the minimal *on*, not *pantelōs mē on*; this is to look at matter from top to bottom as the terminally weakened stage of emanation. Therefore, Plotinus is correct when he says "is" is used for two different things because this "is" is not monolithic in its connotation (like his degrees of being) since it can cover different degrees of "is," including the minimal "is" in *mē on*. We, on the other hand could also say that *mē on* can be used for two different things: it either belongs to *on* or belongs to *pantelōs mē on*. Consequently, we can further infer that both "is" and "is not" are applicable to *mē on*, two different words for the same thing, that is. It depends on how one reads this *mē on*. When Plotinus says The true way of speaking is to say it "is not", this opinion cannot be said to be final or it should be accepted with reservation. At least it is contradictory to what is explicitly argued in I.8.3.[2]-[3], that this *mē on* should not be understood as *pantelōs mē on*.

Harder's translation: "*sondern dass sie 'ist,' ist lediglich sprachlicher Gleichklang*" (my underlining; so too Hager 1962 p.89 but with slightly more elaboration of the philosophical implications of this *sprachlicher Gleichklang* in p.90) seems to miss the point; the difficulty is not purely linguistic but mainly philosophical because of the philosophically pregnant *esti* which can mean "exist" in degrees from a full being (hypostatic reality) to a minimal (almost non-existent) being. Schröder's translation also misses the point: "*nur der Gleichheit des*

*Sprachlichen Ausdrucks nach hat sie das 'Sein'.*" (my underlining)

[5] Translation 1.8.5.12-4:

**Deficiency, then, involves being not good, but absolute deficiency evil; great deficiency involves the possibility of falling into evil and is already an evil in itself.**

Commentary:

This passage is based on the conclusion already reached in 1.8.5.[2]-[3]. An entity with relative deficiency in good is not good neither is it absolutely evil, but it is good (and evil) to the extent that its nature allows. Only absolute deficiency or complete privation of good can be called evil itself. Such an evil 'exists' separately, independently and absolutely because its existence is like Plato's *eidos*, but relative evil can exist in degrees, and the degree of its being evil depends on the 'distance' (cp. *aphestēkota* in 1.8.6.41) between it and the absolute evil. Since secondary evil exists in degrees this implies that, as its nature changes, this secondary evil can be more so or less so and, as secondary evil is the consequence of soul's descent, this implies a further possible deterioration (cp. 1.8.15.[3]). This is especially so because in 1.8.4.[9] the absolute evil is said to possess the capacity to attract and contaminate whatever approaches it.

Plotinus here seems to envisage a hierarchy of evils with the absolute evil or matter as the nadir; in correspondence to this anhypostatic hierarchy is the hierarchy in the hypostatic reality with the One as the zenith. Since it has been argued that this anhypostatic reality is nothing other than a reflection of this hypostatic reality, Hager is correct in seeing their relationship as

its reversed image (*spiegelbildlich verkehrt*, Hager 1962 p.90) In I.8.5.[6], that is in the next sentence, Plotinus has tried, very tentatively, to establish the contents of this *Stufenordnung des Bösen* (ibid.).

[6] Translation I.8.5.14-9:

On this principle one must not think of evil as this or that particular kind of evil, injustice for instance or any other vice, but that which is not yet any of these particular evils; these are a sort of species of evil, specified by their own particular additions; as wickedness in the soul and its species are specified by the matter which they concern or the parts of the soul, or by the fact that one is like a sort of seeing, another like an impulse or experience.

Commentary:

The last passage stresses what the absolute deficiency of good or absolute evil is; this passage is on what a particular kind of evil is and how it is specified. The primal evil is an absolute deficiency of 'all' positive features characteristic of the hypostatic reality and this cannot be confused with any particular kind of evil with its relative deficiency of one or a limited number of features in relative degrees. Plotinus raises examples of injustice or any other vice off hand (N.B.: the *tode to kakon* is deictic). These particular kinds of evil are not to be confused with the primary evil; they are in a species-genus relationship (cp. I.8.5.[1] and [3]); these particular kinds of evil are formed (*eidopoioiomena*, N.B.: *eidos* is another transplantation from the hypostatic reality) by the addition of specific difference to the genus matter (*ekeinou prosthēkais*). The inspiration is Aristotelian but the species-genus relationship in the hand of Plotinus has an additional ontological dimension.

The rest of this passage is concerned with the formation of these different species of particular evils; it can be seen as an explanation of the word *prosthēkē*. Plotinus uses the example of wickedness (*poneria*) and its different species and tries to identify different aspects of this *prosthēkē*. First, it is (a) matter. Here matter can only mean the specific portion of proximate matter, the matter which underlies a specific kind of form, such as the descent of body to a body made ready for it in IV.3.12.37-9 (cp. IV.3.9.21-3). Secondly, (b) the parts of soul (*tois meresi tēs psychēs*). This is related to the different faculties of soul and it is the lower faculties of it, especially those related to generation and sensation, that are meant here (cp. the *toū alogou tes psyches eidous* in I.8.4.[2] and I.8.14.[9]: "there are many powers of soul, and it has a beginning, a middle and an end"). (a) and (b) are both about the components of the entity which becomes evil.

(c) one like a sort of seeing, another like an impulse or experience (*tōi to men hoion horan einai, to de horman ē paschein*). (c) is totally different from (a) and (b) because it is concerned with activities which affect the compound of form and matter. It is not certain whether *horan*, *horman* and *paschein* are meant to be exhaustive or not. However, these three modes of experience seem to constitute a logical sequence: first of all, it is the "turning" of soul from *Nous* to matter that puts soul in contact with matter and makes soul vulnerable to influence from matter; the second step is the aroused desire after the turning of soul to matter, that is, the relationship, which soul now has in regard to matter, is no longer epistemological but psychological; the third step is the experience the infected soul has to undergo after its desire for matter. The *men...de* structure has put seeing on one side and impulse and experience on the other, and this is to separate the first epistemological step from the psychological second and third steps; it is meant to separate the soul before its contact with matter and the soul after its contact. Plotinus may have used *ē* (or) to show his uncertainty but the *men...de* structure and the logically progressive arrangement of *horan*, *horman* and *paschein* probably



mean to convey his intention about this progressive lapse of soul into matter.

Incidentally, Armstrong's translation of these three verbs into nouns weakens the force of this clause starting with *ē tōi to men*.

I suggested at the end of I.8.5.[5] that there is a hierarchy of evil, 'probably' (for I am not sure) intended by Plotinus as a reflection of the hierarchy in hypostatic reality. W. Himmerich has explained this phenomenon clearly:

*"Wie das absolute Gute "jenseits", d.h. oberhalb des Seinsbereiches, seinen ontologischen Ort hat, so muss das absolute Böse der Seinslogik entesprechend ebenfalls "jenseitig", aber unterhalb des Seinsbereiches liegen. Es besitzt damit ebenfalls seinen bestimmten ontologischen Ort. Unter dieser Bedingung decken sich Seins- und Wert-skala, indem beide von den gleichen, nur unter anderem Aspekt geschauten, jenseitigen Prinzipien eingeschlossen sind. Sie erhalten damit jeweils eine obere und eine untere Grenze, die ihnen eigentlich nicht mehr zugehört, und in strengem Sinne bedeutet die Erstreckung der Skalen nicht eine solche vom Wert zum Unwert, sondern vom Wert zum Nichtwert." (Himmerich p.118)*

Hager has very conveniently categorised these evils into the following scheme (Hager 1962 p.91):

- i. evil by itself<sup>4</sup> (*kath' heauto*)
- ii. evil on others (accidental evil, *kata sumbebēkos*) including evils about soul<sup>1</sup> (*hylēi meresi horan kai horman*), evils of bodies<sup>2</sup> (*nosos aischra*) and evils from external<sup>3</sup> (*ektos*, i.e., *penia*, cp. I.8.5.[7])

We have given the numerical superscripts to indicate the possible order of these evils in anhypostatic hierarchy if we try to envisage this order in a vertical way with matter at the bottom. This is certainly not the only place where this order of evils can be inferred. Hager sees in I.8.4 another order:

i. matter as primary evil by itself;<sup>4</sup>

ii. *physis sōmatōn*<sup>3</sup> - the irrational part of the soul<sup>2</sup> - the deficiency of epistemological capacity<sup>1</sup> (Hager 1962 p.90; cp. Zeller p.602).

I have arranged them in numerical order with the same kind of imagined visualisation. The very fact that there are few attempts at this arrangement - unlike his three *hypostases* of the One, *Nous* and Soul - and different (though only slightly) results therefrom proves that this hierarchy of evil is, at best, implied in Plotinus' system. Hager's establishment of this scheme is a logical inference based on this implied knowledge.

particular additions (*prosthēkai*). In the present passage it is said that with more external additions the entity concerned becomes less evil and more distant from matter. The same happens in the hypostatic reality in that with more extrinsic additions one becomes more alienated from the One because the hypostatic entity which is predicated has accepted more characterisations and become more differentiated. Both the two poles - the One and matter - are characterised by its unique simplicity, with the One "transcending" all categorial predications and with matter "deprived" of all of them. VI.5.12.16-22 says:

"Now it is because you approached the All and did not remain in a part of it, and you did not even say of yourself 'I am just so much', but by rejecting the 'so much' you have become all - yet even before this you were all; but because something else came

to you after the 'all' you became less by the addition (*elattōn eginou tēi prosthēkē*): for the addition did not come from being (*ou gar ek tou ontos ēn hē prosthēkē*) - you will add nothing to that - but from non-being (*tou mē ontos*).” (Cp. I.1.12.20; I.4.5.18)

This is another example of the application of a concept, which is supposedly proper to the hypostatic reality, to the anhypostatic evil. The only difference is that in hypostatic reality any external addition is an addition from non-being and this makes the entity concerned less concentrated, more dispersed and more alienated from the All or the One, while in anhypostatic reality any extrinsic addition is an addition from being and this makes the entity concerned less evil because of the increase in its being.

This should have made it very clear that the *prosthēkē* here is antithetical to *aphairesis*, and this means that in order to have a knowledge of the One or matter we have to start from what comes between these two poles - entities which are partly good and partly evil - and remove these external additions so that we may reach either the One or matter.

[7] Translation I.8.5.19-21:

**But if one considers that things external to the soul are evils, illness or poverty for instance, how will one trace them back to the nature of matter?**

Commentary:

Human soul on its own without the metaphysical condition determined by matter cannot become evil and this metaphysical condition is external to soul (cp. "evils are prior to us" in

1.8.5.[9]). However soul only acts as the mediation through which the absolute evil is realised in certain kinds of secondary evil and human soul cannot account for those disorders in the sensible world. Plotinus here restricts the application of soul to the human soul (cp. 1.8.5.[8]), in contrast to the more general use of it as a kind of creative principle elsewhere in the *Enneads*.

Plotinus, with these secondary evils in soul, can trace them back to their origin *via eminentiai* and *via* the supposed "anhypostatic hierarchy" suggested at the end of 1.8.5.[6] and thereby find out the metaphysical foundation for these secondary evils. For other kinds of non-psychic evils the mediating mechanism is less clear and therefore Plotinus raises this question of how. He will use the species-genus relationship obtained between the secondary evil and the primary evil in this search.

[8] Translation 1.8.5.21-6:

Illness is defect and excess of material bodies which do not keep order or measure; ugliness is matter not mastered by form; poverty is lack and deprivation of things which we need because of the matter with which we are coupled, whose very nature is to be need.

Commentary:

1.8.5.[6] has told us that in investigating the *ponēria* in the soul one can look at this question either from the proximate matter or from the weakness of soul or from the modes of contact between soul and matter. Ultimately these three perspectives can be taken together and explained by the nature of primal matter, which is absolute deficiency. In [8] Plotinus raises a

few examples - illness, ugliness and poverty - which are non-psychic (N.B.: *psychē* in the narrow sense of human soul) and, according to [7], tries to trace these malaises to their only source. All of these secondary evils are ultimately related to primal matter as its species with "particular additions". Perhaps because soul has been excluded, for the moment, from this search for prime matter, the explanations Plotinus gives are devoid of the words one finds in I.8.5.[6]: "seeing", "impulse" and "experience." The explanations now given can be said to be conceptual.

**Illness is defect and excess of material bodies** (*ē noson men elleipsin kai hyperbolēn sōmatōn enhylon*) which do not keep order and measure (*taxin kai metron ouk anechomenōn*). The defect and excess echoes I.8.4.9 and is said to be the nature of primal matter and in the present case it is the nature of particular material bodies. This proves that illness as secondary evil is a local and limited participation in primal evil. The vocabulary of excess and defect certainly has some medical association in the lack of balance of four elements and this anticipates I.8.8.[1], the section, Heinemann says, which was taken from a medical handbook.

**Ugliness** (*aischos*) is matter not mastered by form. In I.6.2 Plotinus defines 'beautiful' by 'participation in form' (*metochei eidous*) and ugliness when a thing is not completely dominated by shape and formative power "since its matter has not submitted to be completely shaped according to the form." (I.6.2.13-8)

**Poverty is lack and deprivation of things which we need because** (*dia*) of the matter with which we are coupled (*sunezeugmetha*), whose nature is to be need (*chrēsmosunēn*). This passage points out clearly the causative relation (*dia*) which prime matter as absolute poverty exerts on us. The *sunezeugmetha* indicates that body is necessarily enmattered and therefore entails the inevitable ontological limitation of us as embodied souls. This *dia* is therefore indicative of

the close connection between these particular evils and the metaphysical condition for these evils.

A question to be asked and answered, if possible. Is one really more informed about the distinct features of illness, ugliness and poverty by tracing these particular phenomena back to the primal evil? Why do all these definitions of secondary evil seem rather similar to one another and why are they so formalistic and conceptual by nature? It is a matter of concern that the distinct features of these three kinds of secondary evils are after all nothing more than a clever manipulation of abstract predications which are said of primal matter and the implication here is that we have a thesis, similar to the thesis that all virtues are after all one and the same as it is put forward in Plato's *Protagoras*. What distinguishes the secondary evil from the primary evil in their respective contents seems no more than its greater degree of semantic specification. What would this abstract thesis contribute to our 'empirical' understanding of the variety of evils in the world, not only moral evils but also natural disasters and other surplus evils (Hick pp.55-8)? Is a strictly metaphysical account of secondary evils as privation of goodness metaphysically and experientially satisfactory? It is very doubtful. I think this very formalistic definition is probably consistent with Plotinus' *a priori* approach towards evil (cp. I.8.1.[1]). He is very careful in defining, say, poverty as lack and privation of things (presumably = forms or goods) we need, and his choice of words means that he sticks to the metaphysical context (of which evil, as privation of good, is a part), the modes of conception and the vocabulary. This means that an application of his metaphysical doctrine of evil has to be in the right context and the rejection (or acceptance) of this doctrine has to be a rejection (or acceptance) of his whole system. This is fine but one may well question the relevance of this system and so of this particular doctrine. To ask Plotinus whether his doctrine of evil can explain the Holocaust as a deficiency or loss of form and measure might not be fair to him because he might say this is not a question relevant to his system because the nature

of Holocaust is empirical and the "inner man" is essentially and eternally free. Point taken. However, is this adequate and relevant? And why should we abandon history for *a priori* dogma? Why has theodicy, of this and other kinds, rarely brought comfort to the one who is in suffering?

[9] Translation I.8.5.26-30:

If this is true, then we must not be assumed to be the principle of evil as being evil by and from ourselves; evils are prior to us, and those that take hold on men do not do so with their good will, but there is an "escape from the evils in the soul" for those who are capable of it, though not all men are.

Commentary:

It must have been very clear from what we have said that Plotinus' doctrine of evil is a part of his metaphysical system and this metaphysical system is the spontaneous and necessary consequence of the One in its absolute freedom of self-creation. The unfolding of this system is expounded by Plotinus according to the analogy of emanation, and matter is the terminal stage of this process. The goodness of the One is understood as its bestowal of existential fecundity which it lavishes, without grudge, on generated reality and matter as the exhaustion of being is thus identified with evil. The whole process is cosmic and necessary and no human factor is involved; in this picture of reality evil is seen as a kind of quasi-substance, not the quality of moral behaviour, and so humans cannot be held responsible for the existence of evil. I.8.5.[8] has shown that different kinds of secondary evils are merely the variations of the primary evil with different sorts of extrinsic additions which are conceptual and human soul as

the origin of secondary evils is perhaps no more than a medium through which the absolute evil is realised in certain categories of secondary evil (cp. commentary on I.8.4.[2]).

Evil is therefore there as given, not the creation of human beings; evils merely happen *kata sumbebēkos* to reside in human beings. Plotinus thus says that we are not the principle of evils (*archē kakōn*) nor evils are derived from us (*par' autōn*); evils are in fact before us (*pro hemōn*), before us in the sense that it is part of the metaphysical disposition (cp. III.1.9) prior to our individual embodiments and our moral activities. Plotinus' stress on evil as a predominantly metaphysical problem is so obvious that Schröder is quite right to doubt if any talk by Plotinus of reconciliation of the metaphysical approach and the ethico-psychological approach towards evil is no more than an expression of personal sentiment without much philosophical foundation (Schröder pp.148-9). At least there is no sign of Plotinus' attempt to raise this question here. I also hope the passage under comment now is another evidence for the over-determination of psychology of evil by the ontology of evil.

Those that take hold on men is an extraordinary statement about the 'infectious' nature of evils (cp. *pepoiētikos* in I.8.4.12) and the kind of passive roles human beings have to play in this divine economy. It is not proper to imagine evils as some daemons grasping victims; more appropriately one should conceive the whole universe as a pre-arranged divine dispensation and evils as dispersed in pre-ordained 'slots.' Those who are victims and are destined to evils fill in these slots (cp. 4.3.12). This interpretation is based on the myth of Er in *Republic X*, adaptations of which appear several times in Plotinus (Annas 1982). The reason why Plotinus makes evils have a hold on men is his removal from human beings of any psychological initiative on the problem of evil; therefore it makes no sense to say that "men grasp evil". That evils take hold on men cannot be explained other than that there is a divine dispensation which ordains certain men to be victims. This is a deterministic outlook, I think. It explains why those



who are caught up are not caught up with their good will (*hekontas*). (The translation 'with good will' is rather bizarre; 'with will' would be enough.) *Hekontas* (cp. the *akousia pathēmata* in I.8.4.10-1) is not allowed much significance in this dispensation. Cp. IV.4.39.23-33.

Hager sees this statement: evils are prior to us, and those that take hold on men do not do so with their good will as another claim for the Socratic doctrine of *Unfreiwilligkeit des Unrechttuns* (Hager 1962 p.92), another echo of the *akousia pathēmata* in I.8.4.10. This seems to relieve human beings of any moral responsibility because evil is regarded as given to, not as a creation by, human beings. Human beings will not make mistakes provided they know this disposition in advance. I have to confess that Hager's assimilation caricatures Socrates' thesis because it is almost impossible to know if Socrates has the same kind of conceptual framework for his inquiry into ethical problems; moreover, the Socratic inquiry is very personal and ethical, not ontological, in orientation.

There is an "escape from the evils in the soul" for those who are capable, though not all men are. Cp. III.2.10.8ff.. If one cannot explain why men, as moral agents, should be responsible for the divine dispensation neither can one explain how men can get away from it except by appeal to the divine dispensation. There are some who are capable of escape, nevertheless, but some are not; one may well ask the question why some are and some are not if each individual soul is structured in the same way with the duplication of the whole spectrum of reality in it, i.e., a full potential for *sōteria*. This question is worth asking because this sentence is susceptible to a deterministic explanation if not answered properly. Plotinus leaves this vital question unanswered and this could be seen as another symptom of his *a priori* approach towards evil, that is, a logical inference for the necessity of evil and suffering in the name of divine dispensation. I.8.5.[9] as a whole expresses a kind of divine dispensation with a strong deterministic outlook.

This deterministic outlook is the consequence of seeing evil as a kind of quasi-substance and with its designated place in the conceptual framework of being. If evil can be seen as substance to be possessed or not possessed, what objections can there be to *sōteria* being bestowed or not on an individual? This explains why Plotinus says "those who are capable of it (= escape from the evils), though not all men are." This is similar to the charge made by Clement of Alexandria against Gnostics who see faith also as a kind of substance, not as freedom, and who propose that some are destined to be saved while some are not (cp. I.8.1.[1] with commentary *ad loc.*).

"Escape from evils in the soul" cp. *Phaedo* 107d. This is possible because evils, of primary and secondary kinds, are not found in the hypostatic reality while soul by its true nature belongs there.

[10] Translation I.8.5.30-4:

Though there is a matter with the visible gods, evil is not there, not the vice which men have - since not all men have it; the visible gods master matter, - yet the gods with whom there is no matter are better - and they master it by that in them which is not in matter.

Commentary:

Cp. Alexander of Aphrodisias *In Meta.* 983a29.22.13-5. There are four entities mentioned in this passage:

(a) Gods without matter: presumably the three *hypostases*; there is no evil in the hierarchical

reality. (Cp. I.8.7.[9])

(b) Visible gods with matter: astral gods, that is, which are said by Aristotle to possess kinetic *hy/b* (Aristotle 260a28, 1044b7 and 1050b21) or *aether* (Aristotle 270a13-14, b1-2 and 10-11; cp. *Phaedrus* 279a13-b1); they, though enmattered, are not evil; they are generated by world soul which never descends. According to Aristotle, the astral gods conduct a rotary motion which is eternal and regular and admits of no contrariness, in contrast to the rectilinear and contrary motions of the four elements in the sublunar world. (Cp. I.8.6.[2]: "Is it meant that heaven is 'pure of evil' because it always moves regularly and goes in order....") Nevertheless, because astral gods move and thus in a sense change and this necessity involves astral gods in matter (Aristotle 200a31-2). Plotinus in II.9.5.11-2 says that the astral bodies are made of "much fairer material" and exhibit "the order and the excellence of form and arrangement." (Cp. II.5.3.18-9; Origen, *Contra Celsum* IV 56; Bos 1985 pp.16-7.) One has to be reminded that there is a Gnostic background to I.8.5.[10] (and I.8.6.[2]) here for the Gnostics in II.9.10. have tried to enhance individual souls at the expense of the astral entities which are our sister souls according to Plotinus.

(c) Men (who are embodied and thus related to matter) who are not evil because of their mastery of matter. This might allude to the connate *pneuma* in human beings (Aristotle 736b29-737a6), which is the microcosmic counterpart of the aether in the astral gods. Although the astral gods are enmattered, they are not evil; likewise the men, who preserve their *pneuma* and overcome matter, are not evil. (Peck 1953 p.116, Lennox 1982 pp.221-2, Rist 1989 p.133; *contra* Easterling 1964 and Hahm 1982)

(d) Men who are evil because they are overcome by matter.

(a)-(d) are in descending order and cover the whole spectrum of reality except the prime matter. Secondary evils only exist in (d) although not the vice which men have seems a kind of concession to the fact that the visible astral gods remain contaminated by matter - however

special this matter is - and are in a sense evil; this means a kind of ontological limitation because of their embodiment; it is a limitation supposedly different from the further limitation human beings have to undergo.

The first point to be noted is: what is common to the presence of matter in (b), (c) and (d) is the ontological limitation anything embodied has to suffer, and this is shown more clearly by the contrast between (a) and (b): the gods with whom there is no matter are better. This limitation, although a kind of evil, is not recognised as "moral evil" which is found in human beings (cp. O'Brien 1971 pp.129-30, Rist 1974 p.497). The second point is the difference between (c) and (d). In I.8.5.[9] it says that there are those who are capable of escape (= (c)) and some others who are not (= (d)), and the difference is that people in (c) can master matter by that which is not in matter and people in (d) cannot summon this capacity. The matter here apparently means body as VI.9.8.18-9 shows: "we lift ourselves up by the part which is not submerged in the body." I have already said that the rational part of the soul can 'theoretically' master the lower part of the soul, whatever amount the latter is, because the soul is basically hypostatic and there is an undescended part within it which never descends and which maintains a noetic trace. This is a general description of all souls and Plotinus, as it seems to me, never tells us who can and why they can master matter "by that in them which is not in matter" while other cannot.

- 1.8.6-

If evils are 'before' us then evils are constitutive of the world we are in and this means that without these pre-existent evils this world would not be such as it is now. To prove this thesis is the concern of 1.8.6.[1]. This does not mean that evils exist in every part of reality; they only exist in the anhypostatic reality ("mortal nature" and "this place") where elements move against each other in a chaotic way, a reminder of the *ichnē* in *Timaeus* (1.8.6.[2]-[3]). The consequence of this divine economy, according to 1.8.6.[4] and the first half of [5], is to take flight from this place but this flight is not a spatial distantiation but a kind of ontological detachment from anhypostatic reality. The second half of 1.8.6.[5] considers the question: "why escape from it and not rectify it?" by a partial incorporation of the dialogue between Theodorus and Socrates from *Theaetetus* 176a; Plotinus, agreeing with Socrates, denies the possibility of rectification. What is left is a rationalisation and justification of the existence of evils "*di' enantiotētos*" (1.8.6.[6]-[18]). The gist is that the absolute evil and the Good have nothing in common (*koinon*) and stand at the furthest remove from each other in the conceptual framework which includes both hypostatic and anhypostatic reality, and it is in this metaphorically 'spatial' sense that one speaks of absolute evil as opposed (*enantion*) to the Good. Whatever is 'predicated' (N.B.: remember '*poia ousia*') of the one then its privative form is predicated of the other (1.8.6.[17]). This seems to make them two extreme poles by participation in which the entities between them become what they are. This sounds like a kind of dualism but 1.8.6.[19] reaffirms the ontological dependence of absolute evil on the Good, and despite this dependence it is still possible to speak of them as opposites. This means that the concept of *enantion* is closely linked to the concept of *sterēsis*, the *mē* of the *to mē on* and the function of privatives (*a-* or *an-* prefix), and is used not in the sense of antithetical contradiction as ordinary language would make us think but in a new and revised sense within

the conceptual framework defined by Plotinus. I.8.6.[20] raises some examples to illustrate this point and I.8.6.[21] gives a summary of these discussions.

As this brief introduction should have shown very clearly I.8.6 is perhaps the most important section in I.8 which tries to justify the existence of evil by means of 'logic' in terms of this vital, though revised, concept of *enantion*. This fully illustrates the rationalistic and *a priori* nature of Plotinus' and Greek philosophers' - if we may be allowed to make this general remark - perception of the problem of evil: rational justification but no rectification.

The special nature of I.8.6 aroused the suspicion of Thedinga (Thedinga 1919 pp.264-5) who complained of its superfluous details and unnecessary verbosity on the concept of *enantion* while I.8.7, on the contrary, is "*prägnante Kurze, die sich bis zur Unverständlichkeit steigert*" (Ibid.; cp. Heinemann 1921 p.84). Both refer to *Theaetetus* 176ab but, so it seems to him, I.8.6 gets the gist of the quotation wrong (esp. on *thenētē physis* and *hode ho topos*) while I.8.7 gets it right but too simple; at least, so he concludes, I.8.7 on this point is preferable to I.8.6 and so he thinks I.8.6. is an interpolation, even a translation from a work by Numenius who, in the opinion of Thedinga, is an author not averse to lengthy and verbose discourse (cp. Thedinga p.251, p.266 and pp.277-8). On I.8 as a whole he regards I.8.1-5, 7 and 9 as genuinely Plotinian while the rest is taken from Numenius' work on the Good (cp. Heinemann p.83). What we wish to do in the following is to prove the vital importance of the concept of *enantion* and thereby suggest the necessity of I.8.6 for the whole I.8.

[1] Translation I.8.6.1-4:

**We must consider, too, what Plato means when he says "Evil can never be done away with,"**

but exists "of necessity"; and that "they have no place among the gods, but haunt our mortal nature and this region for ever."

Commentary:

I.8.5.[10] has just given us the *topoi* where evil is and is not found; I.8.6 tries to support this position by an interpretation of *Theaetetus* 176ab and proves the necessity of evil for the divine economy of the universe.

The source of this passage is *Theaetetus* 176ab which is also discussed by Plotinus in I.2.1. If my arguments in the Interpretative Essay 1.3.5-9 and 4.1-3 and commentary on I.8.1-5 are correct then evil, like matter, is constitutive of the whole of reality and is the limiting factor for the omnipotence of the One. This means that evil is metaphysically necessary if we accept Plotinus' picture of reality. To have this necessary element eliminated means an abandonment of its context and the whole picture. This is against Plotinus' implicit belief that the emanation derived from the One is the unique one and that the present cosmos is the best possible one (II.9.4.28). Therefore Plotinus says very pertinently that **evil can never be done away with** (*apolesthai*) and **exists of necessity** (*einai ex anankēs*). The existence of evil is an essential part of the Plotinian metaphysical picture.

Evil, either absolute or secondary, is an anhypostatic reality in the sense that it is the imitation and reflection of hypostatic reality and is therefore not total non-being. The outmost edge of hypostatic reality, *physis*, acts on matter and is affected but "that soul which is before nature and close to it acts without being affected, and that which is still higher does not act on bodies or matter" (IV.4.13.24-7). In I.8.5.[10] I distinguished what part of soul will be and what will not be affected by evil, and suggested that the gods in question are the hypostatic reality

(including astral gods). The proper place for the efficacy of evil to be evident is the anhypostatic reality because it is a place where matter is efficacious. This distinction is behind Plotinus' statement, quoted from *Theaetetus*, that they have no place among the gods (= hypostatic reality), but haunt our mortal nature and this region (= anhypostatic reality) forever.

[2] Translation I.8.6.4-8:

Is it meant that heaven is "clean of evil" because it always moves regularly, and there is no injustice or other vice there, nor do the heavenly bodies do injustice to each other, but go on in order, but on earth there is injustice and disorder?

(3) Translation I.8.6.8-9:

For this is what is meant by "mortal nature" and "this place."

Commentary:

I.8.5.[10] mentions visible astral gods with kinetic matter; Plotinus now wishes to contrast these enmattered entities over there with the enmattered entities which are here and mortal. The astral gods over there move in order and there exists a justice or harmony among the constellations. Possible influences on this pro-cosmism come from Plato's *Epinomis* (on astral movement) and Heraclitus (on astral justice, cp. K.R.S. 226) but the implied chaotic movement ("on earth there is injustics and disorder") could also refer to the movement of the primordial *ichnē* before the *dēmiourgos'* intervention in *Timaeus*. This heavenly order and justice is not



seen on earth. This contrast again is probably an influence from Aristotle's distinction between a sub-lunar and changeable world and a celestial and unchanged world; this is certainly not the same as the Plotinian distinction between the hypostatic reality and its anhypostatic counterpart because the distinction is rather "physical". This Aristotelian allusion is introduced here probably only for the sake of *Theaetetus'* quotation where such a contrast is envisaged.

This sub-lunar world is called by Plotinus mortal nature (*thnētē physis*) and this place (*hode ho topos*), terms taken from *Theaetetus* 176a. *Physis* is the outmost edge of the hypostatic reality and with the adjective *thnētē* Plotinus means the *physis* which has been affected by matter and becomes anhypostatic and liable to change and destruction.

[4] Translation I.8.6.9-10:

But when he says "we must take flight from thence" he is no longer referring to life on earth.

(5) Translation I.8.6.10-7:

For "flight," he says, is not going away from earth but being on earth "just and holy with the help of wisdom; so evil for him is wickedness and all that comes from wickedness; and when the answering speaker in the dialogue says that there would be an end of evils "if he convinced men of the earth of his words" Socrates answers that "this cannot be; evils must exist of necessity, since the good must have its contrary."

Commentary:

These two passages continue Plotinus' exegesis of *Theaetetus* 176. Plotinus here tries to separate two facts: on the one hand there is the objective reality such as the existence of earth and, on the other hand, there is a subjective dimension of human beings who live on earth and experience it. When I.8.6.[2]-[3] point out that this earth is of mortal nature and is full of injustice and disorder, the logical conclusion is to reject it and take flight from thence. Plotinus further says that this by no means indicates an abdication of the sensible universe - which Plotinus, in a most graceful passage, says a good sister soul has built for us (II.9.18.15-6) - but an advancement of virtue and a turning upwards to *Nous*. This implies an implicit faith in the earth - a pro-cosmism - which is at least neutral to him and, at most, the best possible one and which he is reluctant to condemn. Therefore take flight from thence means a flight from the source which contaminates the earth, i.e., matter, not a flight from the physical earth. This is a metaphysical problem not to be solved by a spatial alienation.

Harder<sup>2</sup> says that here as in I.6.8.18 Plotinus has spiritualised the "flight". Armstrong has seen in Plotinus' recommendation for this psychological other-worldliness a rejection of the contemporary tendency to demonise the earth and this indeed corresponds to the widespread interest in daemonology at that time; in addition, we may say, it is a rejection of Middle Platonic evil soul. As for Plato himself his *Theaetetus* also recommends a psychological advancement: "to become like God as far as possible (*homoioōsis theōi kata to dynaton*)" and "to become like God is to become righteous (*dikaion*) and holy (*hosion*) and wise (*metaphronēseōs*)" (*Theaetetus* 176b; Dillon 1977 p.123 and p.145 on this *homoioōsis theōi* as *telos* of Middle Platonic ethics). What Plato (and also Plotinus) recommends here is theology for those who wish to take flight from thence; the theology which makes one turn to hypostatic reality which is the abode of gods. This recommendation of theology is an echo of "the visible gods master matter" and "the gods with whom there is no matter are better" in I.8.5.[10]. Theology for Plotinus thus means a "conquest" (*kratein*, I.8.6.20) of matter in the sense of

turning away from matter. It is a subjective experience unrelated to the objective existence of the anhypostatic world. Therefore, when Theodorus replies to Socrates' outburst in *Theaetetus*: "if he convinced men of the truth of his words", and Socrates replies: "this cannot be; evils must exist of necessity, since the good must have its contrary", the nature of Greek theodicy receives its most dramatic manifesto. Theodorus' statement indicates his belief in the possibility of the transformation or amelioration of this world but this, at least for Plotinus and for Plato as well, is a non-confidence vote on the divine dispensation and an accusation of incompleteness and imperfection on the part of creator, which is ultimately the absolute One. This argument on the "unique world theory" surfaced in Plotinus' polemic with the gnostics in II.9 who propose 'another better world' to replace the present one which is wilfully manipulated by a wicked *dēmiourgos* and resulted from an emanation ridden with inner crises. If the objective side of reality cannot be changed in its present form, then the person who wishes to take flight from this place has to get into the subjective side to find solution.

If the existence of matter and evil can only be justified but not rectified, then arguments (*logoi*) are necessary. Plotinus adopts Plato's strategy that "evil must exist of necessity, since the good must have its contrary (*tounantion*)."<sup>1</sup> Why not say "good must exist of necessity, since the evil must have its contrary" instead? The order is necessarily important because we have already said in I.8.1 that the anhypostatic reality is a reflecton of the hypostatic reality and is parasitic on it; the *mē on* of matter and evil must be referred to the *on* of hypostatic reality, not the other way round. To pose the question in this way proves that Plotinus (with Plato) recognises the dependent nature of evil as *sterēsis* of *on*.

To conclude commentary on this sentence I would like to mention one odd point about Plotinus' use of Plato's *Theaetetus* 176a. Plotinus makes his partner in the dialogue (*prosdialegomenos*), Theodorus, say that "there would be an end of evil (*anairesin kakōn*)"<sup>2</sup> but

in *Theaetetus* 176a there is no such optimistic elimination of evils but a more modest wish: "there would be more peace and fewer evils among mankind." This certainly points out that Plotinus' use of Plato is not philological but philosophical (and personal?) and his philosophical reason for the impossibility of eliminating all evils has been stated already. However, Theodorus in *Theaetetus* 176a might also have his reason for his more modest wish; he might have anticipated Socrates' assertion that "there must always be something opposed to the good (*hypoantion gar ti tōi agathōi aei einai anankē*)". What Theodorus might think is this: to constitute a *hypoantion* to the good a minimal "amount" - it is not ridiculous to use this term (see 4.1.36) - of evil would be enough logically to constitute a *hypoantion* and so there is a great scope for amelioration of the world in all its evil aspects by eliminating them with one's best effort. It is very likely that Socrates mistakes this for a total elimination but it is also no less likely that Socrates (or Plato) harbours the same view as Plotinus does that the cosmos in its balance of different elements in the divine economy is the best possible cosmos and any change in it, however limited and minimal, would imply a criticism of the metaphysical principle which makes the cosmos such as it now is.

[6] Translation I.8.6.17-8:

**But how can human wickedness be the contrary of that transcendent Good?**

[7] Translation I.8.6.19-20:

**Human wickedness is contrary to virtue, and virtue is not the Good, but a good, which enables us to master matter.**

Commentary:

1.8.6.[1]-[5] are Plotinus' interpretation of *Theaetetus* 176ab in order to secure the authority of Plato in support of his view that evil is necessary and can only be justified but not rectified. The argument for the thesis that good must have its contrary is meant to be the way of justification. The contrast, repeatedly emphasised in 1.8.6.[1]-[5], that earth here is full of evil and the divine life over there pure and blessed is meant to be a precursor of this more formal and philosophical justification (Schröder p.151) from 1.8.6.[6] onwards.

1.8.6.[6]-[7] here try to establish at least two principles for this justification:

(a) contrary (*enantion*) can be used in a general sense and in a special and revised sense. The general sense is seen in the present passage which places secondary vice (= human wickedness, *tēn kakian tēn peri anthrōpon*) against secondary virtue (*tēi aretēi*), a good (*to agathon*), or which is seen in the elements interacting with each other; they are entities characterised by features which are accidental and antithetical (such as cold and hot). The revised sense of *enantion* is seen in 1.8.6.[17] which places primary evil against primary virtue, the transcendent Good (*ekeinōi tōi agathōi*), and the features characteristic of them are their *poia ousia* or *energeiai*; it is there that this revised *enantion* receives its definition. I will later designate this revised *enantion* as *enantion* in the sense of *sterēsis* and the first and general use of *enantion* as *enantion* in the sense of antithesis.

(b) The two entities which are in a contrary relationship have to be on the same ontological level (i.e., primary evil being opposed to primary good and secondary evil being opposed to secondary good); this is the reason why Plotinus says that the secondary evil cannot be the contrary of the primary good. However, even though Plotinus here wishes to pose a

symmetrical relationship between the primary good and primary evil, it is realised that no entities, including matter, can form a symmetrical relationship with the One; they are symmetrical only in the sense that they are both the extremes (*archai*) of this conceptual framework.

Considering the importance of this argument from contrariety in 1.8.6 as a whole, it seems necessary to give a brief discussion of Aristotle's contribution on this issue because the argument in 1.8.6 presupposes Aristotle's theory of contrariety.

In his criticism of his predecessors' search for *archai* Aristotle repeatedly complained that his predecessors had hypostatized the contraries and made them principles (*Met.* 1075a27-34). Aristotle's distinct contribution in this search for *archē* is to shift "the philosophical employment of contrariety from the cosmological field to the ontological analysis of substance" (Anton 1957 p.14 and p.42) although his stoichiology retains traces of the cosmological implications he had overthrown elsewhere. This ontological employment of contrariety is a part of his first philosophy which is concerned with individual substances in the linear process of change and the contrariety defines the possible scope of *metabolē* the individual substances have to undergo; since nature is a principle of change the study of nature is rooted in a metaphysical inquiry into the concept of contrariety. Anton has expressed this situation in a very clear way:

"The term 'metaphysical contrariety' covers a number of inclusive, most general pairs of contraries that delimit process in the sense of substantial change and its understanding. They display an utmost comprehensiveness and are the pairs of the most pervasive metaphysical distinctions in the analysis of process. From this point of view, contrariety is a first principle (*archē*) in the understanding of substances in so far

as it is in process. Contrary presupposes substance." (Anton 1957 p.13)

The most comprehensive and primary metaphysical contrariety, according to Aristotle, is "form and privation" (*hexis* of *eidos* and its *sterēsis*) (1046a32, 1044b33, 1055b13, 1069b34, 1061a1-1061b17 and 1070b12) because of the central importance of the category of substance in Aristotle. In Anton's view this pair of metaphysical contraries is not related to the ontic status of the substances it characterises; it merely makes intelligible the process of the individual substances:

"Substance is the ontological principle and contrariety is a necessary principle for its intelligibility, and in this respect, the latter is ontologically grounded in the essence of the former and only logically prior to it." (Anton 1957 p.72; cp. Guariglia p.22)

Contraries are not substances but in the substances and must presuppose them; they state the pattern and limits of all changes that the substances in change have to display and can never be taken out in abstraction (*Met.* 1087a35-1087b3). The law of non-contradiction (*Met.* 1005b7-34) is a logical formulation of this theory of contrariety (Anton 1957 pp.100-1). Because these two types of *archē* - the substances and the contrariety (which includes *sterēsis*) - are of different nature therefore they cannot enter into the relationship of contrariety and this averts dualism (*Phys.* 190b33-191a1; Anton 1957 p.77). This point has to be emphasised because the argument from contrariety in *Enneads* 1.8.6 is based on a negation of this thesis and Plotinus can thus argue that there is a contrary to substance, a position strenuously rejected by Aristotle in, e.g., *Cat.* 3b25-30 and *Phys.* 189a29-33. Another point has to be mentioned. Aristotle's theory of contrariety is aimed at individual substances in "change" but in Plotinus' hands this restriction is discarded and the validity of contrariety is extended to the whole of reality.

Virtue is not the Good, but a good, which enables us to master matter. This translation of Armstrong might be a little misleading because the Greek means it is the Good which makes us control matter:... *ou to agathon, alla agathon, ho kratein tēs hylēs poiei*. The distinction between a good (*to agathon*) and the Good (*agathon*) by a *to* is similar to the *to auto tōi energeiai* and *hē energeia* in II.5.1.3-4 where the *to auto* indicates a particular existent in a certain disposition (*tōi energeia*); the *to* here in I.8.6.[7] has the same function: it is a particular existent (*to*) in a certain disposition (*agathon*). On the other hand, Armstrong might take the "matter" in "mater matter" as a kind of proximate matter, a piece of particular matter for the soul's embodiment, and in that case his translation is fully justified. Cp. I.8.5.[6] with commentary *ad loc.*.

[8] Translation I.8.6.20-1:

How can anything be contrary to the transcendent Good?

(9) Translation I.8.6.21:

It is not of a particular quality;

(10) Translation I.8.6.21-2:

and then what universal necessity is there, that if one of a pair of contraries exists, the other must also exist?

(11) Translation I.8.6.22-5:



Granted that this is possible, and may in fact be the case, that when one contrary exists, the other does also - as when health exists sickness can also exist - all the same it is not necessarily so.

Commentary:

I.8.6.[8]-[11] begin to apply the two principles which we have derived from I.8.6.[6]-[7]. The transcendent Good which makes an entity qualified as secondary good cannot be quality itself; this is like the common thesis in Plotinus that only what is beyond being (or beauty or others) can generate being (or beauty or others) and thus only what is not a quality can bestow quality (cp. I.8.2.[3] with commentary *ad loc.*). There seems to be no problem (granted that this is possible as Plotinus says) with the contrary relationship between entities characterised by contrary qualities in so far as their qualities are concerned, such as health (say, of a healthy person) and sickness (of a sick person). However, we seem to meet some trouble when we come to things that are not qualities or qualified entities.

It has to be noticed here that according to *Enneads* II.6 there is no quality in the accidental sense, such as health and sickness, in the noetic world; therefore when Plotinus says that there could be a universal necessity (*anankē pantachou*), he probably indicates that this rule obtains only in the sensible world because the examples of health and sickness indicate this restricted interest, and so Plotinus can say all the same it is not necessarily so because sensible reality is not the only reality (cp. I.8.6.[14]). The lesson is that the *enantia* which obtain in the sensible world, because of its change, cannot have the logical necessity which one expects from an *a priori* argument (cp. I.8.6.[22]). Perhaps Plotinus means something stricter than this: even in the sensible world there are some items which do not necessarily have contraries. Up to now the '*enantion*' thesis is applied to quality only and this '*enantion*' thesis would not be

applicable in the case of, say, quantity (such as 5 feet) although quantity can still be called an attribute of an entity. Any one of these possibilities would deprive the *'enantion'* thesis in its general sense of its universal validity. I suspect there is an implied criticism of Aristotle's theory of categories which in VI.1.1-25 is said to be applicable to the sensible world at most.

[12] Translation I.8.6.25-7:

But Plato does not necessarily mean that this is true in the case of every contrary; he is only referring to the Good.

[13] Translation I.8.6.27-8:

But if the Good is substance, or something which transcends substance, how can it have any contrary?

[14] Translation I.8.6.28-30:

That there is nothing contrary to substance is established by inductive demonstration in the case of particular substances; but it has not been demonstrated that this applies in general.

Commentary:

As far as Plotinus (or Plotinus' Plato) is concerned the universal application of this *enantion* thesis (in the sense of antithesis) is not so important as its application in the case of the Good, because application in this case will change the applicability of the *enantion* thesis from a

semantic level (such as, perhaps, that of Aristotle's) to an ontological level. However, there is one difficulty to be overcome before this change can be seriously considered, that is, the Good, unlike the quality good with a contrary in evil, is a substance (*ousia*) or even something which transcends substance (*epekeina ousias*) and nothing, according to Aristotle, can be contrary to substance or to what is beyond substance. Aristotle in *Met.* 1087b2-4 has discussed this question:

"All contraries, then, are always predicable of a subject, and none can exist apart. But appearances suggest that there is nothing contrary to substance, and argument confirms this. No contrary, then, is the first principle of all things in the full sense; the first principle is something different."

or in *Categories* 3b24-7:

"Another characteristic of substances is that there is nothing contrary to them. For what would be contrary to a primary substance? For example, there is nothing contrary to an individual man, nor yet is there anything contrary to man or animal."

What can Plotinus do with this objection? He replies that it is true and this has been established by inductive demonstration (*tēi epagōgēi*) in the case of particular substances (*epi tōn kath' hekasta ousiōn*). This shows clearly that Plotinus understood Aristotle's philosophy as based on individual substances (Volkmann-Schluck 1967 p.10; cp. 2.1.13) without any further inquiry into the bedrock which makes, supports and explains why these individual substances are such as they are. Aristotle's philosophy is a science of being(s) but Plotinus recommends something more radical: a science of the Being of beings. It is because of Aristotle's atomic emphasis on individual substances as the only foci for all philosophical

discourses that substances do not have contraries. This is also the reason why Plotinus says that Aristotle's conclusion is based on *epagogē*. What if one digs further as Plotinus has done in suggesting a more general science of Being of beings? This would deprive these individual substances of the kind of philosophical centrality they enjoy in Aristotle's philosophy and place them within an ontological map defined by the emanation from the One in different *hypostases* and the reflection of this hypostatic reality on to anhypostatic reality. Furthermore, the contrary in question will be measured by the ontological distance two entities are separated from each other in this linear and hierarchical picture of the whole of reality, and in this sense one can say that the *enantiotēs* between one pair of entities is more contrary than that in another, judging by the 'ontological distances' these pairs of contrary have in this scheme. In this scheme reality exists in degrees while Aristotle's individual being either is or is not. This could be Plotinus' meaning when he rejects Aristotle's science of beings and recommends instead a universal substance (*katholou ousia*) in I.8.6.[15]. Henology has to replace ousiology (4.0.1).

[15] Translation I.8.6.31-2:

But what can there be contrary to universal substance and, in general, to the first principles?

[16] translation I.8.6.32-6:

Non-substance is contrary to substance, and that which is the nature and principle of evil to the nature of good: for both are principles, one of evils, the other of goods; and all the things which are included in each nature are contrary to those in the other; so that the wholes are contrary, and more contrary to each other than are the other contraries.

Commentary:

After rejecting Aristotle's version of ontology and, consequently, Aristotle's *enantion* thesis (cp. *Phys.* 190a14-5), Plotinus begins to formulate his own position. He visualises the whole of reality as a hierarchical spectrum, divided into levels of hypostatic reality, which is *on*, and anhypostatic reality, which is *mē on*, and the *mē on* is an image of *on*; this *mē on* and *on* are respectively identified with evil and good; the ultimate *mē on* or matter is identified with absolute evil and the relative *mē on* - relative to matter - or the sensible is identified with secondary evil while, likewise, in the hypostatic reality the absolute One is identified with the absolute Good and the rest is identified with secondary good. There is a symmetrical structure between the anhypostatic and hypostatic reality:

(i) matter - sensibles - hypostatic *Nous* and Soul - the One;

and this is parallel to

(ii) primary evil - secondary evil - secondary good - primary good.

However, hypostatic reality (including the One) has so far been called primary good (because no matter can contaminate it) and never secondary good, and thus the secondary good should be those sensibles which are partly good and partly evil. Therefore the symmetrical disposition should be like this:

(iii) matter - enmattered sensibles - hypostatic reality;  
(anhypostatic reality)

and this is parallel to

(iv) primary evil - partly good and evil (that is, secondary good and evil) - primary good.

These schemes seem very messy and this because the One is said to be the Good while hypostatic reality (including *Nous* and Soul) is good to a limited extent in respect to the One; in I.8, however, the hypostatic reality is always taken as a unit and no attempt is made to make finer distinction when the problem of evil arises. Plotinus sometimes passes this distinction over without too much scholarly carefulness but I think he in I.8 largely takes (iii) and (iv) as the norm.

It is this general view on the ontological picture, which groups individual *ousiai* under a universal (*holos*) ousiology, the so called henology, that is what Plotinus really means at the end of I.8.6.[14]. The One is not only responsible for the existence of hypostatic reality but also for anhypostatic reality and what he is interested in is not a substance characterised by an X feature which is opposite to another substance characterised by a -X: it is the general ontological picture that interests him, i.e., non-substance is contrary to substance (*tēi men ousiai hē mē ousia*). The non-substance is philosophical nonsense for Aristotle for no one can make a discourse about it; it is, however, understandable for Plotinus because he has said in I.8.6.[12] that what he is concerned with is the Good and its contrary, not specific goods and their specific contraries. Even those features, which characterise the specific secondary evils and goods, in Plotinus are ultimately reducible to *mē on* (for negative features) or (for positive features) *on* and so everything evil and good has to be referred to the words: non-substance is contrary to substance. So now we have a contrary between non-substance and substance and, since in Plotinus axiology is ontology, the nature and principle of evil (*kakou physis kai archē*) is contrary to the nature of good. With the establishment of these general principles

Plotinus can say whatever participates in the one principle is contrary to that which participates in the other. According to this scheme, which Plotinus has envisaged, the principle of evil (= matter) is more separate from (and thus more contrary to) the principle of good (= the One) than those which participate in each other and fall between the two poles.

so that the wholes (*ta hola*) are contrary, and more contrary to each other than are the other contraries. The wholes here mean all the features or *poia ousia* (cp. I.8.6.[18]) which are characteristic, respectively, of the absolute good and the absolute evil and these two wholes are more contrary to each other than the contraries among the opposite individual features because all of them together are characteristic of absolute good and absolute evil respectively.

both are principles, one of evils, the other of goods. This is rather like Numenian dualism. This is *prima facie* possible but we have explained that Numenius' dualism is the consequence of his interest in the *dēmiourgos* (or the equivalent of him) in its cosmopoietic activity in the struggle with evil soul while the seeming dualism of Plotinus is the result of his emanation of reality from the One in which the One and matter stand at the two extremes (*archai*) of this spectrum of reality. This furthest separation, in the name of *enantion*, is the only rationale for the seeming dualism here (cp. Schlette p.155).

[17] Translation I.8.6.36-41:

For the other contraries belong to the same species or the same genus and have something in common as a result of this belonging. But things which are completely separate, and in which there are present in one the contraries to whatever is necessary for the fulfilment of the being

of the other, must surely be most of all contraries, if by contraries we mean things which are furthest of all removed from each other.

Commentary:

This important passage reveals Plotinus' knowledge of Aristotle's discussion on *enantia*, genus and *eidōs*, but it also reveals Plotinus' independence of this influence (cp. Corrigan 1981 pp.104-5, note 32). So far, as we have seen, Plotinus' contraries are paired, that is, one attribute is given only one contrary; for example, evil is contrary to good but not, in Plotinus' view in I.8, to a third neutrality, or the deficiency is the contrary to excess but not contrary to the right measure. In Aristotle contrary can be both dual and multivocal and the multivocality of contraries is not necessarily manifested within the same genus (Pellegrin 1986 p.63). It is the postulation of these dualistic contraries - for there are two poles, matter and the One - that make it possible for Plotinus to propose that all the contraries share one and the same greatest genus, that is the emanation from the One. However, this rule can be interpreted otherwise: in the contrary between the One and matter because the One is the greatest genus underlying everything and matter is defined as a *sterēsis* of the One and therefore the One and matter in this sense share no common substratum which comprehends them both and, according to Aristotle, these two terms are most contrary to each other if they share no genus. Matter stands both inside and outside the genetic space defined by the One (cp. 4.2.1-3).

Plotinus' nonchalant attitude to the concept of species and genus is correct since even in Aristotle species and genus do not have any fixed position in his ontological hierarchy; the only certain thing is that the genus is prior to *eidōs* and is the possibility-condition for it (Pellegrin 1986 p.58). The species, which a pair of contrary entities shares, might therefore be interpreted as the more local and limited *hypokeimenon* which defines the enclosure of



possibility. In Aristotle this problem of *eidōs*-genus is closely related to change and generation (*Met.* 1054b25-31) but there is no sign that Plotinus relates the contraries sharing the same genus to change or generation in his work; it is more likely than not that he bases this postulation of the same genus on the ontological fact that all of them are derived from the same source, the absolute One. It is this ontological fact that can make Plotinus claim, if he wishes to make it explicit, that there exists a greatest genus which underlies all the pairs of contraries and which makes his philosophy a science (Pellegrin 1986 p.56). In a word, Plotinus rejects Aristotle's atomistic substances or individuals, with separate enclosures of conditions for possibilities, as the basic facts of reality which makes it impossible to say, in general metaphysical terms, that non-substance is the contrary to substance because non-substance is never a part of Aristotelian reality. Plotinus instead sees the whole of reality as hierarchical with the One as the only source of being and as the sole substratum underlying all kinds of reality including matter, but, with the definition of matter as the *sterēsis* of being, it can also be said that the One and matter share no common substratum because these two would then entail a third entity more fundamental than both of them.

Moreover, those which are not in the same genus, Aristotle says and Plotinus accepts, do not have anything in common and are incomparable:

"That contrariety is the greatest difference is made clear by induction, for things which differ in genus have no way to one another, but are too far distant and are not comparable (*asumblētos*)...." (*Met.* 1055a5-7)

To translate this *asumblētos* into Plotinus' language we can say that those which share the same genus are mixtures participating both in the absolute Good and absolute evil but absolute Good and absolute evil are incommensurable and share no genus which can define their

relationship, because one is full being and the other is said to be an absolute *sterēsis* of it. It is this condition of sharing no genus that explains things (= absolute Good and absolute evil) which are completely separate (cp. Himmerich pp.119-20).

Then Plotinus continues explaining what he really means by saying that they are completely separate. Plotinus proceeds somehow like this. He has defined primary matter or absolute evil as absolute *sterēsis* of being and goodness, and this means that the definition of absolute evil is a *sterēsis* of those positive *poiai ousiai* characteristic of the absolute Good. This in turn implies that a definition of the absolute Good is a *sterēsis* of that negative *poiai ousiai* characteristic of the absolute evil. This implication is "semantically" legitimate because we have said that contraries, even if they share no genus, are paired and not multivocal, and both absolute Good and absolute evil are thus mutually implicated in their respective definitions. However, "ontologically" *mē on* is dependent on *on* and the "semantically" mutual implication has to be qualified by the understanding that the One transcends, and matter is deprived of, the positive features predicated of them respectively. Furthermore, it would be most bizarre to say that One is the *sterēsis* of the *mē on* for matter as *mē on* just means that it has no content of its own. It does not mean anything to say that the One is a privation of nothing at all. Therefore, Plotinus can say that whatever features there are in any one of the two the contraries of which are necessary for the fulfilment of the being of the other. This share of no common ground in definition explains why they are *asumblētoi* and they are the most of all contraries.

Perhaps it is wiser to register a personal qualm about Plotinus' passage which has just been commented on or, perhaps more properly, about my interpretation of it. The very fact that the One and matter stand at the furthest removal from each other does not mean that whatever is predicated of one the reverse of it is automatically predicated of another, which is indeed

what we have understood in our interpretation of the passage discussed in the last paragraph. The fact is this: strictly speaking, matter as evil is opposite to *Nous*, the full being and the system of forms, since the One is beyond predication while matter and *Nous* are predicated, after all, exactly in opposite terms and this is how Himmerich understands it:

*"Das Böse wird seinem Inhalt nach zwar am Gegensatz entwickelt, aber nicht - wie eigentlich zu erwarten - an seinem absoluten Gegensatz, dem "jenseitigen Guten", sondern als Gegensatz zum wahren sein und Leben, dem Geist." (Himmerich p.119; my underlining)*

Also:

*"Der Gegensatz zwischen gut und böse ist darum in strengen Sinne keine logischer (es sei denn der zwischen Fülle und Mangel), sondern ein ontologischer, nämlich der Gegensatz zwischen Geist und Nichtgeist, zwischen Geist und Materie, und darum in der realität dieser Welt doch ein echter Antagonismus, weil gegenüber dem Weltmodell des Geistes die materie den volligen Kontrast bildet wie die Dunkelheit gegenüber dem Licht." (Ibid. pp.119-20, my underlining)*

I think this possible confusion arises from the fact that in I.8 the clear distinction of three *hypostases* in the hypostatic reality is not enforced because the message to get across is the anhypostatic nature of evil, both of the primary and secondary kinds, to be proved as an image of hypostatic reality "as a whole" and as opposite to it. When it is necessary to get into the particular *hypostases* then question arises.

On the other hand, it is perhaps not misleading to say that matter, depending on what Plotinus

has in mind, is opposite both to the One and to *Nous*. Matter in Plotinus, as we have said, has assumed the functions which were separated in Plato's *hypodochē* and *ichnē*; it is the ultimate *heterotēs* and absence of being on the one hand and the material reservoir with a minimal order, from which elements and other higher complexes are worked up, on the other. In the former case, matter is *sterēsis* of being and so it is the opposite of the One which is responsible for existence; in the case of matter as disorderly *ichnē* and as absence of order it calls for *Nous* primarily - which is the system of forms - and Soul to order it, and in this sense matter is the opposite of *Nous* (and Soul). I have underlined Himmerich's *Weltmodell* in the quotation in order to point out that Himmerich has matter's absence of order in mind (and again as he says of matter in his p.121: "*Ausholung des Seins durch die Materie*") when he says what I quoted. I therefore appeal to matter here used by Plotinus as *sterēsis* of being, and not as the precosmic *ichnē* or material reservoir, to justify my commentary that matter is opposite to the One.

Plotinus then adds another explanation which is spatial in its metaphoricity: **if by contraries we mean things that are furthest of all removed from each other** (*eiper enantia ta pleiston allēlōn apestēkota*). The contraries here certainly mean the most of all contraries because the topic is about the primary good and primary evil which define the scope of reality as a whole. What Plotinus here tries to do is to ask us to envisage a spectrum of reality emanated from the One (or the primary good), with matter (or primary evil) as the terminal end. The 'space' or 'distance' between the One and matter defines the scope of the whole of reality and, because of this, the One is said to be furthest removed from matter.

[18] Translation I.8.6.41-4:

Indefiniteness and unmeasuredness and all the other characteristics which the evil nature has are contrary to the definition and measure and all the characteristics present in the divine nature; so the whole, too, is contrary to the whole.

Commentary:

This passage is an addition to the explanation in I.8.6.[17] that the primary good and the primary evil are predicated in exactly opposite ways. Indefiniteness and unmeasuredness and all the other characteristics must be referred to I.8.3.[5] with commentary *ad loc.*. The whole (*to holon*) here means all the *poia ousia* characteristic of the absolute Good and of absolute evil. All the evils in one are totally contrary to goods in the other, and so it is said the whole is contrary to the whole (cp. *ta hola* in I.35 of I.8.6.[16]). This kind of contrary between collections of features is more contrary than the contrary between individual features because all the features altogether give a more comprehensive representation of absolute evil and absolute good.

[19] Translation I.8.6.44-7:

The evil nature, too, has a false being, primary and absolute falsehood; the being of the divine is true being; so that as falsehood is contrary to truth, so is the non-substantiality of the evil nature contrary to the substantial reality of the divine.

Commentary:

I adopt *autēs* instead of *autois* (Harder<sup>2</sup>) in I.47; Armstrong's addition of *mē* between *to* and

*kat'* in I.46 is unnecessary since this (non-)substantiality of evil can be known from the context. In some places Plotinus does not hesitate to use the term "ousia" of matter such as I.8.3.16-7: "*alla hoion ousia autou (= matter) tauta.*" Schwyzer makes a comment on this use:

*"Es gibt also eine kakou ousia, wenn man diesen Ausdruck überhaupt verwenden darf für das Nichtseiende, und diese kakou ousia ist das kakon prōton kai kath' hautō kakon..., also sozusagen das autokakon."* (Schwyzer 1973 p.274)

I follow the text of H. & S. here.

Plotinus introduces one more dimension - the epistemological dimension - to the axiological *enantia* between absolute Good and absolute evil which are themselves in turn derived from the *enantion* between the *on* or *epekeina ontos* and *mē on*. Anton in his discussion on Aristotle's theory of contrariety has made a statement which is pertinent to the present passage:

"Defined essences and opinions concerning substances remain unaltered, for they are not substances; they change only by virtue of the substance being in process. The truth and falsity of a statement depends on the given determinations and not on any power of the statement itself of admitting contraries." (Anton 1957 p.63)

The absolute evil is said to have false being (*to einai pseudomenon*) and this is then manifested into primary and absolute falsehood (*prōtōs kai ontōs pseudos*; cp. III.6.7.12-3 and II.5.5.23-4; cp. *Resp.* 382ac and *Sophist* 258e). What can this mean except that Plotinus has also treated falsehood as a problem related to being? In this case the ontology of evil again overdetermines the epistemology of evil.

Plotinus here, in my opinion, seems to introduce another proof for the *enantiotēs* between the primary good or the One and the primary evil or *mē on*. His procedure is this: if truth can be found only in the true being (= *on* or *epekeina tou ontos*, and = primary good) then falsehood can be found only in false being (= *mē on*, and = primary evil). Since truth is contrary (*enantion*) to falsehood *on* or *epekeina tou ontos* (= primary good) must therefore be contrary to *mē on* (= primary evil). It has to be realised here that the truth or falsehood in question is not related to a single proposition but to the general condition which makes a proposition true or false.

[20] Translation I.8.6.47-54:

So we have shown that it is not universally true that there is nothing contrary to substance. Besides, even in the case of fire and water, we should accept that they were contraries if they did not have matter as a common element in them, in which hot and dry and wet and cold occurred as accidents. If they only had the things which go to make up their substantial forms without what they have in common, there would be here too a contrariety of substance to substance.

Commentary:

It was proved in the last few passages that there is some entity contrary to substance. It is only in Aristotle's ontology where individual substances prevail that substance cannot have its opposite.

This *enantion* is *mē on*. There are certain conditions for this *mē on*. First of all, this *mē on* is

a universal concept and the substance (*ousia*) to which it is contrary is not an individual *ousia* but a universal *on* or *epekeina tou ontos*. secondly, this pair of contraries shares nothing and their relationship is the greatest ontological distance imaginable between them within Plotinus' conceptual framework. That means this use of *enantiotēs* is closely related to Plotinus' conceptual framework. This search for an entity to be contrary to *ousia* thus involves a certain revision of the concept of *enantiotēs*, that is, Plotinus' 'possession-privation' (*hexis-sterēsis*) does not involve the accidental attributes which Aristotle insists on; it is a possession or deprivation of being or goodness. It is this kind of privation of "being" contrary to possession of "being" that makes absolute evil contrary to absolute good, *to mē on* to *on*, and primary (*protōs*) and real (*ontōs*) falsehood to truth.

By this different use of *enantiotēs* Plotinus can say that there is some entity contrary to *ousia*. However, he seems to entertain the possibility of imposing this revised *enantiotēs* in other less universal entities as well. He raises the examples of the four elements. We should accept (*edexametha an*: N.B.: the conditional form) that they were contraries if they did not have matter as a common element (*koinon*, cp. *koinou tinos* in I.37) in them, in which hot and dry and wet and cold occurred as accidents (*sumbebēkota egineto*). One might feel that Plotinus is carried away by his enthusiasm for his revised *enantiotēs*. Plotinus says that there are four elements which share the same *hypokeimenon*, physical prime matter; the four qualities which are accidental attributes of the elements are nevertheless contraries despite this *koinon*. While the contraries (in the sense of antithesis) between accidental qualities have never been in doubt it is the contraries between *ousiai* that cause all the problems in I.8.6. Plotinus then rectifies this shortcoming and says, *ex hypothesi*, that, if these qualities could be the entities that go to make up their substantial forms (*tēn ousian autōn sumplērounta*), that is, if each pair of qualities became substances, there would be contrariety between one sort of *ousia* and another sort of it.



To say that Plotinus is carried away by his enthusiasm would be quite unfair because the conditional form is very clear here. Instead, one should say that Plotinus is making a thought-experiment; this thought-experiment is not purely idle. Plotinus, in his II.6, knows the distinction between the relationship which obtains between substance and quality among sensibles and that which obtains among the noetic entities. "If" the four elements, *per impossible*, are noetic then the hot and dry and wet and cold would become a kind of *poia ousia*, that is, they are the *energeiai* of the *ousia*. The without what they have in common is also indicative of Plotinus' recognition that at the noetic level there is no matter in the sense of material substratum. On the other hand, these four qualities are only accidental to the four elements in the sensible world and are subject to all kinds of generation and destruction. Plotinus' thought-experiment is based on this 'up-grading', *per impossible*, the four sensible elements to the noetic level. Providing this 'up-grading' were allowed, there would be contrary of *ousia* among them.

[21] Translation I.8.6.54-9:

So things which are altogether separate, and have nothing in common, and are as far apart as they can be, are contrary in their very nature: for their contrariety does not depend on quality or any other categories of being, but on their furthest possible separation from each other, and on their being made up of opposites and on their contrary action.

Commentary:

I.8.6.[20] can be said to be an elaboration of the first half of [17]; I.8.6.[21] can be said to be a further statement of the second half of [17].

If the concept of *poia ousia* valid in the noetic world is transplanted to matter and all the negative features characteristic of *mē on* are in fact matter's *energeiai*, then Aristotle's thinking that there must be a *koinon* underlying opposite accidental features is no longer valid. What we have is *ousia* contrary to 'quasi-ousia'; no *koinon*, in the sense of substratum which both share, is necessary, and this is why Plotinus says they are altogether separate (*pantē kechōrismena*) and have nothing in common (*mēden echonta koinon*). As far as they can be (*pleistēn apostasin*) appeals to our visualisation of Plotinus reality, analogically, as a spatial continuum with the One and matter as the furthest and extreme points (cp. commentary on I.8.6.[17]).

Because *on* and *mē on*, though contrary, share no *koinon* and their *on* and *mē on* are not different from their *energeiai*, Plotinus can say that their contrariety does not depend on quality or any other category of being because all the features are now no more than the '*energeiai*' of '*ousia*' and in a sense are *ousia*. The only contraries now lie in the possession of being and the deprivation of it.

The difference in being is the furthest possible separation from each other (*pleiston allēlōn kechōristai*) because there is nothing which can connect them and also because in the ontological map they are at the two ends of the scheme which define its scope.

The *on* and *mē on* are made up of opposites (*ex antithetōn sunestēke*). Both *on* and *mē on* have features which are characteristic of them and the features of *mē on* are merely the privatives of those features belonging to *on*. Therefore both *on* and *mē on* and those features characteristic of each of them are opposite to each other, opposite in the sense of *sterēsis*. *On* and *mē on* are thus said to be made out of opposite elements.

On their contrary action (*ta enantia poiei*). cp. *pepoiētikos* in I.8.4.12. The contrariety between *on* and *mē on* is also revealed in what they have produced because the sensibles as mixtures share in both the absolute Good and the absolute evil. The secondary good and secondary evil present in the sensible world remain contrary to each other although in this case this contrary has a *koinon* which underlies the contraries.

To conclude commentary on this important chapter I.8.6 it is worth quoting a passage from VI.7.23.10-7:

"...if the evils came later, in things which do not participate in this Good in any way at all, and on the very last and lowest level, and there is nothing beyond evils on the worst side, the evils would be opposed to it without any middle terms for the opposition (*oude echonta meson pros enantiosin*). This then would be the Good; for either there is no Good at all, or, if it is necessary that there is, it would be this and not something else. But if someone says that there is not, then there would be no evil either; so things would be by nature indifferent for our choice (cp. I.8.15.[2]); but this is impossible. But what others call goods are referred to this, but it itself is referred to nothing."

The lengthy I.8.6 is meant to prove the thesis proposed in *Theaetetus* 176ab that good and evil must co-exist otherwise neither of them would obtain. The question is this: with too much stress on their difference (for that is what *enantiotēs* implies) a dualism would emerge. For this Plotinus has to revise his *enantiotēs* and that is what he has tried to do in I.8.6.[6]-[21]. This has to be seen together with the archetype-image relationship that hypostatic reality has with anhypostatic reality. If matter is understood as the image of *on* and *sterēsis* of *on* on the one hand and matter is *enantion* to *on* on the other, then one can immediately associate the

*enantiotēs* with *sterēsis*, *heterotēs*, the privative prefix *a-* or *an-* and the *mē* of *mē on* (see commentary on I.8.1.[5]). It means that *enantiotēs* can happen, in degrees, to any two different levels of reality - either hypostatic or anhypostatic - and what characterises the primary good and the primary evil is that their *enantiotēs* is the "most of the contraries" (I.8.6.[17]) and they "are furthest of all removed from each other" (ibid.). To make all of these possible one must assume the thesis of degrees of being which was first propounded by Plato and firmly accepted by Plotinus. It is the implicit premise for his theory of contrariety to prove the necessity of evil.

- 1.8.7-

We come to the section which causes controversy because it seems to repeat the *Theaetetus'* theodicy which has already been mentioned in 1.8.6 and because it seems to advocate a kind of dualism too blatant to be compatible with what 1.8 has told us so far.

That there is a repetition of the *Theaetetus'* theme in 1.8.7.[5]-[6] is true but this might not amount to a verbose repetition but rather be a brief reminder of the vital importance of this message: justification and no rectification of evil. Schlette has pointed out that 1.8.6 and 1.8.7 are reciprocal and both reveal a kind of metaphysical dualism which Plotinus can surpass by his One as *meta-positivität* (Schlette pp.143-4). More important than this similarity is their difference and the greatest one between 1.8.6 and 1.8.7 is this: the message from *Theaetetus* 176ab is now placed in a new context of "mortal nature" and "this place," that is, this message is taken from the context of the very abstract ontological speculation in 1.8.6 and is put into the more concrete context of the limited human world in 1.8.7. This shift of context is provided by the 'cosmological turn' - the *dēmiourgos' diacosmēsis* out of a pre-given *anankē* or *ichnē* in *Timaeus* - in 1.8.7. Schlette calls this "*echt plotinische Platon-Interpretation*" (Schlette p.143).

What I mean by the 'cosmological turn' is this. In 1.8.6 the discussion proposes the logical concept of *enantion* between the absolute good and its dependent - the absolute evil - which together define the scope of all reality; in 1.8.7.[1]-[7] Plotinus shifts his attention to the *enantiotēs* between two equal and rival principles which are antithetical to each other and which together set up this concrete and sensible world we are in. For this he has introduced "god" (apparently the *dēmiourgos* in *Timaeus*) and *anankē* and their optimal compromise. By

this cosmological turn Plotinus has to change the connotation of his matter, in Platonic terms, from *hypodochē* as ultimate *heterotēs*, which differentiates being, to *ichnē*, which is the primordial and disorderly material reservoir (cp. I.8.10.[6]) awaiting *actio ab extra*. Matter is used in the sense of *sterēsis* of being in I.8.6 but now the attention is shifted to its endowed *poia ousia* which explains its chaotic motion. In other words, Plotinus used matter in a metaphysical sense in I.8.6 but in I.8.7 he uses it in a physical sense. Plotinus tries to justify this shift by explicit allusions to *Timaeus* and *Politicus* which, according to my interpretation, are mainly about *cosmopoiēsis*. Moreover, this version of cosmology had been accepted by the Middle Platonists and this indicated further that this would inevitably entail a dualistic outlook, an outlook indeed clearly seen in I.8.7. This will inevitably change the use of *enantiotēs* from its revised sense of *sterēsis* in I.8.6 (and thereby preserves the unique position of the One) to its use in the sense of antithetical opposition, with *nous* and *anankē* as the main protagonists, in I.8.7. With this cosmological turn which Plotinus introduces in I.8.7.[1]-[7] the *Theaetetus* 176ab is now firmly in the context of *cosmopoiēsis*. What can this mean except that the theodicy expounded in *Theaetetus* 176ab is both valid in a monistic and in a dualistic outlook which requires that good must co-exist with evil? The difference is that the vital concept of *enantiotēs* which defines the relationship between good and evil and which connects them together in I.8.6 and I.8.7 has changed its sense from *sterēsis* to antithesis. However, this is also the case with the *a-noia* in Laws X (1.3.5-9). If this argument is accepted then Thedinga's complaint that the *Theaetetus* 176ab has been unnecessarily repeated is unfounded.

I.8.7.[1]-[3] reaffirm the necessity of *enantion* but in I.8.7.[4] Plotinus begins to give this *enantion* a 'cosmological' twist by his introduction of the *dēmiourgos* and *anankē* which act, respectively, as the principle of good and as the principle of evil, a strong dualism. The consequence of the optimal compromise of these two principles is this "mortal nature" and "this place," that is the universe (I.8.7.[5]). Human beings in this limited context are

themselves limited but are guaranteed protection and preservation by the providence of god (I.8.7.[6]). However, so says I.8.7.[7], this in turn implies that evil cannot be done away with. If this existence of evil is necessary then how can we escape from it? asks I.8.7.[8]: an ontological detachment from lower reality and a turn upwards to the higher one (I.8.7.[8]-[9]). I.8.7.[10]-[12] are rather independent of the rest of I.8.7 and provide another proof for the necessity of evil in terms of the emanative progress of reality: if what comes after the first exists so should the last (i.e. matter or evil) exist after the penultimate. The addition of this extra proof sounds like an after-thought (especially so if we think that it was Plotinus, which it is not, who partitioned the text into sections which we have now) although it does not bring too much incongruity to what goes before it. However, [10]-[12] constitute an argument, a kind of *Ableitungssystem*, which is more akin to the argument in I.8.6 in its metaphysical approach because it is based on the emanation scheme derived from the One on which I.8.6 is also based. On this account it is possible to separate I.8.7.[10]-[12] into an independent section.

[1] Translation I.8.7.1:

**But how then is it necessary that if the Good exists, so should evil?**

[2] Translation I.8.7.2:

**Is it because there must be matter in the All?**

[3] Translation I.8.7.2-4:

**This All must certainly be composed of contrary principles; it would not exist at all if matter did not exist.**

**Commentary:**

I have explained that I.8.7 introduces a cosmological turn as complementary to I.8.6 which treats the problem of evil in an ontological context. This cosmological turn is seen in the All (I.8.7.[2]) and in this All (I.8.7.[3]) both of which mean the sensible universe we are in. This cosmological turn will also invoke a matter which does not function as the ontological *heterotēs* in differentiating each hypostatic reality but as the material reservoir, with its own disorderly motion, from which higher entities are worked up by a noetic principle. The quotations from *Timaeus* 47e-48a and the golden age myth of *Politicus* 273 (cp. 1.2.17) are not accidental because both of them are cosmopoietic in their contexts.

It is in the light of this cosmological turn that we find ourselves unable to agree with Schröder's harsh judgement on I.8.7 as a whole in which he finds "hardly any necessary connection" in its inner structure (Schröder p.158) and the questions asked in I.8.7 are: "*Höchstens ist es doch nur sehr locker mit ihm verknüpft*" (ibid. p.160). This rejection of I.8.7 is interesting if seen together with Thedinga's rejection of I.8.6. In reply to Schröder's accusation that I.8.7 might be a repetition of I.8.6 I nevertheless would like to repeat this: I.8.6 treats the concept of *enantiotēs* in ontological terms in the sense of *sterēsis* with matter as *sterēsis* of all reality derived from the One, while I.8.7 treats the problem of *enantiotēs* in antithetical terms (like cold against hot, health against sickness), with its concentration on this cosmos or "this place" and so the protagonists here are god (= the *dēmiourgos*) and the "ancient nature" (= *hylē* or *hypokeimenē* "not yet set in order"). I have advocated the necessity of distinguishing the problem of existence (related to *hypodochē*) from the problem



of essence (related to *ichnē*) and for I.8.7 it is the problem of essence, that is, the order in the cosmos, that Plotinus has in mind. If Plotinus equates matter with *mē on* then one can say that the matter in I.8.6 stresses the *mē* of the *mē on* and the matter in I.8.7 the *on* of the *mē on*, that is, *ichnē* as a kind of entity (*on*) deprived of essence (*mē*). With this refocus on cosmos the problem of 'flight' does not cease to be important and so [6]-[9] are devoted again to its discussion. I.8.7.[1]-[7] are thus closely related to I.8.6 but they are mostly new. The rest of I.8.7 is also new as far as the argument for the necessity of matter or evil is concerned. With all these as evidence we conclude that Schröder's harsh judgement on I.8.7 is inadequate. His inadequate judgement is due to his failure to recognise the ambiguity of matter in Plotinus which can be understood either in an ontological sense or a physical sense.

The sensibles, as the mixtures of secondary good and secondary evil, are the main entities in the sensible universe; they are under contrary influences from absolute Good of hypostatic reality and absolute evil of anhypostatic reality. This description of the moral character of these sensibles has its cosmological background because Plotinus thinks the cosmos (= *tode to pan*) in itself must certainly be composed of contrary principles. It would not exist at all if matter did not exist. Why? One has to turn back to I.8.2.[9] where Plotinus says, with regret, that there would only have been hypostatic reality and no evil at all had not the Soul *hypostasis* gone further downwards than it had to. Here in I.8.7.[3] it is said that the cosmos will not exist if matter had not been there already. What implications can we have from these two positions? The possible implications are that (a) matter pre-exists, (b) matter is the entity which entices the further fall of soul and (c) matter is one of the two principles which are responsible for the creation of the cosmos. All of these suggest a clear cosmological approach.

[4] Translation I.8.7.4-7:

"For the generation of this universe was a mixed result of the combination of intellect and necessity." What comes into it from God is good; the evil comes from the "ancient nature" (Plato means the underlying matter, not yet set in order).

Commentary:

The none too exact quotations are from *Timaeus* 47e-48a and from *Politicus* 273b5 (cp. *Symposium* 191d, 192b and 193c as Schröder [Schröder p.158 note 7] suggests but the relevance is not direct; nor is his suggestion for *Timaeus* 53aff.). For the problem of Platonic *cosmopoiesis* I refer to my Interpretative Essay on Plato and Middle Platonism. It suffices to say that the universe is a consequence of the imposition of form of the Divine Living Being by God (= intellect cp. II.15-6; = the *dēmiourgos*) on the primordial *ichnē* which are a kind of material reservoir with a chaotic motion (= necessity; = ancient nature (*hē archaia physis*), cp. VI.5.1.16 and VI.9.8.14) and await the imposition of order *ab extra*. Plotinus means this primordial *ichnē* as the underlying matter, not yet set in order (*tēn hylēn legon ten hypokeimenēn oupō kosmētheisan*).

The primordial *ichnē*, unlike *hypodochē*, in *Timaeus* are not there as a first principle (*archē*) but are the consequence of the interaction between the *hypodochē* and Being. The generation of this cosmos is a question about the essence of the universe but this is preceded by the problem of existence which is about why there is a limited and distorted being rather than a full being or simply no being at all. In my interpretation of the difference between Neopythagoreanism and Middle Platonism I have said that by difference of emphasis - either on the problem of existence or on the problem of essence - we would have in turn (a) a theory of evil or matter as non-being or deficiency of being and thus a monism and (b) a theory of evil or matter which is seen as a virulently active force to be suppressed by another rational

principle, like the *dēmiourgos*, and it thus entails a dualism. In 1.8.7.[1]-[9] the position is for (b) and this is confirmed in 1.8.7.[3]-[4] which formulates explicitly as what comes into it from God is good and the evil comes from the 'ancient nature'. I have said that this dualistic option is also based on an antinomian consideration because good can only be productive of good while evil is productive of evil; with the monistic option we inevitably see repeated attempts to explain away the phenomenon of evil, with the consequence of a much revised concept of evil as *mē on* as is seen in 1.8.3-6.

[5] Translation 1.8.7.7-9:

But what does he mean by "mortal nature," granted that "this place" refers to the All?

[6] Translation 1.8.7.9-11:

The answer is given where he says "Since you have come into being, you are not immortal, but you shall by no means be dissolved" through me.

Commentary:

The source for 1.8.7.[5] is *Theaetetus* 176a7-8; it refers back to 1.8.6.8-9. The source for [6] is *Timaeus* 41ab. In my exposition of *Timaeus* it has been shown that the cosmos is a limited being because it is a compromise between *nous* (= the *dēmiourgos*) and *anankē* (= the *ichnē*) (*Tim.* 47e-48a). This means that the cosmos (= the All, *to pan*) on its own cannot have any physical and metaphysical stability; it needs the constant *epimeleia* from the transcendent *dēmiourgos* in order to survive; the myth of golden age in *Politicus* 268d-274e has shown this

very clearly. This physical and metaphysical instability of the cosmos on its own is the so called mortal nature (*thnētēn physin*) here. Moreover, this susceptibility to change and destruction is characteristic of human life in general.

The quotation from *Timaeus* in [6] should prove the importance of the personality of the *dēmiourgos* with regard to his artefact, the cosmos. The fact that it is the goodness of the *dēmiourgos* which sustains the continuation of the cosmos which is said to be of mortal nature, proves that Plotinus does not explain away *in toto* the figure of the *dēmiourgos* into the abstract *nous* or soul. This confirms that there is a strain of Middle Platonic interpretation of *Timaeus* in Plotinus which leads Plotinus inevitably to the kind of dualism exposed here. Nevertheless, this trace of "personality" in the noetic figure does not chime harmoniously with the logical necessity of the emanative scheme of reality as derived from the One.

[7] Translation I.8.7.11-2:

If this is so, the statement is correct that "evils will never be done away with."

(8) Translation I.8.7.11-4:

How then is one to escape? Not by movement in place, Plato says, but by winning virtue and separating oneself from the body: for in this way one separates oneself from matter as well, since the man who lives in close connection with the body is also closely connected with matter.

Commentary:

The rationale behind I.8.7.[7] is this: if the cosmos is a combination of matter and form, and an optimal compromise between the *dēmiourgos* and the *anankē*, then it is also a place where goods and evils come into existence and interact. The fact that the preservation and protection of this mortal nature has to be guaranteed by the providence of the *dēmiourgos* implies the persistent presence of evil in the universe. Because of this dualistic composition the denial or destruction of one of the two principles will mean the dissolution of this cosmos because this cosmos cannot exist on the basis of just one principle.

The statement evils will never be done away with (*mē an apolesthai ta kaka*) has been proved correct in the last paragraph and also in I.8.6.[5]-[22] (see commentary *ad loc.*) in its argument for the necessity of evil (*ta kaka einai anankei* in I.8.6.16). The use of *enantiotēs* in I.8.6 has to presuppose a Plotinian picture of reality in which the One and matter are at the furthest remove from each other and are defined thereby as *enantiotēs* in the sense of *sterēsis*; it is a highly revised use of *enantiotēs*. In I.8.7 the use of *enantiotēs* is brought back to its ordinary use and indicates two entities characterised by antithetical attributes. While in the I.8.6. this revised use of *enantion* requires matter's ontological dependence on the One and matter has to imply the pre-existence of the One but not *vice versa*, the use of *enantiotēs* in I.8.7 indicates that they contradictory principles and the existence of any one of them must imply the existence of the other. Therefore, matter, either in the sense of *heterotēs* (like *hypodochē* in *Timaeus*) or in the sense of *anankē* (= *ichnē* and material reservoir), is necessary in Plotinus' disposition of reality. The only difference is that matter in I.8.6 has the One (= the principle of being) as its antagonist while matter in I.8.7 has *nous* (= the principle of essence) as its opponent.

It is therefore typical of Plotinus' theodicy in that evil - either as absence of being or as a virulent and active being - is to be rationalised and justified because of his Platonic belief in

the rationality and aesthetics of the cosmos and of reality as a whole. This application of *Theaetetus'* theodicy to I.8.6 and I.8.7, to both a monistic and a dualistic outlook, should remind us of the same situation in *Laws X* where theodicy of a similar nature to *Theaetetus* 176ab is both applicable to a monistic outlook (with the privative *a* of the *anoiai xungenomenē psychē* understood in the sense of *sterēsis*) and to a dualistic outlook (with the *a* interpreted in the sense of antithesis, antithetical to the *noun prolabousa psychē*). I hope this is a piece of conclusive evidence for the necessary repetition of *Theaetetus'* passage in I.8.7.

The necessity of evil has been proved and the next step for Plotinus in I.8.7.[8] is to suggest a way out of the sensible of which evil is a necessary characteristic. I.8.7.[8] here is an echo of I.8.6.[1]-[5]. To mention an escape from a divinely ordained - in spite of limited - cosmos is strange because this attempt to escape from "this place" would clearly imply a dissatisfaction with the cosmos; the justification of evil in I.8.6-7 seems to fail in reassuring those who are worried about the presence of evil. This in turn implies a kind of Plotinus' uneasiness with the limited *parousia* of the One in the sensible cosmos. To persuade those dissatisfied with the sensible universe is indeed what [8] intends to do. This seems to indicate a position that theodicy always fails to bring comfort to those in suffering.

The presence of evil, I.8.7.[8] says, is the embodiment of human soul (*sunōn tōi sōmati*) but if the existence of the cosmos is both logical and necessary so is the embodiment of soul. Then why should one leave the sensible world and leave the body? Plotinus has two points to make against this objection. First, the escape (*ekpheuxetai*) involved is not a spatial escape but, as Armstrong says (Loeb I. pp.296-7 note 3), "a radical inner detachment from the body" (see commentary on I.8.6.[4]); this implies that the rationality for the existence of the cosmos is respected but the higher destiny of man is not here. This entails the second point: despite the rational nature of the cosmos and the embodiment of the human soul, the definition of a

human being is its "inner man", a nature which belongs to the intelligible cosmos rather than to the sensible universe but remains susceptible to temptation and hence degenerates (the man who lives in close connection with the body is also closely connected with matter); this means that a human being as born and embodied in this cosmos is a "fact" of his ontological limitation but the return to the higher world is an assertion of his "value" as a transcendent being. By recognising the rational nature of this cosmos as the ground for interaction between goods and evils Plotinus preserves the rationality of the whole of reality; by winning virtue and separating oneself from the body Plotinus preserves the freedom of the individual from bodily contamination. In this sense one seems to witness that the cosmos is endowed with a certain instrumental value of *paideusis* for all to transcend because all are structured in the same way and have the potential to go upwards to the noetic reality; one is further encouraged by the fact that this cosmos is also guided by a providential god (I.8.7.[6]). It seems that a dualistic picture of reality brings forth some implications not realised in the emanative and deterministic scheme of reality in which logic and necessity prevail and dominate. Nevertheless, in the Interpretative Essay 4.3-4 I have argued that this *dēmiourgos*, like the One, remains too intellectual and the *pronoia* he provides might remain limited to the interest in the perpetuation and preservation of this global artefact. All in all one has to say that with the introduction of *anankē* and the *dēmiourgos* in I.8.7 Plotinus does bring us something new and this is his balance between a respect for the limited perfection of the cosmic environment and an encouragement to transcend it because a human being is endowed with such a potentiality in the vertical plenitude of his soul.

Nevertheless, the general approach - if we take the *Enneads* as a whole - towards the problem of evil in Plotinus is to see evil as *mē on*. It has been expressed in the Interpretative Essay that the treatment of evil as a problem of *mē on* has brought out a deterministic outlook for the cosmos and left little room for the existence and exercise of free will (4.3). It is therefore not

a great surprise to see that Fr. Henry, in his preface to MacKenna-Page's translation, questions the effect of Plotinus' recommendation for a spiritual separation:

"Purification might be conceived either as a material separation or as a detachment of the will, Plotinus, by assigning to the will a thoroughly unobtrusive role, is reduced to a conception which, in spite of his denial, comes very near to a material separation."

(p. lxvi)

[9] Translation 1.8.7.15-6:

Plato himself explains somewhere about separating or not separating oneself: but being "among the gods" means "among the beings of the world of intellect"; for these are immortal.

Commentary:

Here is one piece of evidence for Plotinus' equation of his hypostatic reality with gods. The source for [9] is also *Theaetetus* 176a6. I have said that this escape or separation is in order "to become like God as far as this is possible" (*phugē de homoiōsis theōi kata to dynaton*). For Plato this means a theology, a theology which helps separation from the *thnētē physis* of the cosmos and ascent upwards to the *theoi athanatoi*; for Plotinus the separation means the ascent of the inner man to hypostatic reality. Therefore Plotinus can in this passage equate the separation or escape in Plato to the ascent in Plotinus because both of them (i.e., separation from matter = ascent to hypostatic reality) will lead one from mortal nature to the immortal world.



[10] Translation I.8.7.16-7:

One can grasp the necessity of evil in this way too.

[11] Translation I.8.7.17-20:

Since not only the Good exists, there must be the last end to the process of going out past it, or if one prefers to put it like this, going down or going away: and this last, after which nothing else came into being, is evil.

[12] Translation I.8.7.21-3:

Now it is necessary that what comes after the First should exist, and therefore that the last should exist; and this is matter, which possesses nothing at all of the Good. And in this way too evil is necessary.

Commentary:

I.8.7.[1]-[7] give us an argument for the existence of evil which is based on a dualistic and antithetical *enantiotēs* between the *dēmiourgos* and *anankē*, but [10]-[12] give us another argument which is based on a monistic picture of reality, the emanation of reality from the One, and is in spirit more akin to I.8.6.

It was said that the mention of a noetic *dēmiourgos* dealing with a disordered matter will bring us a problem of essence - how the cosmos is as it is now - and a dualism in theodicy. These are the conclusions drawn from I.8.7.[1]-[7]. On the other hand, the mention of the One or the

Good and the emanation of reality in I.8.7.[10]-[12] will bring us the question of existence - why things are rather than are not -; the nature of evil is explained as a question of existence and thus the thesis that evil is *mē on*. This *mē on* as *sterēsis* of *on* is intended to preserve the unique position of the source of existence, the One or the Good, and thus a monism.

The monistic argument for the existence of anhypostatic evil in I.8.6.[17]-[22] is "the furthest possible separation (*pleiston allōn kechōristai*)" of the Good from evil within a Plotinian picture of reality. In I.8.7.[10]-[12] this argument returns to one of the basic doctrines in Plotinus' philosophy, that is, the creation of being by the absolute freedom of the One must be limited in its scope: there must be the last end to the process of going out past it (= the One); this argument can be said to be elaboration of the "perhaps one is the beginning, the other the end (*to men archē, to de eschaton*)" in I.8.1.[6]. This is an expression of Greek philosophy's general abhorrence of unlimitedness but also a necessary safeguard in argument against the countercharge of infinite regress.

Armstrong's translation of *ekbasis* (I.18) as going out past it is inadequate; more probably it means "going out of it". The mention of *hypobasis* and *apostasis* (I.19) means that Plotinus first indicates a *kinēsis* - and thus a *heterotēs* than the One (II.5.5.28-35) - and appeal to envisage his philosophy in a spatial extension (that is, "*die Bild-logik der Rede von den Hervorgangen*" of Schlette p.106) as a continuum or spectrum and is pure logic in conception. (Ibid.) This might be true but we would like to suggest the possibility of a tolmatic implication, especially the word of *apostasis*.

Plotinus, with the premise of the limited scope of reality in mind, decides to prove the necessity (*ex anankēs*) of his argument by saying that what comes after the First (*to prōton*) should exist, and therefore that the Last (*to eschaton*) should exist. Plotinus probably thinks

that the whole of reality after the One forms a great chain of being, a plenitude with connected levels of reality and with no gap left; if what comes after the One exists, so the third after the second and so forth, right up to the last one after the penultimate. This might exhibit some Neopythagorean influence in its reliance on the numerical series which is regarded as a necessary chain of entities. However, without the premises that the whole of reality is limited and that there is no gap in it, it is doubtful whether Plotinus can claim any cogency for his argument. This argument for the necessity of matter therefore presupposes in advance, again, a Plotinian picture of reality. Moreover, he says that the last one is matter and possesses nothing at all of the Good (*mēden eti echousa autou*). It is not clear if this total deprivation of the *dynamis* from the One is logically consistent with the omnipotence of the One because matter is said here to possess nothing at all of the Good and this could mean it is totally unrelated to the One. Matter as the emanated reality from the One happens to be the termination of the One's *dynamis* as well and so the One creates matter which delimits its *dynamis*. It is not clear if one should blame Plotinus for his loose use of language when he seems to say that matter is *pantelōs mē on* as it is here.

- I.8.8-

This is the beginning of the so called apologetic part while what goes before it is the systematic part (Heinemann p.83). What characterises this apologetic part (except I.8.9) is the persistent challenges, in each section and in different forms, against the thesis that matter is the primary evil (Thedinga p.268) and the resourceful responses to it by examining and explaining the conclusions already reached in the systematic part in I.8.1.-6. Most of the challenges presuppose a belief - which is Middle Platonic - that the real source of evil is psychic and non-material. Such a position has been ruled out in I.8.4. but implied in I.8.7 (see commentary *ad loc.*) where the *dēmiourgos* and *anankē* are mentioned and they in Middle Platonism lead to the thesis of evil soul which is responsible for the chaotic nature of matter (*hylēs psychē*), rivalling the *nous* principle, symbolised by the *dēmiourgos*. Admittedly, this evil soul is always understood by the Middle Platonists in the sense of a cosmological soul and not individual human soul. All the challenges, however, in the end only strengthen and circumscribe in a sharper way the thesis that matter is the absolute evil (Volkman-Schluck 1967 p.11) and the status of this thesis as meta-ethics (see commentary on I.8.14.[14]). Nevertheless, it has to be mentioned here that these challenges are not the only topics in the apologetic part of I.8. We, for example, have a substantial portion of I.8.9 devoted to the epistemological difficulty which is related to the *mē on* of matter, and in the rest of the apologetic part we can see the problem of escape from evil emerging now and then, topics which have been raised in I.8.1 and in I.8.6-7.

Stylistically, this series of challenges and responses implies a kind of dialogue between the interlocutor(s) and the answerer, or Plotinus' student(s) and himself, in, say, (a) seminar(s). (Heinemann p.86, cp. p.87; Thedinga p.250) Hadot has very perceptively reminded us that

"philosophising, in a general way, in all the ancient schools is philosophising together (*symphilosophein*)" (Hadot 1986 p.232; Diogenes Laertius 5.25 and 10.18)

Heinemann suggests that I.8.9-15 (he should start with I.8.8 and exclude I.8.9) are completed by an alien hand (Heinemann p.90), presumably (a) scribe(s). This cannot be ruled out *in toto* but this implicit dialogue form with a hypothetical objection and a sharpened reply (with the purpose of further clarification) is not absent in other parts of *Enneads*, such as in IV.7 and V.7. One would like to think of this implicit dialogue form as a stylistic variation rather than to ascribe it to other authorship (cp. Plotinus' conducting his teaching in *Vita* 13). Thematically speaking I.8.4-5 and 7 have anticipated the discussion in the apologetic part and there always lurks behind this vigorous give-and-take a firm belief that matter is the only source of evil.

Another question related to I.8.8 itself. Heinemann thinks the pervasive analogy taken from medical science in I.8.8.[1] and [3] indicates that it is by a medical man, or taken from a medical book (Heinemann 1921 p.91) This is an exaggeration because the medical knowledge in I.8.8.[1] and [3] is of a rather general kind (rather like a "philosophical medicine") and nothing technical enough to require a specialist knowledge; even to consult a medical book would be no less an exaggeration and an underestimation of Plotinus' "general knowledge". By contrast, the 4.1-8.5 of Athenagoras' *De Resurrectione* (*Legatio and De Resurrectione*. W.R. Schoedel, 1972 OUP) which treats the related problem of digestive processes, within the Christian context of bodily resurrection, has to be referred to Galen (Schoedel p.101 notes 3 and 5) because of the great complexity and details involved. This very general description of digestive processes as given by Plotinus in I.8.8 is probably a common knowledge easily accessible to contemporary intellectuals. Moreover, the devoted friend of Plotinus, Eustochius, who waited at his bedside before his death was a doctor and could have imparted to him this sort of knowledge.

1.8.8.[1] puts forwards the objection that it is form of a particular kind, rather than matter, that accounts for secondary evils. [2] then replies to this opinion by saying that form by itself is not efficacious in causing evils; this form has to be enmattered first and this proves that form is corrupted by matter. [3] explains how matter corrupts form; it is *di' enantiotētos* but this *enantiotēs* does not mean a contradiction such as cold against heat but the formlessness against the form of heat and this formlessness assimilates it and turns it into formlessness. However, matter has to act through body to be efficacious (1.8.8.[4]). 1.8.8.[5] assumes that 1.8.8.[1]-[4] have overthrown the thesis that form of a certain kind is the cause of evil and begins a different topic: how to escape from evil. To get the better of evil one has to keep pure that part which can help us do so (1.8.8.[6]). All of this is put down to the purity of body because body in a bad condition can cause mind to commit different kinds of vices (1.8.8.[7]-[9]). 1.8.8.[10]-[11] summarise the discussion that unmeasuredness itself (i.e., matter) is the primary evil and through the participation of it, body and soul become evil but they can be counted only as secondary.

[1] Translation 1.8.8.1-11:

But if someone says that we do not become evil because of matter - giving as a reason that ignorance is not caused by matter, nor are bad desires; even supposing that their coming into existence is caused by the badness of body, it is not the matter but the form that causes them, heat, cold, bitter, salt and all the forms of flavour, and also fillings and emptyings, and not just fillings, but fillings with bodies of a particular quality; and in general it is the qualified thing which produces the distinction of desires, and, if you like, of falsified opinions, so that form rather than matter is evil - he too will be compelled all the same to admit that matter is evil.

### Commentary:

I.8.8. keeps up the theme of tracing the secondary evils in soul back to the primary evil, the matter (cp. I.8.4.[3] and I.8.5.[7]). However, from now onwards one can see that Plotinus thinks he has finished the systematic account of the existence and nature of primary evil and begins to clarify some possible confusions which might result therefrom by answering some objections. What characterises all these objections in the apologetic part is the proposed thesis that form or soul, not matter, is the real cause of evil.

Plotinus here considers a very plausible objection to his thesis that matter is the only source of evil. This objection is based on a top-down approach by conceiving the nature of all sensible entities - entities susceptible to evils - as determined by forms alone; these forms are not any fixed terms but by themselves form a hierarchy - just as we have seen in Aristotle - with prime matter as totally untouched by forms and thus totally powerless in determining the nature of the entities concerned. The hypothetical objection lists as 'forms' ignorance (*tēn agnoian*), bad desires (*tas epithumias tas ponēras*, cp. III.6.2.24), the badness of body (*sōmatos kakian*, cp. I.1.2.17), heat, cold, bitter, salt, all the forms of flavours (*hosā chumōn eidē*), fillings (and emptyings, *kenōseis*) with bodies of a particular quality (*plerōseis toiōnde*), and qualified thing (*to toiōnde*). What clues can we extract from this listing? There are broadly two kinds of form meant here: one kind is bad forms and the other is the Pre-socratic natural elements. Why is Plotinus against this seemingly plausible objection? With regard to the bad forms, it is because to attribute any deficiency to forms is to accuse the hypostatical reality of deficiency and because hypostatical reality as the system of forms and the source of goodness cannot be the source of evil. Only an evil source can explain the existence of evils. As for the view which sees Presocratic natural elements and their interaction as responsible for the existence of evil this amounts to a denial of forms - a position rejected repeatedly and strenuously by Plotinus.

Plotinus' own position is thus clear: the hypostatical reality, *Nous* in particular, as the realm of forms can be the only source of goodness and the explanation for the existence and function of evil have to be found elsewhere. For Plotinus the explanation for the existence of evil can only be matter or evil. To proceed this way Plotinus has to explain how matter or evil can distort and corrupt the incoming and innocent forms which are, by nature, only productive of goodness.

[2] Translation 1.8.8.11-8:

For what the quality in matter does, it does not do when it is separate, as the shape of the axe does not do anything without the iron. Then, too, the forms in matter are not the same as they would be if they were by themselves; they are formative forces immanent in matter, corrupted in matter and infected with its nature. Essential fire does not burn, nor do any other forms existing by themselves do what they are said to do when they come to exist in matter.

Commentary:

1.8.2.[9] says that evil would not have existed if the soul *hypostasis* did not turn away from its *theoria* around the *Nous*; 1.8.8.[2] now recognises this inevitable fact and tries to explain why it is so. Plotinus says the sensible entities as compositions of form and matter are a compromise between form and matter, or a compromise between hypostatical reality and anhypostatical matter. The imposition of form gives matter a certain stability and shape but the form is weakened by matter and becomes less than what it was: the forms in matter are not the same as they would be if they were by themselves. This means the objection in 1.8.8.[1] which blames form *simpliciter* as the cause of evil should have taken an account of



the distinction between unembodied form and embodied form. The former, as it is in the hypostatical reality, cannot be evil or the cause of evil, and the latter is the mixture of both good and evil - good from the imposed form and bad from the appended matter - and, ultimately, only matter can explain why this mixture is evil.

This passage, however, is very dualistic because Plotinus can explain the existence of evil as the weakened - terminally weakened if necessary - expression of the *dynamis* of the One in this late stage of emanation and sees matter as the conceptual limitation for the scope of reality without attributing to it the kind of virulently active force that this strong statement has clearly indicated: they are formative forces immanent in matter, corrupted in matter and infected with its nature (*logoi enyloi* [cp. *de Anima* 403a25] *phtharentes en hylēi kai tēs physeōs tēs ekeinēs anaplēstentes*). This makes matter an independent metaphysical entity with a causal efficacy of its own. This would be truly odd if we hold on to the concept of matter as expounded in I.8.6; however, in I.8.7 Plotinus has introduced us a matter in the sense of *ichnē*, an independent source of evil, and this gives the reason why I.8.8.[2] sounds dualistic, especially since I.8.8 as a whole is dealing with how forms impose essence on matter and how matter corrupts these forms - a topic for *cosmopoiēsis*. It is also because of I.8.7 we can begin to appreciate that the apologetic part is a necessary part of I.8 as a whole.

[3] Translation I.8.8.18-27:

For matter masters what is imaged in it and corrupts and destroys it by applying its own nature which is contrary to form, not bringing cold to hot but putting its own formlessness to the form of heat and its shapeless to the shape and its excess and defect to that which is measured, till it has made the form belong to matter and no longer to itself; just as when animals feed

that which is taken in is no longer as it came out but becomes dog's blood and everything dogish, and all the juices become like those of the animal which receives them.

(4) Translation I.8.8.27-8:

If then the body is the cause of evils, matter would be in this way too the cause of evils.

Commentary:

[3] has depicted the role of matter in a maleficently active way and [4]-[5] continues this trend. The formlessness or unmeasuredness, which is *energeia* or *poia ousia* of matter, is seen to possess a kind of active nature which directly attacks the incoming forms (cp. *pepoiētikos* in I.8.4.12). If Plotinus held on to his monistic interpretation of evil firmly he would not have countenanced this rather dualistic development, unless it is in the context where the order and essence of the cosmos are concerned; this has been foreshadowed in I.8.7.

Plotinus has carefully distinguished two kinds of distortion of forms coming into matter. The first kind is the distortion of forms in a piece of proximate matter - a particular object - in which the qualities of the incoming forms are distorted by qualities of an opposite nature, such as bringing hot to cold. The second kind is the distortion of the forms coming into prime matter; the nature of matter - formlessness, shapelessness, excess and defect (cp. I.8.3.[5]) - is imposed on this quality or form, and the effect is not to produce another form due to a mixture of forms but a deformed form, a form deprived of its *rationale* and more akin to matter than whence it comes. This deprivation of form by matter is an assimilation of form to matter: it (= the nature of matter) has made the form belong to matter and no longer to itself. Therefore its

(= matter's) own nature which is contrary to form is not to be understood in the physical sense of qualities interacting among themselves but in the ontological sense, that a form, in its contact with matter, meets its extinction and ceases to be a form at all. This ontological extinction of form is why matter as *mē on* is called the cause of evils. This stress on the ontological extinction of a form which is assimilated to matter indicates that Plotinus' interest in the problem of evil remains ontological.

The two analogies: (i) the destruction of the form of hot not by the form of cold but by the pure "formlessness" (*aneideon*), "shapelessness" (*amorphian*) and "excess and defect" (*hypobolēn kai ellepsin*) (I.8.8.20-3) and (ii) the digestion of food by a dog into something doglike (I.8.8.24-7), represent two kinds of relationship which matter can have in regard to form. (i) analogy represents a more fundamental kind because what underlies hot and cold is prime matter and therefore what destroys the form of hot is the very nature of prime matter. On the other hand, the (ii) analogy represents the corruption of form (of food) by a proximate matter and therefore the result maintains a kind of mixed form ("doglike," that is.) The (i) and (ii) analogies correspond exactly to what we have analysed in the last passage. This means that in Plotinus' mind the breakdown and corruption of form is a process from food (which is a form) which is transformed into something doglike and, *inter alia*, can then be further transformed into the Presocratic basic forms of quality, hot and cold and so on and down to complete formlessness, shapelessness and excess and deficiency of matter. This proves a Plotinus' belief in the existence of a prime matter which is a physical substrate supporting all these changes.

[5] Translation I.8.8.28-9:

**But, someone else might say, we have to get the better of it.**

**[6] Translation I.8.8.29:**

**But that which could get the better of it is not in a pure state unless it escapes.**

**[7] Translation I.8.8.30-4:**

**And the passions are stronger because of a corresponding mixture of bodies, and some people's passions are stronger than others', so that the individual's power cannot get the better of them, and some people have their powers of judgement dulled because bodily badness has chilled and restricted them; the opposite vices of bodily constitution make them unstable.**

**[8] Translation I.8.8.34-5:**

**The variations in our state of mind at different times are evidence of this too.**

**[9] Translation I.8.8.35-7:**

**When we are full we are different, both in our desires and our thoughts, from what we are when we are empty, and when we have eaten our fill of one kind of food we are different from what we are when we are filled with another.**

**Commentary:**

I.8.8.[5]-[9] are Plotinus' psychosomatics, and the rationale for this psychosomatics is Plotinus' "impassibility of things without matter":

"in general the actualisations of immaterial things take place without any accompanying alteration, otherwise they would perish; it is much truer to say that they remain unaltered when they become actual, and that being affected in actualisation belongs to things which have matter." (III.6.2.49-52)

And from this principle Plotinus continues saying:

"...most often what we call the vice of this part is a bad state of the body (*sōmatos kachexia hē tou legomenē kakia*), and virtue the opposite, so that in either case nothing is added to the soul."

The effect of this bodily contamination is most conspicuous in the restriction of the powers of judgement (*to krinein*); this is an echo of I.8.4.[2] where the irrational part of the soul (*tou alogou tēs psychēs*) will cause "involuntary affections (*akousia pathēmata*) which produce false opinions, making it think that the things which it shuns and seeks after are evil and good respectively." Both the bodily condition in I.8.8.[5]-[9] and the irrational part of the soul in I.8.4.[2] are the same because in I.8.4.[4] it is said that this irrational part of soul "is not outside matter or by itself." All things related to evil are ascribed to the influence from matter *via* soul's embodiment.

There is, however, a difference here: in I.8.4-5 I have said that the efficacy of the primary evil has to be realised *via* the descended soul, but here this role of medium by soul becomes secondary to the medium of body. It is difficult to explain this change but I think the most

likely source for Plotinus' psychosomatics here is from *Timæus* 86dff.. It is a fanciful analysis of the interaction of humours in the human body and from this analysis Plato gives this concludes:

"no one is voluntarily wicked, but the wicked man becomes wicked by reason of some evil condition of body and unskilled nurture, and these are experiences which are hateful to everyone and involuntary. and again, in respect of pains likewise the soul acquires much evil because of body." (*Tim.* 86e)

I.8.8.[6] harks back to the theme of 'spiritualised flight' in I.8.6.[5] and I.8.7.[8]-[9].

[10] Translation I.8.8.37-41:

So, then, let unmeasure be the primary evil, and that which is in a state of unmeasuredness by likeness or participation evil in a secondary sense, because its unmeasuredness is accidental. Primary evil is the darkness, secondary evil is the darkened, in the same way.

[11] Translation I.8.8.41-4:

Vice, which is ignorance and unmeasuredness in the soul, is evil secondarily, not absolute evil: just as virtue is not primarily good, but that which is made like to or participates in it.

Commentary:

I.8.8.[10]-[11] are a summary of the discussions from I.8.3 to I.8.8 and a reconfirmation of

the tentative or provisional (Harder<sup>2</sup> Vb p.413) conclusions reached in I.8.5; it is mainly about the ontological status of evil and the proof for its existence. I.8.9 will change the topic from the ontology to the epistemology of evil.

The relationship between the primary evil and the secondary evil is the archetype-image one, and the secondary evil is an image of the primary evil in so far as the quality of evil is concerned. Secondary evil not only participates in evil but also participates in a limited way in hypostatic reality and these two participations explain why secondary evil retains something good in it. While all the features characteristic of the primary evil are '*poia ousia*' and unmeasuredness, for instance, is an *energeia* of the primary evil, the unmeasuredness is accidental to the secondary evil because it is neither its *energeia* nor is it essential to its nature. I have, however, a reservation on this point. The evil which characterises an entity can not characterise it in an accidental way because the primary evil is seen as an absolute *mē on* and the secondary evil, which is now characterising an entity, is a relative *mē on* and this *mē on* concerns the *on* of this entity. What this can mean is this: Plotinus' evil as a feature of a sensible object which is secondary evil is, like the primary evil, also "me-ontological" by nature, unlike the attributes hot, sick and so forth which are not concerned with the *on* of the entity which they characterise. The attribute of evil, because of its definition as *mē on*, seems to enjoy a privileged status, unlike other attributes, just because its attribution will reduce the being of the entity it characterises. In this sense evil as an attribute in Plotinus cannot be understood in the Aristotelian sense as accidental.

The comparison of evil to pure darkness is proper because it forms a contrast to the analogy of emanation (*perilampsis*) for the derivation of hypostatic reality from the One. Cp. *episkoteisthai* in I.8.4.19 and *skotos* in I.8.4.31 and commentary *ad loc.*.

Passage [11] turns to evil in soul. The secondary evil exists among sensibles, and the soul in question here cannot but be the embodied soul - the soul in its productive function is contaminated by matter. Because this embodied soul lives between the hypostatical reality and the anhypostatic evil, it participates in both of them and the virtue it possesses therefrom cannot but be the secondary. In the same way, the evil it is characterised by must be secondary, too.



This is a section devoted entirely to the epistemology of evil and thus an exception to the apologetic part of 1.8. The basic question is: how do we know evil if we are souls and are hypostatic, and evil is an anhypostatic reality? The appearance of 1.8.9 amid the apologetic part, which is composed of a series of hypothetical challenges against matter as primary evil, is rather surprising. It reads like an after-thought on the important topic Plotinus has promised in 1.8.1.[3]-[5] but has forgotten to discuss until now. Thedinga dismisses all the apologetic sections (and 1.8.6) as Numenian and ascribes 1.8.1-5, 7 and 9 to the genuine Plotinus. At least this attitude is not too inconsistent.

1.8.9.[1] asks how do we know evil and good and [2] narrows it down to knowledge of evil only; this juxtaposition of both objects of knowledge hints that he will attack one of them (i.e., evil) through the available knowledge of the other (i.e., good) and this is indeed what 1.8.9.[3] does. 1.8.9.[4] gives as an analogy that a straight ruler measures both straight and crooked things. Then 1.8.9.[5] returns to the topic itself but the catchword is if we can 'see' it; this 'see' has been selected as a kind of concrete substitute for the linear and discursive thought and belongs to the hypostatic reality but is now applied to the anhypostatic evil. 1.8.9.[6] thinks this 'seeing' is not directly possible in the case of absolute evil; meanwhile it also introduces a methodology on how we can know evil: by the discrepancy between the particular deficiency of secondary evil and a fully realised form of it we know the secondary evil and by a further radical 'removal' we can see absolute evil. 1.8.9.[7] tackles the knowledge of secondary and partial evil and in 1.8.9.[8] Plotinus uses the example of "ugly face" to explain what he means. By this approach towards secondary evil Plotinus in 1.8.9.[10] proceeds to attack the primary evil: that is, from a partial removal we now adopt a radical and complete

removal of features. I.8.9.[11] Plotinus suggests that this removal is a means of our ascent to higher reality but we now apply it to an object which is on the lowest ontological level. I.8.9.[12] again gives us an extended analogy of how eyes can see darkness and, based on this analogy, Plotinus explains how *nous* can see evil, by abandoning "its own light" in order to "experience something contrary to itself.

[1] Translation I.8.9.1:

With what, then, do we know good and evil?

[2] Translation I.8.9.1-2:

First of all, with what do we know evil?

[3] Translation I.8.9.2-3:

We know virtue by our very intellect and power of thought; it knows itself: but how do we know vice?

[4] Translation I.8.9.3-4:

Just as with a ruler we know what is straight and also what is not straight, so we know what does not fit with virtue.

Commentary:

1.8.9. is to elaborate the position announced in 1.8.1.[3]-[5] on how we can have knowledge of evil if knowledge must be of some real entity (*on*) while evil is *mē on*. However, the presence of this inquiry amid the apologetic part is somewhat surprising but this 'insertion' is welcome because it elaborates the schematic agenda set forth in 1.8.1. and the topic is in itself an interesting one.

In 1.8.1.[3] knowledge is said to come by likeness (*di' homoiotētos*) and in 1.8.1.[4] hypostatic reality, because it consists of forms, produces knowledge of forms and has a natural affinity to it; there is a tendency towards identification among the knower (*nous*), the way of knowing (*noēsis*) and the object of knowledge (*noēton*); in the *Nous hypostasis nous, noēton* and *noēsis* are in fact identical while they are similar to various extents along the vertical plenitude in the Soul *hypostasis* (see commentary on 1.8.1.[3]-[5]). Because the Good in the last few chapters has been said to be a condition of being, knowledge of being is therefore also knowledge of goodness. *Aretē* (virtue) is here used as a secondary good characteristic of an entity and in order to recognise this quality we have to use intellect and power of thought. Therefore we have a further identification of ontology, epistemology and axiology.

This poses a problem because vice (*kakian*), either primary or secondary, has been said to be *mē on*, a *sterēsis* and image of *on*. Knowledge as a condition of *on* cannot have access to *mē on* since likeness is only known by likeness. If knowledge of virtue is a knowledge of itself, then knowledge of evil is a knowledge of what is other than itself. Plotinus therefore asks the question: how do we know vice? because the *we* here indicates the capacity for intellect and the power of thought.

Plotinus answers this question by giving an analogy (cp. *de Anima* 411a6): a ruler (*kanon*) is that by which both the straight and the crooked are judged, so the standard (= intellect and

power of thought, *nōi autōi kai phronēsēi*) which judges virtue is also the standard used to judge vice, the contrary (*enantiotēs*) of the good. What does this mean? The analogy is to see the crooked dependent upon the straight for the knowledge of its lack of straightness, so the knowledge which is of good and virtue is applicable to both virtue (and good) and vice (and evil) as well. Or, in short, the knowledge '*di' enantiotētos*' is dependent upon the knowledge '*di' homoiotētos*'. There is an ontological background to this thesis. We have said that anhypostatic reality (including the sensibles and matter) is an image of hypostatic reality and the relationship is a parasitic one because anhypostatic reality has to rely on hypostatic reality to have any share of being. Since the intimate relationship between epistemology and ontology in Plotinus is certain, it is therefore logical to see the knowledge of vice as also dependent on knowledge of virtue. cp. V.3.3.8 and V.3.4.16.

[5] Translation I.8.9.4-5:

Do we see it then or do we not see it when we know it, vice I mean?

[6] Translation I.8.9.5-8:

We do not see absolute wickedness, because it is unbounded; we know it by removal, as what is in no way virtue; but we know vice which is not absolute by its falling short of virtue.

Commentary:

If the anhypostatic reality is an image of the hypostatic reality and is a kind of quasi-being, then, considering the very close relationship between epistemology and ontology in Plotinus,

the knowledge of anhypostatic reality is like opinion which is a diminution or even a falsification of truth. As in the hypostatic reality knowledge is closely linked to the object of knowledge and the way of knowledge, the falsified knowledge in the anhypostatic reality implies a falsified way of knowledge and this way of knowledge is a distortion of that process applied in the hypostatic reality, namely, seeing (*horōntes* or *blepontes*). It is a falsified seeing of a falsified being. As is said in I.8.4.[19] a contaminated soul, filled with indefiniteness, has seen "darkness and has matter by looking at that which it does not look at (as we say that we see darkness as well as the things we really see)". Plotinus asks us whether in such a condition we really see or not, and he gives, on our behalf, the answer "yes" and "no".

Why no? because this seeing is not a real seeing; its epistemological subject is contaminated, the object is darkness and the way of knowing is falsified. Yes, because we still have knowledge of it by applying the proper procedure of knowing in a spurious way, or as Plato has said in *Timaeus*, by applying the *nothos logismos met' anaisthēias*. It is like the status of image, which is both true and false, related and unrelated, in relation to the archetype it is an image of. Unlike Plato Plotinus is not satisfied with this general statement in terms of *nothos logismos*; he lays down the methodological procedures for two kinds of *mē on*, the absolute and the relative (or secondary).

First of all, we can know secondary evil imperfectly because it partially participates in form, but this kind of knowledge is at most partial. Because the form, in which the secondary evil participates, is a full object for knowledge, we can compare the difference between the full knowledge of a fully realised form and the partial knowledge derived from a partially and imperfectly embodied form and, by the deficiency (*tōi elleipein toutōi*) between them, know what the secondary evil really is because this deficiency we learn therefrom characterises the secondary evil in so far it is evil. This is possible because secondary evil as a feature of the

sensibles is always a local phenomenon and we can know what an uncontaminated form could have been like and we can compare this with the present form in its contaminated condition. (Cp. I.8.9.[7]) This intuitive or innate knowledge of what a form really is has to be presupposed in this identification of deficiency; it is a very Platonic presupposition.

However, the primary evil is a not a local phenomenon but a general metaphysical condition which explains the existence of these secondary evils. It is impossible to locate any specific form and have this compared with a corrupted expression of it in the embodiment and recognise therefrom the discrepancy which has characterised the secondary evil. The correct approach must be aimed at the whole system of forms and see the primary evil as a complete deficiency of all forms. Therefore it is by removal (*aphairesis*) of the "whole system of forms" that we can have access to the primary evil. This is a reverse process to that described in I.8.5.[6] where the secondary evils are said to be created by specifications additional to primary evil: "*hoion eidē ekeinou prosthēkais eidopoioumena.*" What is *prosthēkē* there is *aphairesis* here, an inferential deduction.

It is also interesting to make clear this question, that is, how the methodology for the knowledge of primary evil should have been the same as that of the One, *aphairesis* I mean. Earlier in my commentary on the naming of the One in I.8.2, I said that the absolute One is a non-categorical entity and is beyond all the categorial limitation. This means that before the process of *aphairesis* there is an *apophasis*, a process of negations in regard to all the positive descriptions. This is *theologia negativa*. In the case of primary evil, the categorial limitations are inapplicable to it but it is not because the primary evil is beyond them but because it is a negation of all of them and because it is too amorphous and too deprived of any *dynamis* to receive any of them. This means the *aphairesis* in the case of the One is not exactly the same as that of primary evil or matter. This further implies that the hypostatic reality as the

archetype of anhypostatic reality, strictly speaking, includes only *Nous* and Soul *hypostases*. Moreover, if the One is alone responsible for the existence of an entity, and *Nous* and Soul, as the system of forms, responsible for the essence of it, matter as absolute evil, deprived of all forms, is responsible for the evil qualities characteristic of it (cp. Schlette p.151). Because matter is also defined as *sterēsis* of being, matter is also responsible for the existential authenticity of the entity characterised as such.

[7] Translation I.8.9.8-11:

So we see a part, by the part which is there we grasp what is not there, which is the complete form but missing in that particular thing, and so we speak of vice, leaving the missing part in indefiniteness.

Commentary:

This passage is again about the methodology for identifying the secondary evil. One can pose a complete form (*en tōi holōi eidei*), without any material contamination, and a partial form, which is the form embodied and contaminated in this particular sensible, and compare them and know therefrom the missing part (*to esterēmenon*, "the deprived part" would be a better translation) the latter has in relation to the former. This is what we see a part, and by the part which is there we grasp what is not there means. Plotinus says that we leave this missing part in indefiniteness (*en aoristōi*, I.8.3.15). This might mean that we attribute this deprivation to the effect from the absolute evil (= *aoristos*) because such a deficiency in the embodied form is caused by the absolute evil which is itself indefinite.

[8] Translation I.8.9.11-4:

So too, when for instance we see an ugly face in matter, because the formative principle in it has not got the better of the matter so as to hide its ugliness, we picture it to ourselves as ugly because it falls short of the form.

Commentary:

Plotinus uses the example of ugly face to clarify his methodology in identifying the secondary evil. In I.6.5.46 Plotinus says that "his ugliness has come from an addition of alien matter" (my underlining) and in I.6.2.14-7:

"every shapeless thing which is naturally capable of receiving shape and form is ugly and outside the divine formative power as long as it has no share in formative power and form. This is absolute ugliness."

Plotinus has to presuppose here that our innate knowledge of the complete form, that is, form in its pure and unembodied state, is certain and easily accessible; whenever we see a deficient expression of form we immediately know what its perfect condition would be like. Plotinus can claim this implicit knowledge because the knower has an undescended part of his soul and that part is by nature in *Nous* and is identical with the content of it; he certainly can also appeal to Plato for the *anamnesis* of forms.

This pure form is not only ontologically and epistemologically superior than its contaminated counterpart; it is also aesthetically better. 'The form of face' is beautiful and its embodiment in matter is an ugly one. We attribute this deficiency to the influence of matter because form



can never be in contact with matter without diminution of its purity and only a negative source like matter can explain such a deficiency. Plotinus says that this has to be attributed to the weakness of form (the formative principle in it has not got the better of the matter, *ou kratēsantos en autoi tou logou*); it would, however, be more proper to say that this is the inevitable result for form in its encounter with matter.

We picture (*phantazometha*) it to ourselves. The *phantazometha* reminds us of the fact that Plotinus does not see evil, either primary or secondary, as something very private and personal; it is basically an epistemological (and ultimately ontological) problem; evil is open to public investigation. The picture to ourselves (*phantazometha*) is therefore a kind of thought-experiment which analyses the phenomenon of evil, an experiment which we can conduct even if we are not the sufferers or experiencers of it.

[9] Translation I.8.9.14:

But how do we know what has absolutely no part in form?

[10] Translation I.8.9.15-8:

By absolutely taking away all form, we call that in which there is no form matter; in the process of taking away all form we apprehend formlessness in ourselves, if we propose to look at matter.

Commentary:

The secondary evil belongs to a local phenomenon characteristic of a particular entity; the primary or absolute evil is the metaphysical condition which causes and explains these secondary evils. It is therefore impossible to repeat the same *fiat* applicable in the search for secondary evil and then reapply it to primary evil. If the secondary evil is a deficiency of a particular form then primary evil, as a general metaphysical condition, must be a total negation of the whole system of forms; it is a negation of the whole hypostatical reality. Plotinus says this is by absolutely taking away all form (*parapan eidos aphairountes*), and what is left is matter (cp. "by removal" (*aphairese*) in I.8.9.[6]). What he suggests is an approach in which there is no comparison between a perfect form and an imperfect embodiment because the primary evil is a total "blackout" and no partial light is left there for one to identify its difference from the supposed form. In the secondary evil we can theoretically see the different degrees of deficiency and thus recognise different degrees of secondary evil; in the primary evil, there is only one condition which is a total *sterēsis* of all forms and hence a complete *sterēsis* of hypostatic reality as a whole.

One can use the mental power of *phantasia* - the capacity to display things before mind's eyes and conduct a thought-experiment - to have access to the secondary evil, but how can we see a total blackout? Plotinus' epistemology is a kind of correspondence or likeness by likeness; for a knowledge of an absolute formlessness, if it is possible, this means that we must, in a certain sense, possess or apprehend formlessness in ourselves. How do we have it? Plotinus says that there must be the result of a decision to see it (*emellomen hylen theasathai*, my underlining; cp. I.8.14.[5] with commentary *ad loc.*) and then in the process of *aphairesis* of the whole system of forms we have to be psychologically responding to this 'aphairetical' process and to this amorphous object of knowledge and therefore when there is a formless matter 'over there' we have in our mind, presumably, a pre-existent and correspondent formlessness. This is the gist of I.8.9.[10]. How is such a correspondence possible between

complete formlessness over there and whatever is in us ? That has again to be referred to the vertical plenitude of human soul which is a duplication of the whole spectrum of reality including matter, and so Plotinus can suggest that we can apprehend formlessness in ourselves.

[11] Translation I.8.9.18-9:

So this which sees matter is another intellect which is not intellect, since it presumes to see what is not its own.

Commentary:

This is a very obvious allusion to the *nothos logismos* in *Timaeus* 52b (and Alcinous *Didasc.* 162.27ff.; cp. II.4.10.11). II.4.12.33-4 says:

"It is apprehended by a process of reasoning, which does not come from mind but works emptily; so it is spurious reasoning, as has been said (*alla logismōi ouk ek nou, alla kenōs, dio kai nothos, hos eirētai*)."

I have said that to see primary evil there has to be a prior 'decision' (*emellomen hylēn theasasthai*) and so in [11] Plotinus says that it presumes (*tolmesas*) to see what is not its own. It is not its own because man, by definition, belongs to the hypostatic reality and only by a determined lapse does he descend so low and this means the decision to descend so low in order to see matter is not akin to his nature (*ta mē autou*).

Another intellect which is not intellect (*nous allos houtos, ou nous*). *Nous* is the proper knower of the hypostatic reality and absolute evil or matter as the image of this reality has its correspondent knower which is *nous* but *nous* in a very special and limited sense. One may say it is an imitation of *nous*, as opinion an imitation of truth, or simply a fake one. Why does Plotinus use *nous* in this situation? Where is the *logismos nothos* (*Tim.* 52)?

Two reasons I guess. First of all, it has been said that there is a tendency of conceptual transplantation from the hypostatic to anhypostatic reality. *Nous* and its identity with *noēsis* and *noēton* are the *par excellence* model of knowledge *di' homoiotētos* in the hypostatic reality and Plotinus, by the rule of conceptual transplantation, applies, in the case of knowledge of absolute evil, a false version of *nous* to know a false kind of being in a spurious way. Secondly, the use of *nous* here is in contrast to the *phantasia* applied to the secondary evil in I.8.9.[9], because *phantasia* is related to the examination of a particular situation and so *nous* is supposed to bring us the knowledge of a 'general' metaphysical condition, that is, the absolute evil. In short, the use of another intellect which is not intellect in the search for the absolute evil therefore might be the consequence of (a) conceptual transplantation and (b) a contrast to *phantasia* in [9]. Moreover, the use of *nous*, in contrast to the more perceptual *phantasia*, in the search for the primary evil means a kind of imaginative leap or intuition beyond the enumeration of specified and particular secondary evils into the general metaphysical condition which makes them as such.

[12] Translation I.8.9.19-26:

As an eye withdraws itself from the light so that it may see the darkness and not see it - leaving the light is so that it may see darkness, since with the light it cannot see; but without

something it cannot see, but only not see - that it may be able to see in the way it is possible to see darkness; so intellect, leaving its own light in itself and as it were going outside itself and coming to what is not its own, by not bringing its own light with it experiences something contrary to itself, that it may see its own contrary.

Commentary:

I.8.9.[8] the ugly face is the example for knowledge of secondary evil in I.8.9.[7]; in I.8.9.[12] the eye withdrawing itself from light is the analogy for knowledge of primary evil in [10]. Plotinus changes from an analogy which is a particular phenomenon to an analogy which examines the general condition of how we see things; this corresponds exactly to the progress from the search for secondary evil to that for primary evil, from the investigation of a particular phenomenon to a noetic grasp of its metaphysical condition.

It must be clear now that Plotinus likes to use the image of light for hypostatic reality and the image of darkness for anhypostatic evil. It is also clear that for Plotinus knowledge is achieved by the principle of *di' homoiotētos*. Man as the knower of reality directs his mind's eyes to hypostatic reality because his mind's eyes are full of light and reality is light. When he decides to see matter, the darkness itself, his equipment is not proper, and to have darkness in his mind's eye means no more than the withdrawal from light because darkness means nothing if not a *sterēsis* of light. A mind's eye deprived of light and full of darkness, in a normal situation, cannot see anything because it by definition is not in a position to see; it is not a seeing agency any longer. Plotinus describes this situation as without something it cannot see, but only not see. Paradoxically, it is this breakdown of epistemic activity that makes it possible to see darkness: it may be able to see in the way it is possible to see darkness.

Therefore, by parity of reasoning, the person who decides to see matter has to abandon his normal intellectual capacity and leave it aside; he has to act 'out of his character'. With this capacity left behind his epistemological condition is similar to the anhypostatic entity he is going to see. This process is against his original nature because he has, first of all, to abandon his nature (by not bringing its own light with it, *mē epagomenos to heautou phōs*) and then chooses an entity which is not proper for his knowledge (experiences something contrary to itself (*tounantion*), that it may see (*idēi*) its own contrary (*to autōi enantion*)). There is a complicated interaction between *di' homoiotētos* and *di' enantiotētos*. The basic principle for knowledge is for the knower and the object to be of the same kind (*di' homoiotētos*) but when the knower decides to see what is other than the proper object then he is said to know '*di' enantiotētos*'; this only means that the knower and the object do not match and therefore the knower has to change his own nature to match his object ('*di' homoiotētos*') in order to know.

It is necessary to note down this fact in our discussion, that Plotinus ascribes some psychological motivation (e.g., *emellomen* and *tolmesas* in II.17-8) to the attempt to have knowledge of matter or absolute evil because it is not a normal epistemological object, and rationality cannot explain this attempt. This implies a tolmatic theme. With this brief observation we conclude our commentary on I.8.9.

- 1.8.10-

After the diversion of 1.8.9 into the knowledge of evil, 1.8.10 brings us back to the challenge against the thesis that matter is the absolute evil. 1.8.10.[1]-[3] argue that matter, though without quality, is not without nature. 1.8.10.[4] then asks what, if it has a nature, prevents this nature being evil? When we use quality we always use it of an object in an accidental way and the quality cannot exist on its own nor is it intrinsic to the object it is predicated of; this quality in fact has to presuppose a substratum for it to occur in (1.8.10.[5]-[6]). Matter is this very substratum and not the quality predicated of it (1.8.10.[7]). Plotinus then in 1.8.10.[8] accentuates his emphasis by saying: even quality by itself is without quality, *a fortiori* matter, which is not a quality, can be said to have it. The very nature of matter as evil is just because it is totally without quality and this total *sterēsis* of form or quality which makes matter opposed to form (1.8.10.[9]).

[1] Translation 1.8.10.1:

So that is how this is.

[2] Translation 1.8.10.1:

But if matter is without quality, how is it evil?

[3] Translation 1.8.10.1-5:

It is called "without quality" because it has in its own right none of the qualities which it is going to receive and which are going to be in it as their substrate, but not in the sense that it has no nature at all.

Commentary:

Matter is without quality, but has a nature. It is worthwhile to compare I.8.10 with II.4.13 as a whole. Rist says that matter is without quality and other than Being but it has an individual distinctiveness (*idiotēs*) which is its relation of "otherness" to other beings: this distinctiveness of "otherness than" makes matter admit a flux of changing qualities (Rist 1961 p.156). This opinion confirms my attempt to relate matter to the ultimate *heterotēs* (see 4.1.31-33), but we wish to make a slight elaboration. It has been said that *aphairesis*, used in the search for a knowledge of matter and evil, is a negation - unlike the transcendence of the One - of all the positive features characteristic of the hypostatic reality. On the other hand, the privative features characteristic of matter are not seen as its accidental qualities but its *energeiai*. Matter as *hypokeimenon* acts through its *energeiai* that make secondary evils in the way they now are. The evil qualities which characterise the secondary evils are derived from matter but matter is not those qualities and is not characterised by them in the accidental and predicative sense. There is an ontological gap between the *ametria*, say, of matter and *ametria* which characterises the secondary evils. It is also *aneideon*, *pantelēs penia* and so on. It cannot have the nature of those incoming secondary evils for, if it had, it would not constitute the *hypokeimenon* in receiving all kinds of them. It is thus different from all the secondary evils but this does not mean it has no nature at all (*hōs mēdemian physin*) for its nature is its *heterotēs* from all.

Matter is without quality (*apoiōs*). The language is Stoic (SVF i. n.85; Plutarch *De an. procr.*



*in Tim.* 1015b) but the idea is Platonic and Aristotelian (cp. *dexetai* in I.3 and *pandechēs* (= *to hypokeimenon*) in III.6.10.9).

[4] Translation I.8.10.5-6:

**Well then, if it has a nature, what prevents this nature from being evil, but not evil in the way it would be if it had quality?**

[5] Translation I.8.10.6-7:

**Furthermore, quality is that in virtue of which something else is said to have quality.**

[6] Translation I.8.10.7-9:

**So qualities occur accidentally, and in something else, but matter is not in something else, but is the substratum on which the accident occurs.**

[7] Translation I.8.10.9-11:

**Since it has not the quality which has the nature of an accident, it is said to be without quality.**

Commentary:

Plotinus, after arguing that matter has a certain nature in [3], suggests that there is nothing to prevent the nature of matter from being 'evil'. The question is this: if one says that matter

is evil, there is an automatic association of ideas in putting matter together with 'the quality of evil' and in regarding this latter as an attribute of - and thus extrinsic to - the former. Plotinus thinks this position is misleading and it is therefore important for him to clarify what quality (*to poion*) really is.

Quality is that in virtue of which something else is said to have quality. This definition of quality sounds rather tautologous because it is purely formalistic. However, we can see from this definition some clues related to the ontological status of quality. First, quality qualifies a limited being in the particular aspect of which the quality is predicated. Secondly, because it characterises only a part of this limited being, it is ontologically dependent on the entity it is predicated of: in something else. Thirdly, quality is mostly related to accident (*sumbebēkos*) (we say "mostly" because in II.6. Plotinus presents his more considered view and indicates a further distinction of *to poion* into that which contributes and which does not contribute to the substance of an entity). Taken together these mean that quality is unrelated to the essence of the entity it is supposed to characterise. On the other hand, for Plotinus when evil is said of matter, matter is evil itself; because this defies the law of accidental predication (since it has not the quality which has the nature of an accident, it is said to be without quality) the implicit interlocutor can propose the dilemma: either (i) matter has to be characterised by evil in the way that other sensibles or secondary evils are characterised by evil, or that (ii) matter is of no nature at all because it is not characterised by this kind of quality. Plotinus' reply to this dilemma is to find a position between these two opinions and to create a special relationship between the features characteristic of matter and matter itself: if any features are correctly used of matter then these features themselves are, in a sense, matter itself. These features characteristic of matter are of the kind of *poiai ousiai*; they are the *energeiai* of the *ousia* of matter and constitute its nature (*physis tou kakou*, cp. I.8.10.[3]). The ontological gap between these features and the object they are features of disappears in this case. This is a

transplantation of the *poia ousia* in hypostatic reality (where it is *energeia* of *ousia* and *energeia* is *ousia*) to the anhypostatic evil.

[8] Translation I.8.10.11-2:

Then too, if quality in itself is without quality, how could matter which has not received quality be said to have it?

Commentary:

Quality in itself is without quality (*hē poiōtēs autē apoios*) is the famous Platonic puzzle of self-predication of forms: can we say "Beauty is beautiful"? (cp. Fielder 1980 and 1982) To apply this puzzle to Plotinus' case: can we say matter (= primary evil) - which can not be characterised by features in the way other secondary evils are predicated - is evil (which is presumably used as an ordinary predicate in the present situation of self-predication)? Thus Plotinus' strategy is to place an accentuated stress on the qualityless (*apoiōs*) nature of matter: if quality itself has no quality then how can the *apoiōs* matter have quality? (Schröder p.170)

It is not clear how Plotinus sees this puzzle, but, as I have analysed in I.8.1.[2], Plotinus does distinguish the feature called evil which predicates the secondary evils and the primary evil which is the metaphysical condition which matter represents and which explains why the secondary evils as such as they are. (I have expressed my reservation about the idea that the evil nature which characterises secondary evil can be in any sense accidental; this alleged quality of evil touches the very being of the entity it is a quality of.) The question can therefore be reformulated: can primary evil be evil? Plotinus will answer this contradiction in the next

passage I.8.10.[9] in this way: matter has a nature but this nature is its total lack of all positive features and this total deprivation makes matter evil; because of this deprivation of all qualities matter has to be *apóios*. This immediately bring us to the discussion in II.4.13 where Plotinus says:

"privation is certainly not quality or qualified, but lack of quality or of something else...  
for privation is taking away, but qualification is a matter of positive assertion."  
(II.4.13.21-3)

Therefore it is not correct to say that matter is X (including evil) if X is used of matter in the ordinary way of predication. Passage I.8.10.[8] is thus a concession to those who still follow the Aristotelian way of predication. The special way in the predication of matter is to see those features said of it as a kind of *poiai ousiai*, that is, the *energeiai* of the '*ousia*' of matter. This postulation of *poiai ousiai* places the relationship between the features and the subject they characterise much closer than that between the ordinary predicates and the subject they are predicated of. On the other hand, the postulation of *poiai ousiai* does not mean a straightforward identification of features with their subject since these features are after all the *energeiai* or expressions of the different aspects of the *ousia* of their subject; they, when put altogether, constitute the nature of matter.

[9] Translation I.8.10.12-6:

So it is rightly said to be both without quality and evil; for it is not called evil because it has, but rather because it has no quality; so that perhaps it would not have been evil if it was a form instead of a nature opposed to form.

Commentary:

The text I adopt here is the *alla mēn* of Schröder and Harder<sup>2</sup> instead of the *alla mē* of H. & S. and Armstrong in l.15.

To call matter evil and use evil in the categorial sense is impossible because every feature correctly said of matter is the *energeia* of matter and this *energeia* is an expression of its *ousia* and not accidental to it. Therefore the right way of saying 'matter is evil' is to use the 'is' not in the predicative but in the identical sense.

So that perhaps it would not have been evil if it was a form instead of nature opposed to form. Form is the source of value and, if matter is a form, it cannot be evil. Furthermore, matter as the image of the whole hypostatic reality is a negation of the whole system of forms and thus to say matter is 'evil' and use this 'evil' as a predicative quality (= a form) can only mean that matter is a particular something and this is not what matter is supposed to be, a general metaphysical condition for secondary evils. This is another piece of evidence against using evil (in the case of "matter is evil") in the categorial sense.

- I.8.11-

I.8.11 is based on the result of I.8.10 that matter indeed has a nature which is the *sterēsis* of all features and thus of all forms. However, the term *sterēsis* in itself implies another entity of which it is a *sterēsis* and therefore it cannot exist either on its own or alone; matter as *sterēsis* itself means that matter is an inconsistent concept and therefore does not exist. Instead the *sterēsis* must exist in soul and this evil soul is the only source of evil. The Middle Platonic thesis that soul has a psychic origin is put forward in a most explicit way here.

I.8.11.[1] agrees that matter as *apóios* is a *sterēsis* of, and is opposed to, all forms but this *sterēsis* implies the existent of which this *sterēsis* is a *sterēsis* and therefore *sterēsis* must exist in that entity, and has no existence of its own. I.8.11.[2] recommends that this *sterēsis* is in the soul and this makes it the source of all vices. Accompanying this thesis of evil soul is the abolition of matter because matter is said to be *sterēsis* itself and *sterēsis* on its own is non-existent, *ergo* matter is non-existent (I.8.11.[3]). Building on this conclusion I.8.11.[4] affirms that one should look for the source of evil in soul which is in the condition of *sterēsis*. This absolute *sterēsis* in soul, as I.8.11.[5]-[7] argue, means a *sterēsis* of all positive *poiai ousiai* characteristic of hypostatic reality and these include life; thereby the thesis that puts *sterēsis* in soul will undo the concept of soul for soul is said to be a principle of life by definition. This is Plotinus' *reductio ad absurdum*. Soul cannot be the source of evil and the *locale* for *sterēsis* because soul is a trace of *Nous* and has a goodness of its own (I.8.11.[8]). The reaffirmation of the hypostatic nature of soul in I.8.11.[8] can only mean that Plotinus finds the term of "evil soul" self-contradictory because soul as hypostatic can only be the source of good.

[1] Translation I.8.11.1-4:

But the nature which is opposed to all form is privation; but privation is always in something else and has no existence by itself. So if evil consists in privation, it will exist in the things deprived of form and have no independent existence.

Commentary:

I.8.11 raises some fundamental questions about the ontological status of matter as absolute *sterēsis* of forms and as parasitic on the forms of which it is a *sterēsis* and therefrom Plotinus' opponents (probably the Middle Platonic followers) pose evil soul as the only source of evil. Plotinus uses the *reductio ad absurdum* to destroy this opponents' thesis and claims instead that matter is the only source of evil.

The nature of prime matter (or primary evil) has been said to be a question about the general metaphysical condition, unlike the proximate matter (or secondary evil) which is a local and particular phenomenon. It is a deprivation of the whole system of forms which constitute the hypostatic reality as a whole. Plotinus thus says that matter has the nature of deprivation (*sterēsis*) which is opposed to all form (*enantia tōi eidēi panti*). I have mentioned the close relationship between *enantia* and *sterēsis* at the end of the commentary on I.8.6. However, both the primary evil and secondary evil are a deprivation of 'some other form(s)' and this can only mean deprivation has to refer to the form(s), of which they are deprivation, to have any meaning at all. Plotinus thus says privation is always in something else and has no existence by itself (*sterēsis de aei en allōi kai ep' autēs ouch hypostasis*). This could allude to Aristotle *Phys.* 192a5-6 in which the privation always implies the quality it is deprived of.

We think these are logical inferences Plotinus is more than glad to accept because, when "matter is *sterēsis*" is broached, this thesis for Plotinus implied the whole complex of metaphysical doctrines which make it a valid thesis. Plotinus' interlocutor in I.8.11 has misread this point and takes his words at their face value. When Plotinus says matter is a *sterēsis* it means a *sterēsis* "of hypostatic reality as a whole." This might be the reason why Plotinus is not prepared to clarify his own position any more but instead attacks the alternative which puts *sterēsis* in the soul.

[2] Translation I.8.11.4-6:

So if there is evil in the soul, it would be the privation in it which will be evil and vice, and nothing else.

Commentary:

Soul is chosen not at random; the sensibles, of which the secondary evil is characteristic, are the consequence of the descent of *physis* - the lowest reach of Soul *hypostasis* - into matter. (cp. I.8.11.[7]-[8]) Sensibles are thus the composites made out of matter and soul, and soul is the only alternative candidate for the source of evil. This is also a problem related to the history of philosophy: the Middle Platonists, such as Numenius, Plutarch and Atticus, suggest that "if matter is neutral" - an assumption rejected by Plotinus - but nevertheless moves in a disorderly way, then the only explanation is to see this matter is moved by a maleficent soul. The interlocutor in I.8.11 is meant to propose this theory of evil soul as the primary source of evil.



If there is evil in soul, Plotinus says, then this evil means a partial privation of the form which is proper to soul before its descent. Therefore, the privation is in the soul since this privation has to be referred to that form in the soul. Without soul or that form in the soul, evil would not exist. What this means is (a) there is no evil there as pre-given because it has to be dependent on the descent of soul and (b) even if there is evil in itself this evil cannot work without the entity it is in, that is the *causa efficiens*, soul.

[3] Translation I.8.11.6-8:

There are some lines of argument which claim to abolish matter altogether, and others which say that though it exists it is not itself evil:

(4) Translation I.8.11.8-9:

so [on these assumptions] one should not look for evil elsewhere, but place it in the soul in such a way that it is simply absence of good.

Commentary:

I.8.11.[3] gives us two inferences which were mentioned at the end of commentary on I.8.11.[2]. Because the evil soul is pre-existent the evil soul could either be the direct source of evil without the intermediacy of matter or could be the agent which makes matter evil even though the matter it works on is originally neutral. In my view to abolish matter (*tēn hylēn holōs anairein*), as proposed by Plotinus' opponent, does not necessarily mean an abolition of matter *simpliciter*; it more probably means the abolition of matter as source of evil and in

favour of an evil soul with a neutral and passive matter.

If matter is discounted, then soul is the only possible source of evil and therefore we should look into it in such a way that it is simply absence of good (*apousian agathou*). The *apousia agathou* is also seen in I.8.1.11 but there it is said to be the nature of matter or evil; it is the *enantion* to the *parousia agathou* which is essential to hypostatic reality. What is to be noted here is that whether one ascribes primary evil to matter or evil soul, the formal definition of evil is the same in both cases: they are both *apousia agathou*.

[5] Translation I.8.11.10-2:

But if the privation is privation of a form which ought to be present, if the privation in the soul is a privation of good and produces vice in the soul corresponding to its own definition, soul then has no good in it; so then it has no life in it, though it is still soul.

[6] Translation I.8.11.13-4:

So then soul will be soulless, if it has not even any life in it, though it is still soul.

[7] Translation I.8.11.15-6:

But it has life by its own definition; so it does not have the privation of the good from itself:

Commentary:

I.8.11.[5]-[7] is a *reductio ad absurdum* or in Schröder's more dramatic announcement: "*durch eine arg sophistische Übertreibung ad absurdum.*" (Schröder p.171). I certainly think it is a legitimate argument and not 'sophistical' at all. It is to exploit the term of 'evil soul' and, by pushing the meaning of 'evil' to its greatest extent, namely, absolute *sterēsis*, it makes 'evil soul' in itself a contradictory term because 'soul' implies positive values (life, for example) and one cannot have this positive value totally negated without destroying the concept of soul.

The soul is thought of as a form which is goodness. If the complete *sterēsis* in the evil soul is a complete *sterēsis* of the form proper to soul then soul, being deprived of form, is no longer any kind of good. Soul is said to be a productive principle, a principle of life and life is a good. If the deprived soul is no longer good then this means it is no longer alive either. Soul has life by its own definition and therefore soul as the primary evil is impossible because this soul will no longer be soul and the term 'evil soul' will become self-contradictory.

Plotinus' *reductio ad absurdum* is effective because his interlocutor would like to have this evil soul as the only source of evil, and Plotinus points his *reductio* right at the heart of this thesis; this is a correct strategy. His opponents certainly could claim the 'evil' in the evil soul does not mean absolute evil but a secondary one. There is another source of evil and by this qualification they can escape the *reductio ad absurdum* because the *sterēsis* might only be *sterēsis* of certain forms which are not essential to the definition of soul. However, what point can Plotinus' interlocutor make now because even Plotinus does not deny that the evil in the evil soul is derivative and secondary? On this their positions are similar. Furthermore, this retreat by the interlocutor means that there is some entity other than soul which is the primary evil and what can this be but the (non-) entity lower than soul in the hierarchical order? That is matter.

[8] Translation I.8.11.16-9:

so it is a thing of a good kind since it has some good, a trace of intellect, and it is not evil of itself. It is not primary evil, nor is primary evil an accident of it, because the good is not altogether absent from it.

Commentary:

Plotinus gives his opinion on the real and Janus-like nature of soul after the refutation of his interlocutor who asserts that evil soul should be the primary source of all evils. As I have said in the general introduction to I.8.11 this recount of the hypostatic nature of soul is to stress that the idea of 'evil soul' is self-contradictory for soul as hypostatic entity can only be the source of good.

At first sight the "it" seems to indicate a soul uncontaminated by matter at all but the great reservation in the last clause (the good is not altogether absent from it) seems to hint at a soul somehow contaminated and becoming a secondary evil itself. One could say that the tone of this clause is slightly strange but this cannot change the purpose of [8] in giving a straightforward position on the relationship between pure soul and primary evil.

First, Plotinus traces Soul's ontological lineage back to *Nous* (*nou ichnos*, that is, the Soul forms an image-archetype relation to *Nous*) and decides that it is a form with positive value (*agathoeides*). If it is a form with a positive value then it belongs to hypostatic reality and hypostatic reality has nothing to do with anhypostatic evil, either the primary or the secondary kind (cp. I.8.2.[9]). Soul is not a primary evil has been proved in [5]-[7]; nor is primary evil an accident of it (my underlining) means that the pure soul in the hypostatic reality has no contact

with the secondary evil, either.

The last clause, the good is not altogether absent from it, indicates that even if evil is predicated of a contaminated soul it can only be predicated of it in an accidental way (cp. 1.8.12.6: "evil as some kind of accident"), that is, it can only make it a secondary evil and make evil only one part of the nature of soul but can never destroy its hypostatic nature. The soul, because of its originally hypostatic nature, cannot be totally deprived of its goodness and turned into absolute matter. It can approach infinitely close to it but can never be assimilated to it for otherwise this would make matter no longer matter and soul no longer soul. This brings us back to the *reductio ad absurdum* in 1.8.11.[5]-[7] which makes soul a total evil and destroys the nature of soul altogether. This anticipates the very short 1.8.12 which discusses the contaminated soul which is partly good and partly evil.

- I.8.12-

This "*kurzes und sehr merkwürdiges Kapitel*" (Thedinga p.273) continues the I.8.11.[8] where enmattered or embodied soul is said to have evil as its quality. It has been picked out by Thedinga as a mere repetition of what has been said and, according to him, this proves that it is an interpolation (ibid.) and so all the rest of the apologetic part is an interpolation, too! This opinion seems to me a complete exaggeration. I.8.12 reasserts the hypostatic nature of soul and suggests that even if this soul is secondarily evil this evil is only accidental to it and so its hypostatic nature is preserved intact. This makes soul even less likely as the source of evil. However, this admission of soul not being the primary evil does not mean that matter is the primary evil either. In I.8.13 the interlocutor will pick up the fight again.

[1] Translation I.8.12.1-7:

But what is the answer if someone says that the vice and evil in the soul is not absolute privation of good, but only a [particular, limited] privation of good? In this case, if it has some good and is deprived of some, it will be in a mixed state and the evil will not be undiluted, and we have not yet found primary, undiluted evil: and the soul will have good in its very substance, but evil as some kind of accident.

Commentary:

The interlocutor who objected to the existence of primary evil and was refuted in I.8.11 now retreats and accepts the temporary conclusion in I.8.11.[8]; he elaborates it in I.8.12. If, so

the interlocutor asks, evil soul can be partially evil (and partially good), then the evil in soul is only some kind of privation of good and evil is merely an accident of it. Then where is the primary evil? We have not found out yet the primary and undiluted evil (*to prōton kai akraton kakon*) even though evil soul is confirmed to be the possible source of secondary evil. Plotinus will give his reply in I.8.13.

Here the soul which is contaminated by matter and becomes evil can only be partially evil soul. This is because soul can descend and "depart to the depths" (*apestēsan oun eis bathos*, IV.3.6.25, my underlining) but never reaches there without ceasing to be soul: the vice and evil in the soul is ... only a (*tina*) privation of good. The descent is not absolute and the corruption is local. It depends on how far its thought has been dragged down to the "lower existence" (*eis to katō einai*, IV.3.6.27):

"for we must understand that souls were called 'second' and 'third' according to whether they are nearer to or farther from [the higher world]; just as among us all souls have the same relationship to the realities There...." (IV.3.6.28-30)

All of these texts mean that the evil in the evil soul has different degrees of culpability but the nature of the particular soul remains determined by the hypostatic reality from which it descends; evil is an external addition (*prosthēkē*, cp. I.8.5.17) and accidental to the nature of the soul. It is only essential to it if the evil can be said to be *poia ousia* but the *poia ousia* of soul is determined by its hypostatic nature and therefore evil is accidental to its nature. It is this accidental addition that drags down the soul and this implies a kind of optimistic thought that the inner nature of soul remains unsullied and can be brought back to its former glory, however low it has descended. (cp. VI.7.41.16)

Therefore the relationship between an evil soul and absolute evil is this: soul becomes evil (though it is not of its nature to be so) and participates in evil inasmuch as the evil quality is concerned; evil does not determine the essential nature of it; it is called accident because it, unlike *poia ousia*, does not contribute to the nature of soul. Plotinus thus correctly says that the soul will have good in its very substance, but evil as some kind of accident (*sumbebēkos de ti to kakon*).



- 1.8.13-

1.8.13,, superficially, has changed tactics by moving from the 'source' of evil to the 'production' of evil and treats all kinds of evil as on the same level and neglects the transcendent dimension of the problem of evil.

1.8.13.[1]-[3] begin to redefine the meaning of evil by saying that it is an impediment in soul and is productive of evils, and, by parity of reasoning, virtue is the primary good because it helps produce all kinds of secondary goods. 1.8.13.[4] the interlocutor argues that this virtue has been proved elsewhere not to be the primary good and therefore evil as impediment in soul cannot be called primary evil, and so there is no primary evil. Then Plotinus begins his reply. 1.8.13.[5]-[6] reassert the transcendent nature of primary good and primary evil because 1.8.13.[1]-[4] have treated all activities, either good or evil and either primary or secondary, as the activity of soul without a transcendent cause. 1.8.13.[7]-[8] allude frequently to Plato's *opus* and stress that soul can go downwards to such an extent that it becomes almost assimilated to matter and no longer a soul; on the other hand, they reaffirm the hypostatic nature of soul and its ascent to hypostatic reality; one cannot but feel a kind of optimism against the background of an unusually strong interpretation of soul's descent and self-destruction.

{1} Translation 1.8.13.1-2:

But perhaps evil is an impediment to good, as the eye has impediments which prevent it seeing.

Commentary:

This is the beginning of another type of objection centered on the concept of evil itself and its purpose is again to argue against matter as primary evil and this objection lasts from [1]-[4]. The implicit thesis that evil soul is the source of evil remains distinct.

I.8.13.[1] has shown a new turn in the way of objection. It now sees evil explicitly as a kind of independent existent (unlike I.8.10-11 which make it part of the soul) which acts as a kind of impediment (*empodion*) to the proper epistemological function of soul (*to blepein*; cp. I.8.2.25 and I.8.4.4). This obstruction of epistemological function is logical for Plotinus to develop because for him the irrevocable descent of soul is always regarded as a misdirection of *theoria* to the lower existence, a failure of knowledge that is. However, the present objection emphasises the active nature of this evil (see I.8.13.[2]) and adds nothing on the initiative of the soul.

[2] Translation I.8.13.2-4:

Yes, but in this way evil will be what produces evil for the things where it occurs, and produces it in such a way that the actual evil produced is different from the evil which produces it.

[3] Translation I.8.13.4-7:

If then vice is an impediment to the soul, it is not evil but something which produces evil; and virtue is not the good, except in so far as it helps to produce it: so if virtue is not good, vice

is not evil.

[4] Translation I.8.13.7-9:

Then too, virtue is not absolute beauty or absolute good; so it follows that vice is not absolute ugliness or absolute evil.

Commentary:

In this objection evil is now seen as a kind of independent existent; whenever it dwells in soul (which implies that evil as impediment can exist apart from soul, though it has to act through it) it produces evil there. The actual evil produced (*to kakon*) is secondary evil, and the evil (*hē kakia*) which acts as impediment (*empodion*) to the normal function of soul, and as the efficacious cause (*poiētikon*) of other evils is the primary evil; undoubtedly these two kinds of evil are different because one is the cause and the other the caused. Then Plotinus' interlocutor, by parity of reasoning, suggests that if virtue is seen in the same way as evil is, then virtue produces secondary goods in whatever entity it dwells in and so we have the distinction of virtue from the secondary goods.

However, Plotinus' interlocutor takes advantage of the argument Plotinus developed in I.8.6.[6]-[7] and I.8.8.[10]-[11] - another proof for the apologetic part being an intrinsic part of I.8 - and points out that this virtue, which helps produce secondary goods, is not the primary good except in so far as it helps produce it. This suggests that the virtue is merely a *causa efficiens*. Thus the theses: (a) virtue produces secondary goods in soul and (b) evil (*hē kakia*) in soul (as impediment) produces actual evil produced (*to kakon*), collapse. In order to salvage this parallel, we are forced to admit that the alleged primary evil (*hē kakia*) - that is the

impediment - is after all not the primary evil. *Ergo*, no primary evil exists. Plotinus summarises this conclusion in I.8.13.[4].

Virtue (*hē aretē*), which produces secondary goods in the soul, is different from the primary good, which itself produces these secondary goods as well. This indicates a different understanding of causation here: the interlocutor understands causation as an efficacious and horizontal kind while Plotinus understands it in an eidetic-explanatory and vertical way. The interlocutor proposes the horizontal explanation in terms of cause and the caused and, because *hē aretē* and *hē kakia* as causes have to work *via* soul, the interlocutor in effect proposes, indirectly, the thesis of evil as psychic in origin. The interlocutor sees the problems of evil in one dimension without any involvement of the transcendent side of the problem. This is very different from Plotinus' vision of a hierarchical reality and the relationship between the primary and secondary evil as eidetic, and Plotinus certainly will reply to this objection according to his line of thinking.

[5] Translation I.8.13.9-12:

We said that virtue was not absolute beauty or absolute good because absolute beauty and absolute good are prior to it and transcend it; it is good and beautiful by some kind of participation.

Commentary:

This passage announces the first step in his refutation of the objection made in I.8.13.[1]-[4]. Plotinus says that the *aretē* in soul is not absolute good (*autokalon*) or absolute beauty

(*autoagathon*) because these two (which are in effect the same, see I.8.2.[3]) are prior to it and transcend (*epekeina autēs*) it. This means the *aretē* in itself needs a transcendent good or beauty to explain it. This implies that Plotinus does not deny the efficacious and horizontal explanation which *hē poiētikos aretē* obtains in relation to the secondary good; in Plotinus' view this is not enough and one has to go beyond the horizontal relationship and for this the vertical and eidetic explanation will be required. This further indicates that Plotinus admits the necessity of this horizontal relationship between *hē aretē* and the secondary good because *via* this relationship the transcendent and absolute good can then be related to the secondary good *via aretē*.

[6] Translation I.8.13.12-4:

So just as when one goes up from virtue one comes to the beautiful and the good, when one goes down from vice one comes to the absolute evil, taking vice as the starting point.

Commentary:

[5] announces the transcendent nature of absolute good and [6] announces its counterpart in the anhypostatic reality, that is, absolute evil. Both have to start from their secondary exemplifications in order to go upwards (or downwards) to reach their respective transcendent source.

It would be very odd to say that the absolute evil 'transcends' the secondary evil because metaphorically absolute evil points in the exactly opposite direction to that which the word 'transcendence' points. However, in the present case this is another transplantation of a

concept, which obtains in the hypostatic reality, to the anhypostatic reality and therefore should cause us no great concern. The goes up (*anabainonti*) and goes down (*katabainonti*) indicate that this hierarchical structure has two extremes (*archai*) (cp. I.8.6.[17]) and also indicates that Plotinus has in his mind a picture of reality which is spatial in its metaphoricity. This certainly recalls the spatial metaphor implied in I.8.6.[17] and [22] and this is a further piece of evidence of the apologetic part being an intrinsic part of I.8. For us, Plotinus argues, the absolute evil and absolute good are transcendent and are not within our experiential reach (cp. I.8.9.[6]: "we do not see absolute wickedness, because it is unbounded..."); instead we can have an inferential knowledge of it based on our knowledge of the sensibles which are mixtures of goods and evils because we have recognised the eidetic relationship which they have with the primary evil and good.

This argument for the existence of primary evil is, if I may say so, based on our personal experience of secondary evils: taking vice as the starting-point. This is different from the more *a priori* arguments which we have seen, for example, in I.8.6.[22] (the absolute evil and the absolute good are "at their furthest possible separation from each other") or I.8.7.[11] ("this last, after which nothing else can come into being, is evil"). This more concrete approach might be the consequence of the cosmological turn introduced in I.8.7.

[7] Translation I.8.13.14-21:

One will contemplate it with the contemplation which belongs to absolute evil, and participate in it when one becomes it: one enters altogether into "the region of unlikeness" when one sinks into it and has gone falling into the mud of darkness; for when the soul is fallen utterly into utter vice, it no longer has vice, but has changed to another nature, a worse one (for vice

which is mixed with anything of its contrary is still human).

Commentary:

One will contemplate... absolute evil. This is an epistemology of evil. See I.8.9 and commentary *ad loc.*.

One enters altogether into the region of unlikeness (*ginetai gar pantapasin en tōi tēs anomoiotētos topōi*). The allusion is from *Politicus* 273d:

"it might founder in the tempest of confusion and sink in the boundless sea of diversity (*eis ton tēs anomoiotētos apeiron onta ponton*)".

In the Interpretative Essay 4.1.34 it was said that prime matter is the ultimate *heterotēs* and has to retroject itself back to the hypostatic reality as noetic *hylē* and causes the differentiation throughout the hierarchical structure of reality. It is the ultimate otherness (*heterotēs*) because it transforms every entity and makes it break away from its superior and makes them unlike each other and accounts for the deficiency which the inferior reality has in respect to its superior.

The very intimate relation between unlikeness (*anomoiotēs*) and otherness (*heterotēs*) is witnessed in VI.3.2.21-2:

"... there is plenty of otherness, or rather unlikeness, here below (*entautha heterotētos pollēs kai anomoiotētos mallon*)?"

The region of unlikeness is thus the region of matter and the unlikeness can be said to be one *poia ousia* of matter: in the descent into the region of unlikeness the soul is totally transformed and becomes totally unlike its noetic origin. This unlikeness is absolute because it is the direct contact between matter and the incoming soul that has caused it; this absolute unlikeness is unlike the relative unlikeness which matter has projected upon the hypostatic reality.

This clause as a whole reminds us of I.8.9.[10]-[11] where it is said that we are able to look at matter because we "apprehend formlessness in ourselves". This means that the self as a floating *ego* can become totally formless and assimilated to matter if so motivated. Schröder contends that this total assimilation is impossible but instead recommends that the result of this descent into darkness and unlikeness is an exchange of external appearance (Schröder p.175). However here in the text it requires a 'strong' interpretation of soul's descent: when the soul is fallen utterly into utter vice, it no longer has vice, but has changed to another nature, a worse one (my underlining). Schröder's opinion is based on the general doctrine that soul can never be destroyed for it is hypostatic and therefore impassible and, on the other hand, matter can never mix with another entity without losing its *pampathes* and *pandechēs* nature. If he bases himself on the parenthetical clause: for vice which is mixed with anything of its contrary is still human, then he might be wrong because this is hardly a concession on the part of Plotinus. Nevertheless, such a strong interpretation is indeed strange here, especially after I.8.12 where evil is said to be accidental to soul. Perhaps this might have to be explained by the polemical nature of the context here, since the interlocutor in I.8.13.[1]-[4] has tried to place all kinds of activity - good or evil, primary or secondary - on the level of soul and a strong interpretation of soul's absolute descent into matter can recall the transcendent dimension of the problem of evil and good.

When one sinks into it and has gone falling into the mud of darkness (*eis borboron skoteion*).



This alludes to *Phaedo* 69c:

"...whoever goes uninitiated (*amyētos*) and unsanctified (*atelestos*) to the other world (*eis haidou*) will lie in the mire (*borborōn*), but he who arrives there initiated (*kekatharmenos*) and purified (*tetelesmenos*) will dwell with gods." (cp. *Vita* 23.6-7, VI.7.31.26, I.6.5.44-5 and I.8.13.25 (to be discussed below)).

While the region of unlikeness has shown the philosophical significance of this descent of soul into matter, the allusion to the deeply religious *Phaedo* 69c brings a religious dimension to the descent. This means that for Plotinus the descent of soul into matter is not purely a failure of knowledge but also a failure of *aretē* and *ascesis*.

The effect of matter is to make the incoming soul totally unlike its origin and to create an assimilation of soul to the total unlikeness which is matter. The incoming soul is no longer a mixture of good and evil because any reminder of good indicates the relationship which the soul has retained with the hypostatic reality is still there and the effect of matter is not complete: for vice which is mixed with anything of its contrary is still human (*anthrōpikon*). (cp. I.8.5.[2]) There has to be a total break-down between the soul and its hypostatic origin, otherwise matter cannot be absolute in its nature and in its efficacy. If the soul is totally unlike its origin then it means it has become matter and so soul is said to be evil itself, not an entity characterised by evil, and evil becomes part of soul's *poia ousia* and contributes to its nature. This conclusion, as I have said at the end of commentary of I.8.13.[6], contradicts Plotinus' own argument in I.8.10. Before that total assimilation soul remains human (*anthrōpikon*) which could mean that it is just a contaminated soul which has not yet ceased to be soul.

[8] Translation I.8.13.21-6:

So it dies, as far as the soul can die, and its death, while it still plunged in the body, is to sink in matter and be filled with it, and, when it has gone out of body, to lie in matter till it raises itself and somehow manages to look away from the mud; this is "going to Hades and falling asleep there."

Commentary:

This passage alludes to Plato's *Resp.* 533d1-2 and 534c7-d1 respectively. *Resp.* 533d says that

"when the eye of the soul (*to tēs psychēs omma*) is sunk in the barbaric slough (*en borborōi barbarikōi tinī*) of the Orphic myth, dialectic gently draws it forth and leads it up...."

It is less clear if Plotinus in delivering soul from matter has an agenda as formal as what Plato in *Republic* proposes; what is clearer is that the first step is to detach soul from the body it is encumbered with (cp. I.8.7.[8]) and then effect a determined turning from matter. This delivery must include a philosophical aspect as well as a religious aspect because in I.8.13.[7] we have seen Plotinus deliberately alluding to *Politicus* and *Phaedo* to bring these two aspects into the description of the descent of soul into matter.

The ascent of soul from matter is based on Plotinus' philosophy of self; since this self basically belongs to the hypostatic soul and therefore, when we see it descend into matter and become assimilated, it has its nature changed and, in so far as its psychic nature is concerned, the self is dead because it is no longer itself but has become another entity. This is what Plotinus

means: so it dies, as far as the soul can die. This is an apparent concession to the original thesis that soul remains soul however low it has descended; instead the soul now assumes a new anhypostatic identity. The question is this: how far can the soul die? Can it abandon its own nature and assume another one and still be called soul? Plotinus seems to think this new identity is nothing more than a *prosōpon* for the self to assume in "the region of unlikeness;" the *prosōpon* of the self is assimilated to matter but the true soul (like the inner man in I.1.7) remains itself; as soon as it turns itself upwards, the assumed *prosōpon* is discarded and the self is hopeful of a reascent to the hypostatic reality. This seems to vindicate Schröder's argument for an 'external' change of soul's nature. This seems to fit ill with what we have just called the 'strong' interpretation of soul's descent in I.8.13.[7]. The general impression of this and last few passages is that Plotinus speaks in a less restrained manner.

Is Plotinus justified in this optimism and not worried by the permanent change of the self's nature? The answer is probably "yes". It is very clear that Plotinus treats matter and absolute evil as objective existent and the assimilation of self to "the region of unlikeness" is not necessarily a process of 'internalisation'. This again means that the "to sink in matter and be filled with it" can be understood as meaning that the degeneration of self has come to the bottom of the spectrum of spiritual possibility Plotinus has designated for it. It is not to be understood as if matter inflicts a direct blow on it and destroys it. The descent of the self is a decision of its own but its extent is gauged by the objective standard of absolute evil. When it descends to the bottom then it has come to the absolute evil, in a sense; on the other hand, because it is a self-initiated decision it can reverse its direction (it raises itself) and go upwards again. It is this optimism that allows Plotinus to say that the evil soul, which is fully engrossed in matter, can go out of body and raise itself and somehow manage to look away from the mud.

**"Going to Hades and falling asleep there." The allusion of this passage is to *Resp.* 534c7-d1 (cp. *I.1.12.33-5*). In *Resp.* it stresses the vacuity of opinion in its search for the Good and Plato compares this opinion as the knowledge of a man who is in a sleeping condition. Plotinus probably suggests that the descent of soul into matter is a failure of knowledge; the mention of Hades, however, adds a religious (or mythical) dimension to this assertion, an idea anticipated in *I.8.13.[7]*.**

- 1.8.14-

We come to the very section which gives us the opportunity to see how Plotinus conceives his thesis that evil is matter in relation to the daily intuition that evil comes from an evil motivation and is thus psychic in origin. 1.8.14 is still a challenge against the thesis of matter as primary evil but the interlocutor's strategy is different from what has gone before. What was done before 1.8.14 is the presentation of alternative arguments for the position that soul is the source of evil and matter is not; Plotinus replies and points out the weakness and inconsistency in the formulation of these Middle Platonic alternatives and then demolishes them directly; he has rarely appealed, explicitly and systematically, to his own theory in order to counter them. In 1.8.14 both the interlocutor and Plotinus are different in their styles of argument. Plotinus does not try to demolish the alternative thesis because the interlocutor does not broach his alternative in such a way as to exclude Plotinus' thesis. This alleged alternative here is based on ordinary language and on the intuitions embodied in the so called folk-psychology. Here Plotinus tries to give a conceptual context to accommodate these intuitions and therefore defines the relation these intuitions - which, he thinks, are not wrong *in toto* but are limited in perspective and are presented without a context - have to the thesis that evil is matter. Plotinus is thus to make an attempt to *tithenai ta phainomena* but also to go beyond the *phainomena* into the fundamentals of the question.

First, one has to understand that Plotinus' thesis of matter as primary evil is somehow 'revolutionary' in its revision of, say, the 'folk psychology' which starts from common sense and ordinary language. The *tis* in 1.1 does not indicate any particular philosopher or school but people who find the conception of an evil soul workable in explaining evil conducts in daily life. Facing this 'folk-psychology' Plotinus is forced to present the relevant parts of his whole

philosophy (on soul and matter and their relationship). What can this mean but that Plotinus admits the validity of some of the intuitions envisaged in the 'folk psychology' but thinks that one has to go deeper to find out the *rationale* for these intuitions? His thesis of matter as primary evil therefore means a kind of meta-ethics in the sense that it is a revelation of the fundamentals behind all of these intuitions and places them into the right perspective and within the right context: a "philosophical" explanation of the real nature of the concept called evil. Evil by its very nature is an ontological concept which touches the being of the entity of which evil is a characteristic. In my view this attempt in delineating the real status of the thesis - matter as evil - seems the most plausible explanation in accounting for the details and length of I.8.14 and for the systematic recapitulation of his own philosophy which had been done in I.8.2. Only in this light can we understand why Plotinus in his definition of secondary evils (e.g. I.8.5.[8]) becomes so abstract and is so interested in establishing a link between these evils with their transcendent cause (cp. I.8.5.[6]) and in tracing the secondary evils in soul back to matter. There is nowhere else in the apologetic part in which Plotinus' philosophy is expounded in such detail and this can only mean that Plotinus now wishes to place the intuitions embodied in folk-psychology (as reported by the now "non-aggressive" interlocutor) within the context of his philosophy.

I.8.14.[1] is an exposition of the 'folk-psychology' on the weakness of soul which is regarded as the source of vices and can therefore be seen as the primary evil. I.8.14.[2] tries to bolster this kind of intuition by the analogy of bodily malfunctions. In I.8.14.[3] Plotinus then proposes on behalf of the interlocutor a Presocratic psycho-somatic theory of soul but rejects it. I.8.14.[4] instead launches an exposition of Plotinus' own theory: the weak soul is either in matter or is not. It has to be in matter for a soul not involved in matter is pure; it is the presence of something alien to soul that weakens the soul (I.8.14.[5]-[6]). Soul as a hypostatic entity cannot occupy the same place as matter (I.8.14.[7]-[8]); soul, however, is also a vertical

plenitude and the lower reach of it is susceptible to influence from matter (I.8.14.[9]). This contact between matter and the lower soul is mutual, with matter being illumined while soul is darkened, and the reason why the lower soul is willing to be corrupted is because of the temptation for it to generate into matter; soul is weakened thereby (I.8.14.[10]-[12]). This proves that the weakness of soul is not the primary cause of evil but matter is, for the weakness is caused by matter (I.8.14.[13]-[14]), an argument similar to I.8.13.

[1] Translation I.8.14.1-8:

But if someone says that vice is a weakness of the soul - pointing out that the bad soul is easily affected and easily stirred, carried about from one evil to another, easily stirred to lust, easily roused to anger, hasty in its assents, giving way freely to confused imaginations, like the weakest of the products of art or nature, which the winds or the sun's heat so easily destroy - it will be worth enquiring what the weakness is and where the soul gets it from.

Commentary:

The objections raised in I.8.8 and I.8.10-13 have been overthrown and the Middle Platonic thesis that evil has its primary source in soul is thus refuted. The result is to see evils in soul as secondary, particular and local phenomena in relation to the primary evil which is matter and is a general metaphysical condition which makes these secondary evils such as they are. However, the Middle Platonic position is not purely academic but is also based on some intuitions of the so called 'folk psychology', fed upon common sense and ordinary language. This is the reason why Plotinus uses the indefinite pronoun, *tis* (in I.1) - "someone on the street" if I may translate it in this way - as the spokesperson for this position. Plotinus' strategy

against this position is not so much a refutation as an explication, an explication of some intuitions envisaged in this folk wisdom and ordinary language. This is clearly the case if one reads through I.8.14.[1]-[2]; he will find that Plotinus in I.8.14.[3] is not going to point out whether there is inconsistency in this opinion, but he instead summons and encourages the interlocutor to work with him ("we must get to grips with the question (*prositeon engus tōi logōi*)" I.8.14.13-4) in order to sort out what this folk psychology really means and make clear the intuitions therein. That is why there is no refutation but only explication, as far as we can see, in I.8.14. He simply tries to give this folk psychology a context (a context which happens to be his whole metaphysical package with special stress on matter and soul) and circumscribes it. By means of this new strategy he overcomes this challenge of evil soul against his evil matter. If we take into account what was said about relationship between soul and matter in the rest of I.8, this new approach in I.8.14 is fully compatible with the result of our discussion.

[V]ice as weakness of the soul (*astheneian psychēs tēn kakian*, cp. *Gorgias* 477b and *Resp.* 444e). This is the general theme of the folk-psychology in I.8.14. However, for Plotinus soul, as a hypostatic entity, cannot on its own be weak and susceptible to external influences from below unless this soul is compromised (see I.8.14.[3]). For the moment, this hypothetical street-wise man continues to explain what he means by 'enumerating examples' (N.B.: not by a rational discourse on general principles) and these examples reveal that the major symptom of this psychic weakness is its instability both in character and in judgement. This has Platonic support: "change must be for the worse" (*Resp.* 380e-381a) and this most often happens in the 'body' and 'plant' (ibid.), or in Plotinus terms, in *physis* which is in charge of generation.

First, there has to be a general unstable disposition of soul (the bad soul is easily affected and



easily stirred) and, after the lapse of the weak soul, evils of all sorts come to it: carried about from one evil to another. There are three kinds of evils the weak soul will be led into: (i) lust (*epithumia*), (ii) anger (*orgē*) and (iii) giving way freely to confused imaginations (*propetē... eis sunkatatheseis*). This could well refer to the tripartition of soul in *Republic* where soul is said to be composed of *epithumia* (= (i)), *thumos* (= (ii)) and *logismos* (= (iii)). (*Resp.* 438dff.)

However, some Stoic influence can be seen here as well, and the most clear case is hasty in its assents, giving way freely to confused imagination (*propetē de eis sunkatatheseis, kai tais amudrais phantasiais eikousan rhaidiōs*) (cp. Harder<sup>2</sup> Vb p.415). The assent (*sunkatathesis*) and imagination (*phantasia*) express the two aspects of Stoic epistemology. First, *phantasia*. The Stoics define *phantasia* ('impression' would be better than Armstrong's imagination) as "an affection occurring in the soul, which reveals itself and its cause" (A.A. Long & D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, CUP, 1987, 39B2; cp. 40B2) but this self-intimating power is not by itself to be 'cognitive' enough (*katalepton*) because this impression also has to be a faithful reproduction of its cause: "an impression stamped and reproduced from something which is... with all its peculiarities in a craftsmanlike way" (Long & Sedley 40D4). Stoic epistemology is, furthermore, highly linguistic in orientation and Frede (Frede 1987 p.155) has said on behalf of the Stoics that "to have a rational impression is to think a certain proposition in a certain way" (cp. Long & Sedley 39A2).

However, Stoics have seldom formulated explicitly the relation between the privileged set of impressions and its corresponding conceptualisation in proposition and in fact this brings us to another aspect of Stoic epistemology, the aspect of assent (*sunkatathesis*): "one who is non-precipitate (my underlining, cp. the *propetē* in I.8.14.4) should not be pulled by the incognitive impression and keeps control over his assent" (Long & Sedley 41D1). This aspect of assent is to fit the self-intimating *kataleptikē phantasia* into the body of the rationally accepted *logos*

or *lektē* (Annas 1980 p.86 and p.90). This aspect of Stoic epistemology stresses *katalēpsis* rather than *katalēptikē phantasia*. To emphasise *phantasia* too much would seem to give another version of Epicurean naïve realism, but to stress *katalēpsis* alone would create a solipsism and the outside world is dropped out of sight altogether (Annas 1980 pp.86-7). Plotinus' mention of these two aspects in I.8.14.[1] indicates his competent grasp of Stoic epistemology; his additions of *hasty, freely and confused* might indicate his disapproval of this Stoic epistemology though this not certain because even the Stoics will describe evil or bad soul in the same way.

Like the weakest of the products of art or nature (*tōn technēi ē physei pepoiēmenōn*). *Technē*, *physis* and *poiēsis* here represent the kind of activity for the creation of the cosmos which can be engaged in by the lowest reach of the soul, which reminds one of the *dēmiourgos*. As it was said that the *physis* is mainly a power of *poiēsis* with very weak *theoria* and therefore it is this part of soul that can be called weak. This is an anticipation of the more elaborate analogy in I.8.14.[2].

which the winds or the sun's heat so easily destroy. cp. Aristotle *Phys.* 197a23 and Plato *Resp.* 280e5.

[2] Translation I.8.14.9-13:

For weakness in the soul is not just like that in bodies; but incapacity for work and being easily affected, as in the body, so by analogy in the soul has the name of weakness: unless we are to refer weakness in the soul to the same cause as that in body, matter.

Commentary:

I have adopted *tēn* (Harder<sup>2</sup>) instead of *to* (H. & S. and Armstrong) in I.11 to make it consistent with *prosēgorian* in I.12.

The catalogue of weakness in soul in [1], Plotinus explains now, originally belongs to "the products of art and nature", and is by analogy (*analogiai*) transferred to the lowest aspect of soul, the *physis*. The *analogiai* implies that the order of body and the lapsed soul are different but similar in their respective weakness. (These two orders together compose the sensible cosmos.) Plotinus wishes to take advantage of this analogical relationship to inquire into the source for this weakness in soul for, as it seems, the weakness in body can ultimately be attributed, as implied in I.8.14.[3], to matter and, by analogy, perhaps the weakness in soul could be attributed to matter as well.

the incapacity for work here perhaps refers to "hasty in its assents, giving way freely to confused imaginations" and being easily affected refers to "easily affected... roused to anger" in I.8.14.[1]. They are the analogies taken from body to illustrate similar situations in soul.

[3] Translation I.8.14.13-7:

But we must get to grips with the question, what is the cause for what we call weakness in the soul; it is not density or rarity or thinness or fatness, or an illness, like fever, which makes the soul weak.

Commentary:

**"*Alla prositeon engus tōi logōi*". cp. "*phere oun, hosē dynamis engutata pros to on anagōmetha kai leqōmen*" (des Places, *Numēnius* fr.5). (Thedinga p.275)**

**This passage contains a reference to Presocratic psycho-somatic and this, combined with the Platonic and Stoic references in I.8.14.[1], shows that the alleged folk-psychology is composed of all sorts of opinions and they are distilled and formed into the positions or intuitions under consideration in I.8.14 and the rest of the apologetic part.**

**It is necessary to have this passage read together with Plotinus' exposition of psycho-somatics in III.6.3. A typical passage on the relation between body and soul can be seen in II.22-5:**

**"when we say that the soul moves itself in lusts or reasonings or opinions, we are not saying that it does this because it is being shaken about by them, but that the movements originate from itself."**

**This certainly reminds us of the psychic *autokinēsis* in *Phaedrus* and *Laws X*. Therefore, it is the soul itself, not the density or rarity or thinness or fatness of bodies or an illness, that explains the weakness in soul. This means that the weakness in soul has to be explained by a reference to soul itself. On the other hand, soul can explain the bodily activity and this bodily activity is perceptible and can be used as an analogy for one to infer soul functions which cannot be directly perceived:**

**"For with lust, too, as long as its starting-point remains in the soul, it is unperceived; it is what comes out there that sense perception knows." (III.6.3.33-4)**

**This explains I.8.14.[2] where the functions of body are used as analogies for those of soul.**

We have said in the commentary above that secondary evils, either of body or of soul, are derived from primary evil or matter and if the evils committed by the body can be explained with a reference to the activity of soul then the evils or weakness of soul have to be further explained by matter (I.8.13). This leads Plotinus to discuss why soul will become evil in the following paragraphs.

These three paragraphs from I.8.14.[1]-[3] can be said to be the doctrine exemplified in the folk-psychology. What characterises Plotinus' attitude towards this new challenge is that Plotinus does not refute it. The following argument in the rest of I.8.14 in explaining why soul can become evil, is also not meant to contradict the evil soul envisaged in the folk-psychology; it means to make this intuition of evil soul more theoretically coherent and intellectually respectable. For this we have said that Plotinus in I.8.14 has changed his tactics because he can, to a limited extent, countenance the position of his interlocutor but wishes to explicate the implications of it. Or in the language of I.8.13, the horizontal and efficacious explanation the evil soul has in regard to the secondary evil is not enough; why this soul becomes evil is a further question to be asked and this needs a vertical explanation between soul and matter. If we consider from this perspective then I.8.13 and I.8.14 are very closely connected.

[4] Translation I.8.14.17-9:

This kind of weakness of the soul must be found either in those souls which are completely separate or in those which are in matter or in both.

Commentary:

If the weakness in soul that can explain the weakness in body and the weakness in body is due to the presence of matter, then it is proper for Plotinus to say that the weak soul, which causes evils, is somehow related to matter.

What kind of soul can it be in which we can find the presence of weakness? The three possibilities Plotinus lists include:

- (a) the Soul *hypostasis* which is completely separate from matter (*en tais chōristais pantelōs*),
- (b) the embodied soul (*en tais enhylois*), that is, the soul which descends in matter, and
- (c) (in both) including (a) and (b).

The logic of this exhaustive listing is this: if Plotinus has discounted (a) or (b) then (c) can be dismissed automatically. This is because (a) and (b) are mutually exclusive. The real choice is between (a) and (b); the listing seems somewhat unnecessary.

[5] Translation I.8.14.19-24:

So if it is not in those without matter - they are all pure, and, as Plato says, "winged and perfect" and their activity is unhindered - it remains that the weakness must be in the souls which have fallen, those which are not pure and have not been purified; and their weakness will not be a taking away of something but the presence of something alien, like the presence of phlegm or bile in the body.

Commentary:

The real choice in locating the weakness of soul is, as has been said in [4], either in the completely separate soul or in the embodied and fallen soul. Plotinus appeals to *Phaedrus* 246b-c for his two alternatives:

"Soul taken as a whole is in charge of all that is inanimate, and traverses the entire universe.... When it is perfect and winged it moves on high and governs all creation, but the soul that has shed its wings falls until it encounters solid matter."

This passage from *Phaedrus* shows the natural relationship the pure soul has in regard to the cosmos; it is the capacity to descend and then reascend to the hypostatic reality that constitutes the unhindered activity of soul. On the other hand, this natural relationship could be distorted and the natural descent of soul could become, because of its over-involvement, a moral lapse. This descent of soul into lower reality indicates a loss of the original unity it possesses in hypostatic reality and thus suggests an increase of dispersal and differentiation. Plotinus is therefore correct in saying that the soul which has fallen does not have its original nature removed but is contaminated by the addition of features from the lower reality: their weakness will not be a taking away of something but the presence of something alien (*ouk aphairesis tinos, alla allotriou parousia*) (cp. I.1.12.20). The juxtaposition of *aphairesis* and *prosthēkē* (here = *parousia*) here is not coincidental because it has been said that in the search for absolute good and absolute evil one has to approach them *via* its removal (*aphairesis*) of those extrinsic additions (*prosthēkeis*). A very illuminating passage for this presence of something alien in soul can be seen in I.6.5.46-50:

"...his ugliness has come from an addition of alien matter (*prosthēkē tou allotriou*, cp. *alotriou parousia* above).... the soul becomes ugly by mixture (*mixeīn*) and dilution (*kraseīn*) and inclination (*neuseīn*) towards the body and matter (*pros to sōma kai hylēn*)."

(also cp. I.8.5.17; the *mixei* and *kraisei* are semantically related to *prosthekē*)

Plotinus compares this condition of fallen soul to the presence of phlegm or bile in the body. This is an application of the *via analogiae* announced in I.8.14.[2].

The weakness must be in the souls which have fallen, those which are not pure and have not been purified (*en... tais ou katharais oude kekatharmenais*). This passage seems to indicate that the fallen soul is not doomed to stay in the same condition forever but retains the opportunity to regain its original and pure position as the *kekatharmenais* seems to indicate. This is a kind of optimism implied in Plotinus' philosophy of the self. The use of cathartic language here is also significant because it meets the thesis that the lapse of soul is ascribed to the addition of something alien to it which therefore has to be purged away and purified if the lapsed soul wishes to depart from matter. It is related to *aphairesis*.

This lapse of soul into matter seems to add an extra dimension to the emanation of reality from the One down to matter; the latter seems to be a kind of logical necessity while the former seems to show a kind of willingness on the part of soul to get involved more than it has to. What I mean is that the language of *katharsis* implies a kind of personal decision to return, which in turn implies a prior decision to descend. There is an echo of *tolmā* here. cp, the *emellomen hylen theasathai* in I.8.9.17.

[6] Translation I.8.14.25-7:

When we understand the cause of the fall of the soul more clearly, and as it ought to be understood, what we are looking for, the soul's weakness, will be obvious.



Commentary:

The passage from *Phaedrus* 246bc which explains why soul is in charge of the inanimate is also the passage which accounts for the cause of soul's lapse: when the soul is no longer able to maintain its "winged and perfect" condition because of over-involvement in the sensible. This over-involvement brings soul down towards "solid matter" because of the addition of features alien and extrinsic to the soul. This is the cause of the lapse of the soul. To understand the cause, Plotinus thus says, would help us understand the consequence which the cause is going to bring forth. This assertion for the necessity of a knowledge of cause in order to grasp the nature of its consequences is typically Plotinian as seen in the title of I.8: *On what are and whence come evils* (cp. commentary *ad loc.*). This identification of the definition, which a particular entity possesses, with its origin is a doctrine valid in the hypostatic reality, and, as we have seen many transplantations of concepts from the hypostatic reality to the anhypostatic, this identification is now applied to the identification of "what is the weakness in soul" with "whence comes this weakness".

[7] Translation I.8.14.27-8:

There is matter in reality and there is soul in reality, and one single place for both of them.

Commentary:

The doctrine in this passage has been anticipated in I.8.6 where *Theaetetus* 176ab is discussed. The conclusion reached there is that the flight of soul from the place of evil should never be understood in a spatial sense - a rejection of spatial other-worldliness popular at

Plotinus' time as Armstrong has said in his note (Armstrong *Loeb* I. pp.292-3 note 2) -; it is, in addition, a rejection of Gnostics' "another better world" (see 4.5.13). Therefore Plotinus here makes obvious his intention that both matter and soul are *en tois ousin* (I.27), that is, they are in the conceptual framework including the hypostatic and anhypostatic reality. This seems a total vindication of my strategy in seeing I.8 as a consistent attempt to rescue the anhypostatic reality from becoming non-hypostatic and to explain it as a continuation of the hypostatic reality. For the moment Plotinus continues employing spatial language (one single place, *topos heis tis*) but with the qualification of *hoion* ("as if", left untranslated by Armstrong); what one should say here is that Plotinus wishes to use *topos* as a term for the "conceptual framework" within which both matter and soul exist. This conceptual framework is called reality, *ta onta*: matter, like soul, is in reality (*estin en tois ousin hylē*). It is a necessary strategy to include matter within an expanded conceptual framework of reality because without it Plotinus would find it difficult to discuss any interaction which might come between soul and matter and to explain why there is evil.

[8] Translation I.8.14.27-34:

For there are not two separate places for matter and for the soul, - on earth, for instance, for matter and in the air for the soul: the soul's separate place is its not being in matter; and this means that not one single thing comes into being from it and matter; and this means that it is not in matter as a substratum; and this is being separate.

Commentary:

There are not two places for matter and for the soul (*ou gar chōris men ho topos tēi hylēi,*

*chōris de au ho tēs psychēs*), - on earth, for instance, for matter and in the air for the soul. This translation by Armstrong is too interpretative to be faithful. The elimination of *chōris* in translation is particularly harmful because it is the key word (cp. *touto esti to chōris einai* in II. 33-4) in Plotinus' attempt at defining the relationship between matter and soul. A more acceptable translation could be this: "for it is not that there is a separate place for matter and another separate place belonging to soul". Plotinus here raises an example of what he really thinks when he says that matter and soul are not spatially separate. The designation of earth for matter and of air for soul has some Presocratic precedents; with these Presocratic precedents comes the Presocratic mechanism in generation; all of these have been anticipated in I.8.14.[3].

The soul's separate place is its not being in matter (*ho topos tēi psychēi* (misprinted as *psychē* in Armstrong) *chōris to mē en hylēi*). With this Plotinus intends to redefine the kind of separation soul has in regard to matter; they are both in the same framework of reality and not in two separate places (read as: soul is in reality and matter is outwith the reality). The spatial language is seen in the repeated appearance of *topos* and this is connected with the theme of separation (*chōris*). However, this spatial analogy of *choris* is not informative enough and has to be strengthened and therefore Plotinus adds: this means not being united (*henōthēnai*) to matter; and this means that not one single thing comes into being from it and matter (*touto de to mē hen ti ex autēs kai hylēs genesthai*). The separation of soul from matter is now defined in terms of its lack of generation (*genesthai* in I.32 and I.33). Generation is the consequence of the descent of soul into matter. This indicates that pure soul remains in the hypostatic reality without descending and it is this remaining there that accounts for its separation from matter. In other words, the purity of soul as hypostatic can be maintained only on the condition that no anhypostatic generation comes from it and matter. This, on the one hand, harks back to I.8.2.[9] and, on the other, anticipates I.8.14.[11] where matter is said

to lure the descent of soul by its offer of opportunity for generation.

This means that it is not in matter as a substratum (*touto de to mē en hypokeimenōi tēi hylēi genesthai*). If there is a contact between matter and soul - and thus a generation -, matter would assume the status of Aristotle's *hypokeimenon* as the cause of differentiation for this generation and as the substratum (*hypokeimenon*) underlying the generated sensibles. So long as soul is separate from matter, no generation would come out of it and consequently there would be no spatial relationship between soul and matter. If there is no generation there would be no need of matter as substratum for the presence of the lapsed soul.

[9] Translation I.8.14.34-7:

But there are many powers of soul, and it has a beginning, a middle and an end; and matter is there, and begs it and, we may say, bothers it and wants to come right inside. "All the place is holy," and there is nothing which is without a share of soul.

Commentary:

The weakness of soul is due to the presence of something alien and extrinsic in soul (I.8.14.[6]); this implies that such a presence would imply the voluntary descent of soul into matter for nowhere can this extrinsic addition come if it stays above. I.8.14.[7]-[8] have clarified what separation (*chōris*) of soul from matter means, and [9] recognises that this complete separation is only true of soul "in a certain sense". Since cosmos, sensibles and evils are after all existent facts; they are generated from soul. All of these facts indicate that the descent of soul into matter has indeed happened.

Plotinus explains this separation of soul from - as well as the descent of soul into - matter in terms of vertical plenitude within the soul *hypostasis*. He distinguishes this vertical plenitude into many powers (*dynameis de psychēs pollai*) and these powers constitute a continuum with a beginning, a middle and an end (*archēn kai mesa kai eschata*):

"how will intelligence of this kind differ from what we call nature? It differs in that intelligence is primary, but nature is last and lowest (*eschaton*)." (IV.4.13.2-3)

"(it) must have many powers of its own for its natural activities (*pollas oikeias dynameis pros energeias tas kata physin echein.*)" (II.3.15.18-22)

"that one part of our soul is always directed to the intelligible realities, one to the things of this world, and one is in the middle between these." (II.9.2.5-6)

What this division of soul's power could indicate is that with this range of powers soul could establish different kinds of relationship with matter: from a complete and permanent separation on the one hand to over-involvement in the generated sensibles. The soul's power Plotinus has in mind in regard to over-involvement is the *physis*, the power of generation, which possesses very little or no capacity for *theoria*, that is, it can only go downwards without returning to the higher reality (cp. IV.6.3.5-8).

Matter is there, and begs it (*hylē de parousa prosaitē*). cp. III.6.14.8-10 where matter is interpreted as *penia*. According to Plotinus here such an establishment of a relation between soul and matter is not unilateral and is not initiated by soul alone. He invokes what he has said in III.5.9.49-53 (and thus Plato's *Symposium* 203b4) about matter in its aspiration for form. This seems to give matter a more active role in the formation of cosmos and is not very

consistent with the *pandechēs* nature of matter in, say, I.8.3 for example. This should cause no surprise now because we have said Plotinus always puts matter in a more assertive and active role when the context is cosmological (like I.8.7-8), and this is exactly what the present topic is about: the generation by soul of the sensible universe in matter.

Wants to come right inside (*eis to eisō*). The *eis to eisō* means that matter wishes to be uplifted and transformed and becomes a participant in the powers of the soul. It is because of this aspiration for form on the part of matter - it is said to be *eschaton eidos* - that the consequent generation, the cosmos, although a result of soul's descent into matter, is said to be holy: All the place is holy (*pas de ho chōros hieros*). (A not exact quotation from Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* 54: *chōros men hieros pas hod' est'*.) Armstrong says that this uplifting of matter into a share of soul's powers and the generation of a 'holy' cosmos is an expression of one of "the strongest affirmations of the goodness of the material world in the *Enneads*". (Armstrong Loeb I pp.312-3 note 30; cp. III.5.5.7-8: *tou men kosmou legomenou eudaimonos theou*.)

There is nothing which is without a share of soul (*ouden estin ho amoiron esti psychēs*). If we look at the relationship between matter and soul from the top-down perspective then the descent of soul is seen as a dispersal of soul's *dynameis* into the unlimitedness of matter, and the consequent cosmos would receive less optimistic appraisal. On the other hand, when we see this establishment of relationship as the aspiration of matter to join soul, then the cosmos is a place where the *dynameis* of soul are evident and efficacious and nothing in it does not have a share of soul. The comprehensive presence of soul to an aspiring matter is Plotinus' way of generating cosmos:

"a rational principle which makes a thing, cannot include matter but must be a principle

in relation with matter which enters matter and brings the body to perfection."

(II.7.3.10-2)

[10] Translation I.8.14.38-40:

**So matter spreads itself out under soul and is illumined, and cannot grasp the source from which its light comes: that source cannot endure matter though it is there, because its evil makes it unable to see.**

Commentary:

Matter aspires and is uplifted to have a share of the soul's powers in the creation of the cosmos. However, this cannot eliminate the basic difference between these two entities: matter has to remain matter otherwise the cosmos would not exist (I.8.7.[3]-[4]). After a more optimistic description of the close relationship between matter and soul in I.8.14.[9], [10] brings us back to the fundamental difference between them.

**So matter spreads itself out under soul and is illumined. This has a very strong sexual overtone and this might be due to the perception of matter as a kind of female principle and to the present discussion on the generation of cosmos by soul into matter (cp. 3.3.11).**

**And cannot grasp the source from which its light comes. Despite the active nature of matter in its aspiration for form, this aspiration is in fact no more than an all-receptive (*pandechēs*) capacity in matter:**

"matter, which has no resistance, for it has no activity, but is a shadow, waits

passively to endure whatever that which acts upon it wishes." (III.6.18.28-30)

This lack of capacity is unlike the reception doctrine applicable to other entities because matter is unable to receive what soul really bestows (so the use of the *katoptron* analogy) while in other entities the reception of illumination implies a confirmation of the receiver's nature and a further creation of the lower reality.

That source cannot endure matter though it is there, because its evil makes it unable to see. Matter, being formlessness itself, cannot receive the illumination from soul; on the other hand, soul, being form itself, cannot effectively exert its illumination on matter because the total formlessness of matter is destructive of form:

"it (= matter) masters what is imaged in it and corrupts and destroys it by applying its own nature which is contrary to form." (I.8.8.[3])

Soul can see matter only when it transforms itself by reducing itself to 'formlessness' (*amorphia*, I.8.9.[10]) so that it may be able to see matter in the way it sees darkness (I.8.9.[12]); this means that if soul really sees matter soul would cease to be soul. The incompatibility between soul and matter is now complete. Plotinus admits the fact that both matter (though it is there, *kaitoi parousan*) and soul are ultimately derived from the same source of reality but this cannot change this intrinsic incompatibility.

[11] Translation I.8.14.40-3:

Matter darkens the illumination, the light from that source, by mixture with itself, and weakens



it by itself offering it the opportunity of generation and the reason for coming to matter; for it would not have come to what was not present.

Commentary:

For the soul's generation of matter, cp. III.9.3.12ff. and IV.3.9.22ff. (cp. commentary on I.8.14.[14]). Despite the incompatibility between soul and matter, the contact between them nevertheless has happened. This is because the nature of Soul as a whole is not a homogeneous entity like *Nous*: the Soul "has a beginning, a middle and an end." The lowest reach or the outermost edge of soul, *physis* - the productive *dynamis* without *theoria* - is susceptible to influence from matter: "the irrational part of the soul (= *physis*) (which) is receptive of evil." (I.8.4.[2]) The result of this contact is the darkening (*eskotōse*) of the illumination from soul by matter.

Why is soul willing to descend and be weakened and darkened thereby? Plotinus says that matter offers the enticement of generation and this is the very reason for soul's descent. Generation is a spontaneous necessity for all the entities, *via* its inner concentration and then its radiation, in the hypostatic reality but *physis*, because of its weakness in *theoria*, cannot perform this double act; it needs an extrinsic incentive to create. The generation of the cosmos is thus a mixture of *physis* with matter. Without offering the opportunity of generation matter cannot exert its influence on soul and make it descend. The reason why *physis* is willing to descend is not only because of the opportunity of generation but also of the nature of this generation. The generated sensible is a mixture of being and non-being and it is this mixture that makes *physis* able to descend. What we mean is this. Suppose the descent of soul in its generation is a straightforward descent into matter or this generated sensible is a complete non-being, then the descent of *physis* would mean the end of *physis*. A generation which

promises a mixture of being and non-being can produce different degrees of being (or non-being) and this in turn indicates that the soul can descend to various extents so long as it is not assimilated completely to non-being and becomes matter.

[12] Translation I.8.14.44-9:

This is the fall of the soul, to come in this way to matter and to become weak, because all its powers do not come into action; matter hinders them from coming by occupying the place which soul holds and producing a kind of cramped condition, and making evil what it has got hold of by a sort of theft - until soul manages to escape back to its higher state.

Commentary:

The opportunity for creation given by matter and the craving for it by *physis* are the cause of the fall of soul and for the weakness in soul (cp. I.8.14.[10]-[11]). This descent of *physis* into matter means that matter prevails in this contact and makes soul no longer soul but more like matter; the soul is weakened by this contact with matter. This transformation of soul is admittedly confined to *physis* and this means that not all the *dynameis* of *physis* can come into full action in this cosmogony. On the other hand, there is a certain uplifting of matter towards the Soul *hypostasis* in this contact because this contact makes this new matter less like the original matter when it is left alone. This uplifting of matter towards to Soul *hypostasis*, from the perspective of soul, is a kind of usurpation because it invades what does not properly belong to matter; the gain of matter means an expansion of anhypostatic reality and thus a loss or 'contraction' (cp. *suspeirathenai* in I.47) of soul's control of reality. Plotinus uses the very vivid *suspeirathenai* ('to be contracted' or in Armstrong's very elegant translation, "to be made

into a cramped condition") to indicate this loss or contraction within Soul *hypostasis* because part of its power is curtailed. Furthermore, Plotinus attaches a moral label on this advance of matter into soul - *klepsasa* (theft) - and means by this that such an advance is not natural and legal and is surreptitious and is a gain at the expense of others.

What can one do to reverse this situation? Plotinus recommends a return to the state before the contact happens: until soul manages to escape back to its higher state. One should read this together with I.8.6.[5]:

"For 'flight,' he says, is not going away from earth but being on earth 'just and holy with the help of wisdom.'" (also I.8.7.[6]-[8])

This seems to recognise the necessity for the generation of the cosmos; the escape by soul to the higher state is not to roll back what has been achieved; it is advice for a detachment from this creation with an implicit recognition of the *status quo*. A familiar theme of "justification but no rectification" theodicy and another confirmation that the apologetic part is an integral part of I.8.

[13] Translation I.8.14.49-50:

So matter is the cause of the soul's weakness and vice: it is then itself evil before soul and is primary evil.

Commentary:

All of the passages in I.8.14 so far are now proved to explicate, not to refute, the intuitions envisaged in the folk psychology in I.8.14.[1]-[2] which see the weakness of soul a source of all vices. Plotinus does not deny that view but suggests that the ultimate cause is that there is a primary evil or matter which makes soul weak and evil. This introduction of matter as the cause of weak soul in turn will involve the whole metaphysical package. Therefore, Plotinus' purpose in I.8.14 is not to refute but to give the intuitions embodied in the folk-psychology a metaphysical context.

Matter offers the opportunity for generation and entices soul to descend and create; this descent is a departure of soul from its original and pure state into a "cramped condition" which restricts the full display of soul's power, and this weakens soul and soul becomes weak. Plotinus could thus say that matter is the cause for soul to be in the weak and wicked condition.

Moreover, there are other secondary evils the weak soul - this is understood as human soul - cannot explain. In I.8.14.[1]-[2] the kinds of vices caused by evil or weak soul are related either to human dispositions ("lust" and "anger" in I.8.14.[1]) or to his judgements ("hasty assents to confused imaginations", *ibid.*). This means that the explanatory power of positing an evil (and human) soul cannot explain other things which we would also count as evil, such as natural disasters, and other evils unrelated to human activities. This interpretation of soul in terms of human and individual soul is certainly a very narrow one in ancient philosophy, but it is this narrow usage that is presupposed by the interlocutor in I.8.14.[1]-[2] and, I think, in most of the apologetic part. Only matter which explains the ontological limitation of the generated sensible can explain these phenomena. This should further circumscribe the validity of the weak soul as the source of evil.

[14] Translation I.8.14.50-4:

Even if soul had produced matter, being affected in some way, and had become evil by communicating with it, matter would have been the cause by its presence: soul would not have come to it unless its presence had given soul the occasion of coming to birth.

Commentary:

This is the passage about the generation of matter by soul. Schwyzer' famous comment on it in his 1973 p.275 has denied this generation: "*Wir haben hier einen irrealen Bedingungssatz mit dem zugehörigen Hauptsatz.*" From the *anolethros* nature (II.5.5.34) of matter Schwyzer has inferred the *agenetos* nature of matter; he also limits the role of soul to the creation of order in matter and not to the generation of matter: *Gestalten ist aber nicht dasselbe wie Erzeugen* (Schwyzer 1973 p.276). However, all of these have been effectively refuted by O'Brien (O'Brien 1981) and Corrigan (Corrigan 1986). In my view Schwyzer can escape from this mistake if he realises that, in the two descents of soul into matter, the first descent is an "absolute generation" - from nothing at all to something - of matter, that is, a creation of existence, and the second descent is a "reconstructed existence of intelligibility" by imposing order or essence on to pre-existent and disordered existence (cp. Interpretative Essays 1 and 3). Schwyzer's attention is totally on the reconstructed existence and therefore he has the right to say that there is no "absolute generation" of matter. However, this would totally neglect the fact that in the first descent that soul did generate matter which yet awaited ordering.

Even if soul had produced matter. There are several texts in Plotinus' *Enneads* which support the position that matter is generated by soul. (III.4.1.6-12, III.9.3.7-16, VI.2.22.21-23,

IV.3.9.21-27, V.2.2.30-31 and II.9.3.11-21) Schwyzer says that what is referred to in these passages ought to be body and not matter (Schwyzer 1973 p.276) but I think O'Brien is correct in insisting otherwise (O'Brien 1981 p.121 note 19). The generation of matter by soul is part of the ontological scheme of Plotinus, and this is a "logical necessity" for soul. In addition, there is another kind of relation which soul could have in regard to matter, and this is a cosmopoetical relation after the existence of matter. The generation of matter by the first descent of soul explains why there is such an existence called matter and the second descent explains why there is a cosmos rather than an a-cosmos. This double nature of soul corresponds to the double nature of matter which we have mentioned at the beginning of the Introduction and Interpretative Essay on Plotinus: matter as the ultimate *heterotēs* (= Plato's *hypodochē*) in differentiating the monolithic Being, and matter as the material reservoir full of primordial *ichnē* (= Plato's *anankē*) to be worked up into higher entities, including this cosmos. (cp. Zeller pp.604-5 and p.608 for this distinction of two moments in the relationship soul has in regard to matter.)

IV.8.5.8-18 recognises the necessity for soul's descent in the creation of matter for the completion of the conceptual framework of reality; this descent, although necessitated, is, in so far as it is a descent of an entity whose natural habitat is in the hypostatic reality, a punishment for soul which generates matter and from which it has somehow been contaminated (being affected in some way (*pathos*) I.52). This is an echo of I.8.2.[9] where Plotinus thinks the further advance of soul outwith hypostatic reality is a disaster for itself and for hypostatic reality as a whole.

The fact that soul borders on matter and has received punishment for its first descent means this soul has been somehow contaminated. This makes the second descent of soul in its "spontaneous inclination" (*rhōpēi autexousiōi*) less abrupt. This second descent of soul is about

the creation of order in matter, unlike the first one which is about the generation of matter, and seems motivated by a curiosity for knowledge of its own "physical" and generative powers (IV.8.5.26-8), which is useless for the soul abiding above and is revealed only when it descends into matter. This second descent runs the risk of narcissistic over-involvement in its creativity and its own self-image and thus the soul can easily fail to return. This second descent is truly culpable and constitutes the vice which we ascribe to evil soul while the first kind of descent creates the kind of evil which is about the limitation of our existence. III.9.3.7-16 expresses this relationship between these two descents very well:

"The partial soul (*hē merikē*), then is illuminated when it goes towards that which is before it - for then it meets reality - but when it goes towards what comes after it, it goes towards non-existence. But it does this, when it goes towards itself, for, wishing to be directed towards itself it makes an image of itself, the non-existent, as if walking on emptiness and becoming more indefinite; and the indefinite image of this is every way dark: for it is altogether without reason and unintelligent and stands far removed from reality. (= the above is about the first descent of matter in its generation of matter; N.B.: how Plotinus describes this amorphous condition of the generated matter) Up to the time between it is in its own world, but when it looks at the image again, as it were directing its attention to it a second time, it forms it and goes into it rejoicing (*emorphōse kai hēstheisa erchetai eis auto*) (= this is the second descent)."

Rist has said about this second descent: "The fault lies not in the creation of the world, but in the attitude of the individual soul." (Rist 1967 p.127); Inge in his vol.I. p.260 also says: "treating as ends those constituents of the temporal order which were intended to be instrumental." This second descent has to presuppose the result of the first descent, that is, this second descent has to be seen against the background of a scheme of reality determined

by the logical necessity of emanation. The first descent gives us a definition of evil (= matter or *mē on*) which is rather revisionist and it is the kind of evil expounded in I.8.1-6.; the second descent of soul instead gives us the kind of evil we can relate to our ordinary language because it can be related to a voluntary soul. This is a topic running through I.8.7-8 and I.8.10-15.

This revisionist definition of evil as matter proves that Plotinus' thesis that matter is evil is a meta-theory which explains why soul can become evil and weak and why evil and why weak soul produces the so called moral vices, species of secondary evils which are also defined as *mē on*. This seems a perfect combination of the logical necessity of first descent in the emanation scheme and the willingness on the part of soul in its second descent in the moral domain but the explanatory powers are different and the subordination of evil soul as the cause of evil to matter as the primary cause of evil is apparent. Or in other language: the (me)ontology of evil overdetermines the psychology of evil. The apologetic part of I.8 can be said to consist of a string of proofs which denies the explanatory power of the psychology of evil. Matter on the other hand, by its definition as the primary evil, can explain the evil caused by soul and all the other evils (including why soul becomes evil) but soul cannot explain why it itself becomes evil and explain the kind of ontological limitations in the sensibles. The fact that matter as evil is strange and very revisionist according to our common idea is not an argument against its validity which is backed up by Plotinus' metaphysics.

In conclusion, Plotinus' attempt to expand and deepen the intuition about weak soul in I.8.14.[1]-[2] not only preserves this intuition but also gives it a metaphysical context which transforms and expands it. If one can look back at the apologetic part as a whole one can realise that perhaps the nature of all the implicit dialogues in the apologetic part might have the same purpose, although it is not wise to insist too much on this view.



Soul would not have come to it unless its presence had given soul the occasion of coming to birth. This recalls I.8.14.[11]. This is a very strange passage because it says that soul will generate matter if matter has already existed and given soul the incentive to go downwards. This will not cause surprise if we can remember that this sentence indicates the second descent of soul and this descent of soul is a generation of order (= cosmos) out of a pre-given disorder (which is the consequence of soul's first descent). coming to birth should never be understood as "absolute generation" but the generation of an existence of reconstructed intelligibility. The soul in question here is apparently the soul in her second descent because the present passage is cosmological in context, i.e., matter is already born there but in a totally amorphous condition and has to await the cosmopoietic activity of the soul in its second descent, and the occasion of coming to birth means *cosmopoiēsis* and so there is no contradiction here. This cosmological context was already anticipated in I.8.7.

It must have been very clear that it is necessary to distinguish the ontological descent (or first descent) and the cosmological descent (or the second descent) of soul but we also insist on the absolute priority of ontological descent over the cosmological and moral descent because this second descent has to be understood in ontological terms, as a loss of being or presence of non-being and so forth. Therefore it is logical that we should be opposed to Rist's approach to this problem of evil, which is based on the psychology of an individual soul. Nevertheless, it is very illuminating to see how Rist grasps the most vital point in this potential contradiction between the ontological approach of which we are in favour and the psychological approach Rist has applied throughout in his 1967 and in his 1974. This contradiction, so Rist says, has to be traced back to Plotinus himself:

"...if he had been able to concentrate on moral evil or the possibility of moral evil as 'otherness' itself or as privation or above all as non-being, he would have been able to

state the tragic situation of this otherness of the individual soul more satisfactorily. It is the traditional association of this otherness or non-being with matter which gets in his way." (Rist 1974 p.504, my underlining)

The very fact that Plotinus has insisted on the existence of matter and closely associated matter with *heterotēs*, absolute evil and *mē on* should make untenable Rist's attempt to build up a psychology of evil totally on its own because the concept of matter is clearly an "extra-psychological" concept, never susceptible to psychological reduction; Rist's psychological approach towards evil is based on a "what if" which was never accepted by Plotinus.

- 1.8.15-

1.8.15 does not formulate any clear position against the thesis that matter is primary evil probably because of the effort by Plotinus in 1.8.14, but the content implies the challenge embodied in the reply by Theodorus in the *Theaetetus*' texts in 1.8.6-7. The position is that matter and evil can be eliminated once for all (cp. 1.8.11.[3]: "some lines of argument which claim to abolish matter altogether"). One does not wish to say that this amounts to an 'argument' but the intention is clearly to deny that matter is evil. 1.8.15, furthermore, has the function of providing a conclusion for 1.8 as a whole and this will inevitably bring out a more apodeictic and rhetorical style.

1.8.15.[1] asks the audience to refer to what has been discussed for the necessary existence of evil. 1.8.15.[2] then repeats the position Socrates adopts in *Theaetetus* 176ab that good and evil are mutually implicated and without either one of them the other would perish as well, and with this comes the consequence that all practical conduct would have no criterion to follow. 1.8.15.[3], following 1.8.15.[2], envisages an axiological spectrum with good and evil at the two extremes and a mixture of them in between. Within this spectrum there is a kind of momentum: that which has a greater share of evil will tend to become more evil until it becomes "itself totally evil," and *vice versa*. With this ontological and objective disposition of good and evil one can come to the evil which is in soul (1.8.15.[4]). This evil is incurred when soul abandons its own hypostatic nature and comes into contact with matter (1.8.15.[5]). On the other hand, if soul preserves its own nature then all the evils associated with embodiment, such as desires, sorrows, passions and fears will never have happened (1.8.15.[6]-[8]) for such a kind of malaise is due to bodily composition. To counter this downward tendency soul has to turn the other way, to *Nous* (1.8.15.[9]). 1.8.15.[10] concludes in a very elaborate simile:

evil is not only evil *simpliciter* but a *sterēsis* of good, that is, it has to rely on good to have any significance and thereby one has to see evil from the perspective of good; by means of this perspective evil will be understood as a kind of good - however limited and minimal it could be - and so it, as fettered by golden chains and "hidden by them", will not appear charmless to the gods and, presumably, to men as well; this will remind us, when we see evil, of good and we will understand the divine providence of the cosmos in its beauty. This is a Plotinian allegory of pro-cosmism at its highest point.

[1] Translation I.8.15.1-3:

If anyone says that matter does not exist, he must be shown the necessity of its existence from our discussions about matter, where the subject is treated more fully.

Commentary:

I.8.15 as a whole is a summary, but there is some attempt to link the more metaphysical discussion, which has been developed in I.8.1.-14., to its more practical aspects.

The thesis that "if matter does not exist then..." has been broached in I.8.11.6. Both H. & S. and Armstrong have referred the our discussions about matter to II.4. and Harder<sup>2</sup> includes III.6.6.ff. (Harder<sup>2</sup> Vb p.417). This is an undue restriction since those two places are not the only treatises where the existence of evil has been discussed. I would like to include all the discussions on evil before I.8.

[2] Translation I.8.15.3-9:

But if anyone says that there is no evil at all in the nature of things, he must also abolish the good and have no object to aim at, and, for that matter, no aiming or avoidance or intelligence, of the evil: for aiming is at the good and avoidance, of the evil, and intelligence and practical wisdom deal with good and evil, and are a good in themselves.

Commentary:

Cp. VI.7.23.10-7, quoted at the end of the commentary on I.8.6.

Plotinus' aim in this passage is to develop a practical ethics based on metaphysics. The mutual implication of absolute good and absolute evil on the one hand, and secondary good and secondary evil on the other, have been proved in I.8.6 and I.8.7. It is therefore proper for Plotinus to say that without evil the meaning of good would be vacuous (he must also abolish the good) because the existence of evil is necessary for the divine economy of the cosmos (in the nature of things). Cp. I.8.11.8 and III.3.7.3ff..

Because Plotinus has seen the problem of primary good and primary evil as a problem related to substance (*on*) and non-substance (*mē on*), the desire (*orexis*) for the goodness of something is a search for ontological authenticity and the avoidance (*ekklisis*) of wickedness is an escape from its non-substantiality. To abolish the distinction between goodness and wickedness is to abolish *on* and *mē on* altogether because there is no *on* and no *mē on* but a mixture of *on* and *mē on*, but how then can we know that it is a mixture of *on* and *mē on* without being able to distinguish them? Therefore to assert the distinction between goodness and wickedness is an assertion for the distinction between *on* and *mē on*; also based on this distinction are the

*logismos* and *logismos nothos* related respectively to *on* and *mē on*. The *logoi*, including intelligence and practical wisdom (*hē de noēsis kai hē phronēsis*), deal with good (and indirectly with evil, cp. I.8.1.[5]) and are identical with good and therefore are a good in themselves. The identification of the good (an axiological concept), *on* (an ontological concept) and *logos* (an epistemological concept) is complete, and therefore an abolition of the distinction between good and evil has the far-reaching implication of the abolition of reality and the abolition of the way of knowing it and these, in turn, all the criteria for practical wisdom.

Harder<sup>2</sup> has reminded us that the aiming (*orexin*) and the avoidance (*ekkleisin*) are Stoic expressions and quotes Epictetus (Harder<sup>2</sup> Vb p.417).

[3] Translation I.8.15.9-12:

So there must be good, and unmixed good, and that which is a mixture of bad and good, when it has a larger share of evil making itself totally evil, when it has a smaller share tending, because the evil is less, to the good.

Commentary:

We adopt Harder<sup>2</sup>'s *kakon* instead of *agathon* (H. & S. and Armstrong) in I.9 (and so the "unmixed evil" instead of the unmixed good) not only because this change makes the mixture of bad and good read more smoothly but also because the contrast between good and evil and "aiming at" and "avoidance of" them has been the main theme in I.8.15.[2]; the change of text would maintain this contrast.

If the consequence of abolishing the existence of evil is so far reaching, then it can be realised that evil must co-exist with good. Continuing I.8.15.[2] Plotinus begins to conceive the whole of reality as a spectrum with good and unmixed "evil" as the two extremes (and two directions) and what comes between them as a mixture of bad and good (*to de memigmenon ēdē ek kakou kai agathou*). Even though this conceptual scheme is static, for those who experience evil and good the consequences are dynamic: lesser evil tends to give way to greater evil and then to absolute evil, and *vice versa* in the direction of good. This tendency to see degrees in evil and goodness is in conformity to the tendency to see degrees of *on* (and of *mē on*) in Platonism in general.

Armstrong's translation of the key passage: when it has a larger share of evil making itself totally evil (*kai pleionos tou kakou metalabon ēde kai auto suntelesan ekeinōi <ho> en tōi holōi kakon*) seems rather cryptic and inadequate because it does not bring out the kind of dynamism Plotinus tries to convey, especially the *suntelesan*. A better translation might be this: "that which had already a greater share of evil ended up with the [kind of] evil which was total" (that is, absolute evil; my underlining).

[4] Translation I.8.15.12-3:

What, after all, is the evil of the soul?

[5] Translation I.8.15.13-4:

What soul would have it if it did not come into contact with a lower nature?

Commentary:

These two passages are reminders of the extended discussion on the lapse of soul in I.8.14.[5]ff.

I.8.15.[3] has suggested that once soul has become a secondary evil the evil nature - secondary and a mixture - it has obtained would gather momentum and become primary evil. What, Plotinus asks, would it become if soul keeps away from the contamination of matter and the consequent fragmentation and preserves its hypostatic integrity? Most of I.8.15.[6]-[7] will try to answer the question put in [3]; [4] is self-evident and somewhat rhetorical and therefore receives no further elaboration except the brief answer at the beginning of [6].

[6] Translation I.8.15.14-8;

If it did not there would be no desires or sorrows or passions or fears; for fears are for the composite nature, dreading its dissolution; and sorrows and pains belong to it when it is been dissolved; desires arise when something interferes with the composition or when one is planning a remedy to prevent its being interfered with.

Commentary:

Soul's contact with "a lower nature" (*tēs physeōs tēs cheironos*) is soul's descent into matter. This descent is the second and cosmological descent of soul we have mentioned in our commentary on I.8.14.[14]. (In its first descent the soul brings out matter but there is no contact yet.) This second descent brings about the mixture of matter with soul (*to de*



*memigmenon ēdē ek kakou kai agathou*) and thus the embodiment of soul. This means the descended soul becomes a composite.

Plotinus has enumerated several kinds of secondary evils: desires, sorrows, passions and fears. (cp. I.1.1.1ff.; also Plato's *Laws* 864) All these secondary evils arise from the problem of how to preserve the *sustasis* of this composite; presumably this implies that with a simple nature, such as soul in the hypostatic reality, no such evils would come about.

[7] Translation I.8.15.18-21:

Imagination is from a stroke of something irrational from outside; and the soul is accessible to the stroke because of what in it is not undivided.

Commentary:

Cp. II.3.8.15ff..

Imagination is from a stroke of something irrational from outside (*Phantasia de plēgēi alogou exōthen*). cp. *tais amudrais phantasiis* in I.8.14.[1]. The susceptibility of the embodied soul to the external impact is attributed to the composite nature of the descended soul. I.8.15.[6]-[7] seems to point in the same direction in Plotinus' criticism of embodiment, that is, this embodiment makes the descended soul material and thus liable to a materialistic analysis. On the other hand, the undescended soul, uncontaminated by matter, is impassible to the external influence.

[8] Translation I.8.15.21-3:

**The impulse towards intellect is a different kind of thing; all that is necessary here is to be with intellect and established in it, without inclination to what is worse.**

Commentary:

I.8.15.[6]-[7] is on the consequence of soul's descent and I.8.15.[8] returns to the pristine condition of an undescended soul in its upwards look to *Nous*. The same contrast has been tried in I.8.11.[7] and [8].

When the undivided nature of soul has become divided because of embodiment, it becomes susceptible to external influence and worried about the external addition (*prosthēkē*) which drags it downwards (cp. I.8.14.[5]). The composite, because of its material nature, can become more fragmented, and thus from a composite of matter and soul the composite can degenerate into a total fragmentation and pure matter and evil (cp. I.8.15.[3]): it has an inclination to what is worse. On the other hand, if the soul does not descend, then it will preserve its hypostatic integrity by its impulse towards intellect (*hē pros noun orexis*). This is the *theoria* of soul proper which confirms its hypostatic condition while, on the other hand, the productive *physis* in its embodiment has lost this capacity of return to higher reality and can only go downwards.

[9] Translation I.8.15.23-8:

**But because of the power and nature of good, evil is not only evil; since it must necessarily**

appear, it is bound in a sort of beautiful fetters, as some prisoners are in chains of gold, and hidden by them, so that it may not appear in its charmlessness to the gods, and men may be able not always to look at evil, but even when they do look at it, may be in company with images of beauty to remind them.

Commentary:

Cp. II.4.5.16-8.

The nature of evil is parasitic on the nature of goodness just as *mē on* is parasitic on *on*, and this means that evil and *mē on* do not have any independence apart from good and *on*; they have to be expressed through a *sterēsis* of their positive counterparts.

The basis for the whole theory of good and evil in Plotinus is thus the plenitude of *on* and good and this plenitude is the power and nature of good. As goodness has been mentioned together with beauty in I.8.2.[3] and [9] and in I.8.13.[8] and [12]-[13], evil, as privation of goodness, has to assume a false kind of beauty. Plotinus says that evil in its appearance is bound in a sort of beautiful fetters (*perilēphthen desmois tisi kalois*), as some prisoners are in chains of gold, and hidden by them (*hoia desmōtai tines chrysōi, kruptetai toutois*). The beautiful and golden mean the effect which the assumption of the language of goodness - the only language evil has - can bring to evil; its effect means the preponderance of the power and nature of good over evil as the metaphors of fetters (cp. *Apocryphon of John* 55.9; Zandee p.19) and chains indicate.

Why does evil have to assume a false kind of goodness? Plotinus answers that, from the divine and human perspective, it may not appear in its charmlessness to the gods, and men may be

able not always to look at evil. What can this mean? The reason why Plotinus has evil assume a false kind of beauty is because evil is ontologically dependent on good (and beauty) and cannot exist on its own terms, that is, it is a *sterēsis* of goodness and not an active force; why this should have involved problems of perspectives? This can only be explained by Plotinus' faith in theodicy and beauty of the cosmos. The cosmos contains evils but all of these are woven into a holistic picture where all kinds of evil are 'justified' in their advancement of its quest for beauty and harmony. (see 4.3) This means that with this assumption of the language of *on* and goodness the cosmos becomes a rational entity, and evil and its charmless consequences are necessarily reinterpreted and integrated into this complete picture. The cosmos is thus an expression of rationality itself to the hypostatic gods, and is worthy of hypostatic reality because of this rationality. In other words, the attempt to integrate the anhypostatic reality with the hypostatic reality is a successful one and evil is constitutive of the divine economy. On the other hand, despite persistent and pervasive suffering, human beings might derive from the rationality of the cosmos some understanding of the nature of evil and its general purpose in advancing of this cause and thus eke some comforts therefrom. The term *always (æe/)* is suggestive because it means that human suffering brought out by evil is a regular part of reality but can be reduced by a rationalisation.

it may not appear charmless to the gods means that evils, both of the secondary and the primary kinds, are now susceptible to the interpretation based on *on* and goodness and therefore evils can be said to be an extension of hypostatic reality (gods = hypostatic reality) rather than a kind of reality incommensurable with it.

Men may not be able to look at evil means that this rationalisation of evil would make its appearance in the cosmos acceptable because evil can now be translated into the language of goodness and being and become a necessary part of the divine economy.

Even when they do look at it, [it] may be in company with images of beauty to remind them. For human beings evil, with its consequences, is a regular part of reality but by means of rationalisation of evil - by looking at it as *sterēsis* of goodness - evil begins to assume a positive significance in the divine economy of the cosmos and this is the reason why evil, with its consequences, is in company with images of beauty. These images of beauty can help remind (*eis anamnesin*) human beings. But of what? Presumably of the rationality and beauty of the cosmos as a whole. The *anamnesis* here is suggestive and is a clear echo of Plato's *anamnesis* of forms. In I.8.9.[6] we are told that we can know the secondary evil by its *ellepsis* of goodness and this means that by an understanding of evils and the distortion of embodied forms we can have an indirect knowledge of the fully realised forms. This is Platonic.

I have treated this passage as if it were an allegory but my interpretation is based on what the rest of I.8 has said. This whole passage expresses a very ambiguous, or ambivalent, feeling of Plotinus with regard to the existence of evil in the cosmos. On the one hand, it recognises that evil is an integral part of the cosmos while, on the other hand, he suggests that these vices are under the disguise of beautiful fetters and chains of gold. This disguise means the fleeting appearance of forms which can never "mitigate the notion of matter as intrinsically evil; for [if they] did then matter... would cease to be itself." (O'Brien 1981 p.119) What this amounts to is, at most, a justification of evil but evil remains there and suffering continues although men may be able not always to look at evil. (my underlining) Plotinus cannot conceal his sorrow on evil's existence and human's condition; this is his side of personal sensitivity. His attempt to justify - not to rectify - is a revelation of the burden of Greek philosophical tradition - pro-cosmism - he has inherited from Plato. The extravagant "allegory" of prisoners (symbolising evils of all sorts?) bound by beautiful fetters and golden chains (symbolising the rationalisation of evil?) is a most appropriate finale to the enterprise Plotinus has defined in I.8.1: how to incorporate anhypostatic evil into the hypostatic reality, which I have at the

beginning of commentary defined as the theodical objective of Plotinus in I.8. The fact that the conceptual framework of reality, because of this incorporation, has to be extended and diluted in its purity (that is an-hypostatic reality is after all not non-hypostatic), with the dire consequence that evil becomes necessarily constitutive of divine economy, is not a complete triumph for Plotinus. The ambivalent and ambiguous feeling behind this analogy or allegory should add some poignancy to the rational and largely confident arguments Plotinus has given in I.8. After all, it is a paradise that was lost (because of the presence of evils) and is then retrieved (with evils rationalised) but will never be the same (because now reality is not purely hypostatic but includes anhypostatic evil).

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