

Plotinus on *Logos*

Draft

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I begin with Plotinus' basic understanding of what it means to philosophize "Platonically." For Plotinus, a Platonist maintains that a complete or satisfactory solution to any of the vast array of philosophical problems inherited from "antiquity" requires that the *explanans* ultimately include the hierarchically ordered principles of the One, Intellect, and Soul. So, to speak more precisely, any problem that concerns reality "below" Soul or individual souls will require adducing all three principles; any problem about intellects or their activities will require only the first two. The first principle of all, the One is, uniquely, self-explanatory. Therefore, it is not a legitimate *explanandum*.

According to Plotinus, nature (φύσις) is "a soul, the offspring of a prior soul with a more powerful life."¹ This prior soul is the soul of the universe, the "sister" of our individual souls.² So, in order to address the philosophical problems that from the beginning Greek philosophers raised about nature one must, as a Platonist, adduce Soul, Intellect, and the One.³ The manner of their adduction is subtle and complex, for the principles are themselves are a *causal* hierarchy, with the first principle having a universal causal scope, and the second and third having increasingly restricted causal scope. One of the ways in which this integrated causal hierarchy is represented by Plotinus is to say, roughly, that a lower principle is a λόγος of a higher.

In this paper, I shall offer an interpretation of "y is the *logos* of x" in Plotinus' *Enneads*. I shall focus primarily on those passages wherein "x" and "y" have ontological referents, though I shall also have a bit to say about those passages wherein "x" and "y" are used semantically or epistemologically. In the first section, I shall offer my overall interpretation. In the second section, I shall turn first to those texts that most clearly illustrate the thesis I am going to defend and then to those texts that are more problematic.

I.

I claim that "y is the *logos* of x" means either: "x is virtually y" or "y is virtually x." I am using the word "virtually" as a technical term the general meaning of which I

¹ See 3.8.4.15-16.

² See 4.3.6.14. It is not I think entirely captious to point out that this makes nature our niece or at least our relative. Keeping this in mind, one should then be less inclined to think of Plotinus' ambivalence about sensible reality as a kind of alienation. It also helps explain his account of συμπαθεία. It is matter, not nature, for which we have no affinity.

³ When Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 12.7.1072b14-15, argued that the heavens and nature depend on the first principle of all, he was expressing the Platonic position that nature is not self-explanatory, even though it is a principle within a specific kind of science, that is, the science of things that have a principle of motion and standstill in themselves. Plotinus is in agreement with Aristotle that nature is not unqualifiedly self-explanatory. His disagreement is with Aristotle's account of the nature of the ultimate *explanans*.

shall try to convey by examples: (1) "white" light is virtually all the colors of the spectrum; (2) a function is virtually all its "values," that is, its domain and range; (3) an entity is virtually all of its epistemic (as opposed to non-epistemic) appearances; (4) the conclusion of a valid deductive argument is virtually in the premises of that argument; (5) a self-identical Platonic Form is virtually all of its participating instances. All of these examples are intended to convey the idea that virtuality is an ontological concept. Example (3) is no exception. An epistemic appearance is how an entity appears to a cognizer such that on the basis of that appearance the cognizer would typically acquire a true belief about that entity. A non-epistemic appearance is, therefore, one which would produce a false belief. The entity is virtually the appearance itself, not the cognition of the appearance.⁴ If x is virtually y, then, conversely, y may be "reduced" to x. This of course does not mean that y is nothing but x. From a Platonic point of view, even an Eleatic could not mean in this sense that "all is one."

The meaning of "virtually" in "x is virtually y" must not be understood as equivalent to "potentially." There is little likelihood, I suppose, of anyone mistaking "virtually" for "potentially" where "potentially" indicates a passive potency, but there is considerable risk that "potentially" be taken to indicate active potency.⁵ When Plotinus says that the One is δύναμις τῶν πάντων, which I render as "virtually all things," he does not mean that the One has an active potency, since the One has no potency whatsoever.⁶ Although the word δύναμις is of course used by Plotinus to indicate both passive and active potency, the meaning of δύναμις as "virtuality" is prior. Thus, it is owing to the fact that x is virtually y that instances or cases of x can be said to have the active potency for producing something in instances or cases of y, namely, that which x is virtually.

The virtuality of the One in particular and virtuality generally as an ontological concept in Plotinus may be further clarified if we compare it with the medieval Scholastic claim that God is *virtualiter et eminenter* all things. Because the One is absolutely simple, it cannot be *eminenter* all things. It is Intellect which is all things eminently or paradigmatically. By contrast, the Christian God is both, and this is thought by Scholastics generally not to compromise God's simplicity. Much of the complexity in Plotinus' metaphysical system can be traced to this "division of labor" between the One and Intellect, and in addition, Soul. As will emerge only in part in the following discussion, virtuality and eminence cannot be completely separated. So, Intellect and Soul are virtually other things even though at least the former is eminently all things; and the One "in a way" eminently all things.

⁴ If one were to insist that there is no need for an ontological category to be imposed between entities and the cognition of them, then I would reply that such a view undercuts the possibility of there being entities, at least insofar as these are three-dimensional perduring solids. As such, every entity must be distinct from the appearance of it and also every cognition of that appearance must be distinct from the appearance.

⁵ See, for example, the fairly typical remark of Edgar Früchtel, *Weltentwurf und Logos* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1970), 21, n. 47: "Die zu wahrende Integrität des Einem bedingt daher die Aussage, dass das Eine als Prinzip der Vielen die Dinge in sich als ungeschiedene trägt. Erst auf der zweiten Stufe werden diese Dinge durch die rationale Formkraft, den Logos, geschieden und damit verwirklicht. Im Einem sind sie sozusagen noch Potenz, obgleich dieses höchste Verwirklichung in seiner Art ist."

⁶ See III 8. 10, 1; IV 8. 6, 11; V 1. 7, 12; V 4. 1, 23-6; V 4. 2, 38; VI 9. 5, 36; VI 7. 32, 31. Armstrong typically renders δύναμις as "productive power." I fail to see how the word "power" excludes all potency.

If the *ordo essendi* is that x is virtually y, then the *ordo cognoscendi* is typically from y to x. Specifically, the cognition of x from y is an abductive inference from effect to cause where the cause is a paradigm. The logical relation between x and y is in principle one-many. Hence, cognition is always a unifying process. The identity and unicity of the first principle of all reality and the endpoint of cognition is a consequence of this. And just as the first principle of all as a principle stands outside of —I mean is really distinct from—that of which it is a principle, so the endpoint of cognition stands outside of any real object of cognition. The One is "in a way" (ὅτιον) all of that which it virtually is and is "in a way" knowable. Every x that is virtually every y is "in a way" y, but not of course in the same "way" that the One is virtually all things. The last point is easy to see on the basis of the immediate inference from "the One is virtually all things" to "the One is virtually y." But since the One is not identical with x, that is, an intelligible paradigm, then the way in which the One is virtually y is not identical with the way in which x is virtually y. The two virtualities—that of the One and that of every x that is virtually every y—are accounted for by the instrumentality of y (or the ordered series of ys) in the One's activity. Thus in the simplest case, the One and Intellect are virtually Soul. Intellect is virtually Soul because its intelligible contents or οὐσία for short are in Soul though not as they are in Intellect, and the One is virtually Soul because its oneness is in Soul not in the way oneness is either in Intellect or in the One; oneness is in Soul through the intermediation of Intellect.⁷ Incidentally, it is also owing to the two virtualities—the One and its instruments—that the qualification "insofar as it is possible for it" is added to any y participating in any x that is virtually it.⁸ Obviously, the mere fact of y participating in x does not require the qualification; the fact that y has being owing to the One means that its participation in x is "insofar as it is possible for it," that is, insofar as it is possible for that sort of being. The causality of the One is thus clearly prior to and a condition for the causality exercised by Intellect.

If y is the λόγος of x, and z is the λόγος of y, does it follow that z is the λόγος of x? No, virtuality is not a transitive relation like "greater than." The relation of virtually is a one-many relation. If one among that many is virtually something else, then that is owing to its own identity. That something can have an identity over and above being the λόγος of that which is virtually it, is owing ultimately to the One. The canonical Platonic problem of deriving a many from a one does not even begin to be solved unless the many can have an identity other than as merely the λόγοι of the one.

If x is virtually y, then x and y are "the same" (ὅμοιον), *not* "identical" (ταὐτόν). Because they are the same, the being and hence the oneness of this sameness is distinct from or non-identical with the being of x or the being of y. In particular, and recurring to our simplest case, if the οὐσία of Intellect is in Soul, then the being of this οὐσία is not identical with the being of Intellect. If it were identical, then Intellect would not have the complexity that distinguishes it from the first principle of all. Because the being of the οὐσία in Intellect is not identical with the being of Intellect itself, the presence of this οὐσία without the presence of Intellect is possible even if the former is present via the instrumentality of Soul.

⁷ I am not here forgetting that "one" is not the name of the One's οὐσία. Let "one" stand for whatever it is that the One is uniquely.

⁸ Cf. 6.4.11.6-8; 6.5.3.14-16; 6.5.11.28-30; 6.9.7.5-6.

II

I shall now consider a series of passages illustrative of the above thesis, moving from the clearer to the more obscure.

I. 5.1.6.45-6. (Cf. 5.1.3.8-10; 5.1.7.42; 6.4.11.16): οἷον καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ λόγος νοῦ καὶ ἐνέργειά τις, ὥσπερ αὐτὸς ἐκεῖνου. ("For example, Soul is a λόγος of Intellect, and a kind of activity [of Intellect], just as [Intellect is a λόγος and a kind of activity of the One]").

As I have defined λόγος, there is no ground for denying that Intellect is the λόγος of the One.⁹ For the One is virtually all things and Intellect is the first product of the One. The passage gives us the crucial piece of information that a λόγος is a kind of activity.¹⁰ Specifically, it is the "external activity" of that which is virtually it (5.1.3.8-9; cf. 5.4.2.27-30; 6.2.22.26-8). Because the **logoj** is a kind of activity, its own virtuality in addition to its eminence is secured. This ontological dynamism reveals the limitation of my analogy of a function and its domain and range. It also suggests that the proof that y is the λόγος of x is just the proof of x having an external activity.¹¹ I take it that "external activity" is equivalent minimally to "an actualization of x that is really distinct from x" where the real distinction may be either minor or major.

I do not take the words at 6.7.17.41-2: Εἰ δ' ἦν ἐκεῖνος [the One] εἶδος, ὁ νοῦς ἦν ἄν λόγος ("If [the One] were form, Intellect would be λόγος ") as constituting a denial of the above. For Intellect is a λόγος of the One in the sense of being the external activity of it. What these two texts imply is that "x is virtually y" does not mean necessarily that x is a form of which y is an instance.¹² Yet, the inseparability of virtuality and eminence is evident in this text.

The above passage associates λόγος with activity (ἐνέργεια), the activity "from" (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας), not the activity "of" (τῆς οὐσίας).¹³ Specifically, the λόγος seems to be the intelligible content of or in the "external" activity. Intelligible

⁹ See John Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 84-5, for this objection. Also, see Agnès Pigler, "De la possibilité ou non d'un *logos* hénologique," in *Logos et langage chez Plotin et avant Plotin*. Edited by Michel Fattal (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), 189-209, for a nuanced defense of Rist's position. Cf. 5.3.16.16ff where Plotinus in arguing for the necessity of a perfectly simple first principle of all, maintains that part of what this principle must explain is why λόγος comes from that which is beyond λόγος. Cf. 3.3.5.16-17 (quoted *infra* n. 24) and 6.8.14.28 on the One as πατήρ λόγου.

¹⁰ I think the καί here should be understood as epexegetic, but even if it is not, the connection between λόγος and ἐνέργεια is amply developed elsewhere. See, e.g., 5.1.3.8-9.

¹¹ See 5.1.6.44-5; 5.4.2.27-30; 6.2.22.26-8.

¹² Cf. 3.2.2.36-7: Ὁ μὲν γὰρ νοητὸς μόνον λόγος, καὶ οὐκ ἄν γένοιτο ἄλλος μόνον λόγος: ("For the intelligible [world] is only **logoj**, and there could not be another which is only **logoj**").

¹³ Cf. 4.8.6.8-12; 5.1.6.30-48; 5.3.7.23-4; 5.4.2.27-33; 6.7.18.5-6; 6.7.21.4-6; 6.7.40.21-4.

content is always associated with form (εἶδος or μορφή) as opposed to matter.¹⁴ Intelligible content uncompromised by matter is what Intellect is eternally cognitively identical with and what the One is virtually. Intelligible content progressively compromised or occluded by matter is what we find in the sensible world. The modes of cognition in relation to such content are themselves images of the primary mode of cognition found in Intellect. Still, to cognize sensible sameness in difference and the underlying necessary identity of things that are the same, or, in other words, the λόγος of what we encounter with our senses, is to have an intimation of the One.¹⁵ Neither acts of cognition nor the existence of things cognizable are possible without the causality of the One.

II. 5.1.5.13-14: Ὁ οὖν ἐκεῖ λεγόμενος ἀριθμὸς καὶ ἡ δυὰς λόγοι καὶ νοῦς ("What is, then, called number and the Dyad there [viz., the intelligible world] are λόγοι and Intellect").

"Number" here of course refers to that which is numbered, not to that which numbers or measures, that is, to "substantial" number, not "quantitative" number.¹⁶ Insofar as we may assume that Plotinus is here trying to follow Plato, especially in locating numbers cosmologically, we may suppose that the numbers that Aristotle says Plato identified with Forms are not integers but rather ideal ratios, or, more exactly, constitutive formulae of ratios of the elements that go to make up all the things in the world.¹⁷ To know a Form is then to see not an infinite array of ratios or even an infinite array of ratios of ratios, but to see discrete *ideal* ratios of ratios. As Plato says in *Philebus* (65A), "symmetry" (συμμετρία), along with truth and beauty are the forms in which we "catch" the Good, where "catch" is obviously a metaphor for cognitive achievement.¹⁸ Just focusing on symmetry, the understanding or knowledge of it is nothing but cognition of one manifestation of Good, where "manifestation" refers to the converse of virtuality. The symmetry that is, for example, virtue, and consists in the right combination of the elements going to make up the affections of the soul, is not knowable (that is, available for cognition as a distinct οὐσία) unless its distinctness or unity is

¹⁴ Cf. 1.6.2.14-17; 1.6.3.17; 3.2.12.1; 3.8.2.25; 4.7.2.24; 5.9.6.17-18. Also, see Venanz Schubert, *Pronoia und Logos* (München/Salzburg: Verlag Anton Pustet, 1968), 54, "...innerhalb der Abstiegsbewegung stellt er [λόγος] in der Tat zunächst den Inhalt dar, der beim Formakt übermittelt wird."

¹⁵ Cf. 6.8.15.33-6: Ῥίζα γὰρ λόγου παρ' αὐτῆς καὶ εἰς τοῦτο λήγει τὰ πάντα, ὥσπερ φυτοῦ μεγίστου κατὰ λόγον ζῶντος ἀρχὴ καὶ βάσις, μένουσα γὰρ αὐτὴ ἐφ' ἑαυτῆς, διδοῦσα δὲ κατὰ λόγον τῷ φυτῷ, ὃν ἔλαβεν, εἶναι ("For [the One] is the root of λόγος from itself, and all things end up in this; it is like principle and foundation of the greatest tree living according to λόγος, which remains itself by itself, giving to the tree its being according to λόγος which it received").

¹⁶ Cf. Aristotle, *Physics* 4.11.219b5-6 for the distinction and 6.4.16 and 6.6.9 for Plotinus' parallel distinction between substantial and quantitative number.

¹⁷ Cf. *Timaeus* 53B5 where the Demiurge is said to have implanted intelligibility in the preexistence chaos of pseudo-elements by giving it "shapes and numbers." The "shapes" are the continuous quantities of the five regular solids and the "numbers" are the discrete quantities that are ratios or formulae for creating the actual elements and the things made out of these. For Aristotle's testimony see *Metaphysics* 1.6.987b18-21; cf. 1.9.991b10; 12.8.1073a18-19.

¹⁸ Cf. *Phaedo* 66A3; *Theaetetus* 199E4, etc.

provided to it. And the name of the first principle of all, "the Good" or "the One" indicates that this is exactly what that principle does. If we did not posit such a first principle, there would be no way of knowing which among the infinite array of ratios the ideal ones were. There would in that case be no ideal ones.

So, Intellect contains the intelligible structures which are virtually the quasi-intelligible structures in the sensible world which participate in these.

III. 2.3.17.1-7: Πότερα δὲ οἱ λόγοι οὗτοι οἱ ἐν ψυχῇ νοήματα; Ἄλλὰ πῶς κατὰ τὰ νοήματα ποιήσει; Ὁ γὰρ λόγος ἐν ὑλῇ ποιεῖ, καὶ τὸ ποιοῦν φυσικῶς οὐ νόησις οὐδὲ ὄρασις, ἀλλὰ δύναμις τρεπτικὴ τῆς ὑλῆς, οὐκ εἰδυῖα ἀλλὰ δρώσα μόνον, οἷον τύπον καὶ σχῆμα ἐν ὕδατι [ὥσπερ κύκλος], ἄλλου ἐνδόντος εἰς τοῦτο τῆς φυτικῆς δυνάμεως καὶ γεννητικῆς λεγομένης τὸ ποιεῖν. [("Are these λόγοι which are in Soul thoughts? But then how will it make things in accord with thoughts? For λόγος produces in matter, and this natural producing is neither thinking nor vision, but a modifying power in matter, which does not know but only acts, like an impression or reflection in water, there being something else different from what is called the power of growth and generation which gives it this power").

As this passage goes on to explain, Soul receives from Intellect the λόγοι that it transmits to the soul of the universe and to this soul's "sibling" (see below passage VII). The former will alone produce nature; the latter refers to the succession of individual souls. All soul mediates the intelligible principles which are virtually what Soul contains.¹⁹ Thoughts are indeed images or representation of intelligible reality, but they are not λόγοι. Unlike thoughts, λόγοι are productive in matter, imitating the Demiurge or Intellect.²⁰ Thus, their productivity is an imitation of the paradigmatic ἐνέργεια.²¹ Since Plotinus elsewhere calls embodied thoughts τύποι, the τύποι which are λόγοι are evidently different from embodied thoughts. In Intellect, there are of course no τύποι of νοήματα. The principal difference between the two types of τύποι is that the subject of the latter can also be self-consciously aware of the presence of the content of the thought.²² Thus, nature is the non-thinking expression of Soul, brought into being via the soul of the universe. The paradigms of the parts of nature, of course, are eternally present in Intellect. The soul of the universe, therefore, did not have the option of producing, say, bears or rose bushes that think. We, that is, embodied human beings, know of these apparently necessary constraints, however, only empirically. It is important

¹⁹ See Michel Fattal, *Logos et image chez Plotin* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998), 23-7.

²⁰ Plotinus is here drawing the opposite conclusion to the hypothetical claim and its unacceptable conclusion in the previous chapter (16.19ff), namely, that Soul's λόγοι are acts of knowing.

²¹ Cf. 5.9.6.10-13: Καὶ αἱ τῶν σπερμάτων δὲ δυνάμεις εἰκόνα φέρουσι τοῦ λεγομένου [ὁ νοῦς]: ἐν γὰρ τῷ ὅλῳ ἀδιάκριτα πάντα, καὶ οἱ λόγοι ὥσπερ ἐν ἐνὶ κέντρῳ. ("The powers of seeds realize an image of what has just been said [that Intellect is all things together and also not together]; for all the parts of [the powers, or the λόγοι (cf. 15-16)] are undistinguished in the whole, and the λόγοι are as if in one center").

²² On embodied thoughts as τύποι, see 5.3.2.12; 5.3.12.19, etc. On the absence of τύποι in Intellect, see 5.5.2.2.

to emphasize in this regard that for Plotinus there must be necessary constraints as part of the intelligible architecture of reality, and that our inability to access these directly and hence to be certain of them does not in the slightest undermine their necessity. That is, the argument for there being such constraints is ontological resting on the paradigm-image structure of reality, whereas epistemological limitations are determined independently.

IV.4.3.5.8-10: Οὕτω τοίνυν καὶ ψυχὰι ἐφεξῆς καθ' ἕκαστον νοῦν ἐξηρητημέναι, λόγοι νῶν οὔσαι καὶ ἐξειλιγμέναι μᾶλλον ἢ ἐκεῖνοι ("So it is, too, with souls which depend in order on a particular intellect, and are λόγοι of intellects more unfolded than they").

Just as Soul is a λόγος of Intellect, so certain particular souls are λόγοι of particular intellects.²³ Obviously, these are souls which possess intellects. Leaving aside the vexed question of Forms of particulars, these souls differ "in their characters" (ἐν τοῖς ἤθεσι), in the "operations of their acts of discursive reasoning" (ἐν τοῖς τῆς διανοιάς ἔργοις), and even owing to the results of their past lives (4.3.8.7-9). In what way are we to suppose that the peculiarities of a particular soul constitute a λόγος of a particular intellect? Perhaps there is some light to be thrown on this problem by the claim that "in general while Intellect is all the Forms, each intellect is each Form."²⁴ For example, if the particular intellect of Socrates is identical with all the Forms in its eternal knowing of them, then the peculiarities of Socrates' particular soul (apart from those that are owing strictly to embodiment) certainly constitute a λόγος of the intellect of Socrates.²⁵ I would be inclined to minimize peculiarities which are *not* owing to embodiment, thereby leaving the disembodied intellect as a locus of intellection indistinguishable from every other except numerically.²⁶ Nevertheless, Plotinus does at least entertain the possibility that the peculiarities owing to embodiment are themselves

²³ See 4.3.5.8-10: Οὕτω τοίνυν καὶ ψυχὰι ἐφεξῆς καθ' ἕκαστον νοῦν ἐξηρητημέναι, λόγοι νῶν οὔσαι καὶ ἐξειλιγμέναι μᾶλλον ἢ ἐκεῖνοι ("So it is, too, with souls which depend in order on a particular intellect, and are **logoi** of intellects").

²⁴ 5.9.8.3-4: Καὶ ὅλος μὲν ὁ νοῦς τὰ πάντα εἶδη, ἕκαστον δὲ εἶδος νοῦς ἕκαστος. This line is translated by Armstrong thus: "And Intellect as a whole is all the Forms, and each individual Form is an individual intellect." This translation seems to me to be incorrect, making Plotinus say something that is both absurd and in direct conflict with Plotinus' apparent limitation of Forms of individuals to individual human intellects.

²⁵ See the interesting discussion of this problem by Dmitri Nikulin, "Unity and Individuation of the Soul in Plotinus" in *Studi sull' anima in Plotino*. Edited by Riccardo Chiaradonna (Napoli, 2005), 275-304.

²⁶ Cf. 4.3.5.6-8: ἐπεὶ κάκει οἱ νόες οὐκ ἀπολοῦνται, ὅτι μὴ εἰσι σωματικῶς μεμερισμένοι, εἰς ἓν, ἀλλὰ μένει ἕκαστον ἐν ἑτερότητι ἔχον τὸ αὐτὸ ὃ ἐστὶν εἶναι ("since intellects in the intelligible world are not dissolved into a unity because they are corporally divided, but each remains one it is otherness, having self-identical being"). If, as some suppose, this passage is an illusion to the division of the μέγιστα γένη of Plato's *Sophist*, then the point is not that all the intellects have the same intellectual essence, which is of course true, but that each of them is a distinct being.

expressions of differences in disembodied intellect.²⁷ I do not see him as being entirely clear himself on this point.

- V. 4.4.13.3-5 (Cf. 3.8.2.20-3): ἵνδαλμα γὰρ φρονήσεως ἢ φύσις καὶ ψυχῆς ἔσχατον ὄν ἔσχατον καὶ τὸν ἐν αὐτῇ ἐλλαμπόμενον λόγον ἔχει ("For nature is an image of intelligence, and since it is the limit of soul has the limit of λόγος which shines in it").

Nature (as the lowest part of the soul of the universe) is a λόγος of Soul, meaning, on my interpretation, that Soul is virtually nature.²⁸ Nature is also said to be the product of the hypostases Soul and Intellect, implying that Intellect and Soul are virtually nature each in a different way (cf. 3.2.16.13-17). Since the One is virtually all things, its causal contribution, too, must be taken into account in the analysis of nature. Soul is the instrument of Intellect, and Soul and Intellect together are the instruments of the One.²⁹ The λόγος that nature is or has produces "non-randomized movement" (κίνησις τις οὐκ εἰκῆ) (3.2.16.20). Nature itself is unmoved (3.8.2.12-18). The motion produced by nature is bodily as distinct from the κίνησις νοῦ ("motion of intellect") belonging to Intellect and the higher part of the embodied soul (cf. 5.2.2.9-11). The variety of non-randomized bodily motions are expressions of Soul-Intellect-One analogous to the way that a solid geometrical shape is an expression of a plane geometrical figure, which in turn is a "projection" of an algebraic formula, which in turn is an expression of the principle of number. This analogy, however, is defective in that it does not consider the property of conscious desire in Soul. The digestive system in an animal, say, or a tropism in a plant are non-conscious expressions of the desire for the only true object of desire, namely, the Good.³⁰

²⁷ See 5.7.2.18ff where the possibility of differing λόγοι for different individual human beings (including identical twins) would appear to require differences among the eternal undescended intellects of these human beings.

²⁸ On nature as the last and lowest part of the soul of the universe, see 4.4.13.3-5. I take it that A.H. Armstrong's argument in *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), 86, that nature is in fact a fourth hypostasis has little or no explanatory force and so may be set aside.

²⁹ Cf. 6.7.42.21-4: Ἀνηρημένης δὲ ψυχῆς εἰς νοῦν καὶ νοῦ εἰς τὰγαθόν, οὕτω πάντα εἰς ἐκείνον διὰ μέσων, τῶν μὲν πλησίον, τῶν δὲ τοῖς πλησίον γειτονοῦντων, ἐσχάτην δ' ἀπόστασιν τῶν αἰσθητῶν ἐχόντων εἰς ψυχὴν ἀνηρημένων ("Since Soul depends on Intellect and Intellect on the Good, in this way all things depend on [the One] through intermediaries, some of these being close and some of these beings neighbors of those thing which are close, and sensibles at the farthest distance being dependent on Soul"); 4.3.12.30-2: Νοῦς δὲ πᾶς ἀεὶ ἄνω καὶ οὐ μὴ ποτε ἔξω τῶν αὐτοῦ γένοιτο, ἀλλ' ἰδρυμένος πᾶς ἄνω πέμπει εἰς τὰ τῆδε διὰ ψυχῆς ("But Intellect as a whole is entirely above, and could never be outside of its own being, but seated entirely above, it sends down to things here through Soul"). Cf. 3.2.2.15-18 where it is λόγος that proceeds from Intellect, implicitly through Soul, to matter.

³⁰ Cf. 3.2.3.33-7; 3.3.2.5-6 and Plotinus' dependence on Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 12.7.1072b13-14 and 10.1075a18-22.

Instrumental causality is an integral feature of the λόγος- hierarchy.³¹ Plato employs instrumentality causality in explaining how the sensible world acquires intelligibility: beautiful things are beautiful by means of beauty; large things are large and small things are small by means of largeness and smallness.³² Since Forms do not in themselves operate as efficient causes, *some* instrumentality must come into this picture. The correct way to represent the precise configuration of instrumentality, including the soul of the universe, the Demiurge, and, ultimately, the Idea of the Good or the One, is of course the principal interpretative battleground amongst Platonists. To ignore the instrumental causal hierarchy, as does Aristotle when he says that Plato uses only formal and material causality, is to miss what is most distinctive about Platonic metaphysics, at least as Plotinus understood that.³³

VI.4.3.9.48-51: Καὶ τοσαύτη ἐστὶν ἡ σκιά, ὅσος ὁ λόγος ὁ παρ' αὐτῆς. Ὁ δὲ λόγος τοιοῦτος ἦν, ὡς μέγεθος τοσοῦτον ἐργάσασθαι, ὅσον τὸ εἶδος αὐτοῦ ἐβούλετο μέγεθος ἐργάσασθαι. ("The shadow is as large as the λόγος which comes from [soul]. And the λόγος is of such kind as to make a magnitude as large as the magnitude from which it comes wanted to make").

The context of this passage makes it clear that the "shadow" and λόγος is body in relation to the lower part of soul, namely, nature. (cf. 3.8.4.10; 4.3.10.38-41; 4.4.20.24-5). The magnitudes made are presumably those of individual bodies, not magnitudes in general.

VII.3.8.2.30-35: Ὁ μὲν οὖν λόγος ὁ κατὰ τὴν μορφήν τὴν ὁρωμένην ἔσχατος ἤδη καὶ νεκρὸς καὶ οὐκέτι ποιεῖν δύναται ἄλλον, ὁ δὲ ζῶν ἔχων ὅτου ποιήσαντος τὴν μορφήν ἀδελφὸς ὢν καὶ αὐτὸς τὴν αὐτὴν δύναμιν ἔχων ποιεῖ ἐν τῷ γενομένῳ (cf. 2.4.5.18; 3.3.6.4-8; 3.4.1.7). ("The λόγος, then, which is in the visible shape, is the last one, and as such is dead and no longer able to produce another, whereas that which has life is the brother of the one which produces the shape, and it produces in that which comes to be the identical power that it has").

Taking passages VI and VII together, we have in addition to the λόγος which is nature, the λόγος which is the visible shape produced by nature and the λόγος which is the brother of that (sister, 4.3.6.14) which produces the visible shape, the brother of the

³¹ It is perhaps worth pointing out that Numenius, from whom Plotinus was accused of plagiarizing, explicitly deploys a hierarchy that operates instrumentally. See fr. 15 Des Places and Des Places's note, p.110, n.3. It should be added, however, that for Numenius the instrumentality is occasioned by the fact that the Good or One is ἀργός and ἀνενέργητον (fr. 12 Des Places), whereas for Plotinus the first principle of all is infinitely active.

³² See *Phaedo* 100D-E. I take τῷ καλῷ, μεγέθει, and σμικρότητι as instrumental datives. Cf. 6.6.14.28-30 where Plotinus appeals to this passage in his explanation of the causality of number.

³³ See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1.6.988a7-17. Aristotle of course does not himself avoid employing instrumental causality ubiquitously in his explanations of natural and superlunary phenomena.

soul of the universe. It certainly appears as if the "brother soul" refers to the individual soul of the living being. The sibling souls are what the hypostasis Soul is virtually.³⁴

This λόγος and nature itself are evidently co-causes; the former accounting for the soul and the latter for the body's shape or form. The "identical power" must indicate specific identity.³⁵ Thus, we are faced with the puzzle of the connection between a "visible shape" and a type of soul. Evidently, we cannot say that the visible shape follows from the transmitted power of the progenitor nor can we say that the transmitted power follows from the visible shape. It is tempting to classify this position as a type of functionalism, thereby logically severing psychic functioning from any particular type of body. Certainly, the more seriously we take Plotinus' commitment to the doctrine of transmigration, the easier this is to do.³⁶

One line of thought is developed in 6.7. There it is argued that the λόγος which is identical with a man is other than the λόγος which is the soul in the living soul-body composite (6.7.5.1-2). The latter "makes shapes in body according to itself and makes another image of man as far as body allows"

(ἐν σώματι δὲ μορφώσασα κατ' αὐτὴν καὶ ἄλλο εἶδωλον ἀνθρώπου ὃ σὸν ἐδέχετο τὸ σῶμα ποιήσασα) (6.7.5.13-15).³⁷ Later in the treatise, we learn that, for example, animal horns are in the intelligible world because they serve the sufficiency and completeness of this living being (6.7.10.1-4). These compensate for the particular sort of deficiency that pertains to the particular type of complexity that is this eternal intelligible nature.

If god wanted to make a horse, then the horse must "already" exist eternally (6.7.8). I take it that this "wanting to make" is to be analyzed according to the hierarchy of wanting in the One, Intellect, and Soul. Ultimately, it is because of what the One "wants" that the soul of the universe wants to provide the horse or the ox with a suitable body. Intellect alone cannot explain why an animal that looks the way it does exists; Intellect can only explain what is unequivocally intelligible. Soul alone cannot explain why the animal looks the way it does because the way it looks follows from the exigencies of its eternal nature. Soul, then, becomes the necessary instrument of Intellect, which in turn is the necessary instrument of the One.

This line of thought suggests that the right scientific question is to ask for the role of the subordinate functionality of an animal's anatomy and physiology in relation to the

³⁴ So I understand the words at 4.9.5.5-7: δύναται [Soul]

γὰρ εἰς πάντα ἅμα καὶ ἐκάστου οὐκ ἀποτέμνεται πάντη τὸ αὐτὸ οὖν ἐν πολλοῖς ("For Soul is virtually in all at the same time and it is altogether not cut off from each thing; therefore, it is the identical thing in all"). Cf. 16-17 where the virtuality is glossed as οἶον ἐνεργεῖα ἅμα πάντα. On the distinction between the hypostasis Soul and the soul of the universe or world soul, see 4.9.4.15-20; 4.9.1.10-13; 4.3.2.50-9.

³⁵ Cf. 6.7.5.5-6: Οὕτω γὰρ καὶ οἱ ἐν τοῖς σπέρμασι λόγοι· οὔτε γὰρ ἄνευ ψυχῆς οὔτε ψυχαὶ ἀπλῶς ("For this is the way the λόγοι are in seeds; for they are neither without soul nor are they souls"). I take it that the σπέρματα or seeds are the precise vehicle for the transmission of its powers. See also 4.4.39.7; 4.9.3.17; 5.3.8.4, 7. These σπέρματα are transmitted from individual to individual.

³⁶ On Plotinus' commitment to the transmigration of souls, see 3.2.13.15; 3.4.2.2-4; 4.3.8; 4.7.4.8-14. On the soul of a man, identified with a λόγος, entering the body of an animal, see 6.7.6.21ff.

³⁷ See the claim that the visible shape is an "image" (εἰκὼν) and an "imitation" (μίμημα) of the λόγος that is the soul (6.3.15.24-37).

overall life functioning of the kind of soul that it has. Such questions can be iterated (e.g., why is this organic function located in this type of body) until we reach matter.

Another line of thought in the text may be supposed to contradict this. For at 6.3.8.20, Plotinus argues that a sensible substance is a "conglomeration" (συμφορησις) of qualities and matter.³⁸ If this is so, then the intelligible ordering of body to type of soul seems to be undercut. We may recall that the above claim about the nature of sensible substance is made within the context of a critique of Aristotelian essentialism, a position that Plotinus interprets as maintaining, among other things, that the essences of sensible substances provide them with their identities. This is a notoriously difficult position to maintain unless one were to opt for that which Aristotle himself rejects, namely, individual essences. The essence of man could not be identical with Socrates if that means that it identifies him. Hence, for Plotinus, this fact justifies him in taking the Platonic position that the essence of Socrates is separate from Socrates (6.3.15.27-31). The "conglomeration" of particular qualities and matter (at a particular time and place) that comprise the visible Socrates are in fact constantly changing. It seems that what Plotinus should be saying here is that the soul of Socrates—itsself an image of the real Socrates—is virtually all the succession of conglomerates that together comprise Socrates' incarnate life. Indeed, if transmigration is possible, then the soul of Socrates is virtually all the conglomerates that that soul inhabits, including those of other individuals, whether belonging to Socrates' species or to another.

VIII.3.4.9-13: καὶ λόγος ὁ μὲν ποιητικός, ὁ δὲ συνάπτων τὰ κρείττω τοῖς γενομένοις, κάκεινα πρόνοια ἢ ἄνωθεν, ἢ δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς ἄνω, ὁ ἕτερος λόγος συνημμένος ἐκείνῳ, καὶ γίνεται ἐξ ἀμφοῖν πᾶν πλέγμα καὶ πρόνοια ἢ πᾶσα ("and there is one λόγος which is productive, and one which connects the greater things to the things which have come into being, and those greater things are providence which is above, and the other is [providence] derived from that which is above, that other λόγος connected to that [one from above], and the entire nexus of things and the sum of providence arises from both").

The context of this difficult passage is the effort to account for human moral responsibility within the universal ambit of providence, particularly the moral responsibility of those who do wrong. The general contribution that our passage is supposed to make to the solution of this problem is clear enough. There are two sorts of providence operating on humans here below. If only one of these were operating, there could be no possibility of moral responsibility; with the second type, moral responsibility is possible (cf. 3.3.4.1-5). An incautious reading of the text would make "productive λόγος" correspond to "providence from above" and so "connective λόγος" to "providence derived from that which is above." Yet in the passage considered above and elsewhere Plotinus describes the activity of the soul of the universe as productive (cf. 4.3.11.8-12). If this is the case, then since this activity or nature is clearly that which if

³⁸ Cf. 6.3.10.15-16; 6.3.15.24-7 where the view expressed dialectically at 6.3.8.20 is asserted. At 2.7.3.11-12 for a clear statement that body is matter plus λόγος, where the latter is form comprised of all the qualities in the body.

operating alone on humans would eliminate moral responsibility, the "connective λόγος" must be that which is intended to solve the proposed problem.³⁹

Two questions then arise: (1) what is connective λόγος and (2) what are the two types of providence? The second question is easier to answer. Later in this treatise, Plotinus says that what comes from intelligible reality is providence, and this includes what is in the hypostasis Intellect and also all that comes from Intellect to the hypostasis Soul and to living things.⁴⁰ Presumably, the latter includes the "siblings," the soul of the universe, with its lowest part, nature, and the souls of individual living things (cf. 3.2.16.12-17). It appears, then, that "the providence derived from that which is above" refers generally to providence in Soul and in all living things.

If this is right, then the connective λόγος here associates nature with individual human souls. As the rest of 3.3.4 explains, what this perhaps means for the possibility of moral responsibility is that human beings, possessing specific physical or bodily properties endowed by nature, thereby have access directly to Intellect and thereby have the equipment necessary for the attribution of moral responsibility. In other words, it is providential that we have the sorts of bodies that enable us to think. The connective λόγος represents this particularly working of providence.

IX. 3.8.3.1-3: Πῶς οὖν ποιῶν καὶ οὕτω ποιῶν θεωρίας τινὸς ἂν ἐφάπτοιτο; Ἡ, εἰμένων ποιεῖ καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ μένων καὶ ἐστι λόγος, εἴ η ἂν αὐτὸς θεωρία (cf. 6; 3.8.1.22-4) ("How, then, when [nature] produces, and produces in this way, could it acquire some sort of contemplation? If it remains, it produces, and if it remains in itself and is λόγος, then it would be contemplation").⁴¹

Since nature is λόγος, it is contemplation and contemplated. As λόγος, nature is an image of Intellect, which is itself paradigmatically contemplation and object of contemplation (3.8.8). So, nature is itself an image of contemplation and object of contemplation. As a result of its contemplation, it produces the dead end of intelligibility, shapes imprinted in matter.

The connection between λόγος, activity (ἐνέργεια), and contemplation becomes evident in 6.8.15 where Plotinus calls the One "the root of λόγος" (ρίζα λόγου, 33) and says, most remarkably, that the One is "loved and love and self-love" (Καὶ ἐράσμειον καὶ ἔρωσ ὁ αὐτὸς καὶ αὐτοῦ, 1). So, the paradigmatic

³⁹ See Chiara Russi, "Providenza, *logos* connettivo e *logos* produttivo. Le tre funzioni dell' anima in *Enn.* III 3 [48], 4.6-13," in *Studi sull' anima in Plotino*. (ed.) Riccardo Chiaradonna (Napoli, 2005), 61-78, for a clear and persuasive demonstration of this.

⁴⁰ See 3.3.5.16-20: Τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ τῷ νοητῷ πάντα λόγος καὶ ὑπὲρ λόγον· νοῦς γὰρ καὶ ψυχὴ καθαρὰ· τὸ δὲ ἐντεῦθεν ἤδη ὅσον μὲν ἔρχεται ἐκεῖθεν, πρόνοι α, καὶ ὅσον ἐν ψυχῇ καθαρᾷ καὶ ὅσον ἐντεῦθεν εἰς τὰ ζῶας ("For the things in the intelligible world are all λόγος or beyond λόγος; for all are Intellect and pure Soul. What is here therefore comes from there [Intellect], is providence, both such things as are in pure Soul and such things that come from [Soul] into living things").

⁴¹ Cf. 3.8.3.18-19: Ἔστι δὲ θεωρία καὶ θεώρημα, λόγος γάρ ("It [nature] is contemplation and contemplated because it is λόγος").

activity of contemplation is the secondary activity of the One. The One's primary activity is self-loving. And the spontaneous production of nature as a result of its contemplation is an image of this self-loving. The One's production of everything ends with matter. The instrumentality of Intellect and Soul, and finally, nature, the lowest part of Soul, consists in bringing intelligibility up to matter.

III.

Virtuality is an ontological concept or category. The claim that the One is virtually all things entails that the One is implicated in the being of all things. In the semantical (as opposed to the ontological) sense of the term λόγος, to give a λόγος of something, say, a kind of animal or a kind of virtue, is, broadly speaking, to provide a representation of the object's derivation from the One (with the instrumentality of Intellect and Soul, including nature). Most crucially, the possibility of there being a λόγος of something depends upon that thing being intelligible. Plotinus derives from Plato and from Aristotle the principle that the fundamental structure of that which is intelligible is that it is a complex expression of a unity. So, for example, the intelligibility of any equation of the form $A = B$ depends upon there being some "C" of which "A" and "B" are expressions, not just any expressions of course, but related such that they are co-extensive or mutually implicating. What intelligibility is is cognition of "C" in relation to "A" and "B," not "C" or "A" or "B" alone. Where Plotinus differs from Aristotle, at any rate, is in his view that cognition has paradigmatically the former structure, not the latter. It is obvious, therefore, why the absolutely simple One, the ultimate explanation for anything, must be in itself non-intelligible or super-intelligible. I suspect that the mystical experiences Plotinus claims to have had are of the reductive unity of all that is intelligible.

The principal implication of Plotinus' metaphysics for his philosophy of nature is a claim that is deeply shared by both Plato and Aristotle. It is that nature's intelligibility is qualified. If understanding, as Aristotle says, is to know causes, the intrinsic heteroexplicability of nature necessitates its limited intelligibility. So much I think is fairly evident. What Plotinus adds to this is a systematic presentation of the instrumental and hierarchical causal structure. Hence, no λόγος of anything in nature could be explanatorily adequate since nature itself is the last in a line of λόγοι leading to the One.