

Overview of Levels of Soul

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CONTENTS:

Third Hypostasis, Soul, most difficult and complex notion
***Enneads* are formulations of Plotinus' intuitive realizations of ultimate truths; need to still the mind to receive them without coloration**
Importance of understanding Soul properly
Overview of levels of Soul
Earth as fourfold
Human soul: I AM and Witness-I
Primal image
Moment of birth
Faculty of understanding developed through experiences provided by body
What gods think, we must perceive
Earth, footstool of the Gods, nurses our soul to heavenly maturity

BOOKS QUOTED FROM OR REFERENCED:

- Plotinus, *The Enneads* (MacKenna translation, 4th ed.)

DIAGRAMS appended to this paper:

- FIGURE 1983 1216b-1. Levels of Soul.
- FIGURE 1983 1216b-2. Nested Levels.

These diagrams are from *Astronoesis*, pp. 178 and 250 respectively. These diagrams are appended here to help follow along and are also appended to WG Class 1983 1216a where this paper is read.

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RETYPE AND REFORMATTED by IT 2022

NOTES:

- **RETYPE AD PAPER presented in class (V09MP).**
- This is **1983 12/16b = Overview of Levels of Soul Paper, and the second entry associated with this date. 1983 12/16a = Plotinus; Soul Class.**
- This paper is read and discussed in WG Class 1983 1216a Plotinus; Soul.
- All spelling corrected, numbers and abbreviations spelled out, couple words in brackets added for clarity.

OVERVIEW OF LEVELS OF SOUL

[File ASN MASTER SOUL 21-55.PDF (formerly ASN MASTER SOUL 21-40.PDF) Begins (pp. 41-45)]

[Note: See FIGURES 1983 1216b-1, Levels of Soul, and 1983 1216b-2, Nested Levels, appended to this paper to help follow along. These diagrams are from *Astronoesis*, pp. 178 and 250 respectively.]

[Paper read 12-16-83] [Note: This is student handwriting at top of page.]

We may refer to the three Primal Hypostases as the Absolute in order to emphasize their transcendent aspect as well as their remoteness and inconceivability. If we do so, then the third degree of this mysterious Void Plotinus refers to as Soul. In some regards this is the most complex and difficult of all notions to articulate, because of its scope and diversity of application. So we are required at the very outset to try and organize our understanding of the manifold of meanings it is invested with, so that whenever the term is used the appropriate referent is brought into view and the proper context of connotations applied, hopefully so that the passage in question can be meaningful in terms of the intelligible vision which Plotinus is revealing.

Now throughout the text there are found statements about the Soul articulated with a planned obscurity. We must remember that these were esoteric teachings and not intended for public or mass consumption. The *Enneads* are formulations of Plotinus' intuitive realizations of ultimate truths to which only our inner being may respond. We must let the Logos in our Soul absorb the impact and assimilate the meaning of his intuitions prior to allowing our critical and egotistical intellect [to] pounce upon them. In other words our mental activity must be stilled so that the Silence within can receive the passages in question without coloration and this may help us to understand the ordered classifications and the various levels of Soul and how they fit in with the overall scheme of reality that is implied. The issue is crucial for its ramifications extend from the unitary life of the universe to the least of the creatures within it. For within the universe there are to be found all these various grades of life or Soul, suspended from above, each fixed at that grade of reality appropriate to it, and there cannot be any ambiguity in our understanding if we are to properly appreciate this wisdom-knowledge that he is delivering. The profundity of his understanding makes it possible for us to distinguish the definition of Soul and the differentia that exist among souls and the consequent levels of reality that they are being co-ordinated with. This complex of problems associated with Soul must be comprehended and not explained away by reducing the many souls to one soul, or confusing them with one another.

We will attempt a brief resume or outline of the (term Soul and try to reveal the) hierarchy implicit in his exposition. If we start at the highest level we must understand it is an indivisible aspect of the One itself. Here the formless form of the unsullied Life may be recognized as the transcendent paradigm or immaculate version of this principle from which flows a whole hierarchy. From Its perfection there radiates the life of the Intellectual-Principle or Absolute Soul, which is the recipient of all the Ideas. And just as the life of the Intellectual-Principle is determined by all the Ideas, so reciprocally are all the Ideas made living and permanent possibilities or presences within the Intellectual by Soul. The next hierarchical level of Soul, and not to be confused with Absolute Soul, is the Soul of the Universe or the Demiurge--Zeus. Here Soul is the principle of Universal manifestation, and it is referred to as twofold, on the one hand eternally contemplating the Ideas or the wisdom of God, a timeless and abiding wisdom. And on the other hand organizing the samskaras or past traces of universal manifestation (energy =

matter) into a basic or primitive plan of the universe to be. This vast and cosmic sweep of its intellectual fabrication is referred to as the tentative illumination of matter, or the ground-plan of the universe to be. After this there follows that order of Souls which we may for convenience call Star Souls. Each Sun is such a soul (we are ignoring for the moment its intellect and unity that resides in the Intellectual-Principle). Each of these Star Souls is a part of universal manifestation and their totality constitutes the inerratic or immutable sphere of ideas. Also each Sun or Star Soul is unfolding or manifesting within itself, through its own powers, the content of its own Logos i.e. a world or a cosmos of its own. [Note: The editing is unclear in the following sentence, needs to be reviewed by an editor.] So for instance our Sun, through its own powers symbolically represented by the planets, which are both the agents and the vehicles that are manifesting that Sun's intellectuality, is unfolding or manifesting its own world. And each of those planets is also a god manifesting or unfolding the master-plan inherent in the Sun's intellectuality, providing in their respective sphere habitations for the next degree or level of Soul. [Note: The following sentence is bracketed and not read by AD in the 12/16/83 class.] [The vehicles or sheaths that are provided by the planetary gods to individual souls which will then experience that particular world by the bodies thus supplied.] Thus our Earth, a god, but also included within our Sun's manifestation, has a body, soul, intellect, and unity. The grossest aspect corresponds to the elements, and this is equivalent to the body of the earth. The traces of life that have been left behind in the elements may be referred to as its soul. These memories retained by the planetary mind constitutes our subconscious and correspond to the ancient notion of the dragon. The third level -- the degrees of the Zodiac around the Earth which constitute its intellectuality and often referred to in astrological literature as the differentiation of the Earth's aura. And lastly the unity of each of the mundane gods is a participation in the Sun Soul's unitary functioning. There is no contradiction in referring to the unity aspect of each of the mundane gods to be the same as the wisdom-knowledge and functioning of the Sun Soul's powers.

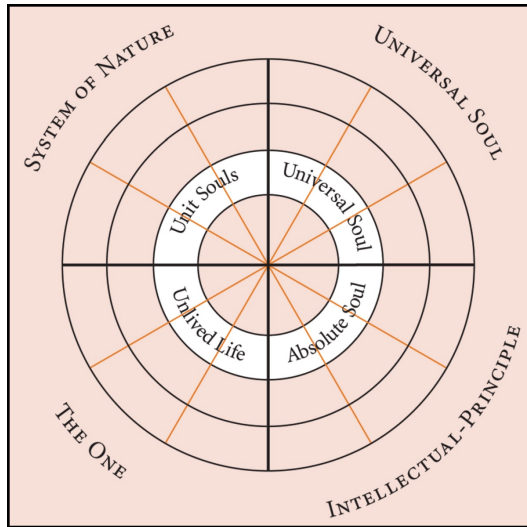
Let us reverse the procedure and consider the Earth's unity as identical with or coinciding with the unitary functioning of the Sun's powers. This will be equivalent to referring to the unitary aspect of the Earth as the undivided or infinite mind of the Earth. Then follows the 360 degrees that are distributed around the Earth [and] may be considered as its intellectuality. And the traces of life left behind may be considered as its soul, and finally the gross elements as its body.

Ignoring for the present the herd or tribe of daimons (angels) associated with each mundane god introduced by later Neo-Platonists we come to human souls. Here we must remind ourselves that Plotinus points out that there is a part of the soul that remains in the Nous, but it emanates a reflex of itself, a principle of intellectual being that is similar to itself. It is this unit soul, the God within us, that may be referred to as our soul, our ultimate individuality and the true knower within us. It is man made in the image of God. Now how this formless and infinite consciousness gets contracted and starts on a journey of self-realization we hope to explain later on. In order not to lose the thread of continuity, we will remark that this soul or mind is 'reduced' and will ultimately becomes identified with bodily vehicles that are being fabricated for its use in order to experience the sensible, i.e. complete its contemplation ["of the Ideas" is added by AD in his reading of this paper in the 12/16/83 class]. Now this contracted consciousness we may refer to as an impersonal or witnessing consciousness and is associated with the planetary mind, from which it receives the image of the world idea. At this level the world image is in a pristine and subtle form, an alogical unity that includes all the features that will be found later on in the reflective consciousness. Included in this world image is the particular body which is being evolved, with which that human soul identifies.

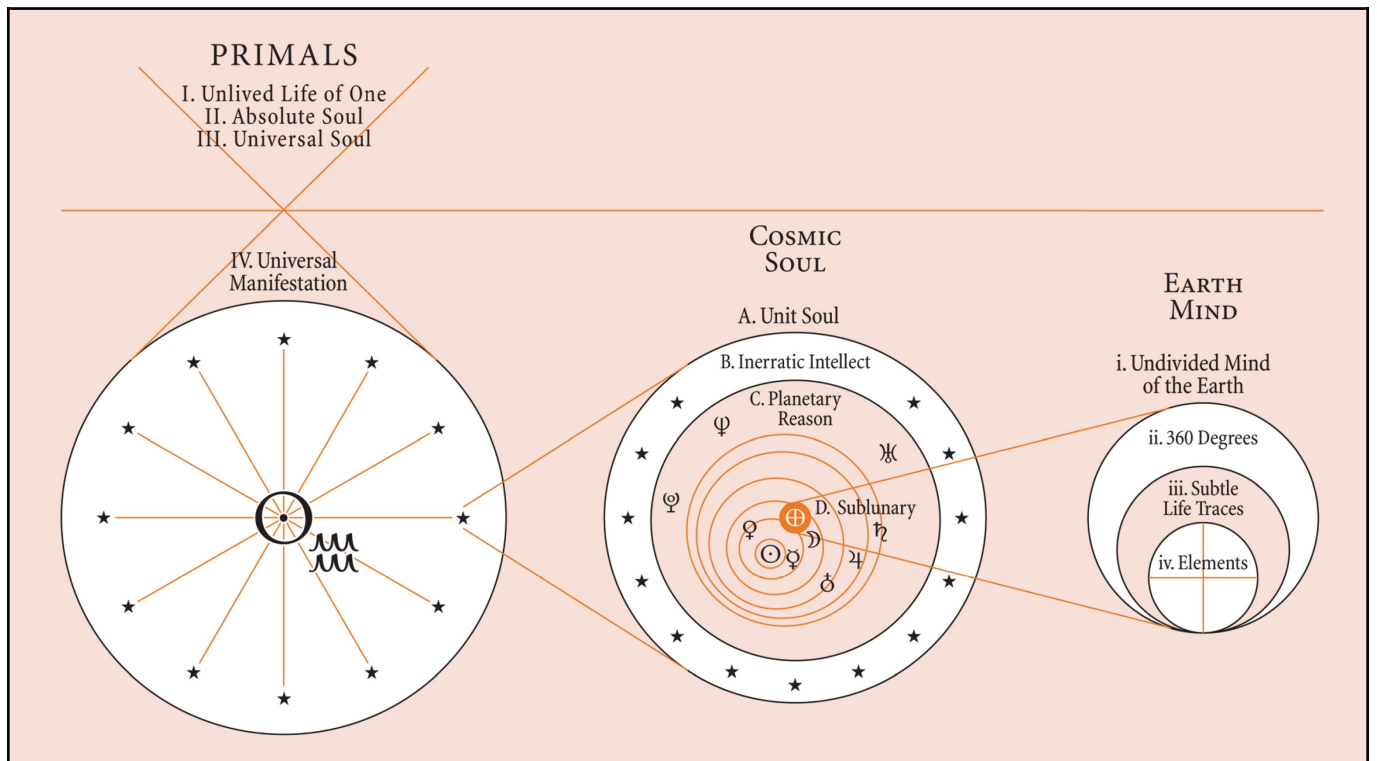
The entrance of the soul into the world, to associate with a particular body, is determined by the root tendencies inherent in the soul which compel it to identify with a body with a certain phylogenetic and ontogenetic history and produced at a certain moment of time which is indicated by aspectual relationship among the planets. The human soul is now a fated member of the Circuit. Here the experiences provided through the body will develop its faculty of understanding and reason through an indefinite series of incarnations. Soul incarnates or participates in the ideas of the planetary mind by perceiving the world and experiencing through a body what the Gods think. Thus the Earth -- footstool of the Gods -- nurses our soul to heavenly maturity and manhood.

[File ASN MASTER SOUL 21-55.PDF (formerly ASN MASTER SOUL 21-40.PDF) Ends (pp. 41-45)]

DIAGRAMS FOR 1983 1216b



[FIGURE 1983 1216b-1. Levels of Soul. Facsimile scan of diagram from *Astronoesis*, p. 178.]



[FIGURE 1983 1216b-2. Nested Levels. Facsimile scan of diagram from *Astronoesis*, p. 250.]