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Writing Process

Outlining this essay required many steps between reconstruction and comparison among Plotinus's *Enneads*, Plato's *Republic*, and Genesis Chapters 1-3. First in the draft, I reconstructed Plotinus's argument about the three hypostases and his cosmos. Next, I compared Plotinus's theory of the Intellect to Plato's Allegory of the Cave and concluded with a comparison between Plotinus's three hypostases and Genesis Chapters 1-3. I created my first full rough draft and attended a conference with Dr. [Elizabeth] Mackay; from there I used her provided revisions for a second rough draft. I then met with a Write Place consultant for a proofread and final edit to create the final draft.

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Dorian Miller

Plotinus' intricate idea of the Intellect is one of an external existence that is a thinker and an object of thought. Section 4 of the *Enneads* 5. 1:1-2 states that the Intellect embraces all, being and thought, in its unchanging cognitive identity (541). Plotinus' *Enneads* cover metaphysics, cosmology, epistemology, metaphysical psychology, ethics, and aesthetics; his idea of the One, the Intellect, and the Soul revolve in this complex spiritual cosmology that can be compared to Plato's metaphysics. It is important to compare the two theories because while Plato and his ideas came first and Plotinus came across as only a commentator of Plato, Plotinus actually goes well beyond Plato (Meisami). These texts, Plotinus' *Enneads* and Plato's *Republic*, give readers the philosophical insight into the cosmos and the origins of practically everything in existence. Plotinus' argument was that the Intellect contained the ability to think, reason, and even understand reality, and from that emanated the Soul as an image of it with the power of emanation of individual souls. This essay will summarize Plotinus' three hypostases with the primary focus and emphasis on the Intellect; additionally, it will compare the Intellect to Plato's Allegory of the Cave and to Genesis Chapters 1-3, all with the purpose of finding a better understanding of Plotinus' cosmos and its role in the creation of the universe.

Plotinus established a unique relationship in his spiritual cosmology that can be seen similarly through other philosophers; it begins with the One. This is the creator and is not a being; it does not have a form (Meisami). It is not personified as a soul; it is a non-being that emanates. Even if it does not will action, the One acts because it is perfect. The One emanates the Intellect, and from the Intellect comes the Soul; this order in the levels of being is the hierarchy among the three hypostases. The One does not need the Intellect, but the Intellect cannot exist without the One (535). This happens because the One does not decide to emanate, it just occurs; it is in a dyad with the Intellect because it can produce the Intellect

without changing itself (539). According to sections 5 and 6 of the *Enneads*, the One is the foundation of multiplicity while standing outside of it; it produces due to its perfection. And since the Intellect comes from the One, the Intellect is the actual generator of this multiplicity. So, through this, the Intellect is made in the One's perfect image and therefore can understand its own image by contemplating the One. By nature, the Intellect is a cognitive unity, meaning it has the power to think, reason and understand reality, as stated by Plotinus (541). That is how and why the Intellect is able to contemplate the One. Existing externally, the Intellect thinks of itself and through that it emanates the Soul; the external existence of the Intellect's activity (536). The Intellect does not give the Soul complete perfection, yet it is still perfect because it is in the Intellect's image (536). Being the Intellect's image, the Soul also contains the ability of reasoning and can create individual souls without breaking itself apart (545). Understanding the Soul and how it functions as being emanated from the Intellect can help to grasp the purpose of the Intellect itself, which is really emanation and contemplation. Plotinus uses an analogy of the Intellect as a Father to his child, the Soul (536); this demonstrates the relationship between the Intellect as a creator, and its creation, the Soul.

Both Plato and Plotinus argue that intellect, or education, is a key principle of society. Plato makes the case that such an education comes after an escape from prison while Plotinus writes that "in the intelligible world... the internal activity does not flow out of it; rather, one activity remains in it" (536). Plato's Allegory of the Cave in the *Republic* begins with prisoners in a cave whose knowledge is limited by their surroundings. All these prisoners know are shadows on the wall; they had never been exposed to anything else. How could they have any further knowledge? Plato writes that Socrates said, "what the prisoners would take for true reality is nothing other than the shadows" (209). In the Allegory, a prisoner escapes the cave and begins to understand so much more information; more than he knew to even exist (210); this can also be called the "capital T" Truth. Plato was trying to present his idea that Truth serves as the base of human reality. When the prisoner is seeing the complete and real world outside of the cave, he is processing all the new information and the Truth. Similarly, through Plotinus' theory, the Intellect encompasses all forms; it is an intellectual entity. Additionally, Plotinus and Plato have different writing styles even though the idea of the Intellect and knowledge have similarities. Plato's Allegory in the *Republic* has a much higher human quality than Plotinus' prose and can be easier to understand and relate to. The *Enneads* have no immediate tie to human nature which means the lack of imagery can make these abstract concepts much more difficult to process. This is important to acknowledge because the goal of this essay is to be able to better understand Plotinus' cosmology and when comparing

Plato and Plotinus, one is easier to digest than the other. And while this is true, it is more important to note the similarities and differences in their theories, not just their writing techniques.

Plotinus' three hypostases are all intertwined, each with their own unique relationships to one another. While the focus of this essay is the Intellect, one cannot be fully explained without another. For the Intellect, one must understand and acknowledge the One as the emanator of it. Secondly, the Intellect cannot be fully grasped without the mentioning of the Soul seeing as it is the Intellect's primary product. Plotinus' three hypostases can also be compared to Genesis Chapters 1-3. As learned previously, God created the earth out of chaotic emptiness in the first account of creation, speaking new creations into existence. Similar to the One, God "emanated" his creations without losing himself or giving any part of him. God is perfect like the One, and therefore could create all that He did although the One is just a figure that is acknowledged; whereas, God is worshipped by his creations.

Also, in the second account of Genesis, God has more interaction with humanity and his creations than the One does. In this way, then, the Intellect can briefly be seen as God by ways of creation as well. The Intellect emanates the Soul, its primary creation, in its own image just as Genesis says that God created all in His own divine image. Through these perfect images, the creations (or emanations) are formed in the vision of the creator. For Genesis, it was the earth and human beings and God saw them all as good. For the three hypostases, each emanation carries traits from its emanator that are all necessary for being. The Intellect has other similarities next to the Genesis Chapters 1-3 as well. For instance, in the second account of creation of man and woman in Genesis, Eve commits the first sin by taking and eating from the Tree of Knowledge. Previously, Adam and Eve only contained the knowledge that was given to them by God, and in the same way the One emanates the Intellect and gives it what it needs. This Tree of Knowledge enlightened Adam and Eve, exposing them to the world of ideas, thoughts, and realizations (Genesis 3:7). In a similar way, one of the Intellect's capabilities is contemplation. Just as Adam and Eve saw that they were naked and hid in shame, the Intellect has the power of reasoning and understanding reality.

So, then, why is it important to take on Plotinus's intensely complex theory of creation? Because it is exactly that, a theory of creation, a cause of existence. His philosophy, using the principle of emanation, is his reason for how all humans and souls exist today. According to Plotinus, without the One at the top of this hierarchy, nothing below it—including human beings, could exist. This essay mentioned other multifarious thoughts on creation. Still, it is beneficial to

understand that all theories are about life just from different perspective—who or what gives it, how, and why? Plotinus’ intricate theory of knowledge and being is seemingly tangled like many others, because just as in life, it is all messy.

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