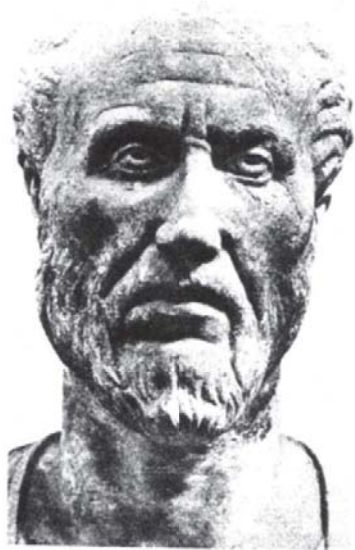


PLOTINUS

AGAINST THE GNOSTICS



BERSERKER

BOOKS



NINTH TRACTATE

AGAINST THOSE THAT AFFIRM THE CREATOR OF THE KOSMOS AND THE KOSMOS ITSELF TO BE EVIL: [GENERALLY QUOTED AS "AGAINST THE GNOSTICS"]

1. We have seen elsewhere that the Good, the Principle, is simplex, and, correspondingly, primal- for the secondary can never be simplex- that it contains nothing; that it is an integral Unity.

Now the same Nature belongs to the Principle we know as The One just as the goodness of The Good is essential and not the outgrowth of some prior substance so the Unity of The One is its essential.

Therefore:

When we speak of The One and when we speak of The Good we must recognize an Identical Nature; we must affirm that they are the same- not,

it is true, as venturing any predication with regard to that [unknowable] Hypostasis but simply as indicating it to ourselves in the best terms we find.

Even in calling it "The First" we mean no more than to express that it is the most absolutely simple: it is the Self-Sufficing only in the sense that it is not of that compound nature which would make it dependent upon any constituent; it is "the Self-Contained" because everything contained in something alien must also exist by that alien.

Deriving, then, from nothing alien, entering into nothing alien, in no way a made-up thing, there can be nothing above it.

We need not, then, go seeking any other Principles; this - the One and the Good - is our First; next to it follows the Intellectual Principle, the Primal Thinker; and upon this follows Soul. Such is the order in nature. The Intellectual Realm allows no more than these and no fewer.

Those who hold to fewer Principles must hold the identity of either Intellectual-Principle and Soul or of Intellectual-Principle and The First; but we have abundantly shown that these are distinct.

It remains for us to consider whether there are more than these Three.

Now what other [Divine] Kinds could there be? No Principles of the universe could be found at once simpler and more transcendent than this whose existence we have affirmed and described.

They will scarcely urge upon us the doubling of the Principle in Act by a Principle in Potentiality. It is absurd to seek such a plurality by distinguishing between potentiality and actuality in the case of immaterial beings whose existence is in Act - even in lower forms no such division can be made and we cannot conceive a duality in the Intellectual-Principle, one phase in some vague calm, another all astir. Under what form can we think of repose in the Intellectual Principle as contrasted with its movement or utterance? What would the quiescence of the one phase be as against the energy of the others?

No: the Intellectual-Principle is continuously itself, unchangeably constituted in stable Act. With movement - towards it or within it - we are in the realm of the Soul's operation: such act is a Reason-Principle emanating from it and entering into Soul, thus made an Intellectual Soul, but in no sense creating an intermediate Principle to stand between the two.

Nor are we warranted in affirming a plurality of Intellectual Principles on the ground that there is one that knows and thinks and another knowing that it knows and thinks. For whatever distinction be possible in the Divine between its Intellectual Act and its Consciousness of that Act, still

all must be one projection not unaware of its own operation: it would be absurd to imagine any such unconsciousness in the Authentic Intelligence; the knowing principle must be one and the selfsame with that which knows of the knowing.

The contrary supposition would give us two beings, one that merely knows, and another separate being that knows of the act of knowing.

If we are answered that the distinction is merely a process of our thought, then, at once, the theory of a plurality in the Divine Hypostasis is abandoned: further, the question is opened whether our thought can entertain a knowing principle so narrowed to its knowing as not to know that it knows- a limitation which would be charged as imbecility even in ourselves, who if but of very ordinary moral force are always master of our emotions and mental processes.

No: The Divine Mind in its mentation thinks itself; the object of the thought is nothing external: Thinker and Thought are one; therefore in its thinking and knowing it possesses itself, observes itself and sees itself not as something unconscious but as knowing: in this Primal Knowing it must include, as one and the same Act, the knowledge of the knowing; and even the logical distinction mentioned above cannot be made in the case of the Divine; the very eternity of its self-thinking precludes any such separation between that intellectual act and the consciousness of the act.

The absurdity becomes still more blatant if we introduce yet a further distinction- after that which affirms the knowledge of the knowing, a third distinction affirming the knowing of the knowledge of the knowing: yet there is no reason against carrying on the division for ever and ever.

To increase the Primals by making the Supreme Mind engender the Reason-Principle, and this again engender in the Soul a distinct power to act as mediator between Soul and the Supreme Mind, this is to deny intellection to the Soul, which would no longer derive its Reason from the Intellectual-Principle but from an intermediate: the Soul then would possess not the Reason-Principle but an image of it: the Soul could not know the Intellectual-Principle; it could have no intellection.

2. Therefore we must affirm no more than these three Primals: we are not to introduce superfluous distinctions which their nature rejects. We are to proclaim one Intellectual-Principle unchangeably the same, in no way subject to decline, acting in imitation, as true as its nature allows, of the Father.

And as to our own Soul we are to hold that it stands, in part, always in

the presence of The Divine Beings, while in part it is concerned with the things of this sphere and in part occupies a middle ground. It is one nature in graded powers; and sometimes the Soul in its entirety is borne along by the loftiest in itself and in the Authentic Existent; sometimes, the less noble part is dragged down and drags the mid-soul with it, though the law is that the Soul may never succumb entire.

The Soul's disaster falls upon it when it ceases to dwell in the perfect Beauty- the appropriate dwelling-place of that Soul which is no part and of which we too are no part- thence to pour forth into the frame of the All whatsoever the All can hold of good and beauty. There that Soul rests, free from all solicitude, not ruling by plan or policy, not redressing, but establishing order by the marvellous efficacy of its contemplation of the things above it.

For the measure of its absorption in that vision is the measure of its grace and power, and what it draws from this contemplation it communicates to the lower sphere, illuminated and illuminating always.

3. Ever illuminated, receiving light unailing, the All-Soul imparts it to the entire series of later Being which by this light is sustained and fostered and endowed with the fullest measure of life that each can absorb. It may be compared with a central fire warming every receptive body within range.

Our fire, however, is a thing of limited scope: given powers that have no limitation and are never cut off from the Authentic Existences, how imagine anything existing and yet failing to receive from them?

It is of the essence of things that each gives of its being to another: without this communication, The Good would not be Good, nor the Intellectual-Principle an Intellective Principle, nor would Soul itself be what it is: the law is, "some life after the Primal Life, a second where there is a first; all linked in one unbroken chain; all eternal; divergent types being engendered only in the sense of being secondary."

In other words, things commonly described as generated have never known a beginning; all has been and will be. Nor can anything disappear unless where a later form is possible: without such a future there can be no dissolution.

If we are told that there is always Matter as a possible term, we ask why then should not Matter itself come to nothingness. If we are told it may, then we ask why it should ever have been generated. If the answer comes that it had its necessary place as the ultimate of the series, we return that the necessity still holds.

With Matter left aside as wholly isolated, the Divine Beings are not everywhere but in some bounded place, walled off, so to speak; if that is not possible, Matter itself must receive the Divine light [and so cannot be annihilated].

4. To those who assert that creation is the work of the Soul after the falling of its wings, we answer that no such disgrace could overtake the Soul of the All. If they tell us of its falling, they must tell us also what caused the fall. And when did it take place? If from eternity, then the Soul must be essentially a fallen thing: if at some one moment, why not before that?

We assert its creative act to be a proof not of decline but rather of its steadfast hold. Its decline could consist only in its forgetting the Divine: but if it forgot, how could it create? Whence does it create but from the things it knew in the Divine? If it creates from the memory of that vision, it never fell. Even supposing it to be in some dim intermediate state, it need not be supposed more likely to decline: any inclination would be towards its Prior, in an effort to the clearer vision. If any memory at all remained, what other desire could it have than to retrace the way?

What could it have been planning to gain by world-creating? Glory? That would be absurd- a motive borrowed from the sculptors of our earth.

Finally, if the Soul created by policy and not by sheer need of its nature, by being characteristically the creative power- how explain the making of this universe?

And when will it destroy the work? If it repents of its work, what is it waiting for? If it has not yet repented, then it will never repent: it must be already accustomed to the world, must be growing more tender towards it with the passing of time.

Can it be waiting for certain souls still here? Long since would these have ceased returning for such re-birth, having known in former life the evils of this sphere; long since would they have foreborne to come.

Nor may we grant that this world is of unhappy origin because there are many jarring things in it. Such a judgement would rate it too high, treating it as the same with the Intelligible Realm and not merely its reflection.

And yet- what reflection of that world could be conceived more beautiful than this of ours? What fire could be a nobler reflection of the fire there than the fire we know here? Or what other earth than this could have been modelled after that earth? And what globe more minutely perfect than this, or more admirably ordered in its course could have been conceived in the image of the self-centred circling of the World of Intelligibles? And for a

sun figuring the Divine sphere, if it is to be more splendid than the sun visible to us, what a sun it must be.

5. Still more unreasonably:

There are men, bound to human bodies and subject to desire, grief, anger, who think so generously of their own faculty that they declare themselves in contact with the Intelligible World, but deny that the sun possesses a similar faculty less subject to influence, to disorder, to change; they deny that it is any wiser than we, the late born, hindered by so many cheats on the way towards truth.

Their own soul, the soul of the least of mankind, they declare deathless, divine; but the entire heavens and the stars within the heavens have had no communion with the Immortal Principle, though these are far purer and lovelier than their own souls- yet they are not blind to the order, the shape-ly pattern, the discipline prevailing in the heavens, since they are the loudest in complaint of the disorder that troubles our earth. We are to imagine the deathless Soul choosing of design the less worthy place, and preferring to abandon the nobler to the Soul that is to die.

Equally unreasonable is their introduction of that other Soul which they piece together from the elements.

How could any form or degree of life come about by a blend of the elements? Their conjunction could produce only a warm or cold or an intermediate substance, something dry or wet or intermediate.

Besides, how could such a soul be a bond holding the four elements together when it is a later thing and rises from them? And this element- soul is described as possessing consciousness and will and the rest- what can we think?

Furthermore, these teachers, in their contempt for this creation and this earth, proclaim that another earth has been made for them into which they are to enter when they depart. Now this new earth is the Reason-Form [the Logos] of our world. Why should they desire to live in the archetype of a world abhorrent to them?

Then again, what is the origin of that pattern world? It would appear, from the theory, that the Maker had already declined towards the things of this sphere before that pattern came into being.

Now let us suppose the Maker craving to construct such an Intermediate World- though what motive could He have?- in addition to the Intellectual world which He eternally possesses. If He made the mid-world first, what end was it to serve?

To be a dwelling-place for Souls?

How then did they ever fall from it? It exists in vain.

If He made it later than this world- abstracting the formal-idea of this world and leaving the Matter out- the Souls that have come to know that intermediate sphere would have experienced enough to keep them from entering this. If the meaning is simply that Souls exhibit the Ideal-Form of the Universe, what is there distinctive in the teaching?

6. And, what are we to think of the new forms of being they introduce- their "Exiles" and "Impressions" and "Repentings"?

If all comes to states of the Soul- "Repentance" when it has undergone a change of purpose; "Impressions" when it contemplates not the Authentic Existences but their simulacra- there is nothing here but a jargon invented to make a case for their school: all this terminology is piled up only to conceal their debt to the ancient Greek philosophy which taught, clearly and without bombast, the ascent from the cave and the gradual advance of souls to a truer and truer vision.

For, in sum, a part of their doctrine comes from Plato; all the novelties through which they seek to establish a philosophy of their own have been picked up outside of the truth.

From Plato come their punishments, their rivers of the underworld and the changing from body to body; as for the plurality they assert in the Intellectual Realm- the Authentic Existent, the Intellectual-Principle, the Second Creator and the Soul- all this is taken over from the Timaeus, where we read:

"As many Ideal-Forms as the Divine Mind beheld dwelling within the Veritably Living Being, so many the Maker resolved should be contained in this All."

Misunderstanding their text, they conceived one Mind passively including within itself all that has being, another mind, a distinct existence, having vision, and a third planning the Universe- though often they substitute Soul for this planning Mind as the creating Principle - and they think that this third being is the Creator according to Plato.

They are in fact quite outside of the truth in their identification of the Creator.

In every way they misrepresent Plato's theory as to the method of creation as in many other respects they dishonour his teaching: they, we are to understand, have penetrated the Intellectual Nature, while Plato and all those other illustrious teachers have failed.

They hope to get the credit of minute and exact identification by setting up a plurality of intellectual Essences; but in reality this multiplication lowers the Intellectual Nature to the level of the Sense-Kind: their true course is to seek to reduce number to the least possible in the Supreme, simply referring all things to the Second Hypostasis- which is all that exists as it is Primal Intellect and Reality and is the only thing that is good except only for the first Nature- and to recognize Soul as the third Principle, accounting for the difference among souls merely by diversity of experience and character. Instead of insulting those venerable teachers they should receive their doctrine with the respect due to the older thought and honour all that noble system- an immortal soul, an Intellectual and Intelligible Realm, the Supreme God, the Soul's need of emancipation from all intercourse with the body, the fact of separation from it, the escape from the world of process to the world of essential-being. These doctrines, all emphatically asserted by Plato, they do well to adopt: where they differ, they are at full liberty to speak their minds, but not to procure assent for their own theories by flaying and flouting the Greeks: where they have a divergent theory to maintain they must establish it by its own merits, declaring their own opinions with courtesy and with philosophical method and stating the controverted opinion fairly; they must point their minds towards the truth and not hunt fame by insult, reviling and seeking in their own persons to replace men honoured by the fine intelligences of ages past.

As a matter of fact the ancient doctrine of the Divine Essences was far the sounder and more instructed, and must be accepted by all not caught in the delusions that beset humanity: it is easy also to identify what has been conveyed in these later times from the ancients with incongruous novelties- how for example, where they must set up a contradictory doctrine, they introduce a medley of generation and destruction, how they cavil at the Universe, how they make the Soul blameable for the association with body, how they revile the Administrator of this All, how they ascribe to the Creator, identified with the Soul, the character and experiences appropriate to partial be beings.

7. That this world has neither beginning nor end but exists for ever as long as the Supreme stands is certainly no novel teaching. And before this school rose it had been urged that commerce with the body is no gain to a Soul.

But to treat the human Soul as a fair presentment of the Soul of the Universe is like picking out potters and blacksmiths and making them war-

rant for discrediting an entire well-ordered city.

We must recognize how different is the governance exercised by the All-Soul; the relation is not the same: it is not in fetters. Among the very great number of differences it should not have been overlooked that the We [the human Soul] lies under fetter; and this in a second limitation, for the Body-Kind, already fettered within the All-Soul, imprisons all that it grasps.

But the Soul of the Universe cannot be in bond to what itself has bound: it is sovereign and therefore immune of the lower things, over which we on the contrary are not masters. That in it which is directed to the Divine and Transcendent is ever unmingled, knows no encumbering; that in it which imparts life to the body admits nothing bodily to itself. It is the general fact that an inset [as the Body], necessarily shares the conditions of its containing principle [as the Soul], and does not communicate its own conditions where that principle has an independent life: thus a graft will die if the stock dies, but the stock will live on by its proper life though the graft wither. The fire within your own self may be quenched, but the thing, fire, will exist still; and if fire itself were annihilated that would make no difference to the Soul, the Soul in the Supreme, but only to the plan of the material world; and if the other elements sufficed to maintain a Kosmos, the Soul in the Supreme would be unconcerned.

The constitution of the All is very different from that of the single, separate forms of life: there, the established rule commanding to permanence is sovereign; here things are like deserters kept to their own place and duty by a double bond; there is no outlet from the All, and therefore no need of restraining or of driving errants back to bounds: all remains where from the beginning the Soul's nature appointed.

The natural movement within the plan will be injurious to anything whose natural tendency it opposes: one group will sweep bravely onward with the great total to which it is adapted; the others, not able to comply with the larger order, are destroyed. A great choral is moving to its concerted plan; midway in the march, a tortoise is intercepted; unable to get away from the choral line it is trampled under foot; but if it could only range itself within the greater movement it too would suffer nothing.

8. To ask why the Soul has created the Kosmos, is to ask why there is a Soul and why a Creator creates. The question, also, implies a beginning in the eternal and, further, represents creation as the act of a changeful Being who turns from this to that.

Those that so think must be instructed- if they would but bear with cor-

rection- in the nature of the Supernals, and brought to desist from that blasphemy of majestic powers which comes so easily to them, where all should be reverent scruple.

Even in the administration of the Universe there is no ground for such attack, for it affords manifest proof of the greatness of the Intellectual Kind.

This All that has emerged into life is no amorphous structure - like those lesser forms within it which are born night and day out of the lavishness of its vitality- the Universe is a life organized, effective, complex, all-comprehensive, displaying an unfathomable wisdom. How, then, can anyone deny that it is a clear image, beautifully formed, of the Intellectual Divinities? No doubt it is copy, not original; but that is its very nature; it cannot be at once symbol and reality. But to say that it is an inadequate copy is false; nothing has been left out which a beautiful representation within the physical order could include.

Such a reproduction there must necessarily be- though not by deliberation and contrivance- for the Intellectual could not be the last of things, but must have a double Act, one within itself and one outgoing; there must, then, be something later than the Divine; for only the thing with which all power ends fails to pass downwards something of itself. In the Supreme there flourishes a marvellous vigour, and therefore it produces.

Since there is no Universe nobler than this, is it not clear what this must be? A representation carrying down the features of the Intellectual Realm is necessary; there is no other Kosmos than this; therefore this is such a representation.

This earth of ours is full of varied life-forms and of immortal beings; to the very heavens it is crowded. And the stars, those of the upper and the under spheres, moving in their ordered path, fellow-travellers with the universe, how can they be less than gods? Surely they must be morally good: what could prevent them? All that occasions vice here below is unknown there evil of body, perturbed and perturbing.

Knowledge, too; in their unbroken peace, what hinders them from the intellectual grasp of the God-Head and the Intellectual Gods? What can be imagined to give us a wisdom higher than belongs to the Supernals? Could anyone, not fallen to utter folly, bear with such an idea?

Admitting that human Souls have descended under constraint of the All-Soul, are we to think the constrained the nobler? Among Souls, what commands must be higher than what obeys. And if the coming was uncon-

strained, why find fault with a world you have chosen and can quit if you dislike it?

And further, if the order of this Universe is such that we are able, within it, to practise wisdom and to live our earthly course by the Supernal, does not that prove it a dependency of the Divine?

9. Wealth and poverty, and all inequalities of that order, are made ground of complaint. But this is to ignore that the Sage demands no equality in such matters: he cannot think that to own many things is to be richer or that the powerful have the better of the simple; he leaves all such preoccupations to another kind of man. He has learned that life on earth has two distinct forms, the way of the Sage and the way of the mass, the Sage intent upon the sublimest, upon the realm above, while those of the more strictly human type fall, again, under two classes, the one reminiscent of virtue and therefore not without touch with good, the other mere populace, serving to provide necessaries to the better sort.

But what of murder? What of the feebleness that brings men under slavery to the passions?

Is it any wonder that there should be failing and error, not in the highest, the intellectual, Principle but in Souls that are like undeveloped children? And is not life justified even so if it is a training ground with its victors and its vanquished?

You are wronged; need that trouble an immortal? You are put to death; you have attained your desire. And from the moment your citizenship of the world becomes irksome you are not bound to it.

Our adversaries do not deny that even here there is a system of law and penalty: and surely we cannot in justice blame a dominion which awards to every one his due, where virtue has its honour, and vice comes to its fitting shame, in which there are not merely representations of the gods, but the gods themselves, watchers from above, and- as we readily rebutting human reproaches, since they lead all things in order from a beginning to an end, allotting to each human being, as life follows life, a fortune shaped to all that has preceded- the destiny which, to those that do not penetrate it, becomes the matter of boorish insolence upon things divine.

A man's one task is to strive towards making himself perfect - though not in the idea- really fatal to perfection- that to be perfect is possible to himself alone.

We must recognize that other men have attained the heights of goodness; we must admit the goodness of the celestial spirits, and above all of

the gods- those whose presence is here but their contemplation in the Supreme, and loftiest of them, the lord of this All, the most blessed Soul. Rising still higher, we hymn the divinities of the Intellectual Sphere, and, above all these, the mighty King of that dominion, whose majesty is made patent in the very multitude of the gods.

It is not by crushing the divine unto a unity but by displaying its exuberance- as the Supreme himself has displayed it- that we show knowledge of the might of God, who, abidingly what He is, yet creates that multitude, all dependent on Him, existing by Him and from Him.

This Universe, too, exists by Him and looks to Him- the Universe as a whole and every God within it- and tells of Him to men, all alike revealing the plan and will of the Supreme.

These, in the nature of things, cannot be what He is, but that does not justify you in contempt of them, in pushing yourself forward as not inferior to them.

The more perfect the man, the more compliant he is, even towards his fellows; we must temper our importance, not thrusting insolently beyond what our nature warrants; we must allow other beings, also, their place in the presence of the Godhead; we may not set ourselves alone next after the First in a dream-flight which deprives us of our power of attaining identity with the Godhead in the measure possible to the human Soul, that is to say, to the point of likeness to which the Intellectual-Principle leads us; to exalt ourselves above the Intellectual-Principle is to fall from it.

Yet imbeciles are found to accept such teaching at the mere sound of the words "You, yourself, are to be nobler than all else, nobler than men, nobler than even gods." Human audacity is very great: a man once modest, restrained and simple hears, "You, yourself, are the child of God; those men whom you used to venerate, those beings whose worship they inherit from antiquity, none of these are His children; you without lifting a hand are nobler than the very heavens"; others take up the cry: the issue will be much as if in a crowd all equally ignorant of figures, one man were told that he stands a thousand cubic feet; he will naturally accept his thousand cubits even though the others present are said to measure only five cubits; he will merely tell himself that the thousand indicates a considerable figure.

Another point: God has care for you; how then can He be indifferent to the entire Universe in which you exist?

We may be told that He is too much occupied to look upon the Universe, and that it would not be right for Him to do so; yet, when He looks down

and upon these people, is He not looking outside Himself and upon the Universe in which they exist? If He cannot look outside Himself so as to survey the Kosmos, then neither does He look upon them.

But they have no need of Him?

The Universe has need of Him, and He knows its ordering and its indwellers and how far they belong to it and how far to the Supreme, and which of the men upon it are friends of God, mildly acquiescing with the Kosmic dispensation when in the total course of things some pain must be brought to them- for we are to look not to the single will of any man but to the universe entire, regarding every one according to worth but not stopping for such things where all that may be hastening onward.

Not one only kind of being is bent upon this quest, which brings bliss to whatsoever achieves, and earns for the others a future destiny in accord with their power. No man, therefore, may flatter himself that he alone is competent; a pretension is not a possession; many boast though fully conscious of their lack and many imagine themselves to possess what was never theirs and even to be alone in possessing what they alone of men never had.

10. Under detailed investigation, many other tenets of this school- indeed we might say all- could be corrected with an abundance of proof. But I am withheld by regard for some of our own friends who fell in with this doctrine before joining our circle and, strangely, still cling to it.

The school, no doubt, is free-spoken enough- whether in the set purpose of giving its opinions a plausible colour of verity or in honest belief- but we are addressing here our own acquaintances, not those people with whom we could make no way. We have spoken in the hope of preventing our friends from being perturbed by a party which brings, not proof- how could it?- but arbitrary, tyrannical assertion; another style of address would be applicable to such as have the audacity to flout the noble and true doctrines of the august teachers of antiquity.

That method we will not apply; anyone that has fully grasped the preceding discussion will know how to meet every point in the system.

Only one other tenet of theirs will be mentioned before passing the matter; it is one which surpasses all the rest in sheer folly, if that is the word.

They first maintain that the Soul and a certain "Wisdom" [Sophia] declined and entered this lower sphere though they leave us in doubt of whether the movement originated in Soul or in this Sophia of theirs, or whether the two are the same to them- then they tell us that the other Souls

came down in the descent and that these members of Sophia took to themselves bodies, human bodies, for example.

Yet in the same breath, that very Soul which was the occasion of descent to the others is declared not to have descended. "It knew no decline," but merely illuminated the darkness in such a way that an image of it was formed upon the Matter. Then, they shape an image of that image somewhere below- through the medium of Matter or of Materiality or whatever else of many names they choose to give it in their frequent change of terms, invented to darken their doctrine- and so they bring into being what they call the Creator or Demiurge, then this lower is severed from his Mother [Sophia] and becomes the author of the Kosmos down to the latest of the succession of images constituting it.

Such is the blasphemy of one of their writers.

11. Now, in the first place, if the Soul has not actually come down but has illuminated the darkness, how can it truly be said to have declined? The outflow from it of something in the nature of light does not justify the assertion of its decline; for that, it must make an actual movement towards the object lying in the lower realm and illuminate it by contact.

If, on the other hand, the Soul keeps to its own place and illuminates the lower without directing any act towards that end, why should it alone be the illuminant? Why should not the Kosmos draw light also from the yet greater powers contained in the total of existence?

Again, if the Soul possesses the plan of a Universe, and by virtue of this plan illuminates it, why do not that illumination and the creating of the world take place simultaneously? Why must the Soul wait till the representations of the plan be made actual?

Then again this Plan- the "Far Country" of their terminology - brought into being, as they hold, by the greater powers, could not have been the occasion of decline to the creators.

Further, how explain that under this illumination the Matter of the Kosmos produces images of the order of Soul instead of mere bodily-nature? An image of Soul could not demand darkness or Matter, but wherever formed it would exhibit the character of the producing element and remain in close union with it.

Next, is this image a real-being, or, as they say, an Intellection?

If it is a reality, in what way does it differ from its original? By being a distinct form of the Soul? But then, since the original is the reasoning Soul, this secondary form must be the vegetative and generative Soul; and then,

what becomes of the theory that it is produced for glory's sake, what becomes of the creation in arrogance and self-assertion? The theory puts an end also to creation by representation and, still more decidedly, to any thinking in the act; and what need is left for a creator creating by way of Matter and Image?

If it is an Intellection, then we ask first "What justifies the name?" and next, "How does anything come into being unless the Soul give this Intellection creative power and how, after all, can creative power reside in a created thing?" Are we to be told that it is a question of a first Image followed by a second?

But this is quite arbitrary.

And why is fire the first creation?

12. And how does this image set to its task immediately after it comes into being?

By memory of what it has seen?

But it was utterly non-existent, it could have no vision, either it or the Mother they bestow upon it.

Another difficulty: These people come upon earth not as Soul-Images but as veritable Souls; yet, by great stress and strain, one or two of them are able to stir beyond the limits of the world, and when they do attain Reminiscence barely carry with them some slight recollection of the Sphere they once knew: on the other hand, this Image, a new-comer into being, is able, they tell us- as also is its Mother- to form at least some dim representation of the celestial world. It is an Image, stamped in Matter, yet it not merely has the conception of the Supreme and adopts from that world the plan of this, but knows what elements serve the purpose. How, for instance, did it come to make fire before anything else? What made it judge fire a better first than some other object?

Again, if it created the fire of the Universe by thinking of fire, why did it not make the Universe at a stroke by thinking of the Universe? It must have conceived the product complete from the first; the constituent elements would be embraced in that general conception.

The creation must have been in all respects more according to the way of Nature than to that of the arts- for the arts are of later origin than Nature and the Universe, and even at the present stage the partial things brought into being by the natural Kinds do not follow any such order- first fire, then the several other elements, then the various blends of these- on the contrary the living organism entire is encompassed and rounded off

within the uterine germ. Why should not the material of the Universe be similarly embraced in a Kosmic Type in which earth, fire and the rest would be included? We can only suppose that these people themselves, acting by their more authentic Soul, would have produced the world by such a process, but that the Creator had not wit to do so.

And yet to conceive the vast span of the Heavens- to be great in that degree- to devise the obliquity of the Zodiac and the circling path of all the celestial bodies beneath it, and this earth of ours - and all in such a way that reason can be given for the plan - this could never be the work of an Image; it tells of that Power [the All-Soul] next to the very Highest Beings.

Against their will, they themselves admit this: their "outshining upon the darkness," if the doctrine is sifted, makes it impossible to deny the true origins of the Kosmos.

Why should this down-shining take place unless such a process belonged to a universal law?

Either the process is in the order of Nature or against that order. If it is in the nature of things, it must have taken place from eternity; if it is against the nature of things, then the breach of natural right exists in the Supreme also; evil antedates this world; the cause of evil is not the world; on the contrary the Supreme is the evil to us; instead of the Soul's harm coming from this sphere, we have this Sphere harmed by the Soul.

In fine, the theory amounts to making the world one of the Primals, and with it the Matter from which it emerges.

The Soul that declined, they tell us, saw and illuminated the already existent Darkness. Now whence came that Darkness?

If they tell us that the Soul created the Darkness by its Decline, then, obviously, there was nowhere for the Soul to decline to; the cause of the decline was not the Darkness but the very nature of the Soul. The theory, therefore, refers the entire process to pre-existing compulsions: the guilt inheres in the Primal Beings.

13. Those, then, that censure the constitution of the Kosmos do not understand what they are doing or where this audacity leads them. They do not understand that there is a successive order of Primals, Secondaries, Tertiaries and so on continuously to the Ultimates; that nothing is to be blamed for being inferior to the First; that we can but accept, meekly, the constitution of the total, and make our best way towards the Primals, withdrawing from the tragic spectacle, as they see it, of the Kosmic spheres- which in reality are all suave graciousness.

And what, after all, is there so terrible in these Spheres with which it is sought to frighten people unaccustomed to thinking, never trained in an instructive and coherent gnosis?

Even the fact that their material frame is of fire does not make them dreadful; their Movements are in keeping with the All and with the Earth: but what we must consider in them is the Soul, that on which these people base their own title to honour.

And, yet, again, their material frames are pre-eminent in vastness and beauty, as they cooperate in act and in influence with the entire order of Nature, and can never cease to exist as long as the Primals stand; they enter into the completion of the All of which they are major Parts.

If men rank highly among other living Beings, much more do these, whose office in the All is not to play the tyrant but to serve towards beauty and order. The action attributed to them must be understood as a fore-telling of coming events, while the causing of all the variety is due, in part to diverse destinies- for there cannot be one lot for the entire body of men- in part to the birth moment, in part to wide divergencies of place, in part to states of the Souls.

Once more, we have no right to ask that all men shall be good, or to rush into censure because such universal virtue is not possible: this would be repeating the error of confusing our sphere with the Supreme and treating evil as a nearly negligible failure in wisdom - as good lessened and dwindling continuously, a continuous fading out; it would be like calling the Nature-Principle evil because it is not Sense-Perception and the thing of sense evil for not being a Reason-Principle. If evil is no more than that, we will be obliged to admit evil in the Supreme also, for there, too, Soul is less exalted than the Intellectual-Principle, and That too has its Superior.

14. In yet another way they infringe still more gravely upon the inviolability of the Supreme.

In the sacred formulas they inscribe, purporting to address the Supernal Beings- not merely the Soul but even the Transcendents - they are simply uttering spells and appeasements and evocations in the idea that these Powers will obey a call and be led about by a word from any of us who is in some degree trained to use the appropriate forms in the appropriate way- certain melodies, certain sounds, specially directed breathings, sibilant cries, and all else to which is ascribed magic potency upon the Supreme. Perhaps they would repudiate any such intention: still they must explain how these things act upon the unembodied: they do not see that the power they attrib-

ute to their own words is so much taken away from the majesty of the divine.

They tell us they can free themselves of diseases.

If they meant, by temperate living and an appropriate regime, they would be right and in accordance with all sound knowledge. But they assert diseases to be Spirit-Beings and boast of being able to expel them by formula: this pretension may enhance their importance with the crowd, gaping upon the powers of magicians; but they can never persuade the intelligent that disease arises otherwise than from such causes as overstrain, excess, deficiency, putrid decay; in a word, some variation whether from within or from without.

The nature of illness is indicated by its very cure. A motion, a medicine, the letting of blood, and the disease shifts down and away; sometimes scantiness of nourishment restores the system: presumably the Spiritual power gets hungry or is debilitated by the purge. Either this Spirit makes a hasty exit or it remains within. If it stays, how does the disease disappear, with the cause still present? If it quits the place, what has driven it out? Has anything happened to it? Are we to suppose it throve on the disease? In that case the disease existed as something distinct from the Spirit-Power. Then again, if it steps in where no cause of sickness exists, why should there be anything else but illness? If there must be such a cause, the Spirit is unnecessary: that cause is sufficient to produce that fever. As for the notion, that just when the cause presents itself, the watchful Spirit leaps to incorporate itself with it, this is simply amusing.

But the manner and motive of their teaching have been sufficiently exhibited; and this was the main purpose of the discussion here upon their Spirit-Powers. I leave it to yourselves to read the books and examine the rest of the doctrine: you will note all through how our form of philosophy inculcates simplicity of character and honest thinking in addition to all other good qualities, how it cultivates reverence and not arrogant self-assertion, how its boldness is balanced by reason, by careful proof, by cautious progression, by the utmost circumspection- and you will compare those other systems to one proceeding by this method. You will find that the tenets of their school have been huddled together under a very different plan: they do not deserve any further examination here.

15. There is, however, one matter which we must on no account overlook- the effect of these teachings upon the hearers led by them into despising the world and all that is in it.

There are two theories as to the attainment of the End of life. The one proposes pleasure, bodily pleasure, as the term; the other pronounces for good and virtue, the desire of which comes from God and moves, by ways to be studied elsewhere, towards God.

Epicurus denies a Providence and recommends pleasure and its enjoyment, all that is left to us: but the doctrine under discussion is still more wanton; it carps at Providence and the Lord of Providence; it scorns every law known to us; immemorial virtue and all restraint it makes into a laughing stock, lest any loveliness be seen on earth; it cuts at the root of all orderly living, and of the righteousness which, innate in the moral sense, is made perfect by thought and by self-discipline: all that would give us a noble human being is gone. What is left for them except where the pupil by his own character betters the teaching- comes to pleasure, self-seeking, the grudge of any share with one's fellows, the pursuit of advantage.

Their error is that they know nothing good here: all they care for is something else to which they will at some future time apply themselves: yet, this world, to those that have known it once, must be the starting-point of the pursuit: arrived here from out of the divine nature, they must inaugurate their effort by some earthly correction. The understanding of beauty is not given except to a nature scorning the delight of the body, and those that have no part in well-doing can make no step towards the Supernal.

This school, in fact, is convicted by its neglect of all mention of virtue: any discussion of such matters is missing utterly: we are not told what virtue is or under what different kinds it appears; there is no word of all the numerous and noble reflections upon it that have come down to us from the ancients; we do not learn what constitutes it or how it is acquired, how the Soul is tended, how it is cleaned. For to say "Look to God" is not helpful without some instruction as to what this looking imports: it might very well be said that one can "look" and still sacrifice no pleasure, still be the slave of impulse, repeating the word God but held in the grip of every passion and making no effort to master any. Virtue, advancing towards the Term and, linked with thought, occupying a Soul makes God manifest: God on the lips, without a good conduct of life, is a word.

16. On the other hand, to despise this Sphere, and the Gods within it or anything else that is lovely, is not the way to goodness.

Every evil-doer began by despising the Gods; and one not previously corrupt, taking to this contempt, even though in other respects not wholly bad, becomes an evil-doer by the very fact.

Besides, in this slighting of the Mundane Gods and the world, the honour they profess for the gods of the Intellectual Sphere becomes an inconsistency; Where we love, our hearts are warm also to the Kin of the beloved; we are not indifferent to the children of our friend. Now every Soul is a child of that Father; but in the heavenly bodies there are Souls, intellectual, holy, much closer to the Supernal Beings than are ours; for how can this Kosmos be a thing cut off from That and how imagine the gods in it to stand apart?

But of this matter we have treated elsewhere: here we urge that where there is contempt for the Kin of the Supreme the knowledge of the Supreme itself is merely verbal.

What sort of piety can make Providence stop short of earthly concerns or set any limit whatsoever to it?

And what consistency is there in this school when they proceed to assert that Providence cares for them, though for them alone?

And is this Providence over them to be understood of their existence in that other world only or of their lives here as well? If in the other world, how came they to this? If in this world, why are they not already raised from it?

Again, how can they deny that the Lord of Providence is here? How else can He know either that they are here, or that in their sojourn here they have not forgotten Him and fallen away? And if He is aware of the goodness of some, He must know of the wickedness of others, to distinguish good from bad. That means that He is present to all, is, by whatever mode, within this Universe. The Universe, therefore, must be participant in Him.

If He is absent from the Universe, He is absent from yourselves, and you can have nothing to tell about Him or about the powers that come after Him.

But, allowing that a Providence reaches to you from the world beyond-making any concession to your liking- it remains none the less certain that this world holds from the Supernal and is not deserted and will not be: a Providence watching entires is even more likely than one over fragments only; and similarly, Participation is more perfect in the case of the All-Soul-as is shown, further, by the very existence of things and the wisdom manifest in their existence. Of those that advance these wild pretensions, who is so well ordered, so wise, as the Universe? The comparison is laughable, utterly out of place; to make it, except as a help towards truth, would be impiety.

The very question can be entertained by no intelligent being but only by one so blind, so utterly devoid of perception and thought, so far from any vision of the Intellectual Universe as not even to see this world of our own.

For who that truly perceives the harmony of the Intellectual Realm could fail, if he has any bent towards music, to answer to the harmony in sensible sounds? What geometrician or arithmetician could fail to take pleasure in the symmetries, correspondences and principles of order observed in visible things? Consider, even, the case of pictures: those seeing by the bodily sense the productions of the art of painting do not see the one thing in the one only way; they are deeply stirred by recognizing in the objects depicted to the eyes the presentation of what lies in the idea, and so are called to recollection of the truth- the very experience out of which Love rises. Now, if the sight of Beauty excellently reproduced upon a face hurries the mind to that other Sphere, surely no one seeing the loveliness lavish in the world of sense- this vast orderliness, the Form which the stars even in their remoteness display- no one could be so dull-witted, so immoveable, as not to be carried by all this to recollection, and gripped by reverent awe in the thought of all this, so great, sprung from that greatness. Not to answer thus could only be to have neither fathomed this world nor had any vision of that other.

17. Perhaps the hate of this school for the corporeal is due to their reading of Plato who inveighs against body as a grave hindrance to Soul and pronounces the corporeal to be characteristically the inferior.

Then let them for the moment pass over the corporeal element in the Universe and study all that still remains.

They will think of the Intellectual Sphere which includes within itself the Ideal-Form realized in the Kosmos. They will think of the Souls, in their ordered rank, that produce incorporeal magnitude and lead the Intelligible out towards spatial extension, so that finally the thing of process becomes, by its magnitude, as adequate a representation as possible of the principle void of parts which is its model- the greatness of power there being translated here into greatness of bulk. Then whether they think of the Kosmic Sphere [the All-Soul] as already in movement under the guidance of that power of God which holds it through and through, beginning and middle and end, or whether they consider it as in rest and exercising as yet no outer governance: either approach will lead to a true appreciation of the Soul that conducts this Universe.

Now let them set body within it- not in the sense that Soul suffers any

change but that, since "In the Gods there can be no grudging," it gives to its inferior all that any partial thing has strength to receive and at once their conception of the Kosmos must be revised; they cannot deny that the Soul of the Kosmos has exercised such a weight of power as to have brought the corporeal-principle, in itself unlovely, to partake of good and beauty to the utmost of its receptivity- and to a pitch which stirs Souls, beings of the divine order.

These people may no doubt say that they themselves feel no such stirring, and that they see no difference between beautiful and ugly forms of body; but, at that, they can make no distinction between the ugly and the beautiful in conduct; sciences can have no beauty; there can be none in thought; and none, therefore, in God. This world descends from the Firsts: if this world has no beauty, neither has its Source; springing thence, this world, too, must have its beautiful things. And while they proclaim their contempt for earthly beauty, they would do well to ignore that of youths and women so as not to be overcome by incontinence.

In fine, we must consider that their self-satisfaction could not turn upon a contempt for anything indisputably base; theirs is the perverse pride of despising what was once admired.

We must always keep in mind that the beauty in a partial thing cannot be identical with that in a whole; nor can any several objects be as stately as the total.

And we must recognize, that, even in the world of sense and part, there are things of a loveliness comparable to that of the Celestials- forms whose beauty must fill us with veneration for their creator and convince us of their origin in the divine, forms which show how ineffable is the beauty of the Supreme since they cannot hold us but we must, though in all admiration, leave these for those. Further, wherever there is interior beauty, we may be sure that inner and outer correspond; where the interior is vile, all is brought low by that flaw in the dominants.

Nothing base within can be beautiful without- at least not with an authentic beauty, for there are examples of a good exterior not sprung from a beauty dominant within; people passing as handsome but essentially base have that, a spurious and superficial beauty: if anyone tells me he has seen people really fine-looking but interiorly vile, I can only deny it; we have here simply a false notion of personal beauty; unless, indeed, the inner vileness were an accident in a nature essentially fine; in this Sphere there are many obstacles to self-realization. In any case the All is beautiful, and there can

be no obstacle to its inner goodness: where the nature of a thing does not comport perfection from the beginning, there may be a failure in complete expression; there may even be a fall to vileness, but the All never knew a childlike immaturity; it never experienced a progress bringing novelty into it; it never had bodily growth: there was nowhere from whence it could take such increment; it was always the All-Container.

And even for its Soul no one could imagine any such a path of process: or, if this were conceded, certainly it could not be towards evil.

18. But perhaps this school will maintain that, while their teaching leads to a hate and utter abandonment of the body, ours binds the Soul down in it.

In other words: two people inhabit the one stately house; one of them declaims against its plan and against its Architect, but none the less maintains his residence in it; the other makes no complaint, asserts the entire competency of the Architect and waits cheerfully for the day when he may leave it, having no further need of a house: the malcontent imagines himself to be the wiser and to be the readier to leave because he has learned to repeat that the walls are of soulless stone and timber and that the place falls far short of a true home; he does not see that his only distinction is in not being able to bear with necessity assuming that his conduct, his grumbling, does not cover a secret admiration for the beauty of those same "stones." As long as we have bodies we must inhabit the dwellings prepared for us by our good sister the Soul in her vast power of labourless creation.

Or would this school reject the word Sister? They are willing to address the lowest of men as brothers; are they capable of such raving as to disown the tie with the Sun and the powers of the Heavens and the very Soul of the Kosmos? Such kinship, it is true, is not for the vile; it may be asserted only of those that have become good and are no longer body but embodied Soul and of a quality to inhabit the body in a mode very closely resembling the indwelling of the All-Soul in the universal frame. And this means continence, self-restraint, holding staunch against outside pleasure and against outer spectacle, allowing no hardship to disturb the mind. The All-Soul is immune from shock; there is nothing that can affect it: but we, in our passage here, must call on virtue in repelling these assaults, reduced for us from the beginning by a great conception of life, annulled by matured strength.

Attaining to something of this immunity, we begin to reproduce within ourselves the Soul of the vast All and of the heavenly bodies: when we are come to the very closest resemblance, all the effort of our fervid pursuit

will be towards that goal to which they also tend; their contemplative vision becomes ours, prepared as we are, first by natural disposition and afterwards by all this training, for that state which is theirs by the Principle of their Being.

This school may lay claim to vision as a dignity reserved to themselves, but they are not any the nearer to vision by the claim- or by the boast that while the celestial powers, bound for ever to the ordering of the Heavens, can never stand outside the material universe, they themselves have their freedom in their death. This is a failure to grasp the very notion of "standing outside," a failure to appreciate the mode in which the All-Soul cares for the unensouled.

No: it is possible to go free of love for the body; to be clean-living, to disregard death; to know the Highest and aim at that other world; not to slander, as negligent in the quest, others who are able for it and faithful to it; and not to err with those that deny vital motion to the stars because to our sense they stand still- the error which in another form leads this school to deny outer vision to the Star-Nature, only because they do not see the Star-Soul in outer manifestation.

BERSERKER

BOOKS

