

The Philosophy of Astrology

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One of the major questions in philosophy is: What is the ultimate nature of reality? When it comes to mind and matter the question takes on the form of: what has the greater reality, or what is more fundamental, or which would by necessity be prior: mind or matter? Most of us take a middle of the road approach; we say: “Well, they require each other, or you can’t have one without the other.” It hardly makes any difference when you’re going about your daily affairs, and who gives a darn anyway? But it does have ramifications. If you believe in God, then you are called an Idealist. If you don’t, then you’re called a materialist or empiricist. Atheists tend to be materialists, many scientists too. Plato established the Idealist tradition that makes mind fundamental before all else. This occurred four hundred years before the birth of Christ, and philosophers have been arguing ever since, although present day philosophers tend to get stuck in problems with language and logic.

This point of view had a resurgence during the 18th and 19th centuries with the German Idealists. The noted philosophers of this time were Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. Because Plotinus owes much to Plato, we have to set this groundwork before we can move on, but I’m not going to get involved in this discussion during my lecture. I can sum up this position in a general sense by quoting a line from Copleston’s History of Philosophy regarding Schelling’s philosophy:

Idealism is “the view of nature as an immediate manifestation of the Absolute, as a self-organizing dynamic and teleological system which moves upwards, as it were, to the emergence of consciousness and to Nature’s knowledge of herself in and through man.”

I try to use the word God sparingly; most of us were raised

Christians, and we relate that particular word to a personal being that created the universe and everything in it, so He is considered a transcendent God, and stands outside His creation. As a personal God he hears prayers directly and is the source of great comfort. Idealist philosophers use other terms for the creative principle, such as the Absolute, and consider this source, being fundamental, to be a reality of the universe itself. This is more in accord with the Eastern religions that use terms like universal consciousness, or the mental universe, or cosmic consciousness. This consciousness manifests in Nature, or life, and works its way upward to knowledge of itself in and through mankind. In my interpretation of this process evolution is the means mind-spirit work together reaching ever greater levels of perfection. You can't get one without the other.

The great debate about whether Intelligent design or Evolution should be taught in the schools is ridiculous. Intelligent design requires evolution and evolution requires intelligent design.

Because the lecture doesn't give me enough time to present a complete description of the system of Plotinus, I will be more than happy to offer a copy of my book for no charge to those attending this session. But you have to log on and present yourself with your name in the beginning or early on during the lecture, then contact me by Email.

The following, taken from the book, is an attempt to bridge the gap between third century astronomy and present day cosmology.

PHILOSOPHY AND THE SOLAR SYSTEM

Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus attempted to solve the problem of the relationship between a spiritual universe and a physical world. The structure of the observable heavens served as the model upon which their theories took form. Although they did not have the benefit of telescopes, their unaided vision affirmed the belief that the stars and planets were in motion, and planetary motion seemed oddly circular. What they failed to

realize, for want of a developed science and technology, was the immense size of the universe and the relative obscurity of the earth in relation to it. In the case of Plotinus, his system was not grounded entirely on astronomical theories, but rather on the structure of his own inner or visionary experiences. If this is the case, then his thought is better understood in terms of the make-up of the heavens, as we know it today, rather than on the inadequate astronomical theories of his own time. If Plotinus' inner experiences were true for him, and the structure of his metaphysics kept firmly in accord with those experiences, then what his thought embraces is that model of the heavens we know today as the solar system.

The idea of a solar system, that is, a seemingly stationary sun with a group of planets in revolution about it, was a novel idea to the early Greeks. But philosophy at that time had little knowledge of how the heavens were constructed. Plotinus believed his system could explain everything in terms of absolutes using terms such as eternal and infinite to describe the universe of time and space. Although it's difficult to see how his system describes the universe as a whole, it does show how the three hypostases might work within a physical framework. His system loses nothing of its descriptive value when reconsidered in light of our unfolding knowledge of physics and astronomy.

The task then is to conceive Plotinus' system of three hypostases, the Divine Triad, in terms of the structure of the solar system. At the summit of Plotinus' system is the ONE; he constantly refers the ONE by analogy to the sun. As the ONE "over-flows" producing the Intellectual-Realm, so too the sun issues forth the planetary spheres, a unity in diversity. As the planetary spheres turn to contemplate their source--the ONE, the World Soul or the Earth, belonging essentially to the Intellectual Sphere, generates in its own contemplative power the things of the physical world. The planetary spheres, each distinct in their own orb, together keep and hold the divine intelligence as they circle in contemplation of their source--the Sun. Plotinus was without the knowledge of what a solar system might have been, but his thought points to the idea of a solar system. In his words:

". . .The entire intellectual order may be figured as a kind of light with the ONE in repose at its summit as its King: but this manifestation is not cast out from it--that would cause us to postulate another light before the light--but the ONE shines eternally, resting upon the Intellectual Realm; this, not identical with its source, is

yet not severed from it nor of so remote a nature as to be less than Real-Being" 11

Plotinus conceives the Intellective powers as circling around the ONE as the planets circle the sun. The ONE being at the summit is also at the center; as the sun shines, so does the ONE. The planets represent diversity within unity, and maintain the individual characteristics of the ONE as defined by

Plato's mathematical forms. The planetary Beings, as the second hypostasis, while identical with the One, nonetheless encompass the diversity within the totality of their Source. As Plotinus has said, the three hypostases are not separate or exclusive from each other, but are together everywhere, with the ONE, or the sun, at the center. The sun is thought of as the physical manifestation of the ONE. The planets are the physical manifestation of the Intellectual Realm. The Earth is considered the third hypostasis or World Soul, and the means Intellect and Being come to exist as things and life in the physical world.

The ONE expresses its Idea of creation through the power of the star. As the ultimate unity, and undifferentiated source of totality, it is not known, discursively, even to itself. Yet it does not remain self-contained, it goes out of itself into its "otherness;" its over-flowing is an over-flowing into diversity and multiplicity. As the Intellectual Realm turns to contemplate its source the ONE comes to know itself as Self, and assumes Self-Hood. It is one system of three hierarchies, with contemplation and generation as the dynamics of each stage. Plotinus even alludes to planets as if moving in a solar system with these words:

"Thus the Intellective power circles the Supreme which stands to it as archetype to image. The archetype is intellect-in-unity; the image in its manifold movement about its Prior [the ONE] has produced the multiplicity by which it is constituted Intellect or Mind; that prior has no movement; it generates Mind by its sheer wealth. The planets are divine in virtue of cleaving to the ONE because they remain linked with the Primal Soul, and through it possess the vision of the Intelligible World." 12

The idea here is that the universe is a Spiritual universe; that the power of stars generates life. Plotinus' words become figurative and even dramatic when he says: ". . . By the power of Soul the manifold and diverse heavenly

system is a unit: through Soul this universe is a God: and the sun is a God because it is ensouled, so too the stars; and whatsoever we ourselves may be, it is all in virtue of Soul" 13

The sun represents the ONE, a unity that Plotinus speaks of as unnameable and un-knowable because it contains potentially all that can be known without distinction or differentiation. The ONE does not remain self-locked, it pours forth its radiant energy as a star. Just as consciousness seems independent of the elements of which the body is composed, so too the heat of the sun must be akin to creative power. It must be independent of the material of which the sun is composed. This radiant energy is focused within the planetary orbs as an image of the ONE, and each planet represents a distinct and diverse characteristic that makes the One knowable. Here the unity of thought as bestowed by the ONE becomes manifest as multiplicity or objects of thought. Reasoning is at once potential and possible.

The planetary spheres, as the Intelligible Realm, and second hypostasis of the Divine Triad, manifest that unity-in-diversity through which each contains and radiates its own unique character and quality. The Earth, or third hypostasis, represents birth, growth; the fertile womb of humanity in which reasoning takes on actuality. The sun transmits life to the Earth through light, heat, and magnetism, and the planets share in the work by blending their fields with the solar radiation. We might even say that the Earth is our divine mother, and that we have been sired by that celestial power that is the ultimate source of all life--the SUN.

Creation is not without a purpose. We are divine through that which has given us life, and our purpose can only be realized through that process which sustains the very existence of the universe itself.