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PLOTINUS' νοητή ουσία MEANS SUBSTANCE PATHS TO THE ABSOLUTE

In Plotinus' teachings, self-knowledge – *νοῦς* – correlates with νοητής ουσίας or spiritual substance. Through the first self-being's creative and eternal power, the incorporeal being knows itself. This is the condition of cognition in the noetic view of the Absolute and thus the truth of itself in God. This phenomenon is described as a mystery and experience of a supernatural nature. The Greek term *ἐπιστήμη* refers to certain and indisputable knowledge, which contrasts with the term *δόξα* (meaning misconception or conjecture). Cognition based on thinking about itself has a necessary basis, one that guarantees its possibility in a direct view of divine being oriented intuitionistically, but without rejecting speculative rationality. The weakening of spiritual substance or its complete absence signals the end of non-corporeal substance's creation. The primordial truth – unique and simplest in itself – appears in the idea of being. This constitutes the starting point for all action, thinking, and knowledge.

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The sensory world – *κόσμος αισθητός* – shows certain aspects of the temporal environment, including the spiritual. It can concurrently symbolize externality and limit the knowledge of truth (aletheia). Existing omniscience is always inferior to the whole understood spiritually. In other words, being has ontic priority over sense knowledge. This relies on the fact that the gignetic moment of the world is a specter of the eternal present. Yet, it does not mean that their relation with each other is one-sided. According to Plotinus, the metamorphosis of what is divine in us consists in the transformation of a being burdened by externality into that which is supra-imaginary. The latter is free from the notches of past-future temporality and, thus, the ever-becoming moment.

Every human being has the capacity for intellectual intuition, but not everyone knows how to develop inner sight and actively use it. Human consciousness manifests itself in the deepest layers of its existence – reaching all the way to the placeless Absolute. When interpreted a certain way, the Greek verb *μεταμόρφω* seems almost aligned with the soul's intellectual growth toward the ontic truth of redemption:

Ἀλλ' ἐπὶ πόσον ἢ κάθαρσις λεκτέον- οὕτω γὰρ καὶ ἡ ὁμοίωσις τίνι θεῷ φανερά καὶ ἡ ταυτότης [τίνι θεῷ]. Τοῦτο δέ ἐστι μάλιστα ζητεῖν θυμὸν πῶς καὶ ἐπιθυμίαν καὶ ἄλλα πάντα, λύπην καὶ τὰ συγγενῆ, καὶ τὸ χωρίζειν ἀπὸ σώματος ἐπὶ πόσον δυνατόν (En. I, II, 5).

That which is spiritual has its presence in man. And, human self-knowledge – being the image of a constantly working spiritual mind – is only a present presence. It does not remain invariably in its unity; it weakens materializing spatially. According to the *Enneads* author's account, streams flow from the region of divine-human thought. Here, the *psyche* detaches itself from earthly accretions and is, thereby, ontically illuminated by the radiance of light (it is already more than just psychic and emotional)².

The specificity and truthfulness of this knowledge take on an existential and subjective character. In other words, it is a higher cognition of logical reason. Indeed, νοῦς does not only possess this knowledge but is also identical to it in substance:

2 Ἀπὸ μὲν δὴ σώματος ἴσως μὲν καὶ τοῖς οἷον τόποις συνάγουσαν πρὸς ἑαυτήν, πάντως μὴ ἀπαθῶς ἔχουσαν καὶ τὰς ἀναγκαῖας τῶν ἡδονῶν αἰσθήσεις μόνον ποιουμένην καὶ ἰατρεῦσεις καὶ ἀπαλλαγὰς πόνων, ἵνα μὴ ἐνοχλοῖτο, τὰς δὲ ἀληθῆρας ἀφαιροῦσαν καὶ, εἰ μὴ οἷον τε, πρᾶως φέρουσαν καὶ ἐλάττους τιθεῖσαν τῇ μὴ συμπάσχειν· τὸν δὲ θυμὸν ὅσον οἷον τε ἀφαιροῦσαν καὶ, εἰ δυνατόν, πάντα, εἰ δὲ μὴ, μὴ γοῦν αὐτὴν συνοργισμένην, ἀλλ' ἄλλου εἶναι τὸ ἀπροαίρετον, τὸ δὲ ἀπροαίρετον ὀλίγον εἶναι καὶ ἀσθενές· τὸν δὲ φόβον πάντη· περὶ οὐδενὸς γὰρ φοβήσεται - τὸ δὲ ἀπροαίρετον καὶ ἐνταῦθα - πλὴν γ' ἐν νοουθετήσῃ (En. I, II, 5).

Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ νοῦς διὰ τί οὐκ ἐνεργήσει καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ περὶ αὐτὸν ἢ πρὸ αἰσθήσεως καὶ ὄλως ἀντιλήψεως; Δεῖ γὰρ τὸ πρὸ ἀντιλήψεως ἐνέργημα εἶναι, εἴπερ «τὸ αὐτὸ τὸ νοεῖν καὶ εἶναι» (En. I, IV, 10).

This statement alludes to the subject understood substantively. Yet, figuratively, it may symbolize spiritual transformation by analogy to the Absolute. The human being – defined as a mind-subject – does not only come to know that which is infinite, but himself becomes an objectified νοητὴ οὐσία. The activity of the meta-soul (soul in the proper sense) signifies (in a substantial sense) thinking directed toward cognitive mystery – something that few are capable of.

God makes himself present in Plotinus in the religious act of concentration and the transition from thinking to the substantial. This binary dual state is the intertwining wherein the pure individuality of being and substance merge into one. The *psyche's* higher part – discursively thinking human consciousness – aids the whole on the path to ontic unification. Having achieved view of intuition, he makes progress in virtue and thereby reaches God. This surplus is not something entirely of its own for the self. Self-consciousness does not express itself solely in virtue of individual insight. In the process of inner transformation, it achieves something more than temporal existence. This is both the phenomenologically necessary form of self-knowledge and Plotinus' peculiar *mutatis mutandis*. The gignetically finite whole transcends its limitation and essentially exists in the infinite. The structure of the *psyche's* division, in turn, corresponds to the difference between *κόσμος νοητός* and *κόσμος αισθητός*.

In the context of the sensual world, the thinking subject manifests divine qualities expressed through insight into the reality of the Absolute. In his ethical writings, Plotinus repeatedly evokes attitudes that can be described as the bottom-up dispersion (or enslavement) of the self. Sensual power leads toward division. In an act of imagination, the soul then obtains a gignetical entity. The result is a senseless pursuit, one that involves a search for ever-new sensations and the satisfaction of passions. Man is only at the peak of νοητῆς οὐσίας when knowledge of himself is bounded into one:

Καθ' ἑαυτὴν δὲ ἡ ψυχὴ ὅταν ἰδεῖν ἐθέλῃ, μόνον ὁρῶσα τῷ συνεῖναι καὶ ἐν οὐσα τῷ ἐν εἶναι αὐτῷ οὐκ οἶεται πω ἔχειν ὃ ζητεῖ, ὅτι τοῦ νοουμένου μὴ ἕτερόν ἐστιν [...]. Ἐπεὶ τοίνυν ἐν ἐστιν ὃ ζητοῦμεν, καὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν τῶν πάντων ἐπισκοποῦμεν, τὰ γὰρ ὅταν καὶ τὸ πρῶτον, οὔτε πόρρω δεῖ γενέσθαι τῶν περὶ τὰ πρῶτα εἰς τὰ ἔσχατα τῶν πάντων πεσόντα, ἀλλ' ἰέμενον εἰς τὰ πρῶτα ἐπαναγαγεῖν ἑαυτὸν ἀπὸ τῶν αισθητῶν ἐσχάτων ὄντων, κακίας τε πάσης ἀπηλλαγμένον εἶναι ἅτε πρὸς

τὸ ἀγαθὸν σπεύδοντα γενέσθαι, ἐπὶ τε τὴν ἐν ἑαυτῷ ἀρχὴν ἀναβεβηκέναι καὶ ἐν ἐκ πολλῶν γενέσθαι ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐνὸς θεατὴν ἐσόμενον (En. VI, IX, 3).

It is the metaphysical One that suffices for every being, but never in an identical way. The ontological status of existence is manifested differently in sense things – differently in terms of substance (En. VI, II, II, 11). An apt example of this relationship is the incorporeal nature of mind. In Plotinus' metaphysics, every presence of an immaterial idea is marked by the disembodiment of the object on which it manifests itself. As such, the incorporeal substance is located without space or place – as if in a single point. Each part of it equals the whole. *Noῦς* is the *raison d'être* of first existence as a necessary entity: God in and for Himself. It appears as a binary unity, one that is attributed with existence (in the ontic sense). The first in itself is composite as a logical consequence of the substance resulting from thinking. This is because Being-Mind contains everything in itself as a noetic one-size-fits-all.

The creation of the world can be described as the antinaturalization of soul and idea, following which each thing separates according to the general principles of centripetal unity. The nature of this process is a mode of existence that consists in the fact that what constitutes a whole in the idea breaks down into a multiplicity of mutually external objects. The mortal being perishes, but the genus persists and effectively escapes death. Thirsty for salvation, individuals can cluster; they can help each other to form great social organisms. This is what civic altruism is all about. On the surface, it has a centrifugal direction, but, in fact, helps the whole progress along the path of ontic continuance :

Οὐ γὰρ ἀποτετμήμεθα οὐδὲ χωρὶς ἐσμεν, εἰ καὶ παρεμπεσοῦσα ἡ σῶματος φύσις πρὸς αὐτὴν ἡμᾶς εἴλκυσεν, ἀλλ' ἐμπνέομεν καὶ σωζόμεθα οὐ δόντος, εἴτ' ἀποστάντος ἐκείνου, ἀλλ' ἀεὶ χορηγοῦντος ἕως ἂν ἧ ὅπερ ἐστί (En. VI, IX, 9)³.

In the above distant analogy to the human Self, man – as the reality of actual thinking – discovers the subjective inner side. This side constitutes the restitution of the idea, in that man is outside of himself. As a separate phenomenon, his own Self is a consequence of his departure from the idea as a whole. In his finitude, he is not an entity for himself. He will only become one when the super-self (the soul) returns to the divine source. This twofold process of human becoming signifies a new, higher way of thinking, one that is conceived in substance. It goes beyond

3 Among Plotinus' many revelatory sayings, we also find some in which he describes the mind as the creative activity of power, life, and existence (En. VI, II, 7).

mortal being by recognizing in itself the infinite that relies on the literal self-knowledge of God⁴.

Plotinus did not only teach about the way down but also about conscious spiritual intuition. This is the (more and less) effective pursuit of everything spiritual and corporeal toward the Absolute. A directly animal nature is precisely that from which we should rise and also oppose. As we progress spiritually, our intellectual subjectivity disappears as well, until, finally, at the moment of ecstasy, all that remains is a feeling of blissful vision of blissfulness. This state of coming out of oneself can be described as the gift of the sacrifice of transcending oneself, and thus becoming a spiritual man in all his fullness. Remaining on the border of these two worlds, the self perceives the truth about itself. It is no longer just a rational animal. It must shed its previous habits because it has recognized the differences between what it is, what it should be, and what it is becoming.

Plotinus was well aware of the fact that human discursive thinking is immersed in finitude and shaped in its fashion. Even the calculating intellect's capacity is limited, which means that our cognitive acts remain incomplete; that is, distant from *νοητής ουσίας*⁵. The path of transformation is otherwise a higher level of self-knowledge. The subject of the act of thinking need not focus exclusively on finitude. Moreover, the fact that our reality is the spiritual order implies a commitment to act in terms of intellect. Truth implies the unity of thought and reality – of the subject understood as pure thought. Hence, calculative reason moving into finitude is lost by division; it alienates itself from knowledge of itself. This is why man's attainment of intellectual intuition represents the cognitive task of transforming discursive thinking into enlightened thinking.

According to the author of *Enneads*, we do not receive mental impressions from things (in the ordinary sense of the word) during sensory activities. He goes on to say that what we mean by the sensation of an apple's sweetness, for example, is different. What is different is the very thought of it or the idea of sweetness. There is no less significant difference between (a) the analysis of a particular phenomenon of sweetness (i.e., the impression that the phenomenon causes) and (b) judgment.

4 Ἡ τε οὖν ὑπόστασις αὐτῆ ἀπὸ νοῦ ὁ τε ἐνεργεῖα λόγος νοῦ αὐτῆ ὁρωμένου. Ὅταν γὰρ ἐνίδῃ εἰς νοῦν, ἐνδοθεν ἔχει καὶ οἰκεῖα αὐνοεῖ καὶ ἐνεργεῖ. Καὶ ταύτας μόνως δεῖ λέγειν ἐνεργείας ψυχῆς, ὅσα νοερῶς καὶ ὅσα οἰκοθεν· τὰ δὲ χειρῶ ἀλλοθεν καὶ πάθη ψυχῆς τῆς τοιαύτης (En. V, I, 3).

5 Μηδὲν δὲ ἔργον εἶναι αὐτῶ, ὅτι μηδὲν ἐπιβάλλει αὐτῶ ποιεῖν· ἀρκεῖ γὰρ αὐτὸς καὶ οὐδὲν δεῖ ζητεῖν παρ' αὐτὸν ὑπὲρ τὰ πάντα ὄντα· ἀρκεῖ γὰρ αὐτῶ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἂν αὐτὸς ὁ ἔστιν (En. VI, VII, 37). Ἄλλ' οὕσα δύναμις τοῦ γεννᾶν ἐφ' ἑαυτῆς ἐγέννα, καὶ ἡ ἐνεργεῖα αὐτῆς ἔστιν οὐσία, καὶ σύνεστι καὶ ἐν τῇ οὐσίᾳ, καὶ ἔστιν οὐχ ἕτερον ἢ νόησις καὶ ἡ οὐσία αὐτῆ καὶ αὐτῆ ἑαυτῆν νοεῖ ἢ φύσις, οὐχ ἕτερον, ἀλλ' ἢ λόγῳ, τὸ νοούμενον καὶ τὸ νοοῦν, πλῆθος ὄν, ὡς δέδεικται πολλαχῆ (En. VI, VII, 40). Κινδυνεύει γὰρ βοήθεια τὸ νοεῖν δεδῶσθαι ταῖς φύσεσι ταῖς θειοτέροις μὲν, ἐλάττωσι δὲ οὐσίαις, καὶ οἷον αὐταῖς τυφλαῖς οὐσίαις ὄμμα. Ὁ δ' ὀφθαλμὸς τί ἂν δέοιτο τὸ ὄν ὁρᾶν φῶς αὐτὸς ὄν; Ὁ δ' ἂν δέηται, δι' ὀφθαλμοῦ σκότον ἔχων παρ' αὐτῶ φῶς ζητεῖ (En. VI, VII, 42).

As such, the sensation itself will not relate solely to the *psyche*; it will not act on it as such, but neither will it be caused solely by sensory experience. There is no thing without content because what we perceive is neither an entity without form nor exclusively a creation of our thought (En. V, V, 1).

We can conclude that the topic under discussion is characterized in the context of modality, which is preceded by the senses. If so, then human intentionality does not exclude unconscious acts. This means that every impression is intentional, even if not all impressions are conscious. Thus, the nature of spiritual content is signified by its relation to itself (where we have a unity of “this” and “other”). But, if sensation is conscious, then it will be denied to all beings that do not possess this characteristic (or, more absurdly, consciousness will be attributed to all sensations). There is a significant disproportion between the sensation invoked and the content, which is the expression of what we apprehend through the action of *cogitare*.

Undeniably, man is capable of self-reflection. Also, mere sensation without the content of thought becomes an epiphenomenon for the thinking subject, one that speaks for the veracity of both his existence and the existence of all other beings. Of course, this is not sensation in the strict sense, but the omnipresent activity of a single moment: being (including its existence, thought, and consciousness). The phenomenon signaled will only be a starting point for the above relationship. The omnipresence of ontic activity is always before the activity of being (En. V, VI, 2; VI, VII, 16). It refers to the function of the intellect that encompasses our being, and it acts as an intermediate link for existence understood ontologically.

I do not think anyone will deny that consciousness and thinking refer to the so-called logical proof rather than the condition of existence. After all, someone who is alive does not need to be aware that he is alive. Similarly, someone who reads does not need to have an awareness of reading (even when he reads with strained attention). Indeed, thinking points to existence. However, in the context of ontological primacy, being seems to be the primary category for ontological considerations. It seems clear, then, that the moment of realizing being’s truth occurs in the present. It is clear that the truth of being is realized in the present moment. The memory of past existence does not add to the essence of being. Similarly, being is not made greater by talking about it. Rather, being is experienced in the state of existence one is currently in. This is because life desiring existence is about temporality. Existence is in it, and our past is thus irretrievably lost. It results that knowledge of our being is somehow suspended between mere sensation, present presence and intellectual discernment in the process of consciousness. The phenomenon of thinking is the basis of our humanity. But, on the grounds of ontology, it does not take precedence over *εἶναι*. The above rationale is a source of certainty for both (a) the

very existence of the phenomenon of thought and (b) a personal conviction related to the authenticity of the existence we experience. In this respect of being and feeling existence, the thinker's single thought should not be divided. Even if there were two elements here (thinking and that which thinks), it remains the case that there is one reality and one entity realizing the described activity. Plotinus discussed this at some length. He mentions in *Ennead* II that the νοῦς both necessarily possesses itself in thinking and sees itself (En. II, IX, 1). This is existence by reason because, in it, existence becomes the origin of spiritual being. Truly, it is ontical existence itself – ουσία. 'Full' is only that which remains filled. Not being a substance, the corporeal man constantly desires something else. This is because of the privation available (En. III, V, 8). Even if he is filled, he does not know how to maintain the proper restraint as he constantly seeks what he lacks. The polarity between what is full and what is defined encompasses all planes of human existence. At the same time, everyone must realize the inner need that causes a desire for transformation. Human subjectivity is not an end in itself, but a means to understand ourselves. We thereby realize self-knowledge, which refers the subject to a spiritual reality, one that conventionally transcends existence.

The attainment of νοητής ουσίας poses a cognitive challenge to man. The non-spatial place where this process occurs is the higher level of the psyche. This is the supersoul of spiritual intuition. It stands above all extensibility. It is not subject to the object of cognition and understanding – αἴσθησις – which refers to the sensory experience of perception. The process of spiritual growth consists in the fact that the inferior being begins to exist in that which is substantial. Then, we speak of a mystical experience of the self's dissolution. The 'I' locates itself in time, and the 'there' has no place or moment because everything exists indivisibly. Thus, the subject (as self-knowledge) detaches itself from individuality (as the object of the idea conceived). Seeking itself in sense-view, it must emerge from nature because it is itself the object form of the idea of the divine νοῦς. This detailed content of existence expands in a definite way into its 'other' so that it already exists as one. It is the mythical ἔν, which refers to transcendental unity. It relates to the return of that which is stuck in nature – to the timeless moment of the Absolute⁶.

6 Ὅταν δὲ τοῦτου εὐτυχῆσῃ ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ ἦκῃ πρὸς αὐτήν, μᾶλλον δὲ παρὸν φανῆ, ὅταν ἐκείνη ἐκνεύσῃ τῶν παρόντων καὶ παρασκευάσασα αὐτήν ὡς ὅτι μάλιστα καλὴν καὶ εἰς ὁμοιότητα ἐλθοῦσα – ἡ δὲ παρασκευὴ καὶ ἡ κόσμησις δῆλη πού τις παρασκευαζομένοις – ἰδοῦσα δὲ ἐν αὐτῇ ἐξαίφνης φανέντα – μεταξὺ γὰρ οὐδὲν οὐδ' ἔτι δύο, ἀλλ' ἐν ἅμφω· οὐ γὰρ ἂν διακρίναις ἔτι, ἕως πάρεστι· μίμησις δὲ τοῦτου καὶ οἱ ἐνταῦθα ἐρασταὶ καὶ ἐρώμενοι συγκρίναι θέλοντες – καὶ οὔτε σώματος ἔτι αἰσθάνεται, ὅτι ἔστιν ἐν αὐτῷ, οὔτε ἑαυτήν ἄλλο τι λέγει, οὐκ ἄνθρωπον, οὐ ζῷον, οὐκ ὄν, οὐδὲ πᾶν – ἀνόματος γὰρ ἡ τούτων πως θέα – καὶ οὐδὲ σχολὴν ἄγει πρὸς αὐτὰ οὔτε θέλει, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸ ζητήσασα ἐκείνῳ παρόντι ἀπαντᾷ κάκεινο ἄντ' αὐτῆς βλέπει· τίς δὲ οὐσα βλέπει, οὐδὲ τοῦτο σχολάζει ὁρᾶν (En. VI, VII, 34).

For Plotinus, God is not a postulate of theoretical knowledge. After all, substance is spoken of in terms of the abolition of being's spatial magnitude (although not in the sense that nothing is preserved from this abolition). This means that the only possibility was apophatic determination by negation. The individual 'I' can neither comprehend Him nor make Him apparent. The Absolute, as the basis for everything, confirms itself through self-determination grounded in an act of will. This act of will signifies its very being, or as Plotinus states, τὸ ὑπὲρ τῆς οὐσίας (beyond being):

Εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, ὡς ἄρα ἐβούλετο, οὕτω καὶ ἔστιν. Οὐ μᾶλλον ἄρα ὡς πέφυκε βούλεται τε καὶ ἐνεργεῖ, ἢ ὡς βούλεται τε καὶ ἐνεργεῖ ἡ οὐσία ἐστὶν αὐτοῦ [...]. Εἰ γὰρ ἡ βούλησις παρ' αὐτοῦ καὶ οἷον ἔργον αὐτοῦ, αὕτη δὲ ταυτὸν τῇ ὑποστάσει αὐτοῦ, αὐτὸς ἂν οὕτως ὑποστήσας ἂν εἴη αὐτόν- ὥστε οὐχ ὅπερ ἔτυχεν ἐστὶν, ἀλλ' ὅπερ ἐβουλήθη αὐτός (En. VI, XVIII, 13).

The negation alluded to earlier presents itself in terms of the cognitive end of self-knowledge. This is the apognitive impossibility of showing the Absolute, which is transcendent of existence and yet somehow accessible via spiritual insight or intuition. This intensifies the concept of ontic being, in which thought and being have not yet separated. Yet, we still speak of the two as one. Plotinus realized that the world of spiritual entities shows itself (in its fullness) when man opposes the external world and separates the subject from the view – the concept from the image. The philosopher's question about the essence of self-knowledge expresses man's very desire and need. Indeed, man's intersubjective acts, thoughts, and wants define his unity.

The first step on the path of spiritual intuition involves developing a clear and rational intentional consciousness. This consciousness manifests itself in the curbing of blind admiration for insignificant goods. The mystery of the noetic world does not consist in ideas, symmetry, or numbers, but in the revelation of a supra-spatial and timeless ontic being. According to Plotinus, goodness (together with a vision of the archetypal world) is more important than academic scholarship, which only aids the self in its purification. Implicit in the concept of self-knowledge is the ability to transcend the finite 'I' in an infinitely transcendental experience. It is never final or end-oriented. Action facilitates the revelation of the truth concerning the liberation of the self from egocentric constraints. Herein, the 'I' recognizes itself as an intelligence, one that is aware of its freedom in the act of self-knowledge. Spiritual empowerment of man is manifested in an eternally universal humanity. Passing from the stage of consciousness to the moment of self-knowledge, there is a transformation of that which is subjective into that which is ontic and substantial. The

secret of salvific initiation is the discovery of reality in which the thinking subject becomes one with what was previously hidden or unknown. Plotinus uses terms like “ecstasy,” “delight,” and “state” to show unity with the Absolute. Through an ecstatic and transcendent vision, he transforms the perception of gignetical being into an intuitive experience of seeing. At the same time, the philosopher notes that it is impossible to achieve this state by conventional methods of description or calculation (En. VI, IX, 11).

Plotinus placed special emphasis on the momentousness of being and the idea that the substance *νοητής ουσίας* is the source of creative and eternal power. The Socratic maxim “*γνώθι σεαυτόν*” plays a key role in the process of self-knowledge. For the philosopher, it becomes a signpost on the ontic journey of the self toward the Absolute. The self-knowledge of the soul in Plotinus’ teachings has a profound existential and subjective character. The transformation of a being burdened by the senses’ limitations into a supramental being is the most important aspect of cognition. This is especially the case in the context of the limitation of the sensory world, which can act as a barrier to divine humanity’s presence.

The philosopher shows that the metaphysical principle of unity is manifested in the subject’s ontology. Mysticism is, thus, oriented toward the introspective study of the process of human metamorphosis. Phenomenologically, mysticism can be thought of as the pursuit of a union with God and discovering Him in the most intimate area of existence. This process is portrayed as a phenomenon of authentic transformation and return. It can be accomplished through the abandonment of egoistic tendencies – through the act of transcending oneself and loving divine virtue until one reaches a fundamental continuum with the first and indivisible all-unity.

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SUMMARY

The main issue of this paper is the role of νοῦς, or mind, as a condition for νοητής ουσίας. The activity of self-conscious self-knowledge within the framework of the noetic view of the Absolute is the ultimate and most important category for the author. Plotinus transcends the traditional dualism of being and non-being by showing that mind and soul are integral components of immaterial reality. In doing so, he makes it clear that human self-knowledge has an existential-subjective quality, based on the capacity for spiritual intuition. Discovering and developing this truth leads to transcendence, which is the criterion for transforming an entity burdened by externality into a supra-gignified entity, one that is free from the limitations of time and space. The sensual world, represented by the κόσμος αισθητός, can be an obstacle to learning about one's own nature and realizing the path toward liberation from the yoke of the animal self. Of course, being, understood in a spiritual context, has ontological priority here. However, an entity that is limited by external conditions - can bring itself all the way up to intellectual life through knowledge of itself. It manifests itself in the ability of spiritual intuition and thus salvific metamorphosis toward the timeless and supra-ontic Absolute. For Plotinus, this spiritual process of development represents an important truth about man. On the noetic view of the One, the identity of the self implies knowledge of the self in God, which is the central mystery of transformation and return to the supernatural source.