
PLOTINUS AS A KIND OF DEEP ECOLOGIST?

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This paper examines the extent to which the cosmology presented in the Enneads can support an environmental philosophy that would be of contemporary interest. Four major features of the deep ecology position of Arne Naess are identified. Comparable features in the position elaborated by Plotinus are identified. It is argued that, although the dominant interest of Plotinus was the educational ascent of the soul to nous and the One, his cosmology has an evaluative depth and grounding that can be used to support significant environmental principles that are importantly comparable to deep ecology and of interest to contemporary thinking about the environment.

1.

I think it is fair to say that the Enneads has left most readers with the impression that Plotinus would be an unlikely candidate for an environmental advocate.¹ He does not appear to be positively disposed to the material world and his priorities do not seem to be supportive of concerns that characterize contemporary environmental thinking. The dominant repeated theme in his writings involves the quest to realize unity with the One which is not only beyond the natural environment but beyond every other kind of being as well.

In order to facilitate proper philosophical aspiration, Plotinus employs what might be called a narrative of contempt for the world. The imperative is to turn away from sense-experience, to eliminate attachments, and to disidentify with affairs of the world that are mistakenly but routinely taken to be real and valuable. This type of anti-external, world-devaluing mystical disposition would seem to be anti-social, anti-political, anti-embodiment, as well as anti-environment. To care about such matters would be an enormously consequential error, which Plotinus seems vigilantly on guard to prevent.

2.

The biography of Plotinus supplied by Porphyry, however, contains information that is surprisingly at odds with this narrative of contempt

for the world. Plotinus is described as a highly respected person in Rome. Porphyry not only touts--as one might expect from a close associate--the sageliness, the intellectual acuity, the powers of self-discipline and concentration of Plotinus,² but we also see displayed his discernment of peoples' character, his caring social involvement, and his willingness to be seriously responsive to others.³ Plotinus was not only accessible as an educator, with his school meetings open to anyone, he is described as being "gentle...and at the disposal of all who had any sort of acquaintance with him" (*Life* 9.19). He was known to associate with a diverse number of prominent people from the Emperor Gallienus and his wife to poets, orators, senators, and doctors. He also acted as an arbitrator in very many people's disputes without, says Porphyry, ever making an enemy of any official during his 26-year residence in Rome.

Additional noteworthy features of his demeanor include the fact that he welcomed women as serious, legitimate students (*Life* 9.1). Some became long-time associates devoted to philosophy. Also, because he was held high esteem, Plotinus was asked to accept responsibility for the guardianship of children and young people (*Life* 9.5). As a consequence, Porphyry says that his household was always "full of lads and maidens." Plotinus supervised their general welfare, especially, it is said, when he recognized that they would likely have no interest in philosophy. Porphyry notes that Plotinus actually attended to the repeated revisions of the schoolwork of some of these young people. Finally, Plotinus disapproved of eating the flesh of even domestic animals. He was a vegetarian to such an extent that he refused to take medicines made from animal products (*Life* 2.1-5).

This biographical information is quite remarkable. One would never suspect such behavior on the basis of reading the *Enneads*. The proper treatment of women, children, and animals is not only without explanation or defense, the issues never appear in his writings. If, however, we suppose that Plotinus is a living exemplar of the ideas presented in the *Enneads*, as Porphyry, for example, does, it is clear that the quest for mystical unity did not require a lifestyle of an isolated hermit or even an attitude of indifference to the ongoing affairs of the world. Plotinus was a highly responsible, stable, resourceful, and engaged figure in Rome. From Porphyry we see that the narrative of contempt and the advocacy of resolute, fixed concentration upon intellect (*nous*) and beyond, on the one hand, and a life dedicated to the welfare of others--explicitly

including women, children, and animals--are not at odds or irreconcilable, but are in some fashion conjoined, integral, and concurrent.

I am not going to suggest that Porphyry failed to mention that Plotinus was the originator of the Green Party for environmental protection once he established himself in Rome or that the projected but never realized city of Platonopolis--which Plotinus himself had requested of Emperor Gallienus (*Life* 12.1)--would have included a charter setting forth environmentally friendly policies. There is no evidence that Plotinus was or had any intention of becoming an environmental activist. But it is problematical to fault a thinker for not advocating a standpoint on an issue prior to that issue being recognized as worthy of serious consideration. A philosophical view may very well contain principles and values that have direct and consequential implications for problems that were not (and perhaps could not reasonably have been) considered by the thinker who advocated those principles. Contemporary thinkers concerned with the racism or sexism of past philosophical and religious systems, for example, have shown that these positions merit reassessment on the basis of principles contained in those systems that can sometimes be shown to oppose the very statements espoused or presumed by the authors of those systems.

3.

A credible case for significant environmental concern cannot rest upon biographical evidence external to the writings of Plotinus, however. When the internal evidence includes material that appears to be contrary to a high valuation conferred by Plotinus on embodiment, worldly affairs, and materiality, the arguments must be based upon principles that are central and fundamental to the system of thought advocated in the *Enneads*. Are there such principles?

Several points need to be made prior to approaching this issue more directly. First, the *Enneads* must be understood to be highly specialized narrowly focused writings intended primarily for advanced members of his school. They are something like carefully considered responses to graduate seminars, written out to clarify and explain in further detail what had been the subject matter of previous lectures and discussions. The argumentation and explanations contained in the *Enneads*, secondly, have the

overriding goal of providing the means for making (understanding, explaining) the journey of the soul from everyday historical and embodied experience to the ultimate One (Good, Source, Divine). Philosophy, for Plotinus (as for Plato and others), is a personal and educational transformation of the soul, a therapeutic enterprise, a soteriology. The dominant strategy in the *Enneads* is to sour the material-temporal elements of experience and to sweeten the eidetic (transcendent, eternal). This procedure is captured in the following:

"One must therefore speak in two ways... One shows how contemptible are the things now honoured by the soul...and the other teaches and reminds the soul how high its birth and value..." (V.1.1.20f.)

If one raises questions about the environment within the educative-soteriological context of the *Enneads*, a reorientation to the text is required. What can be identified as the *ascent* vector (dynamic, movement) of *eros* for unity with the One commands, not unjustifiably, the spotlight of attention in the *Enneads*. It is, after all, at the heart of the injunction "to know oneself" for Plato and Plotinus. To become virtuous (*arete*), to achieve happiness (*eudaimonia*) or completeness, the One/Good is the genuine *telos* (end or goal) to be realized. It is supposed by Plotinus that nothing else in experience can be identified properly without the "inward appropriation" of this philosophical itinerary. This vector, in addition, is described as being inherent or operative throughout the cosmos, in all things.

But, this ascent vector cannot be taken in isolation. The cosmological and ontological dynamic, although asymmetrical because it depends upon the One, is nevertheless bi-directional. Its "other," as inherent in and co-constitutive of all things, is the *descent* vector of reality. The ability to realize the place, importance, and proper functioning of self and all else is also dependent upon this other cosmic, specifying, concretizing, and individualizing dynamic. The descent is built into reality as the productive, formative, expansive manifestation of power that flows (radiates, unfolds: V.1.6; V.2.7) endlessly from the ultimate source, the consequence and goal of which is the organization of the material world.⁴ The basic mission of this fundamental trajectory and endowment of power aims to impart (produce) order, goodness, and beauty to the fullest, most complete extent possible. It should be recognized that Plotinus included but did not emphasize in the *Enneads* this pro-cosmic (descent, formative) aspect of his own metaphysics.⁵

Finally, if Plotinus has value within the context of environmental philosophy today it will be on the basis of his distinctive ontology and cosmology which supports both a view of nature as a kind of holistic organic continuum and an integrative mystical unity view of reality, i.e., a view advocating an intimate and unifying relationship between humans, the One, and all things. It is this body of information that can serve as a resource when confronted with environmental problems of the sort that we face today, e.g., global alteration of the environment, soil degradation, ozone depletion, deforestation, species extinction, pollution of air, water, land, and so on.

4.

I will argue that the positive accounts of the cosmos in the writings of Plotinus are required by the basic operational principles of his worldview. These principles reveal and clearly establish the necessity of a non-anthropocentric, pro-environmental position. In effect, the descent vector is of equal status in the bi-directional operation of reality. As such, the ontology and cosmology of the *Enneads* are surprisingly responsive to environmental concerns today and amount to a version of what has come to be called deep ecology.

A noteworthy consequence of this argument is that Plotinus cannot rightly be understood as a monistic, inward, or introverted mystic. His conception of unity has two sides or directions, so to speak, each of which is required for a full-fledged realization of self and reality.⁶ Unity with the One, as if that were the whole story of the way the One and self "is," would disregard this teleological, normative, providential aspect of the One. This realization is, I think, disclosed (exemplified) in the account of Plotinus' life. But he himself has misled readers by his narrow portrayal of the priorities of a good life set forth in the *Enneads*. Yet, his own detailed, comprehensive, and systematic cosmology corrects the distortions evident in his preoccupation with elaborating (and enacting) the details of the curriculum directed to union with *psyche* (Soul), *nous* (Intellect) and the One. These counterbalancing and required details of an adequate account of the nature and operation of reality and self that are included in his writings deserve more careful appraisal, even when Plotinus' own personal predilections seem to impel him to emphasize a rather exclusivist mode of presentation focused on the ascent.

5.

The features of deep ecology that I have in mind as a basis of comparison with Plotinus are set forth in the work of Arne Naess.⁷ The major tenets are what Naess identifies as (1) a relational, total-field perspective which is the basis for an holistic, systems, interdependent, integrated conception of the environment, (2) self-realization as a natural disposition common to all beings, (3) an identification on the basis of (1) and (2), that leads a person to an environment-wide conception of self-realization and value, and, finally, (4) the aesthetic richness of the world as another feature of the proper self-orientation to the value inherent in nature.

The first point requires a conception of nature that is *systemic, contextual, and holistic*. It denies assumptions about isolated individuals or independence of kinds (Naess 79). The identity of anything is interconnected and its existence is interdependent. There is thereby a deep affiliation of every individual with other things. And, within this field perspective, even though each individual and species will have unique features, capacities, and functions, any judgment regarding specialness, privilege, or priority must be relativized and seen within the context and operation of the greater environment, the encompassing systems or regions of nature.

The second point, *self-realization*, serves as the basis for the affirmation that all things have inherent or intrinsic value, where the flourishing or optimal functioning of things (as individuals and as eco-systems) is the primary, basic value or norm. This deep grounding is especially obvious in living things, but it is built into and common to the constitution of all things. This, in turn, leads to the principle of ecospherical egalitarianism, i.e., that perspective that all things equally have value in the affairs of nature and are required for the ongoing flourishing of the ecosystem as a whole. And, because the functioning of individuals and systems depends upon the fullness, richness, and diversity of things, these features too are affirmed as valued (normative) conditions.

The third point, *identification*, follows from the acceptance of holism and self-realization. As a deep feature and value for all beings, the distinctive project of self-realization for humans in particular leads not only to the goal of individual optimal flourishing, or to the goal of species flourishing, i.e., the good of humanity, but also to the affirmation of the value of flourishing of the greater

"environmental self." The norm of what is to take precedence is transformed to encompass the optimal self-realization of all things as a part of one's own (environmental) self. Even though other beings and things may remain unaware of the smaller-bigger (micro-macro) constituency of this greater self, humans can achieve a more extensive explicit consciousness of this expansive horizon. Because we have a locus of identity in our individuality, family, community, nation, species, as well as in our environment, the conditions of the environment become conditions of our extended self. As such, the normative significance of self-realization cannot be reduced to individual or species preferences regarding well-being.

To identify with others, says Naess, leads one to care for what has become a part of one's expanded self. Care leads to the acknowledgment of entitlement and to respect that is warranted by all things. These assessments lead to a transformation in the identity of things inasmuch as every thing is both its narrower and wider self. It also leads, Naess finds, to a "realistic egalitarian attitude" (Naess 176) where the need to protect the richness and diversity of the environment is done for the sake of the environment, i.e., because of its inherent or intrinsic worth. But it is also the case that such protection is extended because the environment has become part of one's own extended self.

The awareness of one's symbiotic participation in nature transforms the basis for identifying and assessing all things. The constitution and well being of "self" should thus comprise the goal (*telos*) of both the narrow and wider conceptions of self. The distinctions between perspectives turn out to be on equal footing (egalitarian) in the sense that none can simply be excluded nor can any be allocated exalted or exclusive ranking. There is, says Naess, an obligation to care universally for all things.

"The greater our comprehension of our togetherness with other beings, the greater the identification, and the greater care we will take. The road is also opened thereby for delight in the well-being of others and sorrow when harm befalls them. We seek what is best for ourselves, but through the extension of the self, our 'own' best is also that of others" (Naess 175).

Naess, it must be emphasized, clearly understands that the principle of self-realization involves conflicts of interest that cannot be eliminated. "...Egalitarianism defined in terms of equal rights," or "the equal right to live and blossom," does not deny the reality or

legitimacy of killing, exploitation, and suppression (Naess 28, 167, 170-176). Sensitive "ecospheric belonging" rightfully affirms the value of benefit for all. But given the natural needs of living beings and the various limitations of material conditions, such interdependency also "implies duties which sometimes involve killing or injuring non-humans" (Naess 170) as well as habitat alterations that damage, debilitate, or eliminate life-forms and existing natural processes and patterns. Human decisions involving such actions, however, are serious, they have moral weight, and they should be acted upon responsibly through a careful consideration of the norms involved. The general (ideal) guideline is: Do not inflict unnecessary suffering or damage. Or, following a Kantian formulation: Do not reduce anything simply to a means. This is to be upheld even though suffering, damage, exploitation, and death are hardly avoidable. (Naess 171)

The realism of such egalitarianism thus includes self-preservation and individual and species discrimination by humans as these dispositions emerge out of the self-realization process. But these dispositions get adjusted and have to accommodate to the identification process as the narrow self expands to become the environmental self. Proper education involves this transformation in the boundaries of self and a rather radical re-adjustment to the recognition of value beyond what one initially presumed to be true, i.e., an ethic of narrow self-realization or a broader human centered ethical perspective.

As a final, fourth, point, I simply note briefly that Naess also finds the world so conceived to provide the basis for such *aesthetic values* as joy, loyalty, solidarity, majesty, equanimity, beauty.

The depth of such environmentalism includes, then, metaphysical, ethical, and aesthetical dimensions. A view of the universe that is sensitive to integrated unities and holism, self-realization, self-identification, and aesthetic richness, leads to an ethics of obligation to protect and preserve the environment. This is not simply a pragmatic or utilitarian assessment but one that is grounded ("deeply") in the experience of the nature of the environment itself and its (inherent and co-relational) value.

These four general features of deep ecology will be used as a basis of comparison with features of Plotinus' s conception of cosmos in an effort to clarify what, in fact, his position is regarding environmental ethics.

6.

The basic argument regarding the environment from the *Enneads* can be set forth in a rather straightforward way. The rationale for this worldview is not novel. Its logical makeup follows from basic distinctions observed by Plato and Aristotle. Starting with the world, one tracks down what seems to be required in order to account for the range of characteristics that make up this experience.⁸

The route of analysis (or the dialectical sequence) moves from (1) ordinary sense perception (2) to formal factors discerned in sense experience that comprise ideas (forms, principles) which explain what is perceived (3) to that which lies beyond as the basic unchanging determinant of all such experience. For Plato it requires the Good beyond being; for Aristotle it requires the prime mover(s). For Plotinus it means that the primal One is the ultimate source the denial of which would result in an incomplete explanation when a complete one is available. Given the existence of the material world (as a manifold), one is driven to affirm the One. A denial of the One is impossible because self-defeating both existentially and logically (See, for example, V.4.1.5 f.).⁹ The argument is, in effect, one based upon the principle of sufficient reason. The logic, both *a priori* and inductive, is assumed to represent reality, to exhibit what and how it can be known and the values that apply to it.¹⁰

The theoretical framework of the *Enneads* contains two primal components that constitute reality arranged in a bi-polar arrangement. There is (i) the One (and what follows from it, i.e., Intellect (*nous*) and Soul (*psyche*)) and (ii) matter (*hyle*). The material universe (*kosmos*) that results from this juxtaposition is a consequence of the productive vitality of the One.¹¹ The motive power and formative agency is provided from the One through *nous* (via *eide*) and (*psyche* (via *logoi* and life). Matter is limited in its capacity to be receptive so that it makes possible only partial representation of the formative forces. But inasmuch as the One is the ultimate empowering source (*arche*) and is itself supremely good, only good can result from its influence.

Since the world does result from the influence of the One as supremely Good,¹² this world is, for Plotinus, the best that it can be--in formal, structural features such as principles (laws, patterns, arrangements, processes), in fullness (impetus to richness of detail, diversity), and in excellence of qualities such as life, justice, and beauty (See, e.g., VI.7.9). As a material organization, the cosmos as

a whole deserves the highest ranking. Given the limitations of corporeality and its matrix of space-time-motion, this is the best possible world.

Plotinus' critical response to Gnostic negativism is also clear evidence of his assessment of the *kosmos* (See II.9). He faults them on three important and interrelated counts: (a) they condemn the world/cosmos, (b) they assume an arrogantly high appraisal of themselves and their superior so-called *gnosis*, and (c) they are indifferent to the task of tending and purifying the soul "here below" and thereby do not care about right conduct or the life of virtue. His disagreement on each of these points shows that right reason (of a cultivated self or sage) is able to discern that the world has positive value.

"But if someone who sees beauty excellently represented in a face is carried to the higher world, will anyone be so sluggish in mind and so immovable that, when he sees all the beauties in the world of sense, all its good proportion and the mighty excellence of its stars, for all their remoteness, he will not thereupon think, seized with reverence, "What wonders, and from what a source?" If he did not, he would neither have understood this world here nor seen that higher world" (II.9.16).

The intentional participation of a person in this material world, in a properly disposed way, is part of the realization of the good life. The *kosmos* involves "divine providence" and care which "extends to this world and to anything and everything" (II.9.16). Humans are not given privileged status or preferential treatment in this cosmology because the "providential care is much more of wholes than of parts." The sage, as one who understands this, will exercise piety toward the *kosmos* (II.9.16). The sage will not expect preferential treatment from the world for self or other humans. Neither will the sage degrade or be indifferent to the world but will function so as to increase and enhance the quality of life of the material environment.

For Plotinus, the four ontological components (regions, dimensions) of cosmos, Soul, Intellect, and One are (a) different and irreducible in nature, (b) they are linked to one another in a sequential (interactive but not symmetrical) relationship of dependency and representation beginning with the One, and (c) the relationships are such that there is representational participation

which involves continuity and co-presence of these four. The four ontological constituents are not alienated from one another, even though they retain their distinctive features (or identities). The material world constantly participates in Soul, Soul in Intellect, Intellect in the One; and the One constantly generates or radiates and sustains Intellect, which generates and sustains Soul, which generates and sustains the world. The world, then, exists as the *material base* for ideal representation--including every portion according to its capacity; Soul is the *life base*; Intellect is the *noetic* (eidetic/contemplative) *base*. These are ever on going features of the process aspect of reality. As stable and everlasting ontological structures, they function as dynamic powers (activities, forces) involved in their own way of being.¹³

Plotinus continues to warn about the misleading and yet inevitable use of spatial (object or perception based) language as a way to refer to Soul, Intellect, the One. Since they are immaterial and not subject to the conditions of space-time-change, it is not proper to describe them as either existing or not existing or as constituting a hierarchy like levels of a physical structure. For Plotinus this means that, in a stricter sense, one is obliged to say that Soul, Intellect, and One are everywhere, there is no place where they are not, and yet, of course, they are also nowhere and at no time. Or, again, the One, for example, is completely unaffected, self-sufficient, unchanging, etc., but is also flowing out to constitute the reality that comprises Intellect, Soul, and world. Although Plotinus prefers to say that the cosmos exists "in" Soul, and Soul "in" *nous*, all of these dualistic, opposing distinctions amount to an artful way of shifting the perspective in order to remind us that the juxtaposition between the two orders of the One and matter is unprecedented, one of ontological difference, and yet the cosmos goes on as a result of such an interface of orders of reality. The main point, in any case, is that the world is determined by, akin to, always intimately involved with, and constituted of both orders, One and matter. The differences are real and irreducible. But so are the co-presence, integration and continuity. Both aspects are to be authenticated and respected by the truly virtuous person.

7.

The principle that reveals most about how to understand Plotinus' conception of the cosmos (earth, nature, environment), I think, is the principle of the generative power (productivity, fruition, creativity) of

the One. This feature is a determinative component, to the extent possible, in the operation of everything. The *Enneads* contains many different formulations of this. Plotinus says, for example,

"[it] is in every nature to produce what comes after it and to unfold itself as a seed... [this] had to go on forever, until all things have reached the ultimate possible limit [impelled] by the power itself, which sends them out and cannot leave anything without a share of itself" (IV.8.6.7).

"Now when anything else comes to perfection we see that it produces, and does not endure to remain by itself, but makes something else. This is true not only of things which have choice, but of things which grow and produce without choosing to do so, and even lifeless things, which impart themselves to others as far as they can: as fire warms, snow cools, and drugs act on something else in a way corresponding to their own nature--all imitating the First Principle as far as they are able by tending to everlastingness and generosity" (V.4.1.27).

All things complete themselves by generating (transmitting, producing) representative instances. The dynamism of the One flows out (radiates, unfolds, disseminates) to result in the noetic/eidetic realm (hypostasis), and this in turn generates Soul which empowers the material realm into a well-formed world. The analogies Plotinus frequently relies upon to demonstrate the function of the One include an ever-flowing spring, a growing plant or tree, or the sun radiating light. But however helpful or problematic these models may be, Plotinus is very clear about the generative results. Of this cosmos so conceived, he says,

"it is not proper for anyone to speak ill of even this universe as not being beautiful or the best of all things which have body...[it is] a whole, all beautiful and self-sufficient and friends with itself and with its parts, both the more important and the lesser, which are all equally well adapted to it...one must consider the parts in relation to the whole, to see if they are harmonious and in accord with it..." (III.2.3.1 ff.).

When Plotinus allows the universe to speak from its own perspective, it says such things as the following:

"Everything in me seeks after the Good, but each attains it in proportion to its own power...some things appear to participate only in being [existence], others in life, others...have sense-perception, others...reason, and others the fullness of life. One must not demand equal gifts in things which are not equal." (III.2.3.32 f.)

Two senses of 'equality' are observed here. There is, first, equality within or as a part of the whole, a kind of equality of participation and contribution. A thing is equal to any other thing because it has a place in the world, functioning in its particular niche, and displaying its own "gifts." The material order is interlinked, composed of many complex causal networks, where each thing has equality of status in that arrangement by contributing whatever it does. Different things function differently and are not simply replaceable by others. It would be wrong to say that one thing or kind of being is more important than another in the operation of a whole. The second sense of 'equality' is equality of nature or of rank. Because things are not the same or equal by nature, even within a kind or species, Plotinus denies that things are equal in this second sense. Humans, for example, differ from plants and animals; they also differ among themselves in capacities of body, soul, character, reason, life activities, and so on (e.g., IV.3.8.8).

It is important to see that these claims can be maintained without incompatibility. Discrimination and hierarchy based upon natural differentiation (or function) and proper deference to such differentiation within the whole can and should go together. Description is correlated to evaluative (or normative) status in the *Enneads*.¹⁴ In an important sense, everything has a standing of equality *and* inequality, one by reference to the whole and the second by reference (comparatively) to other considerations.

Bearing on this distinction is another one related to teleology. Although the world, for Plotinus, is organized with everything having a *telos* according to its nature and as disposed to the One, he does not mean to claim that the world operates according to superimposed conscious design intended by the One. Strictly speaking, it cannot be said that the One thinks, plans, has purposes or goals. But from the One comes those determining eidetic (or noetic) elements and formative powers. That this happens and does so in the way that it does is a source of wonder, Plotinus acknowledges, but it is not to be thought of as either intended or

arbitrary. Teleology in the organizational structure of material beings happens as a matter of course, due to the determinative "outflow" from the One. *Nous* is supremely rational, Soul is a rationally determined life force, and the material world in its arrangement and operation is the product of these influences. This accounts for why the cosmos is rational, i.e., why it operates according to principles that are goal oriented. Each thing is, therefore, to the extent that it can be according to its nature, a teleological structure caught up in an incredibly complex network of other teleological structures, aiming to fulfill their potential. Virtue is itself defined on this basis.

In this context, Plotinus is very much aware that many things, including the cosmos as a whole, are not able or not able optimally to realize their natural goals.¹⁵ *Telos* is always compromised by material conditions and the restricted possibilities that can be realized within this one particular world order. It is also evident to Plotinus, in this context, that the universe is not organized for the purpose of fulfilling human needs or preferences. He says,

"the life of the universe does not serve the purposes of each individual but of the whole...." (IV.4.39.30).

"each thing in the All, according to how it is in nature and disposition... contributes to the whole and serves its purposes and has its own proper rank and utility...." (IV.4.45).

Plotinus thinks of humans as occupying "the middle place between gods and beasts, and [they] incline now one way, now the other..." (III.2.8.9). But, "man is a noble (*kalon*) creation, as far as he can be noble, and being woven into the All, has a part which is better than that of other living things, of all, that is, which live on the earth" (III.2.9.27 f.). In addition to the distinction of "rank and utility" in the above quote, we see again a distinction between two senses of status, one as woven in the All and the other as related to other things on earth. In this way, Plotinus clearly recognizes that the good of nature involves a hierarchy of beings, each adding to the good of the earth and the cosmos as a whole.

"The formative principle did not make everything gods...not out of grudging meanness but by a reason containing all the rich variety of the intelligible world" (III.2.11.7 ff.).

Notice in the following quotation, the sensibility and attention to the detail of the organization of nature.

"...the universal order is forever...[it] extends to everything, even to the smallest, and the art (*techne*) is wonderful which appears, not only in the divine beings [i.e., the stars] but also in the things which one might have supposed providence would have despised for their smallness, for example the workmanship which produces wonders in rich variety in ordinary animals, and the beauty of appearances which extends to the fruits and even the leaves of plants, and their beauty of flower which comes so effortlessly, and their delicacy and variety, and that all this has not been made once and come to an end but is always being made as the powers above move in different ways over this world. ...it brings together beauty and justice in its workings." (III.2.23.18 ff.).

Plotinus observes further that the diversity of nature includes both conflict and coordination. Nature contains a "rich variety," " manifold life," "ceaselessly making beautiful and shapely living creatures." All things, he says, are "parts of the single universal living being, and the All agrees with itself...even as patterns are made out of conflict and opposition...which gives it structure" (III.2.16). Nature is an ever-going productive activity, with a drive for diversity (differentiation) and richness (abundance) as well as unity (III.2.17). Yet, organizational structure emerges out (or proceeds by means) of "conflict and opposition."

These observations are, I think, very important. The "beauty of flower which comes so effortlessly" is in fact a result of antagonistic forces. In addition, each occurrence in nature is related to occurrences that precede and follow from it in a sequential determinate manner. In this way, the sequence is one that involves not simply order but also, for Plotinus, justice. Things are "right" in their individual vectors as well as within the context of all vectors that make up the composite world.

Continuity within the orders, from Intellect to Soul to environment, can be seen in the formative factor of *logos*. The hierarchical correlation goes from *eide* (ideas or forms in *nous*) to *logos* (rational principle) in Soul to regulated patterns or structures in the cosmos. This is the basis for our disposition to understand

discursively, cognitively, the principles that are determinative of the nature of the cosmos. Plotinus observes that this continuity is also accessible by way of sympathy with things. There is an empathic discernment of the operation of nature that is beyond ("below") rational cognition--or is rational in the mode of sympathetic sensibility. The cosmos has, says Plotinus, "an internal self-communication" with itself (IV.4.35.9). This low-level degree of rationality extends to include everything, even what we ordinarily consider to be lifeless things.

"...different things in the Whole live in different ways, but we do not say that anything is alive which does not move itself perceptibly; but each thing of this sort has a hidden life; and the thing which is perceptibly alive is composed of parts which are not perceptibly alive but contribute wonderful powers to the life of a living thing of his kind." (IV.4.36.17)

There are, he maintains, hidden wonderful powers even in those things that appear to be without life. Even as a poor trace of an ideal, an "inanimate" material thing participates in being, life, and *logos*. Distant and diminished though it may be, it still has "a share in divine things through its kinship (*suggeneian*) and consubstantiality (*homoousion*)" (IV.7.10.19.).

In language closely paralleling Plato, Plotinus says that Soul, "desiring to impart order and beauty according to the pattern which it sees in Intellect, is as if pregnant by the intelligibles and laboring to give birth, and so is eager to make, and constructs the world" (IV.7.13.5). Elsewhere, "the souls and the works are in harmony with each other; in harmony in such a way that a unity comes from them, even if it is a unity produced from opposites" (III.3.1).

The cosmos is, according to this perspective, a single multiplex living thing with distinct parts, and each of the things in it acts according to its own nature while being all the same in the whole (III.3.1). Circumstances, he says, are woven into a chain of causation (III.3.2). Natures are not equal but they have an equal place in the operation of things.

Another important contention advanced by Plotinus is that "making" (*poiesis*) is what contemplation does in the form of *logos*. Although making is a lower activity in comparison to the pure activity of contemplation, it is nevertheless to be understood as a form of

contemplation, a form of contemplative fruition. Contemplation involves a bi-directional activity, towards the One and also toward the material stuff of the world. Soul resides in *nous* and also extends its powers by going forth always and everywhere disposed to form matter in the best way that it can.¹⁶ In this way, Plotinus is able to make the otherwise astonishing statement that "All things come from contemplation and are contemplation" (III.8.7).

"For when living things, too, produce, it is the rational principles (*logoi*) within which move them, and this is an activity of contemplation, the birth pain of creating many forms and many things to contemplate and filling all things with rational principles, and a kind of endless contemplation, for creating is bringing a form into being, and this is filling all things with contemplation." (III.8.7.14)

To envision the world as the praxis of contemplation is incredibly challenging and very far from a *dégradant* perspective on the environment. Again, Plotinus says that the formative forces (of Soul and Intellect)

"had it in them to belong to the universe, and to care for it and bring it into existence and direct it, and in one way or another, to make it...animals and plants share in reason and soul and life...the All is a single living being...[with all the parts] excellently disposed..." (III.2.7.24 f.).

Through the productive power of the One (III.8.10), all of this follows to produce a network of kinships so that the world operates..."for the coordination and completion of the whole," involving "chains of causation and ordering" (III.2.5.12-15).

Plotinus also recognizes a distinction between actions in the world that are natural and those due to human arts (*technai*). How the sun is positioned or that there are many-colored birds are nature's doing. Humans are also made by nature to be the constructors of objects, such as houses. Humans also engage in "...the arts of medicine and agriculture and others of this kind" as "ancillary and help natural things to be in a natural state" (IV.4.31.17). Notice that such "secondary" arts are to be supportive and a help to the nature of things. The same soul-forces are at work in humans from the basic desire to survive to the impetus to organize and engage in sophisticated social-political practices, laws,

and institutions. The natural parameters include both common animal capacities (nutrition, locomotion, etc.) as well as distinctive functions that involve the cultivation of arts and technology. From this perspective, technology functions properly when it complements the natural order.

8.

Given this account, the material universe can be identified as having value in several different respects. First, it has value derivatively, because it is a generated product of the One-Intellect-Soul. Secondly, it has value in itself as a unified whole because it contains the determinates that constitute value. Simply put, the formative principles are embodied in and exemplified by the world. Taken more specifically, thirdly, it has value as a composite whole, because it is the complex, dynamically interrelated, highly organized kind of material living organism that it is. It is also the case, fourthly, that each thing in the cosmos has value (a) derivatively, in its relation to "higher realities," i.e., the fundamental powers constituting reality, (b) contextually and interdependently as a part of the whole changing universe, a contributor to the good of the whole, (c) usefully as an entity involved with other entities where each may serve to help realize the *telos* or good of others--and, thereby, partially or completely sacrifice its own *telos*, and finally (d) being inherently valuable in itself because it is the particular thing that it is, a materialized form in space, time, and motion.

When Plotinus raises the question of specifying one's own personal self-identity, it is precisely these distinctions that apply. We each are beings in ourselves, usefully or instrumentally connected to others, contextually unified with the greater whole, and, finally, more fully realized ("idealized") in each of the hypostases, in unity with Soul, *nous*, the One. Plotinus sometimes illustrates these distinctions rather simply as a laborer who serves the master (or employer, leader) with one part of himself, but with another he belongs to himself. There are, in effect, expanding and contracting circles of identity that need to be acknowledged. Besides these two, Plotinus adds that the more general good is something to which both master and worker aspire. This analysis applies not only to the arrangements that make up the environment or universe, it also applies to the four regions of being.

But most important for the issue of the environment is the authentication of both vectors in the dynamic operation of things, the descent and well as the ascent vector. We should perhaps remind ourselves, at this point, that, strictly speaking, there is "nowhere" to ascend or descend in the sense that everything is right here, now. It is not as if the One or *nous* is positioned at some distant location. Plotinus expresses this matter in different ways. He says, for example, following Plato's *Timaeus*,

"that this All is a "single living being which encompasses all the living beings that are within it"; it has one soul which extends to all its parts, in so far as each individual thing is a part of it; and each thing in the perceptible All is a part of it, and completely a part of it as regards its body; and in so far as it participates in the soul of the All, it is to this extent a part of it in this way too...but all those which also participate in another soul are in this way not altogether part, but none the less are affected by the other parts in so far as they have something of the All, and in a way corresponding to what they have. This one universe is all bound together in shared experience and is like one living creature, and that which is far is really near, just as, in one of the individual living things, a nail or horn or finger or one of the other limbs which is not contiguous: the intermediate part leaves a gap in the experience and is not affected, but that which is not near is affected. [They] share their experiences because of their likeness." (IV.4.32.5).

In effect, the universe is one unified being and it is also many living, non-living, interacting beings. It shares in its experience as a whole, but there are gaps and distances and differences in such sharing by virtue of the differences in relations and makeup of natures. This diversity, variegation, and complexity in relationships mean that the encounters will benefit some and injure others as each operates according to its nature within the greater whole. Kinships and alienations are always involved in the ongoing dynamic as parts and wholes flourish according to their capacity and are eventually reabsorbed or recycled into the ongoing process. Plotinus says that this

"coming into being and destruction and alteration for worse or better of all these individual things brings to its fullness the unhindered life according to nature of that one

[universal] living creature; since it was not possible for all the individual things to be as if they were alone nor for the final purpose to be directed and look towards them when they are [only] parts, but it must be directed to that of which they are parts, and since they are different, they cannot all have their own for ever in a single life; it was not possible for anything to persist altogether the same, if the All was going to persist, which has its persistence in its movement" (IV.4.32.45).

The order and harmony of the cosmic whole is obviously not a non-violent, conflict free, painless, equally supporting environment. It could not be, according to Plotinus. Devotion to the ideals does not make Plotinus a romantic teleologist. The "whole universe actively lives its own complete life, moving its greater and lesser parts within itself, and continually rearranging them..." with all the complexity and concomitant states of affairs that are involved and that follow for the bigger and smaller parts and their ongoing activities and relationships (IV.4.33).

9.

The place of humans within the cosmos involves what amounts to a dialectic that mirrors the way in which reality operates. A person is (a) a material product within the cosmic order between the godly powers of the heavens (i.e., the operating principles of everything) and the life-forms on earth, (b) a trace of Soul, Intellect, and the One which, as soul, needs to free itself from the "lower powers" and track down this lineage, continuity, and unity with the "higher powers," and (c) a contemplative-generative being who is engaged in the ongoing affairs of the world as it continues to be constituted. Humans are involved through their crafting (*techne*, *ergon*, *poesis*) capacities with other humans as well as the ongoing affairs of nature.

Because humans belong to each of the orders of reality (through *sympatheia*, *aisthesis*, *logistikos*, *dianoia*, *noesis* and *hyper-noesis*), they can, as one passage puts it, be involved in both the realization of themselves as well as the whole. It is hubristic, of course, to claim that one is a maker of oneself, a maker of the world, and in unity with *psyche*, *nous*, and the One, but the ontology set forth by Plotinus allows precisely such a depiction.

Experientially, Plotinus affirms that humans have the capacity to "be in touch" by means of their epistemic powers through embodiment (nutrition, growth, *sympatheia*), sensation, calculative thinking, discursive understanding, and pure understanding or contemplation. As we direct our attention to the world, each of these capacities is available and operative according to its own makeup. In particular, as we think about the ongoing affairs of the environment, our participation and assessment processes can engage each of these epistemic determinations. Using *telos* as a major marker, we can move from the goals natural to our own embodied selves, other humans, other animals, plants, and more expansively to the material environment.

"Since all souls derive from the same from which the soul of the Whole derives too, they have a community of feeling. For we have said already that they are both one and many" (IV.3.8.3).

Even at the material level, then, Plotinus claims that we can sense the natural concord and opposition of things. 'Sympathy' is a term that attempts to capture "the rich variety of the many powers which go to make up the life of the one living creature," i.e., those powers of the earth and universe that are more primitive or less cognitively explicit than sense perception (See IV.4.40 f.).

The disposition of a person who becomes responsive to the spectrum and dynamics of this narrower and wider environment is one that *mirrors* and represents the disposition of the One. It is (a) to be involved in tranquil unaffected undifferentiated identity with itself, (b) to be formatively ("genetically" via *eide* and *logoi*) disposed to goodness, beauty, justice by means of contemplation, and (c) to be a productive life force in the condition of materiality. The distinction made between civic virtues and intellectual or higher virtues in the context of the ascent result in the disparaging and surpassing of civic virtues. But from the perspective of descent and generative activity, the material world is *the* site of responsible productivity for humans. We are situated to be, according to our capacities, a proliferator of good and beauty in every possible nook and cranny of our part of the cosmos. And that responsiveness should be performed in a way that does not violate the proliferation of good and beauty by other agencies or powers in the world. This is clear from the fact that we are not only our individual selves but also participants in the community of the environment as well as

representatives of *psyche*, *nous*, and the One in this cosmos. "Our" perspective cannot but include these other powers and dimensions.

When Plotinus somewhat surprisingly raises the question about who exactly "we" are in various places in his writings, he is in part, I think, attempting to jar our consciousness so as to wake us up to the spectrum of identities that constitute us. But such prodding is not intended to deny or diminish our responsibility to ourselves, our human "homemaking," and the affairs of our own self and human cultivation. It is just that ontologically, epistemically, ethically, and aesthetically we are also distinctive parts of a greater whole with the capacity to think and appraise this predicament.

From the point of view of an individual human, the transformation of self has its counterpart to this bi-directionality of reality. The self that extends itself to fuller participation in *psyche*, *nous*, the One, is also the self that extends its powers into the otherness of the material world. The higher intellectual virtues are, in effect, in continuity with the lower civic virtues and only in opposition when one takes the material or noetic world to be the exclusive site of excellence and nobility. What at first is a warning, "To descend and participate in the world is a sin," becomes, after a person has learned to function adeptly in the ascent, an injunction to care for and enhance the world. In effect, a fully responsive self would be able to locate itself properly in the totality of reality, within and across each level (or hypostasis) from the here and now material world to the indescribable One. The sin, in this context, would be to get lost or stuck in one level at the expense of others. This would be to misidentify and misjudge both self and reality.

From this perspective, the life of virtue and compassion characterizes the descent mode of our lives, i.e., its other dynamic and identity. It is an essential part of our integrity as lovers, parents, teachers, crafters of material things as well as constructors of laws, institutions, and in general caretakers and cultivators of virtuous living. As properly performing the *ergon* (work) of the good, the *tolma* (audacious, venturesome, courageous) enterprise of making the world good, beautiful, and just, through the soul's natural disposition is right and good. But this must be done without becoming entangled in or succumbing to the *tolma* (recklessness) of specialness, independence, and self-service (egoism, narcissism, and anthropocentrism).¹⁷ The world once left behind as an obstacle to the realization of the good is repossessed in status as having

genuine value expressed (represented, delineated) in material existence. The world is created for the good and we function properly (optimally) by being full-fledged participants in this creative process.

10.

Given this conception of the cosmos, what comparisons are there with the Deep Ecology position of Arne Naess? According to Plotinus, the universe is to be understood (1) holistically, in terms of the integrated operation of the whole, (2) with a fundamental dynamic or disposition immanent in everything to realize the optimal conditions possible, a teleological directionality toward full realization of a thing's nature, (3) with a mechanism for proper identification provided to humans through conscious, cognitive capacities with the consequence that the realization of self involves an expanding circle of domains from individual embodiment to the realization of the good of the cosmos (and beyond--where the experience of transcendence is the condition for finding and making the transcendence immanent in human experience), and, finally, (4) the recognition that normative qualities such as refinement, magnificence, richness, beauty are also inherent in the environment. Plotinus, on occasion, almost as a matter of common, everyday delight, expresses a highly appreciative and detailed sense of the aesthetic richness and diversity of nature.

These four features of Plotinus' conception of the environment qualify it as a version of deep ecology. Its "depth" is attested by the value that inheres in the cosmos as a whole, in its very on-going process and structure, and in its specific details. Since everything is an instance of being, *logos* (principle), and life, everything is worthy of care, respect, and proper deference.

Although Plotinus is undoubtedly aware of the view that the universe is made for the benefit of humans, that it is in status of instrumental or prudential value, he never suggests that such attitudes or appraisals are adequate. Humans do play an important role in the ongoing affairs of the earth, and the environment certainly does have use-value relative to the states of affairs and interests of all life forms. Even his belief, grounded on what he considers to be good evidence, that humans are superior life forms on earth does not lead him to the conclusion that such superiority is deserving of treatment that is different in principle from any other being. That is,

everything rightly operates according to its own natural parameters. In this sense, the cosmos, so to speak, is egalitarian in its operation. Just treatment is treatment in accord with the nature of a thing. And a just world order is one that operates in such a way as to maximize this value. So conceived, the universe for Plotinus is a just order, one disposed to proliferate and flourish in the best way possible, but not in such way that any individual or species receives premium status.

What we do not find investigated by Plotinus are questions having to do with scarce or irreplaceable resources or conflicts of interests that seriously jeopardize patterns of nature. But it is quite clear from what he has written, that the cosmos (earth, environment) is deserving of respect as a bearer of values that are not reducible or relative to human interests. His perspective requires an ethic of respect and circumspective cautionary behavior where the consequence of human activities may have a negative impact upon the affairs of nature.

It is also clear that the value of the earth is not something that is separate from us humans, nor is our value separate from it. We are constituted as composite beings, invested by our nature in this environment as a matter of ontological fact and we are epistemically wired to it, so to speak, by way of all of our conscious capacities that include sympathy, sense perception, reason, contemplation. It is a holistic unity, a community of life, that provides and shares its resources with itself.

As such, responsibility for the future is also to be considered, i.e., the well being (goodness, beauty, justice) of future generations is implicated in our present way of existing, our way of dealing not only with ourselves and other humans, but with all beings, including the state of affairs of the environment.¹⁸ So, in addition to the expanding sense of identity for a knowledgeable and deferent self, genuine self-identity also extends into the past and toward the future, embracing and representing those values that enhance and participate in the creation of the best possible arrangement of the future state of the planet.¹⁹

One might say that on earth reality sees and understands itself most self-consciously through us. This is both a privilege and a responsibility. We can help accomplish a higher sense of unity in the ongoing workings of reality and thereby demonstrate the legitimacy of environmental care based upon more than a human-centered

pragmatic or utilitarian method of assessment. This deep grounding is evident in the experience and understanding of the nature of the environment itself.²⁰

11.

Even though Plotinus does not develop a specific response to the question "How should we humans treat the environment?" there are quite definite general ethical principles or norms that can be extrapolated from the conception of the cosmos that follows from his ontology. In summary, these would include:

1. The cosmos, as a whole, is a living, interactive organism or being, in unity with itself. "This one universe is all bound together in shared experience and is like one living creature" (IV.4.32.5.) It has "a community of feeling. [Everything is] both one and many" (IV.3.8.3). Everything has "a share in divine things through its kinship (*suggeneian*) and consubstantiality (*homoousion*)" (IV.7.10.19.).
2. As a living community, the material cosmos is sustained by (is a participant in and determined by) the formative powers of Soul (life), Intellect (Ideas), and the One (source of all).
3. Nature is organized according to principles that express the general values of goodness, beauty, and justice to all things, states, and processes. It "produces wonders in rich variety in ordinary animals, and the beauty of appearances which extends to the fruits and even the leaves of plants, and their beauty of flower which comes so effortlessly, and their delicacy and variety, and that all this has not been made once and come to an end but is always being made as the powers above move in different ways over this world. ...it brings together beauty and justice in its workings" (III.2.23.18 ff.). Even the so-called lifeless parts "contribute wonderful powers" to other things.
4. The power inherent in nature aims to maximize the fullness, diversity, and richness of material possibilities.
5. The cosmos is in harmony with itself, even as opposition, conflict, strife through competition occurs in its operation.
6. All material things change, do not stay the same; the transformations of coming into existence, developing, and going out of existence apply to all material things. But each thing has its *telos* according to its nature.

7. Nature is a complex network of chains of causal interrelationships with differing capacities ranging from elementary growth to sensation more sophisticated capacities of perception, understanding, imagination, reason.
8. Each thing naturally tends to impart itself "to others so far as it can...tending to the good it is able to realize, to everlastingness and generosity" (V.4.1.27).
9. Everything is equally valuable in the sense that "...each thing in the All, according to how it is in nature and disposition... contributes to the whole and serves its purposes and has its own proper rank and utility..." (IV.4.45).
10. On earth, there is a hierarchy of life forms, with humans as the most advanced.
11. Neither the earth nor the cosmos is organized to serve the exclusive interests of humans. Humans are one kind included in the multiplicity of kinds, each of which depends for their existence, livelihood, and well being upon other material beings and things.
12. The individual self is a participant (to whatever extent) in each level of reality (material, soul, intellect, and One). Cultivation of self or proper (philosophical) education will result in the correct identification and operation of a self which includes each of these levels of reality--from cosmos to Soul, Intellect, One. The self has an inclusive identity, extending and developing across the spectrum of reality.

The normative consequences of this Plotinian worldview for humans would include the following general prescriptions:

- Honor and respect the good. Put negatively: Do not harm (damage, degrade) what is good. Promote the welfare of the environment as the materialization of the good, i.e. the good in "hard copy," so to speak.
- Promote richness, diversity, fitness, beauty. One should act so as to enable the good to be realized to the maximum extent possible.
- In one's activity and work (*ergon*), human goals ought to mirror/represent the values of Soul and Intellect, i.e., mirror the way that Soul operates to produce good, beauty, justice, and, in

general, excellence (*arete*) not only in relation to humans but in relation to everything in the ongoing affairs of the environment.

Although use of the environment is natural and necessary for humans, this usage can and should be seen as part of its value-enhancing character. Levels of value include: (1) the eidetic "architecture," contemplative ideals, (2) ensoulment, life force and forms, *logoi*, (3) organic operational harmony, richness, diversity, and (4) individual well-being and fruition. Priority for the cosmos lies with the good of the environment measured in its holistic operation, empowered by fundamental reality, so as to be the best that it can be in its unity, diversity, and plurality. This affirmation of status, I think, is a surprisingly resourceful position for environmental advocacy that provides motive, rationale, and normative grounding for protection, restoration, and creative enhancement of the ongoing affairs of the beings and processes that make up the natural world.

There are a variety of ways to criticize and dispute the ideas of Plotinus, but one should not mistake the implications that are contained in the view that he himself advances. This has happened, it seems to me, in most interpretations of his position related to the material world, how it is to be assessed, and the responsibilities of humans to this non-human natural environment. What appears to be a very hostile position taken by Plotinus in fact turns out to be quite otherwise. He was an educator of soul and mystic, yes, but not one who can legitimize an anti-social, world renouncing, purely transcendent perspective. The implications are, to put it simply, pro-environment, a kind of cosmo-centric egalitarianism, without denying the important hierarchical differences that pertain to life forms, certainly to the full realization of humans.²¹ As with the Deep Ecology position of Naess, the position of Plotinus advocates a field perspective, a drive for self-realization, an expanded conception of self-identification and value, and diverse aesthetic richness. These ideas and values continue to have, I think, an important role to play in contemporary thinking about how best to understand our place in the world and our responsibilities within it.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 10th International Conference on Greek Philosophy, "The Greeks and The Environment," Samos, Greece.

2. Porphyry says Plotinus "never, while awake, relaxed his intense concentration upon the intellect (*nous*)" (*Life*: 9.15). Porphyry. 1966. "On the

Life of Plotinus and the Order of His Books," in *Plotinus*. Loeb Classical Library, Vol. I. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

3. Porphyry reports that "he shielded so many from the worries and cares of ordinary life" (*Life*: 9.15).

4. In very general terms, the bi-directionality of reality--the ascent-descent dynamic between the poles of the One and matter--is captured in the action characteristic of eros (following Plato's *Symposium*) which (1) "as poverty" aims for complete beauty and good and also (2) "as resource or plenty" generates from the productive vitality derived from its encounter with and responsiveness to instances of beauty and good.

5. When Plotinus is confronted with the world and material disvaluing features of the Gnostics and their friends, he clearly disassociates himself from such views (in II.9). This allows him to correct any misunderstanding of his appraisal of nature/the cosmos. What he needs to say with respect to soteriological-educative concerns should not be converted into normative claims about the status of the material world.

6. I also think that theistic interpretations of Plotinus' mysticism sponsored by A. H. Armstrong and John Rist do not do justice to his position. See Blakeley, Donald N. 1992. "Unity, Theism, and Self in Plotinus," *Philosophy and Theology*, 7:1, 53-80.

7. Despite the literature that has been stimulated by the work of Arne Naess, both positive and negative, he remains, it seems to me, the most careful and critically cautious advocate of deep ecology. In this paper I refer to his work in *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle* (Naess), trans. & ed. by David Rothenberg, New York: Cambridge University Press. 1989. In addition, I also take as exemplary of major features of deep ecology the specific characteristics he sets forth in his *Ecosophy T*. This explicitly includes the idea of self-realization.

8. Plotinus is quite aware that this reasoning can go in either direction, i.e., from sense-experience of the world to Ideas or from Ideas to sense-experience. And, as things are constituted, there is continuity and co-presence between the four realms of world, Soul, Intellect, and One.

9. The reasoning here is certainly open to critical challenge. It is on a par, it seems to me, with some versions of the cosmological argument for the existence of God. It should also be emphasized that, for Plotinus, this route of analysis, the logical-ontological aspect, is supplemented by (has its parallel counterpart in) the route of direct experience, what one might refer to as the epistemic-phenomenological aspect. One can also develop an aesthetic line of reasoning as well, so that ontological, epistemic, and aesthetic features of the world and experience serve to support the argumentation. The rational and experiential are thus explicitly conjoined in correspondence with the order of things from world to *psyche*, to *nous*, to the One.

10. It is interesting that the same type (logical form) of argument applies to matter. Yet matter, for Plotinus, is not possessed of the richness of the One but is bereft. Although both are, in the strict sense, indeterminate in nature and beyond description, they are very different and unequal in basic ontological identity and function. Theoretically the basic determinants might be shifted, within this bi-polar structure, so that a more balanced contribution is made by each or one might concede priority of contribution to matter. But Plotinus stacks

the goods, so to speak, on the side of the One. It is not clear to me that a deep ecology position requires one rather than another of these theoretical possibilities. My claim is simply that what Plotinus does advocate in his metaphysics provides an ethical basis for an environmental protectionist position.

11. This world is comprised of everything from the four major elementary kinds of matter (earth, air, fire, water) to the earth and its processes, to living things ranging from plants, animals, to humans, to the greater powers (demigods, gods) of heavenly bodies (stars). The world/cosmos is not, strictly speaking matter but the result of the interface between matter and "formal" reality.

12. Other necessary properties of the One, according to Plotinus, include simplicity, completeness, eternality, power/resourcefulness, and immutability. The One, as *arche*, functions as principle of all things; it preserves (*sozeri*) and keeps them in being, having both final and efficient causal status.

13. There is no absolute creation or temporal beginning for Plotinus. The basic constituents have always been a part of reality. Formation and change require some causal account, but they do not require a beginning, origin, or some kind of personal or purposive creator agent(s).

14. This can be considered the commitment of the naturalistic fallacy on the assumption that fact/value, description/evaluation, is/ought distinctions are categorically different and uncorrelated from the outset. But it must be acknowledged that some philosophical positions begin with the assumption that such distinctions are correlated and can be elaborated systematically. If this is the case for a philosophical project from the outset, then a correlated sequence or hierarchy can be set forth that reveals the linkage between levels of being-knowing-value. "Committing the fallacy" is in this sense entailed in its basic methodological stance. This does not, I think, dispel the problem but it recontextualizes it into another sort of critical issue. It makes the is/ought dichotomy appear to be artificial, unnatural, and eccentric.

15. Plotinus is not at all ignoring the many bad or evil things that occur in the world. He has a number of ways of accounting for them, e.g., (a) matter is variable in its receptivity to formative forces so that the conditions for better instances are not always available, (b) concomitance of many possible options is prevented by the specific, finite, ongoing order and arrangement of things, (c) things are by their very nature vulnerable to other powers, (d) some bad things are of service to good consequences, (e) such badness does not in fact harm the goodness or virtue of another, and (f) badness is a relative judgment that does not take into account the overall good that is achieved by what occurs. Pain, disability, suffering, death, etc., are all part of the ongoing character of a changing material environment. But this cosmos, he is convinced, could not be better, more beautiful, more filled with rich variety.

16. The debate on this point (by Dodds, Puech, O'Brien and others) of how Soul goes forth is of interest. Does Soul wish voluntarily to descend or is it sent, constrained, or compelled? Of crucial importance, I think, is that the descent is not a bad response to the resourcefulness of the One-Good but is one that is natural and leads to the consequence that the most good that can result does so. Soul descends necessarily because it is its nature to do so, i.e., to carry out its labor as mediating between *nous* and matter. The issue of volitariness is to

be worked out in this context. Proper (good, right) exercise of a nature will involve the exercise of powers to accomplish the goals of aspiration (ascent) and productivity (descent) as effectively as possible. Individual souls should be appropriately bi-directional in their functioning.

17. Although over half of the twenty or so instances of the term '*tolma*' in the *Enneads* are negative and critical, two other uses are positive. The first has to do with the way in which Plotinus proceeds in his exposition of major ideas. He refers to this endeavor as being daring, audacious, bold, risky. Such is an indication of a way of advancing which, although hazardous and precarious, is nevertheless required and useful in attempting to make sense of things. The second use is more substantive, although it is, I think, the model for the former use. It is represented at every major level of ontological progression (i.e., descension). *Nous* dares to stand away from the One; Soul assertively extends itself to materiality (e.g., VI.9.5.29, V.2.2, III.4.2). This second usage is significant because it shows how the descent dynamic operates so as to constitute the material world--which is itself an extension of the constitutive empowerment present in the nature of the One. This purposive (teleologically operating) descent is, in effect, justified in the most fundamental way. It must be audacious in this manner in order for everything to function as it ought, according to its erotic modality. This kind of "self-assertion" is definitely good (a) insofar as it does not leave behind (become alienated from) its grounding in the higher good and (b) because it extends the influence of the good to all things. My thanks to Laura Westra for highlighting the importance of making this point about *tolma* clear.

18. This may explain why (according to Porphyry) Plotinus was a vegetarian. But there is no evidence in the *Enneads* for this link between reincarnation (or transmigration of soul) and vegetarianism.

19. It seems clear from the *Enneads* that Plotinus takes quite seriously the implication of the principle of cosmic order and justice. Nothing, it is claimed, escapes the consequences of its activities. As a result, Plotinus, besides accepting such a position from Plato (and others), also accepts the doctrine of reincarnation. Although he himself does not really exploit this doctrine as other, especially non-Western, views have done, it would at least follow that the causal consequences of actions do affect the future states of affairs for both the material order as well as the order of soul. When we enhance the world by our actions, we would, on this principle, determine not only the destiny of material states of affairs but also the future states of affairs of our own soul and of Soul's extension in multiplicity.

20. 'Depth' in this context is dialectical and bi-directional within the multi-dimensional structure of reality. But this hierarchy, it must be remembered, is an interpenetrating unity immediately present everywhere.

21. Transcendence is of undeniable importance for Plotinus. Soul, *nous*, and the One are beyond and other than the material world. But matter becomes the formed world by the immanence of the One's power through *nous* and Soul. As such, no simple ontological duality can be sustained (i) in an adequate explanation, (ii) in the actual existence of things, or (iii) in the way in which things are experienced.