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Does Soul Incur Evil in the Genesis of Time?
A Paper on Plotinus' Philosophy of Time

In Plotinus' procession of the many from the One, the genesis of time is unique for at least two reasons. The genesis of time is the only one which begins with the open disarray of soul's *tolma*. Soul needs fecundity, in order to temper the multiplicity caused by such *tolma*. Thus, the genesis of time is in greater need of fecundation than any other generation. Yet, it is also the only genesis which is not fecundated by an underlying contemplation. Soul, the immediate progenitor of time, does not fecundate its genesis of time, by any direct, steadfast contemplation of Intellect, its prior.

In this paper, I have asked two questions. First, what are the forms of ontological loss, incurred by soul, as it descends through its genesis of time and the sensible universe? Second, does soul incur evil through such ontological loss? Soul incurs at least two stages of ontological loss. The restlessness unleashed by soul's *tolma* unequivocally enhances its multiplicity. This loss is tempered only to a degree by soul's unquiet power, which is aware of the Intelligible realm, and sought to transfer this vision to the realm of process. This vision is a contemplative look which is the only source of fecundity, which tempers soul's multiplicity. Soul incurs ontological loss also through its very movement of generation, for soul does not abide unchanged, when it generates. Soul gathers an enhanced multiplicity by moving into a weaker extension of itself. Soul is already one-and-many, and has a degree of multiplicity higher than that of Intellect, even before its generative acts. This multiplicity is enhanced further, when soul generates the sensible universe and time. Here, one has to ask whether these modes of ontological loss are beyond the usual loss decreed by emanative necessity.

On the question of whether soul's ontological loss is evil, perhaps soul's generation of time should be distinguished from its generation of the sensible universe, for the cause of loss is different in each case. *tolma* is the cause of ontological loss in soul, when it generates time, and not matter. For time is not a material form. *tolma* cannot incur evil, if it is wrought by emanative necessity. Here, the question is whether *tolma* indeed incurs evil, by being beyond the pale of emanative necessity. However, when it comes to the generation of the sensible universe, it is not *tolma*, but soul's complicity with matter, which runs the risk of causing a loss that might be evil. Matter weakens soul, and causes it to fall by tempting soul to generate. To generate the sensible universe, using matter, Soul has to first abide in Intellect (V.2.1). However, matter, by its theft, tempts soul to leave its absorption in Intellect, as a result of which, Soul falls (I.8.14). Here the question is whether Soul's fall is a secondary evil incurred by Soul's participation in the essential evil of matter.