

Study questions on the *Enneads*

1. Plotinus suggests that there are two methods by means of which we can regain our intimate knowledge of God. One is to realize the trivial nature of the things we, in our fallen disgrace, have come to place importance on. What is the second method which Plotinus will subsequently engage in in the following passages?
2. How does Plotinus describe Soul? How is his description different from Plato's description of the World Soul?
3. How does Plotinus describe the relation between Soul and Intellect?
4. What do you think Plotinus means when he describes the realm of Intellect as the "age of Kronos"?
5. What is the relation between Intellect and Being?
6. What features associated with the Intellect lead Plotinus to posit the One?
7. What problem of ancient philosophy does Plotinus concern himself with in explaining the nature of the One?
8. Why does Plotinus describe the One as immobile? Why is it then hard to describe how secondaries arise from the One? How does Plotinus describe this process?
9. To describe how Intellect follows from the One, Plotinus appeals to the principle that what is "fully achieved" engenders. What reasons can you think of for accepting this principle?
10. Plotinus describes part of an individual soul as remaining in the Intellect, thus providing a direct link between individuals and the One. Why then do we remain "unaware"? How do we become aware?
11. Describe Plotinus' Two-Act theory, as given in Ennead V.4, chapter 2. How does it solve the Problem of the One and the Many?

Study Questions on The Hermetic Corpus and Magic (Yates 1-28; 35-38)

Hermes Trismegistus (Yates pp. 1-19)

1. The *Asclepius* and the *Pimander* (and other works in the *Hermetic Corpus*) were written in the 2nd century AD. According to Yates, what are some of the characteristics of this epoch?
2. What are the themes of the *Asclepius* and the *Pimander*?
3. Who or what was Hermes Trismegistus? According to Yates, why did many Renaissance thinkers think he actually existed?
4. How does Hermes appear in the writings of Lanctantius?
5. How does Hermes appear in the writings of Augustine?
6. How does Hermes figure into Ficino's account of the *prisca theologia* (ancient theology)?
7. According to Yates, what separates Renaissance magic from medieval magic?

Ficino's *Pimander* and the *Asclepius* (Yates pp. 20-28; 35-38)

8. What is the distinction between pessimistic gnosis and optimistic gnosis?
9. What aspects of Yates' account of the *Pimander* are Platonic? What aspects are Plotinian?
10. What are some of the similarities Ficino identified between the *Pimander* and the book of *Genesis*? What are some differences that Yates points out?
11. According to the *Asclepius*, man has a double nature. What is this double nature and why does man have it?
12. What are the 36 decans?
13. How does man "make gods" according to the *Asclepius*?