# PLOTINUS AND THE PLATONIC METAPHYSICAL HIERARCHY

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*For my buddy İlknur*

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# INTRODUCTION

Plotinus stands at the end of a long tradition of ancient Greek metaphysical thinking, and is arguably the last great ancient Greek philosopher. His writings, composed late in life, represent a profound understanding of his tradition. His historical vantage point affords him a unique opportunity to see the general movement of Greek philosophy and his place in it. What Plotinus sees from that vantage point is that all of Greek philosophy has been seeking a way to articulate the necessity and nature of a unitary first principle of metaphysics. This stands in sharp contrast with Aristotle's account of Greek philosophy's search for four causes in *Metaphysics* A. This difference becomes even more pronounced once placed in the context of what I want to call the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy. My reason for employing the terminology "Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy" is to suggest that there is a significant advantage in thinking along broad lines of metaphysical positioning when it comes to recognizing issues of compatibility in various metaphysical systems. Much of what the Greek philosophers say in criticizing each other seems to operate at the level of broad metaphysical positioning, as opposed to intricate arguments based on considerations of minutiae. Philosophical systems stand or fall, are accepted or contested in accordance with questions of much greater

scope and significance than the problems posed by minutiae. Moreover, I think Greek philosophy is much better understood in terms of broad lines of metaphysical positioning. Understanding, like criticism, does not stand or fall on minutiae. Often too much attention to detail leaves one in the position of not being able to recognize the significance of the more global ramifications of a system of thought. Understanding the Greek philosophers in terms of broad lines of metaphysical positioning seems appropriate because it seems to me that they argue along such lines.

This book is not an attempt to put forth a comprehensive treatment of being and unity in Plotinus' *Enneads,* or a comprehensive account of being and unity in Greek philosophy. Indeed I do not deal with important issues and movements in Stoicism or Scepticism to any great degree, although there is much to learn from a study of Plotinus' relationship to these schools.[1] I am here rather concerned with Plotinus' approach to Aristotle and Aristotle's approach to Plato. Hence I have chosen specific elements and movements that help to show the significance of the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy as informing the larger metaphysical position of Plotinus. It may in fact be that I am trying to make small steps in the direction of a method for understanding Plotinus' metaphysics in a systematic way, but this is certainly a very minimal step in that direction. I do think that the metaphysical position of Plotinus is more easily understood with the help of the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy as a frame or a gauge.

As opposed to offering a new philosophy, Plotinus sometimes claims to be nothing more than an exegete of Plato. Separated from the architect of the divided line by some six hundred years, there are elements of Plotinus' understanding of Plato that seem to have been colored by certain Aristotelian and Middle Platonic interpretations of Plato.

In fact, what I am calling the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy is really a characterization of Plato that emerges from Aristotle's critique of Platonism in *Metaphysics* A. The Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy is a broad line of metaphysical positioning where unity is seen as metaphysically prior to being, and being as metaphysically prior to particulars. Whether or not this is actually a position that Plato himself would readily claim as his own, Aristotle says that his teacher believes something like it, and Plotinus goes to some lengths to defend it. The Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy is not, for Plato, an *explicit* metaphysical position, but rather an implicit way of thinking about metaphysics and more particularly the relationship of being, unity and particulars in metaphysical systems. Nowhere does Plato clearly lay out the position that Aristotle attributes to him, and indeed Aristotle's portrayal of this position might appear to be tendentious at best.

Plotinus' understanding of Plato's philosophy bears the marks of certain innovative developments in Middle Platonism, most significantly the placing of the Platonic Ideas in the mind of god. At the same time, Plotinus would not accept certain aspects of "Aristotelianised" Platonism that run counter to the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy. Once one sees the implications of the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy, one also sees that the apparent identification of the Platonic Good with the Unmoved Mover in the *Didaskalikos*, a "school handbook" of Platonism, cannot be a tenable interpretation of Plato's philosophy. This is something that Plotinus recognizes, and though he does not argue against the *Didaskalikos* explicitly, it seems clear that the Good of Plato is incompatible with the Aristotelian first principle. It seems to me that the best way to understand Plotinus' acceptance or rejection of revisionist understandings of Plato is to gauge their compatibility with the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy. By remaining true to the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy,

Plotinus is able to keep his Platonism pure from incompatible innovations. According to the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy, Aristotle's Unmoved Mover, grounded as it is in the Stagirite's understanding of being and unity as predicates of substance, cannot be a first principle; Plotinus sees that being and unity must be prior to particulars. Moreover, the idea of a thinking god as a first principle is by definition multiple and hence not the "pure" principle of unity implied by the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy.

Plotinus' philosophy is an extrapolation of Plato's philosophy that takes Plato's remarks about the principle of unity in metaphysics in a particular direction. The level of coherence and consistency with which he does this is remarkable, and the more so when one sees how much of the implications of Plotinus' thought fit organically with Plato's dialogues. The end point of Plotinus' Platonism, taking their impetus in part from Aristotle's critique of Plato, is the One, Plotinus' metaphysical principle of unity that is beyond being. I think that the apparently incoherent nature of the One as it appears in Plotinus' *Enneads* can in fact be made sense of in terms of a fusion of positive and negative henology[2], and I attempt to identify some "principles" which make the explanation of that fusion, as well as the sometimes nebulous concept of emanation a bit more understandable.

All too often Plotinus is dismissed as a "mystic", while little or no thought is given to the meaning of that term. Mysticism generally implies an attempted union with god, either by a concentricity of mind with a first principle that unifies a metaphysical system, or an identity of the self and that monistic first principle. Mysticism is an attempt to transcend normal bounds of thinking; in this regard it is what metaphysics always does in some way or other. Because Plotinus believes that a principle of unity is implied by existence, he seeks an understanding of that principle that can only be achieved by

transcending metaphysics, much like the ladder of Wittgenstein that one throws away in the end. The first principle he seeks is implied by metaphysics, but is not contained within metaphysics.[3] Metaphysics and its elements are amenable to discursive or noetic thought, but the fact that this discursiveness and noesis requires a unifying principle points in the direction of the non-discursive. This and nothing else is the heart of Plotinian "mysticism". The ability to follow the implications of metaphysical discursiveness to a transcendent principle is the mark of a great metaphysician, and I think Plotinus deserves to be treated precisely as such. What results from his interpretation of Platonism is a cosmos that is grounded in a perfectly unitary, necessarily emanating first principle. The "necessary organism" that emerges as Plotinus' picture of the emanated cosmos raises concerns about human freedom. I think these concerns can be addressed and answered by a close reflection on Plotinus' account of the fall of the soul in accordance with the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy.

All of the issues that I attempt to address in this book are better understood, to greater or lesser degrees, in terms of the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy. Whether or not this hierarchy is a key to understanding Plotinus' philosophy as a whole, I think that it may make a small step in the direction of understanding some of the positions he holds, and that it may help us to read Plato and Aristotle with sharper peripheral vision, yielding a richer and better informed understanding of their philosophies.

**Notes for Introduction:**

[1]See Graeser (1972); O'Meara (2000), Crystal (1998), Emilsson (1995), Wallis (1987).

[2]The term is borrowed via Schürmann (2002: 159) from Aubenque (1971, 102)

[3]See Schürmann (2002, 157 and 172) and extended treatment in Rappe (2000). I regret that I have not been able to take full account of this text by the time of sending this book to print.

# CHAPTER I
# THE PLATONIC METAPHYSICAL HIERARCHY

The subject of this book is the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy, a broad metaphysical orientation that Aristotle attributes to Plato. It is a position that Plotinus takes up and defends, in part or in whole, as a result of this characterization of Plato by Aristotle. Plotinus sees himself as conceptually aligned with Plato and at odds with Aristotle on the issue of the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy. In order to see the significance of this, it is important to see how Plotinus conceives of himself in relation to his predecessors. In the following text, Plotinus concludes a summary of the search for a unitary first principle by the presocratic philosophers and Plato in the following terms:

> For this reason [the problems engendered by Aristotle's system of movers] those of the ancient philosophers who took up positions closest to those of Pythagoras and his successors and Pherecydes held closely to this nature [of a singular first principle of unity]. (*Enneads* V.1.9, 28-30)

This passage comes on the heels of Plotinus' critique of Aristotle's understanding of the Unmoved Mover as a first principle. The difficulties with Aristotle's first principle are said to be the reason that a "Pythagorean" conception of unity was adopted by most thinkers.[1] Plotinus' references to these thinkers are very cursory, and they suggest only that Plotinus recognizes in them a need to say something about a principle of unity.

According to Plotinus, it is Aristotle who strays from the "positions closest to Pythagoras," making his first principle multiform without establishing an acceptable grounding principle of unity. In short, Plotinus includes himself in a Pythagorean/Platonic lineage, and identifies Aristotle's "non-Pythagoreanism" as the absence of a true principle of unity.

From these considerations we can suggest several things. First, Plotinus sees himself standing in a certain Pythagorean lineage, one that includes Plato. Second, he regards the project of Greek metaphysics as a search for a unitary first principle. It is also useful to note that Plotinus has adopted something of the "historical method" that Aristotle employs in *Metaphysics* A.[2] There Aristotle offers a summary of the views of his predecessors regarding first principles, one which is cast in terms of Aristotle's *own* search for the four causes. In *Metaphysics* A Aristotle attempts to show that he has taken account of his predecessors' work, that he and they are looking for the same solution to certain problems of causality, and that he has a more complete and/or more reasonable solution to these problems.

Plotinus employs a similar "historical method" in *Enneads* V.1. Just as Aristotle moves from cursory history to a critique of the Platonic theory of Forms, Plotinus moves from cursory history to a critique of Aristotle's Unmoved Mover. It is important not to miss the underlying theme here: Plotinus sees himself as aligned with certain thinkers, most

importantly Plato, and he sees Aristotle as the one who stands outside of this lineage. Most significantly, whereas Aristotle gives a historical summary of the search for causes, Plotinus stresses the search for a unitary first principle, and he sees Aristotle's position as incompatible with this search.

It is ironic then that Plotinus' own understanding and defense of certain aspects of Plato's philosophy seem to be colored by an Aristotelian account of Plato, one that is also to be found in *Metaphysics* A.[3] Plotinus accepts the picture of Plato painted by Aristotle, and moreover defends it. In so doing he rejects Aristotle's own metaphysical position because of its incompatibility with the Platonic position that Aristotle paints.

Perhaps this only amounts to the fact that Aristotle disagrees with Plato's theory of Forms for the reasons outlined in *Metaphysics* A. The significance of this however, lies in the fact that while Aristotle's claims about Plato are hardly exoteric or obvious, Plotinus adopts certain elements of Aristotle's picture of Plato and defends that picture. Both Plotinus and Aristotle believe a certain thing about Plato. Moreover, both Plotinus and Aristotle see Aristotle's *Metaphysics* as incompatible with it. This discussion between Aristotle and Plotinus, along broad lines of metaphysical positioning, reveals a picture of Plato that is helpful in understanding Plato's metaphysical orientation in a new light. For it is not the case that Plotinus only read Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. He most certainly read and had a particular approach to most, if not all of Plato's dialogues. Some of his interpretations and extrapolations of Plato may seem inaccurate or illegitimate moves by Plotinus; indeed some of them may be colored by the strange way that Aristotle describes Plato's metaphysics. Some may be colored by innovations in Stoicism, and Middle Platonism generally. We should be cautious here. Separated as we are by over two millennia from Plato's conceptual *milieu*, we should

not be so self-confident in our contemporary pictures of Plato as to suggest that the two greatest minds to follow Plato in the Greek philosophical tradition, one his student for twenty years, and the other his greatest self-professed exegete and defender, had Plato's general metaphysical orientation so completely wrong. Plotinus is in the unique position of being able to see the development of Greek philosophy from a distance yet still from within its conceptual framework.[4] He knows what Aristotle's objections to Plato are and sees the Platonic tradition as very much alive and defensible from Aristotle's criticism.

I say all of this because what Aristotle says about Plato, and what Plotinus is defending and/or adopting as a central general metaphysical position of Plato's, is not one that we would readily attribute to Plato. Yet I think that Aristotle is right in attributing it to him in some general sense, a sense that becomes clearer when we see its implications drawn out in Plotinus' *Enneads*.

What Aristotle says about Plato in *Metaphysics* A that Plotinus sees as seminal to Plato's metaphysics, and hence his own in so far as he regards himself as a Platonist, is that the Platonists engage something that I call the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy. Because of Aristotle's own position on the nature of being and unity, this hierarchy is inimical to the heart of Aristotelian metaphysics as well as later attempts to reconcile the metaphysical systems of Plato and Aristotle in Middle Platonism and medieval philosophy. Aristotle claims that the Platonists envision a metaphysic where unity is prior to being and being is prior to particulars:

> For they do not conceive of the Forms [τά εἴδη] as the matter [ὕλην] of sensible things (and the One [τὸ ἕν] as the matter of the Forms) nor as producing the source of motion... but they adduce the Forms as the essential nature [τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι] of all other things,

> and the One as that of the Forms. (*Metaphysics A* 988 b1-5)
>
> For the Forms are the cause of the essence [τοῦ τί ἐστιν αἴτια] in everything else, and the One [τὸ ἓν] is the cause of it in the Forms. (*Metaphysics A* 988a 10-12)

A principle of unity, ostensibly "the Good" which Aristotle is here calling "the one" (*to hen*), is prior to the Platonic Forms, and these are in turn prior to particular material instantiations of things. Priority in this context indicates an inverse relationship of metaphysical dependency. For example, the One (Good) acts as a principle of unity for the Form of Man, which acts as a principle for all of the particular men who stand in a dependent mimetic relationship to it.

It may be the case that Aristotle has a Speusippian version of Platonism in mind in his remarks, but what this would show is that the general movement of Platonism was in the direction that Plotinus eventually took it is a comprehensive and complete system. That is, if the idea of a "one beyond being" is implicit in Plato, it seems clear that "a one beyond intellect" is implicit in Speusippus.[5] The tendency to place being and thinking on the same metaphysical level runs throughout Greek philosophy, and hence the implications of a one beyond intellect also imply a one beyond being.[6] Since for Plato, Forms are the proper objects of intellective knowledge - that which the power of knowing is "set over"[7] - the general drift of a "one beyond *nous*" suggests the priority of unity to being. For the purposes of further evincing that Aristotle attributes the hierarchy of "*unity-being-particulars*" to the Platonists in general, it is useful to look at one passage where he deals with Speusippus:

> Nor is a certain thinker [Speusippus][8] right in his assumption when he likens the principles of the universe to that of animals and plants, on the ground that the more perfect forms are always produced from those which are indeterminate and imperfect, and is led by this to assert that this is true also of the ultimate principles; so that not even unity itself is a real thing [ὥστε μηδὲ ὄν τι εἶναι τὸ ἓν αὐτό]. (*Metaphysics* 1092a 12-15)[9]

Aristotle believes that the implication of Speusippus' position on unity is that it is "beyond being." This is not something that Aristotle attributes only to Plato; thinking along broad lines of metaphysical positioning allows us to observe that he attributes it to the Platonists in general. His criticism of Speusippus later in the *Metaphysics* ultimately tends in the same direction. Aristotle's description of the general movement of Platonism lies the direction that Plotinus eventually took it as a comprehensive and complete system, and this is consistent with the broad reading that I have been advocating.

One of Aristotle's primary complaints about the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy is how its components are causally connected - how the Good is connected to the Forms, and how the Forms are connected to particulars. Plato's answer to this question employs the concept of "participation". Aristotle calls this *mimesis* or *methexis* (imitation or participation) an empty metaphor, and his solution is to eradicate this *diaspora* by locating the form and the one (the being and the unity) in the particular. The consequent result of repatriating the form in the particular is a broad metaphysical orientation that we might call convertibility. According to Aristotle, in saying that "x is," you imply that "x is one," just as saying that "x is one" implies that "x is".[10] Both

being and unity are predicates of, and are dependent on a substance of which they are predicated; substance is that which corresponds to the "x" which is or is one. A good example of Aristotle's idea of convertibility (in accordance with *pros hen* equivocity) comes at *Metaphysics* Γ[11]:

> Now if being and unity [τὸ ὂν καὶ τὸ ἓν] are the same [ταὐτον], *i.e.* a single nature in the sense that they are associated as a principle [ἀρχὴ] and a cause [αἴτιον] are, and not as being denoted by the same definition [ἑνί λόγῳ] (although it makes no difference but rather helps our argument if we understand them in the same sense)...and unity is nothing distinct [οὐδὲν ἕτερον] from being; and further if the substance [οὐσία] is one in no accidental sense, and similarly is of its very nature something which is - then there are just as many species of being as there are of unity. (*Metaphysics* 1003b24-35)

To say that being and unity are *predicated* of substances allows Aristotle to reunite a thing with its unity and its being. By making being and unity convertible predicates, he avoids placing them in a hierarchy.

In an interesting passage in *Metaphysics* H, Aristotle suggests that the integration of matter and form is similar to the integration of being and unity. These two integrations, one may note, correspond to the two levels of the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy (unity – being, being – particulars):

> Owing to the difficulty about unity some speak about 'participation,' and raise the question what is the cause of participation and what is it to participate...The reason is that people look for a unifying formula and a difference between potency and complete reality. But, as has been said, the proximate matter and the form are

> one and the same thing, the one potentially and the other actually. Therefore it is like asking what in general is the cause of unity and of a thing's being one; for each thing is a unity, and the potential and the actual are somehow one. Therefore there is no other cause here unless there is something which caused the movement from potency into actuality. And all the things which have no matter are without qualification essentially unities [ὅσα δὲ μὴ ἔχει ὕλην, πάντα ἁπλῶς ὅπερ ἕν τι.] (*Metaphysics* 1045b7-25)

There are a number of things to note in this passage. First, Aristotle is saying that certain material items are by their very nature commensurate with certain formal items. There is nothing over and above the bare fact of this union; substance simply works this way.[12] Second, there is the suggestion of an agency that will cause the move from potency to actuality. This should tell us something about the nature of the cause of unity in general. Ultimately, the unity of concrete particulars requires *motion* in order to effect the union of form and matter, and motion is guaranteed (via the *Physics*) by the continuity of motion in the system. The *kinesis* in the system is guaranteed, in the final analysis, by the Unmoved Mover which itself must possess being and unity. Hence there is a causal relationship, albeit a remote one, between the Unmoved Mover and the unity and being of the concrete particular.

Aristotle goes on to suggest that things that have no matter are without qualification essentially unities.[13] This suggests something about the nature of substance itself, namely that the "formal" side of substance is a source or cause of unity in particular beings. The form or essence is doing the work of unification; the matter is potentially unified by the form. The fact that the potency is what the matter is, just as

the actuality is what the substantial form is, and the fact that these are a union, does not detract from the fact that if you *could* "remove" the matter (ontologically, not epistemologically), you would have an essential unity. In other words substance, in various ways and at various levels, including the level of the Unmoved Mover or ultimate final cause,[14] conveys unity; given the convertibility of being and unity, one may say that it conveys being as well.

In *convertibility*, being and unity are co-equal in terms of metaphysical priority, and both stand in a dependent relation to particulars. Wherever there is a particular you will find being and unity, and you will not find being and unity in the absence of a particular. For Aristotle, being and unity are predicates - they are "said of" something. Being is the being of something and unity is the unity of something. We see another expression of this convertibility in *Metaphysics* I, where it is said that there is no *real* distinction between "man" and "a man," only a distinction in thought:

> That in a sense unity means the same as being [ταὐτο σημαίνει πως τὸ ἓν καὶ τὸ ὄν] is clear from the fact that its meanings correspond to the categories one to one, and it is not comprised within any category... but is related to them exactly as being is, that in 'one man' nothing more is predicated than in 'man' (just as being is nothing apart from substance [τό τι] or quality or quantity); and that to be one is just to be a particular thing. (*Metaphysics* 1054a13-19) [15]

It is not *ontologically* possible to separate "man" from "a man". It is possible to separate "man" from "a man" in abstraction, e.g. the separation of a universal concept of "man" from a particular man, but this is an *epistemological*, and not an *ontological* separation. In Platonism the *ontological* separation of "Man" (Form) and "a man" (instance) is a central tenet.

When we read the Plato's theory of Forms through the eyes of Aristotle's metaphysics, unity and being have to play the role of both substances (an ontological role) and universals (an epistemological role). They have to play the ontological role of substances because they have separate independent existence and ground particulars (unity grounds particular Forms, Forms ground concrete particulars in flux); they have to play the epistemological role of universals because in the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy, unity makes forms conceivable, and forms make particulars conceivable.[16]

When Plotinus makes an attempt to distinguish (ontologically) a thing's existence from its unity, we see things that start to look like direct references to the texts in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. This is not to say that Aristotle is the only possible target, but given the focus on Aristotle as the one who strays from the Pythagoreans, it is quite suggestive that Plotinus wants to deny convertibility on the grounds that a principle of unity is required to account for being. To place the principle of being and unity *in* the substance as an account of its unity and being, as Aristotle does, is to beg the question regarding the *source* of being and unity in the *bearer* of that being and unity, the substantial form. Where do unity and being come from? At *Enneads* VI.9.2 Plotinus begins by putting the question this way:

> Is it, then, true that for each of the things which are one as parts, its substance [ἡ οὐσία] and its one (τὸ ἕν) are not the same thing, but for being and a substance as a whole substance and being are the same thing? So that anyone who has discovered being has discovered the One, and substance itself is the One itself: for example if intellect [νοῦς] is substance, intellect is also the One since it is primary being [πρώτως ὄντα] and primarily one, and as it gives

> the other things a share in being, so in the same measure it gives them a share in the One. (*Enneads* VI.9.2, 1-9)

It may be that Plotinus is responding here to Origen or Ammonius Saccas,[17] and not to Aristotle, but we should keep in mind that Plotinus frames the question in terms of whether someone who has discovered being has also discovered the One.[18] Further, Aristotle's first principle is "substance itself," *i.e.* substance par excellence, and is so regarded by Plotinus. The "example" used to illustrate the question of whether finding the One amounts to finding unity is given in terms of *Nous* (a secondary self-intellecting principle with which Plotinus identifies the Unmoved Mover) and *ousia* or substance. Finally the convertibility of being and unity is suggested by the idea that the "same measure" of being and unity is shared among things that have them. This sounds very similar to a picture of Aristotelian convertibility.[19] Moreover, what Plotinus says next is also suggestive of Aristotle:

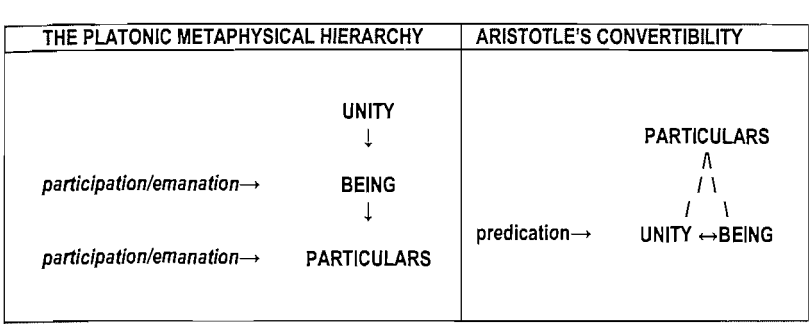
> For what can anyone say that [the One] is besides being and intellect? For it is either the same as being - for 'man" and "one man" are the same thing - or it is like a kind of number of the individual; you say "one" of a thing alone just as you say "two things." Now if number belongs to the real beings, it is clear that so does the One; and we must investigate what it is. But if numbering is an activity of soul going through things one after another, the One would not be anything factual. But our argument said that if an individual thing loses its one it would not exist at all. We must therefore see if the individual one and individual being are the same thing, and universal being and universal One [τὸ ὅλως ὂν καὶ τὸ ἕν]. (*Enneads* VI.9.2, 9-16)

The analysis of "man" and "a man", while commonplace, is the same example Aristotle uses to assert the convertibility of being and unity in the *Metaphysics*. Plotinus' subsequent rejection of convertibility implies an acceptance of a "universal one" and a "universal being," and, given the priority of unity to being, it suggests a conceptual allegiance to the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy:

> ... if the being of the individual is a multiplicity, but it is impossible for the One to be a multiplicity, they will be different from each other. At any rate, "man" and "living being" and "rational" are many parts and these many are bound together by that one. "Man" and "One" are therefore different, and one has parts and the other is partless. And further, universal being, which has all the beings in it, will still be more many and different from the One, and will have the One by sharing and participation. (*Enneads* VI.9.2, 17-24)

Plotinus goes on to connect universal being with the self-intellecting hypostasis *Nous* that "contains" the forms, and he says that this is not the first principle. The conclusion is that *Nous* (a self intellecting mind), and therefore the Unmoved Mover (also a self-intellecting mind) – in fact *any* self intellecting mind – cannot be a first principle. The way in which Plotinus arrives at this conclusion has important ramifications for convertibility. "Man" and "a man" are *not* the same. Being and unity *are* ontologically and hierarchically distinguishable, both at the level of the particular and at the level of primary being and primary unity. Being participates in a prior unity. This suggests (with a new set of emanative criteria to effect the causal mechanics of participation)[20] that Plotinus once again asserts the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy of *unity-being-particulars*. I will say more about emanation in the next chapter, but for now I point out that Plotinus agrees

with Plato on the question of the proper relation of being and unity, and he disagrees with Aristotle's position. The two metaphysical systems are represented pictorially in the diagram below.




Whereas Aristotle would maintain that the difference between being and unity is often merely conceptual,[21] Plotinus maintains that their difference is real. The difference between "man" and "a man," in this case is that "a man's" existence is preserved by its unity, a unity that ultimately derives from the One.[22] The existence of each and every thing is dependent upon the principle of unity, the One.[23] At the most general level, being is dependent upon the One.[24] The broad metaphysical position and conceptual orientation - the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy - is completely consistent with Plotinus' own hypostatic hierarchy, which is comprised of the One, *Nous* and Soul. The One is a principle of unity, upon which the formal realities of *Nous* and Soul are dependent, and upon whom in turn material particulars are dependent. *Contra* Aristotle, Plotinus believes that being and unity are prior to, and not predicated of material particulars. What we shall see is that Plotinus' critique of the Unmoved Mover uses Aristotle's own understanding of the relation of being and unity, and his conception of thinking, to undermine the first principle of the Aristotelian system. Plotinus ultimately con-

cludes that the ultimate principle of being and unity is not an exemplar of being and unity, or a paradigm *per se*; rather the One is, in the spirit of Platonism and *contra* Aristotle, beyond being and knowing. Aristotle's unitary principle is a unitary being, and in Plotinus' eyes, the unity of this being requires a principle and a source.

For Plato and Plotinus what are intuitively predicates or types become true substances, while their instantiations are demoted to dependent beings, relying on an ontologically prior and "more real," formal unity for their derived existence.[25] For example, in the *Republic*, Plato says the following:

> we predicate [εἶναί φαμέν] 'to be' of many beautiful things and many good things, saying of them severally that they *are* and so define them in our speech...And again we speak of a self-beautiful [αὐτὸ δὴ καλὸν] and of a good that is only and merely good [αὐτὸ ἀγαθὸν], and so, in the case of all things that we then posited as many, we turn about and posit each as a single idea [ἰδέαν μίαν] or aspect, assuming it to be a unity [μιᾶς] and call it that which really is [ὁ ἔστιν]. (*Republic* 507b)

This kind of "eidetic inversion," of making the Ideas more real than their instances, is of special import for Plotinus, since it helps explain the acceptability of the logic employed to justify the One as the ultimate source of unity. Plotinus understands the Forms as unities whose unity comes from something prior, just as in Plato's *Republic*, Forms get their unity from something prior; further, sensible particulars get their natures from something prior to them, *i.e.* the Forms. With this "eidetic inversion," any group of things stands in a dependent relation to a prior "eidetic" principle. It is eidetic because the "prior" is derived from an *eidos* or form. It is "inverted" because it is counter-intuitive in so far as the

more familiar sensible objects play less of a role in the explanation of our experience than our experience leads us to believe. The existence of Plotinus' One, and its function as a principle of unity in the cosmos, is implied (via eidetic inversion) by the being and intelligibility of every Form, and in the participant existence and perceptibility of every instantiation of a Form in the Plotinian universe.[26] In other words, you invert the logic of predication, making "predicates" prior ontological principles, and those things which Aristotle takes as substantive (concrete material particulars) are understood as instantiations of what are truly substantive (Forms). In Plotinus' philosophy, the conceptual approach to the One as the "principle" of all reality is an extrapolation of this principle - Forms are grounded in a supra-ontological, supra-noetic prior principle. The unity derived from the One is manifest in *any* existent thing (*i.e.* material or formal); in order to be, a thing must be one.

The problem that Aristotle introduced regarding participation as a source of motion and change is in Plotinus answered by appeal to the causal efficacy of the One's superabundance. Although the One is not diminished in any way, its power "overflows," so to speak, and produces the next hypostasis, as a result of the kind of principle that it is. Things participate in unity because a principle of unity is their ontological source. In a unified, vitalist conception of the cosmos like that of Plotinus', the causal connection is guaranteed by the unity of the system, just as Aristotle's account of motion in the *Physics* requires a *spatio-kinetic* contiguity. Hence, in a new key, the unity of all things, both formal, and material, is one where emanation, explains predication.[27]

This is not to suggest, however, that the One for Plotinus, (or the Good for Plato) can be thought of as a sort of "Form of unity."[28] Nothing can participate directly in the One, and the unity and being which it conveys has to be me-

diated by the circumscribing unity and being of the Forms and *Nous*. No participant in the One is properly an "instance" of it, because the One, such as it is, cannot give its nature to anything. By the same token for Plato, while all forms participate in the Good, they imitate, albeit imperfectly, the unity and completeness which of which the Good is the principle.

When the logic of eidetic inversion is projected by analogy to a higher level, unity is seen as emanating from the One, and hence unity is not a predicate but a principle. Plotinus accounts for this derivation in terms of emanation. Again, for Plato, the unity of a Form is seen as derived from the Good, in so far as it is a principle of unity. Plotinus introduces emanation as a principle that provides a more vitalistic notion of the connection with this ultimate principle of unity and the Forms.

But can we really be justified in identifying the One of Plotinus with the Good in Plato? At this point I want to say only that the broad lines of metaphysical orientation with regard to being and unity are consistent in Plato and Plotinus and incompatible with Aristotle's position. However there is more going on here that needs consideration. Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus all seem to state, in one way or another that the Platonic Good is metaphysically prior to being. Aristotle says as much in "erecting" the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy, for the purposes of criticism and Plotinus says as much in defending it. Seeing the broad lines of metaphysical positioning help to see how both Plotinus and Aristotle make the claim. But is there a justification for such a claim in Plato? Is it the case that Aristotle and Plotinus are right about Plato in saying (Aristotle) that there is a dependent relation of being to unity and in claiming (Plotinus) that the Plotinian hypostatic system is compatible with Plato's metaphysical position?

Attributing a broad conceptual scheme like the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy to Plato has more to do with the *perceived implications* of Platonism, and less to do with the explicit positions that Plato or the Platonists hold. The significance of the claims that both Aristotle and Plotinus make about their predecessors is most visible if we remain cognizant of the opposition between convertibility and the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy. Whether or not the idea of a One beyond being is actually a workable proposition is a different issue from what was actually maintained by Aristotle, or Plotinus, or in fact Plato. Plato, as we shall see, is not entirely helpful about concretising the nature of the Good in his most explicit treatment of it. Aristotle sees in Platonism a predilection for a larger conceptual scheme (*unity-being-particulars*). It is a general tendency in Plato's philosophy to see the Forms as belonging to the realm of "being", to which particulars stand in a dependent relationship.[29] That the Good or the One[30] functions as a principle of unity for the Forms also seems evident. At this point it is not *crucial* to see Plato's "Good" as "beyond being"; it is crucial to see that its role is somewhat different from that of the "other" Forms, in so far as they require a principle of unity which grounds them.

When we turn to the most obvious place to look for Plato's account of the Good, from the perspective of the broad metaphysical positions we have identified, we do find textual grounds for what Aristotle and Plotinus think about Plato's metaphysics.[31] At *Republic* 509 we find this exchange where Socrates is explaining the nature of the Good:

> "The sun, I presume you will say, not only furnishes to visibles the power of visibility but it also provides for their generation and growth and nurture though it is not itself generation." "Of course not." "In like manner, then, you are to say that the objects of knowledge not

> only receive from the presence of the good their being known, but their very existence and essence is derived to them from it, though the good itself is not essence but still transcends essence [ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας] in dignity and surpassing power." And Glaucon very ludicrously said, "*Heaven save us,* hyperbole can no further go." [Καὶ ὁ Γλαύκων μάλα γελοίως, *Ἀπόλλον* ἔφη, δαιμονίας ὑπερβολῆς] "The fault is yours," I said, "for compelling me to utter my thoughts about it." (*Republic* 509b-c)

The oath "*Apollon*" is uttered by Glaucon as a response to the Good being characterized by Socrates as *epekeina tēs ousias.*

After Glaucon utters his oath, he begs Socrates to elaborate his account of the Good, which he does in terms of the similitude of the sun and the analogy of the divided line. Glaucon insists that Socrates omit nothing from his account of the Good, to which Socrates replies that much must be omitted, due to practical limitations. Plotinus understood the difficulty. In the *Enneads*, he discusses the Pythagorean way of dealing with ineffability of first principles:

> But perhaps this name "One" contains only a denial of multiplicity. This is why the Pythagoreans symbolically indicated it to each other by the name Apollo [Ἀπόλλωνα], in negation of the multiple [τῶν πολλῶν].[32] (*Enneads* V.5.6.27-29)

Now, if Plotinus had a copy of Plutarch's *Moralia* in front of him, he would have seen the following remarks on the Pythagoreans "Naming unity [τὴν μονάδα] Apollo, duality Artemis." Later in the *Moralia*, Plutarch remarks:

> Being must have unity, even as unity must have being [ἓν εἶναι δεῖ τὸ ὄν, ὥσπερ ὂν τὸ ἕν]. Now divergence from unity, because of its differing from Being, devi-

> ates into the creation of that which has no Being. Wherefore the first of god's names is excellently adapted to him...He is Apollo, that is to say denying the many and abjuring multiplicity. (*Moralia* 393B-C)

The relationship between being and unity expressed by Plutarch is not that of the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy, but closer to the Aristotelian understanding of being and unity as convertible. If I am right in this assessment, Plutarch has Aristotelianised Pythagoreanism in a metaphysically incompatible way. Plotinus' faithfulness to the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy and its Pythagorean heritage would force him to reject this kind of Aristotelianising. This should not distract us from the fact that *Apollon* is employed to discuss a primary principle of unity both in the *Moralia* and the *Republic*. Many attempts have been made to qualify the characterization of the Good as *epekeina tēs ousias* in the *Republic*, for fear that the most rational of philosophers may lapse into mysticism at the summit of his greatest work. But Plato has said that the Good is beyond being. To deny this or attempt to qualify it fails to account for why Glaucon is so incredulous. That is, once Glaucon accepts the principle of Forms in general, it is hard to imagine why he is so surprised at the mention of a superior Form. The characterization of that Form as "beyond being" is the only thing that explains Glaucon's incredulity. Attempts to mitigate the claim that the Good is *epekeina tēs ousias* must mitigate Glaucon's incredulity and the consistency of usage of *Apollon* as a term for a principle of unity. We are considering a point of interpretation where to deny Plato's mystical tendencies closes the peripheral vision necessary for an appreciation of the movement of the text, one which brings us from the festival of Bendis (Athenian: Artemis, symbol of duality) in *Republic* I to Apollo (symbol of unity) in *Republic* VI.[33] Only by recognizing of the broad structural

movements and resonances in which it is situated can we come to terms with the significance of the cryptic tone in which Plato remarks upon the nature of the Good at *Republic* 509.[34] Again, when we take into account the statements Aristotle makes regarding the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy, and we see Plotinus' conceptual alignment with that hierarchy, it becomes possible to gain some historical perspective on what it means for Plato to have a principle of unity, what Plotinus calls a One "beyond being".[35]

One of the things we can derive from this assessment is the close kinship that Aristotle sees between the Pythagoreans and the Academy. The problem of the *chōrismos* is present in both, and this may help to see (along with the innovations of Speusippus) why Aristotle would refer to the Platonic Good as *to hen*. When we consider that Plotinus knows that the Pythagoreans refer to their first principle by the word *Apollon*, and we see Plato using this word, albeit cryptically, in the context of saying that the one is *epekeina tēs ousias* we can identify a broad line of metaphysical positioning that extends some six hundred years. We see a lineage of a seminal metaphysical conceptualization of the relationship of being unity and particulars with which Aristotle finds himself at variance.

Plato's own intuition regarding the Forms is that they enjoy a higher ontological status than, and logical priority to the realm of becoming; they are more real, and not subject to change or corruption. The Forms then, can be seen to exist to a greater degree than their imitative instantiations in the realm of becoming. The same holds true for Plotinus; indeed he extends the scope of this tenet by applying it to his triadic system of hypostases. The general rule that he observes in accounting for hypostatic declension or hypostatic ascent is that the closer one gets to the One on the hypostatic ladder, the more reality and the more being something has.

Plotinus believes that the cosmos is grounded by a principle of unity, the One, which is beyond both being and thought. This perfect and complete principle gives rise to a second primary principle or hypostasis,[36] *Nous*, by a process of emanation,[37] wherein it first produces unlimited being, which is then limited by intellection. The combination of an unlimited outflow of being and the limiting nature of thought is *Nous*, the second hypostasis, a monadology of self-intellecting forms.[38] The idea of calling *Nous* a "monadology" is to suggest that each of the forms in *Nous* is a unity unto itself that is in harmony with all of the other forms, and that in its self-intellection, it reflects all of the other forms as related to itself, much as each monad in Leibniz's system refers to every other monad in terms of an infinite number of true predicates. To say that each form is a kind of monad, and that the collection of forms in *Nous* is a monadology, also stresses the interconnectedness and harmony of the expressions of unity that each form represents, as well as the individuality of each form. One gets a sense of this in the following lines from *Enneads* V.9.8:

> If, then, the thought [of *Nous*] is of what is within it, that which is within it is its immanent form [τὸ εἶδος τὸ ἐνόν]; and this is the Idea [ἡ ἰδέα]. What then is this? Intellect [νοῦς] and intelligent substance [ἡ νοερὰ οὐσία]; each individual Idea is not other than Intellect, but each is Intellect. And Intellect as a whole is all the Forms, and each individual Form is an individual intellect, as the whole body of knowledge is all its theorems, but each theorem is a part of the whole, not as being spatially distinct, but as having its particular power in the whole. This Intellect therefore is in itself and since it possesses itself [ἔχων ἑαυτὸν]

> in peace is everlasting fullness [ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ κόρος ἀεί]. (*Enneads* V.9.8, 1-8)

*Nous* is a unity of multiplicity, perceiving directly and immediately all of the forms, which also perceive themselves directly and immediately. This One-Many - *Nous* - gives rise to a third hypostasis, Soul, that thinks discursively, and can be seen to have an upper part which apprehends and conveys order to the material realm below it, by creating "place holders" of a sort for bodies. Soul also has a lower component that gives life and sense perception to the places "marked out" by upper soul. Human souls have a part of them that resides with *Nous*, while the rest of them is engaged in the body. The aim of the human soul in this hypostatic system is to disengage from material concerns, or weak expressions of unity, and to recollect the true unity of the self that always resides with *Nous*. If the soul is able to turn inward and actualise itself, it ascends to the level of *Nous*, from which it may attempt a mystical union with the One that is beyond being.

*Nous*, which is grounded in this principle, expresses the One in a way that is more real and less "diminished" than Soul. For Soul ultimately takes its reality from the One, but it does so mediately through *Nous*. When we arrive at the level of particular material things, they all seem to share the same amount of being,[39] but their prior formal instantiations increase in reality at the level of Soul, and are more real yet again at the level of *Nous*. Implicit in this is a position which goes back to Plato's divided line, where images are less real than beliefs, beliefs are less real than mathematical objects, mathematical objects are less real than Forms, and all of them are grounded in an ultimate principle, the Good.[40] For Plato the Good plays the same role as a principle of unity as the One does in the system of Plotinus. The realm of being is participant in (Plato's view) and emanated from (Plotinus' view) this first principle. The realm of being is the realm of

the formal and mathematical, hypostatised by Plotinus into *Nous* and Soul. World Soul informs the particulars of the material world, and individuals, as objects and images are participants or participant reflections in Plato's metaphysical hierarchy. In the diagram below, one can see the relative positioning of the objects of knowledge in Plato's divided line and the hypostatic system of Plotinus.[41]

Within this structure, and employing the logic of eidetic inversion, Plotinus develops and projects an apophatic characterisation of a One beyond being which would account for the unity and existence of both formal reality and material instantiation of that reality. With sensible particulars, one denies all of the aspects of material instantiation in order to approach an understanding of the Forms. What is left is then posited as the ground of material particulars. Within the Formal realm, one denies all aspects of formal being in order to approach an understanding of the One. What is left is then posited as the principle of the Forms. Plato in effect, as characterised by Aristotle, is doing the same thing when he articulates the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy.

| PLATO | PLOTINUS |
|---|---|
| UNITY | |
| GOOD | ONE |
| BEING | |
| FORMS<br>MATHEMATICAL OBJECTS | *NOUS*<br>SOUL |
| PARTICULARS | |
| PHYSICAL OBJECTS | WORLD SOUL |
| PHYSICAL OBJECTS<br>IMAGES | INDIVIDUAL SOUL |

**Notes for Chapter I:**

[1]This tendency to attribute authority and validity to thinkers or their thoughts in accordance with their supposed concomitance with Pythagoras arguably goes back to the Old Academy, and the tradition survived until Plotinus' time. Plotinus sees in Plato a Pythagorean lineage. Having dealt with the "true views" of that lineage, he goes on to mention Anaxagoras, who "neglects to give an accurate account because of his antiquity," Heraclitus, who is said to have maintained that "the One is eternal and intelligible," and "Empedocles for whom "Love is the One." (*Enneads* V.1.9, 1-5) Dillon (1977, 51) observes, "The view that Plato is essentially a pupil, creative or otherwise, of Pythagoras grows in strength and elaboration among all classes of Platonist, attaining its extreme form among those who unequivocally declared themselves to be Pythagoreans. Nevertheless, despite all the variations in doctrine that emerge, we can observe in this period the growth of a consistent body of thought, constituting a Platonic heritage that could be handed on... to Plotinus and his followers..." See also Dillon (1977, 38); on Plotinus' attitude towards Plato, see Armstrong (1980, 206, 213 *ff*.).

[2]This is not to say that Aristotle is the source of the historical method he employs, but rather to suggest that the method focuses on a different central point; Aristotle sees causality as primary in the history of Greek philosophy and Plotinus sees unity as the central issue.

[3]Gerson (1994, 8) suggests that Plotinus argues for the tenets of his system by arguing against Aristotelian principles. He goes on to say, "The *Enneads* is the first and even up to the present day one of the very few attempts to appreciate Aristotle's arguments and to defeat them on their own ground." There was never any question of how much of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Plotinus' subsumed. Porphyry says as much in his *Life of Plotinus* (14, 6-8). One is reminded of Heidegger's claim that Aristotle's *Physics* is the "hidden foundational book of Western philosophy." (quoted in Schürmann 2002, 160). Some scholars such as Kenney (1991, 30, and Ch. 3 *passim*) see Plotinus as reacting not specifically to Aristotle, but to Middle Platonists or Neopythagoreans holding a first principle which admits of duality. These are not mutually exclusive options, however. In some cases Plotinus is reacting specifically to Aristotle, and in others to the integration of Aristotle into Platonism, and in others to both. On the idea that the new Platonism had been more or less Aristotelianized, see Blumenthal (1986, 66). Plotinus frames a significant portion of the approach

to his first principle in reference to Aristotle, and an examination of later Middle Platonism and Neopythagoreanism reveals a tendency in those schools to combine a Platonic cosmos with an "Aristotelian" god. In the end, the result of Plotinus' attack is the same - a first principle cannot admit of any multiplicity, and as far as Plotinus is concerned, Aristotle's Unmoved Mover is as multiple.

[4]Hathaway (1969, 19) remarks, "It is frequently forgotten that the Neoplatonist commentators had an excellent text of the dialogues, possessed critical philological principles, and lived in some periods in a genuinely critical philosophical environment."

[5]See Dillon (1977, 18).

[6]Schürmann (2002, 157-158 *passim*), and (*pace* Gadamer 1986, 28) who claims that, "Plotinus takes a new step when he also calls the One *epekeina noēseōs* (beyond all thinking), and when he takes all being and all thinking too as a pointer into transcendence." See also (2002, 186-7)

[7]*Republic*, 478c.

[8]See Tredennick (1956, 290, n. *a*) and Taran (1981, 33 *ff.*).

[9]Taran (1981, 33) correctly points out that Aristotle does not mean that Speusippus' One is "beyond being." According to Taran, interpretations which say this are based on a misunderstanding of the syntax, and consequently of the argument: "Aristotle's argument here [1092a12-15], being a *reductio ad absurdum,* implies that Speusippus probably would not have been prepared to accept the necessary consequence of his doctrine as Aristotle sees it. For the latter contends that, if the principles were indefinite and imperfect, The One itself would not even be an entity. But in every other passage about Speusippus' One Aristotle consistently takes it to be just that." (Taran 1981, 34).

[10]Suggests Watson, (1898, 38) "'reality' and 'unity,' though they are not identical ideas, mutually imply each other; whatever is 'real' is 'one,' and whatever is 'one' is 'real'.

[11]This notion of *pros hen* equivocity is central to Joseph Owens' thinking (1981), and is reiterated by Gerson (1994, 92). The idea of the *pros hen* plays an important part of Patzig's thinking, but he casts the concept in terms of paronymy. In his later work, Patzig suggests that G.E.L. Owen's idea (1978) of "focal meaning" grasps Aristotle's intention better. Ideally, what the *pros hen* equivocal aims at is an understanding of many different senses of a word that have their significance in relation to a primary sense. For example, a doctor, an apple and a walk are all healthy, but their healthiness stands in relation to health proper, which is not manifest in a Platonic Form, but rather is manifest in a healthy person, or arguably, in

the mind of the *iatros* in a manner similar to the product of an art being present in the mind of a *tektōn*. I take it that Owens and Gerson want to make the *pros hen* relationship apply metaphysically as well as epistemologically. In other words, they want to make the Unmoved Mover an ontological primary that all things ought to be metaphysically related to. I suspect that Aristotle has only the epistemological sense in mind.

[12]See Scaltsas (1994, 215), and Kosman (1984, 144) remarks, "Aristotle compares asking for an explanation of why potentiality and actuality are one with asking for an explanation of why anything is one. No answer is needed... because the explanation of the thing is at the same time an explanation of its being one." This is the consequence of making being and unity convertible terms.

[13]'ὅσα δὲ μὴ ἔχει ὕλην, πάντα ἁπλῶς ὅπερ ἕν τι'(*Metaphysics* 1045b25).

[14]See Frede (1994, 175): "It is obvious that a final answer to the question what is it to be a substance will have to be one which also fits immaterial substances."

[15][τὸ ἑνὶ εἶναι τὸ ἑκαστῳ εἶναι]. *cp. Enneads* IV, 2, 1003b23 *ff.*

[16]In Aristotle, the convertible nature of being and unity has important consequences for how forms, substances and universals are understood. Aristotle needs some kind distinction between ontological forms and epistemological ones - between "substantial" forms and universals.

[17]See Armstrong (1988, 306 *n.* 1) Although we are not especially clear on the positions of Ammonius, it seems clear that they too will be subject to the same middle Platonic assumptions that Plotinus is responding to. Given the tendency to "Aristotelianize" Platonism, Aristotle becomes, even if indirectly, the ultimate target, to the extent that convertibility is incompatible with the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy. More work on the relation of Plotinus to Ammonius in O'Brien (1994).

[18]As well, the relation of the unity of the parts to the unity of a substance are said to be different, as they are in Aristotle.

[19]With the exception that there seems to be a causal relation implied by the "sharing out" of being that I do not think is present in Aristotelian *pros hen* equivocity. However, Plotinus thinks that the Unmoved Mover won't work in any case, and the notion/assumption that the source of unity for particulars and *Nous* is the same may suggest that the critique encompasses this lacuna in Aristotle's metaphysical explanation, for it is an explanation that suggests that concrete particulars are explanatorily basic in terms of the source of their being and unity.

[20]In this regard, Dillon (1988, 350) suggests that, "We cannot really think of an Ideal Horse any more. What subsists in Intellect [*Nous*] is a certain quasi-mathematical formula, which is also a field of force, programmed to take on this configuration when projected onto Matter according to a prearranged pattern - the mysterious προὐπογράφη."

[21]*Metaphysics* 1003b22-34; 1043b1-3; 1041b11-33. Gerson (1994, 7), and Gerson (1990, *passim*).

[22]Gerson (1994a, 14-5) suggests that the positing of the One above the forms makes Plotinus differ from Aristotle because for Aristotle, being and *ousia* are identical, *e.g.* being is unqualifiedly separate form. However I say that *to on* is predicated of *ousia*; this accounts for the predicative, epistemological distinction that is ontologically unreal. The conclusion we reach is the same, however: since, for Plotinus, forms depend ontologically on something prior for their being (*to on*), there is no longer any ground for ontological identity. In Plotinus, there is a dependency of *to on* on *to hen*, and of particulars on *to on* and *to hen*, in this order: unity - being - particulars.

[23]Hadot (1990, 134) puts this nicely: "Every ordered multiplicity, every 'system,' presupposes the transcendent One whose unity grounds the possibility of that order."

[24]Gerson (1990, 203) goes so far as to say that Plotinus' proof for the existence of the One depends upon this refutation of Aristotle's conflation of being and unity. This is an extremely important observation, although I do not think, as Gerson does, that the philosophy of the One stands or falls with it. While it is true that unity must be prior to being, it may be enough to say that Plotinus makes the distinction *because* he wants his notion of unity to be indivisible. In short he does not want to say that the One "exists" if this would admit of a distinction between the One and the One's existence. Deck's position, that the nature of *Nous* demands the One is a more general application of Gerson's specific thesis about "man" and "a man", and when Plotinus does offer "proofs" of the One (*Enneads* III.8.9, 1-13; III.8.11.7-10) it is clear that, metaphysically, he regards the "proof of the One" to stand or fall on an understanding of *Nous*/Being via Plato's *Parmenides*. It is philosophically significant (*pace* Deck 1967, 8) that Plotinus is a mystic. For the One is often discussed without formal proofs (*Enneads* II.9.1; V.8.5; V.2.1; V.4.1; V.4.2) and ultimately, appreciating the ineffable nature of the One, though it may be philosophically implied, cannot be fully accomplished without taking seriously the fact that some experience is ineffable.

[25]See Findlay (1982, 1) and Strange (1992, 486).

[26]Findlay (1982, 7).

[27]*i.e.* this contrast between "emanative" and "predicative" speaks to Aristotle's attempt to call participation in Plato vacuous and assert predication in its place. Plotinus now reasserts a kind of metaphysics of participation with emanation as the vehicle that Aristotle claims is absent from Plato.

[28]On this see Gerson's insightful comments (1994, 36).

[29]At *Republic* 477a Plato says that "knowledge pertains to that which is," (ἐπὶ μὲν τῷ ὄντι γνῶσις ἦν) *cp.* 477b. He also says (478a) that *episteme* is a power set over that which is. (ἐπὶ τῷ ὄντι τὸ ὂν γνῶμαι ὡς ἔχει). And what we have knowledge of are the Forms, which truly are. *cp. Republic* 507b.

[30]At times both Aristotle and Plotinus treat these indifferently. *cp. Metaphysics 9888a14-5,* 988b10-15; 1075a35-8; *Enneads* VI.9, entitled by Porphyry *On The Good or The One.* For the identification of the two in modern literature see Narbonne (2002), Hitchcock (1985), Findlay (1974), Kramer (1969), Dodds (1928).

[31]Much has been made of the relationship of the *Parmenides* to Plotinus' *Enneads*, following Dodds (1928). There is more work on this in Jackson (1967), Narbonne (2002 *esp.* 190 *ff.*), and Schürmann (2002 *passim*). I do not treat much of the *Parmenides* in this book because I think that Plotinus is not solely committed to the *Parmenides.* To my mind, he sees the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy as pervading the Platonic corpus, or at least that part of it regarded as canonical, for which see Hathaway (1969). Narbonne also seems to proceed this way (2002, 190) regarding the *epekeina* motif: "I wanted to show [by focusing on *Republic* VI and VII] that the Neoplatonic reading of the ἐπέκεινα as the characteristic and exceptional transcendence of the Good above the other ἄλλο could rest on this basis alone."

[32]Schürmann (2002, 163) suggests we should be discouraged from "conceiving of the One as a position, a *thesis.* They should also discourage us from conceiving of it as a simply more intense mode of *being* than anything we experience phenomenally."

[33]Given that Artemis is frequently associated with Bendis, the double procession on her feast day (the day of the discussion of the *Republic*) is highly suggestive of a movement from plurality to unity in Plato's great work. See Plutarch's *Moralia* 354F, 381F, 394A. For an interesting discussion of Plutarch's influence on Plotinus, see de Vogel (1953, 46-8).

[34]I want to suggest that to say that the form of the Good is unqualifiedly beyond being does not necessarily suggest that it is non-existent or irrational, a point which Taylor (1927) is also quick to relay. It merely suggests that, given the way that we understand the forms, and the relationship of mathematical and scientific reasoning to knowledge of them, the way in which the Good is to be approached and understood is also beyond these methods. One might say that such a method must correspondingly transcend science and mathematics in dignity and power - that is we are talking about transcending the discursive for a more direct form of intuition. This is what Schürmann denies (2002, 159) to Plato, which I think he shouldn't.

[35]Narbonne (2002, 193): "We may assert that, unlike Plato, who expresses the Good's transcendence using the language of being, that is *intra-ontologically*, the Neoplatonists express the Good's transcendence *extra-ontologically* (*henologically*, or of we prefer, *hypostatically*), by means of a vocabulary which is distinct and superior to the vocabulary of being and which was beyond the reach of Plato in the *Republic*...That which Plato, without any doubt, *aimed at* with his ἐπέκεινα, the Neoplatonists were able to name." This is certainly not true of Plotinus who speaks of being in agony for a true expression, but I don't think Narbonne intends the point to be taken literally. (Narbonne 2002, 194): "we can reasonably argue that the Neoplatonists convey better than Plato himself that major intuition which was surely his own, on the way to which he, at the very least, indubitably found himself, even though the words and the technical descriptive processes to express it were still lacking." See also Kelly (1973, 244).

[36]Much argument has been passed about the nature of "hypostasis," in Plotinus. Gerson (1994, 2) notes that the term is applied to "wisdom," "matter," "love," "numbers," "relation," "time," "motion," and so on. The reason people want to say that Plotinus has "Three Primary Hypostases" is because Porphyry gave *Ennead* V.1 this title. While some have suggested that this is no good reason to assert that Plotinus in fact has them, I think that Porphyry probably knew what he was talking about; however it should be noted that the title Porphyry chose was the Three *Primary* Hypostases, which should suggest that Plotinus depends on the functional notion in more than these primary ways. Common sense dictates that anyone who engages in a discussion about Plotinus knows very well that for the most part discussion of Hypostases refers to the One, *Nous* and Soul, and hence we seem to be able to communicate perfectly well with a bracketed understanding. The debate between Deck (1982) and Anton

(1982) as to whether the One is "properly" hypostasis is interesting, in so far as it engages the question of whether a hypostasis entails being or not. For more on *stasis*, see Bussanich (1997, 164 *ff.*) I use the term "hypostasis" to refer to the three primary ones, and I believe that the One is a hypostasis which is beyond being.

[37]Armstrong (1937, 62) suggests that "emanation" is taken over from a Stoic notion of material emanation, and meant to do non-material work. He notes, (1937, 60) however, that an account of the capacity of the individual to receive unity which Plotinus gives in VI.4-5 is substituted for emanation, wherein each thing participates in the One according to its capacity. Lee (1979, 96) suggests that this "receptiveness" ought to be seen as an aspect of integral omnipresence. What is positively fascinating, is that where Armstrong (1937) and (1960) sees a particular account of emanation (VI.4.7) as Plotinus all but deconstructing the emanation theory, Sells (1994) takes the same passage as an example of apophatic reasoning. For my discussion of Plotinus' philosophy, nothing stands or falls on this, but I think that Sells may be right in so suggesting. Gerson (1994, 27) in calling "emanation a category mistake" suggests, "I suspect the attraction of emanationism as an interpretation of Plotinus' metaphysics derives in part from supposing that this is the best way to explain the derivation of multiplicity from unity or complexity from simplicity. In order to remove this attraction, we need only to consider that this *archē* of all is known only by its effects, which are all cases of complexity. Accordingly, there could be no derivation of multiplicity from unity in the sense of a strict demonstration."

[38]It is Kenney's idea to call *Nous* a monadology: "Plotinus' realist theology is...at base a monadology, for the world of being exhibits upon examination a collective unity of monadic intellects...Just as *nous* as a whole thinks itself, and 'this thinking is *idea*,' so also the intelligible character of each form is a function of its own exercise of intellection". (Kenney 1991, 148-9). This is of course often connected with a more noetic version of the Stoic idea of *logos spermatikos*. For an interesting treatment of this see Kelly (1973, 254).

[39]For example *Enneads* VI.2.11, 14-21. See however, the general claim at *Enneads* V.3.15, 17*ff.*

[40]"Assume these four affectations occurring in the soul: intellection or reason for the highest, understanding for the second; assign belief to the third, and to the last, picture-thinking or conjecture, and arrange them in proportion, considering that they participate in clearness and precision in

the same degree as their objects partake of truth and reality." (*Republic* 511d).

[41]For a different (but I believe compatible) concordance, see Narbonne (2002, 193).

# CHAPTER II
# *METHEXIS* AND THE PRINCIPLES OF EMANATION

One of the things for which Aristotle criticizes Plato in the *Metaphysics* is his use of participation or imitation to explain the relationship between unity, being and particular things. That is, the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy leads to a problem about the mechanical functioning of *methexis*. Once you ontologically "separate" a particular from its Form, or the unity of a Form from the Form, what explains how a Form actually gets its unity or a particular its generic structure? Aristotle believes that to call upon *methexis* is to employ a vacuous metaphor:[1]

> all other things cannot come from the Forms in any of the usual sense of 'from'. And to say that they are patterns [παραδείγματα] and the other things share [μετέχειν] in them is to use empty words and poetical metaphors [μεαφορὰς λέγειν ποιητικάς]. For what is it that works [ἐργαζόμενον], looking to the forms [πρὸς τὰς ἰδέας ἀποβλέπον]? (*Metaphysics* 991a19-23)[2]

Aristotle maintains that the Pythagoreans have an equally untenable theory of participation, and that all Plato did was change the name from *mimesis* to *methexis*, whereas "what the *mimesis* or *methexis* of the Forms could be they left an open question."[3] The primary metaphysical problem surrounding participation for Aristotle seems to be that the separate Form fails to account for the unity of the particular, either in terms of its parts, or in terms of the *ousia* and the *to ti ēn einai*. Participation involves the notion of a sensible particular existing somehow apart from its essence. The two concepts, *mimesis* and *methexis*, are essentially the same, and both have the same problem. There is no causal contiguity that allows for the organic functioning of the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy in its present form.

Another important criticism of participation is that it does not offer a coherent account of motion, change, generation or corruption. Besides saying that the 'substance' and that of which it is the substance should not exist apart from one another,[4] Aristotle also expresses a concern with movement:

> when the Forms exist, still the things that share in them do not come into being, unless there is something to originate movement [τὸ κινήσον]. (*Metaphysics* 991b4-6)[5]

This is very important for Aristotle's agenda. There is no necessity, or immediately evident ontological or kinetic efficacy entailed by the purported existence of Forms, even if we grant the existence of "separate substances." Plato's separate substances do not, in and of themselves, account for generation, corruption, or movement.[6]

In a passage in *Metaphysics* A7 (998b - discussed in Chapter I) a criticism regarding the final cause of motion arises by way of a comment that none of Aristotle's predecessors has

expressed the notion of essence (*to ti ēn einai*) or substantial reality (*ousia*) clearly.[7] The Platonists hinted at something like "essence" with their notion of Forms as principles, but in contradistinction to presocratic theories, the Platonic "principles" are not the matter of existing things, nor are they *a source of movement.* Instead, What is not explained in this theory of "essences" is what Aristotle identifies as the final cause of change and motion. Why do things change, and why do they move? For the sake of what do things come to be, pass away, and engage in any kind of activity whatever?

The One, says Aristotle, seems to be a final cause of a sort, but only incidentally.[8] There is nothing in the *nature* of the One that makes it the final cause:

> those who say that the One or the existent is the Good, say that it is the cause of substance [οὐσίας αἴτιόν], but not that substance either is or comes to be for the sake of this. (*Metaphysics* 988b11-13)

All of this speaks to the larger issue of Plato's failure (in Aristotle's eyes), to present a coherent account of motion and change, either in terms of an ultimate cause, or in terms of motion and change in the individual.

After levelling the charge outlined in A7, Aristotle goes on in A8 to take up the difficulties of various presocratic positions, and those of the Pythagoreans. In A9 he dispenses with the Pythagoreans and takes up the Platonic position. When he continues his critique of Forms in A9, he protests:

> Above all one might discuss the question what on earth the Forms contribute to sensible things, either to those that are eternal or to those that come into being and cease to be. For they cause neither movement [κινήσεως] nor change [μεταβολῆς] in them... (*Metaphysics* 991a9-12)

Again we see an attack on the lack of explanatory value regarding motion or change in eternal or corruptible things. What Aristotle objects to is the absence of any adequate account of key physical questions, such as "what causes motion?" or "what causes change?" He also finds wanting any coherent account of key metaphysical questions, "what accounts for being?" and "what accounts for the unity of a substance?" Aristotle's account of Platonism suggests that these alterations, generations or corruptions are supposed to be accounted for by participation, which in his view is an empty metaphor.[9] To summarize: some of the key objections which Aristotle raises against separate Forms are as follows:[10] 1) Forms fail to account for motion and change. 2) Forms don't help the existence of particulars, since they are not in particulars. 3) Forms cannot both be particulars and have separate existence, if they are predicated of other things.

Plotinus' hypostatic, emanative metaphysics seems attempts to answer to these objections while retaining (if not amplifying) the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy: *unity-being-particulars*. The concept of emanation in part deals with the question of motion and change, for the living continuity of the cosmos speaks to the continuity of motion that Aristotle suggests is required; the *energeia* that emerges from the One shows the One to be principle and guarantor of the cosmos. The existence of concrete particulars is accounted for by making them emanative projections of particular Forms. The division into genera and species is the result of a corresponding increase in the intrusion of a material principle on an emanating prior unity, or viewed conversely, the result of the weakening of the emanative "reach" of the One. The general problem of the *chōrismos* is also mediated by the theory of emanation, whereby the being and unity are emanated from a first principle in a cosmos that is a living unity of multiplicity, a living being.

For Plotinus, the answer to how unity, being and particulars are connected is the process of emanation, or a positive outflowing or overflowing of varying degrees of unity that ultimately find their source in the One. Again, his first principle is conceptually aligned with the Good in Plato's metaphysics. Because all things *derive from* the One and because all things are *connected to* the One organically in an organic whole that is the cosmos, the problem of the *chōrismos* is overcome. The connection is at once *formal, kinetic, organic, energeic, emanative.*[11]

One might be tempted to call emanation an equally vacuous metaphor, and hence it requires further discussion. In order to discuss emanation, I propose to cast it in the terms of some main principles that I think guide Plotinus' way of expression and thinking. I divide the explanation into a treatment of several important principles that I think Plotinus employs: 1) *Positive Production*, 2) *Non-Convertibility,* 3) *Indexed Unity* and 4) *The Priority of the Simple.*

## 1. *Positive Production*

The principle of "positive production," as I call it, has a long lineage in Greek notions of causality.[12] For Plotinus, whenever any entity possesses a degree of completeness or unity, it produces an "overflowing" of itself.[13] This applies to hypostatic levels as well as to "organic" functions, such as for example, the procreation of living beings when they reach perfection. Says Plotinus:

> Now when anything...comes to perfection, we see that it produces, and does not endure to remain by itself, but makes something else. (*Enneads* V.4.1, 27-9)

This notion of production, perhaps in combination with the Platonic notion of the generosity of the Divine,[14] finds ex-

pression in Plotinus' conception of a highest perfection that "gives of itself." The One does not "give of itself" so as to diminish itself however, nor does *Nous* - both remain unchanged and unaffected in their "giving". This kind of "distancing" of the One from the cosmos can also be found in later interpretations of Speusippus, in the *Didaskalikos*, and in the philosophy of Numenius, of which I say more in Chapter IV. Plotinus' third hypostasis - Soul - does change however, and engages in demiurgic functioning similar to the "split god" in Numenius (and arguably in the *Didaskalikos*). Part of Soul retains formal integrity, and part of it engages with matter. We see the distinction clearly drawn at *Enneads* V.2, in a passage that also gives one a sense of the continuity of being throughout the cosmos, from the One to *Nous*, *Nous* to Soul, and Soul to the physical world:

> the One, perfect because it seeks nothing, has nothing, and needs nothing, overflows, as it were, and its superabundance makes something other than itself. This, when it has come into being, turns back upon the one and is filled, and becomes Intellect by looking towards it. Its halt and turning towards the One constitutes being, its gaze upon the One, Intellect. Since it halts and turns towards the One that it may see, it becomes at once Intellect and Being. Resembling the One thus, Intellect produces in the same way, pouring forth a multiple power - this is a likeness of it - just as that which was before it poured forth. This activity springing from the substance of Intellect is Soul, which comes to be while Intellect abides unchanged: for Intellect too comes into being while that which is before it abides unchanged. But Soul does not abide unchanged when it produces: it is moved and so brings forth an image. It looks to its source and is filled, and going forth to an-

> other opposed movement generates its own image, which is sensation and the principle of growth in plants. Nothing is separated and cut off from that which is before it. (*Enneads* V.2.1, 7-23)

In this example of hypostatic positive production, *Nous* is ontologically posterior to, dependent on, and inferior to the One; it is produced by a positive outflowing from the One. Again we see the two stages involved in the production of *Nous*: first an outpouring of what appears to be unlimited being-in potency (in so far as it is unlimited, it is not yet being proper); second, there is a "turning," a metaphorical expression of the limiting aspect of Thought. For Plotinus, privation is and can "be" positive precisely because it is a privation of multiplicity. When he describes the "production or emanation" of *Nous* from the One, he describes it as a (logical) two step process whereby "unlimited being" comes from the One (which remains unaffected), and only attains limit when this unlimited being is thought:

> thinking does not come first either in reality or in value, but is second and is what has come into being to itself, and it was moved and saw. And this is what thinking is, a movement towards the Good in its desire of that Good; for the desire generates thought and establishes it in being along with itself. (*Enneads* V.6.5, 5-10)

In thinking, *Nous* "turns" and causes a circumscribing unity, actualising what is potentially thought and being.[15] That towards which thinking moves is itself unlimited, as we see in the following passage from VI.7:

> if there is anything prior to actuality [ἐνεργείας] [*i.e.* the primary actuality of *Nous* or Being] it transcends actuality [ἐπέκεινα ἐνεργείας]... If then there is life in this Intellect the giver gave life, but is nobler and worth

> more [καλλίων δὲ καὶ τιμιώτερος] than life...So when [*Nous*'] life was looking [βλέπουσα] towards [the One] it was unlimited [ἀόριστος], but after it looked there [βλέψασα], it was limited [ὡρίζετο], though that Good had no limit. For immediately by looking to something which is one the life is limited by it, and has in itself limit and bound [πέρας] and form [εἶδος]; and the form was that in which it was shaped [μορφοθέντι], but the shaper was shapeless [ἄμορφον]. (*Enneads* VI.7.17, 10-18)

For Plotinus, being only reaches the classical conception of finitude in *thought*; this is the reason why he advocates a sort of monadology of self-intellecting forms in a self-intellecting *Nous*. This self-intellecting is circumscribed by a "more limited unity" and dependent upon an ultimate "indefinite" principle of unity, which must be prior. This "more limited unity" should be understood as the self-intellecting Forms and the self-intellecting hypostasis that is *Nous*.

By positing a principle of unity that provides, via emanation or "energetic outflowing," the potential of both being and thought, Plotinus is in fact indicating a *dunamis* for thinking that is directed at a *dunamis* for being. The "unlimited being" is a *dunamis* for "limited being" precisely because it is not initially limited by thought.[16] It becomes actual or limited being when it is circumscribed by the formalising principle of self-intellection that is thought. By the same token, the "thought" which is implicit in the *energeia* coming from the One is potential until, in its limiting of unlimited being, it becomes the monadology that is *Nous*.

While Plotinus makes distinctions of logical priority, whereby unlimited being is prior to thought, (since thought requires a prior actuality in order to occur) we ought to think of being and thought as simultaneously implicit or contained

in the One's *energeia ek tēs ousias*, that which emanates eternally from the first principle. Taken together, thought and being (in the primary sense) are commensurate in the second hypostasis, *Nous*. The important thing to note is that not only does the One stand as a principle of being and unity, it also provides a mechanism for unification in supplying, via emanation, the means for that unification via "being" to be thought, and thinking to limit being.[17]

In explaining positive production, Plotinus often uses the image of the sun giving off light while the source of the light remains unchanged.[18] The result of this "irradiation", with regard to any hypostasis, is the production of a lower "image" of itself; the result is an effect different than, but related to, its cause.[19] One might think of the difference in this relation as the difference between the "internal" activity of an entity and the inevitable consequence of that activity, a secondary, unwilled effect.[20] Plotinus makes a distinction of this sort in *Enneads* V.4, where he speaks of the *energeia tēs ousias* (the internal activity) and the *energeia ek tēs ousias* (the secondary "outflowing" effect). In the following passage, Plotinus explains the emanation of *Nous* from the One in these terms:

> But how, when [the One] abides unchanged, does Intellect come into being? In each and every thing there is an activity which belongs to substance and one which goes out from substance [ἐνέργεια ἡ μέν ἐστι τῆς οὐσίας, ἡ δ' ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας ἑκάστου]; and that which belongs to substance is the active actuality which is each particular thing, and the other activity derives from that first one, and must in everything be a consequence of it, different from the thing itself... (*Enneads* V.4.2, 26-30)

The claim that all things have an *energeia ek tēs ousias* and an *energeia tēs ousias*, gives both the One and the eternal and unchangeable intelligible world (*Nous*) productive force[21] while allowing them to remain unchanged in themselves. And because the efficacy of all material existents is grounded in the first principle,[22] there is a causal link, via *Nous* and Soul, of all things to the first unchanging One. In the following passage Plotinus compares the irradiation of all things from the One to the heat that comes from fire. One might think of the heat of or within the fire as its *energeia tēs ousias*, and the heat that it passes on to people or objects near it as its *energeia ek tēs ousias*:

> as in fire there is a heat which is the content of its substance, and another that comes into being from that primary heat when fire exercises the activity which is native to its substance in abiding unchanged as fire. So it is in the higher world, and much more so there, while the Principle abides "in its own proper way of life," the activity generated from the perfection in it and its coexistent activity acquires substantial existence, since it comes from a great power, the greatest of all, and arrives at being and substance: for that Principle is beyond being. That is the productive power of all things, and its product is already all things: therefore "beyond being"; and if the product is all things but the One is before all things and not on equality with all things, in this way too it must be "beyond being". (*Enneads* V.4.2, 30-43).

In another passage, in *Enneads* V.1.6, we again see the comparison of positive production to material emanation, where the "producer" is unchanged:

> How did [*Nous*] come to be then, and what are we to think of it surrounding the One in its repose?

> [πῶς οὖν καὶ τὶ δεῖ νοῆσαι περὶ ἐκεῖνο μένον;] It must be as a radiation [περίλαμψιν] from [the One] while [the One] remains unchanged, like the bright light of the sun which, so to speak, runs round it [περιθέον], springing from [the sun] continually while [the sun] remains unchanged. All things which exist, as long as they remain in being, necessarily produce from their own substances, in dependence on their present power, a surrounding reality directed to what is outside them, a kind of image of the archetypes from which it was produced: fire produces heat which comes from it; snow does not only keep its cold inside itself. Perfumed things show this particularly clearly. As long as they exist, something is diffused from themselves around them, and what is near enjoys their existence. And all things when they come to perfection produce; the One is always perfect and therefore produces everlastingly; and its product is less than itself. (*Enneads* V.1.6, 27-40)[23]

We see here also the idea of things that retain their being while producing, from the unity of their substances, a lower image of themselves. I say that it is the unity of the substance that produces because the *energeia tēs ousias* is a substantial concentration of unity, hypostatic or otherwise, one that gives off the *energeia ek tēs ousias*.

A summary, then, of the "elements" of positive production might include the following:[24] a) The agent is more powerful than the product,[25] and all things are ultimately grounded in the all-powerful One; b) the principle is prior to and sustains what is posterior to it;[26] c) the principle is of a higher actuality than what is generated;[27] d) the power to generate requires a degree of concentrated unity; e) the activity of generation is compatible with rest, since the end of its activity

is always achieved and not planned.[28] What I mean by this last is that the emanative power of "generation" is not deliberative or kinetic, but rather the ontological consequence (mediately or immediately) of the efficacious *energeia* of the One.

Positive production applies not only to the emanation of *Nous* from the One, but also explains the production of Soul from *Nous*, material things from Soul, and the effects of material things from them. At the level of "material emanation," the unity of material things is too weak (*i.e.* not unitary enough) to produce any substantial emanation. The whole process of emanation, from the One to the material effects of things involves successive stages of declining unity. The stages of *Nous* and Soul are "hypostatic," by which I mean that they are clearly demarcated levels of unity in rest. We see this same tendency towards hypostatisation in Numenius.[29] The fact that each hypostasis conveys a lesser degree of unity on what it unifies leads to another Plotinian principle, that of "indexed unity". Since this principle applies more to hypostases and less to material things, before I examine "indexed unity," it is useful to discuss yet another principle first, one which is seen more clearly in terms of material things, and this is the principle of "non-convertibility".

## 2. *Non-Convertibility*

I have already discussed Plotinus' rejection of "convertibility" in the first chapter. Convertibility, or giving the same metaphysical priority to being and unity as predicated of a particular, is inimical to the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy. Hence while the amount of reality a hypostatic relation possesses is "indexed" to the amount of unity it possesses, the principle of non-convertibility means that in emanative processes, being is always dependent on unity.[30] What I mean by "indexed" in this context is that the "closer" to the One a hypostasis or particular is, the more real it is. Says Plotinus,

> But we exist more when we turn to [the One] and our well-being is there, but being far from him is nothing else than existing less. (*Enneads* VI.9.9, 12-3)

As noted, the goal of the soul is to "unify" the self in higher and higher degrees, culminating in a unity with our ultimate grounding principle, the One. This suggests that the more unified we are, the more real we are. Being is dependent on unity, so that while being and unity are indexed, they are indexed while retaining a dependent relation of the former on the latter, even at the hypostatic levels of *Nous* and Soul.

Plotinus also seems to want to deny a clear indexing of being and unity at the level of the material particular. Material particulars are corruptible, and their unity and being are also in flux, whereas hypostases do not suffer the encroachment of a material principle (or a distancing from the One) to the extent that their unity and being is subject to indeterminacy.[31] Ensouled human particulars are engaged in a moral/metaphysical pursuit of unity. Concrete particulars may have the same degree of *existence* but vary in terms of their unity:

> a thing is not...one in proportion to its being, but it is possible to have no less real existence but to be less one. For an army or a chorus has no less being than a house, but all the same it is less one. It seems then that the one in each thing looks more to the good, and in so far as it attains to the good it is also one, and being more or less one lies in this; for each thing wishes not just for being, but for being together with the good. (*Enneads* VI.2.11, 14-21)

In this passage, perhaps inspired by the Stoics or by Philo, it is clear that the existence of material things is *dependent on*, not *convertible with* unity, and it is from unity that their existence

receives its goodness.[32] Plotinus is speaking of material particulars at the same "level" of reality, such as the unity of a house or the unity of an army. In the case of material things, each thing has the same degree of existence, although it may be unitary in better or worse ways depending on its susceptibility to division. A house made of many bricks has more unity since its unity is more stable than a unity of such things as an army or choir, which are unitary only in so far as their members stay together. People have aims other than those of the aggregate they compose, whereas bricks for the most part do not (although they may break and threaten the integral unity of the house). This suggests that the unity of a choir or army (composed of "autonomous" humans) is less stable, that their parts are more distinct than those of a house.[33]

If a thing exists as a magnitude it will have parts by definition, and the parts must tend to unity in some way if the magnitude is going to be an entity. "So through magnitude and as far as depends on magnitude [a thing] loses itself; but as far as it possesses a one, it possesses itself."[34] In fact, says Plotinus, while one may wonder at the infinite variety in the universe, it is good (*kalon*) because it has been circumscribed by unity, and has not been left to "escape to infinity" (*fugein eis tēn apeirian*)".[35] This notion of goodness also applies to *Nous*, where everything is co-equally substantial because it is "contained" concomitantly within the monadological system of self-intellection. The higher degree of unity within *Nous* accounts for its higher degree of being, and its unity is found through the limiting of being by thought. The lack of material recalcitrance at the level of *Nous* means also that there is no susceptibility to contingent division in *Nous*, whose being and unity are eternal and unchanging.

Because concrete particulars are corruptible, their unity is susceptible to dissolution, and when corruptible things lose their unity (the principle of all existent things) they no longer

exist. The principle of non-convertibility is consistent with the belief that the cosmos cannot stay in existence of its own power. The physical world, its immediate source, Soul, and in turn Soul's source, *Nous*, all require a completely unified principle that is prior to them.[36] Nothing can exist without both deriving its unity from the One and striving to attain the unity of the One in its own way. All things, says Plotinus, "originate from the One and strive towards the One."[37]

Denying the convertibility of being and unity is not (in the passages we have cited here) a response to Aristotle *per se*, but rather an attempt to engage a hierarchy of the dependence of things on unity. However, the rejection of the convertibility thesis, in conjunction with the multiplicity of the Unmoved Mover, shows that Aristotle's first principle is (in Plotinus' eyes) inadequate, since it stands in need of explanation. I examine this in detail in Chapter III. The implication of this is that *a being cannot be the principle of being.*[38] By employing a principle of non-convertibility, Plotinus re-establishes what convertibility denied, namely the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy.

### 3. *Indexed Unity*

As for hypostatic levels or degrees of reality, it seems undeniable that there is a *proportionate* indexing of being, unity and goodness. *Nous* is "lower" than the One because it has multiplicity, and Soul is lower than *Nous* for the same reason,[39] and material particulars are lower yet again:

> all things try to represent the same [One] but some attain only a remote resemblance, some come nearer and attain it already more truly in Intellect: for soul is one and Intellect and being are still more one. (*Enneads* VI.2.11, 9-12)

Given Plotinus' predilection to see the One as the Good and to make comparative claims about the hypostatic levels of reality, it follows that the "further away" from the One a hypostatic level is, the less "good" it is.[40] This is the consequence of setting unity as the standard of all existence.

Plotinus can be seen to hold to a conceptual corollary of the "indexed" nature of being, goodness, reality and unity[41] at the hypostatic level[42]. "Being" is a technical term that Plotinus uses "in the classic Greek philosophic sense of that which is eternal, changeless, limited, internally one."[43] At the hypostatic level, the more unity a thing has, (*i.e.* the closer it is to the ultimate source of its unity, the One) the more real, good, and existent it is. This however is not to suggest that, the One is a "paradigm" of being and unity; the One is a principle which is beyond these categorisations. The transcendence of the principle of all things means that all relations, even the "otherness" of *Nous* and the One are non-reciprocal;[44] The One cannot be "other" than anything, for this would predicate of the One one of the "primary genera," which would undermine its simplicity:

> For since the nature of the One is generative of all things it is not any one of them. It is not therefore something or qualified or quantified or intellect or soul; it is not in movement or at rest, not in place or in time, but itself by itself of single form, or rather formless, being before all form, before movement and before rest; for these pertain to being and are what make it many. (*Enneads* VI.9.3, 40-5)

The principles I have been discussing are derived from considerations of relations of hypostases and particulars to the One. The "nature" of the One is induced[45] by an apophatic abduction to a first principle that explains these hypostatic and entitative relations.[46] But to say that the One has

"more being" or that it is "more unified," suggests that the One can be compared to *Nous* or Soul as if they are on equal footing, and this would in some sense deny the utter transcendence of the One. On the other hand, if we can accept a non-technical sense of reality in Plotinus, it may be acceptable to say (in a qualified, metaphorical, sense) that the One is "more real."[47]

## 4. *The Priority of the Simple*

The last principle I wish to consider with regard to emanation in Plotinus' system is the idea of the priority of the simple.[48] Plotinus also employs this concept in his critique of Aristotle, in so far as any multiplicity is regarded as grounded in a prior unity. As Plotinus states in *Enneads* III.8.9:

> "τοῦ γὰρ γεννηθέντος πανταχοῦ τὸ γεννῶν ἁ πλούστερον."[49]

This principle may be seen from two sides. In the most general sense, the priority of the simple is an example of a Platonic "one over many" relationship (or eidetic inversion), whereby many instances of something are related to something that is ontologically prior:

> for there can be no many if there is not a one from which, or in which these are, or in general a one which is counted first before the others, which must be taken alone, itself by itself. (*Enneads* V.6.3, 2-5)

Hence *Nous*, as a composite of self-intellecting forms, must be explained by the prior simplicity of the One, and the many instances of material unity must be explained (via Soul) by the existence of Forms in *Nous*, which is more real and simple than its material instantiations.[50] The other side of this principle, given the principle of positive production, is that a uni-

tary entity is also capable of producing and sustaining its instantiations. One sees this in the opening lines of *Enneads* V.4, entitled by Porphyry, *How That Which Comes After the First Comes From the First*:

> If there is anything after the First, it must necessarily come from the First; it must either come from it directly, or have its ascent back to it through the beings between, and there must be an order of seconds and thirds, the second going back to the first, and the third to the second. For there must be something simple before all things that come after it, existing by itself, not mixed with the things that derive from it, and all the same able to present in a different way to these other things, being really one, and not a different being and then one... (*Enneads* V.4.1, 1-9)

The One emanates *Nous*, *Nous* emanates Soul, and Soul gives rise to material entities. This does not mean that all things are "contained" in the One, if by this we are tempted to conceive all material entities and forms existing concretely in the One. Rather, it is to suggest that lesser instantiations of a prior simple depend on that (more) simple principle in order to exist at all. The manifold expressions of unity in the cosmos, from material things to *Nous* itself, are mediately accounted for and sustained by their immediate prior, and ultimately accounted for by the primordial simple, the One, in an emanative causal series.

Again, the implications of this principle are that the One cannot be the same as being, that which it grounds, since if it is identical with being, it will be multiple;[51] being, a monadology of all the Forms, is multiple, and if something is many there must be a one before the many. If the One is all things, says Plotinus, it must either be each individual thing, or it will be all of them collected. But if it is all of them collected, then

unity will be posterior to the unities of which it is composed. If being as a whole is a multiplicity and if unity is simple, then, *contra* Aristotle, unity must be different than being. Neither can unity be identical with the being of any one thing, since if things are to be distinguished from each other, they must have unity as well as their distinguishing feature; otherwise nothing will distinguish them. Hence there must be a prior unity in which all things participate.[52] Says Plotinus:

> For all things [together the totality of being] are not an origin, but they came from an origin, and [the One] is no more all things or one of them; [if it is, it will not be of such a kind] that it can generate all things, and not be a multiplicity but the origin of multiplicity; for that which generates is always simpler than that which is generated. If this, then, generated Intellect, it must be simpler than Intellect. But if anyone should think that the One itself is also all things, then either it will be each one taken separately or all of them together. If, then, it is all of them collected together, it will be posterior to all things; but if it is prior to all things, all things will be other than it, and it will be other than all things, but if it and all things are simultaneous, then it will not be an origin. But it must be an origin, and exist before all things, in order that all things, too, may exist after it. (*Enneads* III.8.9, 40-50)

If something is many, such as *Nous*, or indeed the cosmos, there must be a one before the many that is "*auto monon einai.*"[53]

To summarize: our four "principles of emanation" point in the direction of a One that grounds the unity, being and multiplicity of the cosmos. Positive production supplies continuity to being that emanates, via the lower hypostases, to

the sense world. The denial of convertibility suggests that being is dependent upon unity and suggests a faithfulness to the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy. The idea of indexed unity shows that the closer one is to the principle of the cosmos, the more unity, goodness, being and reality it has. The priority of the simple, finally, shows that the principle of all is beyond multiplicity, and since being is by its very nature multiple, the principle of all is beyond being. The movement towards a "One beyond being", grounded in the preceding conceptual principles also reflects a necessity to transcend Aristotle's Unmoved Mover, in order to seek a principle of unity that grounds being.

**Notes for Chapter II:**

[1]See *Metaphysics* 1075b20.
[2]*Metaphysics* 1075b17-20.
[3]*Metaphysics* 987b13-4.
[4]*Metaphysics* 991b1-3.
[5]*Metaphysics* 1075b28-9.
[6]See Watson (1898, 270).
[7]*Metaphysics* 988a34 *ff.*
[8]*Metaphysics* 988b6-15.
[9]Suggests G.E.R. Lloyd, (1968, 46) "Plato himself would no doubt have answered that what originated movement, in his cosmological system, was the world-soul or Craftsman who is described in the *Timaeus* as bringing the world out of disorder into order and as creating things after the pattern of the eternal Forms...Aristotle's objection has this much point that the Forms themselves provide no answer to the question of the origin of movement."
[10]See *Metaphysics* 1079b15-18.
[11] See Kelly (1973, 251 *ff.*) for a treatment of this.
[12]Katz, (1950, 10-11) says the following about the idea of cause: "In the notion of cause (*aitia, poiesis*) [the doctrines of Greek philosophers] in consequence of the search for order and unification find a major focus. The common sense notion of the fecundity and power of the cause to produce its effects never loses its sway over ancient (and modern) thought. It is mirrored in the Pythagorean concept of the 'evolution' of the one into many, of the point into lines, planes and solids. It is mirrored in the doctrine of Ideas, the Stoic "seminal reasons," (*logoi spermatikoi*), and reaches a culmination in Plotinus' One...". See also O'Meara, (1993,47 *ff.*)
[13]Deck (1967, 13).
[14]O'Meara (1991, 63) See also *Timaeus* 29e.
[15]The description of this seems to have shades or undertones of Aristotle's discussion of the desire that the first heaven has for the Unmoved Mover.
[16]See *Enneads* VI.9.6, 11 *ff.*
[17]Plotinus believes that some kind of *Nous* is the unity that Aristotle wants to ground his system. What is interesting in the idea of thought being directed at being in the emanation of *Nous* from the One is that it speaks to one of Plotinus' key charges against the Aristotelian Unmoved Mover, which Plotinus claims is multiple because distinctions may be made re-

garding the thinker, thinking and the thought, indicating a need to explain this multiplicity in terms of a prior unity.

[18]*Enneads* V.1.6, 30-3.

[19]It should be noted that emanation, as Plotinus is well aware, is a material process, and is used only metaphorically by Plotinus to represent what happens at "higher levels". These material processes are images of Hypostatic emanation, but it is not these processes. (*Enneads* III.4.3) See O'Meara (1991, 61).

[20]Gerson (1994, 214 *ff*).

[21]Gerson (1994, 24-25) suggests three texts of Plato's which may have motivated the modification of a distinction between God's first and second *energeiai*. The first is that in the *Republic* the Form of the Good is interpreted as affecting Forms outside itself (*Republic* 509b6-10). The second is the notion of a good and ungrudging Demiurge (*Timaeus* 29e), and the third is the idea of the Good as the source of beauty in the *Symposium* (206-12). For whereas Aristotle's *theos* stands as an exemplary teleological principle, (as does Plotinus', I suggest, in so far as all things act on a principle of desiring the One, not the least of which humans) as a guarantor of motion, Plotinus' One also has a productive function, or ontological efficacy.

[22]This I think may be the reason why emanationism is a preferred term, at least imagistically, in so far as the "outflowing" that is the second *energeia* is distinguishable from the intrinsic activity that is Plotinus' One, although Gerson (1991, 333 *ff*.), seems to think that there is no distinction to be made between creation and emanation.

[23]We should not worry here about the apparently predicative claim that Plotinus makes about the One, by adding the epithet "perfect" to it. This will not undermine its simplicity, for Plotinus draws an important distinction between "speaking the One" and "speaking of the One." The former is impossible because the one transcends rational thinking and consequently predication. Any predicative statements we make about the One fall under the category of "speaking of the One", and this reflects the multiplicity in our thinking, and not in the One. I suggest something like this in my treatment of the *Didaskalikos*.

[24]See Katz (1950, 11 *ff*.)

[25]*Enneads* III.5.3; V.2.2; VI.4.10.

[26]*Enneads* III.9.3; V.V.6; V.6.6.

[27]*Enneads* II.5.3.

[28]*Enneads* V.4.2, V.1.6; V.2.1.

[29]See Chapter IV.

[30]Gerson (1994, 198) says the following: "Being must have some sort of unity...although unity need not have being...To put this more exactly, finite being and finite unity are convertible, but finite being is not convertible absolutely with being. The dependence of being on unity and the independence unity has of being is the simplest expression of the fundamental consequence of Plotinus' critique of Aristotle." I think it makes more sense to say (*pace* Getson) that finite being and finite unity are: 1) hypostatically indexed 2) not indexed in material things, 3) not convertible.

[31]*Enneads* VI.3.2, 1-4.

[32]At *Enneads* V.9.2, 15, Plotinus says that, "if an individual loses its one, it will not exist at all."

[33]Armstrong (1988, 142) notes that this is a "Stoic scale of degrees of unification." The very same notion, using chorus, army and ship (which Plotinus uses in *Enneads* VI.9.1) is found in Philo's *On Genesis*, I,15. I find (*pace* Schürmann 2002, 162 and 174 *n.* 22) Gadamer's connection with Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* (100a) a bit of a stretch.

[34]*Enneads* VI.6.1.

[35]*ibid.*

[36]Katz (1950, 39).

[37]*Enneads* VI.2.11.

[38]See Gerson (1990, 200-1). Whereas Gerson believes that the *pros hen* equivocal nature of substance ought to be causal, I think that it was not meant to be so in Aristotle. It is causal in Plotinus, but I think that Plotinus' approach to non-convertibility is due more to seeking prior unity than seeking causal links to the Unmoved Mover, although the latter does play a role. The principle of positive production is cast in terms of conveying unity, and subsequently being, and hence the question is more importantly one of unity as opposed to one of being.

[39]O'Meara, (1993, 49).

[40]*Enneads* VI.2.11, 26-9; VI.9.9, 12-3.

[41]See Gerson (1994, 9).

[42]Deck (1967, 16. *n.* 23) notes that Plotinus tends to use 'reality' in a non-technical sense, usually in the broader sense of meaning simply "non-fictitious".

[43]However, Plotinus does employ a sense of "unlimited being" as well.

[44]Gerson (1994, 34).

[45]*Enneads* V.3.15; V.3.17; VI.4.10; VI.7.23; VI.8.18.

[46]It is indeed ironic that Plotinus has so much to say about the ineffable One. Rist (1967, 32) helpfully suggests, "...the very fact that Plotinus can

argue to [the One's] existence from its effects, can demonstrate all these finite beings which exhibit a 'trace' of the One that there must be a One itself indicates that there is some manner in which we can know something of the One, even if we cannot grasp it essentially."

[47] This same metaphorical tentativeness would apply to any reference to the One's *energeia* in so far as it must be spoken of by analogy with and hence in terms of the *energeia* of Nous and Soul.

[48]Or as O'Meara calls it, "The Principle of Prior Simplicity".

[49]*Enneads* III.8.9, 43.

[50]*Enneads* V.6.3, 5-25.

[51]*Enneads* V.6.3.10.

[52]*Enneads* III.8.9,48 *ff.*

[53]*Enneads* V.6.6, 10 *ff.*

# CHAPTER III
# PLOTINUS' RESPONSE TO ARISTOTLE'S UNMOVED MOVER

I have suggested that the way in which Plotinus frames his approach to the first principle in his system can be seen in part as a response to Aristotle. In the next chapter I want to suggest that certain Middle Platonists have a tendency to combine a Platonic cosmos with an "Aristotelian" god. Before looking at this however, I want to look at Plotinus' specific critique of Aristotle's Unmoved Mover. This helps to see why Plotinus would reject Middle Platonic attempts to identify the Aristotelian Unmoved Mover with the Platonic Good. The issue can once again be understood in terms of the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy: Aristotle's Unmoved Mover, and the Middle Platonic identification of that first principle with Plato's first principle, are inconsistent with the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy.

Plotinus in effect "demotes" the Aristotelian first principle, making it the second principle in his own system of hypostases; in so doing he incorporates some other aspects of Aristotelian thinking, following the Middle Platonic tradition.[1] A wide range of Aristotelian terminology is employed by Plotinus, such as the concepts of actuality and potentiality,[2]

and the notion of *pros hen* equivocity[3], the employment of which is evident in so far as the meaning of being in Soul and material particulars is derived from the meaning of the being of *Nous*. However, *contra* Aristotle, there is an organic continuity of the "being" that is grounded in the One, yet finds its primary sense in *Nous* and equivocal senses in all other beings.[4] It is also important that the identity of *noēsis* and *noēta* in Aristotle's *De Anima* III,4 is central to Plotinus' epistemology and theory of *Nous*,[5] because Plotinus' incorporation of this epistemology enables him to undermine Aristotelianism on its own terms.[6] The two approaches which Plotinus takes towards Aristotle's Unmoved Mover have to do with 1) the Unmoved Mover as an exemplar of substance, and 2) the Unmoved Mover as a self-intellecting mind.

## 1. The Unmoved Mover as Substance

The establishment of the Unmoved Mover as a paradigm of substance implies that convertibility applies to the Unmoved Mover as it does with every other substance. If the subject matter of the *Metaphysics* is taken as theology, the *theos* that should be its proper subject matter is a substance in whom being and unity are convertible. If the proper subject matter of the *Metaphysics* is being *qua* being, that being must also be convertible with unity. I say this because some scholars have maintained that Aristotle is inconsistent in his different statements regarding the proper subject matter of metaphysics. In Book Γ of the *Metaphysics*, the claim is made that metaphysics is about being *qua* being; In Book E, we find the claim that it is theology. Here is what Aristotle says in Γ:

> Clearly, then the study of things which are *qua* being, also belongs to one science. Now in every case knowledge is principally concerned with that which is primary [τοῦ πρώτου], *i.e.* that upon which all other things

> depend, and from which they get their names. If then, substance [οὐσία] is this primary thing, it is of substances that the philosopher must grasp the first principles [τὰς ἀρχὰς] and causes [τὰς αἰτίας]. (*Metaphysics* 1003b15-19)

In E, he says the following:

> The primary science treats of things which are both separable and immutable. Now all causes must be eternal, but these especially; since they are the causes of what is visible of things divine. Hence there will be three speculative philosophies: mathematics, physics, and theology - since it is obvious that if the divine is present anywhere, it is present in this kind of entity; and also the most honourable science must deal with the most honourable class of subject. The speculative sciences then, are to be preferred to the other sciences, and theology to the other speculative sciences. (*Metaphysics* 1026a16-23)

It is interesting to note how E opens with the statement that, "It is the principles and causes of the things which are that we are seeking."[7] In the passage I have just cited from Γ, Aristotle seems to be saying the same thing: "it is of substances that the philosopher must grasp the first principles [*tas archas*]". This perhaps suggests that the "two conceptions" of metaphysics are not as far apart as one might think. It is quite plausible that we will learn something very important about the "principles" and "causes" of being*s* in looking at the most excellent substance, the Unmoved Mover.[8] Further, while the principles and causes of things undoubtedly refer to Aristotle's famous four, the Unmoved Mover is also a cause of beings (plural).[9]

Both the inclusion of Γ and E in the summary in Book K, and the consistency of Γ with the opening remarks of E, indicate that Aristotle may not have seen "metaphysics as theology" "and metaphysics as ontology" as inconsistent propositions. If the Unmoved Mover functions as the first principle and primary example of being and unity and (via the First Moved Mover) is the ultimate cause of all other substances,[10] then in order to grasp the causes of substances, we have to understand that substance which is most excellent.[11] All that is required is that the Unmoved Mover be the primary exemplar of substance.[12] If we take the Unmoved Mover as the primary exemplar of substance, upon which all other substances depend, this is consistent with the idea that substances are (in ontological abstraction)[13] essential unities. It is also consistent with the claim, made both at Γ and E, that we are looking for the principles and causes of substance.

In a sense, for Aristotle, metaphysics is a "doubly-paronymous science,"[14] – there are two levels of *pros hen* equivocity going on in the *Metaphysics*. What this means is that all sensible substances stand in a *pros hen* equivocal relation to the Unmoved Mover, just as attributes stand in a *pros hen* equivocal relationship to sensible substances. However, we need not assume that *pros hen* equivocity is anything but intra-categorial; there is no good reason to assume that it does apply to different types of substance (sensible, eternal material, non-material); given the fact that all substances bear being and unity, we ought to think that all of these substances *qua* substances are meant as such bearers.[15]

The *pros hen* works perfectly well with regard to substances, quantities, qualities and their relation to reality. Our task is to discover the principles of the primary determinations of reality, which are substances. My point is that we need not assume that because there is one perfect substance, everything stands in relation to it.[16] But we may need to un-

derstand perfect substance since it is (remotely) causally connected to all other substances. The fact that substances are the primary determinations of reality suggests that we need not look outside them in order to understand them as substances *qua* substances; however we do need to look to the highest substance in order to understand the cosmological system in which they are manifest. The predication of being and unity in the case of the Unmoved Mover is more precise, whereas in the case of sensible particulars, being and unity is spliced with material recalcitrance. This introduces potency into the prior actuality of sensible substance, causing impediments to the actuality and resulting in differentiation. This does not mean that "substance" in the case of concrete particulars is used "equivocally," however.

The Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy denies substantiality to concrete particulars. Aristotle grants substantiality to the paradigm *and* the sensible particulars. As a paradigm, the Unmoved Mover is the exemplar of what it is that all substances do - it manifests being and unity; given the absence of matter, and the claim that all formal substances are essential unities, it is most fully being and unity. If we say that the "job" of substance is to stand as the primary, ontologically efficacious bearer of being and unity, and this happens at both the level of the Unmoved Mover and sensible substance, then the sense of substance as bearer of being and unity in the Unmoved Mover and in sensible substances is the same; the Unmoved Mover "bears" being and unity most perfectly; sensible substances manifest being and unity, only less perfectly.

Moreover, once one realises the necessity of the Unmoved Mover as a guarantor of the motion of the First Moved Mover, which in turn is necessary to guarantee the motion of the system that is necessary for sensible substances to come to be in the first place, it is irrelevant that Aristotle

does not refer to the Unmoved Mover in the central books of the *Metaphysics*. Indeed one may take the central books as a focused discussion of sensible substances that is premised on the entire metaphysical structure of movers that Aristotle erects, or thinks is implied by sensible substances.[17]

The real difficulty, implicit in Plotinus, is that Aristotle has a *particular thing* as the primary cause and principle of his system. The Unmoved Mover, the principle and cause of substances, is itself a substance. One of the driving forces of Plotinus' rejection of Aristotle's first principle is that the cause of substantiality should not itself be a substance; the principle of unity should not be a unity, and the principle of being should not be a being. Plotinus, in seeking a principle of being and unity, looks to his understanding of Plato's Good, which is said to be *epekeina tēs ousias*.

It seems clear that Aristotle posits an Unmoved Mover as the guarantor of motion. A separate, but not entirely unrelated difficulty occurs when Aristotle tries to account not only for the movements of the celestial spheres, but for the regular variations of planetary movement which one observes. The introduction of a multiple number of Unmoved Movers in Λ8 is directed to this problem of planetary variance. Such was, in part, the project of Plato's *Timaeus*, and of much of the important work of Academics like Eudoxus and Callipus, whom Aristotle discusses in Λ8.[18]

For Aristotle, the fact that the Unmoved Mover has no matter and is completely actual should indicate that there is only one such being. This is suggested by the fact that all things that are many in number have matter, that material substance plays an important role in (although it is not the primary cause of) individuation. In cases of sensible substances, "man" applies to many men, but Socrates is one, distinct from the universal "man" and other men because the substantial form in him is individuated by matter/form.[19]

The primary essence has no matter because it is a complete *energeia* in the highest sense and is therefore one, in both formula and number (*logō kai arithmō*).[20] What becomes more difficult for Aristotle to explain, in the absence of matter/potency, is the existence of many "Unmoved Movers."

In the main, it seems that Aristotle in the *Physics* and the *Metaphysics* would prefer to simplify matters by having a system with one ultimate mover as a unitary teleological/exemplary cause. At *Physics* 259a he says,

> Nevertheless there is something that comprehends [all the movers of non-eternal beings], and that as something apart from each one of them; and this is the cause of the fact that some things are and others are not and of the continuous process of change; and this causes the motion of the other movers, while they are the causes of the motion of other things. Motion, then, being eternal, the first mover, if there is but one, will be eternal also; if there are more than one, there will be a plurality of such eternal movers. We ought, however, to suppose that there is one rather than many, and a finite number rather than an infinite number. *(Physics* 259a3*ff*.)

Here Aristotle mentions the possibility of more than one Unmoved Mover.[21] However, Aristotle seems hesitant to posit more than one unmoved mover, citing his preference for only one. It is unclear why such hesitation would present itself, if this passage is meant to accommodate his (late) considered position. A better suggestion might be that Aristotle was unclear on the issue. We shall see Plotinus takes him to task for this.

Aristotle begins the discussion of multiple Unmoved Movers by saying that the first principle and primary reality (*archē kai to prōton tōn ontōn*) is unmoveable both essentially (*kath'auto*) and accidentally, and that it excites the primary

form of motion that is eternal.[22] We also observe other eternal spatial movements that must be accounted for:

> there are other spatial motions - those of the planets - which are eternal (because a body which moves in a circle is never at rest - this has been proved by our physical treatises): then each of these spatial movements must also be excited by a substance (οὐσία) which is essentially immovable and eternal. For the nature of heavenly bodies is eternal, being a kind of substance, and that which moves is eternal and prior to the moved; and that which is prior to substance must also be a substance. It is therefore clear that there must be an equal number of substances in nature eternal [τήντε φύσιν ἀϊδίους] essentially unmovable [ἀκινήτους καθ' αὑτὰς] and without magnitude [ἄνευ μεγέθους]. (*Metaphysics* 1073a26-1073b1)

The position that Aristotle reached in his investigations (in the form it has come down to us at least) is wanting; Aristotle's notion of "individuation", such as it is, is built up from his examination of concrete *material* particulars. Form is the primary principle of individuation, but in material particulars, form stands in relation to some matter, and in virtue of its compatibility, it is distinguishable from other forms. In the case of multiple unmoved movers, where each one is entirely actual (and hence not commensurate with any potency), it is not clear how Aristotle will distinguish them.

Aristotle goes on to argue that there is only one heaven, which appears to be inconsistent with the argument about a multiple number of movers,[23] and more importantly, since the argument uses appeals to the need for matter to individuate a number of heavens, one is left wondering how the multiple movers are individuated.

> Evidently there is but one heaven. For if there are many heavens as there are many men, the moving principles, of which each heaven will have one, will be one in form but in number many. But all things that are many in number have matter. (*Metaphysics* 1074a32-4)

Presumably, Aristotle would distinguish them on the basis of the 'order' (*taxin*) in which they stand, an order that corresponds to the spatial motions of the heavenly bodies:

> it is clear that the movers are substances [οὐσίαι] and that one of them is first and another second and so on in the same order [τάξιν] the spatial motions of the heavenly bodies. (*Metaphysics* 1073b1-3)

The difficulty however, is that these 'substances' ought to be prior to the order in which one finds evidence for their existence (e.g. planetary movement) since it is the movers that explain that order, and not the other way around. Hence the order cannot be employed as an explanation of the individuation of the movers. Given our examination of sensible substances, one might suggest that the unmoved movers, since they are substances, are self-individuating. But unlike sensible substances, these eternal substances are completely *actual* - they have no commensurate potency whereby they differ from one another. Hence it remains unclear how Aristotle can explain their individuality. The consequence seems to be that Aristotle falls prey to the difficulty of distinguishing immaterial particulars.[24]

My thinking is that Aristotle in fact builds up a notion of individuation based on the material concrete particular. This conception of individuation is incapable of dealing with immaterial concrete particulars. Again, one might think that if the substantial form was the individuating feature, then this ought to pose no problem for Aristotle. However, his notion

of substantial form is based on an analysis of the concrete material particular, wherein the commensurability of substantial form with matter in a matter/form union is what individuates. Hence one comes to the conclusion that the Unmoved Movers are indistinguishable on Aristotle's own principles.

In Plotinus' critique of Aristotle's Unmoved Mover in *Enneads* V.1.9 Plotinus takes issue with the fact that Aristotle posits a plurality of immaterial substances. Aristotle himself appears to be speaking as a "layman"[25] about the correct calculations regarding the number of motions that need to be accounted for, suggesting that the issue of demonstrating the necessity of the matter will be left to more powerful thinkers.[26] Plotinus says the following:

> and by making many other intelligible realities, as many as the heavenly spheres, that each particular intelligible may move one particular sphere, [Aristotle] describes the intelligible world in a way different from Plato, making a probable assumption which has no philosophical necessity. But one might doubt whether it is even probable: for it would be more probable that all the spheres, contributing their several movements to a single system should look to one principle, the first [τὸ πρῶτον] (*Enneads* V.1.9, 9-15)

While it is clear that Plotinus objects to the idea of the Unmoved Mover as a first principle, the existence of more than one intelligible principle raises other difficulties. Plotinus seems to think that there is an ambiguity in the use of "*prōton*" to describe Aristotle's "first" mover.[27] This presents two options. Aristotle could mean: (1) the many intelligibles *derive* from the one (*ta polla noēta ex henos*) as the primary principle, or (2) that there are *many* primary principles (*archai*) in the intelligible world. If (1), then the "containment" of the spheres

by the outmost sphere ought to be enough to solve all of the problems of variant movements, since they would all be directed by the One:

> if they derive from the one, the situation will clearly be analogous to that of the heavenly spheres in the sense-world, where each contains the other one, and one, the outermost dominates [μιᾶς δὲ τῆς ἔξω κρατούσης]; so that there too the first would contain others and *there will be an intelligible universe* [κόσμος νοητὸς]; and just as here in the sense world the spheres are not empty, but the first is full of heavenly bodies and the others have heavenly bodies in them, so there also the moving principles [τὰ κινοῦντα] will have many realities in them, and *the realities will be truer.* (*Enneads* V.1.9, 18-24)

What I have italicised indicates that Plotinus may be thinking of a principle that dominates other principles as playing the role of his *Nous*. He sees the "outermost sphere" as containing the "truer realities," in a *cosmos noētos* and this seems to refer analogously to *Nous*. His predilection to see the Unmoved Mover as *Nous* also suggests this kind of conceptual association.

There remains the second possible interpretation of "*prōton*" that Plotinus raises. If Aristotle means (2), *i.e.* if the movers are all *archai*, then there will be a random assembly (*suntuchian*) of principles, and the order of the spheres and their movements will be arbitrary:[28] "why will they be a community and in agreement on the one work, the harmony of the whole universe?"[29] Further, says Plotinus, if these other movers are immaterial, then they are indistinguishable:

> And how can the intelligibles even be many, when they are incorporeal [ἀσώματα] as they are, and matter

> does not divide them [ὕλης οὐ χωριζούσης]? (*Enneads* V.1.9, 27)

While Plotinus seems to take matter as a principle of individuation[30], it seems more likely that Aristotle is required to assert that the commensurability of form with matter individuates. However, Plotinus' point stands whether he sees matter as a principle of individuation or not. If he sees Aristotle as holding to "commensurability," this is based on material particulars, *i.e.* a matter-form union. This is consistent with Plotinus' realization that if he (Plotinus) is to have many intelligible principles, they must be individuated by their derived being and unity, and not by their involvement with matter.

Plotinus does derive the unity of substances from a prior principle, and this is possible because unity is treated as prior to being. Aristotle cannot derive unity from something prior, since for him, unity is predicable of, and hence dependent on substance. Because, for Aristotle, being and unity have to be predicated of something whose individuation is presupposed, he cannot point to being *or* unity *or* matter in order to individuate his movers. This was not a problem for a plurality of material substances, but it becomes a problem for a multiple number of immaterial substances, since Aristotle's account of substance is such that the form (ontologically) abstracted from matter is an essential unity.

To summarize: Plotinus takes Aristotle to task on this very question of the individuation of many "Unmoved Movers." This also points to the larger question of being and unity, because we cannot forget that Aristotle is asserting, on the one hand, that separate immaterial substances exist, and on the other, the incoherence of Platonic *chōrismos*.

When Aristotle has to individuate non-material particulars, he can appeal to neither unity nor being, since these being and unity are dependent on their substantiality. If unity

were prior to immaterial substances, then they could be individuated, since a prior principle of unity could be appealed to as an explanation of why immaterial things are nonetheless unities. But since for Aristotle, substances must "bear" being and unity, there is no coherent appeal to unity as a principle of individuation. Plotinus points out that Aristotle's multiple movers are indistinguishable, and one wonders if, in light of this difficulty, he is motivated to reassert the priority of unity, to use the idea of a prior principle of unity to ground the multiplicity of Forms in his second principle, *Nous*. Cast in this light, it makes sense for Plotinus to affirm what Aristotle had denied, namely that Forms are dependent upon a prior principle of unity for their existence.

## 2. The Unmoved Mover as *Nous*

The Unmoved Mover is a perfect Mind that thinks itself. Aristotle believes that non-material things are essential unities, and the Unmoved Mover is such a unity. The absence of matter indicates the absence of potency for change or movement of any kind, and therefore the Unmoved Mover cannot change from one thought to another. The Unmoved Mover is a pure unitary actuality. It is unchanged throughout eternity, and it manifests the best activity - it thinks itself. One might say that its being, unity, and thought are the same.

Aristotle says that the life of the Unmoved Mover is like the best that we temporarily enjoy, and that it must be in that state always, since its very actuality is pleasure.[31] As he considers that which we most enjoy to be contemplation, the implication is that the Unmoved Mover thinks:

> Now thinking in itself is concerned with that which is in itself best, and thinking in the highest sense with that which is in the highest sense best. (*Metaphysics* 1072b16-20)

Thinking is the highest form of life and pure actuality.[32] Aristotle goes on to say that the Unmoved Mover thinks itself eternally, and suggests that the Unmoved Mover's thinking and thought are identical:

> thought thinks itself because it shares the nature of the object of thought; for it becomes an object of thought in coming into contact [θιγγάνων] with and thinking its objects, so that thought and the object of thought are the same [ταὐτον νοῦς καὶ νοητόν]. For that which is capable of receiving the object of thought, *i.e.* the substance, is thought.[33] And it is active [ἐνεργεῖ] when it possesses this object. (*Metaphysics* 1072b20-4)[34]

Aristotle himself questions whether the identity of *nous* and *noēton* is a valid conception of thought, since for the most part thought and its object are two different things. This is the very objection that Plotinus raises against Aristotle's conception of the Unmoved Mover. Plotinus answers the question negatively, and as such makes the Unmoved Mover the *second* principle in his hypostatic system. What Aristotle maintains is that in "some cases" the knowledge "is" the object:

> As, then, thought and the object of thought are not different in the case of things that have not matter [ὅσα μὴ ὕλη ἔχει], they will be the same, *i.e.* thinking will be one with the object of thought [τῷ νοουμένῳ] (*Metaphysics* 1075a3-5)[35]

The question becomes what the thought of this self-thinking would be like.[36] The idea of a mind thinking itself is best grasped by an examination of *De Anima* III,4.[37] There we see two types of thinking, and the criterion of difference is whether the mind is in potency to something external or something internal. These two types of thinking are: 1) mind

in potency to external forms, and 2) mind in potency to itself when it knows all of the forms:[38]

> Once the mind has become each set of its possible objects, as a man of science has...its condition is still one of potentiality, but in a different sense from the potentiality which preceded the acquisition of knowledge by learning or discovery: the mind is able to think *itself.* (*De Anima* 429b5-9)

The first type of thinking suggests that the intellect is potential because it does not "possess" its object. The second suggests that it is actual, in so far as it does "possess" its object.[39]

If a mind stands in potency to an external object, some kind of *kinēsis* is required for it to "possess" that object.[40] It would, however, be wrong to suggest that the Unmoved Mover stands in any kind of potency to any thought since, unlike material substances, it contains no potency, but is always actual.[41]

The usual interpretation of the Unmoved Mover's self-thinking implies that nothing else is *worthy* of its thought. This interpretation is imposed upon Aristotle by requiring that the idea of the Unmoved Mover thinking itself excludes thinking of other things. Here is what Aristotle says:

> It must think either itself or something else; and if something else, then it must think the same thing always, or different things at different times. Then does it make any difference, or not, whether it thinks that which is good or thinks at random? Surely it would be absurd for it to think about some subjects. Clearly then, it thinks that which is most divine and estimable, and does not change; for the change would be for the worse... (*Metaphysics* 1074b3-8)

All that we observe here is that it would be "out of place" for the Unmoved Mover to think of *some things*. Self-thinking need not be represented as entirely exclusive however. Any actualised mind that thinks theoretically, and not about external objects, is engaged in self-thinking.[42] There is nothing to prevent it from being engaged in continuous abstract thought; all of its thinking is theoretical, and its theoretical thought is distinguished from human thought by its eternity.[43] If the Unmoved Mover thinks the thoughts that it has without the help of external objects, then it is engaged in self-thinking, but this does not mean that it has only to think itself. It is not possible for it to think about particular contingent things, presumably, since they come into being and pass away; knowledge of a thing existing at time T1 and not existing at time T2 would entail a change in what it thinks. Further, since the Unmoved Mover is completely actual, it may not change what it thinks in any way, since thinking about 'x' while being able to think about 'y' places the mind in a potency to 'y'.

The Unmoved Mover is the highest being, or the most unified unity, the primary substance. If the Unmoved Mover thinks about itself and it is the primary example of being and unity, it seems to follow that *it thinks about being or unity in the most unqualified sense*. That is, the "abstract" nature of its thought is such that it does not merely think about *itself* as the primary exemplar of being and unity, but of being and unity in the most abstract sense. The thinking on thinking is a thinking of being and unity. Plotinus sees that Aristotle's assertion that the primary unity "is," makes the first principle multiple. To suggest that it "thinks itself" also implies multiplicity. On this basis Plotinus "demotes" Aristotle's Unmoved Mover to the second level of his hypostatic system, a *Nous* that thinks the Forms.[44]

When Aristotle places at the head of his metaphysical system a thinking, "unitary" *being*, Plotinus asserts that it is not completely unitary, in virtue of its being *and* its thinking. In accordance with the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy, Unity must precede being, and also thinking:

> Later Aristotle makes the first principle [τὸ πρῶτον] separate [χωριστὸν] and intelligible, but when he says that it knows itself he goes back again and does not make it the first principle; (*Enneads* V.1.9, 8-9)[45]

Plotinus' ontological perspective requires that the first principle be *absolutely* simple, and he maintains that an entity which is self-intellecting is not absolutely simple, but manifold.[46] He agrees with Aristotle that the first principle must be without potency, but in so far as thinking *always* ought to imply the potency of the thinker to the object of thought, he maintains that there is potency within the Unmoved Mover.[47] By Aristotle's own lights then, an actuality is required that is *prior* to thinking, in order to guarantee the act of thinking which in turn guarantees motion.[48] According to Plotinus, to say that a divine intellect such as the Unmoved Mover is the primary unity that generates multiplicity, does not appreciate that the principle of being and unity must itself be *beyond* being and unity.[49] This is the transcendence demanded by the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy.

The general tendency in Middle Platonism to identify a divine mind that thinks the Platonic Ideas with Aristotle's Unmoved Mover is something that Plotinus inherits. Since we know that what Plotinus thinks about *Nous* is what he thinks about the Unmoved Mover (at a general level), we may elucidate the terse statement made about the Unmoved Mover in *Enneads* V.1.9 by examining Plotinus' reflections on *Nous*. At *Enneads* V.3, he says:

> If then *Nous* is *Nous* because it is multiple, thinking itself [νοεῖν αὐτὸ] even if it derives from *Nous*, is a kind of internal occurrence which makes it many. That which is absolutely simple and first of all things must be beyond [ἐπέκεινα] *Nous*; but if it is *Nous*, it will be multiplicity. [πλῆθος ἔσται] (*Enneads* V.3.11, 26-31)

Any self-thinking thing then, is multiple, and any multiplicity requires a unity that explains it.[50] This is further suggested by the following:

> But that which is before [intellection and being] is their principle, not as immanent in them; for it is not that from which something comes which is immanent, but the parts of which it is constituted; but that from which each individual thing comes is not an individual thing, but other than all of them. It is not then, one of all things, but before all things, so that it is before *Nous*...It must not be one of the things before which it is, and you are not to call it intellect; not even the Good then: no, not even this if "the Good" means that which is not before all things; but if it means that which is before all things, let the name stand. (*Enneads* V.3.11, 16-25)

The two previous passages are from the relatively late treatise *On the Knowing Hypostases and That Which is Beyond* (V, 3).[51] The treatise begins by enquiring into what can properly be said to think itself. Plotinus argues that the human soul does not properly "think itself," but rather takes its intellection from *Nous* and sense-perception, the former by way of an "imprint" on its reasoning faculty and through the comparison of external *aisthēta* with these imprints - what Plotinus says we should call the *anamnēsis* of the soul.[52] The human soul stands in a kind of "middle realm," halfway between

*Nous* and the material world, and it bridges the gap between the two:[53]

> The activities of *Nous* are from above in the same way that those of sense-perception are below; we are this, the principal part of the soul, in the middle between two powers, a worse and a better, the worse that of sense-perception, the better that of *Nous*. (*Enneads* V.3.3, 36-40)[54]

Though the soul is not engaged in what might be called self-intellection proper, one might suggest that in so far as soul "ascends" to the level of *Nous* in Plotinus' hypostatic system, it understands itself non-discursively.[55] However, only *Nous* (and the Forms) can properly be said to be self-intellecting, in so far as there is an identity of *ousia* and *energeia*; *Nous*, *noēton* and *noēsis* are one:

> If then [*Nous*] is actuality and its substance is actuality, it is one and the same with its actuality; but being and the intelligible are also one with the actuality. Altogether are one, Intellect, intellection, the intelligible [νοῦς, νόησις, τὸ νοητόν]. If therefore, Intellect's intellection is the intelligible, and the intelligible is itself, it will think itself: for it will think with the intellection which it is itself and will think the intelligible, which it is itself. In both ways then, it will think itself, in that intellection is itself and in that the intelligible is itself which thinks in its intellection and which is itself. (*Enneads* V.3.5, 41-50)

In the end, Plotinus concludes from his analysis of the thinking of *Nous* that it is "being" in the primary sense:

> ὁ μὲν δὴ λόγος ἀπέδειξεν εἶναι τι τὸ αὐτὸ ἑαυτὸ κυρίως νοεῖν.[56]

> ing and the seen must coincide, and what is seen by itself must be a universal multiplicity. (*Enneads* V.3.10, 9-18)

Once the distinction can be articulated about being and thought, Plotinus indicates the possibility of deriving, (as he does in *Enneads* V.1), the Platonic "primary kinds" of the *Parmenides* and *Sophist*.[58]

The One, on the other hand, is an entirely simple principle of unity, and in so far as it is beyond both thought and being, it has no need of thinking itself, explaining itself, or understanding itself: "...that which is absolutely different remains itself by itself (*auto pros auto*), and seeks nothing about itself; but that which explicates itself must be many."[59] We should of course understand this "self-explication" as a sort of monadology, wherein the "one-many", which is *Nous*, is a self-intellecting unity composed of self-intellecting Forms.

In *Enneads* V.3.12, Plotinus also suggests, on the basis of an analysis of thinking, that the act of thinking is dependent on something prior. The tack here is analogous to the idea that being, in so far as it is multiple, requires a prior actuality that is unitary. Since thinking and being are extensionally the same in *Nous*, thinking requires a prior actuality, just as being does. If, says Plotinus, the activities of the simple principle came into being because it started to be active at some point, then the principle itself will be multiple, containing both principle and act or potency for act.[60] By the same token, because thinking is an act that is essentially directed toward something, it implies deficiency on the part of the thinker, (logically, not temporally),[61] and hence thinking cannot be determined to be the first act.[62] If the primary activity of thinking is identified with the first principle, then the first activity would have nothing to think,

> and again it could not have one part of the thing [which it wanted] and not have another, for there was not anything at all to which the impulse could be directed. (*Enneads* V.3.12, 33-4)

The "impulse" is directed towards the *energeia ek tēs ousias* of the One, the potency of the One's emanative force to be limited by thought. This also suggests that *Nous* does not arbitrarily think what it chooses, with the consequence of bringing things into existence arbitrarily:

> For it is not true that when [*Nous*] thought a god, a god came into existence or when it thought motion, motion came into existence. It is then, incorrect to say that the Forms are thoughts, if what is meant by this is that when Intellect thought this particular Form came into existence or this particular Form; for what is thought must be prior to this thinking [of a particular Form]. Otherwise how would it come to thinking it? Certainly not by chance, nor did it happen on it casually. (*Enneads* V.9.7, 13-19 )

If the Good is thinking, then there is a distinction between the Good in itself and the Good that is thought.[63] Therefore the first principle must, says Plotinus, remain in "its own proper state." Plotinus wants to say that being, unity, and thought are prior to any *particular* and further that anything which possesses being, unity, or thought, no matter how simple, is multiform. Anything which is multiform cannot stand as "first cause."

In short, it is impossible for a first principle to think, act or even "be"[64] because these characteristics indicate multiplicity. In thinking there is an active and a passive part, or if the object of these acts are other than itself, it implies a potency on the part of the first principle. If the first principle engages

in an activity towards something external, there is nothing for it to engage at any rate, for as first principle there is nothing but itself to act upon, unless it decides to forge out into nothingness in a kind of "objectless" urge. This goes to the heart of Plotinus' reaction to Aristotle, since, in a coherent account of thinking, the being of anything is prior to the thought of it. Knowing and being for Plotinus have their place not with the One, the first principle, but with a second principle, *Nous*. In order to account for the unity/multiplicity of *Nous*, a prior principle is needed. It is this that, according to Plotinus, Aristotle failed to accommodate.

If Aristotle wants a first principle and numerous immaterial principles that derive from it, the Unmoved Mover ought to "contain" the other ideas as it does in Plotinus' system. The identification of *Nous* with the Unmoved Mover in the Middle Platonic tradition, as well as Aristotle's own notion of the *noēsis/noēton* identity of the Unmoved Mover, (and of theoretical knowledge and the theoretically known at *De Anima* 430), means that *Nous*, and Aristotle's Unmoved Mover as Plotinus understands it, is a one/many. The "one" is accounted for by *Nous*' unity with Forms that it derives from the One, and the "many" is accounted for by the monadology of self-intellecting Forms that derive their own unity from the One. Plotinus gets around the Aristotelian problem by denying that being and unity are metaphysically posterior. This amounts to asserting the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy. Plotinus can say that if being is dependent on unity, *i.e.* if a thing must be one in order to be, then its individuation is guaranteed by a prior principle of unity.

In conclusion, part of the way in which Plotinus frames his own position regarding the first principle can be better understood in relation to his critique of Aristotle. The *Nous* of the Platonists and the Unmoved Mover, as self-intellecting entities, are by definition multiple, since they are analysable

into a thinker and an object of thought. This multiplicity (indeed any multiplicity) requires a prior unity. Since *Nous* or the Unmoved Mover is understood by Plotinus as the primary *being*, such a being needs a principle of unity. If being depends on unity, it is certainly not convertible with it; hence Plotinus rejects the convertibility thesis. The dependence of particulars on being, and being on unity reflects the re-emergence of, or perhaps Plotinus' sustained faithfulness to the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy.

**Notes for Chapter III:**

[1]It seems clear that Plotinus does not distinguish between the Active Intellect and the Unmoved Mover; but we should remember that Alexander of Aphrodisias did not either. See note 51.

[2]For example, *Enneads* II.5.1-3.

[3]*Enneads* VI.1.25, 17-18. See Gerson (1990, 8-9) and Hadot (1990, 129).

[4]It is my contention that, in Aristotle, *pros hen* equivocity is not intercategorial, whereas in Plotinus it is hypostatic, or applies to the three primary hypostases.

[5]Armstrong (1979, 401) notes that a direct application of the Aristotelian notion is perhaps not possible, but clearly some version of it is employed. It is clear that Aristotle warns against a *strict* identity of *nous* and *noēta* at *Physics* 220a20-b22. See also Alfino (1988, 276).

[6]Katz(1950, 4); O'Meara (1993, 49-50) and Gerson (1994, 192 *ff.*).

[7]*Metaphysics* 1025b1.

[8]The fact that *plural* principle*s* and cause*s* are mentioned perhaps leaves room for Aristotle's First Moved Mover as well as the theory of multiple movers. I think it significant that Aristotle at one point summarizes his reflections on the Unmoved Mover in the following manner: "Such then is the first principle [ἀρχῆς] upon which depend the sensible universe and the world of nature." (*Metaphysics* 1072b13) See *Metaphysics* 1073a23.

[9]Some attempts to rectify the apparent discrepancy in E and Γ take up issues of dating the text. Natorp (1898) for example, says that attempts to identify theology and first philosophy are interpolations of a "later hand." However, since Book K (Chapters 1-8) summarizes books B, Γ, and E, it would mean that Book K is also a later interpolation, as Patzig (1979, 35) argues, and the question of why the "later hand" saw no inconsistency between E and Γ remains unanswered. Jaeger, (1968, 218) on the other hand, suggests just the opposite, that theological references are to an "earlier, Platonising stage." According to Jaeger, first philosophy as theological and Platonic stands in sharp contrast with the later vision of first philosophy.

[10]In so far as all sensible substances require motion for their generation, which motion is guaranteed by the First Moved Mover whose motion is in turn guaranteed by the Unmoved Mover.

[11]It would be odd that Aristotle's theology spent all of its time talking merely about a self-thinking unity; this would place us back into the science of Parmenides, and even he talks about more than just this.

[12]Patzig (1979, 38). Not to say that the *Metaphysics* is primarily about God. This does not mean, however, that understanding the role of the Unmoved Mover is not essential to grasping the nature of being *qua* being, since the primary example of being is also the principle of all beings. Patzig says, about E, that "it is clear from these remarks that the embarrassing contradiction between a 'first philosophy' which is universal ontology and a 'first philosophy' which, as theology, investigates only the subject of God did not exist for Aristotle. First philosophy...is theology of so special a kind that it is *as such at the same time* ontology. Aristotle is envisaging here a philosophical discipline that is both a first and a general philosophy, and a substance that is so superior to all other substances that it can be called in a certain sense substance in general."

[13]I say "ontological abstraction" to distinguish from epistemological abstraction, or the recognition of separate components in a concrete particular. This notion I take from Aristotle's musing at H 6, where Aristotle says that things that have no matter at all are essential unities (*Metaphysics* 1045b23-4).

[14]Patzig (1979, 38).

[15]Something Watson (1898, 36-7) says about *pros hen* equivocity is useful: "why...is the common term 'real' applied to [substance, quality and quantity]? It is so applied because substance, quality and quantity are relative to a single nature (πρὸς μιᾶν φύσιν), not because they themselves possess a common nature; they are predicated πρὸς ἕν, not κὰθ'ἕν. Everything that is in every sense affirmed to be real is relative to the one idea of reality...it must be observed, however, that substance (οὐσία) is the fundamental determination of reality, because apart from it there can be no quality or quantity or any other determination whatever. The first task of Metaphysic, and indeed its main task, must, therefore, be to determine the principles of substance."

[16]*Pace* say, Owens, Gerson, and the tendency of Patzig. I should perhaps note that Patzig does not seem to think that the account of substances in the central books of the *Metaphysics* is consistent with what he envisions as the "doubly-paronymous" structure. He suggests (1979, 46), "the three so-called books on substance of the *Metaphysics*...cannot be fitted into the account of the doubly-paronymous ontology that I have outlined. It is true that in these books beings in the other categories are still related to

substance as the 'first being'; but there is no trace of an essential reference in the analysis of natural substance to the doctrine of the 'prime mover.'"

[17]*i.e.*, it is implied because sensible substances are corruptible and come to be. Their genesis and corruption requires motion and that is what the system of cosmological movers guarantees.

[18]*Metaphysics* 1073b*ff.*; *cp.* G.E.R. Lloyd (1968, 148).

[19]*Metaphysics* 1074a34-5.

[20]*Metaphysics* 1074a35*ff.*

[21]Jaeger (1968, 346 *ff.*) suggests this is a later addition to the text by Aristotle, in order to accommodate the considerations of *Metaphysics* Λ8, but see Owens (1981, 282). Indeed Jaeger suggests that this chapter is a late and hardly finalized interpolation. Aristotle's own hesitance regarding the final number of Unmoved Movers suggests as much, although the fact that in both the *Physics* and *Metaphysics* he is willing to entertain the idea of many Unmoved Movers shows that he was not unaware of the difficulty of celestial motion.

[22]*Metaphysics* 1073a23-6.

[23]Proof perhaps that Λ8 is a late interpolation. See Tredennick (1956, 160, *n.* b).

[24]Jaeger (1968, 352) treats of matter as the principle of individuation, whereas my own interpretation treats of the substantial form in the concrete particular as the principle of individuation: "If matter is the principle of individuation...either the movers of the spheres cannot be immaterial, since they form a plurality of exemplars of a genus, or Aristotle refutes himself by retaining his doctrine of immateriality, since this excludes individual multiplicity. In either event he falls into contradictions with the presuppositions of his own philosophy".

[25]G.E.R. Lloyd (1968, 153).

[26]*Metaphysics*, 1074a14*ff.*

[27]*Enneads* V.1.9, 16 *ff.*

[28]*Enneads* V.1.9, 23-4.

[29]*Enneads* V.1.9, 24-5.

[30]Armstrong (1988, 44 *n.* 1) notes that the critique here is similar to that made by Theophrastus at *Metaphysics* II.7, 9, "but the resemblance is not close enough for us to assume that Plotinus had read Theophrastus."

[31]*Metaphysics* 1072b14 *ff.*

[32]See Tredennick (1956, 149).

[33]τὸ γὰρ δεκτικὸν τοῦ νοητοῦ καὶ τῆς οὐσίας νοῦς.

[34]*trans.* Barnes.

[35]*trans.* Barnes.

[36]Often I think we conceive of Aristotle's first principle as narcissistic, *e.g.* that it loves itself and thinks only itself because nothing else is worthy of its thought. Norman (1979, 93) argues that the idea of a "narcissistic" self-thinker is incorrect and comes from a misunderstanding of what is meant by a mind thinking itself.

[37]Norman (1979, 93-4).

[38]*De Anima* 429b5. Note that in both cases the mind is in potency to something, either an external form, or to itself, both of which suggest that there is a bifurcation or duality in thinking, that it has two components, thinker and object of thought. This duality forms the core of Plotinus' critique of Aristotle.

[39]"in [potential intellect] intellect *becomes* identical with the objects of thought, whereas in [actual intellect] it is *already* identical with them before it thinks itself". (Norman 1979, 94-5).

[40]*Metaphysics* 1074b28.

[41]From the distinction drawn from *De Anima*, Norman (1979, 98) also suggests the following about Aristotle's approach in Λ9, "The question [what the Unmoved Mover thinks] is posed in the form which of the two kinds of thinking does it engage in? Is it intellect (*i.e.* the capacity for thought) or thinking, potentially or actually, is the object of its thought something external, or the mental concepts that constitute its own mind? If the former - *i.e.* if its essence is not thinking but potentiality - then its state will be determined by something other than itself, *viz.* its external object of thought, and so it will not be the highest reality".

[42]This is certainly what Plotinus thinks about Aristotle's Unmoved Mover, and it is why he nonetheless "demotes" him.

[43]"when it is said that the Prime Mover 'thinks itself,' what is meant is not 'self-contemplation', but simply that identity of intellect and object of thought that characterizes all abstract thought." (Norman 1979, 97).

[44]Plotinus' identification of the Unmoved Mover with Nous may in part derive from a passage in the *De Anima*, where Aristotle says, "It was a good idea to call the soul 'the place of the forms' though (1) this description holds only of the intellective soul, and (2) even this is the forms only potentially, not actually." (*De Anima* 429a27-8). Plotinus will maintain that any thinker is always composed of two parts, the *nous* and the *noēton*, and that there is potency and multiplicity in such a being.

[45]See *Enneads* V.1.9; V.3.11-4; V.6; VI.7.35-7.

[46]See O'Meara (1993, 50).

[47]Indeed this is the case in *De Anima* III,4.

[48]Gerson (1992, 22).

[49]Gerson (1994a, 9) suggests that Plotinus' refutation of Aristotle has two parts; "First, Plotinus aims to show that what Aristotle regards as the *archē* of all, the unmoved mover or 'thinking thinking about thinking,' cannot be the absolutely first principle. It cannot be absolutely first because it is not self explaining. That it, it must have a principle or cause outside of itself. The second stage of the strategy is to demonstrate the existence of the true first principle, and to deduce its properties, none of which can be possessed by Aristotle's god."

[50]See *Enneads* III.8.9, 6-7; VI.9.2; V.1.5, 1-19; Gerson (1994a, 10).

[51]Says Armstrong (1980 V. 69) "The treatise shows, perhaps more clearly than any other in the *Enneads*, the stimulation of the thought of Plotinus by critical reflection on what Plotinus says about Intellect and exposition of Aristotelian doctrine by...Alexander of Aphrodisias."

[52]*Enneads* V.3.2, 1-14.

[53]This is not to deny, however, that a part of the soul is always in contact with *Nous*.

[54]In a more poetic rendering, Plotinus says: "αἴσθησις δὲ ἡμῖν ἄγγελος βασιλεὺς δὲ πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἐκεῖνος [νοῦς]." (*Enneads* V.3.3, 45-6).

[55]At *Enneads* V.3.4, 13-4, Plotinus says that the better part of the soul is "*pterousthai pros noēsis*," recalling *Phaedrus* 246 *ff.;* See also Armstrong (1988, 83 *n.*1); on discursive thinking, Armstrong (1991, 120), Blumenthal (1986, 73).

[56]*Enneads* V.3.6, 1-2.

[57]*Enneads* V.3.10, 13.

[58]*Enneads* V.3.10, 24 *ff.* also VI.2.See also Crystal (1998, 276 *ff.*).

[59]*Enneads* V.3.10, 51-3.

[60]*Enneads* V.3.12.

[61]See A.C. Lloyd (1986, 258. *ff.*) and Alfino (1988, 275).

[62]O'Meara (1993, 50) says: "Thinking reaches toward and therefore cannot be, absolute self-sufficiency."; see also Katz (1950, 40) and *Enneads* V.3.10; V.6.5.

[63]*Enneads* VI.7.15. See Gerson (1994, 21).

[64]This is not to suggest that the One does not exist, but rather it is beyond the "being" that emerges as its *energeia ek tēs ousias*, or the finitude or limit that being takes on in *Nous* or Soul.

# CHAPTER IV
# THE *DIDASKALIKOS* AND NUMENIUS

In this chapter I want to look at how Plotinus' philosophy appropriates certain developments in Middle Platonism. Recognizing Plotinus' fidelity to the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy allows us to see him as a kind of "purifier" of Platonism. Plotinus seems to reject Middle Platonic tendencies toward amalgamating or reconciling Plato and Aristotle regarding the first principle, while at the same time retaining and extrapolating developments of amalgamation that are consistent with the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy. The identification of the Platonic Good with the Aristotelian Unmoved Mover that occurs in the reputed school handbook of Platonism, the *Didaskalikos*[1] becomes untenable when one thinks in terms of the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy. As mentioned, Plotinus identifies the Unmoved Mover, and the god that thinks Plato's ideas with *Nous* in his own system. He "demotes" the Demiurge and the Unmoved Mover to "second rank," and he identifies the Platonic Good with his first god, the One.

This "demotion" seems clear enough in the *Didaskalikos*, and the distinction is even sharper in the philosophy of Nu-

menius, who also has a triadic system of hypostases similar to that of Plotinus.

## 1. The *Didaskalikos*

In looking at the *Didaskalikos*, I do not want to maintain that Plotinus was *directly* influenced by the work. If the Middle Platonists had much importance for Plotinus, which I think is undeniable, then a proponent of a significant variant interpretation of Plato's doctrine, such as we find in the *Didaskalikos*, must be of profound importance. Moreover, the *Didaskalikos*, apart from Plutarch's writings, is the only fully intact work of Platonism we have until Plotinus.[2] In looking at the history and preservation of ancient texts, one often gets the sense that those texts which were considered most important survived either because of wider distribution, or because they were held in high esteem, or both. The fact that the *Didaskalikos* has survived may point to its importance at some level. Its importance for someone like Plotinus extends at least as far as the assumption that Plotinus would have inherited certain developments in the interpretation of Plato from its influence, especially if the work was a "school handbook" of the Academy.[3] If the work was an introduction to Platonism, which many Platonists read, then it stands to reason that the way in which Plato was understood was coloured by such an introduction to Plato's philosophy. If one wants to maintain that Plotinus was more "original," this merely speaks to the fact that, as a superior philosopher, he grew and developed from his influences and could see some of the flaws in his own tradition. I suspect that the excising of flaws in later Platonism and the rejection of Aristotelianism are important for Plotinus' account of the first principle in his system; the fact that the *Didaskalikos* gives us a well-preserved example of "Aristotelianising" Platonism helps us understand not only the inconsistencies that Plotinus saw in his own tradition, but

also the significance of the critique of Aristotle that Plotinus offers in the development of his own system.

The structure of the *Didaskalikos* is (roughly) as follows:[4] Introduction (Chapters 1-3), Dialectic (4-6), Mathematics (7), Theology (8-11), Physics (12-26), Ethics (27-39).[5] What I am primarily interested in are Chapters 8-11, where we see several interesting things: 1) a clear and intact text stating that ideas are in the "mind of God"; 2) the incorporation of Aristotle's theology into Platonism, in so far as a self-contemplating Unmoved Mover (First God) stands above a Second God that thinks the Platonic Ideas; 3) an apophatic description of the first God. I want to suggest that these *ideas* influenced Plotinus, but not necessarily the text under scrutiny. What I am examining are trends in Platonism that shed light on Plotinus' particular understanding of Plato and Aristotle.

Chapter 8 of the *Didaskalikos* begins a discussion of "the principles and precepts" of theology," (*tōn archōn te kai theologikōn theōrēmatōn*)[6] with a treatment of matter. In Chapter 9, we are told that there are other principles, including: 1) the paradigmatic first principle, that is the Ideas, and 2) God the father and cause of all things. The *Didaskalikos* refers to "form" (singular) as the thinking of this god, which I take to refer to the "father" in the passage just below. A second passage a few lines down refers to the "forms," (plural) which are grounded in the first intelligible, as "thoughts of God," which I take to refer to the paradigmatic principle. Here is the first passage:

> Matter constitutes one principle, but Plato postulates others also, to wit, the paradigmatic, that is the forms, and that constituted by God the father and cause of all things. Form is considered in relation to God, his thinking; in relation to us, the primary object of

> thought; in relation to Matter, measure; in relation to the sensible world its paradigm; and in relation to itself, essence. (*Didaskalikos*, 9.1.)

In the second passage, the notion that the forms are the thoughts of god is offered as a proof (the first of several) for the existence of Forms:

> For the forms are eternal and perfect thoughts of God. [Platonists] justify the existence of forms in the following way also. Whether God is an intellect or is possessed of intellect, he has thoughts, and these are eternal and unchanging; and if this is the case, forms exist. (*Didaskalikos*, 9.2-3.)

I suggest that the thoughts of god here are the thoughts of a being "possessed of intellect", the Demiurge. The thoughts of god who is simply "Mind" would then refer to the first god.[7] In the first passage, where the form is the thought of God, the first god, we are talking about a "perfectly unitary" first principle. That the forms are thoughts of god is stated with certainty, and is presented as a thesis that is held by Platonists in general. This suggests that the notion was already a fixed doctrine by the time the *Didaskalikos* was written.[8]

The god that thinks the Ideas gives order to Intellect and to the World Soul. In Chapter 10, The *Didaskalikos* says that the primal God is the Father:

> He is the Father through being the cause of all things and bestowing order on the heavenly Intellect and the soul of the world in accordance with his own thoughts. By his own will he has filled all things with himself, rousing up the soul of the world and turning it towards himself, as being the cause of its Intellect. It is this latter that, set in order by the Father, itself imposes order on all of nature in this world. (*Didaskalikos* 10.3)[9]

We should not be worried by the fact that here the *Didaskalikos* refers to the thoughts (plural) of the primal God. All this suggests is that when they are conveyed to the World Soul, they are plural. The account that precedes this passage speaks of the primal god as a complete unity, described apophatically as:

> Eternal, ineffable, 'self-perfect', that is deficient in no respect), 'ever-perfect' (that is, always perfect), and 'all-perfect', (that is, perfect in all respects), divinity, essentiality, truth, commensurability <beauty>, good. I am not listing these things as being distinct from one another, but on the assumption that one single thing is being denoted by all of them. (*Didaskalikos* 10.3)

I will have more to say about this passage later. Right now I want to point out that if the *Didaskalikos* speaks of the thoughts (plural) of the first god, it means that things "below" him would see them as plural, but that in him they are Idea (singular).

What is most interesting for our study of Plotinus is that he himself wrote a treatise (*Enneads* V.5) that Porphyry entitles "That the Intelligibles are Not Outside the Intellect, and On the Good." What is by the time of the *Didaskalikos* a fixed doctrine, that Ideas are the thoughts of God, is in Plotinus the subject of an adamant treatise, suggesting that for Plotinus it has become an important issue for his understanding of Platonism. Again, we should keep in mind that the parallels need not imply the direct influence of the *Didaskalikos*, for it seems likely that this way of conceiving the Ideas was a commonplace among Platonists of the time of the *Didaskalikos*[10] and as late as Plotinus. That is not to say everyone held this position. Longinus most certainly did not, and Porphyry was only convinced after long debate with Plotinus' student Amelius.[11] However it is useful to see a complete text

like this is in the context of Middle Platonism, since it is less odd to find Plotinus maintaining the position with vigour later. What we will come to see is that the Platonic Ideas immediately apprehended by the mind of God is the way that Plotinus conceives of *Nous*, the second God in his system. As I have suggested, the god in the *Didaskalikos* that thinks the Ideas is a second god. However, the first god looks nothing like Plotinus' One; instead we see Aristotle's Unmoved Mover.

In the *Didaskalikos*, the description of the first god is a blending of Plato and Aristotle; it is as if the author takes Plato's Good in *Republic* VI and characterises it as the Unmoved Mover of *Metaphysics* Λ.[12] It is useful, before we look at this characterisation, to see why there is something (metaphysically) prior to the mind that thinks the ideas. It is argued in Chapter 10 that there must be primary objects of intellection in an absolute sense:

> If there exist objects of intellection, and these are neither sense-perceptible nor participate in what is sense-perceptible, but rather in certain primary objects of intellection, then there exist primary objects of intellection in an absolute sense, just as there are primary objects of sense perception. (*Didaskalikos* 10.1)

The notion of participation here is interesting. It is used to suggest that the "objects of intellection" are not grounded in the sense-world, but rather in "primary objects of intellection", which are in turn grounded in "primary objects of intellection in an absolute sense". This brings to mind the idea of the Forms participating in the Form of the Good. This makes sense given that the discussion opens with the claim that Plato thought that this first god was "almost ineffable". Whereas humans do not know the objects of intellection perfectly, but often are hindered by materialistic conceptions of

them - "conceiving along with [the intelligible] often a notion of size, or shape, or colour"[13] - the gods know the intelligible immediately and without sense perception. But there must be a cause of this knowing:

> Since intellect is superior to soul, and superior to potential intellect there is actualized intellect, which cognizes everything simultaneously and eternally, and finer than this again is the cause of this and whatever it is that has an existence still prior to these, this it is that would be the primal God, being the cause of the eternal activity of the intellect of the whole heaven. (*Didaskalikos* 10.1)

Here we have merged into Aristotelianism. The notions of act and potency are employed, and the first god is described as causing the eternal activity of the whole heaven. The fact that the knowing of all things simultaneously is seen as caused by the primal god suggests that the thoughts of the second god are caused by the first; but this second god seems also to be the mind of the whole heaven. The mind that knows all things simultaneously cannot be the first god, because it is itself caused by the first god. Nor can it be different from the first heaven, since then it would be a third god, and there is no mention of this. Hence it seems that the second god and the mind of the heaven are two aspects of the same thing.[14] This is also suggested by what the *Didaskalikos* says next:

> [the primal god is] the cause of the eternal activity of the whole heaven. It acts on this while remaining itself unmoved, as does the sun on vision, when this is directed towards it, and as the object of desire moves desire, while remaining motionless itself. In just this way will this intellect move the intellect of the whole heaven. (*Didaskalikos* 10.2)

The primal god is an "Unmoved Mover" that sets the heaven in motion as an object of its desire. This conception then merges with Plato's analogy of the sun, wherein the Form of the Good grants intelligibility to its objects. A plausible interpretation of the passage is that the Ideas in the second god come from the Idea of the first god. This primal god thinks itself, and the argument reflects that of *Metaphysics* Λ:

> Since the primary intellect is the finest of things, it follows that the object of its intelligizing must also be supremely fine. But there is nothing finer than this intellect. Therefore it must be everlastingly engaged in thinking of itself and its own thoughts, and this activity of it is Form. (*Didaskalikos* 10.3)

Again we see that the "thoughts" of the first god are spoken of in the plural but, given the apophatic expression of this god's unity, it again makes sense to interpret this as "plural" from our perspective but unified from his.

When we come to examine the philosophy of Plotinus, we shall see that what is actually "plural" in *Nous* is a potency, a *dunamis tōn pantōn*, of the One. Further, for Plotinus, the "first god" is not a being that thinks itself at all, although it does stand in a similar relation to *Nous* as the *Didaskalikos*' primal god stands in relation to the World Soul.

As I have suggested, the *Didaskalikos* maintains that we must understand the first god apophatically, or by means of a sort of *via negativa*, so as to grasp its unitary nature.[15] I now want to revisit this *via negativa* in the *Didaskalikos*, and to suggest that Plotinus retains this kind of negative theology, but in fact moves beyond it to a kind of negative henology. He demotes both the primal god of the *Didaskalikos* and Aristotle's Unmoved Mover to the "second rank," in consonance with the kind of negative theology we see in the *Didaskalikos*. The World Soul that bears the similarity of demiurgic functioning

and thinking of its prior, and takes on the "third rank," the Soul of Plotinus' system. As we have seen, the *Didaskalikos* describes the primal god as ineffable, self-sufficient, eternally perfect, and all perfect, as well as being divinity, essentiality, truth, commensurability and good.[16] These are not to be taken as indications of multiplicity, but rather different ways of talking about the same thing.

There are similarities to Plotinus' One here, and there are differences. For Plotinus, the characteristics "truth" and "essentiality" belong to *Nous*, for *Nous* is the primary instance of Being and Thought. Plotinus sees his own first principle as conceptually aligned with "the Good" and he would accept a characterization of the One as ineffable, eternal, self-sufficient and perfect. The question for Plotinus is whether or not thought and being can properly be said of the One, even as a "complete unity." For Plotinus, being and thought are inconsistent with "complete unity" and the method he often uses is similar to the apophatic approach of the *Didaskalikos*. Here is another example:

> God is ineffable and graspable only by the intellect, as we have said, since he is neither genus, nor species, nor differentia, nor does he possess any attributes, neither bad (for it is improper to utter such a thought), nor good (for he would be thus by participation in something, to wit, goodness), nor indifferent (for neither is this in accordance with the concept we have of him), nor yet qualified (for he is not endowed with quality, nor is his peculiar perfection due to qualification) nor unqualified (for he is not deprived of any quality which might accrue to him). Further, he is not a part of anything, nor is he in the position of being a whole which has parts...The first way of conceiving God is by abstraction of these attributes, just as we form the form

> the conception of a point by abstracting from sensible phenomena... (*Didaskalikos* 10.4-5)

Plotinus' philosophy attempts to preserve and refine this kind of apophatic approach to the first principle. Taken to its logical extreme, apophasis dictates his rejection of the identification of the One with being or thinking. Plotinus explicitly rejects Aristotle's first principle because it is a thinking being. Plotinus would also have to reject the kind of Aristotelianising Platonism that has crept into the *Didaskalikos* and assert that the first principle is not a supreme "being". This leads to his own *henological*, not theological account of the One. My suggestion is that Plotinus is trying to keep his Platonism "pure", to rid it of elements that are incompatible with it. This is consistent with the idea that Plotinus remains true to the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy. His rejection of the Unmoved Mover as a first principle is grounded in his Platonic understanding of the relation of being and unity, and this is the metaphysical core with which Aristotle's metaphysic is inconsistent. The development of this hierarchy into hypostases is perhaps more adequately understood when we consider the system of another Middle Platonic thinker, Numenius of Apamea.

## 2. Numenius of Apamea

That there is some significant similarity between Plotinus and Numenius is attested to by Porphyry's account of how Plotinus was accused of plagiarising him.[17] Numenius presents us with a triadic system of hypostases of a sort, standing in successive dependent relations to one another,[18] and it seems that Moderatus of Gades may have held something similar. Here is what Simplicius says:

> And Moderatus reports that the Pythagoreans were the first to maintain this about matter, and after this Plato.

> According to the Pythagoreans, there is a first "one" which is said to be over all that is, and a second "one", which is being and mind, and the forms are said to be this, and a third which is the soul, which participates in the [first] one and the forms.[19]

This is the similar to the system of hypostases that we see in Plotinus; the fact that Moderatus "reports" this suggests (like our reasoning about the *Didaskalikos*) that it was the type of doctrine that was circulating at his time.

Numenius' system has three divinities: a "first God," which is simple, indivisible[20] and self-directed, a "second God" of which the first is the Idea, and which is initially unified but divides as a result of its involvement with matter, and a "third God," which is roughly equivalent to World Soul.[21] The basic scheme is represented fairly succinctly, (albeit incorrectly), by Proclus:

> Numenius proclaims three gods, calling the first 'Father', the second 'Creator' and the third 'Creation'; for the *cosmos* according to him, is the third god. So according to him, the Demiurge is double, being both the first god and the second, and the third god is the object of his demiurgic activity - it is better to use this terminology than to use the sort of dramatic bombast that he employs, naming them respectively Grandfather, Son and Grandson.[22]

It seems that Proclus has made the division of the Demiurge incorrectly[23], that the Demiurge is divided between the second and the third gods, and not the first and the second. This seems to be clear from Fragment 11:

> The First God, existing in his own place, is simple and, consorting as he does with himself alone can never be

> divisible. The second and third God, however are in fact one; but in the process of coming into contact with Matter, which is the Dyad, [the second God] gives unity to it, but is Himself divided by it, since matter has a character prone to desire and is in flux. So in virtue of not being in contact with the Intelligible which would mean being turned in upon himself), by reason of looking towards Matter and taking thought for it, He becomes unregarding of Himself. And he seizes upon the sense realm and ministers to it and yet draws it up to His own character, as a result of this yearning towards Matter.[24]

It should perhaps be noted that many Pythagoreans (and the author of the *Didaskalikos* also) draw a distinction between the supreme God and the Demiurge,[25] but with Numenius, the distinction is somewhat sharper. This sharp distinction between an active second principle and an ultimate source of unity,[26] was perhaps fuelled by Gnostic concerns about requiring the first principle to be the ultimate source of evil. Part and parcel of this "sharp distinction," is the "demotion of the Demiurge."[27] The first God is entirely self-directed and self-intellecting, whereas the second God now performs extrinsically directed intellective and demiurgic functions. The second God has thought, which is related both to what is above it and to what is below it in the hypostatic chain. Plotinus seems to have held a theory similar to Numenius in an earlier treatise (V.5.2), wherein Numenius' first God is like the One, in that it retains some kind of intellection.[28] In later treatises, as we shall see, Plotinus explicitly denies that the One is intellective.[29] Further, Plotinus' *Nous* never becomes "unregarding of itself" in the way that parts of his third hypostasis, Soul, do. The notion of "self-forgetting" is key to Plotinus' account of embodied souls.[30] Plotinus' second god,

*Nous*, is (usually) a distinct hypostasis from Soul. They are not, as they are in Numenius, one. However the distinction in Numenius between the second and third gods may suggest a desire to maintain a purely formal realm, one that does not suffer the encroachment of matter or bear the responsibility for creating matter. Numenius makes great steps towards the "demotion of the Demiurge" to a secondary principle that enhances the tendency already present in Moderatus of Gades to impose a hypostatic understanding on Platonic metaphysics.[31] In an interesting passage, one that *may* have influenced Plotinus' interpretation of Plato, Numenius speaks of Plato's Demiurge as the second god, which is lower than an "aloof" first god:

> Since Plato knew that among men the Demiurge is the only divinity known, whereas the Primal Intellect, which is called Being-in-Itself, is completely unknown to them, for this reason he spoke to them, as it were, as follows: 'O men, that Intellect which you imagine to be supreme is not so, but there is another intellect prior to this one which is older and more divine.[32]

As we have said, Plotinus identifies the Demiurge with the Unmoved Mover, and the reserving of a non-intellective and non-proactive position for his One.[33]

In both Numenius' philosophy and the *Didaskalikos*, the ultimate source of being and unity is still engaged in thought,[34] and, in some sense, being. For Plotinus the principle of being is beyond thinking and existing. While the "activity," of the Numenian First God or the active teleological first principle of the *Didaskalikos* would no doubt be the cause of some consternation for Plotinus, there are significant similarities to his metaphysical position. In the *Didaskalikos* we see a tendency towards apophatic description of the complete simplicity of a first principle that transcends the Ideas existing in

the Mind of the demiurgic second principle. We see in Numenius a triadic hypostatisation and an attempt to seek a transcendent non-generative, non-demiurgic first unity. Further, there is his tendency to bifurcate the demiurgic and purely formal functions of the second principle. Some scholars have observed that the movement in later Platonic and Pythagorean thought was towards a "demotion" of mind as an ultimate principle, which laid the groundwork for a less anthropomorphic understanding of "god" than that of Plato or Aristotle.[35] This should perhaps not be stated too strongly, for it is clear that thinking holds a place of primary importance in Plotinus' *Enneads*, and why that should be the case is arguably as much of an anthropomorphic principle as anything in Plato or Aristotle.[36] The key, however, is that Plotinus puts his primary principle beyond this, wherein the noetic plays more of an instrumental than a direct causal role.[37] It is through thinking that the Forms "become being," so to speak, and through Formal emanation that the rest of the cosmos derives its existence.

This brief look at general movements in the thought of those who considered themselves Platonists is helpful, I think, for understanding several of the moves that Plotinus makes in his own metaphysical thinking. It helps explain, to some extent, the kind of Platonism that had developed by the time he began philosophising, and it also helps explain why he thinks that he is offering an acceptable interpretation of Plato in the *Enneads*.

When one sees that the general philosophical movements of the tradition in which Plotinus finds himself points to a principle which transcends thinking and being, it becomes easier to understand why he finds Aristotle's First principle unacceptable. Moreover, it becomes clear, on the basis of Plotinus' critique of the Unmoved Mover, that the Platonic Good cannot be identified or reconciled with Aris-

totle's first principle. Ultimately, I think that both the "first god" of Plotinus' Middle Platonic predecessors and Aristotle's Unmoved Mover are unacceptable because they are incompatible with the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy, where unity is prior to being, and being is prior to particulars.

**Notes for Chapter IV:**

[1]There has been some controversy over the true authorship of the *Didaskalikos*. It has come down to us under the name Alkinos, but in the 19th Century Freudenthal claimed that Alkinos was really a manuscript corruption of Albinos. The matter of the authorship of the *Didaskalikos* seems to have rested there for some time. Dillon (1977) still cites Freudenthal as authoritative, as does Reedy (1991). This view has been challenged however, by Whittaker (1974) and John Kenney (1991) both of whom argue in favour of the manuscript's identification of Alkinoos as the author. Dillon now treats its author as Alcinous (Dillon 1993). The issue is for us somewhat peripheral, and I shall refer simply to the *Didaskalikos*.

[2]Reedy (1991, 11). There must of course be many influences besides this, but I use the *Didaskalikos* because it is a clear and intact text. For other influences, including Plutarch, Albinus (/Alcinous), Numenius, Valentius, the Gnostic *Hermetica*, and Philo, see de Vogel (1956).

[3]Dillon (1977, 268); Reedy (1991, 9).

[4]See Reedy (1991, 10-11).

[5]On the divisions of philosophy and its possible sources, see Armstrong (1967, 64-5).

[6]Witt (1971, 68) suggests that this "...is an indication that the subject to be discussed is rather metaphysics...than 'theology' in the narrower sense, which is, however given its due place (Chapter X)."

[7]For a slightly different interpretation see Kenney (1991, 75). Treating Idea and Ideas separately makes more sense than Witt's (1971, 69-76) apparent conflation of the two. The primal god cannot have Ideas (plural), given his simplicity; something else must have Ideas. Witt seems to assume that Idea (formal cause) is the same as "Ideas", and that the formal cause is different from whatever the first god thinks. But the distinction the *Didaskalikos* makes between whether God is a mind or a being with a mind makes more sense if we take Ideas (plural) to belong to the being with a mind, and Idea (singular) to belong to a mind.

[8]See Armstrong (1967, 66).

[9]For an interesting treatment of Plotinus' use of this kind of imagery, separate from the context of the *Didaskalikos*, see Schürmann (2002, 163).

[10]Emilsson (1995, *passim*) suggests that the idea is certainly compatible with the spirit of Platonism, and goes so far as to suggest that it may be implicit in Plato's thought in any case. While I think the reason to accept

the compatibility is that it does not run counter to the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy, I am somewhat more skeptical about the implicit agreement with Plato, in so far as complete expression of this notion really only seems possible after Aristotle, and moreover, it denies the very complaint of Aristotle regarding "free floating forms", as well as what appears to be the story in the *Timaeus*.

[11]Emilsson, (1995, 23).

[12]See Kenney (1991, 77) and Witt (1971, 10).

[13]*Didaskalikos* 10.1

[14]This I think is better than Armstrong's suggestion (1967, 66): "The actual intelligence [the author of the *Didaskalikos*] identifies sometimes with the supreme god, but sometimes he distinguishes a god who is the cause of intelligence and, instead, or along with the triad god-ideas-matter establishes another: first god-intelligence-soul." When we come to examine Numenius, we see that the second god actually splits into two, one of which is a formal intelligence, the other being involved more intimately with matter and perhaps demiurgic functioning. It seems like something of this nature is going on in the *Didaskalikos* - there are not two triads, but some ambiguity about the roles of the second god in the *Didaskalikos*. Kenney's interpretation (1991, 77) is closer to my own.

[15]It is clear that Aristotle thinks his God will be a unity, in so far as it is completely actual. The Didaskalikos seems to say that this type of unity can be asserted of a self-intellecting first principle, whereas Plotinus does not.

[16]For an interesting concordance of these epithets with Plato, thought not in the context of the *Didaskalikos*, see Schürmann (2002, 157 and 173 *n.* 1 and *n.* 2.)

[17]We also know from Porphyry that in Longinus' opinion, Numenius was expounding a doctrine similar to that of Plotinus, but he lacked Plotinus' philosophical accuracy. Amelius wrote a book on the difference between the two, which he dedicated to Porphyry. (*Vita* XVII).

[18]It appears that both Numenius and Plotinus use Plato's *Second Letter* (312e) as a justification for this (Armstrong 1967, 98). Kenney (1991, 59) notes that the tendency towards a triadic system of this sort was already present in Moderatus of Gades. See also Dillon 1977, 46. We also see in Numenius a conception of ethics striking in its similarity to Plotinus. The chief aim of the soul is to free itself from its descent into body and seek a likeness to God. See also *Enneads* I,2, and Dillon (1977, 366). The notion of an "ascent to the Good" is also part of this ethical picture. (*Frag* 2; Dillon 1977, 372).

[19](*In Phys*, A7, 230.34 *ff.*) My translation. Dodds (1928, 137 *ff.*) notes that the first part of this passage refers to the *Parmenides* (interpreted Neoplatonically), and that Moderatus was probably not the first to so interpret Plato.

[20]I take it that Kenney's claim (1991, 60) that it is "divisible," is a typographical error.

[21]With regard to my interpretation of the *Didaskalikos*, Armstrong's (1967, 100) interpretation of Numenius is perhaps instructive in that, to my mind, it characterises both Numenius and the *Didaskalikos* equally well: "The first god is the Idea...of the second god who can also be referred to as a second intelligence or as artificer...Instead of speaking of a third god we should rather say that he is a double one."

[22]*In Tim* I, 303, 27*ff.* =*Frag* 21.

[23] See Dillon (1977, 367).

[24]*Frag* 11, *trans.* Dillon (1967). Des-Places (1973, 52) says: "*N'etant pas attache a l'Intelligible...parce qu'il regarde la materiale, il s'en preoccupe et s'oublie lui-meme.*"

[25]Dillon, (1977, 367).

[26]Kenney (1991, 60) suggests, "There is no question that the systematic intent of this theology is to distinguish quite sharply between the principle that actively exercises the function of cosmic production and the ultimate first principle of the system."

[27]Kenney's (1991) term.

[28]Rist (1967 42-4), Dodds (1928, 19-20) and Armstrong (1988 V, 146 *n.* 1). For a different view see Bussanich (1997, 165 *ff.*).

[29]It is useful to note that Armstrong (1967, 101) suggests that, "when Numenius describes his first god as thinking, Plotinus must have considered it the same error which Aristotle had committed."

[30]See Armstrong (1967, 101).

[31]In fact Numenius declares his triadic distinction to be the teaching of Socrates. See Dillon (1977, 367).

[32]*On the Good*, VI (*Frag.* 17).

[33] See Schürmann (2002, 163).

[34]See Dodds (1928, 132).

[35]On the anthropomorphism, see Rist (1967, 75).

[36]Gerson (1994, 21).

[37] Gerson (1994, 29 *ff.*).

# CHAPTER V
# THE ONE OF PLOTINUS

Plotinus' adherence to the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy reflects his belief that being is dependent on unity. The various gods of the Middle Platonists, and the first principle of Aristotle are all *beings*. Further, the Unmoved Mover in Aristotle, or its analogue in various Middle Platonic metaphysical systems, is a *thinking being*. Plotinus maintains that any *being* is by its very nature multiple, and multiplicity requires a prior unity which grounds it. He also maintains that thinking is by its very nature multiple, and requires a prior unity that grounds it. Plotinus therefore thinks that whatever grounds the being and thinking of the *existent* cosmos cannot itself be a being, or a thinking being. Plotinus believes that there is duality in the way Greek philosophers (especially Aristotle) understand thinking; it implies both a thinker and a thought.[1] It is also hard to deny that being itself is multiple, when one understands it as "limited", for this implies both a limit and a limited, as well as the primary genera that go along with being. Plotinus is willing to grant that there can be a great deal of unity in being or thought, and this kind of thinking yields the unchangeable one-many that is *Nous*. Since being and thinking are multiple, they cannot serve as a first principle.

Further, to his mind, all of Greek philosophy is seeking a principle of unity that grounds multiplicity.

One gets a good sense of Plotinus' approach to the thought of his predecessors in his summary of earlier philosophers in *Enneads* V.1, which stands in stark contrast to Aristotle's summary in *Metaphysics* A. In the *Enneads* Plotinus claims that his predecessors sought a principle of unity; in the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle claims that they were seeking the causes of being. One may argue that these amount to the same thing, in so far as for Plotinus, unity is the ultimate cause of being. But for Plotinus, the ultimate cause of being, the principle of unity is *beyond being*, and the principle of being. As he says in *Enneads* V.1:

> For the soul now knows that these things must be, but longs to answer the question repeatedly discussed also by the ancient philosophers, how from the One, if it is such as we say it is, anything else, whether a multiplicity, or a dyad or a number, came into existence, and why it did not on the contrary remain by itself, but such a great multiplicity flowed from it as that which is seen to exist in beings, but which we think it right to refer back to the One. (*Enneads* V.1.6, 2-8 )

The "question" here speaks to Aristotle's question of how Plato's One and Forms are ontologically efficacious. Aristotle's solution was to make substance the ground of being and unity, and to posit being and thought *par excellence* as a remote final cause. Given Plotinus' conviction that true being and true thought have their principle in something *other than* and *prior to* them, he must explain how the One is beyond both knowing and being.

What I propose to do in this chapter is threefold. I first want to look at Plotinus' fusion of negative and positive "theology". I suggest that the Platonic notion of "eidetic in-

version" is the "positive" side of his "theology", whereby the multiplicity of *Nous* is "projected" onto the One without affirming of the One the characteristics of *Nous*. That Plotinus denies that the One has any positive characteristics points to a desire to assert its simplicity. In so far as the One is the principle of unity for multiplicity and "potency for limited being", positive "theology" (productive power) meets negative "theology" (apophatic simplicity). It is better to speak here of positive and negative *henology*, if we think of theology as a discussion of a supreme "being", for a "being" is most significantly what the One is not.[2] Thus secondly, I want to reject the idea[3] that the One is the primary sense of being, and that *Nous* is to be understood equivocally in relation to it. This would be an interpretation of Plotinus in terms of a sort of *pros hen* equivocity. I suggest that because Plotinus maintains that the One is beyond being, he would not accept such an analysis. This also helps to show what Plotinus *means* by saying that the One is beyond being. Finally I discuss the inconsistency of attempting to claim, on the basis of Plotinus' reference to the One's *ousia*, that the One is also a kind of "one-many" like *Nous*.[4] Such a position assumes that we can have rational knowledge of, and make distinctions about, the One. I point to Plotinus' distinction between "speaking the One" and "speaking of the One". "Speaking the One" is not possible, for the One is ineffable; "speaking of the One" is what we do, and in so far as we limited minds do it, we only know *of* the One, but we do not know the One itself. We can refer to the One, but we cannot know it. The One is at best a principle that is necessary for the grounding of the cosmos, and we know of it only in virtue of the logical necessity that requires unity to explain, ground, and sustain multiplicity.

It has been said that that Plotinus mixes the elements of positive and negative theology together in "a most disconcerting way."[5] Indeed at V.2.1, Plotinus says that,

> The One is all things and not a single one of them: it is the principle [ἀρχὴ] of all things, not all things, but all things have that other kind of transcendent existence; for in a way they do occur in the One; or rather they are not there yet, but they will be. How then do all things come from the One, which is simple and has in it no diverse variety, or any sort of doubleness [διπλόης]? It is because there is nothing at all in it that all things come from it: in order that being may exist, the One is not being, but the generator of being. (*Enneads* V.2.1,1-8)

I believe that we can make some sense out of why he makes these apparently contradictory claims. In the above passage, Plotinus says a number of things. To make an assessment of the passage above more manageable, I will split it into two halves and deal with each half by calling upon some of the principles and influences discussed in the previous chapters.

1) "The One is all things and not a single one of them: it is the principle of all things, not all things, but all things have that other kind of transcendent existence; for in a way they do occur in the One; or rather they are not there yet, but they will be."

This may be explained in terms of the monadological approach to *Nous*, and it is also useful to keep in mind the apophatic approach of the *Didaskalikos*. The monadological understanding of *Nous* is such that the Forms and *Nous* have their individuation through self-intellection, or the limiting of being by thought. There is no such limiting of the One, since it is beyond both being and thought. Hence it is "all things" in a kind of "positive potency", a potency for the limited finite being that occurs in *Nous*.[6] Says Plotinus:

> All things are the One and not the One: they are he because they come from him; they are not because it is in abiding by himself that he gives them. (*Enneads* V.2.2, 25-7)

Hence the One is all things because it is a principle that is potentially all things, where potency is a sort of productive capacity. This productive capacity comes from its perfection, in accordance with the principle of positive production. The One is "not a single one of them" because it is not limited in the way that being is limited, or in the way that thought limits. Now, before we proceed to the next claim, I should say a little more about this idea of "positive potency."

To say that the One "is" all of the beings that come after it would suggest that it can be regarded as an *energeia*. For in order for it to be "all of them", there must be some positive or actual "nature" that the One possesses. The *energeia* of the One is to be understood as a higher activity than that of substance.[7] We have already briefly seen Plotinus' distinction between the *energeia tēs ousias* of the One and its *energeia ek tēs ousias*. The One's *energeia tēs ousias* may be said to be "all things" in so far as it is the cause of them all, and they could have come from no other cause. The effect, which is the *energeia ek tēs ousias* that becomes *Nous*, (and via *Nous*, Soul and the rest of the cosmos) implies that there is an *actual* cause of that effect, and that cause is the *energeia tēs ousias*.

To say that the One is *not* being, or Forms, or Soul, or concrete particulars, but sustains them and is their principle, suggests that it is a sort of *dunamis*[8] that stands in potency to these limited actualities because they are limited and it is not. The concept of *dunamis* in Plotinus does not always carry with it the negative connotations that it does in Aristotle's notion of *dunamis*; here it ought to be regarded instead as "productive power."[9]

In *Enneads* III.8.10, in response to the question, 'what is it that is not one of all things but before all things,' Plotinus answers "*dunamis tōn pantōn*" - "the productive power of all things."[10] Similarly in *Enneads* VI.7.32:

> Therefore the productive power [δύναμις] of all is the flower of beauty, a beauty which makes beauty. For it generates beauty and makes it more beautiful by the excess of beauty which comes from it, so that it is the principle [ἀρχὴ] of beauty and the term [πέρας] of beauty. But since it is the principle of beauty it makes that beautiful of which it is the principle, and makes that beautiful not in shape; but it makes the very beauty which comes to be from it to be shapeless, but in shape in another, but by itself shapeless. Therefore that which participates in beauty is shaped, not the beauty. (*Enneads* VI.7.32, 32-39)

The fact that beauty by itself is "shapeless" and comes to be "shaped" by posterior instantiations, suggests that the One as *dunamis* is so, precisely because it is not limited in the way that Forms, *Nous* or being are limited. The One acts as a potency of "finite *energeia*".[11] Finite being derives the One, but it is not *in* the One as finite being.[12]

This sense of *dunamis* helps us to make sense of the odd use of tense in the main passage we are examining. Plotinus says that all things "occur in the One; or rather they are not there yet, but they will be." The use of tenses to draw logical distinctions is commonplace; the notion of *dunamis* as "potency of finitude" he employs here is not so commonplace. All things are 'not in the One yet' because in the One they are indistinct and unlimited. In the act of limiting Being (thinking), *Nous* looks towards the One, yielding a "rational" or "Formal" version of what is before the rational. This recalls the distinction in the *Didaskalikos* between Idea and Ideas.

Now, if there were no *Nous*, it would be impossible to claim that all things are "in the One", for there would be no distinctions, no plurality, no many. Only *after* the limitation of infinite being by *Nous* is such a claim possible. Hence "all things" only make their appearance in the "future," when *Nous* allows for the distinction and limitation of the things that "in a way, occur in the One."

There is another distinction that helps us make sense of the first half of our passage. It is the distinction between the *energeia tēs ousias* and the *energeia ek tēs ousias*. The *energeia tēs ousias* of the One must be understood as the unlimited source of all things. This stands in potency to the limitation of its *energeia ek tēs ousias* by and in *Nous*. Things that are "in" the One (although this is metaphorical at best) are in it "dynamically."

At VI.8, where Plotinus discusses the "freedom" of the One, he speaks of the *energeia* of the One as its hypostasis a kind of metaphorical expression of its "existence". This "existence" is explicitly said to be free of *ousia*. Hence the notion of the *energeia tēs ousias* of the One is also metaphorical at best; the One has no *ousia* properly speaking, if we understand *ousia* as limited. Drawing a distinction between the *energeia tēs ousias* and the *energeia ek tēs ousias* may be a useful way to contrast the unlimited and unchangeable nature of the One with its effect (which is limited by the monadology that is *Nous*). In short, we must not take the idea of the One's *ousia* too literally. Says Plotinus:

> Nor should we be afraid to assume that the first activity [ἐνέργειαν] is without substance [ἄνευ οὐσίας], but posit this very fact as his, so to speak, existence [τὴν οἷον ὑπόστασιν θετέον]. But if one posited an existence without activity, the principle would be defective and the most perfect of all imperfect. And if one

> adds activity, one does not keep the One. If then the activity is more perfect than the substance, and the first is more perfect, then the first will be activity. In his activity, therefore, he is already the first, and it cannot be that he was before he came to be, but already altogether was. Now certainly an activity not enslaved to substance is purely and simply free [ἐλευθέρα]. . ." (*Enneads* VI.8.20, 9-19)

In short, Plotinus is attempting to articulate a notion of *energeia* that is beyond any normal conception of that term. Normally we expect that an activity has its source in some kind of *ousia*. While Plotinus does refer metaphorically to the *energeia tēs ousias* of the One, the explicit claim that it is *aneu ousias* carries more weight, since an absolute denial ought to be taken more literally than the use of analogous terms in cases where we are dealing with the ineffable. Since "*ousia qua ousia*" is limited, the *energeia* is affirmed of the One in such a way as to render it "free" of the limitation that *ousia* implies.[13]

We may now turn to the second half of our "split passage":

2) "How then do all things come from the One, which is simple and has in it no diverse variety, or any sort of doubleness? It is because there is nothing at all in it that all things come from it: in order that being may exist, the One is not being, but the generator of being."

When we appeal to the "principles of emanation", we see that the One is metaphysically prior because it is absolutely more powerful (positive production), absolutely more simple (prior simplicity), absolutely independent, that on which being depends absolutely (non-convertibility), and absolutely more good (indexed unity). In short, the application of these prin-

ciples through Plotinian spectacles requires that the One be absolutely more powerful, immutable, self-sufficient[14] and simple than that which it grounds.[15] The things of which it is the principle are not self-sufficient, and therefore strive after the unity that the One grants. By contrast, there is nothing the One could or would seek:

> A principle is not in need [ἐνδεὲς] of the things which come after it, and the principle of all things needs none of them. For whatever is in need is in need as striving towards its principle; but if the One is in need of anything, it is obviously seeking not to be one; so it will be in need of its destroyer; but everything which is said to be in need is in need of its well-being and its preserver. So that there is nothing good for the One; so then it does not wish for anything; but it transcends good, and is good not for itself but for others, if anything is able to participate in it. (*Enneads* VI.9.6, 34-43)

Plotinus bases the idea of a principle needing something on the presumption that needful things need something that will benefit them, or will be good for them. (One may think in terms of the Socratic paradox of 'no man doing wrong knowingly' - we might think we need false apparent goods, but in reality, they are not what we need.) The idea of needing good suggests the basic assumption that things do not seek their own destruction. By defining need as "need for some good," Plotinus suggests that anything "in need" participates (gets *what* it needs) from some higher, more unified good (in accordance with the principles of indexed unity and prior simplicity). *Nous* participates in the One, but there is nothing higher than the One in which it participates, hence it is not in need. The dialectical move that Plotinus makes, *i.e.* saying that if the One needed anything, it would need its destroyer, suggests that nothing but the one is truly unified. One is re-

minded of Parmenides of Elea's claim that if being needed anything "it would need all," reflecting the fact that being contains no not-being, and that we can only consider being in its totality.[16] For Plotinus, the only thing the One could need (the only thing it does not have) is "not one," or multiplicity.

Since that which derives from the One is (along with the rest of the cosmos) the monadology of Being and Thought, understood as the unification *of* Forms and *in* Forms, *of* Mind and *in* Mind, the One is more simple and more powerful than being, Mind, and Forms. This is the positive side of Plotinus' henology. On the negative side, all those things that are predicated of *Nous* and of Forms, which make them multiple, must be denied of the One. We cannot *predicate* being, life, thinking, quiddity, *ousia*, or anything that suggests the multiplicity of the One.[17] In fact the One should not even be called "One," says Plotinus, but we give it a name because "we want to indicate it to ourselves as best we can."[18] The primary difficulty, it seems, is that to predicate anything of it is to "import duality" into it:[19]

> Ἡ ἐστι μὲν τὸ μηδὲν τούτων ὧν ἐστιν ἀρχή, τοιοῦτο μέντοι οἷον μηδενὸς αὐτοῦ κατηγορεῖσθαι δυναμένου μὴ ὄντος, μὴ οὐσίας, μὴ ζωῆς τὸ ὑπὲρ πάντα αὐτῶν εἶναι.
>
> It is not one of those things of which it is the principle; certainly it is similar, though of it nothing can be predicated, not being [of any sort] or substance [of any sort], not life [of any sort], such that it is above all these things. (*Enneads* III.8.10, 27-31).[20]

The question is how we are to understand the One as the "*archê*" of being. Emanation is the process by which the One "gives rise to being," but what is it that actually gives rise to that process? The principle of positive production suggests that anything that is perfect creates. The principle of prior

simplicity indicates that it is absolutely simple. The logic of the eidetic inversion shows that if the One is to ground *Nous*, *Nous* and the things within must in some way be like "instantiations" of the One, on the analogy of material things as instantiations of Forms.[21] It would be wrong to say that the One is being, or Form, or Mind, or contains them. Instead, I think that we ought to think of the One's power to produce as a projection of the concepts of unity, actuality and thought that exist in *Nous* to a logically required, completely simple principle:

> What then could the One be, and what nature could it have? There is nothing surprising in its being difficult to say, when it is not even easy to say what being or Form is; but we do have a knowledge based on the Forms. (*Enneads* VI.9.3, 1-4)

Thinking of *Nous* as a monadology is extremely helpful in seeing how that multiplicity-in-unity attains an identity of its Forms through monadological self-intellection. Denying being and thought of the One also removes the ability to keep the Forms that it grounds separate from each other. For one may wonder how the "Ideas in the Intellect" do not all collapse into one, since *Nous* is a unity. Forms can be separate in *Nous* because they are self-intellecting. If one could remove both limited being and thought from a conception of *Nous*, one would be left with an approximation of the indefinite *energeia* of the One, an *energeia* that "contains all things." One gets a sense of the idea of projection to a principle of unity, linked to the idea of apophasis, in the following passage:

> Why then, if [the One] is not in movement is it not at rest? Because each or both of these must necessarily pertain to being, and what is at rest is so by rest, and is not the same as rest; so rest will be incidental to it and

> it will not be the same as rest. For to say that it is the cause [αἴτιον] is not to predicate something incidental to it, but of us, because we have something from it while that One is in itself; but one who speaks precisely should not say "that," [ἐκείνου] or "is" [ὄντος]. (*Enneads* VI.9.3, 45-52)

Plotinus is here denying that motion and rest, two of Plato's "primary kinds," apply to the One. Implicit in the denial is that those things which would be predicated of it (if we follow his way of thinking) would be prior to it, in accordance with a Platonic way of thinking about predication as participation. We see also the idea of "projecting" predicates, which belong properly to being, onto the One. Plotinus is careful to complete the thought by denying limiting references of quiddity or being to the One.

We have then two strains of thought in Plotinus' discussion of the One. One strain, a negative, apophatic one, asserts its simplicity; it is a denial of everything that may be asserted of thought or being. At the same time, there is a second, positive strain, which draws on the idea that some kind of actuality is needed to produce the effect that is *Nous* (and subsequently Soul and the cosmos). The upshot is that when the power of the One meets the simplicity of the One, positive theology synergises with negative henology.

The question that still remains is how we are to understand the claims that the One is beyond being and beyond knowing. Given the considerations about the relationship of positive and negative henology in Plotinus' philosophy, we might conceive of the One as an undifferentiated, simple power or principle.[22] Plotinus does say that it is infinite, and this infinity stands in contrast to the limiting of being by thought in *Nous*:

> it must be understood as infinite [ἄπειρον] not because its size and number cannot be measured or counted, but because its power [δυνάμεως] cannot be comprehended. (*Enneads* VI.9.6. 11-13)

This again suggests that the One's "actuality" is not limited by the monadological system of self-intellection or comprehension that is *Nous*. At *Enneads* V.3.15, Plotinus suggests that the One possesses all things in such a way as not to be distinct:[23]

> What then are "all things"? All things of which that One is the principle. But how is that One the principle of all things? Is it because as principle it keeps them in being, making each one of them exist? [ἕκαστων αὐτῶν ποιήσασα εἶναι] Yes, and because it brought them into existence. But how did it do so? By possessing them beforehand. But it has been said that in this way it will be a multiplicity. But it had them in such a way as not to be distinct: they are distinguished on the second level, in the rational form [τῷ λόγῳ]. For this is already actuality; but the One is the potency of all things [τὸ δὲ δύναμις πάντων]. Not in the way in which matter is said to be in potency, because it receives: for matter is passive; but this [material] way of being a potency is at the opposite extreme to making [τῷ ποιεῖν]. (*Enneads* V.3.15, 27-36)

This passage gives a very clear sense of the *dunamis* of the One that we have seen already in the last section. It is a positive *dunamis*, one that "makes". Again in *Nous*, the distinctness of each Form is explained by the monadology of self-intellecting (comprehending) Forms in a circumscribing self-intellecting (comprehending) *Nous*.[24] *Nous* is the primary level of being, the primary level of rational form, but it is the sec-

ond hypostasis. We are still left with the question of how to understand the "existence" of the First hypostasis, the One.[25] Plotinus' account of the derivation of being and thought from the One, in accordance with the principle of positive production and the idea of degrees of reality, indicates that the limited *energeia ek tēs ousias* of the One is being, and that being is something less than the One, and dependent on it. In short, being is dependent on unity, and the principle of being cannot be a being.

Viewed from the perspective of infinity, if one accepts the infinity of the One as the primary sense of being, this denies the classical, finite sense of being to the Forms which "annihilates" all else, since if Forms are not to be taken as being primarily, what else can possibly exist?

The fact that being is used by Plotinus to mean finite limited being (except when he explains the process of emanation, where limitless being is prior to noetic formal limiting) makes it clear that the One itself is not the primary referent of being, but that the primary referent of being is *Nous*. Plotinus' project is to explain how existence is possible at all. The existence of anything affords the opportunity to distinguish the thing's nature from its existence, and hence to derive multiplicity via the technique of the *Parmenides* and *Sophist*, just as as self-intellection affords the ability to derive multiplicity from the Unmoved Mover, or *Nous*. Hence it is clear that both thought and existence must be denied of the One. Thought and existence are derived from the One emanatively in *Nous*, but are not found "ontologically" in the One itself.

The "Good" which gives rise to *Nous* must be simple, self-generating and without need (*anendeés*); given that it is without need, it cannot need thinking. Further "the One cannot be all things, since Intellect is all things; and it cannot be being, since being is all things."[26] Again this is why being, *Nous* and (Plotinus' understanding of) Aristotle's Unmoved

Mover qualify as second in Plotinus' system; they are all seen as dependent upon that which is not itself a being. It is also why an Aristotelian god will not sit comfortably in a Platonic system like that of the *Didaskalikos*. The One is beyond *nous* and beyond being.

Attempts[27] to show that Plotinus is obliged to attribute to the One a multiplicity of sorts is, in my opinion, the result of assuming that we can explain the features of the One. It is not necessary, however, that in making the One an *energeia*,[28] Plotinus makes it an *ousia*.[29] Plotinus invites this kind of interpretation by referring to the *energeia tēs ousias* of the One, but I have suggested that this is metaphorical at best, given his explicit denial of the One's *energeia* that is said to be "*aneu ousias*".[30] When a finite mind attempts to understand the One, it makes distinctions at a lower level than the One, and analogically[31] at best.[32] Again the *Didaskalikos* comes to mind. If we take Plotinus' mysticism seriously, it amounts to accepting that no words are adequate to give an account of the nature of the One:[33]

> The perplexity arises especially because our awareness of that One is not by way of reasoned knowledge [κατ' ἐπιστήμην] or of intellectual perception [κατὰ νόησιν] as with other intelligible things, but by way of a presence superior to knowledge [κατὰ παρουσίαν ἐπιστήμης κρείττονα]. The soul experiences its falling away from being one and is not altogether one when it has reasoned knowledge of anything; for reasoned knowledge is a rational process [λόγος] and a rational process is many. (*Enneads* VI.9.4, 1-6)

It is again useful to recall that Plotinus draws a distinction between "speaking the one" and "speaking *of* the one".[34] We cannot speak the one, but we may speak *of* it. To predicate of

the One is to "speak *of* it," but not to "speak it," or actually say what it is, since the predication implies duality. If we were to try to speak it, we would fail because of our own noetic or discursive reasoning. Further, in so far as "conceiving" may be taken as grasping the essence of something apart from its existence and the One's "essence" is indistinguishable from its "existence" one cannot "conceive" the One.[35]

Where Plotinus speaks at length in dualistic terms about the One he often opens and or closes the discussion with a warning. For example, at *Enneads* VI.8.13-18 he tells us he will speak "*ouk orthōs*" and must use words that depart "from the rigour of knowledge".[36] Plotinus says things like this throughout the *Enneads* and any example of this kind of statement could serve as a rejoinder those who say that Plotinus' attempts to characterise the One show that the One has multiplicity:

> But we have [the One] in such a way as to speak about it, but not to say it itself. And we say what it is not; what it is we do not say. So that it is from what is posterior [to it] that we speak about it. We are not hindered from having it, although we do not say it. But like those who are inspired and become [divinely] possessed, if they manage to know that they have something greater in themselves, even if they do not know what, from that through which they are moved and speak, from this they acquire a sense of the mover, being different from it, thus we do appear to relate to [the One]. (*Enneads* V,3.14, 5-14)[37]

The One is not something to be thought, or to exist, but to be *unified with*, in a process of mystical ascent and the jettisoning of the restrictions of thought and being. That which Aristotle saw as the height of human activity, rational contemplation, is for Plotinus merely a stepping stone to the true end of

human existence. The first step in the ascent is to transcend the restrictions of discursive thinking in order to obtain a noetic position of immediate intuition of Formal reality, the level of *Nous*.[38] The second step is to transcend even those restrictions, and seek what is prior. In *Enneads* V.5, Plotinus reflects on the difficulty of expressing how he envisions the One, and suggests that a kind of 'apophasis' or 'negation' of even the name "*hen*" is necessary to truly represent the One. He explains this in terms of that word which Glaucon utters after Socrates tells him that the Good is *epekeina tēs ousias*: I quoted part of his passage in Chapter I, now I quote it more fully to bring out its fullest sense.

> But we in our travail do not know what we ought to say, and are speaking of what cannot be spoken [λέγομεν περὶ οὐ ῥητοῦ], and give it a name [ὀνομάζομεν] because we want to indicate it to ourselves as best we can. But perhaps this name "One" contains only a denial of multiplicity. This is why the Pythagoreans symbolically indicated it to each other by the name Apollo [Ἀπόλλωνα], in negation of the multiple [τῶν πολλῶν]. But if the One - name and reality expressed - was to be taken positively it would be less clear than if we did not give it a name at all: for perhaps this name [One] was given it in order that the seeker, beginning from that which is completely indicative of simplicity, may finally negate [ἀποφήσῃ] this as well. (*Enneads* V.5.6, 23-33)[39]

The interdependence of reference and existence is a product of the unification of Form and thought in what is posterior to the One, the result of the One's being a generative principle. Indeed the laws of excluded middle and non-contradiction do not apply to the One.[40] Knowledge can only have as its object

something finite, and the One is not an existent thing, or something delimited by a Form - it is not finite but infinite.[41] The question of the referent of the non-existent is not the concern of Plotinus. Nor was it really Plato's concern, for it is clear from the *Parmenides* that as much can be asserted of a "one which is not," as can be asserted of "a one which is". It is in *Nous* and through *Nous* that truth takes on the delimiting characteristics of being and intellective identity. Hence it is a mistake to apply posterior conditions to what is prior.

Plotinus would deny that the One has knowledge for purposes of emphasising its simplicity, in so far as knowledge on Plotinus' account implies duality.[42] It is clear that even the unity of knower and its objects in *Nous* is not the unqualified One,[43] and the One's possession of noetic capacity is often denied.[44] But it should be noted in this regard that the One cannot properly be called ignorant either, since in such a case there would be a distinction between the one and what it does not know.[45] Given Plotinus' *account* of knowledge, we must conclude that the One doesn't have it[46]:

> But what is beyond being must be beyond thinking; it is not then absurd if he does not know himself; for he has nothing in himself which he can learn about, since he is one. (*Enneads* V.6.6, 30-2)

We may be tempted to posit a "quasi super-noesis" for the One,[47] making knowledge in the primary sense the knowledge that the One has, and all other senses are equivocal[48]. However we must say that the One is the measure because it is the principle, and the pregnant common term of everything, while denying the validity of comparison, because our ability to compare is either discursive or noetic, whereas the One is "henetic." Plotinus may shed some light by saying that the One is "*pantē diakritikon heautou*"[49] in so far as this suggests not a dual knowing, but a clear immediate apprehension that

*is* the One.[50] The essential point is that the One's 'consciousness' is such that subject-object poles are not legitimate distinctions to make regarding the One.[51]

Plotinus' first principle then, is not a being, but is rather the principle of being which is beyond being. It is this necessity of positing a principle of unity beyond being and giving the notion a coherent place in a metaphysical system that is the crowning glory of Plotinus' philosophy, his philosophical system. In a way, it represents the clearest articulation of what Greek philosophy had sought since it began - a principle of unity. It is a projection of what we know as delimited form and being to an infinite *dunamis* of those limited "participants" fused with a denial of the limits that makes knowledge and being possible in the first place. Being as limit, and thinking as "limiter," are denied of the One in so far as these are multiple and require a unifying principle. To assert them of the One would be to engage an infinite regress of seeking the principle of being and unity.

Plotinus' One is more than just the culmination of his own philosophy. It is the culmination of a tradition, because it is the result of reflection on that tradition by one of its most profound minds. Whether or not he is in fact correct in his assessment of that tradition, he regards himself as its product, or at least the defender of a line of that tradition which he believes to be right, and which he defends against the prime metaphysical alternative to that tradition, the metaphysics of Aristotle. Plotinus reasserts and re-engineers, with a good degree of coherence, and a great deal of appreciation for the goals of his tradition, a Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy some 600 years after Aristotle had said that such a hierarchy was unworkable.

**Notes for Chapter V:**

[1]See Gerson (1994, 194 *ff.*).

[2]As Schürmann (2002, 159) suggests: "Negative henology achieves what negative theology can never achieve, namely, an understanding of the difference between non-being and being as the difference between... 'to be' and 'a being'", and (Schürmann 2002, 162) "the alliance between metaphysical apophatism and onto-theology obscures the phenomenological discovery contained in negative henology...It is due to unification...that all beings are beings. In negative theology, on the contrary, we hear that the One is the supreme being, of which we do not know *what* it is, although we know *that* it is."

[3]Gerson's (1994) suggestion.

[4]Armstrong's (1970) suggestion.

[5]Armstrong (1970, 1). Plotinus says that the One is and is not (*Enneads* VI.7.38; VI.8.8), subsists and does not (*Enneads* VI.8.20; VI.8.11), is act and is not (*Enneads* VI.8.20; III.8.11), is free and is not free (*Enneads* VI.8.20; VI.8.8) has life and does not have life (*Enneads* V.4.2; V.7.17). Bussanich (1997, 163) notes that the overwhelming evidence is in favour of an emphasis on the negative conception of the One. A thought from Deck (1967, 1) here is also useful, but it cannot be the whole truth: "The One is or has all these, to the extent that neither they nor the being or having of them involves duality. When Plotinus denies an attribute of the One, he does so to affirm the simplicity of the One; when he affirms an attribute, he shows that the One, although simple, is not negative." It is true that Plotinus wants to deny duality, but since this implies both being and its characteristics, the denial of what would normally be attributes of being is much more significant than I think Deck admits. Saying that the One has "attributes" is a metaphorical claim at best; it certainly does not "have" them in the way that *Nous*, Soul or material beings do, and we must think of the One having attributes via analogical "projection" from our philosophising about *Nous*.

[6]Gerson's (1994) suggestion.

[7]See also Gerson (1994, 22); although characteristically Plotinus denies this apophatically in an attempt to respect the simplicity of the One. See. *Enneads* V.7.17; V.8-16; VI.8.20.

[8]*Enneads* V.3.15; III.8.10; V.1.7; V.3.16; V.4.1; V.4.2; V.5.12; VI.7.32; VI.7.40; VI.8.9; VI.9.5.

[9]Armstrong, (1988, III, 394-5).

[10]*Enneads* III.8.10, 1.
[11]Gerson (1994, 214).
[12]Gerson (1994, 214).
[13]Hence Kelly's claim (1973, 276) troubles me: "[Plotinus] presents the One as an original Form or IDEA, if you will, in whose likeness finite beings are made." The One is not a form, or exemplar of unity but rather a principle of unity.
[14]On self-sufficiency, the One is beyond it; but here again we must take account of the distinction between speaking the one and speaking of it. Plotinus suggests that the One is self sufficient at *Enneads* I.8.2; II.9.1; V.4.1 etc.) See Gerson (1994, 17).
[15]This is not, however, to "predicate" these "absolutes" of the One. We can only speak this way from the perspective of *Nous* looking towards the One. This kind of comparison is, as it were, unidirectional, or knowledge by projection of attributes known by limited reason on to the unlimited one. Hence too, we can "speak of the One," but we cannot "speak the One."
[16]DK 8:33-4. See Emilsson's comment (1994, 88) on the relation of the intelligible world to the sensible world. I read Parmenides as a "cosmological monist" as opposed to the 'predicational monism' advocated by Curd (1997).
[17]See Rist (1973, 83).
[18]*Enneads* V,5.6, 25-6 *cp.* V.3.14, 1-6; VI.9.3, 49-55; VI.9.5, 30-46.
[19]Gerson (1990, 213).
[20]My translation. I find Armstrong's translation somewhat misleading. His translation reads: "It is certainly not one of the things of which it is origin; it is of such a kind [τοιοῦτο μέντοι], though nothing can be predicated of it, not being, not substance, not life, as to be above all of these things." Armstrong's translation of τοιοῦτο μέντοι as "it is of such a kind" is consistent with the normal use of τοιοῦτο as referring commonly to the foregoing phrase (*cp.* Liddell and Scott, "τοιοῦτο") but this makes the One similar in kind to the "things of which it is origin". I think all that Plotinus is saying is that it is not completely disconnected with them.
[21]Katz (1950, 14 and 37-38).
[22]Sells (1994, 25) says "[Plotinus] evokes an act so utterly complete and instantaneous that the subject is fused into the act to the point of no longer existing."
[23]On all forms indistinctly, *Enneads* V.3.15; V.2.1; V.4.2; VI.7.32; VI.8.21. When compared to the "Numenian" *Enneads* V.4.2, where the one is self-

differentiated, one might say that the difference between V.4.2, where the One is a self-differentiated, and V.3.15, where the One is not self-differentiated, one might resolve Bussanich's (1997) consternation is different from *Nous*, whereas, in V.3.15, the One does not admit of inner distinction *because* it is different from *Nous* in precisely such a way as to deny the distinctions that arise in *Nous*. In other words, the One is beyond monadological being.

[24]*cp. Enneads* VI.8.13.

[25]Gerson's solution, (1990, 212 *ff.*) to the problem of how the One can "be" if it is beyond being, is to say that the primary sense of being is the One, and that the "being" of *Nous* is an equivocal use of the word being. Plato's conception of the "existence" (becoming) of material entities works like this in a sense, since to say that a material entity "exists" is to say that it "is" in a sense, because of its participation in Formal reality, which is the true sense of existence. Hence the "existence" of material entities is different but derivative from, and hence related to, the true existence of Forms. Gerson, I take it, envisions that the "existence" of *Nous* is different but derivative from, and hence related to, the existence of the One. I do not think this is a valid position, and an appeal to the relation of unity and being in Plotinus' metaphysics bears this out. Plotinus says that being is dependent on unity, and he says that the principle of unity (the One) is independent of being. Further, because the One is not a genus or a kind because then it would be divisible into species and hence not one but many (*Enneads* VI.2.9). See also Jackson (1967, 321) but beyond genus and kind, it cannot legitimately be compared to genera or kinds. Hence it cannot be related equivocally to other beings either. The One which grounds multiplicity cannot be a one among other ones, for this leaves unanswered the question of why simples and composites can be one. If the grounding unity were simply one thing among others, we should have to look for the *hupokeimenon* of the composite that is *auto kath'eautou*. But if you "see" unity in other things, there must be unity *simpliciter* - a source for that unity. The composite relies on the simples of which it is composed, and the simples themselves must be explained in terms of a prior principle of simplicity. In other words, if the simples (parts) of the composite unity only exist in a composite, then the unity of the composite remains unexplained. If the simples can exist apart, then their simplicity (unity) must be explained. If there are many or a One-Many (*Nous*) there must be a One before the many. For if we are to find a source of unity in being, unity must be prior to it; it also must be prior to the Forms, which can be distinguished from one another in the noetic

apprehension that is *Nous*. In some sense, the idea that to predicate of a unity is to make it multiple (*Enneads* VI.9.3) rules out the possibility of the One being the highest *genus*, since if the One were a genus, it would have many things which were species of it, and one would again be looking for the source of the unity of the genus (*Enneads* VI.2.10). Consequently, the "nature" of the One is at best a metaphorical or analogical projection from the nature of *Nous* (*cp.* Gerson 1994, 13.) Interestingly enough, this kind of move, suggests Rist, was made by later commentators with nearly disastrous results. See also Rist (1967, 33 *n.* 29 and *n.* 34).

[26]*Enneads* VI.9.2.

[27]For example that of Armstrong (1967, 3): "However much [the One] may transcend the beings which we know...if [it is] an οὐσία, then [it is] a one-in-many. It becomes a being to which predicates can be applied and about which logical distinctions can be made".

[28]At V.3.12, Plotinus maintains that the One is not one in *ousia* and many in *energeia*, because such a one would not be complete unless its substance were expressed in act, and since such an act would be multiple, the substance as completed will be multiple. See Jackson (1967, 321).

[29]It should be noted, however (as Armstrong is no doubt aware) that one cannot place too much faith in a disciplined technical use of any term in Plotinus, since he often speaks metaphorically, or uses the same term analogically at each hypostatic level, and in the material realm. See A.C. Lloyd (1986, 263) and Bussanich (1997, 165). Bales' arguments (1982) are unconvincing I think, because they place too much emphasis on this. See Gerson (1994, 310, *n.* 92). The key to understanding Plotinus, I think, is to work through his imagery and analogies, and allow for a sympathetic reading without placing too much weight on terms that he may employ for lack of a more succinct vocabulary. This is sensible, considering the way that Plotinus is reported by Porphyry to have written his treatises. He wrote in a single sitting, in a kind of "white heat of inspiration" (Sells 1994, 14), and refused to revise. Hence to expect too much out of terminology is expecting too much given this consideration.

[30]*Enneads* VI.8.20, 10.

[31]See Rist (1967, 32 *ff.*) on analogy.

[32]See O'Meara (1993, 57-9) and (2000, 247-8); also Schroeder (1985, 75).

[33]Says Bussanich (1997, 163) on this point, "On Plotinus' normal view, neither the positive nor the negative conceptions of the One can tell us anything about the One in itself. This is because an affirmation and negation operate through the ineluctable duality of human thinking which

cannot penetrate the transcendental absolute. The inadequacy of positive theology derives from the attribution to the One of terms that are strictly speaking applicable only to the lower realities of Intellect and Soul."

[34]*Enneads* V.3.14, 1-8; see also Gerson (1994, 25-26).

[35]"Plotinus' explanation of the One's perfection as owing to its *ousia* shows the natural connection in Greek philosophical vocabulary between the terms *teleion* and *ousia*. We might say that the One is analogically speaking perfect because it is analogically speaking an *ousia*. The meaning is that in the unique first principle, where essence and existence are only conceptually distinct, there can be nothing that this first principle could be that it is not." Gerson (1994, 17). O'Meara (1993, 56) notes succinctly that, "Our language relates to the varied world in which we live; it cannot apply to what is presupposed by and other than this world."

[36]Deck (1967, 10).

[37]See *Enneads* III.8.9.

[38]See Sells (1994, 22).

[39]In terms of Plotinus' mysticism, Rist (1967, 221) suggests, rightly, I think, that "Our aim is not to see the One but to be 'oned', as later mystics would have translated."

[40]Sells (1994, 20-1).

[41]O'Meara (1993, 55).

[42]*Enneads* III.8.11, 12-4; V.3.12, 49-50; V.6.4, 1-2. See also Deck (1967, 17).

[43]Deck (1967, 17).

[44]*Enneads* III.8.11; III.9.9; V.3.11, V.3.12; VI.7.37-41.

[45]Deck (1967, 17). See also *Enneads* VI.9.6, 42; VI.7.32, 23-8.

[46]With regard to the One's state of "consciousness" Rist (1973, 81-2) has the interesting suggestion that Plotinus needs a term which stands for a "total transparency," which Plotinus finds ultimately in the Epicurean notion of *epi holē*. However, Rist himself admits that this term, or others such as *katanoēsis*, (V.4.2.17) or *hupernoēsis*, do not tell us very much.

[47]Rist (1973).

[48]A move similar to that of Gerson regarding being.

[49]*Enneads* V.4.2, 16.

[50]Trouillard (1955, 102) suggests that something like a notion of transparency, or perhaps Troulliard's "*une parfaite lucidite*," is best to describe the One's "state of consciousness".

[51]I am inclined to agree with Sells (1994, 214) who suggests a kind of "disontology" at this level, a fusing of subject-predicate dualism through apophasis, necessary to overcome propositional thinking. Says Sells, "This

disontology consists of a continual fusing of the subject-predicate dualism, and a continual displacing of the tendency to revert to simply an opposite of duality and thus be reified within a dualistic relation." Perhaps more radically, Schürmann suggests (2002, 163) that the one is an "event" or "economy of presence."

# CHAPTER VI
# EMANATION AND THE SOUL[1]

Plotinus' version of the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy employs an organic conception of emanation where all parts of the cosmos are "energetically" connected with the One, and whereby emanation occurs out of metaphysical necessity. This raises specific concerns with moral culpability that I propose to discuss here. For if the soul of the individual is also "emanated" it would seem that it simply follows the mechanical necessity of emanation, and has no sense of free action necessary to make it morally culpable. A participant soul, in the Platonic sense, might only need to stand in a mimetic relation to the Form of Justice which, taking our cue from the *Republic*, would mean each part of the soul doing its own work, or reason ruling spirit and appetite.[2] But the introduction of an interconnected "emanative" process that includes the soul requires a more organic explanation of how this soul, now interconnected causally with the cosmos, can have the freedom to be morally culpable.

While no one will dispute that the proper sense of freedom in Plotinus is for the soul to realise its *energeia*[3] in an ascent to the One, the freedom of the voluntary (*hekousia*) must also exist in order to explain moral culpability and the fall of the soul.[4] If an act is to be voluntary the human soul must

have knowledge of what it is doing, it must be capable of doing other than it does and its actions must be wholly its own.[5]

There is a sense in which the human soul must convey what order it might on the world; if this "must" is a must of "emanative necessity," the soul cannot act voluntarily, and it cannot be morally responsible for what it does. The soul is merely doing what is appropriate by occupying its place in the perfection that is the emanated cosmos. Further, the human soul's acts are not its own when it is "embodied," since it acts are governed by bodily impulses and desires that deceive it. Consequently there does not appear to be room for moral culpability once it enters the physical world either.[6] To offer a suggestion in Plotinian fashion, perhaps the acts of the soul in the physical world cannot be in and of themselves voluntary, but must derive their voluntary nature from a truly voluntary act.[7] For example, when Aristotle talks about culpable acts resulting from drunkenness in the *Nichomachean Ethics*,[8] he suggests that acts which are performed as a result of drunkenness are not morally exculpable, because the agent is initially responsible for putting himself in that condition; the first culpable act bears the responsibility for other culpable acts committed once the condition is wilfully embraced. By the same token, says Aristotle, acts made in ignorance of a law that one could (should?) have learned are punishable. To say that it wasn't in such a person's nature to go about learning laws is ineffectual, for men are responsible for their character. The upshot of the discussion is that "if a man knowingly acts in a way that will result in becoming unjust, he must be said to be voluntarily unjust."[9]

In his discussion of human freedom[10] Plotinus appears not to accept this conclusion wholeheartedly:

> Why is an action...not involuntary if one does not know that one ought not to do it? Possibly because one ought to have learnt that? Not knowing that one ought to have

> learnt it is not voluntary, nor is what leads one away from learning. (*Enneads* VI.8.1, 41-5)

I don't think that Plotinus would deny that we are responsible for our character, or that initial acts of culpability render other acts culpable. Rather, he means that if you are in a state where you have no idea either that the law exists or that you could have learned it, your actions are not your own. If what "leads away from learning" here means being bound up with material concerns, as it usually does, then again, what Plotinus means is that once we are so deceived, our actions are not in and of themselves voluntary.

If Plotinus is to have a culpable human soul in a deterministic physical world, something like this Aristotelian notion of initial culpability might be functioning in his notion of moral responsibility.[11] Otherwise, the acts of the soul are not its own, and if its acts are "not its own," it cannot be morally responsible for them.[12] We do find something of this notion of "initial culpability" functioning in Plotinus' treatise on the descent of the soul, for when Plotinus is discussing the apparent contradiction in maintaining that freedom is in necessity, he has this brief comment to offer, before he goes on to discuss punishment:

> For final results are referred to the principle from which they spring, even if there are many intervening stages. (*Enneads* IV.8.5, 15-17)

The question of course is what "the principle from which they spring" refers to. In the first treatise on Providence, (*Enneads* III, 2) Plotinus says that if men's wickedness is "brought about by the first principle determining the consequences that necessarily follow it, then it is natural that they should be wicked. Plotinus goes on to say that this is not unjust, because men themselves "do the deed" and in so doing they err. It is

not the case that nothing is in our power, for the power of free action originates in us. Again in on *Providence I*, Plotinus says:

> it is not unjust that someone who has come to be [a fallen soul] should suffer the consequences of his condition; people must not demand to be well off who have not done what deserves well-being. (*Enneads* III.2.4, 44-8)

Later, Plotinus suggests that,

> Given a first principle, [All soul] accomplishes what follows with an inclusion of all the first principles there are; but men too are principles; at any rate, they are moved to noble actions by their own nature, and this is an independent principle. (*Enneads* III.2.10, 17-20)

What I think this could mean is that while the "first principle" which causes us to *descend* may put us in a position that renders us capable of sinning, we ourselves are responsible for what we do when we are put in this position, whether we ascend, or *fall*. It is important to recognize the distinction between a *descending*, or being placed in remote contact with bodies as is the human soul's function as a result of emanative necessity, and *falling*, or choosing to become intimately or purposively involved in bodies beyond what is appropriate. We can choose to look to *Nous*, or we can choose to look to the material world. If we fail to look to *Nous*, we sin, if we remember to do so we perform noble actions under our own power. If we fail to look to *Nous*, we become deceived and our actions then become deluded and involuntary. Plotinus will say that "what is done, and living well or badly, follows according to [souls'] natures."[13] But why does a person have a particular nature?[14] It is clear that there can be no moral reproach for man if he exists materially of necessity. Even if wicked actions are performed in ignorance, they are not exculpable if we as free principles are responsible for the cause of the ignorance:

> But as it is, man, the bad man, is uniquely subject to blame, perhaps reasonably. For he is not only what he was made but has another free principle, which is not outside providence or the rational principle or the whole... (*Enneads* III.3.4, 5-8)

If we then ask what is to blame for reason not working in someone, Plotinus says that nothing deprives man of reason; but the cause of man's "plunge into troubled waters"[15] lies in the "substratum". This substrate is not, as one might think, matter, but is rather the *logos* which gives man his place in the cosmos according to its worth. Plotinus says that we also must remember that previous lives have an affect on the substrate of our individual natures, "as if the *logos* became dim in comparison to that prior to it as a result of previous happenings, as if soul had become weaker."[16] In Chapter 12 of *On Providence II*, Plotinus again tells us that *logos* places men in the order of things according to their worth. It is important to note, however, that *logos* does not make souls in the universe, "by making them worse, but puts them in places appropriate to them according to their worth," taking into "account" our previous lives. This of course begs the question of how the individual soul originally became worse, and how it fell. It is interesting to note that Plotinus speaks of "becoming worse and falling" as if they are two separate things. I shall say more of this in what follows, but for now, it will do to point out that, perhaps in accordance with our Aristotelian interpretation of initial culpability, Plotinus addresses the question of the initial "worsening of the soul" by saying that, "the inferior became inferior from its beginning, and it suffers the consequences of its inferiority, it suffers what it deserves". [17] It seems as though to say that we *became* inferior from the beginning helps to make sense of the claim, later in the same treatise, that erring unwillingly means that we act nonetheless, but that the error

itself is unwilling.[18] If we understand this beginning as a free and culpable beginning, the unwilling error is still culpable.

If we are find room for the human soul to do its sinning, it has to lie in a strangely vulnerable region between Lower Soul from whence it comes, and Nature, to which it flows. Here the soul is not merely a passive emanating source of order, but a free active agent as well. What is the condition of the soul in this state? I begin by examining the statements made about the descent of the soul in the treatise which bears that name (IV.8), and then apply the considerations there to the texts where Plotinus discusses the descent of the soul in the first two sections of the split treatise on *Problems of the Soul*, (IV.3 & IV.4) in addition to considerations from other treatises, especially the two treatises on providence.

In describing the descent of the human soul into bodies, Plotinus mentions the following elements or steps of the descent, in this order:[19]

1. Souls break off from Soul and "*descend*" to the material realm.
2. If a soul stays down for a long time, *without looking to Nous*, it is weakened.[20]
3. In this weakened state, it is drawn everywhere by material desires.[21]
4. It tends the body and "sinks deep" into it.[22]
5. Here it becomes fettered[23]
6. It is *fallen*[24]
7. It acts by sense because prevented from acting by intellect[25]
8. It recollects, possible, because it always possesses intellect.[26]

In this process, Plotinus tells us that "sin" refers to two things[27]:

S1) the course of the descent. (3)

S2) the evil it does while here. (7)

The punishment of S1 is (*3*) which happens because the soul does not look to *Nous*. The intensity and duration of the punishment of S2 is dependent upon how evil it is. In other words, how far it sinks, and how long it stays sunken is contingent upon its involvement with matter at (*4*),[28] and it propensity to engage *8*.[29] I think it is useful to note that in *On Providence I*, Plotinus says that if the sudden impulse towards the bodily is overlooked, and not immediately corrected, a settled choice (*hairesin*) results, "of that into which one has fallen."[30] Plotinus goes on to say that punishment follows. My concern, however, is primarily with steps 1 and 2.

1. All human souls go down, not just bad ones. Plotinus tells us that souls that are more equipped with intellect will tend to spend more of their existence with the eternal realities, and those who are less intellectually actualised will spend more time in the sense-world.[31] The fact that the nature is not fixed, but is expressed in terms of potentiality and actuality, allows Plotinus say that developing and using the intellect is possible for everyone:[32]

> supposing that a city had a soul and included other beings with souls, the soul of the city would be complete and more powerful, but there would certainly be nothing preventing the others from being the same kind of thing. (*Enneads* IV.8.3, 16-19)[33]

When Plotinus claims that we ought not to blame men for not being gods, he is saying, in effect, that we are perfect "after our own kind." In the context of explaining why men's natures are as they are, this perfection after its kind also seems to imply that some human souls are less actualised than others, and some more. The active principles that we possess allow us to change or alter our position, and even though our past lives determine our "worth," our worth is bad only if we choose not to

overcome the difficulties we encounter, which we can freely do.[34]

2. The soul that stays for a long time, but does not look to the intelligible is weakened.[35] The most important part of understanding Plotinus' account of the descent is to recognize that souls are weakened if they do not look for *Nous*. It seems as though even after the souls descend, they can still look to *Nous*, and if they do, they will not suffer perplexity and weakness to the degree that causes the soul to sin by engaging the body. This allows Plotinus to say,

> If it escapes quickly it suffers no harm by acquiring a knowledge of evil and coming to know the nature of wickedness, and manifesting its powers. (*Enneads* IV.8.5, 28-30)

The upshot of this brief discussion of the descent of the soul is that there is a period of time (a logical metaphor) in which souls have *descended*, but have not *fallen*. In this period, looking to *Nous* or looking to the sense world are both possibilities open to the human soul. This I understand as the force of the following:

> our soul does not altogether come down but there is always something of it in the intelligible; but if the part of it which is in the world of sense perception gets control, or rather if it is itself brought under control and thrown into confusion [by the body], it prevents us from perceiving the things which the upper part of the soul contemplates. (*Enneads* IV.8.8, 2-6)

It is only after this vulnerable period, when the soul has chosen to escape quickly, or to care for the body intimately, that it can be said to be good or bad in a culpable sense.[36] And since its culpability results from what it does in this vulnerable "*descended*, but not *fallen*," state, I suggest that it is in this logical/metaphysical space that the soul is "free" in the

voluntary sense. What remains to be seen is whether this hypothesis can be rendered consistent with statements Plotinus makes elsewhere in the Fourth *Ennead* regarding the fall of the soul. In the end I think that this interpretation is the only one that preserves the coherence of Plotinus' claim that freedom and necessity are compatible, and that the former is contained by the latter.

Throughout *Ennead* IV, 3, Plotinus emphasises the necessity of the descent of the soul, indicating that it is forced to go to the material realm and convey what order it might. The Soul of All, because of its higher emanative power, does not descend, but rules, as it were, on high. My thinking is that if the individual soul must descend, it cannot be held morally responsible for such a descent. The main difficulty with maintaining this is that Plotinus seems to speak at various places in IV, 3 of the soul being made to descend in accordance with "universal law," to a place appropriate to its past unrighteousness. Is the fall of the soul into a sinful state thus destined and beyond its control, despite its lack of wilfulness? Here is what Plotinus says:

> the differences between ["ensouled" places and bodies] then must come from the disposition of the soul, and must also come from justice and the nature of things. For no one can ever evade what he ought to suffer for his unrighteous doings: for the divine law is inescapable and has in itself together with the judgement already pronounced its execution. He too who is to suffer is carried unknowingly to what he has to suffer. (*Enneads* IV.3.24, 7-13)

Here Plotinus indicates that the soul goes "unknowingly" to the place of its punishment, and that this "descent" is determined by "divine law." (Presumably, if the soul is not to suffer, he is

not carried unknowingly.) At this stage one may look to *Nous* and be knowledgeable. Immediately following, Plotinus says,

> on his unsteady course [the soul] is tossed everywhere in his wanderings, and in the end as if utterly weary, by his very efforts at resistance he falls into the place which suits him, having that which he did not will for punishment *as the result of the course which he willed.* (*Enneads* IV.3.24, 13-17)

Plotinus tells us that the soul falls "by its very efforts at resistance." What can these acts of resistance mean? Plotinus is a philosopher of unity, and in so far as all components of his system function as unity-seeking and unity-conveying devices[37] the efforts of the soul are quite likely attempts to seek or convey unity. In seeking truth in the weaker unity that it conveys, the unity of multiplicity of the material body, the soul has lost its way and succumbed to the material world by its own efforts. It becomes weakened because it has turned its back the true unity to be found in *Nous*.[38] In this utterly weakened state, it becomes concerned with the unity that it conveys.[39] It falls in love with unity because that is what it is meant to do. It falls in love with false unity because it is forgetful and weary. It falls in love of its own efforts because it is capable of doing other - its contact with the higher soul and *Nous* is still there, but it must avail of them before it becomes too weak.

When Plotinus (in the above passage) speaks of the "result of the course which he willed," in one sense he may be speaking of the previous life of the soul which led him to this fall, but in another sense he means the course of its confused wanderings, for it is in these confused wanderings that the soul is confused and exerts its own efforts of resistance to the fall. It is this course that can be avoided if the soul looks to *Nous*.[40] This is also the course that Plotinus says is both punishable and punished at the same time. What then are we to

make of Plotinus' next claim, that it is destined how long and how much the soul must suffer? Says Plotinus,

> But it is stated in the law how much and how long he must suffer, and again there come together the release from punishment and the ability to escape up from these regions by the power of the harmony which holds the universe together. (*Enneads* IV.3.24, 17-23)

In one sense this means that the worth of the soul, and how far it must descend, depends on the "worth" it attained in previous lives. But Plotinus has just said that the suffering of the soul has been willed by the soul, and we ought to think of this as a voluntary act, since knowledge and the ability to do other are given by the soul's constant contact with the "upper region". What precisely, is the nature of this "law"? If Plotinus is to remain consistent in saying that the final position of the fall is the result of the soul's own efforts, and that it was willed, "the law" must state that the soul's worth has been determined, but that the intensity and length of time of the "punishment" will be determined by the soul's only free choice: either to avoid utter confusion and weariness and seek true unity, or to succumb to its weariness and become ensnared in the material realm of false unity. Plotinus suggests as much at IV.4.39,[41] where he says that the rational formative principle of All is like a legislator who "knows already what the citizens are going to do and why they are going to do it, and legislate with regard to all this." It seems as though this type of "legislation," is meant to deal with every contingency, and should not be taken to mean that what men will do when they enter the material realm is predetermined. Indeed Plotinus says that it is not due to the deliberate choice (*prohairesei*) of stars and the All that people become thieves, house-breakers and temple-robbers or go about committing indecencies (IV.4.32).[42] While the material realm is mechanistic, and things follow of necessity in

accordance with a universal harmony and mechanistic materiality, whether men will be good or bad is not ultimately predetermined.[43] As Plotinus says in the early treatise *On Destiny*:

> ...there must be actions or thoughts which are our own: each one's good and bad actions must come from himself, and we must not attribute the doing of bad actions at least, to the All. (*Enneads* III.1.4, 27-30)

To say then, that the All legislates the intensity and duration of punishment, must mean that it is determined how long and intense the *fall* will be, contingent upon men's choices when confronted with desire caused by matter. It would not be inconsistent to say that the depth of the *descent* is predetermined,[44] in accordance with a pernicious dimming of *logos* caused by previous lives. Nor would it be inconsistent to say that what happens as a result of the soul's actions after it *falls* is predetermined,[45] but it would be inconsistent to say that what the soul wills when it *descends* is determined, for this would not be a correct use of the word will. If there is a principle which necessitates all things,

> "what is in our power" will be a mere word; it will not exist any more just because it is we who have the impulses, if the impulse is produced in accordance with those pre-existing causes. (*Enneads* III.1.7, 16-18)

If the soul seeks true unity despite its difficulties, the intensity and duration will be less, the soul redeemed, and less likely to fall again so deeply because it regains true freedom and emanative intensity; if it seeks false unity in crisis, its freedom both in the voluntary and the dynamic sense will be suppressed, and it will fall to a similar depth or more deeply in the next life.

In *Enneads* IV.4.17, Plotinus again returns to a discussion the fall of the soul, this time in connection with the relation

of the soul to the body. Here he suggests that the lower part of the human soul necessarily encounters perplexity, and that it is the needs of the body that make us have continually different opinions. He speaks here of an ignorance of the good (*agnoia tōn agathōn*). It is not, however, the "best part" of the soul that has different opinions - that remains untouched. Rather the "best part" is compared to the wisest adviser that cannot be heard in a clamour of voices:

> ...from our best part the right account is given to the common gathering, and is weak because it is in the mixture, not by its own nature. But it is as if in the great clamour of an assembly the best of the advisors does not prevail when he speaks, but the worse of those who clamour and shout, but he sits quietly unable to do anything, defeated by the clamour of the worse. (*Enneads* IV.4.17, 21-7)

This may seem to suggest that we fall into utter perplexity, not voluntarily, but of necessity, and that our access to reason is also cut off necessarily. If such is the case, then it would follow that the soul does not freely choose to become entangled in material concerns, but is, as it were, a victim of "emanative circumstance." However, we do know that we are never totally separated from our "best part," no matter how weak its hold on us may be. There is still the possibility that the soul may make its way through the tumult of the assembly of passions and talk calmly and quietly with the "best advisor." If this is the case, then it really is a matter of choice whether the soul, in its descended state does choose to abandon the One for the false unity of soul's material image. What Plotinus goes on to say immediately following the analogy of the assembly appears to support this interpretation. Plotinus discusses four types of people: 1) the worst, in which the "common gathering" predominates like a bad body politic, 2) the "middling," in

whom there is some control over the clamour, 3) the better, who are escaping the clamour, and 4) the best, who obtain complete separation from the clamour. Plotinus has indicated the necessary nature of the descent into matter in the exposition leading up to this division, and it cannot be that only the worse fall into the material realm of temptation; the best must also descend. All souls are in the descended state, regardless of their disposition. The question becomes whether the "best" are best because of how they react, or because they are destined to so react. Given that all souls are thrust into the material realm, and all suffer perplexity, it seems more plausible that people are identified as "best" because they are able to listen to the "adviser," to effect a separation. If we say that the "best" person escapes because s/he is *already* best, then we are left to answer why s/he descends at all, and we have to maintain that there was never the possibility of being anything but best. In other words, we convert "moral goodness" into a necessary degree of perfection, and by the same token, moral depravity into necessary imperfection.[46] In short, the only way these passages can be interpreted as procuring the pretext of moral praise or blame is to allow that all souls can voluntarily become attached to matter or can voluntarily free themselves.

The same notion of being deluded by the senses is investigated in a discussion of magic and enchantment. (IV.4.44) From the notion of enchantment, Plotinus derives the following more general point:

> to be actively occupied with the semblance of truth and drawn towards it in any way is characteristic of someone who has been deluded by the forces which draw one to the lower world...for to pursue what is not good as if it was good, drawn to the appearance of good by irrational impulses belongs to one who is being ignorantly led where he does not want to go...the man then is alone free

> from enchantment who when his other parts are trying to draw him says that none of the things are good which they declare to be so, but only that which he knows himself, not deluded or pursuing, but possessing it. So he would not be drawn in any direction. (*Enneads* IV.4.44, 27-36)

The thing to notice in this passage is that someone who trusts only his/her intellect, or "looks to *Nous*," will not be drawn in any direction. We are told that s/he who is deluded by images of what is good will be led in ignorance to the lower world. Previously, Plotinus had said that all souls of necessity are thrown into perplexity, drawn in many directions, but here the good person is not drawn in any direction. If we understand what makes a good person good, and a bad person bad, we may yet make sense of this. The bad person is led in ignorance because s/he has turned his/her back on true knowledge, and this turning is the source of his "badness." S/he would have to be bad in turning before one could say that s/he were deluded *because* s/he was bad. And if s/he is going in ignorance, the act of going is not in itself culpable; the cause of the act of going is. The good person may suffer some perplexity, but is not drawn to the lower world in ignorance, because in his perplexity, s/he focuses on knowledge, the adviser who has been shouted down, and as such is not deluded. The only place then where it is possible to be "good" or "bad" is in the moment of deciding to trust images of unity instead of true unity. Choosing the good may be difficult, but it is possible for all, if it is really a choice. That the choice is available to all is perhaps suggested by Plotinus' understanding of an individual soul standing between the upper and lower regions of Soul. This passage from *On Sense Perception and Memory* is in spirit linked to the last in that it thinks of delusion as being "charmed":

> Therefore [soul] is certainly in relation to [the intellect and the sense-world]; by the power of one it flourishes and gains new life, by the power of the others it is deceived because of their likenesses and comes down as if charmed. But being in the middle, it perceives both, and it is said to think the intelligibles when it arrives at memory of them, if it comes to be near them... (*Enneads* IV.6.3, 8-13)

I began this chapter by examining something of Plotinus' thinking (ostensibly) on some claims made by Aristotle regarding moral culpability. It may be that Plotinus is not specifically referring to Aristotle, but rather using ideas similar to his in order to build up his own Platonic view of human freedom.[47] That no man can do wrong knowingly does seem to be an edict with which Plotinus would agree, but I wonder if an examination of something implied in the Platonic corpus may be of assistance in understanding the relation of the intellect to moral culpability a little more clearly. I think we can get closer to the answer to this question if we revisit the similarities between Plotinus' hypostatic ladder and Plato's divided line. It is clear that for Plotinus, *Nous* understands the forms non-discursively, and in so doing, it would stand at the highest level of knowledge on the divided line, that of intuitive *epistēme*. Soul also understands non-discursively,[48] but human souls, when engaged with matter or bodies respectively, understand at a level of *dianoia*, *pistis* or *eikasia,* depending on whether they seek unity and understanding from above (Soul, *Nous*) or from below (bodies/images).

| PLATO | PLOTINUS | LEVEL of THOUGHT |
|---|---|---|
| | **UNITY** | |
| GOOD | ONE | ΕΠΕΚΕΙΝΑ ΤΗΣ ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΗΣ |
| | **BEING** | |
| FORMS | *NOUS* | ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΗ |
| MATHEMATICAL OBJECTS | SOUL<br>ALL SOUL | ΔΙΑΝΟΙΑ |
| | **PARTICULARS** | |
| | ALL SOUL | ΔΙΑΝΟΙΑ |
| ↑<br>↓ | DESCENDED<br>HUMAN<br>SOUL | ΔΙΑΝΟΙΑ |
| PHYSICAL OBJECTS<br>↑<br>↓<br>IMAGES | LESS<br>FALLEN<br>SOUL<br>MORE<br>FALLEN<br>SOUL | ΠΙΣΤΙΣ<br>↑<br>↓<br>ΕΙΚΑΣΙΑ |

The reason in soul is between that which is always turned upwards and that which is directed to things here."[49] The human soul, when it descends, but before it falls, understands at the level of *dianoia*. Now it seems that hypothesis may be of two types for Plato, especially in the *Republic*, upward looking and downward looking. Thrasymachus, I would argue,[50] is not thinking at the realm of *pistis* or *eikasia*, but rather at the level of *dianoia*. He has a hypothesis about justice, and in contradistinction to Polemarchos who speaks of finding it hard to dis-*believe* (*apistein*) Simonides, Thrasymachus speaks at

the level of *archai* and *orthoi logoi*. His hypothesis, however is a bad one, it is concerned too much with the world of material things. His soul needs to be educated, turned in the right direction. If not, Thrasymachus will be deceived by the world of material things, and suffer the illusion of belief and image, becoming a lover of beautiful things and not of beauty.

The condition of the human soul in Plotinus' system, in that strange region of moral vulnerability, is a level of *dianoia* where it can choose to turn upward, and rule the material order from on high like Soul, or it can choose to look downward, risk being deceived by beautiful things. As he says in *On Providence I*:

> But living beings which have of themselves a movement under their own control might incline sometimes to what is better, sometimes to what is worse...It is probably not worth inquiring into this self-caused turning towards the worse. [πρὸς τὰ χείρω τροπην πὰρ' αὐτοῦ]. (*Enneads* III.2.4, 36-9)[51]

Plotinus tells us that it is the effect of body on the soul that weakens its intellect and fills it with desire. By the same token, Plato's *phulakes* must be restricted from the temptations of private property and family because they cannot see the forms, and are susceptible to material desires. It is precisely at the level of a weakened *dianoia* that the soul is most vulnerable in its freedom. In fact the only place the soul experiences this moral vulnerability is when it exerts downward pressure on the material world. In so ordering the material world, the soul exists at the level of *dianoia* and has knowledge of what it is doing. Consequently, its acts are "its own." That the soul may become deceived by its foray into the material and have its voluntarism stripped of it by existing at the level of untested belief or worse, images, does not contravene the fact that in order to be capable of acting as a cause in the world, the soul must act at a level of hypothesis. And in so far as this hypothesis is turned in the

right direction, the soul maintains its freedom of choice, and the possibility of freedom in true *energeia*. Once however, the soul's hypothetical thinking turns its back on its source, it becomes concerned with the material world which it orders, and it seeks too intimate an inhabitancy with it. Plotinus says that the soul may "descend" into the material realm, and not be culpable, if it escapes quickly. Along Platonic "lines" I take him to mean by this that the soul must not allow its weakened intellect to succumb to the level of *pistis* or *eikasia*. If it does this, then its acts are not its own, and it is responsible for its particular acts because it is morally culpable *ab initio*, like Aristotle's culpable drunkard.

What we see with the introduction of Plotinus' emanative theory is a well-rounded psychological picture of the fate of the human soul, and how that human soul is related to the rest of the cosmos. Emanation, the answer to the Aristotelian charge of *chōrismos* presents us with a picture of a soul in process of return to the One, which in fact employs Aristotelian notions of actuality and potentiality. At the same time, Plotinus' own system is remarkably consistent with Plato's own view of the tripartite soul, as we can see by comparison with the plight of the *phulakes* in the *Republic*. From a psychological perspective, the emanated soul follows the same metaphysical structure as other particulars in the Plotinian system, with the significant difference that a part of the human soul always remains with *Nous*. This is really only a matter of saying that there is something of the divine and the eternal in the human soul; it is something that Plato and Aristotle both believed to be the case. The retention and connection of that element of the soul within the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy allows Plotinus to provide an organic psychology that is consistent with Plato's philosophy.

**Notes for Chapter VI:**

[1]Much of this chapter originally appeared as Bowe (1999).
[2]See Bowe (1997); for a treatment of this in terms of *eudaimonia*, see McGroarty (1994).
[3]On this see Armstrong (1990, 400).
[4]On two notions of freedom see Armstrong (1990) It is in light of the following comment of Armstrong's (1990, 400) that I approach this problem with some trepidation: "No solution which Plotinus suggests seems to him perfectly satisfactory. In the end the problems of why there is wickedness in a divinely ordered world, and how the moral responsibility on which he insists can be reconciled with universal providence, remain unsolved."
[5]"For everything is a voluntary act which we do without being forced and with knowledge [of what we are doing] and in our power which we are also competent to do." (*Enneads* VI.8.1, 33-4)
[6]See *Enneads* III.1.8: "And that deed can only be called ours which came from nowhere and from within ourselves, from the purer soul, from a first principle that guides and rules, that errs not through ignorance, and yields not to the strength of desires - desires which at their coming lead and drag us down, and suffer not our deeds to be our own free actions, but only expressions of our passions." For a full discussion of this and its implications, see Fuller (1931).
[7]"...if the desires are according to nature, if they are the kind that belong to the living being, that is the composite, the soul followed from the necessity of nature; but if they are of the kind that belongs to the soul alone, many of things which are now said to be in our power will be outside it." (*Enneads* VI.8. 2, 13-17).
[8]*Nichomachean Ethics* 1113b31 *ff.* where he discusses the law of Pittacus of Mitylene.
[9]*Nichomachean Ethics* 1113b *ff.*
[10]*Enneads* VI.8.1.
[11]In response to Fuller's query (1931, 201) who not unreasonably muses, "If I am not free when I sin (as Plotinus says that I am not) then I am not responsible."
[12]But see Fuller (1931, 189) "A man can be morally responsible foe his act and not free. For what a man does is his act, whether or not he can act differently." I cannot agree with this, since I do not think that a man who cannot do otherwise does an act that can be said to be "his own," in any meaningful application of that concept.

[13]*Enneads* III.3.1, 27-9.
[14]*Enneads* III.3.3.
[15]*Enneads* III.3.4, 28.
[16]*Enneads* III.3.4,138.
[17]*Enneads* III.3.4.
[18]Martinich (1970) treats this issue similarly.
[19]*Enneads* IV.8.4,13 *ff.* For an extended discussion of this, see Rist (1967, 120 *ff.*)
[20]"Now when a soul does this for a long time, flying from the All and standing apart in distinctness, and does not look toward the intelligible, it has become a part and is isolated and weak and fusses..." (notes 20-26 are from *Enneads* IV.8.IV)
[21]"it comes to and turns to that one thing battered by the totality of things in every way, and has left the whole and directs the individual part with great difficulty..."
[22]"...it is by now applying itself to and caring for things outside and is present and seeks deep into the individual part..."
[23]"Here the "moulting", as it is called happens to it, and the being in the fetters of the body..."
[24]"...it is fallen therefore, and is caught, and is engaged with its fetter..."
[25]"...and acts by sense because its new beginning prevents it from acting by intellect..."
[26]"...it turns to intelligence, to be freed from its fetters and to ascend, when it is started on the contemplation of reality by recollection: for in spite of everything it always possesses something transcendent in some way."
[27]Rist, (1967, 120 *ff.*).
[28]See Blumenthal (1993, 60).
[29]Of course this will also depend on the soul's previous lives, and I will deal with that later in this chapter.
[30]*Enneads* III.2.4, 43.
[31]*Enneads* IV.8, 3.
[32]But Blumenthal (1993, 59) claims that the analogy of different souls and one soul does not explain why I am good and you are bad, whereas I think it does.
[33]See also *Enneads* I.8.5: "The evil which lays hold of men lays hold of them without there willing it. Indeed there is a flight from evils existing in the soul, open for those who are able to flee. Not all however, are able." Also, *Enneads* III.2.14, 22-4: "But there certainly would not be any grudging by the whole if the part did gain in beauty and order so as to make it of greater worth."
[34]See *Enneads* III.2.14.

[35]*Enneads* III.1.8: "The better soul has power over more, the weaker over less." Bad soul gives in to affections of the body, "but the other soul, the one which is good by nature [ἡ ἀγαθὴ τὴν φύσιν], holds its own in these very same circumstances." *ibid.*

[36]Deck (1967, 39).

[37]On this, Bowe (1994).

[38]"...lawlessness and irrationality exist because there is Reason, not because the better produces the worse, but because that which ought to receive the better is not able to receive it, either through its own nature, or by chance, and because there are other things to prevent it." (*Enneads* III.2.4, 29-34).

[39]Note that it does this, in part by supplying sense perception and memory to the embodied self by an act of its own genesis, not by passivity. (*Enneads* IV. 6.1-3).

[40]An interesting parallel to this idea exists in Augustine's story of Alypius' adventure at the Coliseum, where he "fell" because he did not look to God, when confronted with the passionate desire to partake in the spectacle of the gladiatorial games. (*Confessions*, I, 13).

[41]*Enneads* IV.4.39, 13-15.

[42]*Enneads* IV.4.39, 52 *ff.* In a later treatise (*On Providence*), however, Plotinus does show how the administrative arm of All-Soul, *logos* will procure particular life situations as retribution for past sins, but this has to be justified by appealing to past lives that are themselves originally morally culpable via the fall of the soul and its lack of concern for true goodness.

[43]See Blumenthal (1993, 60): "if Plotinus had put all the differences in soul, he would have to say that some souls were essentially evil."

[44]As a soul's "worth" is determined it seems by previous lives, but not what it does when it is given this place in the order of things. (*Enneads* III.2.13).

[45]Plotinus indeed says that "Each kind of man, then, goes according to the nature and the *logos* to the place that suits him, and holds the position *he has chosen*." (*Enneads* III.2.17, 26). In addition, Rist (1967, 135) suggests, "It may be that the hand of Providence will write down a man's death as a retribution for previous crimes and a restoration of cosmic harmony, but that does not affect the power of that man to better himself in the important area of life...the nature of his soul."

[46]I should perhaps note that Fuller seems to think that Plotinus conflation of degrees of perfection and kinds of perfection exists as a fundamental inconsistency in Plotinus' philosophy, and his difficulties with this contradiction run through Fuller.

[47]Armstrong says as much (1988, VII, 114, *n.*1).

[48]See Blumenthal (1993, 209 *ff.*).

[49]Blumenthal (1993, 218).

[50]For an extended treatment of this see Bowe (1997).

[51]Of course Plotinus then goes on to inquire, and suggests that initially a deviation which is slight continually makes the fault "graver and graver".

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