Plotinus on Beauty

Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Tradition

VOLUME 29

Plotinus on Beauty

Beauty as Illuminated Unity in Multiplicity

By

Ota Gál

BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

The open access publication of this book has been published with the support of the Swiss National Science Foundation.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Gál, Ota, author.
Title: Plotinus on beauty : beauty as illuminated unity in multiplicity / by Ota Gál.
Description: Leiden ; Boston : Brill, [2022] | Series: Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Tradition, 1871-188x ; volume 29 | Includes bibliographical references and index. |
Identifiers: LCCN 2022004237 (print) | LCCN 2022004238 (ebook) | ISBN 9789004510197 (hardback) | ISBN 9789004510203 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: Plotinus. | Aesthetics–Early works to 1800.
Classification: LCC B693.Z7 G28 2022 (print) | LCC B693.Z7 (ebook) | DDC 186/.4–dc23/eng/20220218
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2022004237
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2022004238

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: "Brill". See and download: brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 1871-188X
ISBN 978-90-04-51019-7 (hardback)
ISBN 978-90-04-51020-3 (e-book)

This book is printed on acid-free paper and produced in a sustainable manner.

Contents

Acknowledgements

This book is a revised version of my doctoral thesis, which was defended at Charles University, Prague, and the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, under the supervision of Štěpán Špinka and Filip Karfík. My thanks are due first and foremost to them: for their guidance, for their ability to inspire, which never ceases to amaze me, for being tough opponents of my ideas and, most of all, for their trust in me. I also owe thanks to Christian Tornau and Riccardo Chiaradonna, the examiners of my thesis, for their valuable comments which helped me to revise the manuscript into its present state. I am very grateful for the thorough work of Chad Jorgenson, who managed to make my English clear and readable. I would also like to thank John Finamore and Robert Berchman, the editors of the series, for accepting my work for publication.

The writing of this study was supported by Charles University Research Centre program No. 204053, and I am especially grateful to Štěpán Špinka and Lenka Karfíková for allowing me to participate in this project.

For many years, I have had the privilege of profiting from long discussions of various topics related to Plotinus with my friends Eliška Fulínová and Robert Roreitner.

My deepest thanks go to my family: to my parents, for awakening the love for knowledge in me and for their continuous support in whatever I am doing, and most of all to my wife Veronika and my daughters, Adriana and Agnes, for their patience, love and support.

Ota Gál
5 July 2021

Abbreviations

Alc. Mai.	Plato, *Alcibiades Maior*
Apol.	Plato, *Apology*
Crat.	Plato, *Cratylus*
Criti.	Plato, *Critias*
DA	Aristotle, *De anima*
DK	Diels, Kranz
DL	Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum*
Ecl.	Johannes Stobaeus, *Eclogae*
Elem. Theol.	Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*
EN	Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
Ep.	Plato, *Epistulae*
Hipp. Maj.	Plato, *Hippias Major*
Hom. Od.	Homer, *Odyssey*
H-S	P. Henry, H.-R. Schwyzer, *Plotini opera*, editio maior
H-S^2	P. Henry, H.-R. Schwyzer, *Plotini opera*, editio minor
In Parm.	Proclus, *Commentary on the Parmenides*
In Tim.	Proclus, *Commentary on the Timaeus*
Intro.	Pseudo-Galenus, *Introductio seu medicus*
Leg.	Plato, *Laws*
Men.	Plato, *Meno*
Met.	Aristotle, *Metaphysics*
N.D.	Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*
OC	Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*
Ov. Met.	Ovid, *Metamorphoses*
Parm.	Plato, *Parmenides*
Phd.	Plato, *Phaedo*
Phdr.	Plato, *Phaedrus*
Phileb.	Plato, *Philebus*
PHP	Galen, *De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*
Phys.	Aristotle, *Physics*
Poet.	Aristotle, *Poetics*
Rep.	Plato, *Republic*
Soph.	Plato, *Sophist*
SVF	Hans von Arnim, *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*
Symp.	Plato, *Symposium*
Theog.	Hesiod, *Theogony*

Tim.	Plato, *Timaeus*
Top.	Aristotle, *Topics*
VP	Porphyry, *Vita Plotini*

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Beauty in Plotinus: Where and How to Start?

It is well-known that Plotinus wrote two treatises on beauty. The first, I.6 *On Beauty*, is also the very first of the *Enneads* and belongs to the group of twenty-one treatises written before Porphyry's arrival in Rome. The second, V.8 *On Intellectual Beauty*, belongs rather to Plotinus' middle period (it is the 31st chronologically) and was very probably part of a larger treatise, which Harder calls the *Großschrift*[1] and which consists of treatises III.8[30] *On Contemplation*, V.8[31] *On Intellectual Beauty* and V.5[32] *That the Intelligibles Are Not Outside the Intellect and on the Good*, reaching its climax in II.9[33] *Against the Gnostics*.[2]

1 Cf. Harder 1936. The considerable degree of interconnection between the four treatises in question has since become widely accepted, although some have raised serious objections (cf. Wolters 1981, D'Ancona 2009, Narbonne 2011). For a summary of the debate on this topic, see Dufour 2006. To briefly summarise my own position which is similar to that of Darras-Worms (2018, pp. 9–15): 1) I think there is more or less strong textual evidence for the continuity of Plotinus' thought in treatises 30–33. This is, in fact, the core of Harder's thesis: III.8 is on contemplation, while V.8 starts by asking how it is possible to attain contemplation of Intellect and ends by asking whether this is enough or whether we should adopt another approach, such as the one laid out in V.5. This treatise ends with a summary to the effect that beauty (from V.8) and beings (from V.5) must come from the Good (causality being one of the main topics in III.8). All of this serves as background to the debate with the Gnostics, as is once again attested at the beginning of II.9, where we find a brief summary of what the Good (from III.8 and V.5), the Intellect (from V.8 and V.5) and soul (from III.8) are, while the attack on the Gnostics largely relies on the idea of continuity (from III.8). 2) The continuity between III.8 and II.9 does not necessarily imply the existence of a *Großschrift* that Porphyry himself cut into pieces with scissors, as Narbonne jokingly interprets Harder's thesis (although treatises V.8 and V.5 were probably divided in a similar way). 3) This continuity of thought does, however, indicate, on my reading, that in this period Plotinus was dealing with a bundle of interconnected topics, such as the true nature of the intelligible (described from various perspectives as being beautiful, as being true, as having the intelligibles in itself and as being contemplation) and what this means for other levels of reality (In what sense is the Good both contemplation and something intelligible? How is everything below the level of Intellect contemplation?). 4) All of this was crucial for the debate with the Gnostics (see below), although Aristotle, as usual, is also in dialogue with various other philosophers and schools (e.g. Plato, the Stoics).

2 An interesting supplement to the *Großschrift* is treatise VI.6[34] *On Numbers*. For the discussion of its connection with the *Großschrift* and its relevance for the concept of beauty, see further below and chapter 5.

There does not seem to be any serious reason to suppose a significant evolution in Plotinus' philosophy. Even leaving aside the problematic nature of developmental theories from a hermeneutical perspective, there exists some positive evidence for consistency in Plotinus' thought. In his *Life of Plotinus*, Porphyry gives at least four reasons for adopting a unitary perspective. The first two arguments are rather indirect: First, Plotinus began to write in his fifties, i.e. when he had already reached relative philosophical maturity. Second, "he worked out his train of thought from beginning to end in his own mind, and then, when he wrote it down, since he had set it all in order in his mind, he wrote as continuously as if he was copying from a book" and when he "had written anything he could never bear to go over it twice, even to read it through once was too much for him" (*VP* VIII.8–11 and 1–4).[3] This approach can easily lead to incoherence in the various expressions of his thought, although, if true, it testifies to the existence of an extremely concentrated mind. Thus, in my opinion, when we encounter potentially contradictory passages, our first attempt to resolve the contradiction should be to seek out a specific perspective from which both A and non-A can be predicated. This suggestion is given further support by the fact that the majority of what Plotinus writes about cannot be expressed, in the strict sense of the term. This situation holds not only for the Good, which is beyond all predication, but also for Intellect, which is the intelligible structure that our language merely imitates, as well as for matter, since we can only have an image of it as of an indefinite mass or a void, as Plotinus puts it in treatise II.4 *On Matter* (cf. II.4.11–12). However, this does not prevent Plotinus from attempting to talk about these things, and his terminological vagueness does not imply vagueness in his thinking, but rather the opposite. As such, Plotinus' writing is to a considerable extent the embodiment of the ideal of modern hermeneutics: the flow of his ideas is a constant attempt to express *verbum interius* and he shows no mercy towards his own laboriously constructed images, constantly seeking to express himself with ever greater precision.[4]

Third, the idea of development is not foreign to Porphyry, who claims that Plotinus' power (δύναμις) varied in the *Enneads*: "The power of the treatises varies according to the period in which he wrote them, in early life, in his prime,

3 Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this book are from Armstrong. Although a new translation by Gerson et al. has recently been published, its strengths and weaknesses have yet to be determined. Since several translators were involved in this translation, the style seems to me slightly less consistent as compared to Armstrong's brilliant work.

4 Cf. e.g. Grondin 1991.

or in his illness. The first twenty-one show a slighter capacity, not yet attaining to the dimensions of his full vigour. Those produced in his middle period reveal his power at its height: these twenty-four, except for the short ones, are of the highest perfection. The last nine were written when his power was already failing, and this is more apparent in the last four than in the five which precede them" (*VP* VI.27–37). Porphyry's judgement on the fluctuating strength of Plotinus' powers of expression is controversial, since, for example, one of the treatises that is most highly regarded by almost everyone, VI.9 *On the One or the Good*, belongs to the period of his supposedly diminished capacities. This is not my point here, however. Porphyry thinks that changes have occurred during the sixteen years of Plotinus' literary production, but that these changes concern his powers rather than his teachings. Finally, the last argument rests on the fact that Porphyry thought it possible to divide and rearrange his treatises in a rather brutal and somewhat artificial way in order to produce six *Enneads* ordered according to their topics: ethics, physics and metaphysics (the latter dealing, in turn, with soul, Intellect and the One).[5] This editorial procedure implies that although each *Ennead* contains treatises from different periods, Porphyry's view is that this should not cause any difficulties.

Is it then necessary to read the two treatises on beauty separately? Yes and no. For reasons I have already at least partly discussed, we should not be afraid to illuminate certain passages with help of other treatises, even ones from different periods, especially when we face problems that cannot be resolved solely on the basis of the treatise we are examining. At the same time, we should take into consideration Porphyry's statement that: "He took their subjects [scil. of his treatises; O.G.] from problems which came up from time to time in the meetings of the school" (*VP* V.61–62). This means that some treatises may treat different problems, whereas others treat the same ones. It is thus possible to use Porphyry's chronological ordering in order to try to examine the *Enneads* from the perspective of the problems discussed.[6] What I mean by this is that there are groups of treatises from different periods which deal with shared or closely related topics. In this sense, there is indeed a development. It would be

5 See the critical comments on Porphyry's arrangement of the *Enneads* by, for example, Armstrong, Gerson and O'Meara (Armstrong 1967, Gerson 2010, O'Meara 1993). At the same time, cf. the interesting attempt by Slaveva-Griffin (2008) to explain Porphyry's course of action as expressing an intrinsic tendency in Plotinus' philosophy. She argues that "just as the substantial number organises the intelligible realm as many-in-one, so does its material image, the monadic number, arrange the multiplicity of the treatises into *kosmos*, which is turned inward towards its intelligible essence" (p. 282).

6 Cf. a similar observation by Hadot (1986, p. 232) and Darras-Worms (2018, pp. 7–9).

quite odd to suppose that Plotinus dealt with the same problems when writing his first and his thirty-first treatises.[7]

1.2 Treatise V.8: Plotinus the Defender, or the Top-Down Perspective

What, then, are the questions that Plotinus poses in the two treatises on beauty, and what was he aiming at in writing them? It is relatively easy to define the context of V.8, which (as already mentioned) is quite probably an integral part of the *Großschrift* culminating in II.9 *Against the Gnostics*, and supplemented by VI.6 *On Numbers*, which completes the discussion of problems associated with Plotinus' concept of number started in V.5.4. In order to attack the Gnostics, Plotinus needs a firm foundation—a foundation that is provided in III.8, V.8 and V.5 with their conception of contemplation, beauty, Intellect and the Good. Note the way in which Plotinus poses questions and introduces the topics of these treatises. Treatise III.8 *On Contemplation* begins as follows: "Suppose we said, playing at first before we set out to be serious, that all things aspire to contemplation, and direct their gaze to this end—not only rational but irrational living things, and the power of growth in plants, and the earth which brings them forth—and that all attain to it as far as possible for them in their natural state, but different things contemplate and attain their end in different ways, some truly, and some only having an imitation and image of this true end—could anyone endure the oddity of this line of thought?" (III.8.1.1–8). Similarly in V.8, the topic is presented in the following way: "Since we maintain that the man who has entered into contemplation of the intelligible world and understood the beauty of the true Intellect will be able also to bring into his mind its Father which is beyond Intellect, let us try to see and to say to ourselves, as far as it is possible to say such things, how it is possible for anyone to contemplate the beauty of Intellect and of that higher world" (V.8.1.1–6). And V.5, which follows immediately on V.8 and represents another way to "clear understanding of the intelligible region" (V.8.13.22–24) starts with the question of whether anyone could say that "Intellect, the true and real Intellect, will ever be in error and believe the unreal?" (V.5.1.1–2).

In all of these cases, Plotinus tries to elaborate on what is implied by premises like "everything aspires to contemplation", "contemplation of Intellect is the contemplation of beauty", "Intellect can never be in error" or "Intellect is

7 Cf. similar statements by Armstrong (in the *Preface* to his translation of the *Enneads*, p. VII), Bussanich (1985, pp. 12–14) or Atkinson (1983, p. X).

a second god". What he is aiming at is the elaboration of the continuity of different ontological levels (particularly in III.8), their corresponding continuous beauty (particularly in V.8) and a proper understanding of Intellect, not only with respect to its own object of thought, but also to its source, the Good (particularly in V.5).[8] He then uses the concepts of continuity, beauty and a definite, defined number of hypostases to attack the Gnostics who are wrong precisely about these points (among other things). They despise the bodily world since they do not understand that it is an image of the intelligible (cf. II.9.3–4, II.9.8, II.9.13). Consequently, they do not understand its beauty (II.9.5, II.9.7–8, II.9.16–17), and they also pointlessly multiply the number of ontological levels, attributing evil to Intellect because they do not understand what it is and how it is generated (cf. II.9.1–4, II.9.11–12).

Accordingly, Plotinus' tone changes in II.9, which swarms with mocking questions[9] of the following kind:

> If […] it [scil. the soul; O.G.] made the world as the result of a moral failure […] when did it fail? […] If it began to fail, why did it not begin before? […] If it forgot them [scil. the intelligible realities; O.G.], how is it the craftsman of the world? […] Why, if it had any memory at all, did it not want to ascend there? For whatever advantage did it think was going to result for it from making the universe? […] And when, too, is it going to destroy it? For if it was sorry it had made it, what was it waiting for? […] What other fairer image of the intelligible world could there be? […] What sphere could be more exact or more dignified or better ordered in this circuit [than the sphere of this universe] after the self-enclosed circle there of the intelligible universe?
>
> II.9.4.1–32

These numerous questions can be condensed into one: How could they possibly bring forward proofs and not only make arbitrary, arrogant assertions? (cf. II.9.10) Or even better: Who, if he is not out of his mind, could tolerate such ideas? (cf. II.9.8). Obviously, Plotinus' strategy here is to point out absurd

8 Cf. Kalligas 2000 and Darras-Worms 2018, pp. 11–12.

9 Armstrong aptly summarises Plotinus' probable attitude towards the Gnostics as follows: "They despise and revile the ancient Platonic teaching and claim to have a new and superior wisdom of their own: but in fact anything that is true in their teaching comes from Plato, and all they have done themselves is to add senseless complications and pervert the true traditional doctrine into a melodramatic, superstitious fantasy designed to feed their own delusions of grandeur." See his "Introductory Note" to II.9 in his translation of the *Enneads*.

deviations of the Gnostic teachings from his own views developed in III.8, V.8 and V.5. This strategy can be shown to be at work even in the case of beauty, my primary object of interest, since Plotinus raises questions of the following kind:

> If someone who sees beauty excellently represented in a face is carried to that higher world, will anyone be so sluggish in his mind and so immovable that when he sees all the beauties in the world of sense, all its good proportion and the mighty excellence of its order, and the splendour of forms which is manifested in the stars, for all their remoteness, he will not thereupon think, seized with reverence, 'What wonders, and from what source?'
>
> II.9.16.48–55

Plotinus insists on two crucial points, namely that beauty can inspire an enquiry into its own source (that is, an ascent to a higher ontological level) and that this world is beautiful because it is an image of the intelligible cosmos, the Intellect. The point, of course, is to demonstrate that the sensible world is dominated by a single principle, the Good, manifesting itself on different levels as beauty, and that it is not created by or imbued with evil forces (like the demiurge Yaldabaoth or some similar entity in other versions of Gnosticism). In this sense, Plotinus proceeds from Intellect down towards its image, since it is only beautiful precisely to the extent that it is an image of Intellect (cf. Darras-Worms 2018, pp. 16–17).

1.3 Treatise I.6: An Introduction to Plotinus, or the Bottom-Up Perspective

The first group of twenty-one treatises is different both in tone and in aim from the later ones, as well as asking different questions. Ontological considerations which are later presupposed and whose implications are elaborated in the *Großschrift* are presented here as something which our soul must first reach and comprehend. Plotinus concentrates on persuading his reader about the existence of the basic principles of his universe and introducing their soul to the different ontological levels. Moreover, he explicitly poses the question of how we can aspire to reach these. Let us list again some of the questions from these treatises, which I have organised in ascending order: "What is this one matter which is also continuous and without quality?" (II.4.8.1–2); "What is it which makes us imagine that bodies are beautiful and attracts our hearing to

sounds because of their beauty?" (I.6.1.18–19); "And how are all the things which depend on soul beautiful?" (I.6.1.10–11); "What nature does this [scil. the soul; O.G.] have?" (IV.7.2.1); "How could one reach it [scil. the realm of the intelligible; O.G.]?" (V.9.2.1–2); "How will he [scil. someone who is by nature a lover and truly disposed to philosophy from the beginning; O.G.] ascend to it, and where will his power come from?" (V.9.2.10–11); "Why, then, must we go on up when we have reached the level of soul, and not suppose that it is the first reality?" (V.9.4.1–2); "Has the intelligible, then, virtues?" (I.2.1.15–16); "What is virtue?" (I.2.2.10–11), "How does the Intellect see, and whom does it see? And how did it come into existence at all and arise from the One so as to be able to see?" (V.1.6.1–2); "What then are the things in the one Intellect?" (V.9.9.1); "Where did the intelligible matter come from, from where did it get its being?" (II.4.2.9–10); "Whence, then, does this [scil. Intellect; O.G.] come?" (V.4.1.22); "How does it come from the First?" (V.4.1.24), "What could the One be, and what nature could it have?" (VI.9.3.1); "But why is the generator not Intellect?" (V.4.2.4); "In what sense, then, do we call it one, and how are we to fit it into our thought?" (VI.9.6.1–2); "How then do all things come from the One?" (V.2.1.3–5).

Of course, one could rightly point out that the unifying principle of the first twenty-one treatises is absolutely arbitrary, namely that they were written before Porphyry's arrival in Rome. For this reason, Hadot proposes to divide them into six subgroups, the first dealing with soul, the second dealing with problems of Platonic theory of forms and Aristotle's conception of the Intellect, the third dealing with the Good and the ascent to the Good, the fourth consisting solely of treatise II.4, which is devoted to matter, the fifth examining virtue and purification (this group ought to include I.6) and the sixth group comprising what is left over, III.1 and II.6.[10] I have no substantial objections to this ordering. Moreover, I do not want to press my point too hard and to try to find a characteristic that is unique solely to the first twenty-one treatises and no others. However, it does make sense to presuppose—and the questions quoted above offer some support for this claim—that when one begins to make a record one's doctrines, it is normal to begin with some sort of introduction to its key elements. In Plotinus' case, this mainly means the three hypostases. However, the hypostases are not lifeless presuppositions in our minds that we derive from reality and that, so to speak, must exist in order for us to be able to explain our experience. Rather, they are something real and living, which our soul can encounter. Only when we have experienced them directly can we truly understand what Plotinus is trying to say—or at least this is how he sees things.

10 Cf. Hadot 1993, section *Analytic bibliography*.

For this reason, the question of the motivation for and the range or scope of the soul's ascent plays a crucial role in these introductory writings. Plotinus himself makes clear where we should start:

> We ought to consider this first. What is this principle which is present in bodies [scil. that makes them beautiful; O.G.]? What is it that attracts the gaze of those who look at something and turns and draws them to it and makes them enjoy the sight? If we find this, perhaps we can use it as a stepping-stone and get a sight of the rest.
>
> I.6.1.17–21, word order slightly modified

I think that this is precisely the context of treatise I.6. Beauty represents a perfect stepping-stone, enabling us to catch sight of everything. It is something we are familiar with from the sensible world, something which can move our soul and which, with the right guidance, can be used to draw us up to its source and perhaps even to *the Source*. Of course, Plotinus knew all of this already from having read Plato, which is perhaps the reason why treatise I.6 was the very first to be written. Put simply, if in the *Großschrift* Plotinus proceeds downwards from the intelligible, in order to demonstrate the beauty of the sensible world as its image, in I.6 and the following introductory treatises, the approach is the other way around. I shall therefore take a lesson from this in my own enquiry and concentrate first on I.6, in order to catch a glimpse of the rest. At the same time, V.8 probably contains some further details since it is addressed to a "man who has entered into contemplation of the intelligible world and understood the beauty of the true Intellect" (V.8.1.1–3).

I shall thus start, in chapter 2, with a discussion of treatise I.6, where I shall look for the outlines of the doctrine of beauty. Chapter 3 then deals with treatise V.8, which is of use in specifying Plotinus' concept of beauty in more detail. In these two chapters, I study the basic outlines of Plotinus' doctrine. This approach seems natural, because these two treatises are generally considered to enquire into this topic and are, in fact, given the title (by Porphyry, of course) *On* (*Intelligible*) *Beauty*. Since the conclusion of both of these chapters is that beauty is primarily to be found in the Intellect and that it is closely linked with unity in multiplicity, this topic will need to be investigated in more detail. For this reason, in chapter 3, I sketch five mutually interconnected perspectives that I have identified in the *Enneads*, which Plotinus takes to describe the unity in multiplicity specific to the Intellect. Two of these perspectives, which concern the nature of intellection and intelligible objects, are at least partially sketched in chapters 2 and 3. The perspective relating to the genesis of Intellect is analysed in chapters 3–6. For this reason, chapters 4 and 5 focus for the

most part on the two remaining perspectives, which are connected to Intellect's hierarchical and structural unity in multiplicity.

1.4 *On the Kinds of Being*: Plotinus the Exegete

The first perspective, dealt with in chapter 4, is that of the highest kinds, as presented in treatise VI.2 *On the Kinds of Being II*, where Plotinus also considers the one in Intellect and beauty as candidates for the highest kinds. Treatise VI.2 belongs to the same period as the *Großschrift*, and is itself also part of a larger treatise devoted to the highest kinds, comprising VI.1[42], VI.2[43] and VI.3[44]. Treatise VI.1 engages in a polemic against the Peripatetic (VI.1.1–24) and Stoic (VI.1.25–30) conception of categories. Plotinus' attitude here is, to a certain extent, similar to his attitude in II.9. In both cases, he is attacking a rival doctrine: in II.9, various claims made by the Gnostics, in VI.1, the account of the highest kinds or categories advanced by Aristotle and his school and by the Stoics. Consequently, the questions he asks here are not used as means to explore an unknown field or to add precision to preliminary accounts, but are raised in order to point out ambiguities in rival theories or even to demonstrate that they are nonsensical.[11] As in II.9, Plotinus does this in a more (in the case of Stoic doctrines) or less (mainly in the case of Peripatetic ones) derisive way. Surprisingly, his attacks here lack his usual open-mindedness and sense for the author's intention, leading treatise VI.1 to be depreciated by some commentators.[12] In VI.2, Plotinus' attitude is different. He himself declares that "the next thing would be to say how these things look to us, trying to lead back our own thoughts to the thought of Plato" (VI.2.1.4–5). Here, we encounter Plotinus the exegete, who develops a genuinely Platonic conception of the highest kinds.[13] This treatise contains nearly three times fewer questions than VI.1 and nearly two times fewer than VI.3,[14] while the tone is once again an exploratory one, in which asking questions helps us to be more specific and to advance the argument. Treatise VI.3 thus stands somewhere between the two previous ones: it attacks Aristotle's doctrine of categories, to some extent, but only in order to

11 Cf. for example VI.1.20–21 on affection, which consist almost solely of such questions.

12 E.g. Armstrong (cf. his "Introductory note" to *Enneads* VI.1–3 in his translation of Plotinus) or Atkinson (1983).

13 As Atkinson points out with reference to other places in the *Enneads* and Plato's *Soph.* 254d4 ff. and *Parm.* 145e7 ff. See Atkinson 1983, p. 96.

14 Or, more precisely, one must take into account the length of each treatise, so that number of questions per line is more accurate. There are nearly two times fewer questions per line in VI.2 than in VI.1 and around one-fifth fewer questions per line in VI.2 than in VI.3.

adapt it for the sensible world, as an image of the intelligible one. Both the tone and the questions raised are, in this sense, less hostile than in VI.1.

1.5 *On Number*: Plotinus the Explorer

Chapter 5 develops the second important perspective for giving an account of the unity and multiplicity of Intellect, namely that of number, which is dealt with particularly in VI.6[34] *On Number*, a sort of appendix to the *Großschrift*. As already noted, in V.5.4 Plotinus postpones a thorough discussion of different problems associated with his concept of number, that is, until treatise VI.6. Here he introduces his notion of substantial number (οὐσιώδης ἀριθμός) and thoroughly discusses its relation to Intellect and to the primary kinds. Plotinus presents a systematic defence of the Platonic concept of *true numbers* especially against Aristotle's criticism, but at the same time he develops his own original version of this concept in dialogue with the Middle Platonists and the Neopythagoreans.[15]

Correspondingly, Plotinus' approach to raising questions and determining the problems to be discussed changes once again in VI.6. Having discussed the question "Is multiplicity a falling away from the One, and infinity a total falling away because it is an innumerable multiplicity and for this reason is evil in so far as it is infinity, and are we evil when we are multiplicity?" (VI.6.1.1–4), Plotinus turns to the main topic of the treatise: "we must now consider how the numbers are in the intelligible" (VI.6.4.1–2). This is followed by a swarm of exploratory questions: "What then is the nature of numbers?" (VI.6.5.1); "Is it an accompaniment of each substance and something observed in it?" (VI.6.5.1–4); "But how is there a dyad and a triad, and how are all unified, and how could such and such number be brought together into one?" (VI.6.5.4–6); "But if the one itself and the decad itself exist without the things, and then the intelligible things, after being what they are, are going to be, some of them henads and some of them dyads or triads, what would be their nature, and how would it come into existence?" (VI.6.6.1–4); "The starting-point of our investigation is: can number exist by itself, or must the two be observed in two things, and the three likewise? And indeed, also the one which is among numbers?" (VI.6.9.5–8); "Is not Being, then, unified number, and the beings number unfolded, and Intellect number moving in itself, and the Living Being inclusive number?" (VI.6.9.29–32); "What, then, is the proper cause of number?" (VI.6.14.27–28);

15 Cf. Slaveva-Griffin 2009.

"But in what way is the number in you?" (VI.6.16.37); "What then is the line there in the intelligible, and where?" (VI.6.17.16).

In this sense, the reader once again assumes the role of an explorer, as was the case in the first group of twenty-one treatises. However, treatise VI.6 differs from these earlier ones insofar as it does not contain an ascent from bodies up to the Good. Rather, it is already underway on the intricate roads of reflection on unity, number and multiplicity in the intelligible. In this sense, although VI.6 is explicitly anticipated in the *Großschrift*, it nonetheless focuses to a considerable extent on its own subject matter, abandoning the controversy with the Gnostics, which was at the centre of the treatises in the *Großschrift* (cf. Corrigan 2005, p. 202). Nevertheless, a proper understanding of unity and multiplicity is necessary in order to grasp beauty in the Platonic way, and this is undoubtedly why a relatively large amount of space is more or less explicitly devoted to this topic here.

1.6 Treatise VI.7: The Many Faces of Plotinus and Beauty

Having considered Intellect's hierarchical and structural unity in multiplicity and its relation to the question of beauty, I then turn in chapter 6 to treatise VI.7[38] *How the Multitude of the Forms Came into Being and on the Good*. This treatise is relevant to the question of beauty, and not only because of the famous chapters 32 and 33, which deal with the relation of beauty to the Good. Treatise VI.7 also develops with greater complexity several motifs already encountered in previous chapters, like that of life, light, the genetic unity and multiplicity of Intellect and the impact of beauty on the soul. However, this treatise is a very complex one consisting of several parts that are only loosely connected.[16] Pierre Hadot (cf. 1988, pp. 20–26 and 76–81) divides the treatise into six parts, each dealing with a Platonic question and commenting on Plato's dialogues: the first (VI.7.1–7) is devoted to the interpretation of *Tim*. 45b3, the second (VI.7.8–14) elaborates on the contents of Intellect, taking into account the relevant passages from the *Parmenides* (esp. 130a–d), the third part (VI.7.15–24.4) develops the question of the resemblance to the Good on the grounds of *Rep*. 509a, the fourth (VI.7.24.4–30.30) considers different accounts of the good from the perspective of the *Philebus* and *Republic*, the fifth part

16 Siegmann's interpretation (cf. 1990) of the treatise as being simply on the Good (reflected in his original translation of the title of VI.7: *Wie kam die Vielheit der Ideen zustande? Vom Guten!*) is, in this sense, not persuasive. For chapters 1–14, at least, do not fit into this scheme very well.

(VI.7.30.29–35.45) elaborates on the relationship between beauty and the Good as sketched out in *Phileb*. 64e, *Phdr*. 250c–256e and *Symp*. 211b–212c, and the last part (VI.7.36–42) proves that the Good does not think, which is, according to Plotinus, made clear in *Rep*. 505a and 519c, as well as *Parm*. 142a. The treatise, as Hadot puts it (1988, p. 21), has a kind of musical structure, in which these themes reappear in slightly different forms throughout the whole work. Nevertheless, this does not mean that there was a pre-existing composition for this musical piece, because, as Plotinus himself admits (cf. VI.7.7.17–18), he gets sometimes carried away with some of the topics being discussed (cf. also Hadot 1988, p. 16). The main tone of VI.7 is therefore exegetical (as in VI.2), but the multi-layered nature of the treatise explains why Plotinus adopts different personas in different parts, e.g. that of a teacher lending an ear to his doubting students in the first two parts (VI.7.1–14, cf. also the similar observation by Armstrong in his "Introductory Note" to *Ennead* VI.7) or that of a ruthless opponent in the fourth and sixth parts, where he enters into a discussion with Aristotle and other philosophical schools.

The function of the questions Plotinus raises in the text changes accordingly, so that—to use the same examples—most of the questions raised in the first two parts sound rather like those of a doubting student, e.g.: "For why should there be horns for defence there?" (VI.7.10.1–2); "Does then the world there have everything that is here?" (VI.7.11.3–4); "How then are there plants there?" (VI.7.11.6), "And how does fire live?" (VI.7.11.6–7); "And how does earth?" (VI.7.11.7); "And how in general can these things here be there in the intelligible?" (VI.7.11.8).[17] On the other hand, the questions of the fourth and sixth part are rather sharp, e.g.: "Well then, if evil acquired a perception of itself, would it be satisfied with itself?" (VI.7.28.17–18); "Then, if it is going to think, it will not presumably think itself alone, if it is going to think at all; for why will it not think all things? Will it not be able to?" (VI.7.39.10–12).[18] Consequently, different parts of treatise VI.7 seem to address different questions with different purposes, and it therefore requires a specifically close reading with respect to the changing context in order to be able to understand its claims correctly.

The last chapter of this book then summarises and relates the conclusions of previous chapters and tries to answer the question what the status of beauty is on the level of sensibles (section 7.1), of soul (section 7.2) and in Intellect (section 7.3), as well as in what sense the Good can be said to be beautiful (section

17 Similar questions are also raised in VI.7.1.25–27, VI.7.3.14–15, 22–29, VI.7.4.37–38, VI.7.8.4–5, VI.7.9.4–5, 15–16, and VI.7.11.18.

18 Similar questions are also raised in VI.7.28.16–17, 18–19, VI.7.29.24–25, and VI.7.37.7–8.

7.4). Section 7.3 also tries to distinguish beauty from several other predicates that characterise the Intellect, such as life, being and the other highest kinds, the one in Intellect, multiplicity, number, intellection, active actuality and eternity, knowledge and wisdom and, finally, the virtues. The very last section 7.5 derives several characteristics of beauty that permeate its predication on different ontological levels.

CHAPTER 2

Beauty as a Stepping-Stone (Treatise 1.6)

The very first *Ennead*, I.6 *On Beauty*, represents an introduction to Plotinus' philosophy through the prism of beauty. I shall begin my analysis by summarising the phenomenal field of beauty in the treatise (section 2.1) and by highlighting its relevant context, i.e. Plato's *Symposium* and the Stoic conception of beauty as symmetry (section 2.2). In the manner of an ascent, I shall then focus on the cause of beauty and ugliness in bodies (section 2.3) and soul (section 2.5), and the impact of beauty on the latter (section 2.4). Finally, I shall address the intricate question "What is the primary beauty in treatise I.6?", i.e. whether it is the Intellect or the Good (section 2.6).

2.1 The Phenomenal Field of Beauty

Plotinus begins with an examination of the scope of the beautiful, i.e. what beauty is predicated of. Many people call things perceived by sight (ἐν ὄψει) or hearing (ἐν ἀκοαῖς) beautiful, as well as things taken from the arts in general (ἐν μουσικῇ καὶ ἁπάσῃ; cf. I.6.1.1–3). The examples Plotinus gives in the treatise for the former group are the following:

1. bodies (σῶμα/σώματα; cf. I.6.1.7, 12–13, 14–16; I.6.2.1–2, 27–28; I.6.3.5–6; I.6.4.20–22; I.6.5.43–48; I.6.6.29–30; I.6.7.20–21, 35; I.6.8.5–6, 13)
2. body parts: e.g. a face (πρόσωπον; cf. I.6.1.38)
3. a human-shaped statue (ἄγαλμα; cf. I.6.9.8–11)
4. a part of a statue: e.g. a face (πρόσωπον; cf. I.6.9.8–11)
5. a colour (χρῶμα; cf. I.6.1.30–31; I.6.3.17; I.6.7.34)
6. light (φῶς; cf. I.6.1.30–31)
7. gold (χρυσός; cf. I.6.1.33; I.6.5.50–53)
8. lightning (ἀστρᾰπή; cf. I.6.1.33–34)
9. the stars (ἄστρα; cf. I.6.1.33–34); the evening/morning star (ἕσπερος/ἑῷος; cf. I.6.4.11–12)
10. an individual stone (εἷς λίθος; cf. I.6.2.24–27)
11. a house (οἰκία; cf. I.6.2.24–27; I.6.3.6–7)
12. fire (πῦρ; cf. I.6.3.19–20)
13. a reflection in the water (εἴδωλον ἐφ' ὕδατος; cf. I.6.8.9–10)
14. the various types of sensual beauty experienced by Odysseus during his stay with Circe and Calypso (ἔχων /scil. Ὀδυσσεὺς/ ἡδονὰς δι' ὀμμάτων καὶ κάλλει πολλῷ αἰσθητῷ συνών; cf. I.6.8.20 and Hom. *Od.* 5 and 10)

For the latter group, i.e. beautiful things perceived by hearing, the following examples are to be found in I.6:

15. melodies (μέλη; cf. I.6.1.3)
16. rhythms (ῥυθμοί; cf. I.6.1.3)
17. sounds (φωνή; cf. I.6.1.34–35)
18. perceptible harmonies (ἁρμονίαι φανεραί; cf. I.6.3.28–33)

Both groups share several characteristics. In particular, they may at times appear beautiful and at other times not (cf. I.6.1.37–40), which implies that they are not beautiful in themselves. Rather, they are beautiful only by participation (I.6.1.12–13). Moreover, insofar as they are beautiful, they cannot be composed of ugly parts (I.6.1.26–30). These characteristics will be described in more detail shortly (see section 2.3).

However, Plotinus continues, those who advance upwards from sensible beauties to soul, will also call the following things beautiful:

19. practices (ἐπιτηδεύματα; cf. I.6.1.4–5; I.6.4.8; I.6.5.2–3; I.6.6.29; I.6.9.3)
20. customs (νόμοις; cf. I.6.1.43)
21. actions (πράξεις; cf. I.6.1.5; I.6.6.28)—i.e. the products of virtue (cf. I.6.5.3–4; I.6.9.4)
22. ways of life (τρόποι; cf. I.6.5.3)
23. characters (ἕξεις; cf. I.6.1.5)
24. intellectual activities (ἐπιστῆμαί; cf. I.6.1.5; I.6.4.8)
25. studies (μαθήματα; cf. I.6.1.44)
26. discourses (λόγοι; cf. I.6.1.41–42)
27. theorems (θεωρήματα; cf. I.6.1.44), as well as their mutual agreement (ὁμολογία τε καὶ συμφωνία; cf. I.6.1.45–49)
28. imperceptible harmonies (ἁρμονίαι ἀφανεῖς; cf. I.6.3.28–33; Heraclitus DK 22 B 54 and Kalligas 2014, com. ad loc.)
29. virtue (τὸ τῶν ἀρετῶν κάλλος; cf. I.6.1.1–6, 49–50; I.6.4.9; I.6.5.11–12; I.6.9.13–14), along with individual virtues like justice and self-control (δἵκαιοσύνη καὶ σωφροσύνη; cf. I.6.4.10–11; I.6.5.12–17),
30. soul, which is beautiful as such (ψυχή; cf. I.6.5.4–5; I.6.6.16–17, 27; I.6.9.2–3)[1]

In passing, Plotinus sketches a distinction between two types of beings: those that only participate in beauty and those that are themselves beautiful, like virtue (ἀρετῆς ἡ φύσις;[2] cf. I.6.1.13–14). The difference is supposed to lie in the

1 The list of beauties in soul in I.6.1.40–44 is an obvious reference to Plato's *Symp.* 209e6–212a8.

2 Cf. Kalligas' commentary (2014) on the translation of *physis* ad. loc.

fact that, in the case of participating things, we can distinguish their being bodies, on the one hand, and their being beautiful, on the other. Something can, for example, be a table, but it is not, by that fact, necessarily beautiful (cf. I.6.1.14–16). We can surmise that in the case of a thing that is beautiful in itself, it would be impossible to find a non-beautiful specimen of that type of thing, since its very being is linked with beauty.

This is probably the case of the intelligibles, as well as of the whole Intellect. And, in fact, Plotinus does go on shortly thereafter to speak about the beauty of:

31. the Intellect (cf. I.6.1.53–54; I.6.6.17, 26–27) or the god (θεός; cf. I.6.9.25, 32–34)
32. the Forms, ideas (εἴδη, ιδέαι; cf. I.6.9.35–36) or real beings (ὄντως ὄντα; cf. I.6.5.19–20; I.6.6.21; *Phdr*. 247c7)
33. the place of the Forms (τόπος τῶν εἰδῶν; cf. I.6.9.40–41, *Rep*. 517b5)
34. the things that come from Intellect (τὰ παρὰ νοῦ; cf. I.6.6.17)

Finally, by the end of the treatise:

35. the Good has been repeatedly said to be beautiful (cf. I.6.7.1–3, 14–21, 28–30)
36. or even identified with Beauty (cf. I.6.6.23–24, 25–26, I.6.7.28–30, I.6.9.42–43)

However, in this case, beauty is in some sense different because:

37. it is inconceivable (κάλλος ἀμήχανον; cf. I.6.8.2, *Rep*. 509a6)
38. it should perhaps rather be termed "the beauteous" (καλλονή; cf. I.6.6.25–26)
39. the reaction of soul to this beauty is different, since it causes a painless shock (cf. the use of ἐκπλήττεσθαι ἀβλαβῶς; I.6.7.16–17 and section 2.4 below)

Moreover, the Good is also said to transcend beauty (cf. I.6.9.37–39) and to be beautiful only in a loose way of speaking (cf. I.6.9.39–42), so that it is *prima facie* not clear how we are to understand this contradiction. I shall address this question in the next section (2.2) and revisit it in sections 2.6, 3.5, 6.6 and 7.4.

2.2 The Context of the Question: The *Symposium* and Beauty as Symmetry

As is obvious from the ascending structure of the treatise,[3] the hierarchy of the ascension[4] and direct quotes from and hidden paraphrases of the *Symposium*,[5] Plotinus is basing the treatise strongly on the passage 199d1–212a7 of this Platonic dialogue.[6] Here, after a brief discussion between Socrates and Agathon (cf. *Symp*. 199d1–201c9), the former recounts his meeting with the Mantinean sorceress Diotima (cf. *Symp*. 201d1–209e4) and how she initiated him into the mysteries of love (cf. *Symp*. 209e5–212a7). According to this passage, *erōs* is always *erōs for* something, i.e. for beauty, and presupposes a preceding *lack* (cf. 199d1–201a1). If we look more deeply into the topic, however, we see that *erōs* is, like any desire, a desire for the good—or more precisely a desire to possess the good always (cf. *Symp*. 205e7–206b10). Such a need is expressed in terms of giving birth in the beautiful, with respect to body and soul (τόκος ἐν καλῷ καὶ κατὰ τὸ σῶμα καὶ κατὰ τὴν ψυχήν; cf. *Symp*. 206b7–8). By giving birth, lovers partake in the eternal and immortal (cf. *Symp*. 206c1–208b9). Those whose pregnancy is of the body do this by physical procreation, giving birth to children. By contrast, those who are pregnant in their souls give birth to virtue (cf. *Symp*. 208c1–209e4). However, the lovers themselves, their conception of beauty and the offspring they give birth to all evolve gradually on the so-called *scala amoris*. This ascent is, to a certain extent, spontaneous, but most lovers—including Socrates himself—require guidance. They start by loving a single body, then advance to loving all beautiful bodies, before arriving at the superior beauty of soul. In this higher realm, they recognise the beauty of practices, laws and knowledge, until they catch sight of the form of beauty itself, in which every beautiful thing partakes. Here, they give birth to true virtue, becoming godlike and attaining immortality as far as possible for a human being (cf. *Symp*. 209e5–212a7 and section 2.4).

As a mythological being, Erōs is a divine spirit situated between the immortal gods and mortal human beings, with various responsibilities related to

3 See the similar observation by Tornau (2011) in his introductory note to I.6.

4 Cf. I.6.1.5–6; I.6.6.27–29; I.6.9.1–6.

5 To name the most obvious, see I.6.1.12–14, 14–16, 20, 42–44; I.6.2.4–6; I.6.4.25–26; I.6.5.1–5; I.6.7.21–24; I.6.8.2. However, Tornau (2011) and Kalligas (2014) provide further references in their commentaries.

6 The literature on Plato's *Symposium* is, of course, vast. To name just a few studies from various philosophical traditions, see Krüger 1939, Allen 1991, Sier 1997, Patočka 1997 or Scheffield 2006.

his intermediary status. He was born from the god Poros, who got drunk at Aphrodite's birthday celebration, and from Penia. As such, he inherited the character of a resourceful and cunning hunter, but is at the same time in a constant state of need (cf. *Symp*. 202b5–204c5). I shall delve deeper into Plotinus' understanding of this myth when discussing the role of *erōs* in treatise VI.7 (see section 6.6).

This very short exposé of Plato's doctrine has provided one of the basic keys for understanding what Plotinus is trying to say in I.6. He chooses the *Symposium* as a background text for at least three reasons:

1. Like Plato, he wants to lead his reader from bodily beauty through that of soul to the beauty of Intellect and beyond. This is made quite explicit at the beginning of the treatise (cf. I.6.1.1–20).
2. Plato's doctrine represented common ground for Plotinus' students.
3. Plotinus must have believed that Plato's doctrine, if properly understood, is the most proper context for posing this question, since he undoubtedly considered Plato's notion of beauty and *erōs* to be correct.

Interpreting treatise I.6 in light of the *Symposium* has important consequences. From the very start, it potentially gives us a hint as to how Plotinus could have spoken of the beauty of the Good, while claiming that the Good is beyond beauty. In the *Symposium*, beauty is, in fact, at the summit of the *scala amoris*, although we know from Plato's *Republic* (508a4–509a7) that the highest form is the Good. However, as is probably also the case in the *Symposium*, if one considers the Good from the perspective of love, it will manifest itself as the ambiguous pair of the beautiful and the good. This results from the fact that the Good is the ultimate object of desire, which is, however, realised as giving birth in the beautiful, so that there is an intimate connection of both. Moreover, the evolution of a lover's understanding of beauty along the *scala amoris* is to be understood as comprising a two-dimensional movement: First, there is a horizontal expansion (cf. the use of ῥώννῡμι and αὐξάνω in *Symp*. 210d6–7) on the first two levels, i.e. a movement from one body to all bodies and from a single psychic aspect to all psychic aspects, so that just before grasping the single form of beauty, the lover sees a vast sea of beauty (πολὺ πέλαγος τοῦ καλοῦ; cf. *Symp*. 210d4). Second, there is a vertical shift from the bodily to the psychic, and then again from the level of soul to the form of beauty. It seems that, by nature, this transformation of the notion of beauty ultimately leads to the search for the principle and source of beauty, i.e. the Good. In the ascent from bodily beauty to the Good, the ultimate goal of one's desire appears as beauty on each level, but the final step reveals the Good as the ultimate source of beauty. From the opposing, top-down perspective, beauty appears on each level after the Good, as a particular manifestation of it. In any case, all of these preliminary remarks

about the relationship between the Good and beauty will need to be pursued further in treatise I.6 (cf. section 2.6) and beyond (cf. sections 3.5, 6.6 and 7.4).

When identifying the context of Plotinus' enquiry, a further, rival conception of beauty must be addressed, which a contemporary reader would probably have had in mind. More specifically, Plotinus states that beauty is not the good proportion of the parts in relation to each other and to the whole (συμμετρία τῶν μερῶν πρὸς ἄλληλα καὶ πρὸς τὸ ὅλον), with the addition of good colour (εὔχροια)—i.e. being well-proportioned (σύμμετρος) and measured (μεμετρημένος), as the Stoics claim (cf. I.6.1.20–25).[7] Plotinus argues against this conception on different levels and suggests that symmetry is an epiphenomenon of beauty, rather than its cause (cf. Smith 2016, com. ad I.6.1.21–54 and Kalligas 2014, com. ad I.6.1.20–25). He begins by pointing out phenomena that are not accounted for by this theory, because they are simple and not composed of visible, well-proportioned parts, e.g. a beautiful colour, light, gold,[8] lightning, sound or—rather surprisingly—the stars[9] (cf. I.6.1.30–36). Moreover, the same thing may sometimes appear beautiful and at other times not, even though it has the same proportions, for instance, a beautiful face (cf. I.6.1.37–40) which, in treatise VI.7.22, is said to be ugly on a corpse (cf. part. 5.4). Advocates of the conception of beauty as symmetry also encounter problems in the case of psychic, or rather intelligible phenomena more generally, where it is not obvious what parts should be well-proportioned with respect to which whole, for example in the case of beautiful ways of life (cf. I.6.1.40–45). Most important here, however, is Plotinus' rejection of the claim that beauty is an attribute of a whole which consists of non-beautiful parts (cf. I.6.1.26–30). Even in this case, we see that he draws inspiration from Plato, who explicitly considers this question at the end of *Hipp. Maj.* (297d9–304a4), where Socrates proposes the definition "pleasure through sight and hearing". Like Plato, Plotinus also advocates a distributive notion of beauty, i.e. he thinks that if the whole is beautiful, its

7 Cf. Johannes Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2.62.15–63.5 (= *SVF* III.278), Galen, *PHP* 5.2.49–3.1 (= *SVF* II.841), DL 7.99–100, Cicero *N.D.* 2.15. However, Plotinus might also be referring to Plato's *Tim.* 87c4–d8, *Phlb.* 64e5–7, *Symp.* 196a4–8 and Aristotle's *Met.* M 3, 1078a36–b1 or *Top.* III 1, 116b21–22. For the historical background of the notion of beauty as symmetry, see Schmitt 2007, Čelkytė 2020 and Hon and Goldstein 2008.

8 The references might once again be to Plato's *Phlb.* 51b–d, *Leg.* VII 812d and *Hipp. Maj.* 289e.

9 An interesting interpretation is suggested by Smith (2016, com. ad I.6.1.34), who claims that Plotinus might be referring to Venus, which appears at first alone in the sky. Otherwise, this example makes little sense. Iozzia (2015, pp. 59–60) correctly notices that all of the examples share a connection with light, which will play a crucial role in Plotinus' understanding of beauty (cf. chapter 6), but even so, the stars as a whole are far from simple, so this does not explain the role of this example in the argument.

parts must be too.[10] Therefore, he argues, it is absurd to call two bad statements which are in agreement beautiful, because a beautiful thing cannot consist of ugly parts (cf. I.6.1.45–49).

It seems to me that this is, in fact, the most important point for Plotinus, because it is precisely the distributive nature of beauty that accounts for the fact that symmetry cannot be the cause of beauty, but only accompanies it. The notion of symmetry assumes that the parts can constitute a higher whole, that is, a structure possessing a quality which the parts themselves do not have. Plotinus, by contrast, will put forward a notion of beauty as a unifying form, which must unite existing parts, that is, parts that participate in a form and are therefore themselves beautiful.[11] As we shall see, Plotinus will identify the extent to which such a distribution is successfully achieved within a given body, through the domination of the form over matter (cf. section 2.3). The paradigm of the completely successful distribution of form and beauty of the whole to each part, is of course the Intellect itself. For this reason, Plotinus ultimately asks how the symmetry theory could explain its beauty (cf. I.6.1.54).

2.3 The Cause of Beauty and Ugliness in Bodies

As has already been mentioned, bodies become beautiful by participation, a process which needs to be described in more detail. What is beautiful is what receives form, or, more precisely, what shares in a formative principle (λόγος) coming from the divine forms. By participating in a form, a thing becomes unified and ordered, inasmuch as the formative principle dominates in matter (cf. I.6.2.13–18).[12] Or as Plotinus puts it in VI.9, beauty is present "where the nature of the one holds the parts together" (VI.9.1.15–16). What is ugly, by contrast, is that which does not share in form or formative principle at all (i.e. matter itself), or what is not completely dominated by it (cf. I.6.2.13–18). This definition of beauty also explains the earlier rejection of the non-distributive

10 Cf. Gál 2012.

11 This is why I consider Anton's (1964), Smith's (2016) and Kalligas' (2014) reconstructions of Plotinus' argument and the assessment of its validity to be wanting: they focus on the simplicity argument and fail to see the point of the distributive account of beauty. The point of Plotinus' argument has been well noted by Vassilopolou (2014, p. 492) and to a certain extent also by Kuisma (2003, pp. 163–165). See also Čelkytė 2020, chapter 6.

12 As Beierwaltes (1986, p. 299) rightly points out, the form at issue here is not an external one, the shape of the object so to say, but rather form as the inner structural and intelligible principle of a thing.

notion of beauty. If beauty consists of participation in a form which makes a given thing one, it must consist of beautiful parts insofar as they are parts, i.e. insofar as each of them is one. As Plotinus puts it once again in VI.9 "it is by the one that all beings are beings" (VI.9.1.1). If a formative principle dominates in a body, it unites its parts and, in order to do so, these parts must themselves be united. Beauty is, in this sense, distributed from the whole of a body to its parts, if a formative principle seizes hold of the body in question (cf. I.6.2.18–27).

At the same time, we come to a better understanding of the distinction between things that are beautiful by participation and those that are beautiful by nature. The latter must be the forms themselves, taken as a whole, which are beautiful simply by being what they are, i.e. a unified multiplicity (cf. section 3.4). However, it is not yet clear how the forms constitute a unified multiplicity.[13] Moreover, it is important to notice that Plotinus does not say here that beauty is caused by the form of beauty, as Plato does, but merely that is caused by *a form*.[14] Both of these issues relate to Plotinus' specific conception of the Intellect, where each form is all of the others and also the whole of them.[15]

It would seem useful, at this point, to outline this concept here, although only with respect to the problem we have just encountered: i.e. how a formative principle is present in a body such that it can either dominate it and make it beautiful, or fail to do so. The most elaborate text on this topic is treatise VI.5[23] *On the Presence of Being, One and the Same, Everywhere as a Whole II*. Plotinus criticises here the illumination simile—which he himself often employs—as empty talk, if we take it to mean that the forms are "placed separately on one side and matter a long way off on the other and then illumination comes to matter from somewhere up there [...] and the Idea is reflected in matter as if in

13 The identification of beauty with participation in form, i.e. with being unified multiplicity has been noticed by Lee 2004, p. 79, Kuisma 2003, pp. 65–73, Leinkauf 2007, pp. 89–90 and Halfwassen 2003, pp. 88–89, and 2007, p. 46.

14 But there are passages in the *Enneads* (cf. VI.6.1, VI.6.8, VI.6.14 and VI.3.12), which suggest that beauty is a particular form or which even explicitly say so. For a discussion of this topic see section 5.2. I consider those interpreters who claim that there is a form of beauty in Plotinus wrong, especially if they base their claim on I.6, which simply does not say this. It is nevertheless a widespread error: cf. Rist (1967, pp. 62–63), Anton (1967/68, p. 92), D'Ancona Costa (1996), Alexandrakis (1997) and Klitenic Wear (2017, pp. 1–2, but cf. her com. ad I.6.5.10 and, even more oddly, her com. ad I.6.6.23–24). Some of Beierwaltes' statements (2013, p. 8) also seem to suggest this, although in other texts, he is more careful (cf. 2011, pp. 244–245). The opposite view is defended by Darras-Worms (2018, p. 156), Smith (2016, pp. 24–25), Tomulet (2014), Kalligas (2014, p. 194), Karfík (2014a), Omtzigt (2012, pp. 78–79), Gerson (2010, p. 183, footnote 22), O'Meara (1993, p. 91) or Schubert (1973, p. 69).

15 For a detailed analysis of Intellect in Plotinus, see especially Emilsson 2007.

water" (VI.5.8.4–6 … 16–17). The correct interpretation of illumination requires a grasp of two points. That which illuminates abides like an archetype in itself, while that which is illuminated is an image of the archetype that is kept separate from it by illumination (cf. VI.5.8.12–15). Anything that participates, loves the archetype as something beautiful that it cannot assimilate itself to as such; rather, it is only able "to lay" with it (παράκειμαι), i.e. to be in its presence, and this acquires a share in it (cf. VI.5.10.1–11). Plotinus compares this presence of the one in many (without the one becoming many) to sharing a thought, which is not one thing for me and something else for others, but rather the same for everyone (cf. VI.5.10.11–23). This comparison is further illustrated with another brilliant simile: to think that people sharing a thought have different thoughts is similar to thinking that if we touch the same thing with each of our fingers in turn, each of our fingers touches something different (cf. VI.5.10.24–26). Moreover, we must understand that a form is not only present in many things, abiding in itself, but it is present as a whole to all. Such is the case of life in a living being and, in the same way, all souls are one (cf. VI.5.9.10–13). In treatise I.6, Plotinus illustrates the rule of form and its presence in all things, by comparing it with the impact of fire on other bodies. It warms them without becoming cold, and shines and glitters, giving colour to everything else, while it itself has colour in a primary sense (cf. I.6.3.19–28). In other words, it acts like an abiding archetype.

Why then is everything not everywhere? Plotinus answers this question on two different levels. First, this lack of omnipresence is caused by an incapacity of the recipient (ἀδυναμίᾳ τοῦ ὑποκειμένου; cf. VI.5.11.31), such that not all matter is equally disposed to receive a certain form, depending on what forms it has already received (cf. VI.5.11.35–36). Even prime matter is primarily adapted for the primary kinds of bodily forms (cf. V.5.11.36–38). It is a kind of spatial indefiniteness, which we always imagine as a void. This void acquires a certain size (μέγεθος) and quality (ποιότης), thus becoming a mass (ὄγκος). It may receive other forms only afterwards (cf. II.4.11–12). The second reason why everything is not everywhere is that not all matter participates in every form, but different powers of the forms as a whole come to be active in different bodies (cf. VI.5.11.36).

How, then, is this specification useful for our purposes? We should now be able to articulate a clearer understanding of how a given thing comes to be ugly, i.e. of how a formative principle may fail to dominate its matter. This can happen in cases where a formative principle tries to dominate a body that had previously received another formative principle, which is not (in a body) compatible with the new one. But this is, perhaps, not the only possibility. We have already encountered the reference to a face, which is ugly as a corpse (cf. I.6.1

and VI.7.22). Here, it is more likely that something is missing, i.e. life, which the soul previously brought with it, but now no longer does. A third possibility might be the case of an excess of form, as in polydactyly or other deformities that were very well-known to the Greeks (cf. also Kalligas 2014, com. ad I.6.2.13–18). Although we should now have a better understanding of what participation in a form means, we have encountered an interesting circle within Plotinus' thought. What is beautiful is what participates in a form, and participation in a form is explained as the attraction of the participating thing towards the beautiful form. Therefore, what we explain beauty with is itself explained by beauty. But this should probably not bother us too much, because, as we have seen, Plotinus has at his disposal other means of explaining participation, i.e. the archetype-image model, which is the true point of illumination.

However that may be, later on in I.6, Plotinus presents a slightly different picture, or at least seems to. In the sixth section, he mentions in a brief summary that it is soul which is given beauty by the Intellect, while everything else receives beauty from the soul (cf. I.6.6.26–32). This may seem surprising, at first glance, since it was previously said that bodies are made beautiful by the presence of a form or a formative principle and not by soul. However, Plotinus discusses this issue in the second section of treatise V.9[5] *On Intellect, the Forms and Being*, where he is concerned with the question of the source of the soul's power for its ascent (cf. V.9.2.1–2). According to these passages, he who ascends must be a lover disposed towards true philosophy, one who is dragged upwards by beauty (cf. V.9.2.2–10). However, the crucial point for us here is Plotinus' explanation of what makes a body beautiful. He says that, in one way, it is the presence of a form, in another, the soul that moulded it and put this particular form in it (cf. V.9.2.16–17). All that is bodily is created by a soul, whether a particular soul in the case of artefacts (and perhaps, at least partially, our bodies[16]) or the world soul in everything else. However, both types of soul create bodies precisely with the help of forms, in analogy with the Demiurge of Plato's *Timaeus*, who thinks the intelligible archetypes and shapes the world in accordance with them.[17] For this reason, it can be said that the bodily acquires its beauty both from Intellect and from the soul. The former expression is in a sense more precise, since the soul is not beautiful in itself, in contrast to Intel-

16 It seems that some parts of our bodies are ruled by the world soul, whereas others by individual souls. For a discussion of this topic, see Blumenthal 1971 and in a more general context Blumenthal 1996.

17 Cf. Plato's *Tim.* 27d–29d, 30a–b, 53b, and 69b–c. See also the discussion of these passages in Karfík 2004.

lect.[18] Otherwise, Plotinus explains, we could not say that some souls are wise and beautiful, while others are stupid and ugly (cf. V.9.2.19–20). Similarly, in treatise IV.7[2] *On the Immortality of the Soul* Plotinus explains that "a part of the soul always remains in the Intellect and a lower part enters the bodily world and imparts order and beauty according to the pattern which it sees in Intellect, is as if pregnant by the intelligibles and labouring to give birth" (IV.7.13.5–8). In this way, "the Intellect which remains the same [...] fills all things through soul with beauties and sets them in order" (IV.7.13.18–19).

2.4 The Impact of Beauty on Soul

A further important motif in treatise I.6 is the impact of beauty on soul. For a beautiful thing to arouse the soul however, it must be first recognised as such. In other words, the unifying formative principle of a beautiful thing must be extracted from it and evaluated by a special power of the soul. Plotinus likens this ability to using a ruler to judge straightness (cf. I.6.3.1–5). This requires an explanation. Basing his account on various sections of the treatises IV.4, V.3 and I.1, Emilsson presents Plotinus' conception of sense perception in the following way (cf. Emilsson 1998): Bodies do not directly leave an impression on the soul. Rather, what the soul receives is a certain translation of the impressions perceived by the living body into a specific intelligible form. However, this latter form somehow preserves the spatial features of the bodies. The special judging power of the soul is discursive reasoning (λογισμός). It is able to compare these hybrid intelligible images with the forms themselves, because the soul has access to them through its highest part in Intellect. In this way, the soul remembers on the basis of sense perception what it always already knew. It recognizes the sensible as at first glance akin to itself (συγγενής; cf. also the discussion of good as οἰκεῖον in VI.7.27 in section 6.5), or more precisely, that part of the sensible that is real, i.e. its form.

The basic outline of the impact of beauty on soul after it is recognised as beautiful is derived from Plato's *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*. In the former dialogue, love is likened to the soul's sickness (cf. the use of νοσέω), which drives animals and certain people to copulate and then to rear their offspring, even going so far as to die for them (cf. *Symp*. 207a5–b6). Similarly, other people are willing to undergo all kinds of dangers to attain immortality through honour

18 In a very specific sense even the Intellect can be said not to be beautiful in itself. See sections 2.6, 6.6 and 7.4.

and fame, or even to die for them (cf. *Symp*. 208c1–e1). In each case, the soul of the lover is in a state of shock or ecstasy (cf. the use of ἐκπλήσσω in *Symp*. 211d5), willing to do anything for the beloved. In the best-case scenario, when one encounters a person with a beautiful body and soul, one welcomes both of these, is full of thoughts of virtue and embarks on the process of education (cf. *Symp*. 209b4–c2).

For the description of erotic longing, however, the latter dialogue, *Phaedrus*, is even more important.[19] This dialogue describes love as madness (μανία) that should not be understood as evil, since it may, in fact, be the cause of the greatest goods and bring the greatest happiness, if it is granted as a divine gift. Examples of such divine manias include prophecies, purifications, poetry and erotic love (cf. *Phdr*. 244a3–245c1). Love is, in the end, described as a state of soul (πάθος, cf. *Phdr*. 252b2) caused by sensible beauty, which reminds the soul of the true beauty (cf. *Phdr*. 248d5–6) that the soul contemplated on the outer edge of heaven before its embodiment (cf. *Phdr*. 247b6–248b1, 254b5–7). This remembrance causes the soul to start to grow wings again, as it wants to fly, but cannot (cf. *Phdr*. 249d6–7). However, this growing of wings in turn causes pain (cf. *Phdr*. 151c1–e), such that the lover shivers and is gripped by something like fear when he or she sees the beloved (cf. *Phdr*. 251a–252a). In other words, love always causes a mix of joy and arousal, on the one hand, and pain and stinging, on the other (cf. *Phdr*. 251d7–8, 251e3–152a1). Moreover, since beauty "shone out (ἔλαμπεν) […] among its companions there" (*Phdr*. 250c8–d1, transl. Waterfield), i.e. in the intelligible realm, it has a specific gleam even in the sensible world (cf. *Phdr*. 250d1–e1). As a result, it may not only cause the soul to remember true beauty, but also attract the soul to itself (cf. *Phdr*. 250e1–251a1). Correspondingly, there are two types of love, a left one (i.e. a bad one) and a right one (i.e. a good one; cf. *Phdr*. 265e1–266b1). The former leads us to surrender to pleasure, behaving like animals and pursuing unnatural pleasures (cf. *Phdr*. 250e4–251a1). The latter instils reverence and awe, since these are the appropriate πάθη to experience with respect to the divine reflected in the sensible (cf. *Phdr*. 251a1–7, 252d5–e1, 254e8–255a1). True love thus leads to the taming of the bad horse within the lover's soul (cf. *Phdr*. 254d7–255a1), to the formation of an erotic relationship—or rather friendship—between followers of the same god prior to embodiment (cf. *Phdr*. 255d6–e2) and finally to a

19 The following summary is fully indebted to the interpretation in Špinka 2009, pp. 117–124. As in the case of *Symposium*, the literature on Plato's *Phaedrus* is vast. To name just a few examples from various philosophical traditions, see Asmis 1986, Rossetti 1992, Heitsch 1997 or Rowe 1986.

likening of both the lover and the beloved to god (cf. *Phdr*. 253b3–c2). Consequently, a loving soul becomes a more and more transparent image of the god and thus beautiful (cf. *Phdr*. 255b7–d3).

Plotinus' description of the impact of beauty on soul follows a very similar pattern. Having recognised a beautiful thing as beautiful, the soul is reminded of Intellect, since they both come from the same source.[20] On the one hand, Plotinus draws on the heritage of *Phdr*. 253e–256a (and perhaps some other texts; cf. Iozza 2015, pp. 81–84) and talks about excitement, "wonder (θάμβος) and a shock of delight (ἔκπληξις ἡδεῖαν) and longing (πόθος) and passion (ἔρως) and a happy excitement (πτόησις μεθ' ἡδονῆς)" (1.6.4.16–18). On the other hand, he recalls the *Symposium*: the soul recognises and welcomes beauty and adapts itself to it, but when it encounters ugliness, it shrinks back, rejects it and turns away from it, being out of tune with and alienated from it (cf. 1.6.2.1–11 and *Symp*. 206d3–7).

Encountering true beauty, i.e. the beauty of Intellect, has an even deeper impact. The soul now understands that intelligible beauty is by far superior to sensible beauty and is "delighted and overwhelmed and excited" (ἡσθῆναι καὶ ἔκπληξιν λαβεῖν καὶ πτοηθῆναι; cf. 1.6.4.13–14), since these πάθη are what intelligible beauty causes in a loving soul, "wonder and a shock of delight and longing and passion and happy excitement" (θάμβος καὶ ἔκπληξιν ἡδεῖαν καὶ πόθον καὶ ἔρωτα καὶ πτόησιν μεθ' ἡδονῆς; cf. 1.6.4.16–17).[21]

However, there are, in fact, two aspects always present in *erōs*: longing for the beloved and the understanding of the true object of the desire. In other words, there is the movement of the soul caused by the need in *erōs*, on the one hand, and the direction of this movement, which is subjected to our understanding, on the other. This does not come as a surprise, if we recall that the parents of Erōs are Poros and Penia (see section 2.2 above). Plotinus illustrates the necessity of arriving at an understanding of the true object of our desire by briefly recounting the story of Narcissus in 1.6.8. In one version of the story, Narcissus drowns when trying to grasp his own reflection in the water (cf. 1.6.8.8–

20 The soul is, in fact, rather reminded of its own origin in Intellect, because it is reminded of beauty itself, i.e. of Intellect, as we shall see later. For the discussion of Plotinus' understanding of ἀνάμνησις in relation to that of Plato and Saint Augustine cf. Karfíková 2015, esp. pp. 32–42.

21 With respect to beauty, ἔκπληξις is used in *Criti*. 115d1–2 and mentioned in the context of pleasure in the *Phileb*. 47a8. Πτοέω is used by Plato in an erotic context in *Phd*. 108b1, with respect to ἐπιθῡμία in *Phd*. 68c9, and to the irrational part of soul in *Rep*. 439d7 and 336b7. In all of these passages however, πτοέω has rather negative connotations, evoking an ignorant soul dominated by desire and doing foolish things.

16).[22] Plotinus parallels this story with the blindness of a soul caused by bodily beauties, which will draw it down into Hades "where intellect has no delight" (I.6.8.15). Bodily beauty, which is as much a reflection as was the image of Narcissus in the water, thus may not only motivate the ascent to a higher beauty, but also bind us, because it is so impressive. The error that the soul makes in confusing an image with its original may have fatal consequences, whether a literal drowning, as in the case of Narcissus, or the metaphorical drowning of a soul in Hades.

That said, is this ambiguity inherent in beauty—i.e. its ability to deceive, or rather its spectacular nature that clears the way for the soul to fall into error—caused by the bodily nature of beautiful things? Or is it rather caused by beauty itself, such that it both stimulates an enquiry into its origin and, at the same time, impedes it? If the latter is the case, we may even ask whether the beauty of the Intellect could impede our ascent to the Good? To answer this question, let us consider once again VI.9[9] *On the Good or the One*. In the fourth section, Plotinus discusses, among other things, the fact that the soul, which ascends through Intellect to the Good, must also rise above knowledge, i.e. all that is known, and every object of vision, even the beautiful ones. The reason for this is that all beautiful things only come about after the Good, like the light of the day emanating from the sun. Plotinus' formulation "even beautiful" (παντὸς ἄλλου καὶ καλοῦ θεάματος δεῖ ἀποστῆναι; cf. VI.9.4.7–10) seems to suggest that there is some special peril in beauty. However, more will be said about this in sections 3.2, 6.4 and 6.6, since Plotinus' warnings about the beauty of Intellect become more explicit in later treatises.

The above-mentioned cognitive aspect of *erōs* is based on the disposition of each soul and the guidance it receives. But whose souls are disposed and what dispositions do they have? What kind of guidance do they need? How are we to understand the transformation they undergo? A whole treatise, I.3[20] *On Dialectics*, is devoted to this topic. Its guiding question is to determine the identity of those who can proceed upwards from the beauty of the bodies, and the kind of guidance they need (cf. I.3.1.5–6 and 10–12). Plotinus says that the person who can ascend to the intelligible—and perhaps even further, to the Good—is the one who has seen all or most things, i.e. the one who was born a philosopher, a musician or a lover (cf. I.3.1.6–9).[23] A philosopher ascends by nature, but the other two must be guided on their path (cf. I.3.1.9–10). When

22 Cf. esp. Ov. *Met*. 3.341. For other sources see Kalligas 2014, com. ad I.6.8.9–16 and Smith 2016, com. ad I.6.8.8–16.

23 The relevant background here is, of course, once again Plato's *Phaedrus*. For a brief comparison of Plato's and Plotinus' accounts, see Kalligas 2014, com ad I.3.1.6–9.

attempting to lead a musician upwards, one must start with what excites him, i.e. harmony and unity in songs and verses, and everything rhythmical and shapely. However, he must be taught to abstract from the material of these bodily images of beauty, as well as to understand that it was an intelligible harmony (νοητὴ ἁρμονία) and universal beauty that excited him. He must then be trained in philosophy (cf. I.3.1.21–35). A lover (who may be a musician who has undergone a transformation) is characterised by a memory of beauty which he is unable to grasp in its separateness. Instead, he is fascinated by visible beauty. He must be shown that the beauty of one body is, in fact, the same in all bodies, but is not itself of a bodily nature and can, moreover, be manifested more fully in other things, such as beautiful ways of life, laws, arts, sciences or virtues. And then he must also be shown their common source (cf. I.3.2.).[24] The philosopher, by contrast, ascends naturally. He only needs to be shown the way which leads through training in mathematical studies, perfecting his virtue and receiving instruction in dialectics (cf. I.3.3).[25]

What conclusions can we draw from this for our purposes? It seems that in order to be able to see the intelligible beauty, one must be a musician, a lover or a philosopher, and one also stands in need of guidance, if only to be shown the right way. On this upward path, one needs to learn the art of abstraction, which means starting to see the forms as causing the beauty of beautiful things. However, one also needs to understand that these causes are common to many beautiful things and that they manifest themselves differently on different ontological levels. Furthermore, in order to better comprehend the immaterial nature of the forms, one must also receive training in mathematical sciences dealing with entities of a non-bodily nature, as well. Moreover, it is necessary to perfect one's virtue because, as Plotinus puts it, "people cannot speak about the splendour of virtue who have never even imagined how fair is the face of justice and moral order" (I.6.4.10–12). And eventually training in philosophy or dialectics is necessary, i.e. in the valuable part of philosophy (cf. I.3.5.9), so that one may grasp the common cause of beauty on the level of soul and ascend to the Intellect. First, however, we must turn to soul and understand its beauty.

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24 As earlier commentators have already noticed (cf. Kalligas 2014, com. ad I.3.2.5–12), these passages echo once again the ascent to the form of beauty from Diotima's speech in Plato's *Symposium*.

25 The reference here is naturally to Plato's *Rep.* II and VII. Cf. also Kalligas 2014, com. ad I.3.3.5–7, I.3.3.8–10 and I.3.4.1.

2.5 The Cause of Beauty and Ugliness in Soul

When Plotinus considers beauty on the level of soul, he does so once again by contrasting it with ugliness. A soul sees itself as beautiful "possessing a moral order [...] and [...] all the other light of virtues [...] [with—added by O.G.] the godlike light of the Intellect shining upon all this" (I.6.5.11–17). This is, according to Plotinus, the case of a soul "separated from the lusts which it has through the body with which it consorted too much, and freed from its other affections, purged of what it gets from being embodied" (I.6.5.54–57). This is where the ugliness comes in, because it is understood as a blemish, analogous to dirtying one's body with mud (cf. I.6.5.43–48). In both cases, we have something that was originally beautiful, but that becomes contaminated by something external, such that this beauty can no longer be seen unless all of the filth is wiped off.

What, then, is this mud that can cover our soul? Plotinus says here, with explicit reference to Plato's *Phaedo*, that it is our inclination towards the body and matter (cf. I.6.5.48–50).[26] As in Plato, we may distinguish two causes of such behaviour. In one sense, it is caused by matter, in another sense by the soul itself, which incorrectly understands itself as being part of the bodily world and is accordingly overly concerned with bodies. This preoccupation with bodies fills the soul with various kinds of lusts, disturbances and fears, such that it becomes cowardly and jealous, enjoying impure pleasures and delighting in ugliness (cf. I.6.5.26–32). This is precisely what we must purge ourselves from. Our soul will then become beautiful on its own, for it was originally beautiful.[27] Plotinus even says here that those things that really exist, are beautiful, but we will need to say more about this, when we deal with the Intellect, since soul has its root in the Intellect (cf. I.6.5.20–21 and section 3.4.7). While bodies become beautiful by participating in forms, soul itself is beautiful insofar as it abides alone, purged from the mud of the sensible world (cf. I.6.5.50–58). According to treatise IV.7.10, it is as if gold were to have a soul and be able to see its true beauty after being cleaned. But is this the full truth? Does becoming virtuous mean that we should withdraw from the world as completely as possible?

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26 Cf. Plato, *Phd.* 66a–67b and 80e–84b. See the discussion of this concept in Špinka 2009.

27 An interesting interpretation of this process is proposed by Tomulet (2014, p. 55). He distinguishes two steps: 1) the washing of soul, i.e. its separation from things that are foreign to it; 2) purification, which refers to repairing the inner damage to the soul caused by its mixture with matter. However, this damage cannot, of course, be caused by matter as such, but by the soul's erroneous understanding of itself.

In order to answer these questions, we must make another digression, this time to treatise 1.2[19] *On Virtue*.[28] There too we find the idea of escaping all that is of bodily nature, but such an escape is here understood as what makes us godlike, by becoming righteous and holy (δίκαιος καὶ ὅσιος) and altogether in virtue (ἐν ἀρετῇ) with the help of wisdom (φρόνησις; cf. 1.2.1.4–5). This process is once again identified with purification, since the point is to purge ourselves from our entanglement with bodies. In this sense, a soul "will be good and possess virtue when it no longer has the same opinions but acts alone—this is intelligence and wisdom—and does not share the body's experiences—this is self-control—and is not afraid of departing from the body—this is courage—and is ruled by reason and intellect, without opposition—and this is justice" (1.2.3.15–19). Once again, this presupposes that the nature of soul is itself beautiful, and that it may again become so when it has been purged. However, Plotinus is more specific here. Yes, the soul has a good nature, but, at the same time, it is unable to remain in the real good. It thus has a natural tendency to incline in both directions. For this reason, it must come to be like what is akin to it (συνεῖναι τῷ συγγενεῖ) and this is achieved through conversion (ἐπιστρέφω), which runs parallel to purification and culminates in virtue, now understood as "sight and the impression of what is seen, implanted and working in" the soul (1.2.4.19–20). In other words, the more the soul frees itself from its enchantment with bodies, the more it focuses its attention on the intelligible and becomes like it. It becomes sight that sees itself, and this unity of the seeing and the object seen is imprinted in the soul and becomes active in it, i.e. it dominates the soul in a manner analogous to how form dominates matter.

But a purged, virtuous soul does not withdraw from the body it ensouls, in the sense that this body ceases to exist and that the man, as a soul-body compound, dies. It only needs to try to escape into the intelligible world *as far as possible* in order to become virtuous (cf. 1.2.5). Or, to put it from the perspective of the Intellect, the soul must not revert to the Intellect fully, because virtue belongs to the soul (cf. 1.2.6.13–19). When Plotinus tries to describe this paradoxical intermediate stage between utter freedom from all bodies and remaining an embodied soul, he speaks about changing the way in which we perceive what comes from bodies. The soul "only makes itself aware of pleasures when it has to, using them as remedies and reliefs to prevent its activity being impeded [and—added by O.G.] it gets rid of pains or if it cannot, bears them quietly and makes them less by not suffering with the body" (1.2.5.7–12). And even the

28 For a general outline of Plotinus' ethics, cf. Stern-Gillet 2014, Bene 2013, Smith 1999 and Dillon 1996.

lesser parts of the soul that are, as such, unable to directly share in the Intellect can change: it is like a person who lives next door to a sage and becomes like him, or at least treats him with such respect so as not to dare to do anything he would not approve of (cf. I.2.5.25–27).

But as we have said, the soul does not fully depart from the bodily world and does not fully revert to the Intellect, since virtue belongs to the soul (cf. I.2.6.13–19). Plotinus even says that the Intellect is not itself virtuous (cf. I.2.1.5–6), just as Intellect cannot be said to possess arrangement or order in a spatial sense. Nevertheless, soul becomes like the Intellect by becoming virtuous and we can build a well-arranged and ordered house modelled on the Intellect. In other words, the archetypes of virtues, as well as those of order and arrangement, are to be found in the Intellect. There is an asymmetrical resemblance between an archetype and its image: an archetype is not similar to its image, although the image is like its archetype and does resemble it (cf. I.2.2.4–10). Plotinus then tries to specify how Intellect contains—or rather is—such an archetype in relation to the virtues: "intuitive thought *There* is knowledge and wisdom, self-concentration is self-control, its own proper activity is 'minding its own business'; its equivalent courage is immateriality and abiding pure by itself" (I.2.7.3–7). Virtue in the soul is the image of this activity of Intellect (cf. I.2.6.13–19).

What does all this mean for our original question about whether becoming virtuous means withdrawing from the world as completely as possible? We see that the answer is affirmative. We should withdraw from the body as much as possible, but it does not mean ceasing to exist as bodies. Rather, it means changing our attitude towards bodily nature, focusing on the intelligible and ultimately receiving an imprint from Intellect which unifies our soul and dominates it. Yet, if we are to maintain, at the same time, that the soul is in its own nature a kind of beauty, we must understand this process as a reunion with what it has always been, but only becomes aware of in this moment. Now this situation is certainly linked with the fact that the soul has its roots in the Intellect, but it nevertheless entails a serious systemic ambiguity. It is as if soul were to become aware of itself as a part of Intellect, because after purification it becomes a true reality, which exists as beauty. At the same time, however, there must still be a certain distance between the soul and Intellect, because there is no virtue *there* but only in the soul. Plotinus is obviously aware of this since in VI.8[39].5 he says that "virtue is *a kind of* other intellect (οἷον νοῦς τις ἄλλος), a state which *in a way* intellectualises the soul (οἷον νοωθῆναι; italics by O.G.)" (VI.8.5.34–35).

Plotinus provides a further important hint about how to understand this when he escalates his formulations concerning the purification in I.6.6: "who

has not been purified will lie in mud [...] just as pigs, with their unclean bodies" (1.6.6.4–6), or when he notes that the "greatness of soul is despising (ὑπεροψία) things here" (1.6.6.11–12). The outcome of the purification is explicitly identified here with the soul's becoming a form in the Intellect (cf. 1.6.6.16–21).[29] At the same time, however, soul becomes a formative power (λόγος), i.e. that which emanates from the Intellect and imprints itself in the soul (cf. 1.6.6.13–16). This may be a clue to understanding how Plotinus can suggest that there remains a certain distance between a virtuous soul and Intellect, while simultaneously claiming that the soul becomes truly beautiful after purification. When the highest part of the soul becomes aware of itself as a part of the Intellect,[30] it also becomes a formative principle which imprints itself in those parts of the soul that are not united with the Intellect. These parts of the soul become virtuous and acquire a share in the beauty that the highest part becomes, or rather always was.

To sum up, even in the case of the soul, there is some sort of partaking in the Intellect which unifies it. This partaking differs from that of bodies. First of all, bodies partake in the soul and only through the soul do they partake in the Intellect, whereas the soul partakes directly in the Intellect. Moreover, in the case of bodies, we do not actually purge them of their bodily being; we only do so in our soul, when we judge them to be beautiful, because they are beautiful precisely only insofar as they are forms. In their creation and subsequent existence, Plotinus only speaks about the domination of a form and not about

29 I remain sceptical about the identification of beauty and being in 1.6.6.21 (as stressed by Smith 2016, com. ad loc.), although, as we shall see (part 3.10 and 4.1.4), Plotinus does indeed advocate it. However, what is identified with beings (τὰ ὄντα) here is the beauteous (καλλονή), i.e. the Good (see below and sections 6.6 and 7.4), leading me to think that Plotinus is speaking very loosely here and merely contrasting what is evil, ugly and non-existent, on the one hand, and what is good, beautiful and truly existent, on the other.

30 It is, of course, problematic to call an individual intellect (within the Intellect) the highest part of soul without any qualification. From the perspective of soul, its individual intellect (within the Intellect) is its principle and core. From a top-down perspective, however, soul is distinct from Intellect and from the individual intellects within it. Their relationship is rather that of an archetype and its image. Therefore, it is difficult to decide whether, for a soul, uniting with the Intellect means fully transcending itself and becoming Intellect, or if it can still in some sense be called soul. It seems to me that if we disconnect a soul's individual intellect from the rest of soul and if we deny that individual intellect is something like "the highest part of soul", it becomes very difficult (if not impossible) to explain the union with Intellect, let alone with the Good. For a discussion of Plotinus' enigmatic account of soul and its parts, see Caluori 2015, Karfík 2014b and Blumenthal 1996, 1974, 1971.

having to reach the form first by purging the body. As we have seen, this domination of a form within a body can be hindered by other forms and, perhaps, by inadequate participation in a form (both in the sense of an excess and a lack). In the case of the soul, the emphasis is laid on the related processes of purification, conversion and becoming godlike. This process restores the soul to its original virtuous and beautiful state, whose archetype is not a singular form, but rather the very life of the Intellect, i.e. in its "itself-thinking that it itself is" (cf. Emilsson 2007, p. 109).

2.6 The Hierarchy of Beauty and What Is at the Top

After this relatively elaborate explanation of sensible and psychic beauty, Plotinus advances further to Intellect. He repeatedly identifies Intellect with beauty itself (cf. I.6.6.17–21, 26–27, I.6.9.25, 32–34, 35–36, 40–41) or true beauty (ἀληθινός; cf. I.6.4.14). However, he does not provide any details about how to understand its beauty in I.6. He only implies that intelligibles are probably not beautiful by participation, but in themselves (cf. sections 2.1 and 2.3) and, in an enigmatic passage, suggests that there is a close connection between the fact that forms are true beings and that they are beautiful: "What does 'really exists' mean? That they exist as beauties." (Τί ὄντα ὄντως; Ἢ καλά.; I.6.5.19–20). We will have to investigate the beauty of Intellect and the link between being and beauty elsewhere (cf. esp. section 3.4).

In the remainder of treatise I.6, Plotinus focuses on the further ascent, i.e. to the Good. As I have already mentioned (cf. section 2.2 above), adopting this approach in the context of ascending the *scala amoris* leads to an ambiguity with respect to its summit. The first time Plotinus touches upon this issue is in I.6.6.21–27, where he decides to make a positive statement about the Good using the *via eminentiae*, pointing out its completeness. As compared to Intellect, which may seem both good and beautiful only from a certain perspective (e.g. in comparison with the first evil), beauty and goodness are truly identical in the Good, while Intellect is in this sense "only" beauty itself. However, we should be careful here, since the identity of the beautiful and the good in the first principle does not mean that Intellect is not the primary beauty, because the Good can be said to be beautiful in some other sense, for instance as the source of the beautiful (cf. a similar observation by Kalligas 2014, com ad I.6.6.21–32).

In fact, Plotinus soon enough makes clear how this is to be understood. At the end of I.6.6, he calls the Good the source of beauty and the beauteous (καλλονή) which is also the good (cf. I.6.6.25–27), while the Intellect is to be

understood as beauty itself. Similarly in V.9[5], Plotinus makes use of Plato's *Phileb*. 64e, saying that beauty is an impression of the Good in multiplicity, while the Good itself remains altogether one (cf. V.9.2.26–27). In this sense, beauty stands in front of the Good, like a porch (cf. V.9.2.25–26). The possible identification of the good and the beautiful in I.6.6 should not, therefore, be overestimated. Rather, it seems to be required by the symmetry of the argument, which identifies, on the one hand, ugliness with evil, and, on the other hand, beauty with the good (cf. Smith 2016, com. ad I.6.6.26 and Tornau 2011, com. ad I.6.6.21–24). Moreover, as we shall see later (cf. sections 3.5 and 6.6), there are passages in the *Enneads* that speak against this identification (VI.9.4 VI.9.11, V.8.8, V.5.12, VI.7.32–33).

The second potentially confusing passage is section I.6.7, where Plotinus describes his own experience with the ascent beyond Intellect to the Good. In order to achieve this, he says, we must once again prepare ourselves, in the sense of purifying and stripping off everything that we took on in our descent. This claim is to be understood in connection with *aphairesis*, i.e. abstraction or taking away (cf. I.6.7.1–12). Only when guided by negative theology can we ascend above even Intellect to the Good, which Plotinus, with reference to his own experience, calls beautiful (cf. I.6.7.2–3), walking a thin line between making a positive and a negative statement. It is a positive statement insofar as he does, in fact, predicate something of the Good. However, he calls it beautiful, and beauty is precisely what the Good as such transcends (cf. I.6.9.37–39). Since the Good is the ultimate object of our erotic desire, however, it makes good sense in terms of the *via eminentiae* to call the Good "beautiful". Moreover, it is also of use here since we connect desire and pleasure with beauty. To correct this statement, however, Plotinus goes on to add that we desire this beauty as good (cf. I.6.7.2–5). And in fact, he immediately turns to the pleasure we experience in the ascent to the Good, speaking of a shock of delight (ἐκπλαγείη μεθ' ἡδονῆς)[31] which causes no harm (ἀβλαβής), a fullness of wonder and delight (ἄγασθαί τε καὶ θάμβους πίμπλασθαι), loving with true passion and piercing longing (ἐρᾶν ἀληθῆ ἔρωτα καὶ δριμεῖς πόθους). In the face of this kind of beauty, everything else seems utterly useless and despicable (cf. I.6.7.12–21).

As can be seen, the description of the impact of the Good on the soul is different from that of beauty, although they share certain features. Both are shocking, because the soul reacts to the apparition of something divine (or union with it, in the case of the Good). However, while the shock caused by beauty is always

31 Cf. Plato's *Phdr*. 250a and also the discussion of this in section 6.6.

mixed with pain, since beauty is not the ultimate object of desire, the Good does not cause harm, but rather, as what is ultimate, brings utter bliss. I will revisit this issue later in section 3.5, when dealing with treatises V.8 and V.5. For the present discussion, all of this provides support for the claim that beauty and the Good are not identified in I.6, because Plotinus does his best to emphasise the differences between both, even though he uses them interchangeably in this particular context. This approach is once again partly informed by the exegetical reasons hinted at in section 2.2. However, this should not obscure the possibility that there is a philosophical reason for this as well. Is there a deeper connection between the Good and beauty allowing for such interchange? This question will have to be further pursued in different treatises, especially VI.7 (cf. section 6.6).

Moreover, although lines 28–30 of the seventh section claim that the Good is beauty most of all (μάλιστα κάλλος) and the primary beauty (τὸ πρῶτον), the whole context of I.6.7 suggests that we should be cautious. When Plotinus describes the preliminary measures we must take before uniting with the Good, he describes the Good in a variety of ways: it is simple (εἰλικρινής), singular (ἁπλόος) and pure (καθαρός) and uncontaminated by flesh or body (μὴ σαρκῶν, μὴ σώματος ἀνάπλεων; cf. I.6.7.21–24). These are all ways of expressing the absolute unity and transcendence of the Good. Plotinus further marks off the Good as the source and goal of everything when he says that it is that "from which all depends and to which all look and are and live and think" (I.6.7.10–12) or when he says that all things except the Good itself "are external additions and mixtures and not primary, but derived from it" (I.6.7.24–25,). An extremely emphatic expression of this can be found by the very end of the seventh section, where Plotinus says that for the vision of the Good we "should give up the attainment of kingship and of rule over all earth and sea and sky" (I.6.7.37–39). He also tries to approach the Good on the basis of things which come from it: everything that is looks, exists, lives and thinks because of the Good, "for it is cause of life and mind and being" (I.6.7.12). Finally, he makes use of analogies: someone who has encountered manifestations of gods and spirits despises bodily beauty, just as a soul which has united with the Good despises everything else. In other words, Plotinus uses all the systematic means of language to try to describe the Good, in this case, in the context of beauty.[32]

If we then find a statement about the Good being beauty in the context of other ways of speaking about the highest principle, it seems reasonable to interpret it on analogy with the standard statement that the Good both is and is not

32 Cf. *Ennead* VI.7.36, discussed in section 6.6, and also Alcinoos, *The Handbook of Platonism*.

everything (cf. Halfwassen 2014, Bussanich 1996 or Schroeder 1985). It is the source of beauty and as such cannot lack it. However, it is not beauty, since it is even more than beauty or is situated above it (cf. I.6.9.37–39). From the perspective of negative theology, the primary beauty is the Intellect.

More will be said about the relationship between the Good and the beautiful in treatises V.8, V.5 (part of the *Großschrift*) and VI.7 (from the same creative period). Large parts of these are devoted to this topic. For the time being, however, I will limit myself to pointing to VI.9[9].11, where the union with the Good is described. Plotinus says there that he who has united with the Good "had no thought of beauties, but had already run up beyond beauty [...] like a man who enters into the sanctuary and leaves behind the statues in the outer shrine; these become again the first things he looks at when he comes out of the sanctuary" (VI.9.11.16–21; cf. I.6.8.1–6). This means that beauty is once again identified primarily with Intellect and one even has to leave it behind when uniting with the Good. In this sense, even though it may seem in some passages of I.6 that the Good, rather than Intellect, is the primary beauty, we must understand this as part of a context-dependent approach to the first principle. Sometimes it makes better sense to say that the Good is beautiful and sometimes it makes sense to set it apart from beauty, depending on the intention of the passage. As Plotinus puts it in VI.9.3, when trying to express his experience of union with the Good, "we run round it outside, in a way, and want to explain our own experiences of it, sometimes near it and sometimes falling away in our perplexities about it" (VI.9.3.53–55). In the case of I.6, where the ascent to the highest principle is described using beauty as a stepping-stone (cf. I.6.1.20), it is useful to show that it leads all the way up to the Good, while further specifications may be added later.

The third confusing passage is section I.6.8, where Plotinus tries to describe the ascent of the soul with the help of the literary tradition. However, he makes it clear from the very beginning that this beauty is inconceivable or even impossible (κάλλος ἀμήχανον; cf. I.6.8.2). The word ἀμήχανος has a strong connotations in Platonic context. It is used by Plato in *Rep*. 509a6 in the allegory of the sun, where it refers to the Good, which is superior to knowledge and truth in beauty.[33] Therefore, it can once again be read as a means of differentiating "the beauty of the Good" from that of Intellect or rather to emphasise that the Good may *appear* as beauty from the perspective of love.

33 It is also used in a different and probably less relevant context in *Symp*. 218e2, where the beauty Alcibiades sees in Socrates is said to be significantly superior to Alcibiades' physical beauty.

The last section of I.6, the most cited of the confusing passages, provides both a summary of the treatise, as regards the hierarchy of beauties, and a relatively clear solution to the Good-vs.-beauty dilemma. With implicit reference to Plato's *Rep*. 515e–516a, Plotinus describes here the ascent of a lover (or, of course, a musician or a philosopher). He proceeds step by step in order to become accustomed to all of the light. The first step involves seeing the beauty in ways of life, then in virtuous deeds and, finally, in the souls of virtuous people (cf. I.6.9.1–6). In order to see their souls, the lover must turn inwards towards his own soul (since all souls are one soul),[34] and he sees their beauty only if he sees his own beauty, i.e. if he too is virtuous (cf. I.6.9.6–15). However, a virtuous, purified soul, as we know, is one that already, in a sense, has become aware of itself as a part of the Intellect and thus, as Plotinus puts it here, becomes true light (φῶς ἀληθινὸν; cf. I.6.9.18). But if only a soul that becomes like Intellect may see the beauty that is Intellect, this ultimately means that the soul becomes a part of the Intellect. However, this also always means that the soul becomes the whole of Intellect, and as such it contemplates itself—beauty contemplating beauty—by merging with the inner life of Intellect (cf. I.6.9.30–34). Or rather, we should probably avoid saying that the soul becomes a part of Intellect, but instead say that it becomes aware of itself as a part of Intellect, which it always has been. In the same way, we should not say that it merges with the inner life of the Intellect, but rather that it becomes aware of itself as having always already merged with it.[35]

Plotinus is, however, ready once again to go beyond Intellect up to the Good and specifies what we have already dealt with, its simultaneous being beauty and being beyond it. He says that "the nature of the Good [...] holds beauty as a screen before it" (I.6.9.37–39). This means that beauty is to be identified primarily with the Intellect, which is prior to the Good from the perspective of the ascending soul and which, in this passage, is once again said to be beauty, because all things are beautiful through it (cf. I.6.9.36–37). At the same time, however, Plotinus insists that it is possible to say that the Good is the primary beauty. He explains this contradiction, by saying that it depends on whether, in a discussion, we need to distinguish the Good from the Intellect. If we do, then it is the Intellect which is the seat of beauty, while the Good is beyond it, as its wellspring and origin. If we do not distinguish them, it is possible to use "the beautiful" and "the Good" interchangeably, at least in a loose way of speaking (ὁλοσχερής λόγος; cf. I.6.9.40–43). But why would we not make this distinction?

34 Cf. treatise IV.9.

35 Cf. footnote 30 above.

Because what is of primary importance for Plotinus at this point—i.e. in the very first treatise paving the way to the intelligible—is that beauty comes from *there*. The details can be filled in later, namely in v.8 *On Intelligible Beauty*.[36]

36 Cf. similar comments by Harder (com. ad 1.6.9.39–43), Kalligas (2014, com. ad 1.6.9.39–40 and 1.6.9.43–44) and O'Meara (1993, p. 94). For a brief overview of Plotinus' sources for the disjunction between the Good and beauty, see Edwards 1991.

CHAPTER 3

Intelligible Beauty (Treatise V.8)

If I am right in my assumption that the treatises of the *Großschrift* are united by a focus on the dispute with the Gnostics,[1] it is necessary to examine V.8 in the context of both the preceding treatise (i.e. III.8) and the subsequent ones (i.e. V.5 and II.9). Since V.8 comes after III.8, which is devoted to Plotinus' concept of contemplation, I will first very briefly summarise its conclusions (section 3.1), because it plays an important role in the discussion with the Gnostics. I shall also try to sketch out Plotinus' notion of contemplation with regard to other treatises. A properly grounded notion of productive contemplation enables Plotinus to maintain simultaneously the continuity and hierarchy[2] of the different levels of his universe, which is of importance even for the question of beauty. If Intellect is beautiful, a claim which the Gnostics would probably assent to, and the universe is continuous, albeit hierarchically ordered, it necessarily follows that even the sensible world is, within its own limits, beautiful. Subsequently, I shall discuss the treatise *On Intelligible Beauty*, along with relevant passages from V.5 and II.9. Once again, I shall divide the treatise in a rather systematic fashion, focusing on sensible (section 3.2), psychic (section 3.3) and intelligible beauty (section 3.4), and on the relation of beauty to the Good (section 3.5). In each section, I shall focus on those aspects and perspectives that are novel as compared to treatise I.6, namely the discussion of τέχνη and the defence of sensible beauty in section 3.2, the beauty of the world soul and the individual souls of heavenly bodies in section 3.3, the means used to describe the supreme unity in multiplicity of Intellect and connect it with beauty in section 3.4 and, finally, further details concerning the relation of beauty to the Good in section 3.5.

3.1 Productive Contemplation

According to treatise III.8, everything stems from contemplation, participates in contemplation and aims at contemplation whenever possible (cf. III.8.7).

1 See chapter 1 and Darras-Worms (2018, pp. 9–15), who also makes an interesting comparison between V.8 and the other treatises of the *Großschrift* (pp. 23–25).

2 I use the word "hierarchy" here and in what follows as a shorthand for the relationship between prior and posterior. Cf. O'Meara 1996.

After all, Intellect, as the structure of the intelligible forms and the paradigm of everything below it, is also an activity of self-contemplation. Consequently, everything that participates in Intellect also participates in contemplation. The being of each thing becomes, on the model of Intellect, the active performance of self-relation. There is thus a continuum of productive contemplation (cf. III.8.8), or as Plotinus puts it, "that which is produced must always be of the same kind as its producer, but weaker through losing its virtue as it comes down" (III.8.5.23–24). Specifically, there is Intellect, which contemplates itself as contemplation, so that there is a unity of contemplation and of that which is contemplated. Next, we find soul, whose upper part contemplates Intellect, but as something in soul, i.e. as λόγοι, and in this sense, what it tries to reach remains external to it. The lower part of soul, nature, contemplates these λόγοι, according to which it creates, but they are external to it because they reside in the upper soul (cf. Roloff 1970, pp. 17–22).[3] As can be seen, the differentiation of these various levels of knowledge is caused by the gradual disintegration of the unity of contemplation and its object, as it is found in Intellect (cf. III.8.8). Moreover, this disintegration leads to decreasing clarity of contemplation on each individual level, as we descend from the Intellect (cf. III.8.8 and VI.7.7).

As a result, it is also possible to say, albeit in a very specific sense, that there is a supreme kind of contemplation in the Good, which is marked by utter unity. However, we must not understand this unique kind of contemplation as implying any form of duality: we must neither differentiate the Good from its knowledge, nor distinguish between the subject of knowing in the Good and the object known (cf. V.6.6). At the same time, simply to draw the conclusion that the Good does not know itself would be at least as erroneous. "Not knowing" not only implies the same duality between knower and known, but also

3 The details of this conception are not very clear. Plotinus divides soul into a lower part, i.e. nature, and an upper part which is said to seek and to love learning (cf. III.8.5). When Plotinus discusses it, he also considers how action is contemplation (cf. III.8.5–6). But whereas nature probably refers to the lower part of the world soul, the things said about the upper part seem rather to relate to the individual soul. This situation raises many questions, especially about the hierarchy between the different parts of the individual soul as compared to those of the world soul. It seems reasonable to differentiate various aspects of contemplation, in which one part of a soul can be said to be superior to another. For example, the contemplation engaged in by nature is probably superior to that of the lower part of an individual soul, in that it possesses its object of contemplation without having had to search for it. On the other hand, it contemplates as if it were sleeping and its contemplation is thus dim. For a discussion of this problem, see Deck 1967, pp. 68–72. Nevertheless, all parts of both the individual soul and the world soul must be contemplation.

a deficiency. For this reason, one can say neither that the Good knows itself, nor that it does not know itself (cf. VI.9.6, VI.7.37), for it is beyond knowing (cf. V.3.12, VI.7.40). The contemplation of the Good must be understood as a form of touching or contact with itself (θίξις καὶ οἷον ἐπαφὴ; V.3.10.41–44), simple concentration (ἁπλῆ ἐπιβολή; VI.7.39.1–2) or immediate self-consciousness (συναίσθησις; V.4.2.18). All of these are ways in which Plotinus tries to express the absolute transcendence of the Good, which, at the same time, implies the superlative possession of every predicate, in the sense of being its source. When not speaking correctly (οὐκ ὀρθῶς; cf. VI.8.13), Plotinus even dares to say that, in a sense, the Good generates itself by looking at itself (cf. VI.8.16). In this way, we may conclude that there is a continuity of contemplation even between the Good and the Intellect, although it is, at the same time, accompanied by insurmountable transcendence of the first principle.[4]

This very brief summary gives us a rough idea of the sense in which contemplation is knowledge. Plotinus goes a step further, however: all contemplation is creative or fruitful. The Good is creative in the sense of overflowing—since it is perfectly complete (cf. V.2.1, V.1.6, V.3.12, IV.8.6, V.5.12)—or emanating (cf. V.1.6), while remaining in itself (cf. V.5.12), similar to how the sun shines. In its overflowing, Intellect comes to be that which emanates from the Good, turns back to it, receives an imprint from it and thus is constituted (cf. III.4.1, VI.7.16).

In a different context, Plotinus systematically presents his concept of productive contemplation as a double activity that is both internal (ἐνέργεια τῆς οὐσίας) and external (ἐνέργεια ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας; cf. V.2.1 and especially V.4).[5] The internal activity here denotes the act of self-relation or contemplation in virtue of which everything is what it is. This internal activity is completed by the external activity, which Plotinus expresses with the help of the metaphors of pregnancy and begetting (cf. V.1.6, V.2.1, V.4.1), emanative overflowing (cf. V.1.6, V.2.1) and illumination (cf. V.1.6, V.3.12). In all of these cases, the external activity is said to be an image of the internal one (cf. IV.5.7, V.1.6, V.2.1, V.3.7). As the metaphors of a spring and a source of light suggest, the external activity is fully dependent on the internal one: if the internal activity were to stop, so too would the external one. Conversely, the external activity in no way dimin-

4 For all of these reasons, I side with Deck (who mentions them as well), as against Rolof, who thinks that contemplation only applies to Intellect and what lies below it. On the latter position, cf. Rolof 1970, pp. 16–17 and 23–27. For Deck's discussion of the topic, see Deck 1967, pp. 17–21.

5 The following passages on double activity and complete motions are heavily indebted to Emilsson's analyses. Cf. Emilsson 2007, chapter 1, Emilsson 2017, pp. 48–57 and Emilsson 1999. See also Bussanich 1985.

ishes or changes the internal one. It is thus more appropriate to conceive of them not as two separate activities, but as one double activity (cf. II.9.8), in the sense of Plotinus' notion of absolute motions (ἀπόλυτοι κινήσεις; cf. VI.1.22 and VI.3.21–26). By "absolute motion", he means that a motion does not need to be completed by its end, as Aristotle thinks.[6] This only seems to be the case when we delimit the motion, by qualifying it with some kind of quality or extent (cf. VI.1.16). Examples of absolute motions include, for Plotinus, walking, talking, dancing (cf. VI.3.22), writing (cf. VI.1.19), thinking (cf. VI.1.22), burning or the action of a drug in a body (cf. VI.1.22, V.4.1). All of these are activities that are directed towards themselves and not towards some external end. Nevertheless, in all of these cases there is also something external that these activities produce in an entirely incidental manner, e.g. fire, a drug and walking respectively produce heat, health and footprints. The external act here is merely an expression of the internal one: it is not an independent act, but something produced incidentally, albeit necessarily. The inner activity of the Good described above with reference to treatise VI.8 is, in this sense, called absolute (VI.8.20.4–8). Correspondingly, Intellect is said either to be or to contain a trace (ἴχνος) of the Good (cf. III.8.11, V.5.5, VI.7.17, VI.8.18) and its generation is, in this sense, the external activity of the Good.

Since the concept of internal and external activity is a tool that is employed systematically, we may also apply it to the other hypostases.[7] The internal activity of the Intellect is its unique way of thinking itself as the plurality of ideas. What makes it unique is the complete identity of contemplation and its object (cf. III.8.8), a topic that Plotinus also discusses in treatise V.8.4, which I shall address in section 3.4. What, then, is the external activity of the Intellect? In treatise III.2.1–2, Plotinus says that Intellect, while remaining in itself, gives something of itself to matter, i.e. λόγοι, with the help of which Intellect creates everything. At the same time, however, the starting point of the sensible universe, which is, in this sense, a mixture of matter and λόγοι, is soul (cf. III.2.2). As already noted in section 2.3, sensibles can be said to be caused both by the soul and by the Intellect. The former explanation is to be understood as being more advanced or detailed than the latter. It is through λόγοι that soul organises the universe (cf. III.5.9). Every soul possesses all of the λόγοι as a single λόγος, but, so to speak, divides and distributes this λόγος out into the world (cf. III.2.17, IV.4.16). But is the soul then not the real product of Intellect? It is, because λόγος is merely an image of Intellect in the soul and, in this sense, it is soul itself, i.e.

6 Cf. *Phys*. VIII.

7 Strictly speaking, of course, it applies primarily to Intellect and can be used for the Good only by analogy.

a soul which has received an imprint from the Intellect after turning back to it (cf. Deck 1967, p. 61). Therefore, soul is also said to be a trace (ἴχνος) of Intellect, i.e. its external activity (cf. V.1.7, VI.7.20) and also a λόγος and εἰκών of it (cf. III.8.2 and V.1.3).

Of course, there is some sort of creativity even in the contemplation engaged in by soul, or rather in both of its parts (i.e. the upper part and the lower part), as well as in both kinds of soul (i.e. the world soul and individual souls).[8] Nature is said to be an unmoved λόγος silently contemplating itself, which gives a share of itself to the substrate of the sensible world (cf. III.8.2–3), and eternally gives rise to it (cf. III.4.4, IV.3.6, IV.3.9). However, nature itself is a product of the contemplation engaged in by the higher part of soul, which Plotinus claims is clearer and always illuminated by the Intellect, as compared to the blurry and weak contemplation occurring in nature (cf. III.8.4–5). Deck (1967, pp. 42–46) takes these passages to be using ποίησις in a looser sense than when it is used in relation to Intellect. The higher part of the soul creates by projecting itself into its product, i.e. into nature. In this sense, there is a combination of mobility and immobility, since the higher part of the soul simultaneously remains in itself and projects itself downwards (cf. V.2.1). The same principle applies to nature, but to an even higher degree, because it creates matter and then turns towards it again in order to form it (cf. III.9.3, IV.3.9, III.4.1).

With this conception of creative contemplation, Plotinus is able to maintain both continuity and hierarchy in his universe. This will be needed in order to defend the beauty of the sensible world not only in treatise V.8, but also, above all, in II.9. After all, Plotinus begins V.8 with a clear reference to his notion of contemplation.

3.2 The Defence of τέχνη and Sensible Beauty

Like treatise I.6, *Ennead* V.8 also promotes the notion of beauty as form. However, the reasoning is slightly different here. Plotinus begins by rejecting the view that the cause of beauty is matter[9] or a physical property, like colour or shape (cf. V.8.2.4–9 and Beutler-Theiler's com. ad V.8.2.6). He then proclaims the form in which a given thing participates as the true source of sensible beauty (cf. V.8.2.14–16), before finally giving support to his thesis by means of a brief debate with an imaginary opponent, to whom he first objects that if

8 However, cf. again footnote 3 above, as the details of the whole concept are not fully clear.

9 Matter is represented here by menstrual fluid (cf. Smith 2018, com. ad V.8.2.7, Kalligas 2013, com. ad V.8.2.1–9, Darras-Worms 2018, com. ad V.8.2.6–14, and Corrigan 2005, p. 207).

mass (ὄγκος)[10] was beauty, the reason-principle (λόγος)—which his opponent acknowledges to be the productive principle in contrast to mass—would not, as the opposite of mass, be beautiful. Given the principle of the superiority of the cause, however, this implication is unacceptable to Plotinus (cf. v.8.2.19–21). Moreover, the same form can make both what is small and what is large beautiful, so beauty does not depend on mass (cf. v.8.2.21–24).[11] Another argument that Plotinus advances in support of his position is that it is not the mass of sensible objects that enters into the soul through the eyes, but only the forms of these objects. If it were the mass that entered the soul, it would be difficult to explain how it would be able to pass through such a small organ as the eye (cf. v.8.2.24–27).[12] Finally, Plotinus argues that if the cause of beauty were ugly, it could not create its opposite. If it were neither beautiful nor ugly, it would not be comprehensible why it begets the beautiful rather than the ugly (cf. v.8.2.28–31).

In this list of arguments, I did not include the famous stone-sculpture comparison, because it is part of a relatively independent section of v.8, on the beauty of τέχνη.[13] In v.8.1, Plotinus urges his reader to compare an unworked stone with a statue whose beauty is caused by spiritual beauty. However, the

10 For the relationship between matter and mass, see II.4.11. Mass is indefinite (ἀόριστος) matter defined as extension (μέγεθος).

11 This is perhaps a reference to Aristotle's definition of beauty in *Poet*. 1450b.

12 It must be added, however, that Plotinus' own position raises far more difficult questions. For example, how can something that is not spatial be present in the physical, that is, how can the soul be present in the body? Plotinus repeatedly struggles with questions of this kind in IV.3, IV.9 and VI.4–5. For a discussion of Plotinus' theory of sense perception, see Emilsson 1988. In IV.7.6.19–24, Plotinus deals with the same problem of how sensibles can enter the soul through a small organ, such as the eye. There, however, he says that all perceived objects are unified in the pupils.

13 I leave untranslated the Greek words τέχνη and τεχνίτης because the English equivalents, "art" and "artist", may in this case be misleading. The Greeks understood the term τέχνη as the "ability to produce things so long as it was a regular production based on rules" (Tatarkiewicz 1980, p. 50; cf. also the definition of Pseudo-Galenus in his *Intro*. 14.685.3–4). Consequently, τέχνη was by definition an intellectual activity and was linked to knowledge, not to inspiration, intuition or imagination. For the latter, the Greeks reserved the term μουσική, in which the μουσικός communicated with the gods and was inspired by them. That is also attested by the fact that μουσική arose from the traditional ritual purification, which used imitation to represent order, and the Greeks called it χορεία. See Parker 1986, pp. 254–274. Τέχνη was therefore something definitely learnable, which stands in direct contradiction with later theories of the artist-genius. Nor was τέχνη primarily linked with beauty. The definition of beauty as the common denominator of most kinds of art, as we understand it today, was not settled on until the late 18th century, after much debate. See Kristeller 1951, pp. 19–20.

statue that he has in mind is not to be shaped in the likeness of a specific person, but rather in the likeness of all beautiful people, i.e. in accordance with a form. Such a statue, which partakes of this mode of beauty, will be beautiful to the extent to which the sculptor has succeeded in giving form to the matter of the stone (cf. V.8.1.6–11). The whole proof that it is a form and not matter which is the cause of beauty in a given thing thus unfolds in four steps:

1) As the comparison of an unworked stone and a statue shows, matter is not a sufficient condition for concluding that a thing is beautiful, because in that case the unworked stone would be equally beautiful (cf. V.8.1.11–14).[14]
2) A form is not already in matter (e.g. in a stone). It must first be invested in it by a τεχνίτης (cf. V.8.1.14–18).
3) The beauty which enters into a stone is inferior to the beauty found in τέχνη (cf. V.8.1.18–21).
4) The λόγος that enters into matter does not stay pure. Rather, it is actualised only to the extent that the matter submits to τέχνη (cf. V.8.1.21–22).[15] It is necessary to understand this process in connection with Plotinus' notion of productive contemplation as elaborated in treatise III.8.

The unity of these two aspects, the noetic and the creative, is captured well in Greek by the word τέχνη. Τέχνη is one form of human participation in Intellect; it is the spiritual means of knowing, but lacks the quality of being immediately all-encompassing, unlike its model. It is through his productive knowledge, i.e. his participation in τέχνη, that the τεχνίτης is able to form matter and thus portray a person at all. Beauty in τέχνη, which Plotinus discusses later in the text, is therefore beauty in contemplation, while what is contemplated through λόγοι are the forms themselves, that is, Intellect. In virtue of his participation in τέχνη, the τεχνίτης makes himself similar to the Intellect, that is, to productive self-contemplation. This is why Plotinus can say that beauty in τέχνη is a higher beauty, while only a lower beauty enters into the sculpture. Furthermore, it does so only to the extent to which the matter of such a mixture, body, submits to what is being created—in other words, to the extent to which the sculpture

14 Armstrong suggests in a comment ad loc. that this contradicts I.6.2, where it is said that nature sometimes gives beauty to a single stone. I do not see the supposed contradiction. Plotinus says here only that if the matter were the cause of the beauty, then an unworked stone would need to be *just as* beautiful as one invested with form by a sculptor. This does not, in any way, prevent an individual stone from being beautiful. On the contrary, if its matter were the cause of a stone's beauty, all stones would necessarily be beautiful and nature would not give it beauty only in certain cases.

15 Matter is used here in the Aristotelian sense with regard to the forming principle, that is, not in the technical sense of ὕλη, as the most remote emanation of the Good. For in a stone, ὕλη is already formed by the form of stone through the agency of the world soul.

participates in the form that it makes present in the world. A form is present in the world, however, as a reason-principle (λόγος), which the τεχνίτης invests in the thing (cf. Rist 1967, pp. 84–102). Τέχνη, as the cause of the beauty of its products, which enables them to participate in what it itself has (i.e. beauty), is more beautiful than its products. According to Plotinus, being more beautiful also implies a higher degree of unification. To illustrate his point, he uses analogies, such as the decrease in bodily strength, heat and potency when these are diffused into space. One could also express this idea by saying that the cause is always homogenous with what is caused, in the sense that the cause lends to the caused what the cause itself has. However, the caused can only accept this characteristic from its cause in a weakened form. Plotinus wishes to apply this principle of the superiority of the cause universally (cf. Emilsson 2017, p. 367), illustrating it here with the example of μουσική, as the cause of someone's being a μουσικός. Indeed, he even mentions a kind of intelligible μουσική as the cause of worldly μουσική (cf. v.8.1.22–32).[16]

Consequently, Plotinus opposes those who do not sufficiently appreciate art for its imitative nature.[17] He presents three objections against this view: First, nature too is an imitation of something higher, i.e. the Intellect (cf. v.8.1.32–34).

16 This example is not, however, fully analogous to the previous causal order in τέχνη. We have here an intelligible μουσική as the cause of its worldly counterpart. This could still be interpreted as the aforementioned distinction between the knowledge of Intellect and its image, i.e. human knowledge. Nevertheless, the causality of μουσική and of the man of the muses is not analogical to τέχνη and its product. Moreover, τέχνη is the cause, for example, of a statue, through the mediation of a sculptor. Therefore, the sculptor could be called the cause of the sculpture, and sculpting itself, that is, the τέχνη, could be called the cause of his sculpting nature. That said, Plotinus perhaps only wishes to illustrate the superiority of the cause, as we saw above, and is less concerned with finding a precise analogy.

17 According to Rist (1967, p. 184), this concerns Plato himself, whose negative attitude to depicting τέχνη emerges particularly in *Rep*. X. This is a widespread cliché: cf. Smith 2018, com. ad v.8.1.20 and v.8.1.32–40, Emislsson 2017, p. 368, Beierwaltes 2013, pp. 15–20, Scott 2011, Büttner 2006, pp. 80–81, O'Meara 1993, p. 95, Armstrong 1975, Tatarkiewicz 1970–1975, Rich 1960, de Keyser 1955, Freeman 1940, Gilbert and Kuhn 1939 and Svoboda 1926. For my disagreement with this interpretation of Plato, see Gál 2014 and cf. also Jinek 2009. Plato only condemns that subtype of art which imitates the sensible world. But this does not mean that a different type of art, which would imitate the paradigm, cannot exist. If nothing else, art plays a crucial role in the proposed education system of *Kallipolis* (cf. *Rep*. II and III), but must be carefully supervised by philosophers (cf. *Leg*. VII 801d), because it mixes truth with falsehood, or beauty with ugliness (cf. *Rep*. II,377a, 383a, *Apol*. 22a–e and *Men*. 99c–d). Corrigan (2005, p. 210) agrees, noting that, at the very least, Plotinus must have somehow understood Plato in this fashion. See further Szlezák 1979, pp. 21–28. Plotinus' objections may rather be directed at Aristotle (cf. *Protrep*. Fr. B 13, *Meteor*. IV.3.381b6, *Phys*. II.2 194a21–22).

Second, a τεχνίτης has access to the λόγοι behind the sensibles, such that the object of art's imitation is the same as that of nature (cf. V.8.1.34–36).[18] Third, a τέχνη may depict things that do not exist in nature, and even if it does portray something sensible, it adjusts and adds what is fitting (cf. V.8.1.36–38). Plotinus illustrates this in the lines that immediately follow, when he talks about a statue of Zeus that was made by Pheidias not according to something he perceived with his eyes, but according to how it would be if Zeus were to appear before him (cf. V.8.1.38–40; for the context of this example, see Kalligas 2013, com. ad V.8.1.32–40). The statue of Zeus is thus his ideal portrait, which means that it has been created according to an individual form.[19]

To summarise tentatively the discussion of sensible beauty in treatise V.8, we can say that Plotinus introduces several new arguments for his notion of beauty as form and draws apologetic consequences from it for the notion of τέχνη. However, in the context of the debate with the Gnostics, who disdain the sensible world, a defence of sensible beauty is required in the field of φύσις rather than τέχνη. Plotinus uses Plato's texts as a common ground for the discussion with the Gnostics in the *Großschrift* and presents his thesis about the beauty of the cosmos originating in Intellect as the correct interpretation of Plato's doc-

18 Consequently, I cannot agree with Schubert (1973, p. 67) who claims that Plotinus appreciates the beauty of nature more than that of τέχνη. According to him, the soul, or the life that the soul gives to things, ought to be the distinguishing criterion. There is, however, no reason to assume that the τεχνίτης could not, in principle, have equal abilities to nature. It is certainly true that Plotinus sometimes praises the world soul for ordering bodies without being impeded by them in any way (cf. IV.3.9), and without having to plan or consider its product (cf. IV.3.10) or to correct it (cf. II.9.2). In this sense, nature creates better images than *technai* (cf. IV.3.10). On the other hand, both nature and a τεχνίτης are on the same level as far as the aspect of μίμησις is concerned. If we follow Plotinus' line of thought in III.8.5–6, it is obvious that the contemplation of an individual soul may be elevated even above the contemplation of nature. For a discussion of this, see Rolof (1970, pp. 36–44), and Deck (1967, pp. 64–72). The same objections also apply to the interpretation of Kuisma (2003). His position is convincingly critiqued by Omtzigt (2012, pp. 60–66). A well-balanced discussion of the topic is to be found in Vassilopoulou 2014, pp. 493–498.

19 The question of individual forms or ideas is of course a peculiar one. Personally, I am convinced that individual forms could be kinds of *logoi* of universal ideas, into which these develop in the movement of unfolding, but which remain at the level of Intellect because they are immediately "rolled back up into" the general structures of relations. I imagine the mechanism as analogous to the one described in the case of species and genera in III.8.8 and V.3.10 as unfolding (ἐξελίσσω), as movement (κίνησις), process (πρόοδος) or activity (ἐνέργεια) in VI.7.13. For an overview of this topic, see the classical discussion between Rist (1963, 1970) and Blumenthal (1966), as well as the re-examination by Kalligas (1997). For a broader discussion of the question with respect to Plotinus' understanding of individuality, see Tornau 2009.

trines (cf. v.8.8.7–23). He argues that Plato sought to show, through the beauty of the sensible world, the beauty of the intelligible model in accordance with which it was created, and that Plato did so particularly in *Tim*. 37c–d.[20] For it is generally true, Plotinus says, that an image is beautiful when its model is beautiful. As proof of this, Plotinus mentions that those who admire a thing modelled on something else, actually admire or direct their admiration (θαῦμα) towards the model itself, even if they do not know what is happening to them (cf. *Phdr*. 250f.), as is the case of most lovers (οἱ ἐρῶντες) and, more generally, admirers of the beauty found down here (οἱ τὸ τῇδε κάλλος τεθαυμακότες). The cosmos, he claims, must therefore be considered beautiful or even perfect, to the extent to which it participates in the paradigm (cf. v.8.9.43–47). One can only reproach the cosmos for not being beauty itself, i.e. for not being Intellect (cf. v.8.8.22–23). In this sense, Plotinus here even calls the Intellect "more than beautiful" (ὑπέρκαλον) as compared to the beauty of the sensible world, but, paradoxically, it is more than beautiful through an overwhelming beauty (κάλλει ἀμηχάνῳ; cf. v.8.8.11–23, *Rep*. 509a6 and Darras-Worms 2018, pp. 34–35).

This line of thought is precisely the one that Plotinus develops further in many passages in treatise II.9. For example, in the fourth section he says that we should not judge the bodily world too harshly, concluding that its source is evil because there are unpleasant things in it (cf. II.9.4.22–24). Such a position confuses the intelligible world with its image. We should not despise the sensible world because "what other fire could be a better image of the intelligible fire than the fire here?" (II.9.4.26). Plotinus asks even more emphatically in the eighth section why we should not call the sensible world a clear (ἐναργής) and beautiful (καλόν) image (ἄγαλμα) of the intelligible gods, if "it has come into life in such a way that its life is not a disjointed one [...] but coherent (συνεχὴς) and clear (ἐναργής) and great (πολλὴ) and everywhere life (πανταχοῦ ζωὴ), manifesting overwhelming wisdom (σοφία ἀμήχανος)?" (II.9.8.10–16, modified; cf. also *Tim*. 37c). Plotinus repeats that we can only belittle the bodily world if we judge it by the standards of its paradigm, but this would mean failing to see that it manifests this paradigm to the extent that a beautiful natural image can (cf. II.9.8.16–20 and Gertz 2017, com. ad II.9.8.16–19). In the spirit of this argument, Plotinus criticises the Gnostics' scorn for the sensible world further in the thirteenth section. If one fails to understand that an image of something only imitates it to the extent that it can, it would be necessary to despise even Intellect in opposition to the Good (cf. II.9.13.13–33). A superior conception

20 For the analysis of Plato's conception of the world as an image of the divine paradigm, see Karfík 1995. See Darras-Worms (2018, pp. 35–37) for a discussion of the impact of the *Timaeus* on treatise v.8.

would then involve understanding the continuous decline of what is imitated throughout the hypostases, and accordingly "one should rather meekly (πράως) accept the nature of all things" (II.9.13.5–6, modified). If someone were to take the contrary position, it would make that person altogether wicked (πάνκακος), showing that they do not understand either the bodily world or its intelligible archetype (cf. II.9.16.1–5 and 12–14). The behaviour of the Gnostics does, however, actually show that they recognise bodily beauty, because they are proud to despise even it (cf. II.9.17.27–31 and Gertz 2017, com. ad II.9.17.21–31). Plotinus illustrates this point with a comparison of living in a beautiful house built for us by the world soul (cf. II.9.18.3–17). We can either despise it, but live in it anyway—as the Gnostics do—or recognise the skill with which it was created and wait for the time when we will no longer be in need of a house. The climax of this line of reasoning is approached in the thesis that if there were no beauty in the sensible world, there could not be any beauty in the Intelligible either, which is a consequence of the notion of productive contemplation (cf. Fattal 2010). However, none of this means that everything in the sensible world is beautiful. Since in bodies, the beauty in a part is not the same as the beauty in the whole (cf. section 2.2), we must correspondingly distinguish between the beauty of the whole universe and that of its parts. However, this distinction probably permits the existence of ugliness of parts when considered on their own (cf. II.9.17.25–33 and Rolof 1970, p. 217). Nevertheless, in relation to the whole, these parts must be considered beautiful if the whole itself is beautiful, because its beauty is distributed to all of its parts (cf. section 2.2).

Similarly, at the end of V.8, Plotinus accuses the Gnostics of not understanding productive contemplation correctly and thus wrongly appreciating the world.[21] He once again appeals to Plato, but also to the older mythical tradition to support his thesis. He understands the cosmogony of Οὐρανός, Κρόνος and Ζεύς as an allegory for the procession of Intellect from the Good and of the soul from Intellect (cf. V.8.12–13 and *Theog.* 126–138 and 453–506). In this allegory, Zeus resembles his father in the same way as a picture resembles its model, and he himself causes the creation of another cosmos, that is, the sensible one, which he rules. This cosmos too emerges like a picture of a beautiful model and is beautiful. Through Zeus, it participates in the beauty, being and life of Intellect and therefore has life, exists as an image and is beautiful as a result of being derived from what is above it. Like its predecessors, it is as a whole also eternal, despite being created, because Intellect and the soul are naturally, necessarily, and eternally characterised by their external activity. However, the created

21 See section 3.4.1.

nature of the cosmos should not, according to Plotinus, be taken to imply that there was a time when the cosmos did not exist, because time emerged together with it. In this sense, it has always existed and will continue to exist forever (cf. v.8.12.11–20). Both the claim that the world is a beautiful image and that, as such, it is eternal—derived as they are from Plotinus' notion of productive contemplation and beauty of Intellect—should once again be understood as an attack on the Gnostics, who not only misunderstand the notion of an image,[22] but dare to talk about the creation and destruction of the world as if it were to happen in time (cf. this recurring theme in II.9.4, 7–8 and 12).

From a different perspective, the existence of sensible beauty could be objected to by pointing out the ugliness of matter. However, in order to defend sensible beauty, Plotinus is even willing to shift from a conception of matter (ὕλη) as a purely negative element to one that emphasises its kinship with beings, on the grounds that it is not the absolute opposite of true being, but only different from it.[23] In this sense, it is a kind of last form (εἶδός τι ἔσχατον), and Plotinus can therefore understand the cosmos as a whole as the sum of forms (cf. v.8.7.18–28).

Appreciating sensible beauty is, in this sense, only a matter of the correct understanding of the whole or of looking at it through the prism of its paradigm while understanding the concept of productive contemplation. If we look at nature in the right way, that is, if we look at the reason-principle (λόγος) rather than at the motion that it causes, then we understand that nature is actually beautiful and its cause even more so. Plotinus compares the confusion of the person (probably a Gnostic) who does not see spiritual beauty behind the outer façade of nature, with Narcissus' fatal misunderstanding (cf. v.8.2.34–38 and Miles 1999, p. 44). The ambiguity of beauty has already been touched upon in treatise I.6 (cf. section 2.4) and I hoped to find new clues in v.8. Since, however, v.8 is a part of the *Großschrift*, the search may be naturally extended to v.5, the next treatise in chronological order. In the twelfth section of v.5, the aforementioned ambiguity is explicitly associated with beauty as such, even on the level of Intellect. Plotinus says there that beauty "even draws those who do not know what is happening away from the Good, as the beloved draws a child away from its father; for Beauty is younger" (v.5.12.36–38). The uncertainty about whether

22 A more detailed discussion of this is to be found in Fattal 2010.

23 He thus touches upon the difficult question of the status of matter (ὕλη). It seems to me that Plotinus ultimately holds two contradictory views, considering matter as being simultaneously the absolute and the relative opposite of the Good. Evidence for both conceptions appears in treatises II.4.16 and II.5.5. For interesting interpretations of this topic, see O'Meara 1997, O'Brien 1996, Corrigan 1996 and Narbonne 1992.

it is in the nature of beauty both to stimulate the ascent and to impede it, or whether matter is to be held responsible, cannot be resolved solely by appealing to V.8. However, V.5.12 provides relatively strong evidence in favour of the former position. Even the beauty of Intellect probably poses this kind of threat to the soul.

3.3 The Beauty of Soul: The Cosmic Dimension

In the third section of V.8, Plotinus offers a brief summary of his position: nature too, not just τέχνη, contains the reason-principle (λόγος) in virtue of which the physical thing is beautiful. In both cases, it comes from the soul (cf. V.8.3.1–3). What must be meant here is that nature, as the lower part of soul, acquires its λόγος from the upper part, which contemplates more clearly than nature does and is always illuminated by the Intellect (cf. III.8.4–5). Beauty in the upper part of the soul is thus necessarily more beautiful, according to the principle of the superiority of the cause. The beauty of the soul is evident especially in virtuous souls, for they approach primary beauty (i.e. Intellect) by means of purification (cf. V.8.3.3–8). In fact, the sight of the spiritual beauty of an ugly person (like Socrates; cf. Kalligas 2013, com. ad V.8.2.35–41) is sufficient reason to call that person beautiful. Anyone who did not want to do so, would not even be able to see him—or herself as beautiful. Such a person would therefore remain on the sensible level, ensnared in self-deception, just like Narcissus, not understanding that the beauty of soul is greater than that of bodies (cf. V.8.2.38–44).

On the other hand, beauty may also inspire us to contemplate its cause (cf. V.8.3.4–8). In fact, Plotinus already suggests that this is the case in the very first section of V.8, where he lays out the plan of the treatise: he addresses a (morally) advanced reader, who has already managed to contemplate the spiritual cosmos and together with whom he wishes to examine how to attain the beauty of the Intellect (cf. Smith 2018, com, ad V.8.1.1–4). At the same time, however, he assumes that a person who beholds the beauty of Intellect will also be capable of a spiritual relationship with the Good (cf. V.8.1.1–6). We may understand this as follows: to behold the beauty of Intellect means to truly understand Intellect, and, for Plotinus, to understand something means to be able to articulate its causes (cf. Wagner 1996). Then again, this also means to be able to grasp Intellect as an activity of emerging, self-constituting and returning to its source. (cf. Gatti 1996), or as an internal and external activity (cf. Emilsson 2007). In the case of Intellect, this means being able to contemplate it in relation to the Good. As Rolof (1970, p. 36) puts it, one of the organising principles

of the *Großschrift* is the question of how to attain the Good. The beauty of the Intellect is, in this sense, to be understood as a means of a run-up (ὁρμή; cf. *Rep.* 506e2) to the Good.

In the case of soul, however, it is necessary to expand on this interpretation. It is not possible, as it is with Intellect, to identify the understanding of the beauty of the soul with the understanding of the soul as such. For the soul, unlike Intellect, can also be ugly, namely, when it mixes with the body and imitates it.[24] As Plotinus says in treatise I.2.4, soul is by nature good, but, at the same time, it is unable to remain in the real good, and thus has a natural tendency in both directions. Hence, the reference to the cause in V.8.3.4–8 must rather concern the character of beauty itself. This also corresponds to how Plotinus speaks about that which inspires us to ascend: "by adorning (κοσμέω) the soul and giving it light from a greater light which is primarily beauty it makes us deduce *by its very presence* in the soul (ἐν ψυχῇ ὄν) what that before it is like" (V.8.3.5–7, italics O.G.). When adorned, i.e. made beautiful, the soul becomes an image of or a reference to the Intellect. In section 2.5, I already discussed what it means for a soul to become beautiful: it must be purified, converted and become like the god, which will restore it to its original state, whose archetype lies in the activity of the Intellect. When the soul becomes aware of itself as a part of the Intellect in this sense, it also becomes a λόγος, which imprints itself in those parts of the soul that are not united with it. Those parts, in turn, become virtuous and acquire a share in the beauty that the highest part becomes.

In the *Großschrift*, Plotinus also considers the beauty of the souls of heavenly bodies and that of the world soul. He touches upon this point in V.8.3, where he proposes to investigate the intellect of the gods in order to get a glimpse of Intellect itself, since it is more active and visible in them (cf. V.8.3.12–23). Plotinus differentiates between two kinds of gods, both of which have in common their superiority over the human soul, that is to say, their greater proximity to the Intellect (V.8.3.27–31).[25] The gods of the first kind live in the heavens, and raise their heads above its outer edge in order to catch sight of the contents of Intellect. The clear reference to *Phdr.* 246d–249d (cf. Heitsch 1997, p. 101) suggests that Plotinus may be referring to heavenly bodies, which imitate Intellect with their regular circular movements. In treatise II.9.8, we do indeed find questions

24 Never entirely, of course, i.e. not with respect to its highest part which is part of Intellect. Cf. however footnote 30 in chapter 2.

25 However, cf. the discussions of this topic both in footnote 3 above and my comments on pp. 55–56.

addressed to the Gnostics, who consider heavenly bodies to be evil archons seeking to prevent them from reaching the intelligible universe. If what Plotinus has shown is true, i.e. if the intelligible universe is beautiful and everything is creative contemplation, while the sensually perceptible universe is a beautiful image of Intellect, "why then are not the stars, both those in the lower spheres and those in the highest, gods moving in order, circling in well-arranged beauty?" (II.9.8.31–33). The gods of the second kind merge with the forms themselves (cf. Rolof 1970, pp. 46–47), and, as Plotinus figuratively puts it, live in another heaven.

Let us now examine in more detail what it means for such a soul to have a share in the Intellect. Why are the lesser gods beautiful? With reference to Plato's *Tim*. 34a, treatise II.2(14) *On the Movement of Heaven* raises the question as to why the cosmos moves in a circle. This is also what the lesser gods do, according to II.9.8. The universe moves in this way because it imitates the Intellect in this fashion (cf. II.2.1). "The soul's power is movement round its centre" (II.2.2.7), but this centre must be understood as referring to God, i.e. Intellect as the source of soul (cf. II.2.2). Because the soul "cannot go to him (scil. to God; O.G.), it goes round him" (II.2.2.15–16) and it "embraces him lovingly and keeps round him as far as it can" (II.2.2.13–14). Since the intelligible is not in place and is, in this sense, everywhere, the universe seeks to acquire it by performing circular movements, because the soul "moves it continually in drawing it continually, not moving to some other place but towards itself in the same place [...] and so gives it possession of soul at every stage in its progress" (II.2.1.46–49). Hence, the heavenly bodies not only possess spherical motion, corresponding to that of the whole universe, but each of them is also endowed with an individual motion around its centre, imitating Intellect according to its own nature (cf. II.2.2).

All of this obviously applies to the world soul, which governs the heavens, and to the individual souls of heavenly bodies. But how do things stand with individual souls below the level of the celestial bodies? Plotinus says only that there is also a natural tendency in us to perform circular movements, but as the part of our soul in question is earthly, it does not rotate easily. Additionally, there is a further constituent in us which moves in straight lines (cf. II.2.2), as bodies do (cf. II.2.1). This claim parallels what Plotinus says in treatise IV.8[6] *On the Descent of the Soul into Bodies*, where he acknowledges two reasons why the soul's fellowship with the body is treacherous: the body acts as a hindrance to thought and fills the soul with pleasures, desires and griefs (cf. IV.8.2). Both the earthly character of the lower part of our soul and the natural tendency of our body to move in straight lines refer to the peculiar involvement of our soul with particular bodies. This involvement distorts the circular motion of soul

and makes it difficult for these souls to govern bodies.[26] As Plotinus puts it in treatise IV.8.2, our souls govern bodies that are much worse than that of the world soul. They were obliged to sink more deeply into the world on account of these bodies, which would otherwise disintegrate, since their elements would be carried off to their proper places. This makes it necessary to constantly take care of our particular bodies: "There are two kinds of care of everything, the general, by the effortless command of one setting it in order with royal authority, and the particular, which involves actually doing something oneself and by contact with what is being done infects the doer with the nature of what is being done" (IV.8.2.27–31, modified).

If, in treatise V.8, Plotinus says that the lesser gods are beautiful because they are gods, i.e. because they have a share in Intellect (cf. V.8.3.23–24),[27] this means that they are beautiful because they perform circular movements. By doing so, they imitate the stability and purity of Intellect and direct themselves towards it. It seems possible to combine this partial conclusion with what was said in section 2.5 about the participation of the soul in Intellect. There, we discussed the attainment of virtue by an individual soul, which needed to be purified and converted, as well as to become like Intellect. The latter process restored it to its original and beautiful state, whose archetype lies in the activity of Intellect. As we have noted, an individual soul becomes aware of itself as a part of Intellect when it accomplishes this purification, and it also becomes a λόγος which imprints itself on those parts that are not united with Intellect and restores them in their original, orderly form. If we consider the fact that the world soul never actually lost its original, orderly form, as well as the fact that the individual souls may be influenced by their involvement with particular bodies, which causes them to lose the global perspective of the world soul, it seems to follow that the λόγος received by an individual virtuous soul restores the original circular movement of the soul. In support of this claim, we can refer to passages from treatise I.2, where Plotinus says that the world soul desires Intellect in a similar way to how we do, and that this is why our good order *also* comes from Intellect (cf. I.2.1). Therefore, both the world soul and the individual souls receive good order from the Intellect.

26 Cf. II.1.4; IV.8.8; II.9.2, 4; IV.4.12; III.2.2; V.8.12. See also Smith 2011.

27 Plotinus is even more specific on this point. Being Intellect is said not only to represent the immediate ordered givenness of everything in everything (i.e. wisdom—see section 3.4.5), but also intellection which is "always right in the calm and stability and purity of Intellect" (V.8.3.25–26). This intellection is directed at divine matters which Intellect sees, i.e. the forms (cf. V.8.3.23–27).

Do the ordered state of an individual soul and that of the world soul differ in any way? I believe that they do, because restoring the circular motion of an individual soul surely does not cause the attached body to start rotating on its axis and then launching into orbit. I am sure that Porphyry would have recorded such an entertaining event, if it had occurred during one of Plotinus' four *henoses*. Rather, it means that our thinking is set into such motion, while our bodily movements continue to differ from those of the heavenly bodies, because being virtuous still means being an individual whose role differs from that of the gods.[28] Indeed, our analysis of V.8.3 has already shown that becoming virtuous means, among other things, understanding that one is merely a part of a larger whole. Similarly, in treatise IV.8, Plotinus admits that individual souls may share in the rule of the world soul, "like those who live with a universal monarch and share in the government of his empire" (IV.8.4.7–8). The restoration of a soul's circular movement is then perhaps the strange transformation a soul undergoes when it becomes virtuous, which is responsible for the fact that the linear movements of perceived bodies do not disrupt the soul's movements and, as referenced in section 2.5, the soul "only makes itself aware of pleasures when it has to, using them as remedies and reliefs to prevent its activity being impeded [and—added by O.G.] it gets rid of pains or if it cannot, bears them quietly and makes them less by not suffering with the body" (I.2.5.7–12). This was, for Plotinus, obviously one of the points of *Tim*. 34b–37c and 42e–44d.

Let me add, however, that while it may seem, at the moment, that an individual soul is, in this sense, never as great or as dignified as the world soul, this is only half of the truth. An individual soul can shift between the different ontological levels becoming aware of itself as Intellect and even uniting with the Good. The latter is something the world soul never does. This is probably why Plotinus also says, at the beginning of V.8.3, that beauty of the soul is especially evident in virtuous souls, since they approach the primary beauty. On the other hand, he says a bit later that Intellect is more active and visible in gods, i.e. they are also more beautiful. This once again shows the ambiguous nature of our individual souls. They are both inferior to individual astral souls and the world soul and superior to them, because our souls may ascend to a higher level than them. Much more often, however, our souls remain sunk down below them. It seems that Plotinus lays particular emphasis on the superiority of the world soul when addressing people like the Gnostics (cf. II.9.7–9).

28 Cf. Plotinus' hesitation in ascribing virtue to the world soul in I.2.1.

3.4 The Correct Understanding of Intellect and Its Beauty

Sensible beauty, as well as that of all of the various kinds of soul, is derived from the beauty of Intellect. In treatise I.6, Plotinus does not really explain how to understand this and he could even be accused of confusing his reader, since he almost carelessly oscillates between referring to the Good and the Intellect as the primary beauty. As noted in section 2.6, however, this situation is due to the fact that Plotinus here has the limited objective of showing that beauty comes from *there* in I.6. A treatise entitled Περὶ τοῦ νοητοῦ κάλλους (by Porphyry of course) thus naturally raises great expectations with respect to the details it promises (cf. p. 38). This will be the topic of the present section, insofar as the "*there*" from I.6 is coextensive with the Intellect. Its overlap with the Good will then be analysed in section 3.5.

3.4.1 *How Shall We Describe the Intellect?*

In V.8, Plotinus approaches the description of Intellect with caution. The Intellect lies, by nature, on the boundary of speech, by means of which it is and yet is not graspable. Intellect is not graspable, because it is a model for speech and, in this sense, it is beyond speech. However, it is graspable to the extent that speech reflects the immanent structure of Intellect (cf. V.8.3.11–16). In the same spirit, Plotinus argues that it is impossible to imagine the creation of the cosmos, as if its plan had first been gradually developed and then executed in a similar way to how τεχνῖται produce various objects (cf. Plato's *Tim.* and the interpretation of Plotinus' understanding of it in section 6.1). One of the reasons[29] why this is impossible is that this kind of plan could not be used to create the cosmos, because discursive thought (λογισμός), which would be responsible for developing the plan for its construction, exists only in the world and operates with images from experience, comparing them to the forms in Intellect (cf. V.8.7.8–10). In other words, λογισμός is merely an image of Intellect and it is thus necessary to be careful in making use of it. Catching sight of Intellect is, according to Plotinus, possible through one's own inner purification and

29 The second reason is that the idea of creating the cosmos according to a plan entails an incorrect notion of the process of creation. Artisanal work implies a kind of shaping for which one needs hands, feet and so forth, in other words, everything that has yet to be created (cf. V.8.7.10–12). Moreover, such a notion of creation is derived from the human way of creating, which is not primary (cf. III.8.2). This way of imagining the creation of the cosmos is, according to Plotinus, characteristic of the Gnostics and must be abandoned (cf. II.9.4 and 12.). For these two reasons, Plotinus thinks that although the cosmos was created, and created as an image of Intellect by the agency of the soul, it was created suddenly, as it were (οἷον ἐξαίφνης), all at once.

the understanding of one's own partial nature. We are merely parts of a larger whole and stand in need of purification, like a piece of gold that we have found and must wash, as well as coming to understand that we do not possess all gold, but just some of it (cf. V.8.3.12–18).

Plotinus' famous thought experiment in V.8.9, through which he endeavours to familiarise his reader with his concept of Intellect, should be understood in this way. He appeals to the reader to try using discursive thought (διάνοια) to grasp the cosmos as a whole, by preserving the distinctness of its parts, while thinking about it as one, i.e. as a network of relations of the individual parts and the whole. From this thought, Plotinus claims, it is still necessary to remove all matter (but not in a way that would somehow reduce the size of the sphere in our imagination) and call upon God, who is the creator of the cosmos, in the hope that he appears. If he does appear, we shall contemplate his immense unity, which, however, retains the differentiation between its parts. These parts are, at once, all of the other parts and the whole (ὁμοῦ δέ εἰσι καὶ ἕκαστος χωρὶς αὖ ἐν στάσει ἀδιαστάτῳ; cf. V.8.9.1–26).

3.4.2 *The Unity and Multiplicity of Intellect: A Debate with Aristotle*

One way of understanding how everything in Intellect can be everything else and the whole, and how it is possible at the same time to talk about differences among the forms, is to approach this topic from the perspective of Plotinus' debate with Aristotle. In several places in the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle addresses a question which Plotinus must have understood as threatening his understanding of the Intellect. In Book XII of the *Metaphysics*, the question is whether that which is thought can be said to have parts. But there, Aristotle argues that Intellect would change when passing from one part to the other. Moreover, since it has no matter, the intelligible cannot be divided (cf. *Met*. XII.9, 1075a6–11). Plotinus will react to this by qualifying the use of δύναμις-ἐνέργεια distinction on Intellect as improper and by introducing intelligible matter (I will return to both of these issues in due course). In Book XIV, the question is similar, but this time with respect to what is eternal. Can the eternal be said to have parts? No, says Aristotle, because this would entail potentiality, i.e. what may or may not be, and it could therefore not be eternal (cf. *Met*. XIV.2, 1088b14–28). Plotinus' answer will once again be to deny the applicability of the δύναμις-ἐνέργεια distinction to Intellect. Aristotle further adds that whatever has parts is actually one and potentially *many*. As a composite whole, it always requires an efficient cause to unify it. Of course, this cannot be the case of the unmoved mover, which is the ultimate cause. Plotinus' solution is to introduce a principle superior to Intellect, i.e. the Good, and a transformation of Aristotle's understanding of causality in productive contemplation. Moreover, in

Book VII, Aristotle claims that οὐσία cannot be composed of actual οὐσίαι, just as numbers are either unities (and as such are not composed) or not unities (and then can be said to have parts). His reasoning is as follows: what is actually *two* cannot be actually *one*, but only potentially *one*. Conversely, what is actually *one* can only be *two* potentially. Therefore, given that substance is one, it cannot have parts (cf. *Met*. VII. 13, 1039a3–14). It seems that Plotinus' reaction to this involves a strict dematerialisation—as well as de-quantification—of Intellect, such that it is not only not composed of parts in the same way that sensible substances are, but it is not even composed of parts in the same way that countable numbers are. Rather, it is οὐσιώδης ἀριθμός, i.e. a defined multiplicity, which countable numbers only imitate (cf. chapter 5). Therefore, there are various reasons for denying that Intellect has parts, and all of them (except for the external efficient cause) are based on the Aristotelian notions of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια.

In order to avoid these consequences, Plotinus reinterprets these notions in treatise II.5, where he focuses on the distinction between that which is δυνάμει and ἐνεργείᾳ, on the one hand, and that which is δύναμις and ἐνέργεια, on the other. That which is δυνάμει is that which is potentially something else and needs an external agent to become actual. Consequently, being potentially is always relative to being actual and vice versa (cf. II.5.1.10–21, 28–29 and 3.28–31). Δύναμις, by contrast, is a power to create or actualise something (cf. II.5.1.23–26). Something that was δυνάμει in Intellect would necessarily remain so forever, because no change can happen in Intellect and because there is no time there, but only eternity. Not even intelligible matter can be said to be δυνάμει, because it is a form, and therefore an actuality. It is only in our thought that we distinguish between matter and form in Intellect (cf. II.5.3.4–19). Similarly, Intellect is ἐνέργεια, and can be said to be ἐνεργείᾳ only as a means differentiating it from the sensible things which can never be entirely actual (cf. II.5.3.22–40). Therefore, when applying the δυνάμει-ἐνεργείᾳ distinction to Intellect, one must bear in mind that it is, strictly speaking, inappropriate, a point which Plotinus underlines, albeit not systematically, by using οἷον.

3.4.3 *The Unity and Multiplicity of Intellect: The Matter-Form and Science-Theorem Analogies*

That said, it seems to me that the δυνάμει-ἐνεργείᾳ pair is one of Plotinus' preferred means of talking about the Intellect, as can be seen from two examples. As is obvious from the parts of the *Metaphysics* discussed above, the δυνάμει-ἐνεργείᾳ distinction is linked with the distinction between matter and form. Although Plotinus denies that Intellect is composed of form and matter, in the sense that it is found in the bodies, he is willing to introduce the notion of intelligible matter, in order to be able to talk about parts of Intellect. More precisely,

he uses it to designate that which all of the forms share. The form, by contrast, is that which differentiates them. This allows Plotinus to talk about genera and species in Intellect (cf. II.4.4.2–7). However, intelligible matter is, at the same time, never a substrate of change because in Intellect, everything is already and forever formed and because everything is already everything else. Intelligible matter is thus never shapeless (cf. II.4.3). Rather, it is νοοειδής (cf. V.1.3.22–25 and section 3.4.6). Consequently, it is only in our minds that we separate form from matter in Intellect, considering the residual substrate undefined and shapeless. However, this signifies that the matter-form distinction, and with it also that of being potentially and actually, cannot, in fact, be properly applied to the Intellect.

The second example is that of science and its theorems. Plotinus uses this example to illustrate both that all souls are one (esp. IV.9.5, IV.3.2, III.9.2, VI.4.16, V.8.5) and that Intellect (VI.2.20, V.9.8, V.8.4) and its contents are one. The structure of the analogy is as following:[30] There is a single whole (science), which has parts (theorems or propositions) that present an aspect of it. A theorem *qua* theorem is a piece of knowledge. What differentiates it as a piece of knowledge from other propositions is the fact that it is linked together with all of the other theorems belonging to the science and with the science as a whole. It makes sense as a theorem only against the background of the whole science and in relation to all of the other theorems. Plotinus uses the image of background and foreground to explain his claim that a theorem is actually what it is and potentially the whole of the science. But since, according to treatise II.5, the δυνάμει-ἐνεργείᾳ pair cannot be properly used for Intellect, there is indeed a tension here. In Intellect, everything is rather actuality itself (ἐνέργεια), so that the science-theorem analogy must, in the end, be transcended. This is obvious in V.8.5, as well, where Plotinus dismisses this analogy and replaces it with the metaphor of a picture (for further details, see section 3.4.5). Therefore, Plotinus uses the other meaning of δύναμις instead in order to explain the science-theorem analogy. Someone who understands a theorem *qua* theorem has the power (δύναμις) to explain the theorem within the context of the whole science, i.e. to explain the other theorems as well. The opposite is also true: the whole science is potentially all of the theorems, i.e. it is in the power of the one who has the knowledge corresponding to the whole science to actualise it in each of its theorems. The whole as such is, in this sense, greater than each individual part and greater than even their sum. It is the λόγος in soul, which cannot be expressed, because each expression is only the actualisation of a part.

30 The following summary is heavily indebted to Tornau 1998.

In VI.2.20, where this analogy is used for Intellect, a further element is added: science as a whole is divided into particular sciences with their theorems. However, the basic principle remains: the relationship of the theorems to partial science is the same as the relationship of partial science to science as a whole. Within the Intellect, this seems to imply that the relationship of a genus (science) to its species (particular sciences) is precisely like this, such that a genus-species relation is an integral part of the science-theorem analogy. The analogy should thus be interpreted within this context as suggesting that a genus has the power to generate its species and that a species is actual, as an expression of its genus. However, the genus is potentially present in the species, because, as a species, it makes sense only against the background of the genus.

For this reason, Plotinus seems to think that there is no tension between these two analogies. Why should there be? After all, the science in the background of a theorem is not flat, but is itself structured, i.e. there are more and less general theorems. However, there is a tension, if one understands the genus-species relation as Aristotle did. According to him (cf. *Cat*. V.5), a species is that in which the primary substance is included, and which is a kind of quality related to a substance specifying what kind of substance it is. A genus, on the other hand, is that in which the primary substance *and its species* is included, and which is a kind of quality related to substance/*species* specifying what kind of substance/*species* it is. Finally, Aristotle claims that genera and species are predicated of primary substances as their names and their λόγοι, i.e. we use them univocally. Aristotle's account seems to imply only vertical relations, which are, moreover, all ontologically based on the primary substances (there is even a hierarchy of being more or less substance). By contrast, the theorem-science analogy implies the relation of each part to all of the other parts and the whole, in which the whole is primary, generating theorems and constituting them as theorems.

In any case, Plotinus relies more on Plato than Aristotle when introducing the species-genera model. In Plato's *Soph*. 254b–259b, the relation of everything to everything else is also introduced, since everything is derived from the highest kinds. The existence of the highest kinds also implies different types of relations among the forms, such that understanding a form amounts to understanding it within the structure of the intelligible. In other words, to intellectually grasp a form is to understand both what it is in itself and how it is different from everything else. In Plato, the idea that the μέγιστα γένη are principles is also implicitly present, although it is not clear whether they are still to be considered genera in the ordinary sense, as Plotinus seems to suggest (cf. section 4.1).

In my understanding, being simultaneously a genus and a principle implies the following change in the understanding of genera-species relationship: every species is related to the highest kinds indirectly, through the genera-species structure, insofar as they are γένη, and directly insofar as they are principles (cf. also section 4.1). There is thus a double link which could be compared to the relationship between a university scientist and the dean, who is the highest superior in the faculty. If, for example, you have a complaint, you do not go directly to the dean but rather talk to your direct superior, who then talks to the vice-dean and then to the dean. But if this scientist is, at the same time, involved in a research project led by the dean, he will talk directly to the dean. Similarly, insofar as the being, movement, rest, otherness and sameness of each form is concerned, they relate directly to the "dean", i.e. to the highest kinds, although in other respects (e.g. insofar as it is a question of being a rational, as opposed to an irrational animal), it is only through their genera.

In any case, the question remains how we ought to combine all of these claims made by Plotinus. It is difficult to really explain how individual forms differ from each other, since Plotinus basically dismisses all possibilities for distinguishing between them. Of course, they are not distinguished by occupying a different spatial or temporal position. Rather, they must differ in virtue of their "position" within the genus-species hierarchy. But how can this be if everything is everything else and the whole, and if you at the same time dismiss the δυνάμει-ἐνεργείᾳ pair as not properly applying to Intellect, claiming that everything is actuality in Intellect? What is this "position" in the hierarchy? One possibility might be to say that all forms differ in virtue of their δύναμις, i.e. the power to be actualised as different in what is below, but this "becoming itself in another" does not sound very Plotinian to me. Moreover, the cheap answer that our soul (or at least its discursive part) cannot comprehend the true unity and multiplicity of Intellect is not really helpful.

3.4.4 *The Unity and Multiplicity of Intellect: The Five Perspectives*

So far, I have touched upon two important reasons for calling Intellect the most unified multiplicity of all that is:

1) There is a specific connectedness of different forms with each other and with the whole of Intellect. All of the forms are to be thought similar to the theorems or propositions of a science, which each contain all of the other axioms, as well as the whole of the science. Since each part in Intellect is all of the other parts and the whole of it, everything is, in a sense, one in Intellect, although, at the same time, it is also many. This reason for the Intellect's unity is given from the perspective of the nature of intelligible objects.

2) Some of the forms are not only united with all of the others, but unite other forms in the sense of being superordinate to them, i.e. in being genera. However, some forms are not only genera (γένη), but also principles (ἀρχαί), i.e. the primary kinds (πρῶτα γένη). This means that all of the other forms necessarily partake in them both in order to exist at all and in order to exist as what they are, as opposed to what they are not. They even constitute all of the forms, in the sense that the latter can be viewed as the highest genera unfolded[31] and their constitution as a procession from the highest kinds.[32] In this sense, the highest kinds contain the whole of Intellect and unite it. However, since Plotinus explicitly relates the topic of the primary kinds to beauty, I will address this explanation of the unity and multiplicity of Intellect in more detail in chapter 4.

However, these two are not the only reasons for calling Intellect the most unified multiplicity of all that is. It seems to me that, throughout the *Enneads*, Plotinus provides further reasons for thinking this:[33]

3) Intellect is a specific relationship between subject and object, in that it also implies the plurality of forms. This consideration might be derived from Plotinus' two explanations for the diversity of Intellect. First, Intellect is essentially double insofar as it is a subject-object relation (cf. e.g. V.4.2 or V.3.10). Second, the objects of the Intellect's contemplation, i.e. the forms, are multiple (cf. e.g. V.3.10 and VI.7.39). As Emilsson notes, it would be strange to understand these to be two different sources of plurality. He proposes rather to assume that the difference in the subject-object relation entails a difference in the object of the thinking of Intellect itself (cf. Emilsson 2007, p. 103). Consequently, Intellect can be understood as "itself thinking that it itself is" (Emilsson 2007, p. 109). This means that it is essentially a composite, in the sense that the subject's self-reflecting comprises the reflecting subject itself, and that the subject is part of the reflected object. It is therefore the same diversity that distinguishes the subject from the object and the object as such. Since Intellect desires the Good but cannot think it, because of its absolute transcendence, it rather divides itself into the thinking subject and an image of the Good, which it contains and is (see further below). By means of the act of thinking, it

31 The verb ἐξελίσσω is used for the constitution of the whole Intellect in III.8.8.37 and implicitly used in the context of the highest kinds also in V.3.10.52.

32 Cf. the use of κίνησις, ἐνέργεια and the verbs προέρχομαι and πλανάω in this sense in VI.7.13, where these are, moreover, explicitly related to the highest kinds.

33 For a general discussion of this topic and the analogies Plotinus utilises to describe Intellect's unity and multiplicity, see Smith 1981.

does not therefore reach the desired object itself, but reaches itself as the subject-object (cf. Emilsson 2007, p. 108, and section 6.3). Hence, there is no contradiction when Plotinus states that Intellect desires the Good and also itself. The desire of the so-called inchoate Intellect, i.e. the Intellect not yet established in itself, is therefore one, even though it has two aspects. Although it is the desire for the Good, this is articulated as the desire for its own self-sufficiency. Intellect can, however, achieve this only insofar as its own nature allows. It can only be imperfectly one as a true *unitas multiplex*. Plotinus' conception of reflexivity as "thinking thinking about itself" contains this special loop or rolling up into itself, which enables us to conceive of the two above-mentioned differences within reflexivity as being one and the same (cf. further chapters 4 and 5). In any case, intellection is not only the source of Intellect's multiplicity, but also unites it, since all of its objects of thought are based on its own intellective self-relation. Plotinus develops this argument from the perspective of the nature of the act of intellection itself.

4) Intellect is further united by its underlying "structure", which it brings into life through its intellective activity. Plotinus investigates this structure in treatise VI.6, where he also calls forms beautiful on the grounds that they are numbers. Their characteristic as numbers is precisely their structural delimitation. I shall elaborate on this in chapter 5.

5) Finally, a genetic perspective may be added to these reasons. Intellect comes into being as a desire for the One, which is actualised in an attempt to think of the One, resulting in its thinking of an image of the One, which Intellect contains and is. In other words, the One is present in Intellect as an image or a trace and Intellect does the second-best thing possible with it, i.e. it thinks it. Intellect is thus also unified in virtue of the fact that it contains and is an image of the One, which it breaks into multiplicity because it is posterior to the One (cf. sections 5.3 and 6.3).

As is obvious, these reasons are interconnected. In its genesis, Intellect receives an imprint of the One (cf. V.3.11.1–18 and point 5 above), which is itself one, but one in being, and according to its being one, it becomes number and can be said to be a preliminary sketch of all the forms (cf. VI.6.10.1–4 and point 4 above). In this process, Intellect is constituted precisely as Intellect, i.e. it thinks itself, and unfolds gradually (cf. III.8.8.34–38, V.3.10.52 and points 2 and 3 above) into the complete living being, i.e. into all forms, starting from the highest kinds, which were always already present with Being (cf. VI.7.13 and point 2 above). In the language of treatise VI.6, Intellect becomes number unfolded and all forms as substantial numbers are born on the model of the one (cf. VI.6.9.30–38 and V.5.5.1–4). However, the contents of Intellect are themselves intelligible. There-

fore, they must be one, or rather one-many, distinct in their powers or otherness (cf. VI.9.8.29–33, V.1.4.39–41, V.9.6.7–9) and cannot differ in virtue of being in a different place (cf. VI.4.4.26, VI.9.8.31, V.8.9; cf. point 1 above and Rist 1985, pp. 79–80).

3.4.5 *The Unity and Multiplicity of Intellect: Wisdom*

After this general exposition, let us now turn back to treatise V.8, since large parts of it are devoted to the description of Intellect and the kind of *unitas multiplex* proper to it (basically, sections 3–6 and 9). In brief, Plotinus first draws on Homer's *Illiad* 6.138, in order to describe Intellect as the easy life of the gods, for whom the truth is a mother and a nurse, existence and sustenance (cf. V.8.4.1–2). He then adds the characteristic predicates of Intellect—true being, transparency, the total absence of darkness, clearness to the core without resistance, all of which he ultimately summarises in the expression "light is transparent to light" (φῶς φωτί, scil. φανερὸς; O.G.; V.8.4.6). In the next section (cf. V.8.4.47–50), Plotinus introduces the science-theorem analogy and emphasises both the unity of all axioms and their distinctness. This unity is illustrated elsewhere in V.8 by identifying the Sun, the stars, the great and the small (cf. V.8.4.8–10), the man, the animal, the plant, the sea, the earth, and the heavens (cf. V.8.3.32–34) in Intellect. The latter, i.e. the distinctness of all forms, is understood as being fully determined (explicitly in V.8.9, cf. also VI.9.8.29–33, V.1.4.39–41, V.9.6.7–9 and VI.6.7.7–10). Furthermore, Plotinus touches upon the contemplation proper to Intellect by means of yet another literary reference, this time to the mythical figure of Lynceus,[34] who possessed the ability to see through solid objects. Not only are the objects of Intellect's contemplation absolutely transparent, but the very act of contemplation is a penetrative seeing.[35] Plotinus adds, moreover, that this is not a gaze that could satiate itself with its object, since the term 'satiate' implies a prior emptiness, but *there* everything is eternal and inexhaustible and lives the best life.

The perspective of intelligible objects and that of the act of intellection are cleverly combined by calling the Intellect wisdom (σοφία), since it is understood as the immediate, ordered accessibility and uncoveredness of everything to everything. Plotinus inventively expresses this with the image of walking over ground that is itself the walker and, perhaps even better, comparing the simultaneity to an ascent during which the person ascending is followed all

34 One of the Argonauts. See Hornblower, Spawforth 1999, s.v. 'Argonauts'. Cf. of course *Argonautica* by Apollonius of Rhodes.

35 Perhaps Rolof (1970, pp. 52–53) is right to claim that this is the reason why the life of the Intellect is called easy in the beginning of V.8.4.

the way, step by step, by their own starting point (cf. v.8.4.15–18). He further illustrates the fact that Intellect is always, so to say, accompanied by wisdom,[36] by comparing it with Sophocles' statement from *OC* 1381–1382 that Justice sits beside the throne of Zeus in their common revelation. Plotinus even considers the correct understanding of wisdom to be central to remaining faithful to Plato's legacy, which is based on understanding that knowledge is not different from that which it itself is in (cf. v.8.4.23–55).[37] In this case, however, wisdom is all beings and all beings are wisdom, from which their worth and substantiality derives. Consequently, those beings that are not identical with wisdom itself cannot, according to Plotinus, even be called true substances (cf. v.8.5.15–19).

Plotinus further endeavours to describe wisdom, which is Intellect and resides in its immediate and ordered inclusiveness of everything in everything, using a contrast between scientific theorems and beautiful images. He now turns away from his otherwise standard science-theorem analogy, in the belief that he can express the *unitas multiplex* of Intellect more precisely by comparing it to a beautiful image, because it better captures the immediacy of the view of the whole, together with the ordered nature of diversity. However, he

36 Interestingly, Plotinus uses the word αὐτοεπιστήμη in v.8.4.40. This absolute knowledge must however be understood as a reference to Plato's *Phdr.* 247d–e and thus as synonymous with wisdom. What is much stranger here is Plotinus' specification of this αὐτοεπιστήμη as ἐνταῦθα, which Armstrong surprisingly does not translate at all. Accordingly, there are two possible readings of this passage: 1) we emphasise ἐνταῦθα (cf. H-S in apparatu: Ficino; and also the latest English translation by Gerson et al.: "scientific understanding itself here") and interpret αὐτοεπιστήμη as a solely human way of achieving wisdom, such that the point of the comparison with Zeus and Justice is precisely to say that they are different (I defended this reading in my paper *Gál 2011*); 2) we emphasise αὐτοεπιστήμη, ignoring ἐνταῦθα (which may be a mistaken attempt to emend the original text), and interpret the comparison as saying that wisdom always accompanies Intellect. The latter reading seems to me now more probable, because αὐτοεπιστήμη is, for a Platonist, too loaded, and this reading also better fits the context.

37 In v.8.5, Plotinus undertakes a journey to the self-thinking intrinsic to Intellect. The starting point is that all creation takes place in accordance with some wisdom, in other words according to some plan, with a certain intention or aim. One example of a creation of this sort are the individual τέχναι, whose knowledge Plotinus describes as diversity composed into unity. This is why craftsmen skilled in their field turn to the wisdom of nature, which is one and which they pull apart into diversity for their purposes. However, Plotinus distinguishes between the reason-principle (λόγος) in nature and nature itself. Therefore, he enquires into the source of the λόγος which is the very plan (and therefore wisdom), according to which nature realises its potential as productive. The reason-principle must come from Intellect and even there we must ask where Intellect got it from. The answer, according to Plotinus, is that Intellect acquired wisdom from itself, since Intellect is wisdom itself.

corrects this analogy too, when he seeks, quite paradoxically, to understand images not as painted, but as real or true (ὄντα; cf. v.8.5.19–25).

Plotinus also develops his comparison of wisdom to a beautiful image by referring to the practices of the Egyptian sages (cf. v.8.6). In order to convey wisdom, these sages did not use letters imitating the successive nature of uttered speech, but pictures,[38] which enable general insight and do not engage the dianoetic and bouletic parts of the soul. The successive thinking found in speech can, however, be derived from these images for the specific purposes of explaining individual phenomena, as was the case with τέχναι derived from the wisdom of nature. According to Plotinus, if we wish to glimpse the beauty of things, we must look to the wisdom in them, which endows them with beauty.

In general, these passages from v.8 emphasise Intellect's unity, distinctness, inaccessibility to the senses, inexhaustibility, unlimitedness, immediate givenness, the character of being whole at once, the absence of corporeal substance, and the absence of parts, in the sense in which bodies have parts. Intellect is therefore an intense unity in multiplicity, while every psychic and sensible *unitas multiplex* is merely an imitation of it, as the original. In naming the second hypostasis σοφία, in the sense of the immediate and ordered inclusiveness of everything in everything, Plotinus inventively captures the intensity of the unity of Intellect.[39] And since Plotinus connects σοφία with beauty, we now turn to the central theme of the treatise, intelligible beauty.

3.4.6 *Intellect Is Everywhere in Beauty: Intelligible Matter*

In v.8.4, Plotinus stresses that all of the parts of Intellect are pure (καθαρά), since they are not disturbed by their opposites, in the same way that rest is not disturbed by motion. Interestingly, Plotinus also mentions beauty in this context, explaining that it is not mixed with something not beautiful, but is everywhere in beauty (v.8.4.11–15). This can be taken to mean two different things: First, since everything is everything else in the Intellect, everything is also beauty. In this sense, beauty is everywhere in beauty (cf. v.8.4.14–19; and Rolof 1970, p. 50).[40] Second, it could be interpreted as implying that there can-

38 For a discussion of this understanding of Egyptian writing or temple drawings cf. de Keyser 1955 and Kalligas 2013, com. ad v.8.6.1–9.

39 There is also a polemical motif running through in this whole section, since σοφία was—in a sense—considered the cause of evil by the Gnostics, or, at least, her fall led to the generation of evil. Of course, this made no sense to Plotinus. His claim that a correct understanding of wisdom is central to remaining faithful to Plato's legacy is thus also aimed at the Gnostics. For a more detailed analysis of this layer of the text, see Darras-Worms 2018, pp. 25–27, 30–31 and 37–41.

40 The meaning of beauty being everywhere in beauty will be further refined in section 6.4.

not be matter in Intellect, since, up to this point, Plotinus had connected beauty to form in contrast to the ugliness of matter. Therefore, if there were matter in the Intellect, beauty would be in something not beautiful. Things are, however, more complicated here and Plotinus addresses this issue in treatise II.4 *On Matter*.

Matter surely cannot be a part of Intellect, if we understand it to be something undefined (ἀόριστον) and shapeless (ἄμορφον), while claiming that the forms are simple and cannot contain anything of this sort (cf. II.4.2). However, Intellect is not merely simple but also diverse. Therefore, this question requires an enquiry of its own. Plotinus begins by urging us not to despise automatically everything that is undefined and implies shapelessness. In some cases, a thing of this kind might give itself to what is above it, as a soul gives itself to Intellect, in order to receive form from it and become perfected by it. If the matter in the sensible world is a substrate (ὑποκείμενον) of incessant change, this cannot be the case of intelligible matter because in Intellect everything has and always has had the same form. It cannot change into anything else, because everything is already everything else. Intelligible matter is never shapeless (cf. II.4.3). It is only in our minds that we separate all form from a substrate and claim that the residual substrate is something undefined and shapeless. Nevertheless, it is necessary to presuppose a substratum even in Intellect, since there must be something shared by all the forms, namely, intelligible matter, as well as something else which differentiates them, their individual forms. We should therefore imagine this unique unity of Intellect as varied and endowed with many shapes (cf. II.4.4). The intelligible matter receives an intelligible, defined life when it is formed, whereas the matter in the bodies is merely a decorated corpse. In this sense, intelligible matter is something true (ἀληθινός) and substantial or, as Plotinus puts it, correcting himself, formed matter as a whole is an illuminated substance (πεφωτισμένη οὐσία). The principle (ἀρχή) of such matter is Otherness (ἑτερότης) and first movement (πρώτη κίνησις), which create it and which one might attempt to identify with the highest genera (cf. II.4.5, chapter 4 and sections 6.3–6.4). Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that intelligible matter is something ugly only when we in our minds separate it from the forms and contrast it with them, while, in reality, there is always a formed, living substance. In this sense, intelligible matter should not be considered something that could cause beauty in Intellect not to be in beauty, for it is itself beautiful, because it is simple (ἁπλῆ) and has the form of Intellect (νοοειδὴς; cf. V.1.3.21–25).

3.4.7 *Beauty and Being*

In addition to its being everywhere in beauty, Plotinus introduces a further important characteristic of τὸ καλόν. There is a mutual conditionality or even identity of being and beauty. Plotinus explicitly states that they are of one nature (φύσις) and that deficiency in beauty (ἐν τῷ γὰρ ἀπολειφθῆναι τοῦ καλοῦ) implies deficiency in being (ἐλλείπει καὶ τῇ οὐσίᾳ) and vice versa. Moreover, as beauty is the object of erotic desire, so too is being, and beauty is such an object because it is being. Plotinus demonstrates the identity of being and beauty in sensibles. They become more beautiful the more they participate in a form—for beauty was identified with the reign of form—which also means the more they *exist* (cf. V.8.9.36–47).

The identification of beauty and being that Plotinus introduces here is of great importance. If we consider what it means for a thing to be, we should be able to conclude what it means to be beautiful. Plotinus considers this question in treatise VI.9 *On the Good or the One*. Everything that can in any sense be said to be (πάντα τὰ ὄντα [...] καὶ ὅσα ὁπωσοῦν λέγεται ἐν τοῖς οὖσιν εἶναι), exists according to the first section of this treatise by one (τῷ ἑνί ἐστιν ὄντα; cf. VI.9.1.1–2). Plotinus illustrates this thesis by showing that it applies to different kinds of beings.[41] Discrete entities (διεστηκός), such as an army, a choir or a flock, are what they are only insofar as they are unities (cf. VI.9.1.4–6). The same can be said about things having a continuous magnitude (συνεχῆ μεγέθη), i.e. a continuous body, like a house or a ship. If they are dissolved into parts, i.e. if they lose the unity they had (they are called ἓν ἔχοντα), then they are no longer what they were (cf. VI.9.1.5–10). The last example taken from bodily entities are organisms such as plants or animals, which are also said to exist in virtue of being one (they are called ἓν ὄντα) on the same grounds as before, i.e. that they cease to exist as plants or animals when broken down into multiplicity (cf. VI.9.1.10–14). Plotinus claims, however, that even things such as the health of a body, the beauty of a soul or virtue[42] are things because they possess unity: "There is health when the body is brought together into one order, and beauty when the nature of the one (ἡ τοῦ ἑνὸς φύσις) holds the parts together; and the soul has virtue when it is unified into one thing (εἰς ἓν) and one agreement (εἰς μίαν ὁμολογίαν)" (VI.9.1.14–17).

I mentioned these passages in section 2.3, when analysing similar statements made in treatise I.6. It was said there that a sensible thing becomes united and

41 Plotinus adopts here distinctions made by the Stoics. Cf. SVF II, 366–368 and 1013 and the discussion of Meijer (1992, pp. 68–97).

42 These examples are also of Stoic origin. Cf. SVF III 278 and Meijer's discussion (1992, pp. 68–97).

ordered by participating in a form insofar as the formative principle dominates in matter. Moreover, these theses were connected with Plotinus' rejection of a non-distributive notion of beauty, i.e. his insistence that, if a formative principle dominates in a body, it unites its parts and that in order to do this, the parts must themselves become united. In this sense, beauty is distributed from the whole of a body to its parts if a formative principle takes hold of this body. The present identification of beauty and being supports these conclusions because: 1) a unified thing becomes what it is through the domination of a form that unites all of the parts of the constituted whole; 2) this same form simultaneously makes the whole beautiful; and 3) both the being and the beauty are distributed to all of the parts, because a whole cannot consist of non-existing, i.e. non-beautiful, parts.[43] The identification of being and beauty is therefore enabled here by the fact that both are primarily Intellect and that both are connected with being a unified multiplicity (cf. Halfwassen 2003, pp. 88–89). However, the distinction between them, if there is one, is not clear in V.8 and I will enquire into it later (see sections 4.4 and 7.3).

As was already the case with the beauty of soul and virtue, Plotinus maintains the connection of beauty, being and unity even above the level of bodies. Furthermore, in VI.9, he goes on to ask whether it is the soul that provides the one and whether it is the one that is sought. His answer is, of course, negative. The soul rather gives what it itself does not have or *is* not. It does so by looking to the one that is above it, i.e. to Intellect (cf. VI.9.1.17–26). The different degrees of being, and consequently also of beauty, therefore correspond to the degree of unity of a thing. A soul exists more fully than bodies do, it is more beautiful than they are, and it correspondingly possesses a different unity—it is not composed of parts, like bodies are, but nonetheless "there are very many powers in it, reasoning, desiring, apprehending, which are held together by the one as by a bond" (VI.9.1.40–42). Intellect, being and beauty itself constitute a unity in multiplicity of an even higher grade. Different beings in the Intellect differ by their powers (δυνάμεις), but are, at the same time, one manifold power (μιᾷ δύναμις πολλῇ; V.8.9.17–18), a universal power (δύναμις πᾶσα) extending to infinity and powerful to infinity (εἰς ἄπειρον ἰοῦσα, εἰς ἄπειρον δὲ δυναμένη; V.8.9.25–26). Intellect is, in other words, a unity where all the parts are all the other parts and the

43 On the other hand, if we take into account the above-mentioned parts of treatise II.9 (cf. section 3.2), Plotinus does admit that some parts of bodies are less beautiful or even ugly, but only if these are taken on their own, i.e. not as parts of a whole, but as wholes themselves. In this case, it is possible to conceive of less beautiful or even ugly bodily parts, because they do not, in fact, exist on their own (e.g. an ugly nose), but only as parts of a larger whole, and, as such, are indeed beautiful.

whole. The identification of being and beauty and their connection with unity also supports the thesis that the primary seat of beauty is in Intellect.

3.4.8 *How Can We Contemplate the Beauty of Intellect? The* Phaedrus *Myth*

By the end of v.8, Plotinus attempts to combine: 1) his previous description of the enormous unity and multiplicity of Intellect (cf. sections 3.4.2–5) with 2) the outcomes of his analysis of Intellect's beauty (cf. sections 3.4.6–3.4.7) and 3) one of the leading questions of the treatise "how is it possible for anyone to contemplate the beauty of Intellect?" (cf. v.8.1.5–6). This overlap of perspectives is mediated by the myth in Plato's *Phaedrus* (246e–249d; see further Darras-Worms 2018, pp. 29–34), according to which the souls follow one of the twelve gods on their ride across the heavens. Among the gods, Zeus is the supreme leader, arranging and governing everything. However, since the souls of the gods' followers are different from those of the gods themselves, the former are only able to get a glimpse of the true beings and their beauty, seeing them only partially and with difficulty. Plotinus emphasises in this image that some souls are, in fact, unable to withstand the sight of beauty, since it shines so brightly that the eyes of the one who looks hurt, as if that person were gazing directly at the sun. In this sense, the beauty of the forms may even terrify the soul (cf. v.8.10.4–10). However, for those who can withstand its intensity, beauty manifests itself in multiple forms, e.g. as justice itself or temperance itself. In other words, Plotinus claims, in the spirit of Plato, each individual at first sees Intellect from the perspective of his or her own nature. Only the best—i.e. those who have glimpsed much of Intellect: the gods themselves and the souls in Zeus' retinue—ultimately manage to see the true nature of beauty (cf. v.8.10.1–4 and 16–22[44]). This is why they do not behold Intellect only partially, but as the unity of the parts and the whole, seen all at once. Moreover, they see it in themselves, or rather they become this sight which sees itself, since they assimilate themselves to the beautiful. Plotinus illustrates this thought with an image, which preserves the verticality of spiritual motion: in assimilating itself to Intellect, the soul becomes beautiful, like people who, in climbing mountains, take on the colour of the soil there. As usual, however, Plotinus immediately corrects his analogy: beauty is the colour of Intellect, that is, everything in Intellect is colour and beauty which permeates everything (cf. v.8.10.22–31).

44 With H-S² and Gerson et al. (2018), I believe that the context requires us to supplement ἡ in line 16 with τοῦ καλοῦ φύσις.

This correction allows Plotinus to better describe the unity of seeing beauty and becoming beauty. Such a distinction no longer exists in Intellect, because beauty can only be seen if one becomes beauty, but also because Intellect is of the nature of self-thinking. The difference between the beholder and what is beheld ultimately disappears, with the two poles becoming one (cf. V.8.11.1–24 and Hadot 1993, pp. 42–44). Further enhancing the already intense unity of Intellect, Plotinus even considers the suitability of talking about beholding it (ὅρασις). He points out that, insofar as beholding implies a relationship to what is external, the activity of Intellect cannot be described in this way. It may be called ὅρασις only if this is taken to mean non-physical self-perception (σύνεσις καὶ συναίσθησις; cf. V.8.11.19–24). Intellect is the model of beholding and, as such, it both beholds and transcends beholding. Uniting with Intellect or beauty is, in this sense, not an act of knowing. Rather, it is a return to one's own being. The unified being of the knower and the known is, however, knowledge *par excellence*, even though it may not seem so to the senses.[45] One must therefore internalise the beauty one sees and unite with it. Finally, Plotinus compares this unity of seeing beauty and being beautiful to being possessed by one of the Muses, when a person is controlled by a divine force, which communicates through them, that is, when the person is, and at the same time is not, this force (cf. V.8.10.31–43). The person is to the extent to which they become one with it. However, this person is not to the extent to which this force merely communicates through them. Similarly, in Intellect one cannot speak of looking at an object, because the object beheld is itself the beholding subject, but one can speak of it, insofar as each thing in Intellect is distinct.

Plotinus concludes this passage by suggesting that in order to contemplate the beauty of Intellect, one must assimilate to the god to whose retinue one belongs. This assimilation is interpreted as the internalisation of beauty and uniting with oneself that ultimately leads one to become aware of oneself as a

45 This is, I think, suggested by the strange example of illness and health. Illness, according to Plotinus, is something external to man and this difference allows for a clear distinction, i.e. determination and knowledge. Health, by contrast, is something that essentially belongs to our being, something that we ourselves are, and therefore we often do not perceive it and are unable to grasp it firmly. However, it is clear that this metaphor is largely unsuitable, because it implies clearer knowledge of the external than of the internal, whereas in fact it must be the other way around. Plotinus makes clear that the knowledge which Intellect has and is can be seen as dubious only from the perspective of sense perception, which is directed towards external objects. In other words, sense perception cannot rightfully be considered a judge in questions of being, which, according to Plotinus, is evident anyway from the fact that we can never look at ourselves entirely from the outside, though we do not doubt that we exist (cf. V.8.11.24–40).

part of Intellect. At first, Intellect is understood only partially, but in order to see its beauty, one must comprehend its wisdom, i.e. the immediate ordered accessibility of everything in everything. With this advance, one catches a glimpse of the bond of everything, the nature of beauty, that is the Good.

3.4.9 *The Οὐρανός—Κρόνος—Ζεύς Myth*

Plotinus offers a further myth to express what one sees in Intellect and to ultimately reject the Gnostic disdain for the sensible world. One sees a god (θεός) who painlessly gave birth to everything, who holds it in himself and who governs and enjoys his beautiful descendants (τόκος καλός), with whom he is identical and creates a unique glow. This god, who is called Cronus later in the text, is Intellect itself. Like the mythical character, it is satiated or full of its children, i.e. the forms.[46] Of all of Cronus' descendants who are said to be siblings (ἀδελφοί), Zeus, the youngest son (ὕστατος παῖς), emerges of necessity, and is here clearly identified with soul (cf. Kalligas 2013, com. ad v.8.12.7–15 and Beutler-Theiler's com. ad v.8.12.1). Zeus resembles his father in the same way as a picture resembles its model, and he himself brings about the creation of another cosmos, i.e. the sensible one, which he rules. Cronus provides beauty to Zeus, i.e. soul has a trace of Intellect in itself (ἴχνος αὐτοῦ, scil. τοῦ θεοῦ) and is beautiful precisely for this reason (τούτῳ ἐστὶ καλὴ τὴν φύσιν). Aphrodite, who is identified with the world soul,[47] continues in her intensive participation in Intellect and is correspondingly beautiful. Individual souls, by contrast, can both increase and decrease their degree of participation in Intellect and can thus become more or less beautiful (cf. v.8.13.12–22).

3.5 The Οὐρανός—Κρόνος—Ζεύς Myth: Consequences for Beauty and the Good

In the final section of v.8, Plotinus draws on his firmly established position that beauty is Intellect itself, together with the mythological vocabulary of the theogony, in order to ultimately refer to the Good itself. He begins by repeating

46 According to v.1.7.36 (and, of course, already according to Plato's *Crat*. 396b), it is even etymologically derived from the state of fullness of Intellect because it is κόρος νοῦς. Cf. also the analysis in relation to Hesiod's *Theogony* by Němec 2004 and Hadot 1981.

47 In the *Enneads*, Aphrodite is typically associated with soul. Cf. treatises VI.9.9, III.5 and the interpretations of Němec 2004, Karfík 2003 and Hadot 1981. I agree with Smith (2018, com. ad v.8.13.15) that Zeus is to be identified with the hypostasis Soul and Aphrodite with the world soul.

the claim that Intellect transfers rule over the sensible world to the soul, referring to Intellect as Cronus, in accordance with his earlier identification of the soul with Zeus. It would be improper for so distinguished a god to be concerned with anything lower, and thus he "merely" remains calmly in himself, contemplating his own beauty. Above him, however, there is still Uranus, the Good, which is explicitly said to be what does not belong to Cronus and is too great to be beautiful, once again implying that Intellect is the primary seat of beauty (cf. Darras-Worms 2018, pp. 22–23). Intellect is furthermore explicitly said to have remained beautiful in the primary sense (πρώτως ἔμεινε καλός). Cronus is therefore located in the middle (μεταξύ), between Uranus and Zeus, the Good and the soul. Plotinus explains this intermediate position, on the one hand, in terms of its differentiation from the One (τῇ τε ἑτερότητι τῆς πρὸς τὸ ἄνω ἀποτομῆς), and, on the other hand, in terms of the tie that binds it (τῷ ἀνέχοντι ἀπὸ τοῦ μετ' αὐτὸν πρὸς τὸ κάτω δεσμῷ) and makes it superior to soul (cf. v.8.13.1–15). Its intermediate position therefore derives from its being a specific kind of *unitas multiplex*.[48]

Thus, there are two reasons why Intellect is said to be beautiful in the primary sense: First, there is nothing that is not beautiful in Intellect, since every part of it is both the whole and all of the other parts, such that beauty is, in this sense, everywhere in beauty. Even the intelligible matter, the offspring of Otherness and first movement, as something always formed and living a defined and intelligible life, can be said to be beautiful and does not hinder beauty in Intellect from being everywhere in beauty (cf. section 3.4.6). Second, Intellect lies precisely between what can be called the deficiently beautiful and what is more than beautiful (cf. v.8.8.5 and 13–15).

In addition to the Οὐρανός—Κρόνος—Ζεύς myth, treatise v.8 addresses the relationship of beauty to the Good in two other places:

1) In v.8.1, Plotinus assumes that beauty of the Intellect is a run-up (ὁρμή) towards the Good. However, having more carefully considered sections v.8.10–11 (cf. section 3.4.8), it is now possible to take this interpretation slightly farther. From the perspective of soul, the nature of beauty, i.e. the Good, appears last in Intellect, since it is, as it were, the bond holding everything together (cf. *Phd.* 99c5–6).
2) v.8.8.1–5 claims that Intellect is what is beautiful in the primary sense (καλὸν οὖν πρώτως) and that the Good does not want to be beautiful (οὐδὲ

48 See also the analysis of Hadot (1981), who shows how Plotinus merges the motifs of the binding in chains, castration and swallowing of Cronus' children, and how he transforms them in order to weaken the violent impression caused by the myth.

καλὸν ἐθέλει εἶναι) because it precedes Intellect, confirming again that the primary seat of beauty is Intellect.

Furthermore, treatise v.5, the next part of the *Großschrift*, directly addresses the relationship between beauty and the Good.[49] It does so in section 12, which Pierre Hadot (1993, p. 74) uses as the foundation for his distinction between the gentle nature of the Good and the terrifying beauty of Intellect. In this passage, Plotinus states that the beautiful (i.e. Intellect) needs the Good but that the Good does not need beauty (cf. v.5.12.31–33). Compared to Intellect, the Good "is gentle (ἤπιος) and kindly (προσηνής) and gracious (ἁβρός)", whereas "Beauty brings wonder (θάμβος) and terror (ἔκπληξις) and pleasure (ἡδονή) mingled with pain (ἀγαθός)" (v.5.12.34–35, transl. modified). This distinction obviously refers to the desire of the ascending soul. However astonishing Intellect may be, the soul still feels pain, so to speak, because it has not yet achieved the ultimate goal of its desire, the Good. This distinction is already implied in the preceding passages of treatise v.5, where the Good is compared to a king sitting on a beautiful pedestal—which, in fact, actually hangs from him—and ruling over the inconceivable beauty of the procession unfolding before him. An increasing degree of regal dignity may be observed in this procession, but when the king himself is suddenly revealed, all of the spectators prostrate themselves before him and pray—or rather not all, because some of them have already left, because they thought they had seen enough (cf. v.5.3.3–15) or had merely stuffed themselves in their gluttony with foods, because they considered these more real than the god whom they came to celebrate (cf. v.5.11.12–16).[50] Plotinus also stresses in v.5.3.15–21 that such a king rules over his own kind and is not alien to it.

In v.5.12, Plotinus gives three more reasons for differentiating the Good from the beautiful. First, the Good is longed for by everyone, as if by a divine instinct (ἀπομαντεύομαι), and it is something without which nothing can exist. It is present even to those who are asleep, although they are, of course, not aware of it. However, when they do become aware, they recognise the Good as something that is always already present, such that it is never terrifying. Beauty, on the other hand, is something which must first be seen, in order to arouse longing, ἔρως, and when we behold it, it terrifies us and causes pain. Therefore, as

49 Treatise VI.7[38] from the same creative period deals with the relation of beauty to the Good in much more detail and will thus be discussed separately in chapter 6 (for the relevant passages see section 6.6).

50 The metaphor is of course slightly different as compared to v.5.3. Here, people do not see the god at a festival, whereas in v.5.3 they do not see a king. The point is, however, the same.

Gerson (2013, com. ad V.5.12.15–17) points out, love of beauty is always conscious (συνίημι) and thus implies differentiation of subject and object, which further shows that beauty cannot be the First. Moreover, Plotinus implies here that beauty makes us remember what lies above it, as its cause, whereas the Good does not, because it is recognised as always already present, i.e. in fact never forgotten. Therefore, Plotinus concludes, the fact that the desire for the Good is more ancient than the desire for beauty also shows that the Good is prior to beauty (cf. V.5.12.7–19). Second, whereas the Good is good for others, so that if one attains it, it suffices, beauty is beautiful for itself and not for the one who sees it. Therefore, it belongs only to the one who has it (cf. V.5.12.19–23). In other words, there is ultimately a difference in that the Good is good for others and not for itself (cf. VI.7.27 discussed in section 6.5 and Tornau 2011, com. ad V.5.12.19–24), whereas beauty is beautiful only for itself. As Kalligas (2013, com. ad V.5.12.14–33) suggests, this could also be interpreted as connecting the Good with what is general (for all) and beauty with what is particular (for itself). Third, it never suffices to have the Good only apparently, whereas, for some people, this is enough in the case of beauty (cf. V.5.12.23–24).

Having examined these passages from treatises V.8 and V.5, we now have a slightly more nuanced understand of the relationship of beauty and the Good. Even though it may seem in some passages of the *Enneads* that the primary beauty is not Intellect, but the Good, we must understand this as belonging to a context-dependent approach to the first principle, which reveals the Good as simultaneously beautiful and not beautiful (cf. section 6.6). The primary seat of beauty is Intellect, which received it from the Good. The latter is, in turn, beyond beauty. At the same time, since the Good is understood in the Platonic fashion as a bond embracing and holding together all things (cf. *Phd.* 99c5–6), and since beauty is this bond (unity) applied to all being (differentiated multiplicity), there is an intimate relationship between them, in the sense that the Good is the nature of beauty. Or rather, from a mythological perspective, Uranus is the father of Cronus.

CHAPTER 4

Unity, Multiplicity and the Highest Kinds (Treatise VI.2)

Although certain details about the relationship of beauty to the Good remain unclear, the enquiry has thus far led to a relatively clear identification of Intellect as the primary seat of beauty, an identification which is linked with its specific unity and multiplicity. In section 3.4.4, I sketched five interconnected reasons for why the Intellect has this unique characteristic. One of these reasons, the πρῶτα or μέγιστα γένη, will be the topic of this chapter, in which I shall seek a deeper understanding of the unity and multiplicity of Intellect, and thus also of its beauty. I shall start in section 4.1, by identifying the question of the unity and multiplicity of Intellect and its highest kinds as the central topic of treatise VI.2, proposing an interpretation of Plotinus' quest for the μέγιστα γένη as a search for genera that are also principles. In section 4.2, I shall examine Plotinus' answer to the question of the number and nature of the highest kinds, namely that they are five: Being, Motion, Rest, the Same and the Other. In section 4.3, I shall then turn to Plotinus' reasoning for why the one should not be counted among the highest kinds. His thoughts on this issue provide some clues about how to distinguish the one from Being. At the same time, however, he insists that they have a close relationship: Being and the one are to be considered siblings, as it were. In section 4.4, I shall provide a tentative summary of the results so far and start to link these conclusions to the question of beauty. In particular, the metaphor of closeness to the Good might be read as implying that the highest kinds (or Being, as their representative) are the most beautiful "part" of Intellect. Finally, section 4.5 will summarise and discuss the brief section at VI.6.18, where Plotinus considers whether beauty is to be counted among the highest kinds. In doing so, he sketches several options for how we can understand beauty. Each of them might be read as a partial insight that should be integrated into the correct conception of beauty, which is, of course, Plotinus' own conception.

4.1 The Focus of VI.1–3 and the Quest for the Highest Kinds (VI.2.1–3)

The topic of *Enneads* VI.1–3 is the number of kinds into which the one-being, i.e. the Intellect, is divided (cf. VI.1.1.6–7). Treatise VI.1 is devoted to refuting the

Peripatetic and Stoic doctrines of categories. The Stoic position is, in essence, considered to be completely wrong (cf. VI.1.25–30), while the Peripatetic teachings are adapted to the sensible world, where they have their place, albeit in a modified form and reduced in number (cf. VI.3). As Plotinus clearly states at the very beginning of the treatise, the Peripatetics do not apply categories to intelligible being, i.e. to that which truly exists (cf. VI.1.1.19–30). Therefore, the kinds of the intelligible being, i.e. the highest genera, must be examined in their own right. As Plotinus indicates, it is of importance whether these genera are to be considered principles (ἀρχαί) or simply beings (ὄντα; VI.1.1.13–14). This enquiry is then carried out in VI.2, which presents the richest account of Plotinus' adaptation of the doctrine of the μέγιστα γένη from Plato's *Sophist*.

Plotinus' starting point is that being is not one (as Plato and others have shown). As a result, we must determine how many kinds we must posit and in what way. This enquiry concerns what is called "being" as opposed to "becoming", i.e. the realm of intelligible forms (cf. VI.2.1.14–20). This formulation of the scope of the treatise brings us directly to the core of the enquiry into the unity and multiplicity of Intellect. The thesis that being is not simply one means that Intellect does not possess complete unity or, more precisely, is not as thoroughly one as the One is, since it is also always multiple. To ask about how many kinds of being there are is, in this sense, to ask about the essential multiplicity of Intellect, but its unity will nonetheless also come under consideration. That Plotinus himself understands his enquiry in this fashion can be demonstrated by the way in which he specifies the meaning of the claim "being is not one". For him, this does not mean that being is infinite (ἄπειρον), but rather that it is number (ἀριθμός; cf. VI.2.2.1–3), i.e. at the same time one and many or "a richly variegated one keeping its many together in one" (τι ποικίλον ἓν τὰ πολλὰ εἰς ἓν ἔχον; VI.2.2.3). As such, it must in some way be unified by a limited number of highest kinds that resemble elements in this respect,[1] out of which the intelligible cosmos is constructed.[2] In other words, the kinds Plotinus is looking for cannot be mere genera (γένη), in the sense of that under which lesser genera, species and individuals fall (cf. VI.2.2.12–13), but must simultaneously be principles (ἀρχαί), out of which being is composed and from which the whole of being is derived (ἐκ τούτων τὸ ὅλον ὑπάρχει; cf. VI.2.2.13–14).[3] The question of the number of kinds and the manner in which they are posited or in which they

1 In VI.2.2.17, they are referred to only as τέσσαρες (four), but later explicitly as στοιχεῖα; cf. VI.2.3.22.

2 Cf. the use of σύστασις in VI.2.2.10 and σύνθεσις in VI.2.2.29.

3 On this point, see Horn's discussion (1995, pp. 136–143) of the alternative options and the defence of the *genera-archai* model against Wurm's objections (1973, pp. 221–233).

(co-)exist, is thus narrowed down to an enquiry into the number and mutual differences of genera that are, at the same time, principles (cf. VI.2.2.27–31).

Moreover, the enquiry into this richly variegated one is to be understood as an enquiry into a plurality of kinds that derive from one, or rather from the One (ὑφ' ἓν; cf. VI.2.2.5–6). The unity and multiplicity of Intellect is, in this sense, not only determined by the highest kinds, but is to be found in these genera themselves, i.e. we must ask how these kinds are one and many. The plurality of the highest kinds is considered necessary, among other reasons, because a single genus would be unable to create plurality by itself, i.e. to give rise to all of the forms of Intellect (cf. VI.2.2.34–46). At the same time, it is not by chance (κατὰ τύχην) that there are several such kinds. Therefore, they are somehow derived from a one (ἀφ' ἑνός), but from a one that is transcendent (ἐπέκεινα), i.e. from the One (cf. VI.2.3.1–9). If we are to consider the relation of the kinds to one-being, i.e. to Intellect itself, Plotinus explains, we must take them as something like its parts (οἷον μέρη) or elements (οἷον στοιχεῖα), but only as "something like" them, because they appear as parts or elements to us only in our thinking (ἐπίνοια). In themselves, however, they are a single nature (μία φύσις; cf. VI.2.3.20–31 and also VI.2.8.30–38).

4.2 Establishing the Five Highest Kinds (VI.2.4–8)

Having further specified the question in this way, in VI.2.4 Plotinus begins his enquiry into the highest kinds themselves. He draws a contrast between bodies, which are multiform, composite and various, and soul, in which there is no spatial separation of parts and no magnitude. Consequently, if we have correctly understood what soul is, we should ask the opposite question "how can it be many?" instead of "how is it one?". The question about the unity and multiplicity of soul, formulated more precisely as an enquiry into a single nature that is many (μία φύσις πολλά), should also reveal the truth about the genera we are looking for (cf. VI.2.4.1–35). The one from which bodies come, soul, is itself more one than these bodies, which also signifies that it possesses a higher degree of being (cf. VI.2.5.7–8). Nevertheless, it is not the absolute One, but a sort of plurality which is one (πλῆθος ἕν, cf. VI.2.5.9–10). The plurality of soul is based, on the one hand, on its activity in relation to other things (cf. VI.2.5.14–15) and, on the other hand, on its contemplative activity in relation to itself. This activity breaks down its unity, so to speak, with the result that it manifests as many. In describing the being of soul, Plotinus says that it is life, in opposition to the being of a stone, and that life and being are one in soul. Moreover, soul's act of self-contemplation may be described as its movement (cf. VI.2.6.6–20). More

precisely, its being as life is movement, because Being (and life) in the Intellect is also Movement (cf. VI.2.7.1–8).[4]

Plotinus goes on to subsume life—that of all soul, but also that of Intellect—under the genus of Movement, which he claims must be posited in Intellect along with Being (μετὰ τοῦ ὄντος), i.e. not under it (ὑπὸ τὸ ὄν) or over it (ἐπὶ τῷ ὄντι; cf. VI.2.7.1–18). Plotinus once again reminds his readers that it is our understanding that separates these two kinds, Being and Movement, although they are actually one in Intellect (cf. VI.2.7.7–9, or "one nature", φύσις, in VI.2.7.18–20). Movement is the life and actuality of Being (ζωή, ἐνέργεια; cf. VI.2.7.18, VI.2.7.34–36), the being of Being (αὐτοῦ τοῦ εἶναι, scil. τοῦ ὄντος; O.G.; cf. VI.2.7.36) and it makes it perfect (τέλειον; cf. VI.2.7.25–27). Nonetheless, our thought does not separate them arbitrarily, because they can, in fact, be separated in what comes after them, as in a portrait of a man (cf. VI.2.7.9–14). Moreover, the attempt to separate them in our reasoning is never really possible, because Being always appears when we think Movement and vice versa. Consequently, we should rather say that both the form of Movement and the form of Being are a "double one" (διπλοῦν ἕν) in our thought (cf. VI.2.7.20–24). Plotinus now claims, with reference to Plato's *Soph.* 248a12, that it would be even stranger not to posit Rest along with Being, than it would be not to introduce Movement into Being, because Being always exists in the same state and in the same way (cf. VI.2.7.25–28). Rest, as the third genus, must be separated from Being and Movement, although they are actually one, or rather one-many, and Intellect thinks them simultaneously (ἅμα; cf. VI.2.8.2–3). Otherwise, Rest would be the same as Being and even as Movement (cf. VI.2.7.31–45). Furthermore, Intellect in reality thinks all three of them separately (χωρίς; cf. VI.2.8.1–2 and VI.2.8.2–3). There is, on the one hand, activity (ἐνέργεια) and Movement (κίνησις) in Intellect's thinking and, on the other hand, substance (οὐσία) and Being (τὸ ὄν), since it thinks itself as that from which this activity comes and towards which it is directed. Being, as that which is most firmly established (ἑδραιότατον) among all beings, caused Rest to exist and came to be that from which the thinking starts and where it ends (cf. VI.2.8.12–23). In this sense, Plotinus concludes, "the Form (ἰδέα) at rest is the defining limit (πέρας) of Intellect, and Intellect is the movement of the Form" (VI.2.8.23–24).

4 The claim that there is movement, life and intellection in the Intellect is, of course, derived from Plotinus' understanding of Plato's *Soph.* 248e–249d. It is said there that it would be a dreadful thing to claim that motion, life, soul and thought are not present in what is completely. For a discussion of Plato's *Sophist*, see de Rijk 1986; for its place in the trilogy *Theaeteus—Sophistes—Politicus*, see Klein 1977; for a systematic discussion, cf. Sayre 2005; and for its influence on Plotinus, cf. Gerson 2013 and Perl 2014.

If we try to think these genera, we distinguish them as three different kinds. By contrast, if we try to posit them as they are in Intellect, we collect them into unity or sameness. Distinguishing and mingling the three kinds is, according to Plotinus, based on two other genera that must be posited along with these three, namely the Same and the Other (cf. VI.2.8.28–44). Hence, we end up with five genera: Being, Motion, Rest, the Same and the Other,[5] which mutually condition each other and which are all-pervading, in the sense that all other forms are particular instantiations of them (cf. VI.2.8.42–50). It is not possible to think any of the kinds without the others, because each of them must exist (i.e. partake in Being), exist as itself and be differentiated from the other kinds (i.e. partake in the Same and the Other), and think and be thought (i.e. partake in Movement and Rest). Similarly, all of the other forms in Intellect must partake in these genera. Each individual form's being, sameness, otherness, motion and rest are particular, in the sense of each individual form being what it is in relation to all of the others.

Note how Plotinus tries to simultaneously claim that, on the one hand, the highest kinds are by their own nature *one*, divided only by our thought, and, on the other hand, that Intellect thinks all of them separately and that their difference is essential to them, since the Other is one of the highest kinds. This ambiguity reflects the extent of their unity. In comparison to the Good, however, they are many (see section 4.3).

4.3 Is the One To Be Counted among the Highest Kinds? (VI.2.9–11)

Having established the five highest kinds, Plotinus raises a crucial question: how do we know that there are only these five genera and not others, such as one (τὸ ἕν), quantum (τὸ ποσόν), quale (τὸ ποιόν), the relative (τὸ πρός τι) or others, as proposed by earlier philosophers, such as Aristotle and his followers, with most of the kinds under consideration being Aristotelian categories (cf. VI.2.9.2–6 and later a complete list of categories in VI.2.13–16). Plotinus first addresses the one as a candidate for being an additional kind in VI.2.9. These passages are of the utmost importance for us, because they examine the relation of the highest kinds and the whole of Intellect to the one.

5 For a discussion of the strange passages VI.2.8.39, VI.2.15. 1, VI.2.19.1, VI.2.19.7 and VI.2.21.2, which speak of fewer kinds, see Hoppe 1965, pp. 78–80.

As a first step, we must distinguish between the One, on the one hand, which is absolutely one (πάντως ἕν), which is added to nothing (μηδὲν ἄλλο πρόσεστι) and which therefore cannot be a genus, and one-being (τὸ ἓν ὄν), on the other hand, which is added to being (τὸ προσὸν τῷ ὄντι; cf. VI.2.9.5–10). Nevertheless, it cannot be a genus either, as Plotinus shows by exploring different options for how it would be possible to rank the one among the highest kinds:

1) The one as a potential genus would not be primarily one, since each highest kind must be primarily what it is, just as Being is the primarily existent. However, the One is primarily one, so that the one as genus cannot fulfil this requirement (cf. VI.2.9.8–10).
2) The one is not and cannot be differentiated in itself (ἀδιάφορον ὂν αὐτοῦ). A genus, however, is differentiated because it creates species. In this sense, the one as a genus would destroy itself, because it would also be many. As Plotinus mentions in this passage, Intellect allows differentiations in Being, but not in the one. Or perhaps we should strengthen this statement and say that Being is necessarily many since it is essentially linked with all of the other primary kinds, whereas the one is not (cf. VI.2.9.10–18).
3) Plotinus addresses a potential opponent, who might object that the one is a common term among the genera, since all of them are one. Moreover, according to this unknown opponent, perhaps an Aristotelising Platonist (cf. Aristotle *Met.* 1003b22–27), such a common one is to be identified with being. However, Plotinus objects that being cannot be a common term, in the sense of a superordinate genus. Being *exists* primarily, while all the other kinds *exist* in a different way. The same is true for the one (cf. VI.2.9.18–23).
4) If the opponent introduces the one as a kind that is not superordinate to the other kinds, but still identical with being, then the one is nothing but a different name for being (cf. VI.2.9.23–25).
5) If the opponent insists that each of the kinds is one, then he designates a nature in this way. Either this nature will be a particular one (φύσις τις) or, if he understands the one as a nature generally, he must refer to the One itself, which is not a genus. And if it is the one which is with being (τὸ τῷ ὄντι συνόν, scil. τὸ ἓν; O.G.), it cannot be one primarily (cf. VI.2.9.25–29) as was explained at the very beginning (see the first point above) and as Plotinus repeats once again (cf. VI.2.9.29–33).
6) Plotinus proposes a rather confusing thought experiment in which we separate the one from being in our mind and try to think it as one of the following: prior to, simultaneous with or posterior to being. If it is prior, it will be a principle of being and thus the genus neither of being, nor of

the other kinds. If it is simultaneous with being, it will be simultaneous with everything, but a genus is not simultaneous. And if it is posterior to being, it cannot be a genus either, because a genus is prior (cf. VI.2.9.33–39). In the refutation of all three proposed options, Plotinus seems to make use of his unusual conception of the highest kinds as simultaneously genera and principles. Genera as such are posterior to principles, while in themselves they are both prior to species and simultaneous with all species since they exist in them (cf. VI.2.12.11–15 and VI.2.19.13–18). Principles themselves are prior to all things as the source of everything, but as that from which everything is constructed (cf. the analogy with elements above), they are at the same time simultaneous with everything. The highest kinds that are both genera and principles are a combination of the designation "prior" and "simultaneous". Plotinus employs an interesting strategy in the discussion with his interlocutor here, in which he objects that his opponent thinks of the one either only as a principle (in cases where the one is prior to and simultaneous with being) or only as a genus (in the case where the one is posterior to being). In his refutation, Plotinus always places—perhaps exaggerated—emphasis on the lack of designation (prior or simultaneous) in each particular case.

Plotinus now concludes his enquiry by highlighting the important similarities and differences between the one and Being. The one in being did, in a sense, fall out (οἷον συνεκπῖπτον) of the One together with Being, and Being is one since it is near to the One. On the other hand, Being is posterior to the One, and therefore can be and is in fact many (*polla*). This is why the one in being remains itself one and cannot be divided into parts and consequently cannot be a genus (cf. VI.2.9.39–43). Being, by contrast, is a genus, divisible and multiple. It is important to notice, however, the following points: 1) the one is, in some sense, present in Intellect, i.e. not as a genus but remaining itself; 2) this one in being is produced by the One along with Being; 3) they are closely connected.

A closer specification of the way in which the one in being is in Intellect is given in the next section (VI.2.10), where we find further reasons why the one cannot be a genus:

7) Each particular form in Intellect as particular is not only one, but also many, and each form is one equivocally (cf. section 5.3). Therefore, the one cannot be a genus because it is not a common term and is predicated differently of different forms (cf. VI.2.10.1–6).
8) Furthermore, truly predicating a genus of a thing prevents us from truly predicating the opposite of it. However, we can truly predicate both one and many of all forms and thus the one cannot be predicated of them as

their genus.[6] This is true not only of all forms, which in contrast to the highest kinds are here said to be "in every way many" (πάντως πολλά), but also of the five highest kinds themselves. Plotinus even says that they are all one to the same degree as they are many (cf. VI.2.10.6–13).

9) In this sense, Plotinus once again reminds us that the one as a genus would destroy itself (see the second point above). This time however, he reformulates the same argument and says that the one is not a number, but a genus is. A genus cannot be properly (κυρίως) one since it is many. The one in being is one in number (cf. VI.2.10.13–16). Plotinus immediately explains this claim with the analogy of the relation of the one to the numbers. On the one hand, the one is present in them; on the other hand, it is not present as their genus, but rather as their principle (in VI.2.10.35–38 this comparison is extended to the relation of a point to lines). In this sense, the one in being is present in all of the kinds, but only as their principle and not as their genus (cf. VI.2.10.16–23). The difference between the one and the other kinds is that the latter are both genera and principles, while the former is merely a principle.

In the last passage of the tenth section, Plotinus sketches some other problems that would need to be dealt with, if the one were a genus, e.g. "how would its species differ from each other?" (cf. VI.2.10.23–29). He concludes that it is neither necessary nor possible for the one to be a genus, because it is a principle. An attempt to incorporate it into the highest kinds leads to its being identified with Being, such that the former becomes merely a different name for the latter (cf. VI.2.10.29–43).

Dwelling a bit further on the topic of how the one in being is in Intellect, Plotinus adds a new dimension to it when he asks how division (μερισμός) in Intellect works. First, he claims that the one is different in sensible and intelligible things, and that it is different even among individual sensibles or intelligibles (cf. VI.2.11.1–9). All things nevertheless imitate (μιμεῖται) the One, insofar as they can. Their resemblance to the One depends on their distance from it.

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6 It must be noted, however, that Plotinus does not have the same problem with the other highest genera: the Same and the Other or Movement and Rest. He probably does not consider them opposites, as Plato had already suggested (cf. *Soph.* 256b). In this case, however, we could ask why the one and many must be considered opposites. Plotinus does not give an answer, but the tension between what is one and what is multiple is for him, in fact, the primary opposition, although it is necessary to distinguish defined multiplicity, which is born from the One and interacts with unity, and utter multiplicity, which is conceived of as στέρησις. Cf. also section 5.1. Similarly, the oneness of the One does not mingle with any kind of multiplicity, but only the one in being does. Cf. also sections 6.6 and 6.7. Moreover, the one in being has several subtypes. See my analyses of VI.2.11 below.

In this sense, being and Intellect are more one—or more truly (ἀληθέστερον) one—than soul (cf. VI.2.11.9–12). Plotinus now claims, however, that it is not the same to be and to be one, or that these are the same only accidentally. An army and a chorus exist to the same extent as a house, although they are less one. To what extent a thing is one depends on how that thing's one looks to the Good (πρὸς ἀγαθὸν βλέπειν) and to what extent it attains the Good (καθόσον τυγχάνει ἀγαθοῦ). In this sense, each thing wants not only to be, but to be with the good (μετὰ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ; cf. VI.2.11.12–21). The One is, in this respect, at both extremities of all things: it is their source (τὸ ἀφ' οὗ; all things ἄρχεται ἀπὸ τοῦ ἕν) and goal (τὸ εἰς ὅ; all things σπεύδει εἰς τὸ ἕν) and it even maintains everything in being (cf. VI.2.11.21–29). Being itself attains the one most fully, since it is nearest to the Good. We call it one-being to indicate its very close being with and towards the One (σφόδρα πρὸς τὸ ἀγαθὸν συνουσία; cf. VI.2.11.31–38). Being has the one as its principle and goal (ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος). It is, however, one in a different sense than the One. The one in being allows for prior and posterior, as well as simple (ἁπλᾶ) and composite (σύνθετα), beings to exist as different unities, similarly to the one which is different in itself, in a unit and in various numbers (cf. VI.2.11.38–49).

4.4 Tentative Summary: The Unity and Multiplicity of Intellect in VI.2

To summarise the outcome of my inquiry so far: The unity of Intellect may be based on the highest kinds, but they themselves are, at the same time, multiple. Being is always multiple, so that Intellect in itself is the most unified multiplicity, i.e. it is "a richly variegated one keeping its many together in one" (VI.2.2.3) or a number (cf. VI.2.2.1–3). The highest kinds, Being, Motion, Rest, the Same and the Other which are themselves termed numbers (cf. VI.2.10.13–16), unite Intellect both as genera and as principles. This means that they are not only superordinate to all species which they produce (cf. VI.2.21), but also something resembling elements out of which all intelligibles are composed and from which the whole of being is derived. The highest kinds themselves are united not only by the fact that all of them imply all of the others, but also by being derived from the One (cf. VI.2.2.5–6 and VI.2.3.1–9). The one does not belong to the highest kinds for several reasons, of which Plotinus repeatedly highlights two: it would not be one primarily (since the primarily one is the One; cf. VI.2.9.8–10) and the one cannot be differentiated in itself (but a genus is because it creates species; cf. VI.2.9.10–18). This highlights the important difference between the one that remains itself one and cannot be divided and being, which is necessarily many. Plotinus even says that a thing may be more

or less one, even if it has the same share in being, such that the overlap between them is only incidental (cf. VI.2.11.12–21). Nevertheless, the one and being did, in a sense, fall out of the One together: the one is present in the Intellect and being is one because it is near to the One (cf. VI.2.9.39–43). The presence of the one in Intellect is described as the presence of a principle (cf. VI.2.10.16–23), as opposed to the highest kinds, which are both principles and genera (VI.2.2.12–14). Each intelligible (and even each sensible thing) is one differently according to its closeness to the One and to its ability to imitate it (cf. VI.2.11.5–12 and 40–49). Being, as the closest intelligible, attains the one most fully and is consequently one-being (cf. VI.2.11.31–38).

To return to my main question: how, then, is Intellect one and many? It is one as one-many and as the mutual interconnectedness of the highest kinds. The latter qua genera contain the rest of the intelligible forms and qua principles constitute them. At the same time, Intellect is one-many as Intellect, i.e. because it thinks and, moreover, because it thinks itself. Being, the most firmly established among all beings, thinks itself and, as thinking, is Motion, but motion that originates in Rest and comes to a stop in Rest (cf. VI.2.8.21–23). These three highest kinds, Being, Motion and Rest, are to be distinguished from each other through the Other and they constitute a unity through the Same. The unity of the two descriptions of Intellect's plurality can be observed in this formulation. What Intellect thinks is Being, while the act of thinking is Motion—but Motion that has Rest—and all three are grounded in the Same and the Other.[7]

Why, then, does Intellect think itself and why is it constituted as one-many in the plurality of the highest kinds which all refer to each other? Because it attempts to imitate the One in its own way, which is by thinking. This thinking does not, however, reach the One itself, but is directed at the trace of it in being, i.e. the one in being, which is a principle that is different from the One. If it holds that the closer a thing is to the One, the more it is one, and if beauty was correctly identified with unity in multiplicity, then the highest kinds might be said to be the most beautiful "part" of Intellect. Given that Plotinus sometimes uses Being as a representative for the other kinds,[8] designating it as the most firmly established of all beings, Being is the beauty we sought in Intellect. Beauty cannot be the one in being, since the latter does not allow for multiplicity, but remains in itself. This consideration might serve as a more developed

7 But Plotinus also tries to describe this unity from a different perspective in V.1.4. Hereto, cf. Atkinson 1983, pp. 96–98.

8 Cf. also the discussion of the problem of two different notions of being in Horn 1995, pp. 119–120 and 127–128.

explanation for the identification of being and beauty observed elsewhere in Plotinus' works (cf. the discussion of v.8.9 in section 3.4.7).[9]

4.5 Is Beauty To Be Counted among the Highest Kinds? (VI.2.17–18)

If beauty is so closely connected to Being and, through Being, to all of the other highest kinds, we might ask whether beauty itself is to be counted among these kinds. This is precisely what Plotinus briefly considers in VI.2.18. After rejecting the Aristotelian categories as candidates for additional highest kinds (i.e. quantum, quale, relation, place, time, acting, being affected, having and being in a position in VI.2.13–16), Plotinus turns to other, this time more Platonic candidates: the beautiful (τὸ καλόν), the good (τὸ ἀγαθόν), virtues (ἀρεταί), knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) and intellect (νοῦς; cf. VI.2.17.1–2).

Plotinus considers several options for dealing with beauty. First, if what we mean by beauty is καλλονή, i.e. the One itself (cf. VI.7.33.20–22 and my discussion of it in section 6.6), then it cannot be a genus for reasons already mentioned (cf. VI.2.18.1–3). Plotinus probably means by this above all the previous section, which rejected the Good as a primary kind because it is not predicated of anything (cf. VI.2.17.2–7) and because it is before being (οὐσία, cf. VI.2.17.7–8). Then again, he may also be referring to the passages where one of the options under consideration was that the One is a genus. However, this option was rejected for the same reason, i.e. because the One is not added to anything (cf. VI.2.9.5–10).

A second option would be to take beauty as referring to what shines, as it were (οἷον ἀποστίλβον), upon the forms (cf. again my discussion of this in section 6.6). But even so beauty could not be one of the highest kinds because it shines in a different way on different forms[10] and because shining presupposes the forms on which it shines (cf. VI.2.18.3–5). The third option would be to identify beauty with being (οὐσία). In this case, however, it would already be included in it, i.e. in the highest kind Being (cf. VI.2.18.5–6). The fourth option that Plotinus considers is to understand beauty as existing in relation to and

9 But see section 5.4, where I discuss this question further.

10 This part of the argument seems to be weak, with respect to the analysis performed in treatise VI.7. The fact that light shines on different forms does not, according to these passages, prevent us from being able to say that it is the same in each of these, although it enables each of these forms to be seen as different. Cf. sections 6.3, 6.4 and 6.6. The point here must therefore lie in the reason mentioned next, i.e. that shining presupposes forms.

affecting the observer (πάθος ποιεῖν; cf. VI.2.18.6–7). It seems that we must distinguish two perspectives here: First, there is the observer directed towards the beautiful and the beautiful affecting this observer. This affecting is, however, according to Plotinus, an activity (τὸ ἐνεργεῖν) and therefore motion, and even the activity of the observer, i.e. being directed towards the beautiful, is an activity (ἐνέργεια) and therefore motion (cf. VI.2.17.7–8). As such, beauty would be included in the highest kind Motion.

However brief this passage may be, it contains interesting revelations about beauty, most obviously that beauty is not one of the highest kinds. However, the options for the different meanings that Plotinus considers attributing to beauty should also be noticed, or, more precisely, what this indicates for the reconstruction of his own notion of beauty. As I shall show (cf. section 6.6), under the name καλλονή, beauty may, in a sense, refer to the Good itself. It may also be identified with Being for the reasons given above. Furthermore, it is something that shines, as it were, upon the forms, i.e. something which comes from the Good and stands for it, so to speak, in what comes after the Good. It does so in such a way that it affects all who see it and awakens motion in them (cf. sections 6.4 and 6.6).[11] The impact which beauty has on the observer is something that has already been noticed. It arouses erotic desire, which is ambiguous: if not understood properly, it can bind the lover to the beautiful object, but if understood correctly, it motivates the lover to search for the true source of beauty. What the shining of beauty means is less clear here, but it will be discussed in more detail in treatise VI.7 (see sections 6.4 and 6.6). For now, we may speculate that it perhaps captures the above-mentioned aspect of the correct understanding of a beloved object. Only when the beloved is understood as an expression of a higher beauty, or perhaps even of the Good—i.e. when the lover sees it in the light of its source—will the lover avoid the fate of Narcissus and love truly. In this sense, true beauty comes from what is above and the light of the source enables a beautiful object to be seen as truly beautiful. The various meanings of beauty which Plotinus considers here might therefore be read as being, in some sense, relevant, but by themselves inadequate. They must be integrated into a broader conception of beauty, which will turn out to be Plotinus' own view.

11 The notion of beauty as shining and awakening love is, of course, derived from Plato's *Phdr*. 249d–252c.

CHAPTER 5

Unity, Multiplicity and the Numbers (Treatise VI.6)

The second reason for the specific unity and multiplicity of Intellect that I promised to delve into earlier (cf. section 3.4.4) was its structural delimitation by number. Naturally, I shall take as my focus in this discussion treatise VI.6 *On Numbers*. First, in section 5.1, I shall concentrate on the context of this treatise, i.e. its link to *Ennead* V.5. Then, in section 5.2, I shall discuss an unusual passage from VI.6 which uses a dative construction "τῷ καλῷ", potentially implying the existence of a single form of beauty. However, I shall deny that this is the case. In the next section, 5.3, I shall briefly summarise how Plotinus proceeds in his contemplation of number, before arriving at the central passage VI.6.9–10. This passage is discussed extensively in section 5.4, where I shall try to elucidate the role of number in the generation of beings and to demonstrate its structural function. I shall argue that the epithets of ἀριθμὸς—i.e. ἡνωμένος, ἐξελιγμένος, ἐν ἑαυτῷ κινούμενος and περιέχων—might be read as an interesting shorthand for Intellect's unified multiplicity. Finally, in section 5.5, I shall relate all of this to the question of beauty, following VI.6.18 where Plotinus identifies beauty with being a measure and suggests that beauty understood as number must be limited by its own agency. I shall also try to show that Plotinus' statement that the forms are beautiful as living beings is meant as a Platonist corrective to Aristotle's notion of divine life. Moreover, it might be read as suggesting a more positive appreciation for the role of multiplicity in the intelligible: if Intellect was not everything, but only something, it would probably be less beautiful. In discussing these issues, I shall, however, uncover a new trail that will lead us to chapter 6.

5.1 The Context of the Quest for the Notion of Number (V.5.4–5 and VI.6.1)

Plotinus also deals with the topic of unity and multiplicity in treatise VI.6 *On Numbers*, which is, as mentioned in the "Introduction", a sort of supplement to the *Großschrift* elaborating on the discussion of number started in V.5.4–5. The main topic of treatise V.5 is the correct understanding of Intellect, its contents and its relation to the Good. Its focus is, however, explicitly on the question of unity and multiplicity. In V.5.1, Plotinus states that "we shall proceed to investigate how truth and the intelligible and Intellect are related [in this

unity-in-duality; added by Armstrong]: are they together in one and the same reality, but also two and diverse, or how are they related?" (V.5.1.35–38). In V.5.4, he is thus concerned with specifying the goal of the ascent to the One, which must be truly one (ἓν ὄντως) rather than one to the same degree as it is many or one by participation. This is, however, also the case of Intellect, as we have seen in VI.2.10 (cf. section 4.3). Even the slightest departure from the stillness of the union with the One is a progression towards duality (δύο) derived from the One, i.e. towards multiplicity, although the monad also comes into existence prior to it. Since what comes after the One is Intellect, these two principles, the monad and the dyad, must somehow be related to it, but we do not learn how in this passage. Instead, Plotinus briefly sketches some of the problems that he will deal with in treatise VI.6. What is the relationship of the monad to the dyad? It is not present in the dyad as a unit, nor is it an essential number (οὐσιώδης ἀριθμός) which continually gives existence (ὁ τὸ εἶναι ἀεὶ παρέχων, scil. ἀριθμός; O.G.), nor is it a quantitative number (ὁ τοῦ ποσοῦ, scil. ἀριθμός; O.G.), which under certain circumstances gives quantity (ὁ τὸ ποσὸν, scil. ἀριθμός παρέχων; O.G.). The relationship between the quantitative numbers, essential numbers and the One is described as well, but only briefly and enigmatically. Plotinus says that the nature which belongs to the quantitative numbers imitates the relationship of essential number to the One. But how, then, is the dyad one and how are its units one? Plotinus' short answer here is that they are one by participation in the first monad (μετέχειν τῆς πρώτης, scil. μονάδος). They participate in it in another way than the dyad itself does, just as different sensible things (e.g. an army or a house) are one in different ways. That said, are the units in various numbers then one in the same way or in a different way? And what about different numbers (cf. V.5.4.1–35)?

In V.5.5, Plotinus continues with his preliminary remarks on the topic of the generation of numbers and beings. The One, he claims, remains the same (μένει τὸ πρῶτον τὸ αὐτό) even if other things come into being from it. All beings participate (μεταλαμβάνω, μετάληψις) in the One, though in different ways, while it gives them being (οὐσία) and makes them a sort of trace of itself in being (ἴχνος τοῦ ἑνός; cf. V.5.5.12–14).[1] In a way analogous to how beings are generated from the One, there is another one which makes number (ποιοῦντος δὲ ἄλλου, scil. τοῦ ἑνός; H-S). Number comes into existence on the model of such a one (κατ' αὐτό;

1 A different interpretation of these passages is maintained by Slaveva-Griffin (2009, pp. 97–100), Horn (1995, pp. 250–251) and Nikulin (2002, pp. 88–89). They claim that the One generates the monad through which all beings participate in the One. Plotinus' thought does indeed advance farther in this direction in VI.6, but the present passage does not say this. Cf. section 5.3.

cf. V.5.5.1–4). This other one is specified a few lines later to be the form (εἶδος) of number and called the monad (μονάς; cf. V.5.5.7–12). Plotinus himself, however, corrects this analogy. In contrast to the case of numbers, the One is sufficient to create beings, so that there is no need for the other one (cf. V.5.5.6–8), i.e. for the monad.[2] However, since V.5 precedes VI.6, and since, in VI.6.5.35–38, Plotinus does say that there is another one of this kind prior to forms, and that it is not the One, the direct participation model of all beings in the One might be challenged. Do they not rather participate in the One through the monad? One way of resolving this ambiguity might be to highlight the different contexts in which these claims are made in treatises V.5 and VI.6 (but also V.1), stressing the fact that Plotinus does not want to multiply the number of hypostases as the Gnostics do. Consequently, the direct participation model would be the only possibility. On the other hand, one could question the validity of the context argument, at least in the case of V.5 and VI.6, which are directly related both by their topic and by their chronological order. Moreover, the addition of a participated aspect of the One (like the monad) developed its own tradition in later Neoplatonism.[3] But is the monad then a new hypostasis? Probably not. Rather, it must have some specific function within the Intellect, like that of a principle, as we already know from treatise VI.2. Does it, then, connect all beings to the One? We shall return to this question later (cf. section 5.3).

At this point, we can only speculate: the problem of whether all beings participate in the One directly or through a monad, seems analogous to the problem of the participation of sensibles in the forms of Intellect. As we have seen (cf. section 2.3), there are passages in the *Enneads* which support the model of direct participation, and others that situate soul as an intermediary between Intellect and sensibles. In discussing this topic, I have tried to present both versions as compatible, such that placing soul as an agent of participation represents a more developed version of the direct participation model, which, at the same time, more aptly captures the derivation of everything posterior to Intellect from it. Furthermore, when discussed in the context of other issues, the direct model may simply be more concise. Consequently, I would propose to adopt a similar attitude, i.e. to understand the version favouring the monad as a more developed account. At the same time, however, we ought to observe

2 Similarly, in V.1[10].5 Plotinus describes the One as the maker of number (ὁ τὸν ἀριθμὸν ποιῶν) and specifies this genesis as the defining of the indefinite dyad by the One itself.

3 Cf. the discussion of this topic in Plotinus in Gerson 2013, pp. 120–121 and 134–135. Later Neoplatonists such as Iamblichus (Proclus, *In Tim.* II 240.4–9) and Proclus (*In Parm.* 707.8–18) developed the distinction between participated aspects and the unparticipated monad. On this point, see Chlup 2012, pp. 99–111.

that the statements that support the idea of the direct activity of the One on the indefinite dyad better depict the derivation of Intellect from the One or may simply be used as a shortcut.

From these introductory remarks, we can see that much is at stake here: not only the question of the unity of different entities and the clarification of the still-cryptic notion of substantial number, which ought, in some sense, to be the giver of existence, but also the question of its relation to the One, to the monad and to quantitative number. Treatise VI.6 deals with these topics, but approaches them from a new perspective. It starts with the more general question of how multiplicity (πλῆθος) is to be understood and of whether innumerable multiplicity (πλῆθος ἀνάριθμον) or infinity (ἀπειρία) is a total falling away from the One (ἀπόστασις παντελής, scil. τοῦ ἑνός; O.G.) and evil (τὸ κακόν) and, if so, what consequences this has for our own value. Are we evil insofar as we are multiple (cf. VI.6.1.1–4)? Plotinus' answer to this question involves making a distinction between: 1) multiplicity (πλῆθος), which designates the pouring out of a thing from itself, its extension in scattering (ἐκτείνηται σκιδνάμενον), its inability to tend to itself and its being utterly deprived of the one, and 2) magnitude (μέγεθος), which refers to the abiding of a thing in its outpouring (cf. VI.6.1.4–8). Magnitude might, in a sense, be considered dreadful (δεινὸν), because it is the product of a misguided seeking of itself outside itself or, as Plotinus puts it, of a desire (ἔφεσις) to be great (μέγα; cf. VI.6.1.8–16). Plotinus illustrates this with the dispersion of a whole, which gives rise to autonomous existence of its parts, but the whole itself perishes when its parts stop tending towards its one. In losing its one, a thing loses itself (cf. VI.6.1.17–23).

5.2 Defined Multiplicity, Form of Beauty and the Indefinite Dyad (VI.6.1–3)

An example of a defined multiplicity is the universe (τὸ πᾶν), which is both beautiful and large (μέγα καὶ καλόν), due to the fact that it has been circumscribed by one (περιελήφθη ἑνί) and not dispersed into infinity (cf. VI.6.1.23–25). At the same time, it is said to be beautiful through beauty (τῷ καλῷ) and not through its being large. On the contrary, its largeness would, on its own, be the source of ugliness and is itself quite disorderly and quite ugly (μᾶλλον ἄκοσμον, μᾶλλον αἰσχρόν). It is in need of beauty, because it is large and its largeness is, as Plotinus puts it, the matter of beauty which brings order (κόσμος) into what is many (πολύ; cf. VI.6.1.25–29). Plotinus brings this line of thought to a conclusion somewhat later when he says that multiplicity is not allowed to be altogether multiple (πάντη πλῆθος), but is always unified (ἥνωται) and, as such, both one

and many (ἓν ὂν πλῆθος). It is worse than the One when compared to it, but because it turned back to the One and has one in itself, it preserves its majesty (σεμνόν; cf. VI.6.3.1–10).

These passages explicitly confirm what we have discovered about beauty so far. The universe is said to be beautiful on account of its being circumscribed by one, while its largeness, representing its multiplicity, is rather the source of its ugliness. Beauty is thus connected with the presence of unity in multiplicity, a unity which is itself worse than the One but has its own value and majesty when contrasted with utter multiplicity. At the same time, it is rather surprising that Plotinus uses beauty in the dative (τῷ καλῷ), which is standard in Plato for expressing the causation of an attribute of a sensible thing by a form (cf. *locus classicus Phd.* 100c–e). The impression that Plotinus is referring to the form of beauty is even strengthened by the statement that largeness is called the matter of beauty, once again implying that beauty is a form. Furthermore, later on in VI.6.8, Plotinus speaks in the same spirit about the absolutely righteous, beautiful and all other such things (δίκαιον αὐτὸ καὶ καλὸν καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα τοιαῦτα; cf. VI.6.8.3–4), and, in VI.6.14, he explicitly claims, that a beautiful thing is beautiful by the presence of beauty (καλὸν καλοῦ παρουσίᾳ, scil. ἐστι καλόν; O.G.) exactly as a thing that is white, one, two or just is that way on account of the presence of whiteness, the one, the dyad or the just (cf. VI.6.14.28–30).

In order to be able to evaluate these expressions for the purpose of reconstructing Plotinus' notion of beauty, let me first lay out the possible explanations: 1) Plotinus changed his mind and in treatise VI.6, he considers beauty to be a form among other forms, like those of whiteness, justice, the one or the dyad; 2) He did not change his mind and what is said here is the same as what is said in treatises I.6 and V.8; 3) Plotinus is not speaking properly here and the presupposition of the existence of the form of beauty only serves dialectical purposes, but is not a claim to which he subscribes.

It seems to me that the first option can be dismissed right away, because even if we were to accept some form of developmental theory of Plotinus' thought, it would still be strange that the existence of the form of beauty is not mentioned in treatise V.8, which is very closely connected to VI.6. I do not see how the elaboration of the doctrine of numbers could lead to such a substantial shift in Plotinus' notion of beauty that we could argue in favour of a development between treatises V.8[32] and VI.6[34]. Moreover, many of Plotinus' brief comments on the topic of number from much earlier treatises (like V.1[10] or V.4[7]) are compatible with those from VI.6, which seems to suggest that Plotinus had in mind at least the contours of the doctrine of number when he was writing treatise V.8. Moreover, the "forms" listed in VI.6.14 should attract our attention, even if we put beauty aside for a moment. First of all, both what we know about

the one in Intellect and what we will learn about it later in VI.6 is not compatible with its being listed along with whiteness and the just, as if they functioned in the same way in Intellect. It seems rather that Plotinus here, as elsewhere, is attacking rival conceptions and using whatever arguments come to mind or, at least, allowing himself to speak imprecisely for the sake of the argument. Second, the just and the beautiful, at least, are typical Platonic examples of forms and Plotinus is perhaps "quoting" Plato from memory in order to take his ideas into account.

The second option for reconciling the passages at issue, that of interpreting the aforementioned statements about the form of beauty as being identical to what is said in the two treatises on beauty, does not seem convincing either. Plotinus clearly avoids talking about the existence of the form of beauty in I.6.2 and V.8.1, simply connecting beauty to the presence of *a* form (cf. sections 2.3 and 3.2). I can hardly believe that Plotinus is imprecise in his utterances about the existence of a form of beauty in treatises devoted to this very topic. That said, one could perhaps try to avoid the conflict between VI.6, on the one hand, and I.6 and V.8, on the other, by saying that, in the end, each form is all of the other forms in Intellect. In this sense, it would be possible to say that a thing becomes beautiful by partaking in any given form and, through this form, in the form of beauty. However, even this is to a great extent unpersuasive. Why, then, does a thing not become all things in the Intellect, if these are so easily interchangeable? The intelligibles do not form a complete, undifferentiated unity, but are "a richly variegated one keeping its many together in one" (VI.2.2.3), i.e. they are at the same time *same* and *other*, or as Proclus puts it, they are *auto kai allo* (*Elem. Theol.*, Prop. 176). It is therefore impossible to deal with the problem of the existence of a form of beauty by placing the emphasis on the interchangeability of the forms, since it is not absolute. And even if this reasoning were correct, why would Plotinus keep silent about it in the two treatises devoted to beauty?

It seems to me that this leaves us with the third option, which, however, is perhaps not merely a default solution, but one that has its own rationale. None of the three passages that imply the existence of a form of beauty deals with this topic, but only mention it in passing. In VI.6.1, Plotinus focuses on the elaboration of the opposition between defined multiplicity (μέγεθος) and infinite multiplicity (πλῆθος), in order to emphasise the ethical dimension of his enquiry. In VI.6.8, he is trying to express the fact that Intellect, as the living being, contains all that is and that beauty is something existent. Moreover, this testimony in favour of the existence of a form of beauty might be further weakened, given that Plotinus immediately adds that it remains to be considered how all of the contents of Intellect that have been named exist and what

they are (cf. VI.6.8.6–7 and my comments in section 5.3). Finally, in VI.6.14, Plotinus is interested in freeing the notion of number from being understood as a relation, treating number here (i.e. the one and the dyad) as forms similar to those of white, beautiful or just, for the sake of the argument. As we shall see, however, numbers are not, in fact, simply forms, but rather designate the limited nature of each form. Number is, in this sense, the structural principle of Intellect as a whole (see section 5.3). The three passages from VI.6 that seem to suggest the existence of a form of beauty might each be interpreted as advocating it only for dialectical purposes. It therefore seems reasonable to ignore these implications and to refuse to posit a form of beauty.[4]

But let me return to the analysis of VI.6. In what follows, Plotinus turns to the problem of the number of the infinite (ἀριθμός τῆς ἀπειρίας; cf. VI.6.2) and the existence of the infinite as such (τὸ ἄπειρον; cf. VI.6.3), and expounds on it as the great and the small (μέγα καὶ σμικρόν, cf. VI.6.3.29), i.e. as what is known in the Platonic tradition as the indefinite dyad (ἀόριστος δυάς).[5] As Slaveva-Griffin points out, Plotinus needs to "address Aristotle's misconception of Plato's reference to the Indefinite Dyad and infinite number", which he does in sections VI.6.2–3 in order to show "how multiplicity, as number, unfolds into the universe", because "numbers originate from the Indefinite Dyad" (Slaveva-Griffin 2009, p. 56). The notion of the infinite is, from the very beginning, contrasted with that which is limited (ὁρίζω) and as something which requires limit from outside, it is revealed as precisely unlimited or infinite (cf. VI.6.3.10–15). In itself, it could be depicted as an escape (φεύγει, scil. τὸ ἄπειρον; O.G.) from limit, but this flight is "caught by being surrounded externally" (VI.6.3.16–17). In trying to delimit it, we always miss its elusive nature (cf. VI.6.3.33–35 and the use of the verb ὑπεκφεύγω) and it always emerges as its opposite. Thus, it is to be understood as the simultaneity of opposites, which are also not opposites (cf. VI.6.3.28–29), i.e. precisely insofar as they are the indefinite dyad. As such, it plays the role of the principle of multiplicity, which receives limit and is defined by number, thus becoming all of the forms of the Intellect (cf. the above-mentioned V.1.5, Nikulin 1998a, p. 92, and Slaveva-Griffin 2009, p. 71).

4 I consider treatise VI.3.12, which is to my knowledge the only other place where the existence of a form of beauty is implied, to represent a similar case. It seems to me that Plotinus simply picks out common examples of forms there (cf. *Phd.* 100c–e) to illustrate his point and that he does not care, at that point, whether these examples are compatible with his own doctrine.

5 For a thorough argument for the interpretation of these passages as referring to the ἀόριστος δυάς, see Slaveva-Griffin 2009, pp. 54–70. For the connection of the notion of ἀόριστος δυάς to intelligible matter, see Nikulin 1998a. See also, of course, *Met.* A6.

5.3 Number in the Intelligible (VI.6.4–8)

Plotinus then turns to the main topic of the treatise, which is how the numbers exist in the intelligible. Basically, he considers three options: 1) Number is posterior to the forms (ὡς ἐπιγινομένων τοῖς ἄλλοις εἴδεσιν; cf. VI.6.4.1–2); 2) Number is simultaneous with the forms (συνεγεννήθη; παρακολουθούντων; cf. VI.6.4.1–3 and 6–9); 3) It is possible to think number itself in itself (αὐτὸς ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ; cf. VI.6.4.9–11). Plotinus dismisses the hypothesis of the posteriority of numbers based on what Plato says about true numbers (ἐν τῷ ἀληθινῷ ἀριθμῷ; cf. *Rep*. 529c–530c) or number in substance (ἀριθμὸν ἐν οὐσίᾳ; cf. VI.6.4.20–25), as well as due to the fact that number itself has substantial unity and not the unity of numbered quantity, as the Pythagoreans had already noted (cf. VI.6.5.1–16). The simultaneity of number and forms is also rejected, because all forms, including being and movement—which Plotinus mentions here—are one, such that one must be prior to each form, and number (here represented by a decad) must be prior to all forms. This one, however, is not the One itself, but the other one (cf. VI.6.5.16–52), which we touched upon in V.5.5 (cf. section 5.1). Therefore, number is to be found in the Intellect, where all is intellect (νοῦς) and knowledge (ἐπιστήμη; cf. VI.6.6.18–27).

Nevertheless, all forms in the Intellect are one nature (μία φύσις) and are not separated (χωρίς) from each other. Rather, we must think of them—as Plotinus claims, paraphrasing Anaxagoras—as being all things together in one (ὁμοῦ ἐν ἑνὶ πάντα; cf. VI.6.7.1–5). At the same time, Intellect thinks them as already eternally separated (κεχώρισται ἐν αὐτῷ ἀεί), because it thinks them as defined forms that are distinct from each other (cf. VI.6.7.7–10). In thinking them as separate, Intellect unwinds into multiplicity. In thinking them as one nature, this multiplicity is circumscribed by one (cf. VI.6.1.25). Plotinus presents a very interesting argument for this specific nature of Intellect, i.e. for the fact that it is the paradigm of unified multiplicity. He says that this situation can be confirmed with reference to the participants who are attracted by the beauty (τὸ κάλλος) and greatness (τὸ μέγεθος) of Intellect, i.e. who fall in love with it (ἔρωτι πρὸς αὐτό, scil. νοῦν; O.G.). To the extent that soul is similar to Intellect, the same phenomenon can be seen in the love of other things for soul (cf. VI.6.7.10–14). If there is a beautiful living being here, i.e. the whole sensible cosmos, there must be an absolute living being of wonderful and inexplicable beauty there (θαυμαστοῦ τὸ κάλλος καὶ ἀφαύστου ὄντος, scil. αὐτοζῴου; O.G.). Or rather, Intellect is this complete living being (παντελὲς ζῷον), encompassing (περιέχον) all beings in itself (cf. VI.6.7.14–19 and *Tim*. 30a8–31b3 and 37c6–d4).

Plotinus then turns to the enquiry about the absolute or complete living being. It is called the primary living being (ζῷον πρώτως ἐστι) and identified

with Intellect (νοῦς) and real being (οὐσία ἡ ὄντως), and it is said to contain not only all living things, but also the whole number (ἀριθμός σύμπας), righteousness itself, beauty ("itself" is here implied by the context: δίκαιον αὐτὸ καὶ καλὸν καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα τοιαῦτα) and all other such things (cf. VI.6.8.1–7). However, Plotinus adds as an afterthought, how each of these things exist and what they are is yet to be discovered, signifying perhaps that he has not spoken with total precision (cf. VI.6.8.6–7). The surprising implication of the presence of beauty itself may thus be qualified in this passage. If then, he continues, one assumes a succession of being (τὸ ὄν), intellect (νοῦς) and living being (ζῷον), number is prior to all of them. It must be prior to the living being and to intellect, since they are the third and the second respectively, and consequently they presuppose number. However, number is also prior to being (οὐσία), because being is itself one and many as we know from treatise VI.2 (cf. VI.6.8.17–24).

5.4 The Role of Number in the Generation of Beings (VI.6.9–10)

We then come to the crucial section of treatise VI.6 where Plotinus considers "if being generated number by its own division, or number divided being" (ποτέρα ἡ οὐσία τὸν ἀριθμὸν ἐγέννησε τῷ αὐτῆς μερισμῷ, ἢ ὁ ἀριθμὸς ἐμέρισε τὴν οὐσίαν; VI.6.9.1–3, translation modified). This question, he explains, does not only concern being, but also the rest of the highest kinds—Movement, Rest, the Same and the Other—which either generated number or were generated by number (cf. VI.6.9.3–5). From what comes next, it is obvious that the question in fact relates to all forms or, as Plotinus puts it in this section, to all beings (ὄντα; cf. VI.6.9.9, 14, 22–24 and 36–39). Moreover, Plotinus recalls the question he raised in VI.6.4 of whether number exists by itself (ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ) or is only observed in a number of things. This time, however, he supplements this question with an additional one: is this true also for the one among numbers (τὸ ἓν τὸ ἐν τοῖς ἀριθμοῖς)? Is this one also prior to beings? If so, is it also prior to being (cf. VI.6.9.5–10)?

Plotinus sketches two possible answers: 1) Being[6] is before number (τοῦτο πρὸ ἀριθμοῦ, scil. τὸ ὄν; O.G.) and number comes to exist from being (δοτέον ἀριθμὸν ἐξ ὄντος γίνεσθαι; cf. VI.6.9.10–12); 2) One is before being (προηγήσεται τοῦ ὄντος τὸ ἕν) and number before beings (ὁ ἀριθμὸς τῶν ὄντων, scil. προηγήσεται; O.G.; cf. VI.6.9.12–14). We are familiar with the first option from our experiences

6 In contrast to Armstrong and Harder, and with MacKenna, Brisson, Bréhier, Bertier and the most recent translation by Gerson et al., I take τοῦτο as referring to being and not the one.

counting things (cf. VI.6.9.15–18). However, Plotinus objects that, in the very process of generating beings, it must have been clear how many beings there had to be, if they were not generated arbitrarily (κατὰ τὸ ἐπελθόν; cf. VI.6.9.15–23). Thus, he concludes, the whole of number existed before the beings themselves did (πρὸ αὐτῶν τῶν ὄντων) and, as such, number itself is not any of the beings (cf. VI.6.9.23–24).

What is number, then, and how is it related to being and to beings? Plotinus' answer is that number existed in being (ἐν τῷ ὄντι), but not as its number (οὐκ ἀριθμὸς ὢν τοῦ ὄντος), because at the beginning of the generation of beings, which is of course not to be understood temporally, being was still one (ἓν γὰρ ἦν ἔτι τὸ ὄν; cf. VI.6.9.24–26). Rather, he says, the power of number (ἡ τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ δύναμις) divided being (ἐμέρισε τὸ ὄν) and "made it, so to speak, in labour to give birth to multiplicity" (οἷον ὠδίνειν ἐποίησεν αὐτὸν τὸ πλῆθος; VI.6.9.27). Obviously, the δύναμις here is not to be understood as potentiality, but rather as productive power, since it was able to produce multiplicity (cf. Slaveva-Griffin 2009, p. 86). Number itself is said to be either the very being of being (ἡ οὐσία αὐτοῦ, scil. τοῦ ὄντος; O.G.) or its actuality (ἐνέργεια). Consequently, the absolute living being (τὸ ζῷον αὐτό) and Intellect (νοῦς) are number (cf. VI.6.9.27–29). In the most enigmatic passage of this treatise, Plotinus explains that Being is to be understood as unified number (ἀριθμὸς ἡνωμένος), beings as unfolded number (ἀριθμὸς ἐξελιγμένος), Intellect as number moving in itself (ἀριθμὸς ἐν ἑαυτῷ κινούμενος) and the living being as inclusive number (ἀριθμὸς περιέχων; cf. VI.6.9.29–32). Because it comes from the One, Being must be number, and the forms are henads and numbers (cf. VI.6.9.32–34). Without the One, Being itself would be scattered (cf. VI.6.9.39–44). This number, which is in Being (ἐν τῷ ὄντι) and with Being (μετὰ τοῦ ὄντος), but before beings (πρὸ τῶν ὄντων), and which can be contemplated in the forms (ἐπιθεωρούμενος τοῖς εἴδεσι) and has a share in their generation (συγγεννῶν αὐτά), is to be called substantial (οὐσιώδης; cf. VI.6.9.36–38). Beings are based on substantial number (βάσιν δὲ ἔχει τὰ ὄντα ἐν αὐτῷ) and have their source (πηγή), root (ῥίζα) and principle (ἀρχή) in it (cf. VI.6.9.38–39). At the same time, monadic number, with which we count, is but an image of substantial number (cf. VI.6.9.35–36). Plotinus concludes his exposition with the following:

> Being, therefore, standing firm in multiplicity (ἐν πλήθει) was number, when it woke as many (πολύ), and was a kind of preparation for the beings (παρασκευὴ πρὸς τὰ ὄντα) and a preliminary sketch (προτύπωσις), and like unities (ἑνάδες) keeping a place (τόπον ἔχουσαι) for the beings which are going to be founded on them (τοῖς ἐπ' αὐτὰς ἱδρυθησομένοις).
>
> VI.6.10.1–4

These passages require some comment. Let me start by paraphrasing what Plotinus says here. Number is to be found in Being as its limit, i.e. as that which defines it as if it were its form. Being is unified number, because Being entails, as it were, all of the other highest kinds—or rather they unfold from it—and because all other forms are derived from these (cf. section 3.4.4, point 2). In this sense, at the very beginning of the process of generation of Intellect (which is, once again, not to be thought temporally) when Being was still one, it was *unified* number (cf. section 3.4.4, point 5). However, it never really is one, since being is always to be thought along with and among the other highest kinds. Only "afterwards" do they unfold into all of the other forms. For this reason, Being is unified *number*, because it must be thought as multiple or rather as limited or defined multiplicity (cf. section 3.4.4, point 2). Plotinus tries to capture this moment in the process of the generation of Intellect by comparing it to waking up to multiplicity, but waking up from a sleep that always already stands in multiplicity. Intellect, which is Being, becomes aware, as it were, of its multiplicity by grasping it through the act of intellection. However, multiplicity—i.e. the rest of the highest kinds, as well as the forms of Intellect as a whole—were already there during this sleep. Plotinus once again tries to express this inchoate "state of being" of all of the forms and the highest kinds before they came to be thought by Intellect. They were in Being or rather they were Being, but only as preparations or preliminary sketches, keeping a place for themselves until they came to be conscious or grasped intellectually. Once they have been grasped, they can be called "unfolded number", where "unfolded" refers to the process of their generation, while "number" refers to their defined or limited multiplicity (cf. section 3.4.4, point 5).[7]

The designation of Intellect as number moving in itself (cf. *DA* 408b32–33) once again combines several features of the second hypostasis. As *moving* number, it is thinking or intellective activity, and this activity implies multiplicity, because thinking is self-relation and because Intellect thinks a variety of intelligible objects (cf. section 3.4.4, point 3). Intellect is therefore moving *number*. Moreover, this intellective activity is directed towards itself, because the intelligibles are not outside the Intellect (cf. treatise V.5), so that it is number moving *in itself*. From a different perspective, the self-containedness of Intellect is alluded to in the denomination of the Living Being as inclusive number. As we know from VI.6.7–8, the complete or primary Living Being refers to Intellect and its contents, i.e. to all of the intelligible forms. The Living Being may there-

7 Cf. Maggi 2013, pp. 85–86, who also links unfolded number and inclusive number with unified multiplicity.

fore also be called inclusive *number*, but this time with the emphasis laid on *inclusive* since it contains *all* of the forms. Therefore, the entire multiplicity is circumscribed by one, as Plotinus claims in the very first section of VI.6. The contents of Intellect are, as we know (cf. section 3.4.4, point 1), of such a kind that all of the forms are all the other forms and the whole of them. For this reason, inclusive number brings limit to all forms and to the whole of them, i.e. to the Living Being, and may therefore be identified with it.

As Slaveva-Griffin (2009, p. 109) aptly puts it, "the absolute unified number in Being, when contemplated by Intellect (the number moving in itself), divides substance and becomes the unfolded number of beings, enclosed by the finite number of the Complete Living Being." As can be observed, the identification of different aspects of Intellect with number (unified, unfolded, moving in itself and inclusive) functions as a shorthand for the different perspectives from which Plotinus describes the utmost unified multiplicity of Intellect.[8] Designating different aspects of Intellect as unified and unfolded number captures its unity and multiplicity in the process of its generation (cf. section 3.4.4, point 5), including the unifying role of the highest kinds (cf. section 3.4.4, point 2). Referring to an aspect of Intellect as number moving in itself reminds us of the unifying and multiplying role of its intelligible activity (cf. section 3.4.4, point 3). The fact that, from a different perspective, Intellect is also inclusive number can be read as a reference to the interconnectedness of all intelligible forms with each other and with the intelligible forms as a whole, which, at the same time, expresses their unity and multiplicity (cf. section 3.4.4, point 1). Finally, in all of these cases Plotinus identifies aspects of Intellect with *number*. By doing so, he highlights the results of the enquiry carried out in VI.6, according to which Intellect is a limited multiplicity on the grounds of its "arithmetical structure", understood as the activity of number in Intellect (cf. section 3.4.4, point 4). In this sense, Plotinus later claims that number "is in Intellect as the sum of the active actualities of Intellect" (VI.6.15.16).

A rather difficult question that arises from what I have discussed so far is that of the exact relation of the highest kinds, as interpreted in VI.2, to the doctrine of numbers in VI.6.9–10. Let me begin by saying that we must be very careful here. Slaveva-Griffin, for example, connects Rest with unified number, Motion with number moving in itself, unfolded number with the Other and the Same with encompassing number (cf. Slaveva-Griffin 2009, p. 109, and 2014, p. 205). The obvious problem is that there are five highest kinds, but only four numbers mentioned in VI.6.9, such that if one tries to identify the highest kinds with

8 Of course, Plotinus has exegetical reasons here too, especially the correct explication of the doctrines of Plato and his followers, as recorded by Aristotle. Cf. Šíma 2016.

these numbers, it is necessary to come up with a solution to explain the missing one. In the case of Slaveva-Griffin, it is Being which must be grafted onto the numbers: "When put together, all activities of substantial number bring together the different aspects of the same whole. This same whole, in turn, corresponds to the fifth primary kind of being" (Slaveva-Griffin 2009, p. 109). But, in reality, things are even more complicated, since for example the assumed correspondence of Rest to unified number, is mediated through Being because "the unified substantial number simply defines Being as stasis" (Slaveva-Griffin 2009, p. 102).

A different option, advocated by Nikulin is to split the highest kinds into two groups and connect (Nikulin 2002, pp. 78–79) or even identify (Nikulin 1998b, pp. 331–332) the Same and Rest with the monad, and the Other and Movement with the dyad. The interaction between the monad and the dyad could then be understood as the constitution of beings from Being, such that unified number, number moving in itself, unfolded number and encompassing number are descriptions of such a genesis of beings (Nikulin 2002, p. 80), i.e. the genesis of being as Intellect (Nikulin 2002, pp. 76 and 80).

Although these speculations may be based on reasonable assumptions, they remain speculations. That said, we should not make the opposite mistake and deny the connection between these two topics, since Plotinus explicitly identifies the highest kinds with numbers in VI.2.10 and brings them into play at the very beginning of VI.6.9. The solution that I propose is, therefore, not to try to connect individual kinds to particular types of number or to the monad and the dyad, but to understand them as being related through the mediation of the problem of unity and multiplicity. As indicated above, I read the crucial passage VI.6.9.29–32 as capturing the utter unified multiplicity of Intellect, which is otherwise described from several different perspectives (cf. section 3.4.4). The highest kinds are only one aspect of this topic, albeit an important one. I believe that apart from the oft-repeated statement that the highest kinds are numbers (cf. VI.2.2 and 10), we cannot really say much more on the basis of the textual evidence and perhaps there is little more to be said anyway. The designation "number" indicates that a thing is a limited multiplicity, which is precisely the case of the highest kinds. I see no need to specify what kind of number it is, because it is only a question of how we express ourselves. Plotinus has a lot to say about what kind of unified multiplicity the highest kinds are, without having to use an analogy from the realm of numbers.

Another controversial topic related to the discussion in VI.6.9 is the answer to Plotinus' question from VI.6.9.8–10 of whether number (including the one among numbers) exists before beings or even before Being itself. As we have seen, Plotinus suggests two options: 1) Being is before number and number

comes from being; 2) One is before being and number is before beings (see above, p. 99). Slaveva-Griffin's answer is ambivalent. First, she claims that number and being are "ontologically equal and inseparable" (Slaveva-Griffin 2009, p. 90). However, later she asserts that "number has priority even over Being and if number is prior to Being, then the unified substantial number is the closest to the source of all" (p. 100). On my reading, Plotinus argues for the second option (which corresponds rather to Slaveva-Griffin's first statement): one is before Being and number before beings, so that number, as such, is in Being and with Being (cf. VI.6.9.24–26 and 36–38). Beings, on the other hand, are clearly derived from number (cf. VI.6.9.38–39). But how does number itself come into existence and what is the one which is, according to VI.6.9.12–14, before Being?

As we have seen, even the slightest departure from the One is a progression towards multiplicity, which is the indefinite dyad[9] (cf. V.5.1.8–11), or infinite, manifold, unbounded (πολὺς καὶ ἄπειρος; cf. VI.7.17.20) and unlimited (ἀόριστος; cf. VI.7.17.15) life (ζωή; cf. VI.7.17.11ff. and my discussion of these passages in section 6.3).[10] But with it or rather prior to it, the monad comes to existence (cf. V.1.5.6–8). These two principles interact, i.e. the monad limits the dyad and Intellect is born (cf. V.1.5.7–9, V.4.2.7–8). Their interaction is described, from one perspective, as an attempt by Intellect which does not yet see (ὄψις οὔπω ἰδοῦσα; cf. V.3.11.5–6 and also V.4.2.7), or—as Emilsson (2007, p. 70) puts it—of the inchoate Intellect, to attain the One in its simplicity (ἐπιβάλλειν ὡς ἁπλῷ; cf. V.3.11.2–3). Similarly, Plotinus sometimes speaks of an unintellectual looking at the One (ἔβλεπεν ἀνοήτως) that in fact never sees the One (cf. VI.7.16.13–19 and my discussion of these passages in section 6.3). From a similar perspective, the interaction of the monad and the dyad results in a vague (ἀόριστος; cf. V.3.11.7) presence of an image (φάντασμά τι; cf V.3.11.7) or a trace (ἴχνος; cf. V.5.5.12–14, III.8.11.22–24, VI.7.17.39, VI.8.18.16) of the One in Intellect.

The monad itself is not essential number (cf. V.5.5 but also VI.2.10.13–16), but rather makes number, which comes into existence on the model of it and through it on the model of the One (cf. V.5.5.1–4). The one in being (i.e. the monad), as it were, falls out of the One with Being (VI.2.9.39–43), so that they

9 Slaveva-Griffin (2009, p. 87) calls the indefinite dyad the principle of potentiality, as opposed to number which is the principle of actuality.

10 However, Plotinus sometimes also approaches the constitution of Intellect from the perspective of otherness and movement (e.g. V.1.1.4, V.1.6.53, II.4.5.29–34). As was the case with the exact relation of numbers to the highest kinds, I am inclined to adopt a very cautious attitude, preferring to treat these passages as descriptions of the same process from different perspectives, rather than to supplement the system with additional elements for which there is only scarce textual evidence. For a discussion of these topics, see Nikulin 1998a, Rist 1985 and Beierwaltes 1972. Cf. also my comment in section 6.3, footnote 24.

always come together. However, the "coming together" of Being and the monad does not refer to the generative process of Being itself. Rather, it reflects the fact that, in Intellect, Being and the one are closely connected—or even connected to the highest degree possible in multiplicity. The monad and Being are connected in the sense that number is the very being or actuality of Being (cf. VI.6.9.27–29), or again that Being is unified number. Therefore, there is always number in Being or with Being (cf. VI.6.9.36–38). Since the monad is a trace of the One in Being, it functions, in turn, as a connecting element with the One (cf. συνάπτω in VI.6.15), whereas numbers are said not to do this, because it suffices for Being to be linked to it via the monad (cf. VI.6.15.24–29 and Horn 1995, pp. 257–261). Nevertheless, because all numbers participate in the monad in some way, everything that is shaped by number can also be said to be a sort of trace of the One in Being (cf. V.5.5.12–14).

Since what unfolds from Being and the rest of the highest kinds are all of the forms of Intellect (cf. VI.6.11.24–34), and since they all participate in the unity of the principle, which is the monad, they are all henads. Slaveva-Griffin (2009, p. 102) aptly summarises the role of henads in the constitution of Intellect: "the henads represent the multiplicity of beings that retain a trace of the unified number of Being in themselves to impart onto their beings. Thus, each henad, as a holding place for being, is an individual version of the unified number of Being." However, the use of the words "henad" and "monad" is to a certain extent confusing in VI.6 and Plotinus does not seem to consistently apply the systematically defined meanings I am trying to use here (cf. a similar observation by Slaveva-Griffin 2009, pp. 92–93).

The designation "substantial number" is also a Plotinian innovation, although it is partially derived from what is said about true numbers (ἀληθινὸς ἀριθμός) in Plato's *Republic* (529c–530c) and about true being (οὐσία ὄντως οὖσα) in the *Phaedrus* (247a–248a). Because various forms are different multiplicities that are unified in different ways (i.e. they participate differently in the monad), or in other words, because each of them is a particular henad, they all have their source, root and principle in substantial number (cf. VI.6.9.38–39). Slaveva-Griffin once again accurately paraphrases Plotinus, stating "substantial number is the mold into which the Forms slip to exist" (Slaveva-Griffin 2009, p. 87) and also "the rational principle (*logos*), described in V.1.5.13, which orders substance (*ousia*) and constitutes being (*to on*)" (Slaveva-Griffin 2009, p. 89). As such, substantial number is not only the limit imposed through the monad on every single form by the One, but also the structuring principle of Intellect as a whole. Substantial number is the product of the interaction between the indefinite dyad and the monad, i.e. it is the very limited nature of the intelligible forms and of the whole of Intellect. Therefore, this term captures both the

fact that they are a defined *multiplicity*, and the fact that the monad rules over this multiplicity, i.e. that it is a *unified* multiplicity.

5.5 Number and Beauty (VI.6.18)

A crucial question remains to be answered: what does all this have to do with beauty? First of all, the enquiry into the highest kinds and into the account of number was elicited by the connection of beauty to Intellect on the grounds of its utter unity in multiplicity. My enquiry was guided by the desire to further specify this unity from two important perspectives: 1) the generic and principal role of the highest kinds and 2) the structural role of number in the intelligible. I have already succeeded in specifying the unity of the Intellect by determining the one as a principle in it, I have discussed why beauty is not one of the highest kinds and I have been able to identify Being as the most beautiful "part" of Intellect. A closer reading of treatise VI.6 *On Numbers* was of considerable importance for this topic. I have tried to show that number may function as a shorthand for the utter unified multiplicity of Intellect, derived from the nature of its intelligible activity and from the nature of its objects of thought, from the atemporal process of Intellect's genesis including the role played by the highest kinds in it, and finally from the structural unity and multiplicity of each of its parts and the whole of it. Also, multiplicity of Intellect was identified as a limited one, because, as inclusive number, it was circumscribed by one, both as a whole and as each part. Further implications of this account of number for the question of beauty are listed by Plotinus himself in the last section of the treatise. These passages explicitly address the relationship between beauty and number and may lend further support to my conclusions.

In VI.6.18, Plotinus describes how number is in Intellect from the perspective of limit. All numbers *there* are limited (ὥρισται) and in no way deficient, in the sense that they cannot be in any way greater than they are. One could say that they are unlimited (ἄπειρον) only in the sense that they cannot be measured by something else, because they themselves are measures (μέτρα; cf. VI.6.18.1–12). That which requires an external limit is precisely that which is not limited in itself, but needs to be measured in order to be prevented from carrying on into indefiniteness. Real beings, i.e. intelligible forms, as numbers, do not need such an external limit. They are bound by their own agency in being what they are. Additionally, Plotinus claims that these forms or numbers are beautiful, because they are self-limiting measures of this sort, but also because they are living beings—or rather because they constitute a single Living Being living a divine life (i.e. the first, clearest and best one, that is in no

way deficient or weak, unmixed with death and possessing the pure essence of life). Moreover, this life, which is derived from the One and directed towards it, is an intelligent life or, as Plotinus puts it, it is accompanied by the thinking of all beings (ἡ πάντων φρόνησις) and by universal Intellect (ὁ πᾶς νοῦς). By mixing thought (συγκερασάμενος φρόνησιν) into this divine life and giving it the colour of greater goodness (ἀγαθώτερον αὐτὸ ἐπιχρώσας), the beauty (τὸ κάλλος) of Intellect comes to be even more majestic (σεμνότερον), for even here below a thoughtful life is majesty and beauty in conformity with truth (τὸ σεμνὸν καὶ τὸ καλὸν κατὰ ἀλήθειάν; cf. VI.6.18.7–25). This is all the more true of Intellect, where life flashes out of everything, where there is no contradiction and nothing external to it, but only eternal being in and by itself everywhere, i.e. where being is one. Because Intellect eternally gives being to everything, it is great in power and in beauty (ἐν δυνάμει καὶ κάλλει μέγα) and, as such, charming (θέλγω), such that all seek (ζητέω) the Good with it (μετ' αὐτοῦ τὸ ἀγαθόν; cf. VI.6.18.25–53).

The relevance of the treatise *On Numbers* for the enquiry into the beautiful should now be much more obvious. Beauty is identified with measure, i.e. something limited or number, but also something that does not acquire its limit from something external, since it is limited by itself. Because number was previously identified with the actuality of each form, it is precisely the being itself of a form which is number. Number is therefore a suitable notion for capturing both of the requisite aspects of beauty: the fact that it is limited and the fact that this limit is not external to it. Otherwise, a beautiful thing would be a mere decorated corpse, because Plotinus understands the external limitation of a thing as, in a way, emphasising its own unlimited nature (cf. II.4.16). Moreover, the fact that Plotinus connects number and beauty provides further support for what was already observed in V.8.13 (cf. section 3.5): Intellect is beautiful, since it is what is primarily differentiated and bound, i.e. differentiated and bound to the maximum degree possible. Number stands for precisely these two aspects. As number, Intellect is multiple, but limited. From a structural perspective, treatise VI.6 therefore supports the claim that beauty is *unitas multiplex*, and it even more vigorously emphasises the self-determination of beauty, i.e. the fact that a thing is beautiful when it is bound by its *own* limit. In this respect, the existence of the form of beauty (cf. section 5.2) makes even less sense, because what makes a form beautiful is precisely something that is characteristic of each form, or rather of Intellect as a whole.

The situation is more complicated when it comes to the second reason given for the beauty of Intellect: the fact that it is a living being. It seems that there are several motives that come together here. The first motive is, once again, the connection of beauty to unity in multiplicity, because the life of Intellect is

distinctive precisely in being a life in and by itself that is present everywhere, such that life flashes out of everything, i.e. in being a single life that is also many (cf. VI.6.18.25–44).

Second, life was associated earlier in VI.6.9 with the completeness of the unfolded Intellect, i.e. with the fact that it encompasses every form. This connection of life with such an unfolded multiplicity could be understood as not being restricted to a merely "arithmetical" perspective, encompassing number. It could also be taken to have "biological" connotations with generative or reproductive power. As we know from III.8, the life of Intellect is productive contemplation. In living or contemplating, Intellect unfolds itself. The connection of beauty to life, in the sense of an unfolded but defined multiplicity, has implications for the interpretation of Being as the most beautiful "part" of Intellect, which was derived from parts of treatise VI.2 (cf. section 4.4). It seems that Plotinus adopts a much more positive attitude here towards defined multiplicity, when he makes life one of the causes of beauty. Even from these passages, it seems that if Intellect were not all forms, but only some of them, it would be less beautiful (cf. VI.6.18.20–25 and see further below). In this sense, Intellect, as unified number, would not be as beautiful as encompassing number, because it would "not yet" be the fullness of its contents. At the same time, this enriching role played by multiplicity is not to be overestimated, as Plotinus himself urges in VI.6.1.8–22, in part because the reason for its having such a positive function is the fact that Intellect does not lose any of its unity as a result of this unfolding. In the stages of Intellect's constitution, it is one to the same degree in the moment "when" it is only the highest genera as it is in the moment "after" it has unfolded down into the last of the forms. Moreover, because Intellect never is and never was in an undeveloped state, this issue is merely the result of an inaccurate description. Nevertheless, the motivation for designating the highest kinds, Being or unified number as the most beautiful "part" of Intellect was the fact that these are closest to the One and, in this sense, more fully one. Perhaps, however, the passages from VI.6 currently under discussion show that the metaphor of closeness starts to break down here.[11]

Let us return, however, to Plotinus' motives for making life the cause of beauty. There might be a third motive, which in a way comprises both of the previous ones.[12] To quote Armstrong (1960, p. 403), "It seems to me most

11 In section 4.4, I also hesitated to designate the one in Intellect (the monad) as its most beautiful part, even if this claim could be defended on the grounds of its closest proximity to the One. However, Plotinus repeats several times that it does not allow for multiplicity. The metaphor of closeness did not work there either.

12 Once again, Plotinus might also have exegetical reasons for this, i.e. to show the compat-

unlikely that a philosopher who knew something about Aristotelian theology could have written this without intending an explicit reference to the discussion of divine thought in *Metaphysics*."[13] I too think that Plotinus is actually trying to correct Aristotle's account of νόησις νοήσεως here (cf. *Met*. 1074b15–1075a11). Aristotle devotes this passage to specifying the object of god's thought and he does so, among other things, in the context of the god's necessary majesty (τὸ σεμνόν; cf. *Met*. 1074b17–18). The god must think that which is most divine (τὸ θειότατον) and precious (τιμιώτατον; cf. *Met*. 1074b25–26) in order to be beautiful (τὸ καλόν; cf. *Met*. 1074b23–24), meaning it must think its own thinking (ἔστιν ἡ νόησις νοήσεως νόησις; cf. *Met*. 1074b33–35). This activity of the god was moreover previously identified with the god's life (cf. *Met*. 1072b28–31). It is striking that not only beauty, but also majesty come into play, when Aristotle more closely defines the divine life of the god, which is the thinking of its own thinking. Plotinus obviously alludes to these passages and, to some extent, presents a similar picture. The life of the god, which is Intellect, is also intelligent life accompanied by the thought of all beings (ἡ πάντων φρόνησις) and universal Intellect (ὁ πᾶς νοῦς; cf. VI.6.18.20–23) and it lives a divine life (cf. VI.6.18.12–18). Moreover, Intellect's thought is reflexive, but it does not simply think its own thinking. Rather, it thinks itself as the plurality of all forms. From Aristotle's perspective, this would threaten the beauty and majesty of god, but Plotinus forestalls this objection with two considerations: 1) Intellect does not think something external, but rather itself as all of the forms; 2) The object of thought is beautiful, because all of the forms are measures or numbers. As previously noted, the connection of Intellect with the plurality of forms seems even to make its beauty grander, for it does not become more majestic until the life of Intellect is mixed with thought and until it is given the colour of greater goodness (cf. VI.6.18.20–25).

That said, it is not clear what this "colour of greater goodness" refers to exactly and how it makes Intellect more beautiful. Plotinus does not provide any answers here, since his thoughts are focused rather on defining beauty more precisely with respect to what is both prior and posterior to Intellect. Intellect is said to give being to everything (cf. VI.6.18.46–47) and, with it,

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ibility of the claims made in various Platonic dialogues with his own doctrine, especially those made in the *Timaeus* (30a–31b), about the beauty of the noetic paradigm and about the paradigm being an intelligent living being, and those made in the *Sophist* (248e6–249b1), about the necessary link between being and the other highest kinds to life.

13 The quotation refers originally to treatise V.5 (and not VI.6), but I believe that the same point applies in the latter work. The general connection between Plotinus' notion of the life of Intellect and *Met*. XII has also been noted by Beierwaltes 1974, p. 20.

beauty. Even soul is number, if it is a substance (cf. VI.6.16.44–45), and everything that comes into being is, in the end, determined by the first numbers (cf. VI.6.15.35–42 and Magi 2013). In an earlier passage, however, the multiplicity of the sensible world was not considered to be as positive as the multiplicity of Intellect. It was said to be the source of its ugliness—or, more precisely, it was said that the world would be ugly if it were not circumscribed by one, as by something external (cf. VI.6.1.23–29). Plotinus describes the productive and paradigmatic status of Intellect with respect to what comes after it as its being great in power and beauty (ἐν δυνάμει καὶ κάλλει μέγα; cf. VI.6.18.47–50): in power, because it has the ability to do so and, indeed, does so; in beauty, because it is the primarily beautiful, the paradigm of beauty. For this reason, Plotinus even calls the Intellect charming, placing it as an intermediary between all beings and the One, through which they all seek the One (cf. VI.6.18.46–53). This ability of the beautiful Intellect is, of course, grounded in the fact that it is derived from and directed towards the One (cf. VI.6.18.18–20). Nevertheless, as something charming—or, more precisely, because of its majesty (cf. VI.6.3.1–10), its wonderful and inexplicable beauty and its greatness (cf. VI.6.7.10–16)—it may also hinder our ascent to the One and bind to itself those who admire it.[14]

14 This was probably the case with Aristotle. See also V.1.9.

CHAPTER 6

Beauty as the Manifestation of the Good (Treatise VI.7)

In the previous chapter, we encountered the interesting statement that Intellect becomes more majestic when life is mixed with thought and when it is given the colour of greater goodness (cf. VI.6.18.20–25). I have tentatively tried to explain the relationship between the notion of life and that of beauty, but it still stands in need of further exploration. This inquiry is carried out in parts of treatise VI.7 (cf. sections 6.1 and 6.4). It also remains unclear what Plotinus means by the colour of greater goodness. The answer to this, can, I think, also be found in VI.7 (cf. sections 6.2, 6.4 and 6.6). Additionally, in my analysis of this treatise, I shall further examine the genetic unity and multiplicity of Intellect (cf. section 6.3), Plotinus' conception of ἔρως (cf. section 6.6) and the relationship between beauty and the Good (cf. sections 6.5, 6.6 and 6.7). As noted in the "Introduction", treatise VI.7 is one of Plotinus' longest treatises and covers a variety of topics, which makes it a rich source, when it comes to reconstructing Plotinus' understanding of beauty.

6.1 The Ascent to Intellect as Life (VI.7.1–12)

Plotinus opens the treatise with a paraphrase of the creation of man from Plato's *Timaeus* (44c–47e; VI.7.1.1–5). He focuses on the fact that God, or one of the gods, gave man sense organs, foreseeing (προοράω and προεῖδον) that this would ensure his safety. This account opens a vast field of questions, which Plotinus discusses in sections 1–12, and, in a sense, throughout the whole treatise (cf. the final derivation of sight from the Good in VI.7.41.1–3). It is necessary to clarify: 1) how the creator—i.e. for Plotinus, the Intellect—could plan and have foresight (cf. VI.7.1); 2) how sense-perception—i.e. something belonging to the sensible world—can be derived from Intellect (cf. VI.7.1–7), what the contents of Intellect are (cf. VI.7.8–11) and 3) how these contents exist in it (cf. VI.7.11–12). In trying to answer these questions, Plotinus enters into dialogue with Aristotle's biology and teleology, while developing his own theory of causation (cf. esp. VI.7.1–2). Where appropriate, Plotinus' account is, of course, presented as the correct interpretation of Plato (cf. VI.7.3.5–6; 4.10–11; 5.23–26; 8.23–32).

Plotinus' answer to the question of whether Intellect has foresight (προόρασις) and planning (λογισμός) is quite straightforward:[1] No, it does not. This way of talking is merely the result of speech trying to capture the fact that Intellect has eternal and complete knowledge of itself (ἐπιστήμη). Foreseeing and planning presuppose a step by step progression of thought—i.e. change and time—as well as deciding between different options, both of which are absent from Intellect. Since, however, the sensible world imitates the intelligible, its perfection is reflected in the sensible world, giving the impression that it had been planned and that the needs of all beings had been foreseen (cf. VI.7.1.24–58 and also V.8.7.36–44).

In answer to the second question, concerning how sense-perception is derived from Intellect, Plotinus must first elaborate a non-Aristotelian theory of causality. The goal is to be able to show that Intellect is the cause of the sense organs of living beings, and, in this sense, also the cause of sense-perception itself.[2] Rappe (2002, p. 71) points out that, on the basis of Aristotle's teleology from the *Physics* and *De partibus animalium*, one could think that man possesses all of his different parts because of the actualisation of his form in matter. Different bodily organs are, in this sense, parts of the form of man for different reasons, e.g. as a safeguard (cf. VI.7.3.16–20). For Plotinus, however, this is impossible, since a form cannot, in fact, be fully actualised in matter and some organs are present rather as a substitute for this incomplete actualisation of form (cf. VI.7.9 and Rappe 2002, p. 83). Instead, Plotinus presents a theory of the *coordinate arising of everything*, as Rappe (2002, p. 74 and pp. 77–78) aptly formulates it, i.e. of the coordinate arising of all parts of the sensible world, of all parts of individual beings and of the mutual causality of all of these parts. Consequently, the true cause of each thing is the fact that it is a part of a totality, as well as the fact that there are no substances that exist in themselves in the sensible world, but only relative images of such substances or forms (cf. VI.7.2.31–38 and the commentary of Rappe, 2002, pp. 77–79). Plot-

1 I shall not present here the whole refutation of foresight and planning in Intellect, but only those parts I consider most important for my purposes. As usual, Plotinus discusses different versions of the theory and highlights their contradictory implications. For a thorough discussion, cf. the commentary by Hadot (1988).

2 I shall not follow Plotinus' line of thought here precisely. Once again, there are many digressions to different positions and counter-positions. Rather, I shall try to extract the position Plotinus advocates for, in the face of numerous objections. Especially interesting in these passages is the transformation of Aristotle's terminology to serve Plotinus' own purposes, as well as the attack on the distinction between essence and accidents. However, the analysis of these passages is beyond the scope of the present chapter. An interesting discussion can be found in Rappe 2002.

inus illustrates this counterintuitive theory of causation later in the treatise by saying that it is not friction that causes fire in the sensible world, because fire must already exist in Intellect and bodies being rubbed together must participate in it (VI.7.11.39–41).

This notion of cause is based once again on Plotinus' understanding of Intellect as a specific unity in multiplicity, where all of the parts are both all of the other parts and the whole (see section 3.4.4). In treatise VI.7, he formulates this in Aristotelian terminology, saying that, in Intellect, the essence of a thing—τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι—and its cause—τὸ διὰ τί—coincide (cf. VI.7.2.13–16 and 3.20–22). In saying this, however, Plotinus does not merely want to claim that the cause of everything is form, which is true in each case (cf. VI.7.2.16–18). Rather, he means that if we unfold each and every form back upon itself, we shall discover its cause in it (cf. VI.7.2.19). Plotinus paradoxically uses the verb ἀναπτύσσω with πρὸς αὐτό (scil. τὸ εἶδος; O.G.) here: "unfolding" corresponds to relating each form to the rest of the intelligibles and to Intellect as a whole, while "back upon itself" corresponds to continuing to focus on coming to know that very form.[3] If understanding the cause of a thing means to understand it as a part of a totality, where everything is related to everything else, then, in Intellect, the cause is the same as what a thing is, because it is all of the other things and the whole (cf. Rappe 2002, p. 85).

It comes as no surprise that Plotinus repeatedly remarks in this context that Intellect is beautiful in virtue of having all of the causes within itself (ἔχει καὶ τὸ καλῶς ὁμοῦ τῆς αἰτίας; cf. VI.7.2.29), that its beauty is with the cause and in the cause (τὸ καλῶς μετὰ τῆς αἰτίας καὶ ἐν τῇ αἰτίᾳ; cf. VI.7.3.20–22) and that each form in Intellect is beautiful by being with its cause (μετὰ τῆς αἰτίας) and by being a form, i.e. everything (cf. VI.7.3.9–11). These claims are to be understood as highlighting once again two points: the specific *unitas multiplex* of Intellect (cf. VI.7.2.31–38, VI.7.3.10–11 and VI.7.3.20–21) and the fact that there must not be any external causation in order for a thing to be truly beautiful (cf. VI.7.2.40–45 and VI.7.3.20–22), a motif known to us from VI.6.18.7–8 (see section 5.5). Furthermore, Plotinus expands on this comment, when he adds that there is another condition for a thing's being beautiful, namely the dominance of form over matter (cf. VI.7.3.11–12), known to us already from treatise I.6 (see section 2.3). However, it is not quite clear in this passage, whether Plotinus is referring to the specific characteristics of intelligible matter which allow beauty in Intellect to be everywhere in beauty (cf. II.4.4–5 and section 3.4.6), or whether

3 A detailed analysis of these passages with respect to their Aristotelian and Platonic origins can be found in Schiaparelli 2010.

he is rather broadening his scope and positing this condition with respect to the beauty of the sensibles. The latter seems more probable, considering the passages that immediately follow, in which Plotinus explains that the domination of form over matter is apparent if no part of a thing is left unshaped, i.e. if a living organism does not lack any of its organs, e.g. an eye. This example is immediately transformed into a universal Plotinian causal explanation of a sensible object and all of its parts: these all exist so that "there shall be everything" (ἵνα πάντα; VI.7.3.12–18).

The next step, then, is to specify what is meant by "man", when we say that "man has sense-perception".[4] The distinction between three different kinds of man—one on the level of Intellect (cf. VI.7.4.21–31 and 6.12–14), the second on the level of soul (cf. VI.7.4.11–13 and 6.9–11) and the third on the level of embodiment (cf. VI.7.4.13–21 and 6.11–12)[5]—allows Plotinus to outline how sense-perception imitates the activity of the man in Intellect, i.e. intellection (cf. VI.7.6.1–19 and more explicitly 7.19–32). Plotinus is even ready to lay such a strong emphasis on the continuity of the three men here that he not only calls sense-perception "dim intellection" (ἀμυδρὰς νοήσεις), but intellection is said to be "clear sense-perception" (ἐναργεῖς αἰσθήσεις; cf. VI.7.7.30–31).[6] In conclusion, not only is the true cause of the presence of an sense

4 The target of Plotinus' criticism is, once again, Aristotle and his account of man as a hylomorphic compound of body and soul from the second book of *DA*. Plotinus here uses Aristotle's own rules of definition (cf. *Met*. Z 4–5. 1029b1–1030a14) against him (cf. VI.7.4.21–28). The correct account of man, Plotinus assumes, is to be found in Plato, although it must be properly interpreted. The reference in VI.7.4.10–11 and VI.7.5.23–26 is to *Alc. Mai*. 129e–130a.

5 The precise meaning of these difficult passages is not particularly clear. Together with Siegmann (1990, p. 47), I prefer a rather simple interpretation, which connects the three men with Intellect, soul and embodied soul. Thaler (2011, p. 170) suggests the correspondence of the first man with a form in Intellect, the second with the form's intelligible λόγος actualised in soul and the third with a compound of body and the lowest part of soul. Similarly, Hadot (1988, pp. 210–211) connects the first man with intelligible form in Intellect, the second with rational and more divine soul, defined by λόγος of the rational man, and the third with the sensitive soul, defined by the λόγος of the sensitive man. Since, however, the λόγοι of man are, at the same time, said to be the activity of soul (cf. VI.7.5.8–9), there seems to be little—if any—difference between all of these formulations.

6 It seems to me that the identification of intellection with clear sense-perception goes a bit too far. The relation of sense-perception to intellection must be asymmetrical: sense-perception could be called dim intellection, since it is an image of intellection. To say, however, that intellection is clear sense-perception suggests that there is only a quantitative difference between the two, whereas the difference is—from the perspective of sense-perception—qualitative. As I pointed out in my brief summary of III.8 (cf. section 3.1), Plotinus wants to present the universe simultaneously as a continuum (from a top-down perspective) and as a hierarchy (from a bottom-up perspective).

organ (a form in) Intellect, but sense-perception itself imitates intellection, i.e. the activity of Intellect.

Plotinus then turns to the discussion of the origin of irrational animals (ζῷα ἄλογα) and of those body parts which serve as defence (e.g. horns and claws). How can the irrational be a part of Intellect (cf. VI.7.8.17 and VI.7.9.1–5) and how can there be defensive organs if there is no threat *there* (cf. VI.7.10.1–2)? In order to answer these questions, Plotinus shifts his focus to a certain extent,[7] and begins to discuss the question of whether we are to posit Intellect as containing everything or only as being multiple in the most minimal sense, i.e. as being two, a dyad (cf. VI.7.8.23–29). The correct answer is, of course, that Intellect is everything because division in the dyad is infinite, since nothing below the One can truly be one such that "each of the ones in the dyad [...] must again be at least two, and again it is the same with each of those" (ἑκάτερον τῶν ἐν τῇ δυάδι οὐχ οἷόν τε ἦν ἓν παντελῶς εἶναι, ἀλλὰ πάλιν αὖ δύο τοὐλάχιστον εἶναι, καὶ ἐκείνων αὖ ὡσαύτως; VI.7.8.23–25). Moreover, there must be movement and rest in the dyad, as well as intellect and life, and it becomes everything as the complete living being (ζῷον παντελές) and lives truly (cf. VI.7.8.26–32). The reasoning here is presented in an exegetical manner, because the infinite division of the dyad is taken from Plato's *Parmenides* (cf. 142b–143a), movement and rest, together with intellection and life, are taken from the *Sophist* (cf. 248e–249c; 254b) and the complete living being is taken from the *Timaeus* (cf. 31b). With this support from three of Plato's great works, Plotinus is able to provide the proper background for the two above-mentioned questions. How are we to understand that Intellect contains everything? Does it also contain the irrational (cf. VI.7.9.1–2), i.e. something of no value (εὐτελές or not having τὸ τίμιον), and bodily organs like horns and claws (cf. VI.7.10.1–2), which are connected with deficiency (ἐλλείπω)?[8]

Plotinus addresses the first question by pointing out that a form in Intellect exists in a different way than its image in the sensible world, such that even rational beings do not reason in Intellect, because there is no reasoning there (cf. VI.7.9.5–10). In this sense, the distinction between rational and irrational animals only imitates the difference between the intelligible causes of both, a difference based on the proximity to the first principles in Intellect. Conse-

7 There is probably also an exegetic motif here: a commentary to Plato's *Parmenides* (143a–145a).

8 I have rephrased the question in this fashion in order to emphasise the link to one of the crucial questions for Platonists formulated in Plato's *Parm.* 130c5–7: "Are you also puzzled, Socrates, about cases that might be thought absurd, such as hair or mud or dirt or any other trivial (ἀτιμότατόν) and undignified (φαυλότατον) objects?" (transl. Cornford).

quently, there are three groups of beings: gods, rational beings in the sensible world and irrational beings (cf. VI.7.9.16–23). Plotinus' answer to the question of those contents of Intellect linked with deficiency (e.g. horns and claws) is based on an expansion of the proximity analogy: it is the source that goes out or unfolds (πρόειμι and ἐξελίσσω; cf. VI.7.9.34–39). In the descent, however, something is always lost and the living beings become less and less perfect. In order to compensate for this loss, the nature of nails, claws, fangs and horns appeared (cf. VI.7.9.38–46). But then why are they there in Intellect? For the sake of the self-sufficiency (πρὸς τὸ αὔταρκες) and completeness (καὶ τὸ τέλεον) of Intellect (cf. VI.7.10.2–3), which is everything in a variegated unity (cf. VI.7.10.7–12 and the commentary of Thaler 2011, pp. 176–177). In order for Intellect to be everything, each of its individual forms must be different and it itself must be perfect, so that each contains all of the necessary causes of all of the parts of an animal as we know them from the sensible world (cf. VI.7.10.5–16).[9] Moreover, an idea familiar to us from VI.6.18 (cf. section 5.5) emerges once again here, in the context of Intellect as life or as a living being: the all-encompassing multiplicity of Intellect is not something that makes Intellect worse; on the contrary, it makes it better (cf. VI.7.10.15).[10]

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9 In Thaler's interpretation (cf. 2011, pp. 178–179), Plotinus induces here a revised teleological explanation, which Thaler relates to the whole Intellect, including the highest kinds on the basis of VI.7.13. Consequently, everything in Intellect, including the μέγιστα γένη, is there in order for Intellect to be alive. This claim seems quite exaggerated and is based on two assumptions I consider wrong: 1) Thaler says that Plotinus "specifies the reason why it is good that Intellect stay in motion—that if it were to stop, it would cease from thought and life—is again an idea that presupposes the notion of a beneficial end" (p. 177). However, I do not see this claim anywhere in VI.7.13 and Thaler gives no precise reference. In lines 38–41 Plotinus does indeed consider the option that Intellect does not move, but rejects it, because this would entail that it would cease to think and *exist* (ὥστε καί, εἰ ἔστη, οὐ νενόηκεν· εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, οὐδ' ἔστιν), not to live. Of course, the Intellect would also cease to live in this case, but in order to support his strong claim about the subordination of the μέγιστα γένη to life, Thaler would, in fact, need the text to say "live" and not "exist". 2) Thaler assumes that the final answer of *Ennead* VI.7 to the presence of the Good in Intellect is life (cf. p. 179). This is, however, explicitly called into question in VI.7.18 and 21 and is not considered a completely satisfactory answer, because it is true only from the top-down (genetic) perspective. From the bottom-up perspective, Intellect is ἀγαθοειδής qua beautiful. See my discussion of this topic in sections 6.4 and 6.6.

10 Interestingly, the last sentence of the section might be read as linking this variegated unity to beauty: "Καὶ ἀρετὴ δὲ τὸ κοινὸν καὶ τὸ ἴδιον καὶ τὸ ὅλον καλὸν ἀδιαφόρου τοῦ κοινοῦ ὄντος" (VI.7.10.16–18). This reading is suggested by Armstrong's translation and, to a certain extent, also by that of Harder. Nevertheless, I consider Hadot's translation and explanation better. Consequently, this sentence is not a general statement about beauty, but rather an example of how to define moral beauty (*la beauté morale*) by means of something general

After dealing with these two difficulties, Plotinus thinks it possible to draw a general conclusion about the contents of Intellect. It contains "everything that is made by forming principle, i.e. according to form" (ὅσα λόγῳ πεποίηται καὶ κατ' εἶδος; VI.7.11.4–5, transl. modified[11]). But how (πῶς) does it contain all things (cf. VI.7.11.8), e.g. plants (cf. VI.7.11.6), the elements (cf. VI.7.11.6–7, 12.7 and 10–13), heavens and stars (cf. VI.7.12.4–6) and all living beings (cf. VI.7.12.8 and 14–15)? They are there qua living (cf. VI.7.11.15–18), so that Intellect is a complete living being (cf. VI.7.12.1–19). In order to demonstrate this claim, Plotinus first turns to plants in the sensible world, which are unquestionably alive. Since there is a rational forming principle active in them (λόγος), which accounts for their existence, this λόγος must itself be alive and, *a fortiori*, that from which this λόγος is derived, i.e. Intellect (cf. VI.7.11.10–18). But why should we suppose that the earth lives there, if it does not live here? Plotinus tries to show that, even in the sensible world, earth is alive on account of the activity of its rational forming principle (VI.7.11.20–22 and 33–36). Fortunately, he is more specific here about what the activity of λόγος in a thing means. This activity accounts not only for the existence of the thing, but also for its generation (γεννάω) and growth (αὔξησις), shaping (πλάσσω), external shape (πλάσις) and inner pattern (μόρφωσις; cf. VI.7.11.22–27). All of this can be seen in the case of mountains and stones, which are like wood chopped from a tree. Once again, in Intellect, earth must be even more fully alive and, correspondingly, it must be primarily earth. Similarly, as shape-giving (μορφόω), the rational forming principle in fire is alive, and its paradigm in Intellect even more so. Since Plotinus emphasises above all here that λόγος gives form and shape, it is not particularly clear how water and air can be alive, given that they have no obvious external shape. Although Plotinus claims that even in them the shaping activity of λόγος is present (cf. VI.7.11.29–49), he gives three additional reasons for seeing life as present in them. First of all, living beings are generated in them (especially in water, but he also mentions air and even fire) and consequently they must be alive (cf. VI.7.11.53–55). Second, the fact that they are in constant flux (as fire is too) conceals the presence of life or soul in them. Interestingly, if they were static, their life would be more obvious (cf. VI.7.11.56–60). Third, it can be said that they resemble the fluids in our body, like blood, whose life is also not apparent, but which obviously contributes to the constitution of a living being and ensouls flesh (cf. VI.7.11.60–71), just as water and air contribute to the

(like a disposition or habit) and particular (like "which chooses good" or "which makes man good"). Cf. Hadot 1988, com. ad loc.

11 I consider καί in this sentence to have an explicative, rather than connective, function.

constitution of universal living being, i.e. the whole sensible world (VI.7.11.50–52). Indeed, the whole cosmos is there in Intellect, containing all living beings. Intellect is, in fact, the paradigm of this kind of life because everything in Intellect—including the intelligible sky and stars—is a living being, while, as a whole, Intellect is a complete living being, seething with life (cf. VI.7.12.1–25).

What conclusions can we draw about the life of the Intellect from these passages? If what ensouls and animates all things in the sensible world is the aforementioned activity of λόγος, and if what is before λόγος is even more alive or primarily alive, how does Intellect live? I would venture to infer that life in Intellect does not primarily mean forming something, but rather being form itself, that it does not primarily mean accounting for existence and generation, but rather being in the true sense, that it does not primarily mean being soul, but rather being Intellect, and that it does not primarily mean enabling the generation of beings in it, but rather containing all beings as intelligibles in itself and in identity with itself. This last formulation also evokes a further meaning of life in Intellect, i.e. the fact that it is a living being—or rather the complete living being—and as such a paradigm of all organisms and organisation in general. How is it a paradigm of this sort? Once again, by being a unique, unified multiplicity, i.e. by each of its part being both all of the other parts and the whole.

It is precisely in this context of Intellect as a paradigm of everything and life itself that Plotinus begins to draw our attention to its source (πόθεν), to this "single spring" (μὶα πηγή) from which everything flows (cf. VI.7.12.19–25). In other words, he sets up the proper background for raising the central question of the treatise: how is the Good present in Intellect? One of the answers will be that it is present "as life" (cf. VI.7.17–18), i.e. as the first ἐνέργεια coming from the Good (cf. VI.7.18.41).

6.2 The Context of the Question of the Presence of the Good in Intellect (VI.7.13–14)

However, the question has not yet been raised and we should follow Plotinus closely here, because a proper understanding of this question is essential for making sense of the answer.

His starting point is the simultaneous simplicity and multiplicity (or even wholeness; cf. VI.7.13.3–5) of Intellect. Intellect is said to be a principle (ἀρχή) and activity (ἐνέργεια). The activity of Intellect is further specified as movement on an eternally identical course, a course which is not, however, to be understood as homogeneous (ὁμοιομερές) and unvarying (ἀποίκιλον). There would

be no majesty (σεμνόν) in being like that, because there would be no variation (ἐξαλλαγή) and no otherness (ἑτερότης), and consequently also no life (τὸ ζῆν) and activity (ἐνέργεια).[12] But because there is otherness—i.e. universal otherness or the Other as one of the highest kinds—and life, there must be everything and all life must be there (cf. VI.7.13.1–28). The activity of Intellect refers to the fact that it is "eternally actualizing one thing after the other" (ἐνεργήσαντος δὲ ἀεὶ ἄλλο μετ' ἄλλο; cf. VI.7.13.29, transl. modified) and that it is, as it were, "wandering down every way and wandering in itself" (οἷον πλανηθέντος πᾶσαν πλάνην καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ πλανηθέντος; cf. VI.7.13.29–30), that is "among substances while the substances run along with its wanderings" (ἐν οὐσίαις πλανᾶσθαι συνθεουσῶν τῶν οὐσιῶν ταῖς αὐτοῦ πλάναις; cf. VI.7.13.29). I quote these passages in order to show that Plotinus is willing to go quite far with his language, and to risk being misunderstood, as a result of all of the succession that is implied in Intellect's doing. Nevertheless, if we pay close attention, we observe that Plotinus tries to avoid these implications by highlighting that it is an eternal process[13] and that in the implied succession, that which is left behind moves along with the wandering Intellect. This means that there is no succession, because nothing is left behind, but everything is always present together with everything else. Rather, there is a certain hierarchy of forms. It is no coincidence that at least some of the highest kinds appear in this context,[14] because these are, as γένη, at the very top of this intelligible hierarchy, and, as ἀρχαί, its constitutive elements (cf. section 4.1). The interplay of the highest kinds makes it possible for Intellect to exist as every being (cf. VI.7.13.24–28 and 52–58), to think (cf. 39–44) and to be alive (cf. 11–16). But although Plotinus does mention the whole triad (being, intellection, life), he puts greater emphasis here on life in the context of previous sections and of what is to come (cf. VI.7.15–18). He underlines that the whole activity of Intellect is through life (διὰ ζωῆς) and through beings that are alive (διὰ ζῴων; cf. VI.7.13.44–46).[15] As

12 Moreover, in VI.7.14 Plotinus also adds that a forming principle (λόγος) derived from such homogeneous Intellect, or at least from Intellect that would not be everything, would not be able to form the whole of matter, such that some parts of sensible things would be nothing but unformed lumps of matter (ὄγκος). Since, however, this is not the case, Intellect must be everything.

13 Cf. Plotinus' claim in VI.7.3 that Plato indicates that there is no reasoning, i.e. succession in Intellect, by saying that generation is eternal.

14 Obviously, Movement, the Other and the Same are mentioned, but abiding and standing still (μένω in VI.7.13.33 and ἵστημι in 39–40), as well as being (cf. 40–41), substance (οὐσία; cf. 41) and actuality and activity (τὸ ἐνεργείᾳ and ἡ ἐνέργεια; cf. 51), also play a role here. One might be inclined to identify these with Rest and Being respectively.

15 Cf. my comment to Thaler's interpretation of these passages in footnote 9 of this chapter.

such, it is both one and many (cf. VI.7.14.11–12), because this is what it means to be an organism: i.e. to have "parts" that are connected to all of the other parts and to the whole. Plotinus once again illustrates this specific unity and multiplicity of Intellect by saying that it is held together by true love (ἀληθὴς φιλία; cf. VI.7.14.19–21). This love means "all things being one and never separated" (πάντα ἓν εἶναι καὶ μήποτε διακριθῆναι; VI.7.14.22).[16] But from where does the movement of Intellect through life and through beings that are alive originate (ἀπὸ τίνος) and to where is it directed (ἐπὶ τί ὡς ἔσχατον; cf. VI.7.13.8–9)?

6.3 The Presence of the Good in Intellect: The Top-Down Answer (VI.7.15–17)

The question needs to be slightly modified, however, since Intellect has its life (τὸ ζῆν) in the contemplation (θεωρέω) of all of its contents, i.e. the forms, and in being so, it is good (cf. VI.7.15.11–12). The search for the ἀρχή of this life is consequently a quest for the origin of contemplation and forms. But what does Intellect contemplate? It contemplates itself, as all of the forms, and it has the Good through them, because they are ἀγαθοειδής, i.e. they have the form of the Good (cf. VI.7.15.9–11), as Plato says (*Rep*. 509a3).[17] Moreover, all of these forms came to be in Intellect when it contemplated the nature (φύσις) of the Good. However, they did not come to Intellect from the Good, as if they had previously been there, but rather when Intellect looked to the Good (βλέποντα εἰς ἐκεῖνον, scil. ἀγαθόν; O.G.), it generated them itself, such that they are derived from the Good as from a principle (ἀρχή). In other words, Intellect received the power (δύναμις) to generate forms as its offspring and to be filled up with them.[18] In this sense, the Good gave Intellect what it itself did not have.[19] Every

16 The reference is to Empedocles, as Plotinus himself uncharacteristically makes clear (cf. DK 31 B 17 and B 26).

17 For a brief discussion of the term ἀγαθοειδής and its use in Plotinus, see Baierwaltes 1991 (pp. 243–244) and Montet 1999 (pp. 131–149). The answer that Intellect is ἀγαθοειδής because it has the good (ἀγαθόν) in the forms (ἐν τοῖς εἴδεσι) is, of course, a play on words (cf. Hadot 1988, p. 259).

18 An obvious allusion to the name of Intellect which Plotinus sometimes uses, i.e. Cronus (cf. V.8.12–13 and sections 3.4.9 and 3.5). The allusion was already noticed by Hadot (1988, p. 263) and Tornau (2011, com. ad VI.7.15.18–20).

19 On the topic of intelligible causality and the causality of the Good, see D'Ancona Costa 1996.

δύναμις was one in the Good, but Intellect was unable to hold it as one, breaking it up (συνθραύω) into many powers in order to be able to bear it part by part (cf. VI.7.15.11–23).[20] This "holding" was not an act of contemplation because Intellect was not yet Intellect, when it first looked to the Good. Rather, it was an unintellectual looking (ἔβλεπεν ἀνοήτως, scil. νοῦς; O.G.) that never sees the Good but lives towards the Good (ἔζη πρὸς αὐτό, scil. νοῦς πρὸς τὸ ἀγαθόν; O.G.), depends on it (ἀνήρτητο αὐτοῦ, scil. νοῦς τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ; O.G.) and turns to it (ἐπέστραπτο πρὸς αὐτό, scil. νοῦς πρὸς τὸ ἀγαθόν; O.G.). Or it is a movement around it (κίνησις περὶ ἐκεῖνο, scil. περὶ τὸ ἀγαθόν; O.G.), as Plotinus puts it a bit later, correcting himself (cf. VI.7.16.11–19). In any case, the multiplicity which came to be in Intellect was derived from the Good and, as such, it had its form: it was ἀγαθοειδές (cf. VI.7.15.23–24). As Hadot points out (1988, p. 265), this actually means that Intellect becomes fully constituted, i.e. unwound and, in this sense, many, paradoxically, by looking to the Good from which it receives limit. Therefore, not only its unity, but also its defined multiplicity is precisely what makes it ἀγαθοειδής.

Plotinus illustrates this point by saying that the unitary δύναμις of the Good became a richly varied good in Intellect (ἀγαθὸν ποικίλον), which may be imagined as a richly varied, living sphere, as an entity shining with living faces[21] or as a summit of pure souls illuminated by Intellect (cf. VI.7.15.23–33). In mentioning the richly varied, living sphere—along with the earlier implicit allusion to Cronus—Plotinus is probably referring to his discussion of intelligible beauty in V.8.12–13, where a similar analogy is presented. The reference is further underlined by the first sentence in section 16, where Plotinus suddenly appeals to us to leave "this manifold beauty" and "go on still darting upwards, leaving even this behind" (VI.7.16.1–3; cf. VI.9.4, VI.9.11, V.8.8, V.5.12). However, if leaving beauty means leaving this *richly varied good* (ἀγαθὸν ποικίλον), then beauty is this *richly varied good* which reflects the Good. If I were to press my point even further, I would add that since the Good is also the One, it is present in Intellect not only as *richly varied good*, but also as *richly varied one* (ἓν ποικίλον), i.e. as unity in multiplicity, which I have so far identified with beauty.

However that may be, Plotinus leads us once more to the very border of the Good and Intellect and wants to explore their relationship anew. He is at first interested in the generation of Intellect from the Good (cf. VI.7.16.3–4), because he wants to know what all of the forms "have in common that runs over them

20 I agree with Hadot (1988, pp. 265–266) that it was not, in fact, the power to generate forms that was broken, but rather the forms born in Intellect.

21 As Hadot (1988, p. 260) aptly comments, we are to imagine these faces as individual intellects contemplating each other.

all" (κοινὸν τὸ ἐπιθέον ἐπὶ πᾶσι πάντα ἔχει; VI.7.16.5–6). Moreover, he says that there are further common features of this kind that run over all of the contents of Intellect, such as being (τὸ ὄν), common life (ζωὴ κοινή) and so on. However, not all of these features are that "according to which and by which they [scil. the contents of Intellect; O.G.] are good" (καθ' ὅσον ἀγαθὰ καὶ δι' ὅτι ἀγαθά; VI.7.16.8–9). Unfortunately, Plotinus does not specify what these other features are, but since he mentions being, other μέγιστα γένη could be considered, and since he mentions life, intellection might be a further candidate. If we recall that Plotinus considers the one in Intellect to be a principle that is different from the highest kinds, while being present in all forms without being superordinate to them as a genus (cf. VI.2.9–11 and section 4.3), he might also have in mind this monad (cf. V.5.4–5 and section 5.1 and 5.3). If this is the case, however, would he also add in the multiple, i.e. the dyad? And should we also include number? Moreover, how do all of these potentially common features relate to each other and how do they differ? Is beauty to be considered one of them? Not much can be deduced from this passage. Let us keep these questions in mind for the time being, while following Plotinus' line of thought further. Nonetheless, there is one thing that can probably already be said at this stage, as Siegmann points out (1990, p. 77): Plotinus is looking for the common feature of the whole Intellect insofar as it is the *richly varied good*, which means that the one and the multiple probably cannot be the answer. The one does not account for Intellect being multiple, and the multiple for it being one. Rather, Plotinus is looking for something that makes Intellect ἀγαθοειδής, i.e. both one and many.

Consequently, Plotinus sketches the birth of Intellect from the Good. As already mentioned, he begins by elaborating on his claim from VI.7.15 that Intellect broke the unitary δύναμις of the Good into many by looking to the Good, and adds that this first looking towards it was unintellectual and never really reached as far as the Good (cf. above). Moreover, the Good is not only the donor of all forms, i.e. of being, but enables intellection itself, because intellection is possible only in the light of the Good (cf. VI.7.16.19–23). Plotinus refers to Plato's analogy of the sun from the *Republic* (509b), inferring from it that the Good is the cause of thinking and being thought, while it is itself neither being nor Intellect. Consequently, Intellect has a double source, as it were: 1) itself, as it was before being filled with forms, and 2) the Good, which gave it the power to be filled from within itself (cf. VI.7.15.14–18 and 16.23–36). By shining on it, the Good created the proper environment, so to speak, in which Intellect could see and its sight could be filled (cf. VI.7.16.23–33).

However, this description of the generation of Intellect still raises doubts (cf. Hadot 1988, p. 271). Where do the contents of Intellect come from if they are

neither in the unintellectual look—i.e. in what is filled—nor in the Good—i.e. in what fills it? Plotinus tries to answer this question by pointing out that the giver does not need to possess what he gives, because the giver is greater (μεῖζον) and stronger (κρεῖττον). Consequently, the Good—as the giver—transcends the gift—i.e. actuality and life. Moreover, Plotinus identifies this transcendence with being more beautiful (καλλίων) and worth more (τιμιώτερος) than actuality and life. He then calls the as yet unconstituted Intellect "unlimited life" (ἀόριστος ζωή) and says that life in Intellect is a trace of the Good (ἴχνος τι ἐκείνου, scil. τοῦ διδόντος; O.G.). It is not clear, however, whether he is referring here to the life which is inchoate Intellect or rather to the life of the fully constituted Intellect. In any case, this manifold and unbound life (ζωὴ πολλὴ καὶ ἄπειρος) looks to the Good (βλέπουσα πρὸς ἐκεῖνο) and immediately becomes delimited (ὅρος), receives limit (πέρας) and form (εἶδος) and is shaped (μορφόω) by the Good, but not from outside. Consequently, it becomes the life of a single, manifold thing (cf. VI.7.17.1–23).

However, the problem of how Intellect could receive something from the Good which does not have what it gives, recurs even in this formulation, since the Good itself is shapeless (cf. VI.7.17.17–18) and has no delimitation (cf. 15–16), no form (cf. 36) or, as we might infer, no limit. Nevertheless, in the constitution of Intellect, the multiplicity of its life (τὸ πολὺ τῆς ζωῆς) is that which accounts for the fact that it is many (πολλά), while the defining limit (ὅρος) causes its unity (ἕν). Furthermore, Plotinus identifies this defined and limited life with Intellect, and its being multiple with many intellects that are both the same and different. Summing up, he tells us that the life coming from the Good is all power (δύναμις πᾶσα), the sight coming from the Good is the power to become all things (δύναμις πάντων), Intellect is the actualised totality of all things (τὰ πάντα) and the Good "sits enthroned upon them, not that it may have a base but that it may base the 'Form' of the first 'Forms'" (ὁ δὲ ἐπικάθηται αὐτοῖς, οὐχ ἵνα ἱδρυθῇ, ἀλλ' ἵνα ἱδρύσῃ εἶδος εἰδῶν τῶν πρώτων; VI.7.17.34–36).

In order to understand these passages properly, let me first extract how Intellect is said to be derived from the Good here. It enabled the constitution of Intellect by: 1) emanating life (called πρώτη ἐνέργεια), which was an unintellectual looking towards the Good and life towards it; 2) enabling this sight to see as a result of emanating light; 3) limiting this living sight (enabled by the light) as all beings of which the Good is the source. As Siegmann (1990, pp. 86–87) points out, these three causes correspond to the triad life-intellection-being.

How, then, does this fit with the other descriptions of Intellect's genesis, especially those found in *Ennead* VI.6? To a certain extent, I have tried to answer this question already when discussing VI.6 (see section 5.3), where I pointed out

that the interaction between the monad and the dyad may be described from two perspectives: 1) from that of the inchoate Intellect—i.e. the indefinite dyad or unlimited life—as an attempt of it to attain the One, which is impossible; 2) from the opposing point of view, namely as a vague presence of the One in Intellect, in the form of an image or a trace. A similar structure is also attributed to the genesis of Intellect in VI.7. First, there is a looking towards the Good (cf. VI.7.15.11–14), which is later specified as being unintellectual and unable to reach as far as the Good (cf. VI.7.16.11–19). Thanks to the light emanated from the Good, this sight—which sees nothing—becomes true sight. However, it still does not see the Good directly (which is impossible), but only its reflection in itself. In doing so, this looking receives limit, and this limit comes to it both from itself and from the Good as from its principle (cf. VI.7.15.14–18). Finally, even here, Plotinus occasionally refers to the highest kinds (cf. VI.7.13.10–13, 24–28 and 16.6–8), but it is not explicitly stated how they fit into the process of generation.

This description is not so far removed from that of *Ennead* VI.6. One might speculate that if the unintellectual looking does not reach as far as the Good, while still becoming limited by it, but in such a way that this limit comes from Intellect itself, it is possible that this situation is enabled by the presence of the monad in Intellect. After all, this defining limit is what is said to be the cause of Intellect's unity (cf. VI.7.17.24–25). Moreover, the notion of unlimited life here is not far removed from the description of the activity of the indefinite dyad in the genesis of Intellect, especially if we take into account the fact that life is said to be in the dyad (cf. VI.7.8.27) and that Otherness—whose activity is once again described in a very similar fashion—is said to wake Intellect to life (cf. VI.7.13.11–12). But from where does the monad arrive in Intellect? In one sense, from the Good, because the monad would not come to be, if the unlimited life were not in the presence of the Good, since this life would not be able to turn to the Good in its desire to attain it. In another sense, however, it comes from unlimited life itself, because its limitation is a product of the conversion based on the desire of unlimited life for the Good (cf. Hadot 1988, pp. 271–278). Even on this optimistic synthetic interpretation, however, we can observe that the role of the light emanated from the Good is a new element, or at least receives particular emphasis in treatise VI.7.

If we were to look for inconsistencies, we ought to consider the central parts of VI.6, where the division of Intellect is described by means of the notion of number, or the power of number. Here, the correspondence with VI.7 becomes more blurry. How do they fit together, if, in fact, they do at all? Once again, one should distinguish different perspectives. In VI.7, Plotinus describes how the emanated, unlimited life became limited, whereas in treatise VI.6, by con-

trast, he describes how being, which was still one, became many by division (cf. VI.6.9.24–26).[22] It seems that both accounts are to be understood as a description of the same process, albeit from different perspectives: in VI.7 from the perspective of life, multiplicity or the dyad, and in VI.6 from the perspective of limit, unity or the monad. If so, we could perhaps point out Plotinus' own remark in V.5.1.8–11 that the monad comes into existence prior to the dyad. Consequently, if this "prior" signifies the ontological priority of the monad over the dyad, then the Platonic-Pythagorean perspective in treatise VI.6 might be said to be superior to the description found in VI.7.[23] Why, then, does Plotinus appeal to an inferior explanation here? Probably precisely because of the context. We should not forget that the question of the Good's presence in Intellect was raised by the description of Intellect as a complex living being which has its life in contemplation. Consequently, Plotinus started to look for the trace of the Good in Intellect in its genesis and, from this perspective, it is precisely life—i.e. the very first emanation from the Good—which is formless and shapeless in a way similar to the Good, the giver of all form and shape (cf. VI.7.32–33 and the comments of Hadot 1988, pp. 288–289).

As was also the case in treatise VI.6, it is difficult to determine how the highest kinds fit into this picture, especially because Plotinus sometimes uses Otherness and Movement to describe the generation of Intellect (cf. V.1.1.4, 6.53, II.4.5.29–34), while he also subsumes life under the genus of Movement

22 It ought to be noted however, as Bussanich points out, that unlimited life is also said to be one prior to being limited and formed, i.e. prior to becoming many (cf. VI.7.16.13–16 and Bussanich 1988, com. ad loc.). This might then, in a way, connect both perspectives, but it would do so, or so it seems to me, at a cost. The notion of "unlimited life" which is one becomes quite incomprehensible and the connection between life and the dyad is significantly obscured. Nevertheless, Plotinus does mention that the unlimited life is one. He does so, however, only in a question about one possible way of thinking about Intellect's constitution. Since this possibility is later rejected, the option that unlimited life could be one is probably rejected as well. Then again, in II.4.4 too, Plotinus describes intelligible matter as one. However, since the distinction between matter and form can be applied only imprecisely on the level of Intellect (see section 3.4.3), and since the claim that intelligible matter is one tries to qualify its use as imprecise by contrasting it with (non-intelligible) matter which is many (see section 3.4.6), I remain sceptical about the prospect of considering unlimited life to be one.

23 Cf. a similar comment by Bussanich (1988, comment ad VI.7.17.26–34), who supplements the ontological priority of limit with the chronological priority of unlimited life. It is not quite clear, however, what this chronological priority means, since there is no time. For this reason, I prefer to talk about genetic priority, which would refer to the necessary condition of what follows. In this sense, although limit ontologically preceeds unlimited life, the latter must already be there in order for the former to limit it.

(cf. VI.2.7.1–6). If we leave this difficulty aside,[24] however, it seems that they come into the picture as soon as limit and life—or monad and dyad—start to interact, i.e. as soon as we are able to talk about Being and beings in Intellect. All beings can be thought of only if we simultaneously posit μέγιστα γένη.

In conclusion: what have we learned about the ἀγαθοειδές in Intellect? What is the one thing that all of the contents of Intellect have in common, that runs over them all and that gives them the form of the Good? Is it their origin, such that they are ἀγαθοειδῆ as being derived from the Good? Plotinus presents this derivation as a three-phase process in which life is: 1) emanated as an unintellectual looking toward the Good, 2) able to see by the light of the Good and finally, 3) limited so that it becomes intellection directed at itself and, in seeing itself, Intellect unwinds and gives rise to the totality of beings. This answer is not, however, satisfactory. Although we may now have a clue about how Intellect derives from the Good, we still do not know how the Good is present in it (cf. Siegmann 1990, pp. 89–91).

6.4 The Presence of the Good in Intellect: The Bottom-Up Answer (VI.7.18–23)

In light of these considerations, the question must be taken up anew (cf. VI.7.18.1), with Plotinus reminding us that we are looking for a unique feature that is both common to all of the contents of the Intellect and, at the same time, intrinsic to each intelligible (cf. VI.7.18.9–12; and the comments of Siegmann 1990, p. 92). It does not suffice, in this sense, to say that each thing in Intellect is ἀγαθοειδές simply by being from the Good. Although this might be true, all of these things derive from the Good qua different and not qua the same

24 Cf. my comment on this topic in section 5.3, footnote 10. It seems to me that Plotinus is trying to make use of different inherited philosophical conceptions (μέγιστα γένη, the Good as μέγιστον μάθημα etc.) without worrying too much about their compatibility. He probably does so not out of a lack of precision, but because of the fact that all of this is but an attempt to express something which cannot, in the end, be expressed. It can only be experienced, when we become one with Intellect (in this case) or with the Good. Support for such an interpretation can be found in Plotinus, although in a different context. In VI.7.39, he interprets Plato's remark that being thinks and, for that reason, does not stand still in majesty, as suggesting that the Good does not think. According to Plotinus, Plato speaks in this manner "because he could not explain what he meant in any other way" (VI.7.39.33–34). Similarly, philosophers are said to express the fact that all activity, state and life requires something more only metaphorically, because "they cannot find an appropriate way of speaking about it" (VI.7.30.26).

(cf. VI.7.18.2–9). Is it then their being form (ἰδέα) that makes them ἀγαθοειδῆ? Or their being beautiful (κάλλος) or alive (ζωή) or Intellect (νοῦς; cf. VI.7.18.1–2 and 8)?

However, life is not good as such. Rather, it is good insofar as it comes from the Good, i.e. being the first and true life which has something of the Good in itself (cf. VI.7.18.16–23). The case of Intellect and Form is the same, such that they are good only as true Intellect and true Form (cf. VI.7.18.23–27), i.e. as Intellect and Form derived from the Good.[25] In this case, however, there are three candidates to explain why Intellect is ἀγαθοειδής—life, intellection and form. Nevertheless, each of them is good in a different sense: life, or the first activity (πρώτη ἐνέργεια; cf. VI.7.18.41),[26] is good as something brought into being by the Good (cf. 43), intellection, or what is defined following upon the first activity (cf. 42), as an ordered world which comes from the Good (cf. 43–44) and Form, or both of them taken together (cf. 42) as both of them together (cf. 44).[27] But are we to take these explanations for the good in life, intellection and form as constituent parts of the Intellect's mode of being ἀγαθοειδής? Or is there rather a succession of goods, such that life is good primarily, intellection secondarily and form tertiarily (cf. VI.7.18.14–16 and 26–41)? Moreover, have we really found the good in Intellect that we were looking for, i.e. that which is both common and intrinsic to all intelligibles? In a way we have, but we are still unable to provide another explanation (διὰ τί and κατὰ τί) for the goodness of all intelligibles beyond their origin in the Good (cf. VI.7.18.49–52).

Consequently, Plotinus starts his enquiry anew, but before we follow him, let me first summarise what we have learned so far in treatise VI.7 about life, because Plotinus will, to some extent, shift his attention elsewhere. We have encountered two meanings of life:[28]

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25 Siegmann (1990, p. 92) accurately illustrates this argument by comparing it to pictures which are good, not insofar as they are pictures, but rather insofar as they contain something essential of their paradigm.

26 As Hadot (1988, p. 274) points out, however, this first ἐνέργεια corresponds rather to the second or external ἐνέργεια on the double activity model. For the double activity model, see section 3.1.

27 Against Hadot (1988, cf. pp. 279–283), but with Siegmann (1990, cf. pp. 91–94), I think that τὸ μέν in VI.7.18.42 refers to life, the first τὸ δέ in line 43 to intellection, and the second τὸ δέ in line 43 to form. Although Hadot's reading makes good sense, I find it difficult to believe that Plotinus would suddenly change the order of life-intellection-form after repeating it in this sequence three times in the same section.

28 Cf. Ciapalo 1987, pp. 213–218, who distinguishes life as πρόοδος and as ἐπιστροφή, which corresponds to my observation. Nevertheless, Ciapalo does not comment on the fact that life as πρόοδος is called πρώτη ἐνέργεια by Plotinus rather than δύναμις, although I would agree

1) Life refers to the movement around the Good (cf. VI.7.16.11–19) and the first ἐνέργεια from it (cf. 18.41), which was manifold, unlimited and unintellectual (cf. 16.11–19 and 17.20). Life was, in this sense, a trace of the Good (cf. 13–14). Something from the Good entered into it (cf. 18.16–23) and it was, genetically speaking, the primary ἀγαθοειδής (cf. 18.14–16 and 26–41). However, when it became illuminated, it constituted itself as Intellect and became delimited and, as such, both one and many (cf. VI.7.17.13–23). Life as the first ἐνέργεια accounted for Intellect's multiplicity and the defining limit of its unity (cf. VI.7.17.24–25).
2) Life denoted the complete living being, namely Intellect, which contains all forms as individual living beings (cf. VI.7.11.15–18 and 12.1–19). Its life was said to consist in the contemplation of this seething life (cf. VI.7.15.11–12 and 12.24–25). I attempted to infer what this life of Intellect is like from Plotinus' description of what it means to be alive below the level of Intellect (cf. VI.7.11–12). For Intellect, to live means to be form itself, true being, true intellection and to contain all beings as intelligibles in itself and in identity with itself. Life qua this living being is consequently the paradigm of all organisms and organisation in general. Plotinus' later description of the life in Intellect connects it with a variegated movement of thinking, which comprises change and otherness (cf. VI.7.13.5–28), and which proceeds through life, i.e. through forms as living beings (cf. 13.44–46). In other words, life in this sense describes the fully constituted Intellect in its very activity of self-contemplation, which differentiates all forms and unites them again, as well as all of the contents of this Intellect.

However, these two meanings of life are probably not to be understood as two distinct conceptions of life. Rather, the same life in Intellect is described as the first moment in the genesis of Intellect and as a distinctive feature of the fully constituted Intellect. The latter sense is derived from the former and, in a way, completes it. To be life, in this sense, means both to be something begotten (which corresponds to the first meaning) and to be able to beget (which corresponds to the second meaning). In Plotinus, however, only a fully constituted activity is productive and begets what will further become a lower image of

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that life, in this sense, is in fact δύναμις of intellection. Also, I find Ciapalo's explanation of the relation of life to the μέγιστα γένη perhaps too quick. A more careful interpretation of the relationship between the highest kinds and life is to be found in Lo Casto 2017. However, not even Lo Casto gives a clear answer, perhaps because Plotinus does not express himself clearly enough to enable us to synthesise his various claims. An interesting account of life, in the sense of a complete living being, is also to be found in Nikulin 2002, pp. 152–157. However, not even Nikulin explicitly reflects on life as πρώτη ἐνέργεια in his book.

this fully constituted activity. We can see the similarity to beauty, which, in a way, depicts the same fully constituted activity, but rather as something derived from and referring to what is above than as itself begetting. However, where there is life, there is beauty (cf. Vassilopoulou 2014). As such, life is also mentioned by Plotinus as a common feature in Intellect, which connects it with other such predicates (cf. VI.7.16.5–9), like being and intellection, the highest kinds, and probably others as well, e.g. the monad and the dyad. Plotinus enigmatically comments on the relation of life to such predicates only in the case of the dyad, otherness and movement. Life is said to be in the dyad (cf. VI.7.8.27), to be awakened by otherness (cf. 13.11–12) and to be (at least one type of) movement (cf. 13.5–28, 16.11–19 and VI.2.7.1–6). Since the life of the fully constituted Intellect lies in its self-contemplation, which presupposes μέγιστα γένη, one might relate them to life precisely as highest kinds, i.e. as genera and principles which make it possible for Intellect to think all forms. On the other hand, their relation to life is likely more complicated, because some of Plotinus' aforementioned statements seem to imply that the highest kinds play a role in the actual birth of Intellect. Life as the first ἐνέργεια is, in a sense, a movement from the Good and around it. Also, since something other than the Good comes to be from the Good, there must be otherness present in it. Similarly, as something different from the Good, which is the One, this life is unlimited—i.e. the absolute otherness or a dyad. However, Plotinus is not particularly clear about the compatibility of these claims. Are we simply to identify life, the dyad, otherness and movement? Are we to identify them only relatively, because they capture the same phenomenon, but from different perspectives? Or do they rather capture different features of Intellect and relate to each other only loosely?

But let me return to the enquiry about the form of the Good in Intellect. Since the genetic answer represents merely one type of explanation, and a different one is sought, Plotinus suggests two basic ways of proceeding. Either we identify the good in Intellect with the object of the soul's desire (cf. VI.7.19.1–3) or we identify the Good with Intellect itself (cf. 20.1–13). Both ways are, of course, incorrect per se (cf. VI.7.19.5–6 and 20.16–19). In the first case, the good would become a mere aspect of soul (cf. VI.7.6–7 and the comments of Wiitala 2013, p. 658) and we would be unable to distinguish better and worse. If the good were to be understood according to each thing's excellence (ἀρετή), it would not be able to signify that which is prior to form and λόγος (cf. VI.7.19.9–13). In the second case, we would not be able to explain what is desired on the level of Intellect, i.e. the Good (cf. VI.7.20.19–22). This option is also incorrect, because we do not desire life (ζωή), eternal existence (τὸ ἀεὶ εἶναι) and activity (τὸ ἐνεργεῖν) as Intellect. Rather, we desire all of them as something good derived from the Good (cf. VI.7.20.22–24). However unsatisfactory these

attempts might seem, they show us that the good in Intellect cannot simply be either what is desired or what is simply thought (cf. Siegmann 1990, p. 97).

Hence, Plotinus asks once again what is the one common element that makes each and every thing in Intellect good, such that they have the form of good (cf. VI.7.21.1–2). This time, however, he dares to answer (τολμάω). Intellect and its life have the form of the Good as the first activity from the Good (ἐκ τἀγαθοῦ ἐνέργεια), in the case of life, and as this determinate activity (ὁρισθεῖσα ἐνέργεια; cf. VI.7.21.2–6) in the case of Intellect. They are themselves full of glory (ἀγλαΐα), but this does not suffice to attract the soul (cf. VI.7.21.6–9). They attract it as "good-looking" or as related to the Good (οἰκεῖα),[29] such that they awaken intense love (ἔρως σύντονος) in the soul not simply as themselves, but as receiving something more from the Good (cf. VI.7.21.12–13). Plotinus illustrates this enigmatic claim by comparing the intelligibles to sensible objects, which are in need of another light for their colour to be seen, although they themselves possess light. Similarly, the intelligibles themselves possess much light, but need the light of the Good to be seen in their glory (cf. VI.7.21.15–17). As Siegmann points out (1990, pp. 99–101), the analogy is extremely appropriate, since light comes from something else, but enables the illuminated thing to show its own colour, which is itself of a luminous nature, i.e. akin to light. Moreover, light is precisely what is one and the same everywhere, but still allows everything illuminated to appear different. From a bottom-up perspective, this simile is, in other words, precisely what brings us to the problem of how Intellect is ἀγαθοειδής, because we were looking for a common feature running through all of the intelligibles and the whole Intellect, according to which and through which they are all good (cf. VI.7.16.5–6 and 9). Moreover, this common feature must be intrinsic to each thing (cf. VI.7.18.9–12 and 21.1–2).[30] The new clue we are given here is the more explicit claim that this form of the Good in Intellect is something extra, something in addition to Intellect given by the Good, which,

29 This may be read as an allusion to Plato's *Lysis* 159e–223a.

30 Hadot (1988, pp. 286–287) correctly summarises the features of the explanation sought for Intellect's being ἀγαθοειδής. However, he does not clearly distinguish the top-down perspective from the bottom-up one. In different terms—genetic and phenomenological—such a reading is also advocated by Siegmann (1990, pp. 70–107). Hadot rather talks of a shift in perspective from the genesis of Intellect to the point of view of the soul discovering Intellect and the Good. In this sense, he is close to the bottom-up perspective, but despite this shift in perspective, he still advocates for a single explanation for Intellect's having the form of good: i.e. life as the first ἐνέργεια. Consequently, he is unable to distinguish between life, beauty and light and identifies them, which I think obscures important distinctions and forces him to interpret the language of the *Phaedrus* used in VI.7.22 in a considerably un-Platonic manner (cf. Hadot 1988, pp. 289–293).

however, also means that it is something which allows us to see to the Good as it were, which opens our eyes to it (cf. Siegmann 1990, pp. 98–99).

What, then, does this light of the Good show? What is this glory which is seen only in the light of the Good, this colour of all intelligibles which attracts soul and through which the Good is manifest in Intellect? Plotinus' answer is indirect: it is the light (φῶς) of the Good which moves us (κινεῖται) to the forms and makes us long (γλίχομαι) for the light which plays upon them (ἐπιθέοντος), causing us to delight in it (εὐφραίνεται), just as what we desire in bodies is not the underlying material substrate (ὑποκείμενον), but the beauty imaged upon them (ἐμφαντάζομαι; cf. VI.7.22.1–5). On this analogy, beauty corresponds to the light playing upon the forms, which are not the object of the soul's erotic desire, but account here for the ὑποκείμενον. Plotinus' expression seems to suggest that what the light of the Good allows us to see—i.e. the colour of the forms, which is itself luminous—is beauty.[31] It is interesting to note, however, that he does not say this directly, concluding instead that this light which arouses desire is grace (χάρις). It is through grace that the Good colours the forms (ἐπιχρώννυμι) and makes them ἀγαθοειδῆ (cf. cf. VI.7.22.5–8 and 33). Consequently, we can conceptually distinguish two possible states of Intellect: one unilluminated, the other illuminated. It is worth noticing that Plotinus explicitly calls Intellect beautiful only in the former case (cf. VI.7.22.10–11 and 21–23), where its beauty is said to be inactive (ἀργός), the soul's interest is not aroused (νωθής) and it does not move (cf. VI.7.22.10–14). Nevertheless, what it sees is still something beautiful and majestic (καλὰ μὲν καὶ σεμνά; cf. VI.7.22.21–23). In the latter case, Plotinus rather talks about warmth emanating from the Good (θερμασία) or its grace (χάρις), which strengthen the soul (ῥώννυταί), awaken it (ἐγείρεται), so that it becomes winged (πτεροῦται), and naturally (φύσει) raise it up both to Intellect, which attracts it, and to what is greater (μεῖζον). When this happens, the soul remembers and is lifted up by the giver of love (cf. VI.7.22.14–25). Clearly, the impact of grace on the soul is described in the language of Plato's *Phaedrus* (246a–252c).[32] However, Plato's image of a soul in love is, at the same time, used in quite an unusual way: the description of the amazement of soul when it sees true beauty, its falling flat on its back (*Phdr.* 254b8), is used rather to express its lack of interest and boredom, as it were, when encountering unilluminated Intellect (cf. VI.7.22.10–14).

31 This interpretation is held by Siegmann (1990, pp. 101–105) and Tornau (2011, com. ad VI.7.24.1–4), and is also implied in the interpretations of Halfwassen (2003), Narbonne (2002) and Beierwaltes (2011, p. 347).

32 For more exact references to the *Phaedrus* see Tornau 2011, com. ad VI.7.22.7–17.

The fact that Plotinus does not use the word "beauty" to denote the illuminated Intellect can be interpreted in one of two ways: either it is insignificant, and we are free to add in the term "beauty", or Plotinus wants to reserve the notion of beauty for unilluminated Intellect and purposefully avoids mentioning it here. It is quite difficult to decided between these options, because there are good reasons for both positions. The first claim—i.e. it is insignificant that Plotinus does not use the term beauty for illuminated Intellect—could be supported by the following considerations: 1) such an understanding is suggested by the context of the whole section; 2) there are repeated references to Plato's *Phaedrus*; 3) other passages on beauty from different treatises provide evidence for this view. On the other hand, one could try to undermine these points, arguing that the references to the *Phaedrus* are not used properly (cf. the soul's boredom above and the interpretation of Hadot 1988, pp. 292–293) and that there are also other passages in the *Enneads* which seem to suggest the insignificance of the beauty of the Intellect as compared to the Good (cf. VI.9.4 and 11, V.8.8, V.5.12 and VI.7.32–33). Most important, however, one might object that it is unwise to risk overlooking an important distinction between beauty and something more, perhaps grace. This consideration provides strong support for the other interpretation, according to which Plotinus intentionally avoids the term beauty here, in order to emphasise the substantial contribution made by the Good to beauty, namely the fact that without the Good, there is no (erotic) longing. Evidence for this claim can be found in Plato's *Symposium* (204d–206a) and, of course, in I.6.7. Nonetheless, we might object that 1) Plato does not avoid the notion of beauty in his description of love and it is precisely through beauty that the desire for good is fulfilled, by procreating and giving birth in the beautiful (cf. *Symp*. 206e), 2) avoiding the term beauty in relation to illuminated Intellect seems to contradict Plotinus' standard claims about beauty in other *Enneads* and 3) even in VI.7.22, this position represents, to a certain extent, a counterintuitive reading.

I would therefore suggest adopting an intermediary position, according to which Plotinus does indeed avoid the term beauty here in order to emphasise the substantial contribution of the Good to beauty. This does not mean, however, that on a different occasion, he would not call the illuminated Intellect beautiful. The crucial point here is once again the context of the claim: to find that which is given to Intellect by the Good as something, so to speak, extra and which makes it ἀγαθοειδής. Therefore, in this context, it makes sense that Plotinus would try to accentuate this added value.

The examples Plotinus uses to illustrate his point can be read as supporting this interpretation, because they are oriented precisely at highlighting this "something extra" added by illumination. The first example is that of a beauti-

ful face, which does not catch the eye if there is no grace (χάρις) on top of its beauty (cf. VI.7.22.23–25). The second example relates to symmetry in the sensible world, which is beautiful only if beauty shines upon it (cf. VI.7.22.25–27).[33] The third example is the well-known case of the still-fresh face of a corpse in contrast to that of a living person (cf. VI.7.22.27–29). The fourth example is that of a more lifelike statue as opposed to a more symmetrical one (cf. VI.7.22.29–31). Finally, the last example compares a beautiful statue with an ugly living man, who is more beautiful because he has soul, which shares in what it means to be ἀγαθοειδής (cf. VI.7.22.31–36). As can be seen, all of these examples show that there is something added to sensible things, which must be granted to them from above, i.e. beauty. Similarly, there is something extra, grace, which needs to be added to the beauty of the unilluminated Intellect.

These examples, however, seem to call into question my choice of an intermediary position. The second example, involving symmetry, seems, at first sight at least, to reopen the question of the beauty of illuminated Intellect, because it is beauty that shines on symmetry. Consequently, illuminated Intellect could be said to be beautiful *per analogiam*. However, as Plotinus explicitly states, we are talking about things here below (ἐνταῦθα), whereas, in my interpretation, the point of the passage under discussion (VI.7.22) was to highlight the uniqueness of the illumination by the Good in the case of Intellect, as opposed to all other kinds of illumination below. Therefore, this would provide relatively weak support for claiming that the illuminated Intellect is beautiful, although along with all of the other reasons mentioned above (the context of the passage, references to the *Phaedrus* and the claims of other treatises), it is difficult to simply dismiss this option.

Then again, the third example, which contrasts a living face with that of a corpse might be more persuasive. It is an example that we have already encountered in connection with beauty—or rather ugliness.[34] Moreover in the last two examples, beauty is predicated of both the lifelike statue and the symmetrical one, and again of the statue and the ugly living man. Hence, in the end, why should we refrain from saying that illuminated Intellect is beautiful? Because the risk that we might miss an important distinction by simply adding in the

33 Siegmann (1990, p. 104) infers from this that beauty should always break the rule (i.e. symmetry). This is an incorrect deduction from the example. It also contradicts what Plotinus says about beauty and symmetry (cf. 1.6.1 and section 2.2). Moreover, it makes no sense in the case of simple beautiful objects (like colour, light or gold) which Plotinus uses to attack the symmetry theory.

34 We have encountered Plotinus talking about a corpse with respect to ugliness in section 3.4.6 when discussing *Ennead* II.4.5.18 (hereto cf. II.4.16.3–16 and II.9.17.18–21, and indirectly also V.1.2.17–28).

term "beauty" to VI.7.22 still seems too high to me. Let me rather deepen or refine my intermediary position.

As we have seen in the previous discussion of VI.2.17–18 (cf. part 4.1.5), the idea that beauty might be identified with something which, as it were, shines upon the form, i.e. with the light of the Good, is present in Plotinus' thought. Of course, VI.2[43] was written after VI.7[38]. Nevertheless, VI.2 seems to summarise various important motifs for Plotinus' understanding of beauty, and many of these are to be found already in I.6[1], such as the identification of beauty with the Good as καλλονή, with being, and with what affects all who see it and what awakens motion in them. However, the way in which Plotinus usually presents beauty—i.e. as unity in multiplicity of the Intellect—is now, in VI.7.22, inappropriate for capturing this "something extra" that needs to be added to unilluminated Intellect, which is already one-many. Beauty as a unified multiplicity is rather intrinsic to Intellect and is, consequently, not suitable for depicting this "something extra". Therefore, I would once again suggest maintaining the position that Plotinus is deliberately avoiding this term here and rather introduces a deeper concept of beauty.

According to this conception, beauty would be the manifestation of the Good in Intellect, that which makes Intellect ἀγαθοειδής or good-looking. Plotinus might, in this sense, find support in Plato's *Philebus* (64e) as well, where the power of the good is said to have taken refuge in the nature of the beautiful. Intellect might consequently be said to be ἀγαθοειδής from two perspectives, a top-down one and a bottom-up one. From the first perspective, Intellect is ἀγαθοειδής qua derived from the Good and this derivation has different phases: the emanation of life as πρώτη ἐνέργεια, the formation of this life into intellection by conversion and its becoming constituted as being. The triad life/intellection/being is used by Plotinus to describe Intellect's genesis and reflects a genetic hierarchy of what it means to be ἀγαθοειδής. Intellect has the form of the Good as life, intellection and being. This answer is correct insofar as we are looking for a common feature that runs through all of the intelligibles, making them ἀγαθοειδής insofar as they are different (cf. VI.7.18.2–9).

But what makes them ἀγαθοειδής also insofar as they are the same? This is where the bottom-up perspective enters the discussion. From this perspective, the question is rather the following: how is this intelligent life, which is being—i.e. life formed by itself and simultaneously by the Good in the light of the Good—ἀγαθοειδής? The answer is: insofar as it is beautiful. Consequently, the primary beauty in Intellect is the contemplating life, which is being, i.e. a unity in multiplicity *illuminated by the Good*. This intimate connection with the Good is precisely what makes beauty the object of desire, a desire which is, in fact, always a desire for the Good through beauty or in beauty, as Plato would

put it (cf. *Symp*. 206a–e). Both the top-down perspective—which identifies life (intellection and being) as the reason for the fact that Intellect is ἀγαθοειδής—and the bottom-up answer—which concludes that the common feature which runs through everything in Intellect (including its life, intellection and being), is beauty *referring back to its source*[35]—thus establishes the relation of Intellect and the Good vertically: life in a descending direction and beauty in an ascending one. Being and the highest kinds are, by contrast, used rather for a "horizontal" description of the inner differentiation of Intellect, although I use quotation marks here because there is indeed a vertical differentiation of Intellect in the sense of the establishment of genera and species. Nevertheless, it is still a "horizontal" differentiation insofar as it takes place inside Intellect, so to speak.

In conclusion, this more profound conception of beauty does not involve a rejection of the earlier one—beauty as unity in multiplicity—but places it into a new, broader perspective, which enriches it in two ways. First, it better captures the referential character of beauty to the Good because it presents it as the way in which the Good itself can be seen in Intellect as a unique feature common to everything in Intellect which has a different status than the highest kinds. Second, since life accounts for the multiplicity of Intellect and is genetically primarily ἀγαθοειδής, the enriching role of multiplicity for Intellect is once again underlined here. This has consequences for multiplicity in beauty, as well. The explanation of Intellect's beauty in v.8.4 and v.8.8 (cf. sections 3.4.6 and 3.5) still holds: beauty is that which lies between what is more than beautiful and what is deficiently beautiful. Beauty in Intellect is everywhere in beauty, because illuminated beauty was identified as a common feature that runs through all of the intelligibles and the whole of Intellect, and through which everything is ἀγαθοειδής, both insofar as it is the same and insofar as it is different.

Moreover, in the description of Intellect's genesis, the inchoate Intellect became a defined multiplicity when it was enabled by the Good to see, such that not only its limit, but also this multiplicity, is what makes it ἀγαθοειδής. There is beauty in Intellect only when the latter is constituted, and therefore this beauty emerges first from the bottom-up perspective. Since, however, the life of Intellect, its intellection and their combination, being, are ἀγαθοειδής, both its multiplicity and its unity are beautiful when combined. Thus, whereas from the top-down perspective, there is a descending hierarchy of derivation

35 Even Hadot (1988, p. 284) admits that there is a new perspective in play and a new solution to the problem of ἀγαθοειδής. According to him, these passages show that the Intellect as ἀγαθοειδής refers to the Good.

from the Good and, in this sense, also of the use of ἀγαθοειδής with respect to life, intellection and being, from the bottom-up perspective, there is a countervailing ascending hierarchy. Multiplicity in Intellect is enriching for its beauty qua seething with life, but this multiplicity is still subordinate to the role of limit and unity. Their combination, beauty itself, is that in which the Good manifests itself in Intellect and through which it attracts everything to itself.

How, then, can this still be considered an intermediary position? The proposed interpretation enables us to be sensitive to what is new in VI.7.22, i.e. it allows us to suppose that Plotinus intentionally avoids using the term beauty for illuminated Intellect, while not dismissing the possibility of using the term beauty for illuminated Intellect, even if this beauty must be correctly reinterpreted.

However, there seems to be another serious problem with this interpretation, or rather with the very text of treatise VI.7. The Good seems to have more than one external activity: it emanates life, "then" it emanates limit to bind the multiplicity of life, and "then" it allows these two to interact by emanating light. Even if we abstract from the idea of a temporal sequence of events—which there is not, of course—we are left with life, limit and light as three different emanations from the Good. As was already noted by Emilsson both in the case of pre-Intellect, or the subject of thinking (= life), and in that of imbuing, or the object of thinking (= limit), "there is every reason to suppose that there is just one external act of the One, which somehow contains both a subject and object aspect" (Emilsson 1999, p. 287, cf. also Emilsson 2017, pp. 94–100). Similarly, there is every reason to suppose that there is just one external act of the Good, which somehow contains life, limit and light. But how can this be so? Is everything life because life is the first ἐνέργεια from the Good? No, because life would not only need to be manifold and unbound, but also one and bound, or rather "the bind", since it would need to bind itself. That said, this role is attributed in treatise VI.7 to limit, as something different from life. Are life and light, at least, the same, as Hadot tends to say (cf. 1988, pp. 290–291; and also Vassilopoulou 2014)? Our answer must once again be negative, because Plotinus distinguishes between the top-down and bottom-up perspective by pointing out that the former explains how everything is ἀγαθοειδής insofar as it is different, whereas the latter does so insofar as it is the same. Or is it rather that all three (i.e. life, limit and light) coincide with limit? This cannot be the case, because this limit would have nothing to bind, such that there would be no multiplicity. Are they, then, rather all light, as that which manifests the Good in Intellect? One could perhaps say so insofar as both life and limit emanate from the Good. I propose therefore to posit one external activity of the Good, which is simultaneously life (or multiplicity or the dyad) and limit (or unity

or the monad). These two always already interact with one another. Moreover, this external activity comprises the fact that life and limit come from the Good (as light does) and in this sense they become its manifestation (beauty).[36] Plotinus' description of the generation of Intellect is to a certain extent inaccurate, since every genesis is a process which presupposes some sort of sequence: first, there is something to be formed, then it is formed and, as such, it becomes visible qua similar to its paradigm. However, as Plotinus himself repeatedly points out, the birth of Intellect is to be understood atemporally, i.e. as comprising all of its moments simultaneously.

Moreover, we have already noticed that the reason for Intellect's being ἀγαθοειδής must be a common feature of the whole richly varied Intellect, such that the one and the multiple alone could not be the answer. What is ἀγαθοειδής is both one and many (cf. section 6.3). It should come as no surprise that defined multiplicity is derived from the Good, because Intellect became many precisely by looking to the Good from which it received limit (cf. section 6.3). The point of the whole top-down and bottom-up answer would therefore be that the Good emanates interacting unity (i.e. limit, the monad) and multiplicity (i.e. life, the dyad), which is to say beauty, as it is used with respect to non-illuminated Intellect. Since, however, these come from the Good, this beauty becomes illuminated and refers to the Good, i.e. it becomes grace or beauty in the more profound sense. The addition of light highlights the importance of the referential character of beauty and the fact that there is something more beyond unity in multiplicity, through which the good-looking (ἀγαθοειδής) Intellect refers to the Good.

This point will, however, be made even more explicitly in VI.7.32–33. We should therefore advance in our analysis of treatise VI.7, which from this point on starts to focus on the Good itself. The Good, which emanates Intellect and leaves a trace of itself in it, is, at the same time, that which attracts everything to itself. The Good, which is itself absolutely self-sufficient and above which there is nothing superior, is the condition of all that is, of all of the intermediate goods, and there is a step by step decrease in resemblance to the Good

36 In the same vein, Nikulin (1998b) talks of Intellect as being simultaneously otherness and sameness (with reference to V.3.15.40) and stable movement (with reference to VI.9.5.14–15). The unity of thinking and thought as light is also advocated by Beierwaltes (1961, p. 359) who also notices that light not only allows everything else to be seen, but is itself manifest through it (p. 349). This idea is to be found, of course, already in Plato (cf. *Rep*. 507b–509c) where the light of the sun is said to account for the ability to see and to be seen by the eye, and the light of the Good for the power of knowing and for the truth (cf. Beierwaltes 1961, p. 350). Plotinus in fact refers to these passages in VI.7.16.21–31 (see section 6.3 and the commentary of Smith 2012, pp. 16–19).

down to that which has no share in it, i.e. evil. The fact that there is evil is, in this sense, a proof of the Good, because without the Good, everything would be indifferent. The Good is the giver of Intellect and life, and through them of soul and everything that has a share in λόγος, intellection (νοῦς) and life (ζωή). This process is not a one-time creation, but a constant maintenance of thinking in thinking, of being in being, of life in life and of inspiring (ἐμπνέω) thinking, life and being (cf. VI.7.23.1–25).

6.5 Alternative Notions of the Good and the True Meaning of Plato's Doctrine (VI.7.24–30)

Since the question about the form of the Good in Intellect presupposes that there is the Good, from which Intellect is born as life, intellection and being (the top-down perspective) and which presents itself in Intellect as beauty (the bottom-up perspective), it is necessary to explain how we are to understand this Good. Plotinus presents a number of serious questions about the Good which draw on the previous philosophical tradition and obviously allude to some alternative doctrines about what is to be considered good:[37]

1) The first dilemma (cf. Siegmann 1990, pp. 112–116, and Hadot 1988, pp. 296 and 301–303)—consisting of two opposing possibilities for relating the good and desire—asks whether the former has its own nature (φύσις; VI.7.24.8) which attracts our desire, or whether, on the contrary, the latter defines what the good is (cf. VI.7.24.4–10). Plotinus' answer is, of course, that the good is desirable because it is good and not vice versa (cf. VI.7.25.17–18 and 27.26–27). The contrary answer would make the good a relative notion, i.e. relative to a subject feeling pleasure. Consequently, Plotinus' answer might be interpreted as a rejection of the Sophistic concept of the good (cf. Anonymous, *Δισσοὶ Λόγοι* and Siegmann 1990, p. 113).

2) Similarly, the second dilemma (cf. Siegmann 1990, pp. 112–113 and 117–120, and Hadot 1988, pp. 296 and 303–305) draws an opposition between pleasure derived from the good and something else received from it. Do we desire the good because of the former, as perhaps Epicurus would say (cf. DL 10.127–130), or the latter? And if it is because of the former, why do we find pleasure in this and not in something else? And if it is because of the latter, what do we acquire from the good (cf. VI.7.24.10–13)? Plotinus answers again quite clearly that pleasure, since it is a πάθος (cf. VI.7.26.17), is not the reason why

37 For a general outline of ancient ethics, see Annas 1992.

we desire the good. Pleasure is rather an epiphenomenon of the acquisition of the good (cf. VI.7.27.27 and Siegmann 1990, p. 119) which is, by definition, self-sufficient (cf. VI.7.26.14, 34.21–38 and *Phileb.* 20c–e and 22b). Pleasure, by contrast, requires the constant input of new arousals, and we feel pleasure only in the presence of something that arouses us (cf. VI.7.26.14–16).[38] When the soul acquires the good, it knows, because it stops looking for anything else (μὴ ἄλλο ζητῇ), does not regret (ἀμετανόητος), is filled (πεπληρῶσθαι αὐτῷ γίγνηται) and remains with the good (ἐπ' ἐκείνου μένῃ; cf, VI.7.26.1–2 and 12–14). Moreover, since this good does not come to the soul from something external—as in the case of a corpse, for which the good is burial—it itself becomes something better (βέλτιόν τι γίνηται; cf. VI.7.26.12), i.e. more ἀγαθοειδής (cf. Hadot 1988, p. 304). This improvement is enabled by the fact that we do indeed receive something from the good (cf. VI.7.25.28–29). There is a hierarchy of goods, form for matter, virtue for soul and the Good for Intellect (cf. VI.7.25.25–28), and each being receives something from that which is above it (cf. VI.7.25.18–24). Inanimate objects receive order (τάξις) and arrangement (κόσμος), while living beings additionally receive life (ζωή), rational beings thought (φρονεῖν) and living well (ζῆν εὖ) and Intellect actuality (ἐνέργεια) and light (φῶς; cf. VI.7.25.29–33). Moreover, since there is a hierarchy of goods derived from the Good, and since the Good manifests itself in what is lesser as beauty, this hierarchy is, in fact, the *scala amoris*.

3) The hierarchic perspective is also important for the third question (cf. Siegmann 1990, pp. 120–123, and Hadot 1988, pp. 305–306): is the good to be understood as what is proper to everything or one's own (οἰκεῖον), as the Stoics advocate (cf. VI.7.24.13–14 and SVF I.197, III.178, III.183)? It seems to me that Plotinus' answer is ambivalent. On the one hand, he rejects the applicability of the concept of οἰκεῖον because the good for each thing lies in what is superior, whereas what is its own is on the same level as it (cf. VI.7.27.3–9). On the other hand, those who desire this good, which is superior to them, direct themselves toward it as toward their own potentiality, because not possessing it actually is precisely what arouses their desire (cf. VI.7.27.8–17). In this sense, after they have reached this superior good and actualised it in themselves, it is present as something which is their own. This might be the reason why Plotinus, in a different context, does admit that the good is οἰκεῖον (cf. VI.5.1). Then again, as Siegmann points out (1990, p. 121), speaking this way is imprecise, because as

38 Plotinus even strengthens his argument here by using an interesting, *Matrix*-like mind experiment, in which we are able to enjoy erotic pleasure without the desired person or feel the joy from tasty food without actually eating it. We would not accept such pleasures, Plotinus claims, prior to Lana and Lilly Wachowski (cf. VI.7.26.20–24).

soon as we have reached our good, we discover that this good has withdrawn to the next highest level. Consequently, it is not the good that participates in the οἰκεῖον, but vice versa (Hadot, 1988, p. 306).

4) However, this raises a further series of questions (cf. Siegmann 1990, pp. 123–127 and Hadot 1988, pp. 307–311): is the good good for itself or for another, and if for another, what is it, if it is not good, and is there in fact any such nature for which there is no good (cf. VI.7.24.14–17)? Plotinus' answer is again somewhat complicated. Every good is good for itself and since the lesser is potentially that which is its own good (the superior), the good is good also for the lesser through being good for itself (cf. VI.7.27.13–18). Furthermore, Plotinus specifies here what it means to be good for itself, namely to be some part of the good (τις ἀγαθοῦ μοῖρα; VI.7.27.18). Then again, there is an exception to this, namely the Good itself, which cannot be good for itself, because this expression presupposes a distinction in the Good between its being the Good and it itself for which it is the good. Since, however, there is no such distinction in the Good, it cannot be good for itself "as if it would have as regards itself to get out of its own nature and not be joyful with itself as good" (VI.7.27.21–23, transl. modified). As can be seen from this formulation, the denial of being good for itself in the case of the Good is not a simple rejection. Plotinus rather posits more than identity of the Good with itself, namely "being joyful with itself" (ἀγαπάω). Nevertheless, on the standard way of speaking, the Good is good only for others (cf. also VI.7.41.28–29), i.e. for the lesser. But does this mean also for what is lowest, i.e. matter, which is evil (cf. VI.7.28.1–4)? Plotinus tries to answer this question in two steps. First, he points out that the problem appears only from one perspective, namely from that of the matter: for how could it desire form, i.e. its own destruction (cf. VI.7.28.4–6)? However, Plotinus reminds us, we might turn the problem on its head and formulate the desire of matter—which is evil and non-being—as a desire for form, i.e. for being (cf. VI.7.28.6–7). Consequently, matter does not desire its own destruction, because it is not a being, and in this sense cannot be destroyed. At the same time, insofar as the desire for the good can be formulated in terms of a desire for what a thing is potentially, then matter cannot desire the good, because it is nothing potentially, but only absolute privation.[39] Therefore, the question still stands, and Plotinus offers a second, implicit answer, expressed in the form of rhetorical questions. Matter as pure evil does not desire. Only matter which has perception (αἴσθησις) desires (cf. VI.7.28.8–10). However, this matter is not matter as such, but only

39 For matter as absolute privation, see II.4.16. However, besides other things, Plotinus also says here that matter is in need, or, in fact, that it is need itself (πενία) which lacks everything.

something that has become bad, i.e. something originally good (cf. VI.7.28.11–20). Forms are present in matter rather as opinions or mental pictures in soul, i.e. matter and form do not mix or interact in any fashion that would make it possible to say that the one gets anything from the other (cf. III.6.15).

However that may be, the whole polemic about the desire of matter is probably directed against Aristotle (cf. *Phys*. 192a19, *Met*. 1075a28) and the Gnostics (cf. Siegmann 1990, p. 126), and Plotinus will be able to draw some more important characteristics of the Good from it later. Since he has established the opposition between matter as evil and form as good and since there is a hierarchy of goods, he is able to say that the higher the ascent, the more there is form. Consequently, it would seem, the Good should be form itself. However, Plotinus has a different conception in mind. The Good, which has never come anywhere close to matter, has instead taken refuge in its formless nature (ἀνείδεος φύσιν), because it is even beyond the first form and is the giver of the first form (cf. VI.7.28.27–29). Moreover, since pleasure is caused by the acquisition of good, it is, as such, a symptom of the previous privation of it (cf. VI.7.29.10). However, this privation diminishes in the ascent, because the higher we go, the more there is form and thus, simultaneously, the less need we find. In this sense, there is a continuous decrease in pleasure in the ascent and when united with the Good, we no longer feel pleasure, because we are beyond pleasure (cf. VI.7.29.1–10).[40]

5) Plotinus then turns to a further question (cf. Siegmann 1990, pp. 129–132 and Hadot 1988, pp. 314–316) he considers particularly weighty, because it is the question of a troublesome or peevish (δυσχεραντικός) person. As Siegmann points out (1990, p. 129, footnote 136), such a person is described in Plato's *Philebus* (44b–c), where it is said that he should be taken seriously as someone who divines the truth. This Cynic considers the debate about the Good to be just "pompous language up and down and all around" (VI.7.24.18–20), does not understand what good someone who thinks could acquire from the contemplation of forms (cf. VI.7.24.21–22), because he looks for the good in some form of property (ἐν χρήμασιν; cf. VI.7.29.16–17), namely his own, such that in the end he despises everything and does not see the difference between existence and non-existence unless "one makes selfish love the reason for all this" (εἰ μή τις τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸν φιλίαν αἰτίαν τούτων θεῖτο; VI.7.24.27–28, transl. modified). Plotinus begins his response to this person by saying that he too posits something good which directs his claims, probably himself in some sense, but since he does

40 These parts (VI.7.29.1–10) should be also read as a brief discussion of Aristotle's claim that we would choose seeing, remembering, knowing and possessing virtues even if they were not accompanied by pleasure (cf. *EN* 1174a).

not understand what Plotinus is saying about the good, he cannot simply deny it. In order to explain his position, Plotinus tries to show this Cynic what is evil according to common sense: lack of intelligence (ἄνοια). Moreover, he brings to his attention that in despising being and life, he actually contradicts all experience and implicitly claims that there is merely earthly intelligence, being and life, whereas, in fact, there is also true intelligence, being and life in Intellect (cf. VI.7.29.17–32). But what is so prophetic about the claims of this Cynic? In despising everything, he prophesies the radical worthlessness of everything as compared to the Good (cf. Siegmann 1990, p. 131), he "has a prophetic intuition of what is above Intellect" (VI.7.29.21–22).

6) The last dilemma (cf. Siegmann 1990, pp. 132–141 and Hadot 1988, pp. 316–319) deals with the heritage of Plato and Aristotle and their conceptions of the good and Intellect. How could Plotinus' conception be consistent with *Philebus* (61b–c), where the good is said to be a mixture of intellect and pleasure? In addressing this difficulty, Plotinus proposes two ways of interpreting this mixture. Either the good is intellect and pleasure is mixed with it, in the sense of an experience of soul when possessing it (cf. *EN* 1174b), or the good is a single thing made up of intellect and pleasure (cf. VI.7.30.4–12). Plotinus seems to choose the former interpretation (cf. VI.7.30.14–18), but in a modified version. He avoids using the word pleasure—which he considers to be a metaphorical attempt to express something more or extra that runs over all, as it were[41]—that is needed for every activity (ἐνέργεια), state (διάθεσις) and life (ζωή; cf. VI.7.30.18–26). Similarly, we should interpret the notion of pure and unmixed activity (καθαρὸν καὶ εἰλικρινὲς τὸ ἐνέργημα; cf. *Phileb*. 52d), where there is no opposition and hindrance (cf. *Met*. 1072b), as a sign of the state which the soul experiences when it is in Intellect and illuminated by the Good (cf. VI.7.30.30–33). As not only Plato, but also Homer, metaphorically express it, it is an experience of drunkenness on nectar (cf. *Symp*. 203b), feasting and entertainment (cf. *Phdr*. 247a) or Zeus' smile (cf. *Iliad* 5.426 and 15.47; cf. VI.7.30.26–30). For this reason, Plotinus concludes, Plato also adds truth to the mixture, claiming that there is a measure before this mixture. It is because of this measure that the symmetry and beauty of the mixture become beautiful (cf. VI.7.30.33–35 and *Phileb*. 64b–65a). These claims should obviously be inter-

41 There is a dispute among translators about the text here. Sleeman, Henry and Schwyzer read in line 19 τι ἐπιθέον, and Armstrong and Siegmann τὸ ἐπιθέον, Harder τὸ ἐπὶ πλέον, Beutler, Theiler and Hadot τι ἐπίθετον. I consider all of these possible and if taken in the context of the whole treatise the difference seems to me marginal. Therefore, I speak of "something more or extra that, so to speak, runs over all" to cover all these possibilities.

preted in the context of previous sections, where this something extra running over all forms was light, which made Intellect beautiful, in the sense of having the form of Good (ἀγαθοειδής), and therefore pointing behind or above to the Good itself (cf. Hadot 1988, p. 324).

This issue is exactly what Plotinus will now focus on: establishing the relationship between beauty and the Good more precisely. However, before we follow him, let me briefly summarise the outcomes of the polemic with different notions of the good that we have just examined.[42] The Good was said to be a nature which is desired because it is the good and not vice versa (cf. point 1 above). Therefore, it is not desired because of pleasure, but because of what it gives, i.e. perfection in being, which comes from a superior level (cf. point 2 above). In this sense, it could not be what is one's own (οἰκεῖον), but rather what is ontologically superior, or what has more form (cf. point 3 above). The Good is an exception to this increasing presence of form, because it is itself formless as the giver of form (cf. point 4 above). Below the Good, there is a scale of goods—or perhaps beauties—with Intellect on top and matter, as evil, on the bottom (cf. point 4 above). The Good is that which makes this scale possible and, compared to it, everything is in a sense worthless (cf. point 5 above). Similarly, the Good is exceptional in not being good for itself, but only for everything else, whereas the other goods were said to be good for themselves and, as such, also for what is inferior (cf. point 4 above). Finally, Plotinus interpreted Plato's (and Aristotle's) claims about the good as being compatible with his own, claiming that there is something extra in Intellect which the soul experienced, metaphorically, as pleasure. This something extra is Intellect's beauty, aroused by the light of the Good as a reference to the Good itself (cf. point 6 above).

6.6 The Good from the Perspective of Beauty and Love (VI.7.31–36)

Plotinus now returns to what he wanted to discuss already before his digression on the alternative notions of the good (cf. VI.7.24.1–3), namely the light of the Good. And since we so far inferred that this light is what makes Intellect truly beautiful, these passages will be of the utmost importance.

Plotinus begins by reminding us what the light of the Good does. This time however, he widens the scope so that not only Intellect, but also soul comes in to play. Everything that is, becomes itself and becomes beautiful because of

42 I closely follow Hadot's minutious summary (cf. Hadot 1988, p. 319).

what is above it, and by being illuminated by it (cf. VI.7.31.1–2).[43] This becoming itself means, for Intellect, to think and, for soul, to give life (cf. VI.7.31.2–4). But a part of Intellect was raised up (ἀείρω) to the Good and was joyful (ἀγαπάω) around it (cf. VI.7.31.5–6). Smilarly, that soul which could turn to it "when it knew and saw, rejoiced in the vision and, in so far as it was able to see, was utterly amazed" (ὡς ἔγνω καὶ εἶδεν, ἥσθη τε τῇ θέᾳ καὶ ὅσον οἵα τε ἦν ἰδεῖν ἐξεπλάγη; VI.7.31.6–8). And since soul had something from it also in itself, it knew it intimately (συναισθάνομαι) and started to desire it, as lovers desire the beloved, when they see an image of him and want to see him in person (cf. VI.7.31.8–11). And as lovers make themselves like the beloved, so too does the soul make itself as ἀγαθοειδής as possible (cf. VI.7.31.11–17).

These passages require some comment. First, Plotinus is obviously ready to describe the hierarchy of ontological levels as a hierarchy of resemblance to the Good, where each superior level illuminates the inferior one, as it were, similar to how the Good illuminates Intellect. Consequently, there is a continuous hierarchy of beauty grounded in the Good and the light it gives off. Second, Plotinus seems to suggest that a part of Intellect is elevated by the Good. The concept of a part of Intellect being lifted up to the Good—and through it also a part of the soul—raises several difficult questions:

I) Does this mean that Intellect is sometimes raised up and sometimes not? We should probably interpret Plotinus' formulations here in a similar way to how he himself interpreted foreseeing and planning in Plato's *Timaeus* at the very beginning of VI.7 (cf. section 6.1). Consequently, we should claim that everything that is suggestive of the existence of time events in Intellect is merely a mythical expression, as Hadot puts it (cf. Hadot 1988, pp. 325–326). Since there is no time in Intellect, part of it must be raised up eternally, just as part of it is always descending from the Good.

II) This brings us to the second problem, i.e. the relationship of the descending and the ascending part of Intellect. Are they the same or are they different, so that we should rather distinguish three moments of Intellect, namely Intellect coming into existence, Intellect thinking itself and Intellect raised up? Most scholars agree that the first and the third moment are the same and that Intellect undergoes birth when elevated to the Good (cf. Hadot 1988, pp. 57–67; Rist 1989 or O'Daly 1970; for the contrary position cf. Bussanich 1988, pp. 2–3).

43 This could be also read as a supporting claim for the unity of the external activity of the Good as discussed above (cf. section 6.4).

III) Moreover, it is not exactly clear whether ἕνωσις means actually becoming the Good or "merely" uniting with the nascent Intellect. Plotinus sometimes uses the analogy of the merging of the centres of two circles (e.g. in VI.9.10.17–18), which would suggest the former,[44] but other times (e.g. in VI.8.18.8) he uses the analogy of radii touching the centre of a circle, which rather corresponds to the latter.[45] I will restrict myself here to agreeing with O'Daly's observation (cf. 1970) that Plotinus' statements can support both readings.

IV) Furthermore, there has been a dispute about how the elevated and/or nascent Intellect relates to the thinking Intellect, i.e. whether the relation of the former to the Good is hyper-noetic (cf. Beierwaltes 1974 and 1987) or pre-noetic (cf. Hadot 1985).[46] Without getting bogged down in this debate that goes beyond treatise VI.7, let me just state, for the moment, that Plotinus' description of the elevated Intellect echoes that of the nascent intellect to a certain extent. Both are said either to move—i.e. the nascent Intellect in VI.7.16.16–18—or to be—the elevated Intellect in VI.7.31.5–6—*around* the Good. Similarly, as we shall see later in VI.7.35.23–24, Plotinus will identify the Intellect drunk with love with nascent Intellect. Therefore, at least in treatise VI.7, Hadot's position seems to me better supported by the textual evidence.[47]

Returning to my analysis of the passages under discussion from VI.7, there is a third point, in addition to: 1) Plotinus' willingness to describe the hierarchy of ontological levels as a hierarchy of resemblance to the Good, and 2) his claim that a part of Intellect is elevated by the Good. The part of the soul that can turn to the Good must be the one which is in Intellect, by which Plotinus can hardly mean its lower parts. This claim can be supported by the observation that its love for the Good is described here as having three phases: 1) knowing, 2) seeing and 3) wanting to see. The first phase is probably to be identified with Intellect's contemplation of itself, the second with spotting the trace of the Good in itself—i.e. with realising that Intellect is ἀγαθοειδής, or beautiful in the sense of grace. This, then, arouses love (= the third phase), i.e. a longing for the beloved, which a part of Intellect wants to "see", although it cannot be seen.

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44 This position is held e.g. by Emilsson (cf. 2017, pp. 335–347), Bussanich (1988, pp. 180–181) or Armstrong (2013, pp. 44–47 and 110).

45 This interpretation is advocated by Hadot (cf. 1985, pp. 27).

46 For a comparison of both, see Karfík 2002, pp. 206–220, and 2007, pp. 162–164.

47 This should not come as a surprise, because Beierwaltes' interpretation is based rather on treatises V.4.2 and VI.8.18. Cf. Beierwaltes 1961, p. 349.

This is the Good itself. If so, Plotinus' comparison with lovers in the sensible world, who are reminded of their beloved by an image, makes perfect sense.

A fourth point that I would like to draw attention to is the strong influence of Plato's *Phaedrus* in these passages. He who loves tries to be more like the beloved, which, for Plotinus, is ultimately the Good. Therefore, the lover becomes more and more ἀγαθοειδής and, in so doing, he diminishes the distance between himself and the beloved, as Siegmann points out (1990, p. 147), which is the point of ἔρως and a useful tool for the description of ἕνωσις. At the same time, there are also important differences between VI.7.31 and *Phdr*. 250c–256e.[48] The soul in Intellect which is in love does not need sensually perceptible beauty as a reminder. On the contrary, it distrusts bodily beauty, because it sees that the latter is polluted by bodies and dissolved in magnitudes, and thus understands that bodies are not truly beautiful in themselves (cf. VI.7.31.19–27). Consequently, soul in love aspires to go beyond body, because it understands that bodily beauty has its light from something superior. When it is raised up to the level of Intellect, where all things are beautiful and true (καλὰ πάντα καὶ ἀληθῆ ὄντα), it becomes stronger because it lives true life (οὖσα ζωή) and has true awareness (σύνεσις ὄντως) of the ultimate object of its desire, the Good, which it is near (cf. VI.7.31.27–34).

From the perspective of the ascent along the *scala amoris*, Plotinus turns to the source of beauty, life and substance in Intellect. As a source, it is different from beauty which "rests upon the very Forms, all of them richly varied" (VI.7.32.2–3). When contemplating them, we naturally ask from where they derive their beauty. This source cannot have any of the characteristics of Intellect: it must not be any of the forms or have shape (μορφή) or size (μέγεθος), and it must be without any specific power (δύναμις), not in the sense it would need any of these, but being beyond them and being their source (cf. VI.7.32.1–10). However, being such a transcendent source means that it is, at the same time, none of the things that come from it—insofar as they are posterior to it—and all of them—insofar as they come from it (cf. VI.7.32.13–14). Then again, we should specify in what sense the Source can be said to have what comes from it. Plotinus gives size as an example. Size may come from the Good, but the Good cannot have size in a spatial sense. Rather, its greatness lies in its unmatched power (cf. VI.7.32.14–22). Its being beyond all such predicates is then stressed further in the case of measure (μέτρον), because it is said to transcend both measure and measurelessness (cf. VI.7.32.22–24). In this sense, says

48 Hadot aptly captures the main difference in saying that "la dimension de l'amour humain disparaît complètement" (Hadot 1988, p. 328). The ascent to the Good rather resembles the *scala amoris* in *Symp*. 209e–212a.

Plotinus, we must understand what it means for the Good to transcend both form and formlessness (cf. VI.7.32.24).[49] It makes our love unlimited (ἄπειρος) and immeasurable (ἄμετρος), as there is nothing that we could, so to speak, reach for and thus we continue to reach further and further (cf. VI.7.32.24–28).

The case of beauty is similar. Its beauty "is of another kind and beauty above beauty" (ἄλλον τρόπον καὶ κάλλος ὑπὲρ κάλλος; VI.7.32.29–30). Plotinus even says here that such "productive power of all is the flower (ἄνθος) of beauty,[50] a beauty that makes beauty (κάλλος καλλοποιόν)" and that it "makes it more beautiful by the excess of beauty which comes from it, so that it is the principle (ἀρχή) of beauty and the term (πέρας) of beauty" (VI.7.32.31–34). He is even prepared to go a step further and says that the Good as the source of beauty and forms—i.e. as shapeless—creates beauty as shapeless as it itself is, but in shape in another way (ἄλλον δὲ τρόπον ἐν μορφῇ; cf. VI.7.32.34–39).[51] This very complicated statement should be interpreted in the following way: The shapeless Source of beauty can be said to be beautiful as the source of beauty. If it creates Form—i.e. Intellect—which is beauty, its original shapelessness becomes Form, as it were, or comes to be in shape, and thus starts to exist in a different way—because it is now in shape. In this sense, the primary beauty—the Source as the source of beauty—is not shaped, and only that which participates in it, as Plotinus puts it here, i.e. the Forms themselves, is shaped.[52] Or, to put

49 Hadot (1988, pp. 330–331) connects these claims with the notion of measure from *Phileb*. 64e and the fact that the Good is without limit, measure and shape with the characteristics of the one from *Parm*. 137d–e.

50 Siegmann (1990, p. 154) thinks that ἄνθος is to be identified with the blooming of a flower, i.e. what is present in the whole flower and allows each part of it to be variegated and beautiful. I would be inclined to understand it instead as a sudden and brief shift from a top-down perspective to a bottom-up one, in which the Good might indeed be seen as a flower of beauty from the perspective of a rising soul, because, as it were, it flowers from the beauty which is Intellect, and this flower is its actual τέλος.

51 Siegmann (1990, p. 154) understands these passages to be positing an intermediary beauty between the Good as ὑπέρκαλον and the beauty of Intellect. I find this unnecessary and wonder about the status of an intermediary beauty of this kind.

52 Hadot (1988, pp. 332–336) interprets these passages as referring to the shapelessness of life, as the first ἐνέργεια from the Good and, simultaneously, as a characteristic of a fully constituted Intellect, which is formless in the sense of forming itself. Hadot understands the claim that what gives form is formless to represent a general ontological statement valid not only for the Good, but also for all lower levels. Insofar as each of them gives form, they are formless. As that which gives form, Intellect is, in this sense, also formless. However, I do not see any good reason for taking these passages to be making a general ontological statement. This claim would also imply that Intellect, as the source of all things, is none of them. It seems to me that Plotinus rather understands Intellect as being what it gives to the highest degree. On my reading, Hadot's claims are to be applied only to the Good. But even here, I remain sceptical about the connection of shapelessness to life as the first

it differently, drawing on the conclusions from section 6.4, when the original goodness of the Good becomes Form, it starts to exist in a different way, i.e. as beauty. Since, however, the Good is the source of beauty, Intellect must participate in its shapeless goodness in order to be beautiful, i.e. it must be illuminated by it. In this sense, the illuminated beauty of Intellect, as we shall see, is soon termed "shapeless form". But we must bear in mind that Plotinus is using the predicate "beauty" here—as he also did in treatise I.6—to lead our soul toward the Good. We should thus be very careful about drawing conclusions from this usage. From a different perspective, one could try to describe the Good by saying precisely the opposite—i.e. that it is beyond beauty, has no need of it and is absolutely unrelated to it—since it transcends both positive and negative attributions.

Plotinus' intention to lead our soul toward the Good can further be seen in the passages that follow, where he addresses the soul that tries to ascend to the shapeless from Intellect and states that the shapeless form, i.e. the beautiful Intellect, is proportionate to the lengths to which the soul goes in trying to strip all shape from it (cf. VI.7.33.4–8). As shapeless, the Good cannot be seen, such that every shape must be avoided (cf. VI.7.33.1–2)—otherwise one will fall out of the Good, here called the beautiful (τὸ καλόν; VI.7.33.3), to a different beauty (καλόν; VI.7.33.3) which is called "beauty" in virtue of a kind of "obscure participation" (ἀμυδρᾷ μετοχῇ; VI.7.33.3). Intellect thinks itself, i.e. everything at once and, at the same time, as differentiated, and by both of these intellective acts—which are one in Intellect—it is diminished and pulled away from the Good, since it sees only either a single form or a variety of forms (cf. VI.7.33.8–10). However, the Good which is here called the all-beautiful (πάγκαλος) is both variegated and not variegated (cf. VI.7.33.11–12). Intellect as form is measured and limited (μεμετρημένον), and therefore neither self-sufficient (οὐδὲ αὔταρκες) nor beautiful of itself (οὐδὲ παρ' αὐτοῦ καλόν). We thus desire to transcend to its source, the super-beautiful (ὑπέρκαλον; cf. VI.7.33.16–20). Intellect, as the form, is also said to be a trace (ἴχνος) of the shapeless (cf. VI.7.33.30–31). In this very special sense of being the ultimate shapeless object of desire, it can be said that beauty is the nature of the Good—or, as Plotinus puts it a bit later, the first nature of the beautiful is formless (cf. VI.7.33.38–39).

Let me now summarise what Plotinus says here. First of all, from the perspective of form and shape, we should distinguish three combinations: There

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ἐνέργεια from the One, because this would mean that life as ἀόριστος is ἀγαθοειδής to the highest degree. But does Plotinus, the forceful advocate of forms, really think this? And why then is matter also not more like the Good than Intellect? However tempting Hadot's interpretation may be, in the end, it seems to me substantially un-Plotinian.

is ἀρχή—the Good—which is both ἀνείδεον (cf. VI.7.32.9, 33.13, 21, 38) and ἄμορφον (cf. 32.6–7, 33.20–21, 28). Then there is the beauty of Intellect, which is ἄμορφον εἶδος (cf. VI.7.33.4). Finally, all of the forms are εἴδη and μορφαί. The notion of ἄμορφον εἶδος aptly describes beauty, because it captures well its intermediary character, shedding some light on the passages about the shapeless source of beauty which creates beauty as shapeless as it itself is, but in a shape in another way (cf. VI.7.32.34–39). Beauty leads to the Good, i.e. the ἀνείδεον, because it is itself ἄμορφον, while still being an εἶδος, i.e. a visible—or rather intelligible—manifestation of the shapeless. Therefore, this formulation enables a better understanding of the reaching above which is connected with beauty, because it both entails and actually draws its power from the presence of the shapeless in itself. As ἄμορφον εἶδος, it is precisely the shapeless beauty in shape, the Good in another, the form of Good in Intellect, i.e. what makes it ἀγαθοειδής.

If we now focus on the Good itself in these passages, then we may extract the following negative statements about it:

1) it lacks shape (μορφή; VI.7.32.6–7, 33.20–21, 28)
2) figure (σχῆμα; VI.7.32.25)
3) and form (εἶδος; VI.7.32.9, 33.20–21, 38; it does not have it at all; 33.13)
4) and it is none of those things which have come to be and exist here above, i.e. forms or shapes (πᾶσαι αἱ γεγενημέναι καὶ οὖσαι ἐνταῦθα; VI.7.32.7–8; and it has none of these shapes, not even the last and lowest ones; 33.33–34)
5) it lacks size (μέγεθος; VI.7.32.16)
6) any specific power (τις δύναμις; VI.7.32.7)
7) and limit (πέρας; VI.7.32.15–16)
8) it transcends both measure (μέτρον; VI.7.32.22–23)
9) and measurelessness (ἀμέτρια; VI.7.32.22–23)
10) as well as variety (ποικίλον; VI.7.33.11)
11) and non-variety (οὐ ποικίλον; VI.7.33.11)
12) it cannot be compared to anything (VI.7.32.19–21) and is, in this sense, great (τὸ μέγα; 32.19, cf. also point 20 below)
13) has nothing in common with anything (VI.7.32.22)
14) was not made by anyone (VI.7.32.12–13)
15) was not made anything specific (VI.7.32.12–13)
16) is, in fact, nothing (οὐδὲν; VI.7.32.29)
17) and it is implied that it has no parts (μέρη; VI.7.32.5–6)

The positive statements can be divided into four groups. The first one follows the negative statements, supplements them and presents the Good as the ultimate generative principle. The Good is:

18) beyond all powers and shapes (ὑπὲρ πάσας [...] δυνάμεις καὶ [...] μορφάς; VI.7.32.8–9)
19) and this "beyond" means that the Good is the power of everything (δύναμις παντός; VI.7.32.31) and has the power to create everything (πάντα ποιεῖν δυνάμενον; 32.14)
20) or is even said to be the most powerful of all (μηδὲν αὐτοῦ δυνατώτερον; VI.7.32.19–21) and is, in this sense, great (τὸ μέγα; 32.19, cf. also point 12 above)
21) it is the creator of such beauty and such life, and is the generator of substance (ὁ ποιήσας τὸ τοσοῦτον κάλλος καὶ τὴν τοσαύτην ζωὴν καὶ γεννήσας οὐσίαν; VI.7.32.1–2)
22) and it is that from which all intelligible forms come (ἀφ' οὗ πᾶσα μορφὴ νοερά; VI.7.32.10)
23) it generates form (τοῦτο γεννᾷ τὴν μορφήν; VI.7.33.30–31)
24) and is the source of everything and every form (ἀρχή; VI.7.32.9–12, 14)
25) and as their source it is all of these things (VI.7.32.13)
26) and it measures them (μετρέω; VI.7.32.23)

The second group of predicates relates directly to beauty. The Good is called:

27) beauty, the beautiful or the beauteous (καλόν; VI.7.33.3, 38; κάλλος; 32.29–30, 39, VI.7.33.1; καλλονή; 33.22)
28) but this beauty is of another kind (κάλλος αὐτοῦ ἄλλον τρόπον; VI.7.32.28–29)
29) beauty above beauty (κάλλος ὑπὲρ κάλλος; VI.7.32.29–30)
30) the all-beautiful (πάγκαλον; VI.7.33.11)
31) the really beautiful (ὄντως; VI.7.33.19)
32) the super-beautiful (ὑπέρκαλον; VI.7.33.20)
33) beauty which makes beauty (κάλλος καλλοποιόν; VI.7.32.31–32)
34) and the generator of beauty (τὸ γεννῶν τὸ κάλλος; VI.7.32.30)
35) the flower of beauty (καλοῦ ἄνθος; VI.7.32.31–32)
36) the principle of beauty (ἀρχὴ κάλλους; VI.7.32.34, 35)
37) and term of beauty (πέρας κάλλους; VI.7.32.34)
38) as such, it is desired by soul (VI.7.33.12)
39) moreover, the beauty it generates—i.e. Intellect—is made more beautiful by the excess of beauty which comes from it (γεννᾷ αὐτὸ καὶ κάλλιον ποιεῖ τῇ παρ' αὐτοῦ περιουσίᾳ τοῦ κάλλους; VI.7.32.32–34), i.e. by the light of the Good (cf. 33.29–30)

The third group of predicates relates neither to the fact that the One is a generative principle, nor to beauty, but presents it as a superlative. It is:

40) the best (τὸ ἄριστον; VI.7.33.14)
41) the most lovable (ἐρασμιωτάτον; VI.7.33.14)

42) and the really real (τὸ ὄντως; VI.7.33.13)

And the last group comprises what is implied about the Good. It is:

43) self-sufficient (αὔταρκες; VI.7.33.18)

44) beautiful of itself (παρ' αὐτοῦ καλόν; VI.7.33.18)

45) and not mixed (VI.7.33.19)

Plotinus is using all of these predicates to present the Good as a superlative all-powerful source and principle of everything, which is beyond everything—i.e. different from it and also independent of it. As Siegmann (1990, pp. 155–156) aptly comments, Plotinus uses negative (e.g. ἄμορφον), paradoxical (ἄμορφον εἶδος), superlative (ἄριστον, ἐρασμιωτάτον), absolute (αὔταρκες) and hyperbolic formulations (ὑπέρκαλον) to ascend to the Good. The predicates that relate to beauty should be interpreted in this context. After all, Stern-Gillet (2000, p. 55) makes a comment about Plotinus' language with respect to beauty which is very similar to Siegmann's more general observation. She says that Plotinus uses rare terms (καλλονή), neologisms (καλλοποιόν, ὑπέρκαλος) and metaphors (καλοῦ ἄνθος) to describe the Good or the Beautiful.

In interpreting these statements about beauty in the context of predication about the Good, we should take into account the following points: 1) We should not overestimate their importance, because all positive statements—e.g. that beauty is the nature of the Good—are ultimately to be transcended, as well as their opposites. In this particular case, it means that we should remain sceptical about the identification of the Good and the beautiful. It still seems to me to be a safe starting point to claim that the primary beauty is the Intellect, and that the Good may be said to be the primary beauty as the source of beauty, although it is, in fact, beyond beauty.[53]

But as I said, this is just a starting point, because only now are we able to ask the crucial question with which Plotinus has, in reality, been struggling since at least section 18: why is the Good manifest as beauty? And I do not mean here that it is the source of beauty, because the Good is, in the end, the

53 Omtzigt (2012, pp. 85–90) also claims that the Good is to be differentiated from beauty, which is primarily to be connected with Intellect. However, she claims that Plotinus identifies the Good with beauty in VI.7.32–33 only from a subjective perspective, that of ἔρως. This is only partially true, and osbcures important exegetical and systematic repercussions of this identification as described below. Rist (1967, pp. 53–65) also argues for the distinction of the Good from beautiful. By contrast, their identification is advocated by Stern-Gillet (2000). However, my reading of VI.7 and VI.2 differs to some extent from hers (cf. chapters 4 and 6) and I take Plotinus' refusal to identify the Good and the beautiful in the *Enneads* (cf. VI.9.4, VI.9.11, V.8.8, V.5.12, VI.7.32–33) more seriously than she does.

source of everything.[54] What is important in saying that the Good is manifest as beauty is, rather, that this beauty is the form of the Good in another and that everything below the Good is ἀγαθοειδής, i.e. beautiful. Therefore, we should 2) not underestimate the importance of these claims. If the point of the use of language in the ascent to the Good is to continuously point beyond what is being said, then beauty is perhaps an ideal tool for this, because it is in its very nature to refer to something above and to arouse ἔρως, which is, in the end, a desire to become one with the beloved—i.e. a desire for ἕνωσις. However, this claim might be further strengthened because beauty is not only a useful tool in a language play, but the Good is, in fact, manifest through it. If all desire is directed toward some good and, ultimately, toward the Good, then it must show itself as beauty, which is precisely that which arouses desire and refers to what is above, ultimately the Good. Therefore, the fact that the Good is manifest as beauty means that it is the Good in another, i.e. in a diminished way, but what is preserved in this diminishment is precisely what is needed to attain the Good, namely the energy required for the ascent—ἔρως—and the direction—reference upwards.[55] Moreover, since we have so far maintained that beauty is unity in multiplicity referring to the Good, we might add in a further feature of the Good preserved in beauty, its oneness. Since, however, it cannot exist in another as such, it is preserved in this other—in multiplicity—as unity. As already Plato says, beauty is μονοειδής (*Symp*. 211b1 and 211e4).[56]

Then again, we should refine our claim that, in the end, all predicates are to be transcended, as well as their opposites. This claim implies that each predicate and each of their opposites are equally inappropriate for the Good. This might *in the end* be true, but it seems to me that if one does try to use language to talk about the Good, there is an asymmetry in the appropriateness of at least some predicates and their opposites. If we take as an example two predicates discussed in VI.7.32–33, namely greatness (τὸ μέγα) and beauty, we can observe that Plotinus never uses their opposites to describe the Good, although he does

54 Rist (1967, p. 63) seems to understand the identification of the Good and beauty here in the sense that the Good is the source of beauty, and points out that the Good is, in this sense, the source of everything else. However, this interpretation misses precisely the uniqueness of beauty, the fact that it is to be identified with being ἀγαθοειδής. Emilsson's observation (2017, p. 114) is more precise: "it is noteworthy that Plotinus does not in general suggest that the very prototype of any Form is to be identified with the One. There must be something special about beauty."

55 As far as I understand it, this is exactly Tornau's point (2006, p. 203). He claims that the Good is beyond beauty, but manifest through it, and that it accounts for the ἔρως aroused by beauty.

56 Cf. Halfwassen 2003, who traces this motif back to Plato.

abstract from these predicates (e.g. from beauty in V.8.8). One might argue that, in the end, the Good could be said to be small in the sense of having no size, or even ugly in the sense of not being intelligible beauty. Obviously, however, it would be strange to say this. Moreover, we can think of cases where it would be utterly inconceivable to predicate the opposites of certain predicates, as in the case of the one (i.e. many) and the good (i.e. evil). I cannot think of a context in which it would make sense to call the Good evil or the One many.[57] Plotinus himself comments on this asymmetry in VI.7.20.1–11, when trying to discover what ἀγαθοειδής means. The appropriateness of the predicate of beauty for the Good seems once again to result from the the fact that beauty is the manifestation of the Good, or to put it the other way around, that the Good is the final cause of the ascent along the *scala amoris*. This close connection between beauty and the Good is also something that seems to disrupt the previously repeated identification of beauty and being (cf. V.8.9, VI.2.17–18 and sections 3.4.7 and 4.4–5) above the level of Intellect. Whereas it is possible to say, in the sense just outlined, that the Good is beautiful, I cannot see how this could be possible for being. On the contrary, "beyond being" is along with "beyond intellection" one of the most common epithets of the Good (cf. I.7.1.19, I.8.6.28, III.8.9.9, III.9.9.1, V.1.8.7, V.3.11.28, V.3.12.47, V.3.17.13, V.4.1.10, V.4.2.2, V.4.2.38–39, V.4.2.42, V.6.6.30, V.8.1.3, V.9.2.24, VI.7.35.21, VI.7.40.26, VI.8.16.34, VI.8.19.13, VI.9.11.42). However, as we shall see in the next section, things are more complicated, at least in the case of intellection. In sum, if beauty is a useful predicate for the ascent to the Good because the beautiful is ἀγαθοειδής, it is perhaps also a predicate, whose appropriateness for the Good is asymmetrical to its opposite, i.e. ugliness, and to other predicates designating Intellect, such as being or intellection.

Moreover, Plotinus has yet another reason for calling the Good the primary beauty here, namely an exegetical one.[58] He tries to merge together several claims made by Plato in the *Phaedrus*, *Symposium*, *Philebus*, *Parmenides* and *Republic*. As we have seen, beauty was interpreted as a reference to the Good because it was its image or its trace, or again because the Good can be seen in all beings since they have the form of the Good, i.e. they are ἀγαθοειδῆ. For Plotinus, this referential character of beauty, together with the description of the ascending movement caused by ἔρως is the main lesson which is to be taken from the *Phaedrus*. Moreover, Plotinus combines the claims 1) that all desire is according to *Symposium* (204d–206a) ultimately directed to the Good and

57 D'Ancona Costa (1992, pp. 98–109) makes a similar observation.

58 The texts Plotinus has in mind might not be only those of Plato. He might also be alluding to Numenius of Apamea and Alcinous. Cf. Edwards 1991.

2) that the good has taken refuge in the nature of the beautiful from *Philebus* (64e), with 3) the passage from *Republic* (509a) where Socrates is said to speak of an overwhelming beauty that provides knowledge and truth but is itself beyond them in beauty. Plotinus concludes from this that beauty is the medium through which the soul ascends to the Good. The Good has the characteristics of the one from *Parmenides* (137d–e)—i.e. it is unlimited and without shape—and of the Good from the *Republic* (509b)—i.e. it provides being and intelligibility to everything, while it is itself beyond being, exceeding it in dignity and power. Then again, since, in the *Symposium* (211b–212c), Plato places true beauty at the top of the *scala amoris*, Plotinus has an additional exegetical reason for understanding the Good as beauty, in order to present his own theory as compatible with that of Plato.

The sections under discussion (VI.7.32–33) may further be illuminated by the previously discussed *Ennead* V.5.12 (cf. section 3.5). The beautiful (Intellect) was said there to need the Good, but not vice versa (cf. V.5.12.33). This claim is very close to being the opposite of that statement which I earlier claimed was possible when using language to approach the Good (see above, p. 145). Moreover, the gentle (ἤπιος), kind (προσηνής) and gracious (ἁβρός) Good was contrasted to the beautiful, which rather brought "wonder (θάμβος) and terror (ἔκπληξις) and pleasure (ἡδονή) mingled with pain (ἀλγύνω)" (V.5.12.33–36, transl. modified). From a systematic point of view, it would be perhaps more accurate to select a different word than κάλλος, but with the same erotic connotations with regard to the Good, for instance καλλονή, which is only used four times in the *Enneads* (I.6.6.21, I.6.6.26, VI.2.18.1, VI.7.33.22) and, in each case, for the Good as beauty.[59] Moreover, καλλονή also has the advantage of being used in a similar way by Plato (cf. *Symp*. 206d), which Plotinus could not have ignored. Another possible candidate is ἀγλαΐα, which is used in relation to the Good in VI.9.4.18, where Plotinus also compares the erotic relation to the Good with resting in the beloved (ἐν ᾧ ἐρᾷ ἀναπαύω).[60] But, as we know, Plotinus cared little about such trifles.

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59 This has been noticed by Rist (1967, pp. 53–65) who interprets καλλονή as δύναμις τοῦ καλοῦ. I agree with this definition, but it should be noted that he gives an incorrect reference to VI.7.33.30, where this phrase is not used, and I was not able to find it anywhere else in the *Enneads*. The closest formulation is δύναμις οὖν παντὸς καλοῦ ἄνθος ἐστί, κάλλος καλλοποιόν in VI.7.32.31–32. Even there, however, it makes more sense to connect δύναμις with παντός and καλοῦ with ἄνθος. However, cf. also Halfwassen's translation and interpretation (2007, pp. 51–52).

60 Nevertheless, the word ἀγλαΐα is probably a less suitable candidate than καλλονή because it also occurs in relation to the beauty of Intellect in V.8.12.7, VI.2.21.12 and VI.7.21.6, to that of body as compared to intelligible beauty in I.6.8.5, to that of virtue in I.6.9.14, to the beauty of all in III.8.11.30, and also in contexts not directly related to beauty (cf. IV.3.17.21, V.3.8.31).

What is also interesting, both in VI.7 and in V.5, is what might be called the shaping of the notion of the sublime which has its own history in aesthetics.[61] The Good is here said to be μέγα and ὑπέρκαλον and our attitude towards it is erotic desire which is ἄπειρος and ἄμετρος. Simultaneously, the relation of soul to the Good was distinguished from its relation to the beauty of Intellect. This might suggest a preliminary distinction of the sublime (in the case of the Good) from the beautiful (in the case of Intellect), but there are also significant differences as compared to the traditional distinction. Plotinus connects gentleness, kindness and grace with the Good (which was traditionally connected rather with beauty), whereas the beauty of Intellect is said to arouse wonder, terror and pleasure mixed with pain (which traditionally corresponds rather to the sublime). Consequently, both of the required distinctions, namely 1) between beauty and something more, something μέγα, and 2) between a gentle nature and a terrifying one, seem to be present in Plotinus, but they are mismatched from the point of view of the tradition.

Moreover, Plotinus is prepared to talk about awe or terror (πλήσσω and ἐκπλήσσω) in the case of the Good in VI.7.31. This may once again be interesting in relation to the history of the concept of the sublime, but it is disturbing from a systematic point of view, because it seemed in the interpretation of V.5.12 that Plotinus uses this concept for the beauty of Intellect. Then again, one might argue that in both cases of the use of (ἐκ)πλήσσω in VI.7.31, Plotinus adds "in so far as it was able to see" (ὅσον οἷα τε ἦν ἰδεῖν; VI.7.31.7) or "it saw" (εἶδε; VI.7.31.8), which is, of course, impossible in the case of the Good. Thus, he might be still talking about the beauty of Intellect. However, this does not fit into the context of the passage and even if it did, it would still mean that the beauty of Intellect—when illuminated by the Good—would necessarily be terrifying, which is probably not the case. I am, therefore, rather inclined to explain Plotinus' choice of words here by the context, which is obviously that of Plato's dialogues. Plotinus alludes to them repeatedly and (ἐκ)πλήσσω is used many times in connection with beauty in both the *Phaedrus* (250a6, 255b4 and partly also 259b8) and the *Symposium* (192b7, 198b5, 211d5, 215d6, 216d3, 218a4). Therefore, I would urge against overestimating the systematic implications of the occurrence of (ἐκ)πλήσσω here. Rather, we should interpret these occur-

61 This claim would be especially interesting if we date Pseudo-Longinus' treatise *On the Sublime* to after Plotinus, e.g. if we attribute it to Cassius Longinus (cf. Heath 1999, Grube 1991). However, the arguments against his authorship are strong (cf. Fyfe and Russel 1995, pp. 145–148) and the consensus view is that it was written earlier, for instance in the 1st century AD (by an unknown person rather than by Dionysius of Halicarnassus). For the history of the concept, see Shaw 2006, Costelloe 2012 or Doran 2015.

rences exegetically as showing compatibility with Plato, or perhaps even more strongly, as signifying that Plotinus is Plato's true heir.

In any case, these passages (VI.7.32–33 and V.5.12) might also be read as describing two possible reactions on the part of the soul to the beauty of Intellect taken as such, i.e. to the beauty of the unilluminated Intellect. As it does not provide what the soul ultimately seeks—the Good—it might be conceived of as either still mixed with pain, i.e. ultimately repulsive, or as not providing enough, i.e. ultimately boring.

We could also enrich the conception of ἔρως we have encountered by means of a digression on one of Plotinus' latest treatises, *Ennead* III.5 *On Love*. The majority of this treatise is devoted to the interpretation of Plato's myth of the birth of ἔρως in the *Symposium* (203b–d and 180d–185c). In brief, ἔρως is born from Aphrodite, but there are at least two such goddesses (cf. III.5.2.14–15). The first one is to be identified with soul in Intellect (ὅλη ψυχή; cf. III.5.4.2), which is the motherless daughter of Zeus or Intellect (cf. III.5.2.15–25). Ἔρως was born from her, but there are two moments in this birth that can be distinguished: the plenitude of λόγοι emanating from Intellect or Poros (cf. III.5.9.1–8), and the need of the intelligible matter which corresponds to Penia (cf. III.5.6.44–7.12).[62] This ἔρως, child of the heavenly Aphrodite, refers to the desire for Intellect and for the Good—i.e. it is the love of a daughter for her father and grandfather respectively (cf. III.5.2.33–40). The second Aphrodite, born from Zeus and Dione, corresponds to the world soul (ψυχὴ τοῦ παντὸς; cf. III.5.3.27–38), i.e. a soul which descends to the sensible world and governs it. Insofar as it has descended, its ἔρως accounts for marriages, but insofar as it is derived from the soul in Intellect, it has the same function as the heavenly ἔρως: it leads souls upwards, i.e. to Intellect and to the Good (cf. III.5.3.31–37). Individual souls may also be called Aphrodites and they give birth to individual ἔρωτες, but Plotinus only says that these are comprised by the ἔρως of the world soul, since individual souls are immersed in the world soul (cf. III.5.4.10–24 and IV.9). Also, both the individual ἔρωτες and the ἔρως born of the world soul are said to be daemons, as opposed to the heavenly ἔρως which is a god (cf. III.5.2.25–27 and 4.23–25). One of the basic characteristics of Plato's ἔρως—that it is ultimately a desire for the Good—is thus preserved in Plotinus along with several others (cf. Armstrong 1961, p. 113 and see further below).

The first section of the treatise III.5, which is more important for our purposes here, enquires into the πάθος caused by ἔρως in the soul (cf. III.5.1.10–12). There are two types of πάθη caused by ἔρως: one occurs among those who

62 For further details, see Karfík 2003, pp. 166–168.

are temperate (σώφρων) and akin to beauty, while the other occurs among those who desire sexual intercourse with bodily beauty (cf. III.5.1.12–14). However, both have a common source, which is the desire for beauty itself, with which we have an intimate relationship (οἰκειότης; cf. III.5.1.16–19). This desire may be interpreted differently by different souls (cf. III.5.1.59–65). Those who desire bodily beauty do not understand that it is merely an image of a higher beauty, and therefore desire these images of it thinking that it is what they seek (cf. III.5.1.30–36 and 50–55). However, as Plotinus says—in a surprisingly accommodating gesture—even those who remember the paradigm are satisfied with these images as images (cf. III.5.1.34–35), which are even said to be the completion (ἀποτέλεσμά τι) of the paradigm (cf. III.5.1.61). Insofar as lovers of this kind remain temperate (σώφρων) and do not engage in unnatural sexual intercourse, there is nothing wrong with desiring bodily beauty (cf. III.5.1.36–38 and Kalligas 2014, com. ad III.5.1.10–14). To direct our love toward what is above, we must desire beauty as well as eternity, because we want to procreate in beauty and become immortal insofar as possible (cf. III.5.1.36–43). This process is enabled by the kinship (συγγένεια) of beauty and eternity (cf. III.5.1.43–44), i.e. by the fact that both characterise Intellect. As Armstrong (1961, p. 113) once again puts it, the second basic characteristics of Plato's ἔρως is maintained in Plotinus: when one attains what one desires, this desire remains and does not vanish.

When compared to treatise VI.7, the fundamental elements of the account of ἔρως seem to correspond and are slightly more elaborated in the interpretation of the *Symposium* myth. The only difference seems to be Plotinus' accommodating attitude towards bodily beauty, which is also known to us from treatise II.9. Similarly, just as I emphasised the need for a perspectival reading there (cf. section 3.2), I would suggest understanding these claims here in such a way as to try to capture the continuity of beauty throughout Plotinus' whole universe. In other words, it is predicated from a top-down perspective and does not necessarily contradict Plotinus' claims from a bottom-up one, which rather highlights the qualitative differences between the use of a given predicate on each different level. On my reading, when Plotinus talks about despising beauty, he simply means that higher beauty is much better. However, if we truly understand this higher beauty, we comprehend that it emanates necessarily and is thus manifested in what is below to the greatest extent possible. The engagement of treatise III.5 in the discussion with the Gnostics has, for that matter, been noted in the scholarly literature (cf. Kalligas 2014, "Introduction" to III.5).

To continue my analysis of VI.7, Plotinus will now focus on the description of the union with the Good against the background of the whole ascent

along the *scala amoris* (cf. especially VI.7.34) and a broadened conception of Intellect (cf. especially VI.7.35). He starts by summarising the previous account of the Good as καλλονή. It has no intelligible form (μορφὴ νοητή) and brings about a powerful longing (δεινὸς πόθος) that makes the soul strip away all form, even intelligible form (cf. VI.7.34.1–4). This stripping away enables the soul to be adapted to or fitted in (ἐναρμόζω) the One because it alone—i.e. without anything attached to it, so to speak—is able to receive the One alone (δέξηται μόνη μόνον; cf. VI.7.34.5–8). The process of disposing of every evil or even good attached to the soul is described as becoming as beautiful as possible, i.e. as similar to the Good as possible (cf. VI.7.34.6–7, 10–11), which confirms my former identification of being beautiful and being ἀγαθοειδής. If these preparations are made, the soul has good fortune (εὐτυχέω) and the Good suddenly (ἐξαίφνης; cf. *Symp.* 210e) appears in it (φαίνω) as always already present, the soul becomes one with the beloved and fulfils its erotic desire (cf. VI.7.34.13–16). Such a soul ceases to perceive itself as being in a body, stops speaking about itself as being a human or any kind of living being, or even as a being (ὄν) or being all (πᾶν; cf. VI.7.34.16–18). All of these things would disturb it and it has no need of any of this, including itself, because it already feels good (εὐπαθέω). This feeling can, of course, only be reflected afterwards, i.e. after the soul has disengaged from the Good (cf. VI.7.34.18–31). Such an experience of "happiness" is the ultimate experience, above which there can be no other and which does not allow for deceit (cf. VI.7.34.22–29). The absolute focus on the Good, or rather identity with it, means ceasing to care about all the rest to such an extent that "if all the other things about it perished, it would even be pleased, that it might be alone with this" (VI.7.34.36–38). However, when the soul disengages from the Good, this experience has an impact on its embodiment. It now knows that the true good is the Good and it despises (ὑπεροράω) all other things: bodily pleasures, offices, powers, riches or even beauties and sciences (cf. VI.7.34.31–35).

Plotinus now focuses on explaining how soul can ascend to the Good, i.e. ascend beyond Intellect. Since soul is able to become aware of itself as a part of Intellect, its ascent to the Good is, in fact, an ascent of the "part of Intellect" that the soul has become. Plotinus begins by drawing a contrast between Intellect and the Good from a double perspective: that of an ascending soul and that of a soul which has already ascended to the Good. The latter despises (καταφρονεῖν) intellection because the Good is beyond intellection. Plotinus expresses himself here in terms of movement and rest: when united with the Good the soul "looks" at that which does not move and since intellection is movement, it does not want it, although it welcomed (ἀσπάζομαι) it before, i.e. during the ascent (cf. VI.7.35.1–4). It even first had to become this movement and contem-

plation, but when it "sees" the Good it leaves everything behind (cf. VI.7.35.4–7). Plotinus illustrates this ascent by means of the image of a guest who enters a wonderfully decorated, beautiful house (οἷον εἴ τις εἰσελθὼν εἰς οἶκον ποικίλον καὶ οὕτω καλὸν), which he contemplates. However, when the master of the house appears, he pays attention only to him as to someone worthy of genuine contemplation (ἄξιον τῆς ὄντως θέας) and admirable (ἄγαμαι), who is not of the nature of the images in the house (οὐ κατὰ τὴν τῶν ἀγαλμάτων φύσιν ὄντα; cf. VI.7.35.7–12). In looking at the master, the guest's contemplation starts to change such that he does not actually see a sight, "but mingles his seeing with what he contemplates, so that what was seen before has now become sight in him" (ἀλλὰ τὴν ὄψιν αὐτοῦ συγκεράσαιτο τῷ θεάματι, ὥστε ἐν αὐτῷ ἤδη τὸ ὁρατὸν πρότερον ὄψιν γεγονέναι; VI.7.35.14–16). And, as Plotinus further explains, the master should rather be taken as a god, who does not appear to sight, but in the guest's soul (cf. VI.7.35.17–20).

These passages show that the ascent of the soul to the Good happens necessarily through Intellect, whose beauty is worth admiring as long as the master is not present. And perhaps this simile is also useful for shedding more light on the aforementioned boredom of the soul that has ascended to unilluminated Intellect. As a matter of fact, one could easily imagine a beautiful house becoming boring after a while, if no other living being is present. After all, it was quite clearly stated that the guest did not come to the house to see its decorations, but to see its master.

The appearance of the Good was also previously (cf. VI.7.34.13–16) described in such a way as to give the impression that it acted deliberately when the soul merged with it. This motif is similarly present here because the master, as a living being, decides when to appear. However, both of these passages (i.e. VI.7.34.13–16 and 35.7–12) should be interpreted with caution, because the Good does not act in this manner—that is, as if it were sometimes present and sometimes not. Furthermore, it does not decide when to appear. It is rather always present, and the guest is the one who needs to realise this. The choice of the master of the house in the story is more likely to be understood as illustrating the qualitative difference between Intellect and the Good and the rule of the latter over the former.

The transformation undergone by the contemplation of the master has led Hadot (1988, pp. 341–342) to understand the master as Intellect, which created the forms—the decorations in the house—and the vision without object as the Good. However, I would prefer to keep things simple, i.e. to identify Intellect with the household and the master with the Good. This "simplest interpretation" (Hadot 1988, p. 341) faces two difficulties, according to Hadot. Not only does it identify the Good with an object of vision, whereas the Good cannot

be seen, it also has difficulties explaining why the visitor forgets all objects of vision, when his sight merges with what it sees (VI.7.35.16). However, I do not think that these are serious difficulties, since Plotinus often corrects his own images in the process of elaborating them, something he also does here: the master is to be considered a god and he does not appear to sight (cf. VI.7.35.17–20). Similarly, the description of the transformation of the contemplation of the master can be read as such a correction of the image. By contrast, Hadot undermines, to a certain extent, the very point of the story, which is to show the radical difference between Intellect (i.e. the household) and the Good (i.e. the master), as well as to illustrate the shift of the soul's focus when it encounters the Good/master. On Hadot's interpretation, there would be a more pronounced difference between individual forms (i.e. decorations) and Intellect as their creator (i.e. the master), in contrast to Intellect (i.e. the master) and the Good (i.e. objectless vision).

At any rate, Plotinus now returns to the necessary prerequisites for such an ascent, distinguishing two powers (δυνάμεις) in Intellect: one for contemplating itself as all its contents and the other for looking toward the Good (cf. VI.7.35.20–23), in the sense of "direct awareness and reception" (ἐπιβολῇ καὶ παραδοχῇ; VI.7.35.21–22). Moreover, the latter power is identified with the looking of the nascent Intellect toward the Good, as described in VI.7.16, by means of which it acquired the one and intellection (cf. VI.7.35.23–24). This looking is said to be different than the one involved in intellection (cf. VI.7.35.30–31). The Intellect using the former power is called νοῦς ἔμφρων, whereas the one using the latter power is said to be drunk with nectar, as it were, and is called νοῦς ἐρῶν (cf. VI.7.35.24–25, an obvious allusion to *Symp*. 203b). The drunken Intellect is the one that eternally returns to the Good (cf. VI.7.35.29–31) and is, in this sense, simplified into feeling good by being filled (γίνεται ἁπλωθεὶς εἰς εὐπάθειαν τῷ κόρῳ; cf. VI.7.35.25–26). Since the erotic Intellect is closer to the Good, Plotinus does not hesitate to say that it is better for Intellect to be drunk in this fashion than to be more dignified (σεμνότερος), but sober (cf. VI.7.35.26–28; a possible allusion to *Phdr*. 244d). Plotinus once again reminds us about the generation of Intellect saying that when the nascent Intellect looked to the Good, it generated its offspring (i.e. forms) in itself, and its awareness of them is its intellection (cf. VI.7.35.31–34). Hence, the ascending soul must first unite with this contemplating Intellect and only through it can it be lifted up (ἀείρω) as νοῦς ἐρῶν beyond itself by the Good (cf. VI.7.35.37–41). In this way, it acquires blessed perception and vision (μακάρια αἴσθησις καὶ θέα; again a possible allusion to *Phdr*. 250b) from the Good and is displaced from place itself, such that soul is no longer soul—because it is beyond life—nor even Intellect—since it is beyond intellection (cf. VI.7.35.39–44).

In the last section of this part of treatise VI.7, Plotinus presents a systematic summary of the soul's ascent to the Good and a reflection of our abilities to get to know it by means of rational discourse (λογισμός). He distinguishes, on the one hand, knowledge of (γνῶσις) or touching (ἐπαφή) the Good, which is the greatest kind of knowledge (μέγιστον), and, on the other hand, learning about the Good beforehand (περὶ αὐτοῦ μαθεῖν τι πρότερον), which is what Plato, according to Plotinus, calls μέγιστόν μάθημα (cf. VI.7.36.4–6, and *Rep*. 504e, 505a, *Ep*. VII 341c and *Symp*. 211c). This learning about the Good beforehand proceeds by analogies (ἀναλογίαι), negations (ἀφαιρέσεις), by coming to know that which is from the Good (γνώσεις τῶν ἐξ αὐτοῦ) and by gradually ascending (ἀναβασμοί τινες; cf. VI.7.36.6–9 and *Symp*. 210a–212b). This knowledge of or touching the Good also proceeds gradually, as Plotinus explained in previous sections. It begins by the purification (κάθαρσις) of the soul, acquiring virtues (ἀρεταί) and adornings (κοσμήσεις), i.e. by settling down in Intellect, becoming one with its contemplation and thus becoming Intellect itself or being, intellection and complete living being (ζῷον παντελές; cf. VI.7.36.9–13). In doing so, the soul comes close to the Good, which already shines toward it (cf. VI.7.36.13–15). At this stage, the soul must let go of all knowledge (πᾶν μάθημα) which led it to Intellect or beauty (καλός). It may be carried away from intellection, as if by a wave (κῦμα) or a swelling (οἰδέω) of the erotic Intellect. Then, it suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) beholds the light of the Good which fills its sight, such that it only sees this light and it itself becomes this light from which Intellect is born (cf. VI.7.36.18–27).

Let me now summarise what we have learned about beauty in VI.7.31–36, which were announced as sections dealing with the light of the Good, and which they did, in a way. They focused, namely, on the ascension of soul through Intellect to the Good which is enabled by light. It is light as the single threefold emanation from the Good (cf. above, pp. 130–131) which allows everything to become itself, i.e. to be constituted as a unified multiplicity referring back to its source, that is, as beauty. Beauty in this sense is the manifestation of the Good at all lower levels, with the result that there is a hierarchy of beauties or levels that are ἀγαθοειδής, where each higher level, so to speak, illuminates the lower one in a similar fashion to how the Good illuminates the Intellect. In contrast to the conception found in Plato's *Phaedrus*, the ascending soul does not need sensible beauty as a reminder. Rather, it was described as distrusting bodily beauty and after it became one with the Good, it even started, in a way, to despise all other things, including the beauty and knowledge which characterise the Intellect.

In discussing these passages, I have encountered several controversies about ἕνωσις which go beyond *Ennead* VI.7 and I have tried to briefly and carefully

align myself with certain interpretations of this process. Both the birth of Intellect and its return to the Good, which are probably to be identified, are eternal processes, although some of Plotinus' formulations might seem to suggest succession in time. In any case, on the basis of VI.7, it seemed to me more probable that the ascending Intellect has a pre-intellectual relation to the Good rather than a hyper-intellectual one. In the end, however, I am undecided about the outcome of ἕνωσις because Plotinus' statements could support both the conclusion that the soul merges with the Good itself and the conclusion that it unites "only" with the nascent Intellect.

The process of the soul's ascent was said to have several phases. It begins with purification, acquiring virtues and adornings. Then the soul merges with the contemplating Intellect, starts to see the form of the Good in it and consequently wants to see the Good, i.e. become more than Intellect. In order for that to happen, however, it must let go of all knowledge. This is possible because a part of Intellect—drunk Intellect or Intellect in love—is always ascending to the Good or returns to the state when it was born and looks to the Good unintellectually. This type of knowledge of the Good was distinguished from learning about it beforehand, which proceeds by analogies, negations, by getting to know what is from the Good, and by means of gradual ascensions, which is what Plotinus is doing in the *Enneads*.

I have also analysed the famous sections VI.7.32–33 where Plotinus distinguishes the Good as ἀρχή, which was said to be both ἀνείδεον and ἄμορφον, the beauty of Intellect which was called ἄμορφον εἶδος and all of the forms as εἴδη and μορφαί. I have proposed to interpret the notion of ἄμορφον εἶδος as capturing the intermediary character of beauty, since it is ἄμορφον, like the Good, but, at the same time, it is an εἶδος, i.e. an intelligible manifestation of the Good. As something shapeless, it draws its power from the Good, the power by which it stimulates an erotic ascent. I have also distinguished negative and positive statements about the Good which present it as a superlative all-powerful source and principle of everything which is beyond everything, i.e. which is different from everything and independent of it. In this sense, the Good was also said to be the source of beauty, but it was simultaneously termed καλλονή, κάλλος ὑπὲρ κάλλος, πάγκαλον, ὑπέρκαλον or κάλλος καλλοποιόν. Despite this, I still thought it possible not to overestimate the significance of these claims and to maintain that the primary beautiful is Intellect. Nevertheless, I urged that the importance of these claims not be underestimated either. Beauty allows this unusual predication, because it is in its very nature to refer to something above it and to arouse ἔρως which is, in the end, a desire for ἕνωσις. Moreover, it is the very manifestation of the Good and several of the Good's characteristics are preserved in it: the aforementioned energy required for the ascent, the direction or refer-

ence upwards and, so far as possible, also its oneness as unity (in multiplicity). I have also tried to point out an interesting asymmetry in the use of at least some opposite predicates, which enables Plotinus to call the Good beauteous (καλλονή) and not ugly, and which might also distinguish beauty from being above the level of Intellect, since the former might, in a sense, be applied to the Good, whereas the latter scarcely can. Finally, I tried to briefly sketch some exegetical reasons for calling the Good beautiful. I then turned to a comparison of section VI.7.32–33 with V.5.12, where Plotinus also tries to distinguish beauty of Intellect from the Good, but uses different means to this end, which are also interesting for the history of the concept of the sublime. In contrast to the boredom of soul in Intellect and to the terrifying nature of the Good in VI.7, treatise V.5 associates excitement with the beauty of Intellect and gentleness with the grace of the Good.

6.7 The Good and Intellection (VI.7.37–42)

The last parts of treatise VI.7 are devoted to the discussion of Aristotle's account of νόησις νοήσεως as the ultimate principle. Plotinus explains here why and in what sense the Good does not think. Since these parts are less important for our purposes, I shall only briefly summarise the most important arguments which indirectly shed some light also on the question of beauty. These arguments exemplify in what sense a predicate—intellection—can or cannot be used for the Good. This discussion has consequences for a better understanding of the predication of beauty in relation to the Good.

Plotinus first draws our attention to one of the controversies between the advocates of the idea that the first principle thinks. For it is not clear, he says, what it actually thinks (cf. VI.7.37.1–3): only itself as is the case of Aristotle's unmoved mover (cf. *Met.* 1074b17–35) or everything, i.e. also the things after it, as the Stoics claim (cf. e.g. SVF I.172, SVF II.1106, SVF I.537 and Hadot 1988, p. 252)? In any case, Plotinus wants to focus especially on Aristotle's account of νόησις νοήσεως. He attacks it from several different angles:

First, he questions the value (σεμνόν) of the unmoved mover, because Aristotle attributes thinking to it, in order for it to be the most valuable (cf. section 5.4). Plotinus interprets this as a sign of its lack of value, if taken by itself. Consequently, he outlines two possibilities: either the unmoved mover is valuable as thinking, but then it has less or no value itself, or it has value itself, but then it does not need thinking (cf. VI.7.37.3–10).

Second, Plotinus lays bare the fact that Aristotle speaks about the first principle as both a substance (οὐσία) and an active actuality (ἐνέργεια). In this case,

however, it will be double, i.e. not simple (ἁπλοῦς), as the first principle must be. By contrast, if it is pure thinking without anything added, it does not think since there is no subject of thinking, nor is there any object which could be thought, because, as has already been said, nothing is added to pure thinking of this sort (cf. VI.7.37.10–19 and the commentary of Siegmann 1990, p. 169). Consequently, the first principle is correctly said by Plato to be above Intellect (ὑπὲρ νοῦν; cf. *Rep*. 508c1) and thinking can be attributed only to Intellect, which is many (cf. VI.7.37.18–34). If Intellect did not think, it would be unintelligent (ἀνόητος). However, saying that the Good does not think cannot mean the same thing, because its nature does not involve thinking. Hence, if we say that the Good does not think, this negative statement cannot be taken to indicate privation. If it were, we would be arbitrarily attributing to the Good some task to do and then predicating its absence. Plotinus illustrates the absurdity of this by saying that the Good could, in this sense, be said to be unmedical (ἀνίατρον). What a negative statement such as "the Good does not think" rather means, is that it is prior to thinking, such that it does not need to do anything, but is completely self-sufficient by being what it is (cf. VI.7.37.24–31). However, Plotinus continues, it cannot in fact *be* anything: we cannot use *being* as a copula when predicating of it, because it is no substrate and thus we cannot predicate of it. The copula we use should be interpreted as a mere reference (σημαίνω) to what it is (cf. VI.7.38.1–4).

Third, Plotinus challenges the object of the potential knowledge of the first principle, which here designates the Plotinian Good rather than Aristotle's unmoved mover. What would it know? It cannot know that it is, or what it is, since it *is* not. The content of its thinking cannot be solely "the Good" because it would not, as such, be connected with the Good as thinking. Moreover, there would be at least a duality between it as thinking and the Good as what is thought (cf. VI.7.38.10–20). Consequently, as Plotinus puts it, "if the thought of the Good is different from the Good, the Good is there already before the thought of it" (VI.7.38.21–22). As such, it does not need to think (cf. VI.7.38.22–25). Rather, there is something like a simple concentration with respect to itself (ἁπλῆ τις ἐπιβολὴ αὐτῷ πρὸς αὐτὸν). However, this must be thought of as involving no difference of any kind, because difference exists in Intellect along with all of the other highest kinds, and in fact along with everything (cf. VI.7.39.1–16).[63] Any relation to the Good must, therefore, be non-intelligent (οὐδὲν νοερὸν

63 I agree with Hadot (1988, p. 358) that Plotinus does not posit the self-consciousness of the Good here. He is attempting to present a more intimate self-relation than that of Intellect. However, the denial of such a self-relation is rather to be interpreted as positing more than

ἔχει), because intelligibility is necessarily linked with multiplicity. Therefore, it is more like touch (οἷον ἐπαφή) or a "movement, simple and all the same" (ἁπλοῦν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ πᾶν οἷον κίνημα; VI.7.39.18–19). The quasi-self-relation of the Good is to be understood as standing still in majesty (σεμνὸν ἑστήξεται), which is Plotinus' interpretation of Plato's words from the *Sophist* (248d–249a).

Fourth, in order to change the mind of someone who is still unconvinced, Plotinus claims that it is necessary to add persuasion (πειθώ) to necessity (ἀνάγκη) and to encourage (παραμύθια) this person. He begins his attempt to persuade with a general statement that one must distinguish between the origin of thought (νόησις πᾶσα ἔκ τινός ἐστι) and its object (νόησις τινός). Whereas the thinking intrinsic to soul is an actualisation of pre-existing intelligible forms, the thinking in Intellect is not similarly derived from the Good, which does not contain the intelligibles coming to be in Intellect. The Good is rather the very power to generate (δύναμις τοῦ γεννᾶν ἐφ' ἑαυτῆς), such that it created substance and thinking as one and many. This is, in fact, another meaning of the predicate μέγας (cf. section 6.6): being powerful enough to generate being itself. Since, however, Intellect is the first actuality and the first thought, that which generated it cannot itself be actuality and thought. Rather, it must be something wonderful (τι θαυμαστόν) above these, so that it is not the first principle that needs thinking to have value as it is in Aristotle. On the contrary, Intellect derives its value from the Good which is pure (καθαρόν) from thought and from everything else remaining one in itself (cf. VI.7.40.4–49). In this way, Intellect has an object to "think" when it is born, because "when it thinks itself it is in a way comprehending what it had from the vision of another in itself" (VI.7.40.50–51). Then again, the Good does not think, since it has nothing to think and does not need to think itself, because it is one with itself and thus seeks nothing (cf. VI.7.40.51–56).

Fifth, Plotinus demonstrates that the Good does not think by pointing out the fact that thinking is an aid for those who are in need. It is the ability to find light in darkness, but light itself does not need this. Since thinking always presupposes multiplicity, the Good must be simple and whatever is added to it in fact diminishes it because it needs nothing. If this Good is something, says Plotinus, it is so in a greater way than through knowledge (κατὰ γνῶσιν), thought (νόησιν) or self-perception (σύνεσιν αὐτοῦ). Nor is it in need, in the sense that it does not provide anything to itself but suffices. Therefore, it is not even good for itself but only for others. It does not need to look at itself and nothing can be said to be present with it (cf. VI.7.41.1–38).

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self-relation, i.e. simple identitiy of the Good with itself, which is even above the identity provided by the Same as one of the highest kinds.

Therefore, Plotinus concludes, one must respect the natural order of things and posit values (σεμνά) of a second order (like thinking) around the Good and those of the third order around them. This is the proper interpretation of what Plato says (cf. *Ep.* II 312e) about the King, as the source of everything beautiful, around whom everything is set and for the sake of whom all are, while the King remains different from everyone else. In this sense, too, when Plato says that the Good is the cause of all beauty (αἴτια πάντων καλῶν), beauty itself (τὸ καλόν) is to be posited among the intelligible forms (ἐν τοῖς εἴδεσι), while the Good is above beauty (ὑπὲρ τὸ καλὸν πᾶν τοῦτο), such that there is the Good as a centre around which is Intellect, and around Intellect soul and around soul the sensible world. The point of this image is that everything depends on the first radically different centre and is either closer to it or more distant from it (cf. VI.7.42.1–24).

In summary, these sections of VI.7 exemplify how it is possible to predicate something of the Good. Denying a predicate to the Good, for instance, intelligence, cannot be taken to indicate privation. Rather it indicates priority with respect to the predicate. Plotinus also tries to positively describe this priority, or the fact that the Good is the source of the predicate. He does so by attributing simple concentration with respect to itself to the Good. This concentration, however, is to be thought of as involving no difference. Or, alternatively, he says that it is standing still in majesty. Similarly, the relation to the Good must be non-intelligent, which can positively be likened to touching it or moving to it, without any change. By using these paradoxical phrases and images, Plotinus tries to simultaneously maintain the continuity of a predicate from the Good to the lower levels and the transcendence of the Good, which necessitates a radical shift in the meaning of the predicate when applied to the Good. The very last section of VI.7 claims that beauty is to be posited of Intellect and that the Good is above beauty as its source. Therefore, saying that the Good is not beautiful should not be taken to indicate privation of beauty. Rather, the Good is to be understood as being more than beauty, or the source of it, similar to the case of intellection. As we have seen in analysing sections 32–33 (see section 6.6), this is precisely what Plotinus is trying to express positively by saying that the Good is the beauteous, beauty above beauty, the super-beautiful, beauty which makes beauty, etc. The identification of the Good and beauty (or rather the beauteous, καλλονή) in VI.7.32–33 should therefore be read in the context of the whole treatise. Their identification is not Plotinus' final word.

CHAPTER 7

Beauty as Illuminated Unity in Multiplicity

7.1 Beauty on the Level of Sensibles

As I have pointed out throughout the analyses of treatises I.6 and V.8, the cause of beauty in the sensible world must itself be some sort of beauty which beautiful things participate in (cf. sections 2.1, 2.3 and 3.2). Beautiful bodies receive forms as λόγοι that come from Intellect and that are images of forms that are beautiful in themselves (cf. section 2.3 and 3.2). These formative principles unify and order the underlying matter or mass and make bodies what they are (cf. section 2.3). Formative principles are, in this sense, relatively *one* and hold the parts of the formed body together, i.e. they are at the same time the being of such bodies and their beauty. Moreover, if a λόγος is to dominate in matter, it must distribute its *one* to the parts of the unified body and thus also distribute being and beauty to them (cf. sections 2.2 and 2.3). Plotinus explicitly says that the being of a thing depends on its being one and identifies being and beauty (cf. section 3.4.7). Therefore, a unified body becomes what it is through the domination of a form that unifies all of the parts of the constituted whole. This form makes the whole beautiful and, simultaneously, the form's *one*, being and beauty are distributed to all the parts because a whole cannot consist of non-united, i.e. non-existing or non-beautiful parts.

We have also encountered the question of how these λόγοι are transmitted to matter by soul. Plotinus claims that it is possible to say that bodies acquire their beauty from both Intellect and soul. The former expression is, in a sense, more precise, since soul, in contrast to intellect, is not beautiful in itself (cf. section 2.3). Both explanations can be reconciled since Plotinus ultimately thinks that all bodies are created by a soul, either by a particular soul, in the case of artefacts (and perhaps partially our own bodies), or by the world soul, in the case of everything else. Both types of soul create bodies with the help of forms, analogously to how the Demiurge of Plato's *Timaeus* thinks the intelligible archetypes and shapes the world according to them. In this sense, soul mediates λόγοι to bodies, but they nevertheless ultimately come from Intellect (cf. section 2.3). In the brief discussion of productive contemplation in section 3.1, we were also able to specify this mechanism to some extent. The upper part of the world soul contemplates Intellect, but as λόγοι in soul, and, by projecting itself into its product—i.e. into nature—it creates. The lower part of soul (nature), silently contemplating these λόγοι, creates matter, before

turning to it again in order to form it. In this way, it gives a share of itself to matter and eternally gives rise to the sensible world. In the case of individual souls, Plotinus describes τέχνη as the human form of participation in Intellect. A τεχνίτης is able to form matter, i.e. to invest it with a λόγος, through his productive knowledge—i.e. his participation in τέχνη—by means of which he makes himself similar to the productive self-contemplation of Intellect. This kind of beautiful artefact is, however, beautiful only to the extent to which the matter of the mixture (i.e. body) submits to what is being created, that is, to the extent to which it participates in the invested form (cf. section 3.2).

Plotinus most frequently explains the participation of bodies in forms by means of the metaphor of illumination, through which he emphasises two points: 1) what illuminates abides like an archetype in itself; 2) what is illuminated, which is an image of the archetype, is held separate from it by illumination (cf. section 2.3). However, we must not conclude from this metaphor that everything is everywhere, since different powers of the forms as a whole become active in different bodies. Moreover, not all matters are equally disposed to receive all forms, depending on what forms they have already received. Bodies are mixtures of forms and matter, and this mixture is multi-layered, because matter is first shaped by the forms of the elements, which are then organised into higher wholes, i.e. into objects. Even matter, in the strict sense of the most distant emanation from the Good, is primarily adapted for the primary kinds of bodily forms. This also explains what it means for a λόγος to dominate in matter, since not every form is compatible with all others in a body. This is why Plotinus repeatedly contrasts his notion of beauty with that of ugliness, understood as a deficiency in participation or, as he puts it, a deficiency in the dominance of a form in matter (cf. section 2.3 and 3.2). However, I have also suggested other possibilities, i.e. life, which is normally present in a body along with other forms, but which is absent from a corpse (cf. section 2.3). This view also seems to be supported by Plotinus' claim from VI.7.3 (cf. section 6.1) that the dominance of form in matter is apparent, if no part of a thing is left unshaped. A further possibility would be the opposite excess of a form, as in the case of polydactyly or other deformities.

The beauty of bodies was often contrasted with the ugliness of matter, which Plotinus identifies with τὸ ἄπειρον and τὸ ἀόριστον, or with that which runs through a mass as a movement of contraction, in which the great becomes the small, and of expansion, in which the small becomes the great (cf. section 2.3). Therefore, the presence of a formative principle in matter makes it merely a sort of decorated corpse, because it does not overcome the undefined "nature". Rather a λόγος makes matter more manifest as what it is, that is, the undefined itself or, precisely, a corpse (cf. section 3.4.6). In this sense, what is

beautiful in bodies is λόγος itself—i.e. the intelligible—and bodies, insofar as they are matter, cannot be beautiful, or at least can only be beautiful insofar as they are a *decorated* corpse. From this perspective, the distribution of one, being and beauty takes place only on the level of the decorating λόγοι, i.e. on the level of their coherence and appropriate fullness: no λόγος must be either missing or excessively present. In his polemic against the Gnostics, however, i.e. from the perspective of productive contemplation and beauty of the intelligible archetype, Plotinus simultaneously promotes the concept of a beautiful bodily world, which one must gently accept as an image which imitates its paradigm as much as it can (cf. section 3.2).

In order to see bodily nature as a beautiful image, one must understand it in relation to its archetype. This is not something everyone is capable of, although the desire for beauty and, through it, for the Good is the common denominator of all kinds of erotic desires (cf. section 6.6). As we have seen, Plotinus says that musicians, lovers and philosophers are disposed to ascend to Intellect (cf. section 2.4) and, with the appropriate guidance, grasp its beauty and subsequently correctly understand the beauty of the sensible world. The beauty of the sensible plays a double role in such an ascent. Plotinus warns his readers in both treatises on beauty (cf. section 2.4 and 3.3) about the fate of Narcissus, who mistook his image for himself. Beauty is thus capable not only of motivating the ascent to a higher beauty, but also, in a sense, of binding us to itself, because it is so impressive. The error the soul makes in confusing an image with its original may have fatal consequences. Plotinus urges us to understand beauty on the level of sensible things as a mere image of a higher beauty, but, as I have already stressed, we must simultaneously not despise it, because it is still an image imitating its paradigm as much as it can. The concept of bodily beauty as a beautiful image of intelligible forms thus contains a double warning: 1) We should always bear in mind that it is merely an image of a higher beauty and, in this sense, use it to ascend to its paradigm. 2) We should praise it as a necessary manifestation of this higher beauty in a weaker form and not despise it. In treatise III.5, we have even noted an unusually accommodating attitude towards bodily beauty. Plotinus claims that the beauty of bodies is the completion of their paradigm, and as far as those lovers who understand such beauty as a mere image remain temperate and do not engage in unnatural sexual intercourse, there is nothing wrong with desiring bodily beauty (cf. section 6.6).

7.2 Beauty on the Level of Soul

In the case of the soul, it is also possible to say that it becomes beautiful by partaking in Intellect, which unifies it (cf. section 2.5). Part of both individual souls and of the world soul, the soul in Intellect, in fact never leaves Intellect. This core of each soul is consequently always beautiful. The rest of the world soul also eternally remains in the state of best possible contemplation below Intellect and is therefore as beautiful as a soul can be. In the case of individual souls, losing their global perspective creates their individual perspective, opening the door to forgetting their true nature. Such souls must restore the proper partaking in Intellect and, in this way, they can become beautiful again. In contrast to the mode of partaking proper to bodies, however, individual souls become beautiful through purification, conversion and likening to god, which restore them to their original, virtuous and beautiful state (cf. section 2.5). This purification implies a change in the attitude of the soul towards bodily nature and a focus on the intelligible, ultimately leading it to receive an imprint from Intellect which unifies this soul and dominates it (cf. section 2.5). The archetype of this likening may be found in the life of Intellect itself, i.e. in its "itself-thinking that it itself is" (cf. section 2.5 and Emilsson 2007, p. 109). The outcome of the purification is the merging of the soul with Intellect, i.e. the soul becomes aware of itself as a part of Intellect. At the same time, however, it becomes a formative power (λόγος), which imprints itself in the parts of the soul that are not united with Intellect. These become virtuous and gain a share in the beauty that the highest part has always been (cf. section 2.5). This explanation for the outcome of purification was motivated by an effort to account for how Plotinus could, at the same time, suggest that there remains a certain distance between a virtuous soul and Intellect (because, properly speaking, there is virtue only in soul), and simultaneously claim that, after purification, the soul becomes truly beautiful, i.e. a form (in Intellect).

In the analyses of treatises V.8, II.2 and parts of II.9, we were also able to specify the change a soul undergoes in becoming virtuous (cf. section 3.3). The starting point of this reconstruction of Plotinus' thought was the case of heavenly bodies, which perform eternal, circular movements in an attempt to imitate the stability and purity of Intellect and direct themselves at it. The heavenly bodies and the heavens as such are directed by the individual souls of heavenly bodies and the world soul respectively, which have never lost their original orderly form, in contrast to individual souls here below. In this sense, they always remain equally beautiful and their beauty is manifest in the heavens. Furthermore, if individual souls below the level of celestial bodies lose their original orderly state because of their involvement with particular bodies

or due to the loss of the world soul's global perspective, it seems to follow that the λόγος received by an individual virtuous soul restores the circular movement of the soul (cf. section 3.3). The circular movement of an individual soul of this sort still differs from that of the world soul, however, because being virtuous still means being an individual, whose role differs from that of the gods. More likely, the circular movement of an individual soul is the underlying mechanism of the transformation of the attitude towards bodies, which Plotinus describes in virtuous souls.

In contrast to the beauty of the world soul and of the individual souls of heavenly bodies, the beauty of an individual soul below the level of celestial bodies may vary according to its degree of pollution or purification. However, Plotinus also describes the process of purification as an immersion in one's innermost self, i.e. as a form of knowledge, and he even expresses it in relative terms on a scale of increasing beauty. The culmination of this scale is union with Intellect, where we find the identity of the knower and the known, or beauty itself (cf. section 3.4.8). This also means that, just as was the case for bodies, the beauty of souls corresponds to their degree of being and unity (cf. section 3.4.7). Soul, as such, possesses the *one* more fully than bodies do and is consequently more beautiful. As opposed to Intellect, where everything is everything else, a soul has many different powers, which make it only a ἓν καὶ πολλά (cf. V.1.8.23–26) or, as Plotinus says in VI.2, one nature that is many. Moreover, it is also many, since it is a contemplative activity that is directed towards itself, which cannot be simple (cf. section 4.2).

From a different perspective, however, individual souls below the level of celestial bodies, can surpass the world soul and the souls of celestial bodies, because the former have the ability to ascend even higher than Intellect. Nevertheless, this path always leads through Intellect, since part of it—drunken Intellect or Intellect in love—eternally ascends to the Good (cf. section 6.6). The ascent of individual souls is enabled by the fact that ἔρως (the son of heavenly Aphrodite, who corresponds to the soul in Intellect) is the desire for Intellect's beauty and through it for the Good (cf. section 6.6). In individual souls, ἔρως causes powerful πάθη, which either bind these souls to the bodily beauty they see or enable them to ascend to the paradigm of the beauty, which was what really aroused them (but cf. section 7.5). These different reactions of individual souls are based on their correct or incorrect understanding of bodily beauty as a mere image of intelligible beauty, as well as on their desire to procreate eternally (cf. section 6.6). In ascending, the soul follows the light which shines down from what is above onto what is below, i.e. ultimately from the Good down onto Intellect. In this final ascent towards the Good, ἔρως never really vanishes, because the Good, transcending both form and

formlessness, cannot be reached. In this sense, the love for the Good is unlimited (cf. section 6.6).[1]

7.3 Beauty on the Level of Intellect

Divine Intellect is repeatedly identified as the primary seat of beauty (cf. sections 2.6 and 3.5). Plotinus gives two reasons for this. The first is that there is nothing that is not beautiful in Intellect, since every part of it is the whole and all of the other parts, such that beauty is, in this sense, everywhere in beauty (cf. section 3.4.6). Even intelligible matter, as something simple, always formed and living a defined and intelligible life, can be said to be beautiful, while not hindering beauty from being everywhere in beauty (cf. section 3.4.6). The second reason concerns the intermediate position of Intellect between what can be called the deficiently beautiful, i.e. soul and bodies, and what is more than beautiful, i.e. the Good (cf. section 3.5). However, Plotinus specifies this intermediate position as being at the same time differentiated and bound together in a firmer fashion than soul is (cf. section 3.5). The intermediate position of Intellect consists, therefore, of its being a specific unified multiplicity of such a kind that all of its parts are all of the other parts and the whole (cf. section 3.4.3). In this sense, the unique *unitas multiplex* of Intellect is the deeper reason lying behind the two justifications given for Intellect's being made the primary seat of beauty, namely 1) that beauty *there* is everywhere in beauty and 2) that Intellect occupies an intermediate position between the Good and soul.

We were also able to confirm this observation later in treatise VI.6. There, Plotinus identifies beauty with being a measure or number, i.e. something limited, and with something that is not limited externally, but by its very being. This is precisely the case with number, which refers to the actuality of each form. Number is, therefore, another suitable notion for capturing both of the essential aspects of beauty: the fact that it is limited and the fact that this limit is not external (cf. section 5.4). Anything externally limited is, for Plotinus, merely a decorated corpse (cf. section 3.4.6). As number, Intellect is multiple, but limited. These conclusions were also confirmed by parts of treatise VI.7 (cf. section 6.1).

Let me also try to briefly summarise what we have learned so far about the unified multiplicity of Intellect, which we identified with beauty. I have identi-

1 Moreover, love of the Good would probably not vanish even if it could be reached, since in VI.8.15.1–2 the Good is said to be love of itself, insofar as it is beautiful.

fied five mutually interconnected perspectives Plotinus uses to describe unified multiplicity. The first one related to the nature of intelligible objects, which all contain each other and the whole of Intellect (cf. sections 3.4.3 and 3.4.4). The second one concerned the hierarchy within the intelligibles including the unifying and multiplying role of the highest kinds (cf. section 3.4.4 and chapter 4). The third one was connected with the nature of the act of intellection proper to Intellect (cf. section 3.4.4). The fourth one related to the inner "arithmetic" structure of Intellect (cf. section 3.4.4 and chapter 5). And the last one focused on how Intellect acquired its unity and multiplicity in its genesis (cf. sections 3.4.4, 5.3 and 6.3). I have also outlined some of the overlaps between these perspectives (cf. section 3.4.4), which all aim to show that Intellect thinks everything at once, but as differentiated.

Anything that is to be called beautiful must be unified and this is true in the highest possible degree for everything in Intellect and for Intellect as a whole. From this perspective, it would seem that the more multiple a thing is, the less beautiful it is, but this does not actually seem to be the case, at least in Intellect. Its limited wholeness was, on the contrary, what made it more beautiful, in contrast to a hypothetical state in which Intellect is unfolded. Only when it has become everything and wanders through everything in itself does it attain its true majesty and beauty (cf. sections 5.4 and 6.1). After all, not only its unity, but also the multiplicity which came to be in Intellect is derived from the Good, and Intellect is perhaps surprisingly ἀγαθοειδής even insofar as it is multiple (cf. section 6.3).

However, the beauty of Intellect is not only derived from the Good in the same sense as everything else in Intellect, but it is, in fact, its manifestation (cf. section 6.4). The Good shines on Intellect and its light is what allows Intellect to be seen as truly beautiful. It also shines on all of the intelligibles and on the whole of Intellect and enables everything in it to be seen in its own beauty (cf. sections 6.4 and 6.6). This illumination is, however, something extra, in addition to Intellect's own characteristics, something even beyond its unity and multiplicity. I have tried to interpret the crucial passages in VI.7.22 as distinguishing between two hypothetical types of beauty, depending on whether Intellect is illuminated or not. In the latter case, its beauty is said to be inactive and does not arouse the soul's interest (cf. section 6.4). In the former case, Plotinus talks rather about warmth from the Good or its grace, which awakens the soul, such that it naturally rises toward both Intellect and the Good (cf. section 6.4). Although Plotinus does not explicitly say in VI.7.22 that the state of Intellect in which it is illuminated can be identified with beauty, I have tried to show that this is a reasonable interpretation that avoids two extremes. Among other reasons, this is because if we simply add beauty into these passages, we might

overlook an important distinction between two types of beauty. At the same time, if we refuse to call illuminated Intellect beautiful, we will face various difficulties. Plotinus does, in fact, call the Good beautiful in treatise VI.7, while other *Enneads* also attribute to beauty the ability to stimulate erotic desire and to make the soul ascend to the Good. Moreover, I have tried to show that Plotinus might have good reason to avoid referring to beauty in VI.7.22, given that he wants to stress the added value of illumination and to explain how the Good is manifest in Intellect (cf. section 6.4). The true and primary beauty in Intellect is, consequently, unity in multiplicity *illuminated* by the Good. Only when the Good shines on it does beauty become the object of desire, which is, in fact, always a desire for the Good through beauty. This more profound concept of beauty does not reject the identification of beauty with unity in multiplicity. Rather, it places it into a broader perspective which better captures the referential character of beauty in relation to the Good and stresses the enriching role of multiplicity in Intellect, since, from a genetic point of view, Intellect is primarily ἀγαθοειδής as life (cf. section 6.4).

The fact that illuminated Intellect is said to be the primary seat of beauty does, however, raise a further crucial question. Are we to posit a form of beauty in Intellect, as Plato does, or does beauty rather somehow characterise Intellect as such? As we have seen, there are several passages in the *Enneads* that seem to suggest that there is, in fact, a form of beauty (cf. section 2.3 and 5.2). At the same time, in all of these cases, Plotinus discusses topics other than beauty, and the context of these claims might suggest their dialectical purpose, which is to make a point in an independent argument. Taken together with the fact that Plotinus clearly avoids talking about the existence of the form of beauty in both treatise I.6 and V.8 and connects beauty merely with the presence of *a* form (cf. sections 2.3 and 3.2), it seems to follow that he does not in fact endorse the existence of a form of beauty. Furthermore, the identification of beauty with being, on the one hand (cf. section 3.4.7 and 4.4–4.5), and its being considered as a candidate for one of the highest kinds, on the other (cf. section 4.5), might be taken to suggest that beauty is somehow special, that even if it were a form, it would not be simply one form among others. Similarly, my identification of beauty with the (illuminated) unity in multiplicity of Intellect implies that it is not just a form, because unity in multiplicity characterises each individual form, as well as the Intellect as a whole. Rather, it seems to be a predicate that primarily characterises Intellect as such, because Intellect is always one and many or one-many, even as unified number (cf. chapters 4 and 5). Also, it can be said to be one and many from various perspectives (cf. section 3.4.4). Therefore, its unity and multiplicity is, rather, distributed from Intellect as a whole to its "parts", i.e. to individual forms, and its beauty along with it. I would con-

sequently argue that Intellect is primarily beautiful as a whole and that the beauty of each individual form in it is derived from this primary beauty of the whole (cf. Corrigan 2005, pp. 216–217). This interpretation does, however, to a certain extent change the participation model that was previously discussed. It is not by participating directly in *a* form that a thing becomes beautiful, but by participating through the mediation of this form in the unity and multiplicity of the whole Intellect, which is reflected in the participated form.

This would indeed make beauty a special characteristic of Intellect, although not the only one of this kind. We have encountered several other predicates that could be considered to apply primarily to Intellect as a whole and only secondarily to its parts. These include the virtues (ἀρεταί), knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) and the very name "Intellect" (νοῦς) discussed in treatise VI.2 as potential candidates for the highest kinds (cf. section 4.5), to which we might add the designation "active actuality" (ἐνέργεια) and "wisdom" (σοφία). Moreover, in a different sense, the highest kinds themselves (cf. section 4.1), including the aforementioned being which Plotinus identifies with beauty, characterise Intellect as such, among other reasons because they are principles. Additionally, the one in Intellect, or the monad, was also said to be a principle. However, each part of Intellect, including the highest kinds, was said to be in every way many (cf. section 4.3). As one and many, Intellect is number (cf. section 5.3), and as encompassing number, Intellect is a complete living being, which lives as a whole, while its parts are also alive. Finally, its activity and its life are eternal, and eternity characterises Intellect once again as a whole. For this reason, we should attempt to shed some light on the differences and potential overlaps between beauty and these general predicates, i.e. life, being and the other highest kinds, the one in Intellect, multiplicity, number, intellection, active actuality and eternity, knowledge and wisdom, and the virtues.

When we reflect on the notion of life in the *Enneads*, we find it used in various senses (cf. section 6.4). I have proposed to understand "being alive" as referring to a fully constituted activity (i.e. being the complete living being or encompassing number). As such, however, this activity is always productive and begets what is ontologically lower. If we leave aside, for now, the question of whether the Good itself could be said to be such a fully constituted and productive activity, then life seems to refer primarily to the effluent activity of the Good, which becomes Intellect. However, this activity also continues within Intellect as the movement of its inner differentiation, making it the complete living being. And being complete, it is also the productive component of its contemplation, i.e. its outpouring resulting in the constitution of its lower image. In this sense, life is not simply a particular content of Intellect, i.e. a form in it, but rather characterises Intellect genetically, i.e. both in

its birth and in its birth giving. It is precisely on the boundary between these two poles that Intellect—as life—is the fully constituted complete living being, with "life" denoting here Intellect as a whole. As has been noted (cf. section 6.4), life, in this sense, is quite close to beauty, which refers to the same fully constituted activity, but with respect to its source and, in this sense, concerns its ascent, whereas life refers to this activity in its outpouring and thus concerns its descent. Beauty therefore focuses rather on the *unity* of a multiplicity, whereas life focuses on its *multiplicity* and *multiplying* character. However, the main focus is, in both cases, vertical, in the sense of relating two ontological levels. Nevertheless, the close connection between life and beauty makes it possible for Plotinus to say that there is no beauty in a corpse, or even that where there is life, there is beauty, because beauty and life presuppose a constituted activity of contemplation, which is produced by what is above and which is itself productive.

The highest kinds are said to be both genera and principles, out of which Intellect is composed and from which the whole of it is derived (cf. section 4.1). There are five highest kinds: Being—the most firmly established of all; Movement—or what makes Being perfect, its life, actuality and very being; Rest—or what makes Being exist in the same state and in the same way; the Same and the Other—which make possible, on the one hand, distinctions between all of the highest kinds and, on the other hand, their union. These kinds mutually condition each other and are all-pervading, in the sense that all other forms necessarily partake in them, and are composed out of them, as it were. The highest kinds, however, are also numbers, because they are one and many, and number is even said to be the very being of Being. At the beginning of the genesis of Intellect, Being was unified number and, by the end, it had become encompassing number.

The highest kinds also seem to primarily refer to Intellect as a whole, because: 1) they are the *highest* kinds, i.e. kinds that unite the whole of Intellect; 2) they are principles or constitutive components of Intellect; 3) they are numbers. Intellect as such is the primary Being, is Movement itself and Rest itself and is what is both the Same and Other. Individual forms, by contrast, are like this only derivatively, i.e. by partaking in the highest kinds, or by being composed out of these as it were. In this way, again, where there is being as the representative of all of the highest kinds, there is always unity in multiplicity, and therefore beauty, at least in the narrower sense of unilluminated *unitas multiplex*. As a result, Plotinus was able to identify being and beauty.

Then again, beauty does differ from being and all of the other kinds. It would not be identical with being even if it were the sixth-highest kind, but it is not even one of the highest kinds, as Plotinus makes quite clear (cf. section 4.5).

As noted above (cf. section 6.4), the highest kinds are mostly used by Plotinus to explain structural relations within Intellect, and, in this sense, are a part of a horizontally oriented view of Intellect,[2] whereas life and beauty (in the broader sense of the word as illuminated *unitas multiplex*) belong rather to a vertically oriented description, life in a descending manner and beauty in an ascending one. The vertical description, according to which Intellect becomes illuminated, which arouses erotic desire and brings about epistrophic movement, presupposes, in this sense, the horizontal one.[3] This was, in fact, the point of Plotinus' argument against beauty being one of the highest kinds, if one understands it as that which, as it were, shines upon the forms (cf. section 4.5). It seems, in the end, that from the horizontal perspective, Intellect can only be beautiful in the narrow sense of the word, i.e. as unilluminated, because this illumination already implies verticality. As we have seen, however, such beauty is either painful and terrifying or perhaps, in the end, boring (cf. section 6.6). By contrast, the fact that beauty is the manifestation of the Good and that the Good is the final cause of the ascent along the *scala amoris* is something that establishes a close connection between the Good and beauty (see section 7.4). But their closeness, in fact, disrupts the identification of beauty and being above the level of Intellect, because although it is, in a sense, possible to say that the Good is beautiful (see section 7.4), Plotinus mostly avoids saying that the Good exists, always stressing that it is beyond being.

In conclusion, in contrast to the highest kinds, beauty is not a kind or even a principle. Instead, it belongs to the group of predicates that do not focus on the horizontal description of Intellect, but rather on a vertical (ascending) one, which brings it closer to the Good. Nevertheless, a predicate of this kind does presuppose what the horizontal perspective shows to be the case, i.e. that Intellect is a specific unified multiplicity. Beauty, in the broader sense of the word, therefore comprises both unity and multiplicity and can be connected with the notion of number, which it shares with the highest kinds (cf. section 5.4). However, we must ultimately conclude that even numbers are beautiful in the broader sense of the word, as derived from the Good through the monad, i.e. as illuminated.

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2 Then again, there are the previously discussed passages in the *Enneads*, where Plotinus describes the genesis of Intellect with the help of movement and otherness. As has been noted before (cf. footnote 10 in section 5.4, and 24 in section 6.3), these claims are quite enigmatic and reconciling them with the more standard (horizontal) role of the highest kinds, if possible, would be a difficult task.

3 Of course, the converse is also true. The horizontal description presupposes the vertical one, insofar as what is described needs to be generated first.

That said, we should consider the similarities and differences between the notion of beauty and that of number in more detail. And, in this context, two further predicates—the one in Intellect, or the monad, and the multiplicity of Intellect—should be addressed. As we have seen, the monad should probably not be called beautiful, because—in contrast to being and the other highest kinds—it is not number, it is not many (except in allowing for prior and posterior) and it is not a genus (cf. section 4.3). There are many reasons for this, of which the two most important for Plotinus are probably the fact that the one in Intellect would, as one of the highest kinds, not be one primarily and the fact that the one cannot be differentiated in itself, as a genus needs to be, because it creates species (cf. section 4.3). Therefore, the one in Intellect is only a principle. However, if it does not allow for multiplicity, it cannot be beautiful, given that we have identified beauty with (illuminated) unity in multiplicity. Moreover, it would probably not be correct to simply call Intellect as a whole "the monad", since the latter is, together with the dyad, rather the generative principle of Intellect. However, insofar as the one is present in Intellect with being and insofar as this being is one, it would be possible to say that Intellect is such a one: i.e. the one-that-is.[4] Therefore, if the monad itself is relatively clearly distinguished from beauty, how does this one-that-is differ from beauty? By the same token, insofar as we distinguish this one-that-is from the monad, it is not, in fact, different from being itself, such that the same differences from and similarities to beauty could be found (see the discussion of being above). Moreover, this one-that-is is not simply one anymore, but becomes multiple, i.e. it becomes number (see below).

Along the same lines, we could have doubts whether multiplicity is to be counted among the characteristics of Intellect as a whole. It would be strange to simply call Intellect multiple without any qualification. It seems that multiplicity might be considered to be a predicate of this sort in two possible senses. The first one would be that of the dyad, but just as the monad did not qualify as a holistic attribute of Intellect, the dyad as such must also be rejected. Moreover, Plotinus does not consider it as a potential candidate for one of the highest kinds, with the result that we do not find a clear statement about the dyad being a principle in Intellect in the same sense as the monad is. Its role is, moreover, obscured by its enigmatic relation not only to the notion of life, but also to otherness (cf. section 6.3). Nevertheless, it is different from beauty in all of these possible senses. If it is a principle, the opposite should be applied to it

4 I use this term, of course, with reference to the second hypothesis in Plato's *Parmenides* (142b–155). My reasoning below follows, to some extent, the argument of these passages.

as in the case of the monad, i.e. it cannot be beautiful because it is not one. If it is life or otherness, then its relation to beauty is such as was already described (cf. the discussion of life and the highest kinds above). The second possible qualification of multiplicity that could be considered an attribute of Intellect primarily referring to it as to a whole, might be a defined and intelligible multiplicity or rather (if we exclude the case of soul) the most unified multiplicity. In this case, however, this multiplicity would once again be number.

With these two specifications regarding the one in Intellect and its multiplicity in mind, we should turn to the predicate number, which is precisely what is born from the interaction between the monad and the dyad. As such, it was said to be the limit of being and its actuality, and I have interpreted the notion of number as denoting the specific unified multiplicity of Intellect from a structural perspective (cf. section 5.3). In this sense, the notion of number, and of substantial number as well, describe Intellect from a horizontal perspective, in the sense of focusing on its inner structure, which relates them to beauty, while differentiating them from it in the same way as from the highest kinds. As I have tried to show, the four qualified uses of number (i.e. unified, unfolded, moving in itself and inclusive), all work as a shorthand for the different perspectives from which Plotinus describes the utmost unified multiplicity of Intellect (cf. section 5.3). In this sense, these uses could be understood as filling out this horizontal description, while still remaining within the Intellect itself. The designations of Intellect as "unified" and "unfolded number" focus on the generation of Intellect, in the sense of its inner structuring, "number moving in itself" focuses on its intelligible activity, while "encompassing number" focuses on its interconnected wholeness. Nevertheless, none of these designations captures the ascending verticality implied by the notion of beauty as illuminated unity in multiplicity.

The last bundle of predicates, namely, intellection, active actuality and eternity, knowledge and wisdom, and the virtues, focus neither on the inner structure of Intellect, such as the highest kinds or the notion of number, nor on the relation of Intellect to what is above or below it, as in the case of beauty and life. Rather, they try to capture *how* Intellect is what it is. It is what it is by being νοῦς, i.e. intellective self-relation, and as such it becomes structured and all of the differentiated contents emerge in it as individual intellects. However, this inner constitution of Intellect is not a process, but rather the eternal, active actuality of everything, such that Intellect as a whole is ἐνέργεια and αἰών (cf. III.7.3) and each of its contents is like this secondarily. In this sense, Intellect does not need to come to know its contents, but always already knows them, while each of its contents knows itself. Therefore, Intellect is ἐπιστήμη and individual intellects in it are ἐπιστῆμαί. However, it is not even a conglomerate of discrete, self-

related, knowing intellects, but each part contains all of the other parts and the whole, such that Intellect can be called σοφία, because wisdom was identified with the immediate, ordered givenness of everything in everything (cf. section 3.4.5). The focus of all of these predicates on the *how* of Intellect is perhaps most obvious in the case of ἀρεταί, which Plotinus describes in the following way: "… intuitive thought *There* is knowledge and wisdom, self-concentration is self-control, its own proper activity is 'minding its own business'; its equivalent courage is immateriality and abiding pure by itself" (I.2.7.3–7). Therefore, neither of these holistic attributes of Intellect comprises the reference above as beauty does. They share with beauty at most the field of unified multiplicity, where they describe how it exists. Their focus is, in this sense, simply different.

7.4 Beauty and the Good

When dealing with the question of the primary seat of beauty, we have encountered contradictory assertions with respect to the beauty of the Good. As we have seen, Plotinus says, in some cases, that it is the Good that is the primary beauty (cf. sections 2.6 and 6.6), in others, that it is Intellect (cf. sections 2.6 and 3.5), while, in yet other cases, he remains ambiguous (cf. section 2.6). In dealing with these contradictory statements, my basic strategy has been to contextualise them and to try to fit them into the general outline of Plotinus' philosophy. What I mean by this is the paradox that the Good is simultaneously beyond all predication and, in a sense, capable of having everything predicated of it, since it is the source of all things.

We found the most striking theses about the beauty of the Good in treatise VI.7.32–33. Even there, however, things are more complicated, since Plotinus distinguishes between the ἀρχή (the Good) which is both ἀνείδεον and ἄμορφον, the beauty of Intellect, which is called ἄμορφον εἶδος, and finally all of the forms which are simply εἴδη and μορφαί (cf. section 6.6). I have argued that the notion of ἄμορφον εἶδος is very apt for describing beauty, because it captures its intermediary character and points to the fact that beauty leads to the Good, being its intelligible manifestation (cf. section 6.4). In this sense, the beauty of Intellect is indeed differentiated from the Good. On the other hand, Plotinus does claim in these passages that the Good possesses beauty of another kind, that it is beauty above beauty—beauty that makes beauty, its principle and term—calling it the all-beautiful or super-beautiful (cf. section 6.6). He even goes further with these expressions and says that the Good creates beauty as shapeless as the Good itself is, but in shape in another way, such that the first nature of the beautiful is formless (cf. section 6.6). Nevertheless, I have tried

to show that these and other statements about the Good in treatise VI.7 are, first and foremost, meant to present the Good as the superlative, all-powerful source and principle of everything which is beyond everything, i.e. different from it and also independent of it.

This cannot, however, be the whole explanation, because it is one thing to say that the Good both is and is not all predicates, and another to repeatedly connect it with one predicate, such as beauty, and, moreover, to present beauty as the very manifestation of the Good (cf. section 6.4). Therefore, I have pointed out some characteristics of beauty that make it suitable to be used in the ascent to the Good, that reflect the Good in some way and that bring the notion of beauty so close to that of the Good that they may easily be confused with each other. One of these was the referential character of beauty to what is above and its ability to arouse ἔρως, i.e. the desire to become one with the beloved which, in the end, is the Good (cf. section 6.6). Moreover, since beauty is the manifestation of the Good, it is the Good in something else (cf. section 6.4 and 6.6). In this sense, the Good becomes diminished, but beauty preserves the energy required for the ascent back upwards and, by referring to its source, it shows us the direction of this ascent (cf. section 6.6). Alongside these characteristics, beauty preserves the Good's oneness as much as it can, i.e. as unity in multiplicity (cf. section 6.6). A final reason was an exegetical one, namely to harmonise Plato's claims from various dialogues (cf. section 6.6).

This closeness of beauty to the Good is probably also the reason why beauty belongs rather to the group of predicates attributed to the Good which exhibit asymmetrical appropriateness in relation to their opposites. One example of such a predicate is the designation "Good" or "One", whose opposites cannot be predicated of the Good in any sense. Similarly, it would be extremely odd to call the Good ugly—or perhaps only in the sense of not being intelligible beauty. However, this would still be very inappropriate, because it could be better expressed by attributing to the Good all of the names that Plotinus actually ascribes to it in VI.7.32–33, like the super-beautiful, beauty above beauty, beauty that makes beauty, etc. (cf. section 6.6).

Beauty as a suitable predicate for the ascent to the Good can indeed often be found in contexts where Plotinus tries to make use of all of the different means of language to express the inexpressible nature of the Good (cf. sections 2.6 and 6.6), and it is also often connected with an attempt to express the infinite love we feel for it (cf. sections 2.6, 3.5 and 6.6). However, in some of these passages, Plotinus also clearly distinguishes them, for instance, in V.5.12 (cf. sections 3.5 and 6.6), where he differentiates between the gentleness, kindness and grace of the Good and the terrifying and wondrous nature of the beautiful, which brings pleasure mingled with pain. As I have tried to briefly show, this distinction calls

to mind the difference between the beautiful and the sublime from the history of aesthetics, because there is beauty and something more, which is μέγα, and they have a different impact on soul: one is gentle, the other terrifying. In opposition to the tradition, however, their effects are mismatched to their causes in Plotinus (cf. section 6.6).

More importantly, there are further reasons given in treatise V.5 for distinguishing beauty from the Good (cf. section 3.5). The beautiful needs the Good, but the Good does not need beauty. Nothing can exist without the Good and everyone longs for it in virtue of a divine instinct, as it were, such that it is present even to those who are asleep, and when one becomes aware of it, it is recognised as always already present. By contrast, beauty must be seen first to arouse longing and, again, as something unfamiliar it is terrifying and causes pain. Beauty makes us remember what is above, whereas the Good does not, both because—as always already present—it cannot be forgotten or, by extension, remembered and because there is nothing above it to refer to. Furthermore, the Good is good for others and not for itself (cf. section 6.5), whereas beauty is beautiful only for itself. Finally, no one is satisfied with only seeming to have the Good, whereas this suffices for many in the case of beauty (cf. section 3.5).

Other passages from the *Enneads* support the thesis that the Good not only is beauty (as its source), but also transcends it. In VI.9.11, Plotinus claims that he who unites with the Good has already run up beyond beauty and left it behind, like statues in the outer shrine of a temple (cf. section 2.6). In the same spirit, he also says in I.6.9 that the nature of the Good holds beauty as a screen before it (cf. section 2.6). One reason mentioned by Plotinus as an explanation for his ambiguous statements is a context-dependent need to distinguish the Good from Intellect. If we draw a line between them, then the primary seat of beauty will be Intellect. If we do not, it is possible, loosely speaking, to refer to the beautiful and the Good interchangeably (cf. section 2.6). We know, however, that it is ultimately necessary to distinguish them, since Intellect is not absolutely simple (cf. section 6.7). Along the same lines, the last section of VI.7 claims that beauty is to be posited in Intellect and that the Good is above beauty as its source (cf. section 6.7).

In conclusion, the relationship between beauty and the Good is ambiguous. On the one hand, the Good, as absolutely transcendent, is not beautiful and, in opposition to beauty, it is not multiple (but one), does not refer to what is above (but is the ultimate reference point) and is not illuminated (but is that which illuminates everything). At the same time, it is the source of beauty and is manifest in it, such that beauty preserves several of its characteristics, insofar as it can. Through beauty, the Good reaches to the very border of being,

and attracts everything back to itself.[5] As Siegmann (1990, p. 148) appositely puts it, with the appropriate erotic undertones, beauty is this manifest promise which allows us to glimpse what we are looking for, but immediately retreats into its purer form, which is above and which is, in the end, the Good. As I have suggested, it would be more apt from a systematic viewpoint to reserve a special term for the beauty of the Good in this sense, for instance the "beauteous" (καλλονή), which Plotinus seems to use only with reference to the beauty of the Good. He does not, however, consistently adhere to this terminological nuance.

7.5 Beauty as Such

To conclude this summary, I shall identify some common features of beauty throughout the levels of reality considered above. As we have seen, in the case of bodies, soul and Intellect, Plotinus warns the admirer of beauty about the fate of Narcissus (cf. sections 2.4 and 3.2). When discussing the beauty of soul, we were forced to conclude that the reference to the cause of beauty must concern the character of beauty itself, and not its being in soul (in this case), since the soul can also be ugly (cf. sections 2.4 and 3.3). Plotinus even explicitly connects this referential character to beauty, when he says that the presence of beauty in soul leads us to deduce what that which comes before soul is like, i.e. in this case, the Intellect (cf. section 3.3). Consequently, it is a feature of beauty itself to be ambiguous in this sense, i.e. both to refer to its cause and to bind its admirer to itself. It should also be clear that this ambiguity is caused by the fact that beauty is the manifestation of the Good, which preserves several of its characteristics (cf. sections 6.4, 6.6 and 7.3–7.4). Therefore, it is specifically predisposed to be confused with the Good and to bind its admirer to itself. On that account, it should also be clear why this consideration does not apply to the Good, given that it does not have any further cause and that it is the ultimate principle. Even in this sense, its beauty or beauteousness, if one uses this predicate, is different from the beauty of everything else. Much more debatable is, however, whether this magnificence of the Good does, in fact, bind its admirer to it. Parts of treatise VI.9.7 could be understood along these lines. Plotinus talks there about the union of Minos with the Good and adds that afterwards "he may think civic matters unworthy of him and want to remain always above (ἄνω); this is liable to happen to one who has seen much (τῷ πολὺ

5 There is, of course, no intentionality in this on the side of the Good. It does so only incidentally.

ἰδόντι)" (VI.9.7.26–28, transl. Armstrong). I am personally inclined to take this ἄνω to refer to Intellect. It would be odd for Plotinus to say that a person who has experienced the union with the Good has seen much (πολύ), especially without any qualification. Moreover, it is in the very nature of the Good to give rise to everything: it is *the Good* after all (cf. V.4.1, V.1.6). Uniting with it, i.e. becoming it, can, in this sense, scarcely cause someone to want to do the opposite to what is the nature of the Good. Therefore, I read these passages as referring to the beauty of Intellect. Nevertheless, we see here again that the Good can be called beautiful only in a qualified sense (cf. sections 6.6 and 7.4).

Another characteristic of beauty, which is noteworthy, is the fact that it pervades the whole ontological system of Plotinus: It can, in a sense, be predicated of the Good as its source. It characterises Intellect. Soul is originally beautiful and should strive to attain beauty again. Moreover, in the case of bodies, Plotinus devotes the whole of treatise II.9 to stressing their beauty. This implies that one of the specific features of beauty—in contrast to other predicates, such as freedom—is that it can address human beings even on the basic level of the senses. When we combine this basic accessibility with its referential character, we may better understand why Plotinus says that beauty can be used as a stepping-stone enabling us to catch sight of everything, and perhaps even why he devoted his very first treatise to this topic (cf. section 1.3). But again, one must bear in mind that even those who are disposed towards beauty need guidance, since beauty is ambiguous, which is something Plotinus already calls attention to in his early treatises (cf. sections 2.4). The only truly non-beautiful element in the whole system is matter (ὕλη), which is repeatedly called "ugly", as something completely lacking form or unity, i.e. as pure diversity. At the same time, matter thus also lacks being and, in this sense, beauty does indeed pervade Plotinus' whole *onto*logical system.

A further important element, however, that is connected to the previous ones, is the identification of beauty with being (cf. sections 3.4.7 and 4.4–4.5) and, moreover, with being one (cf. sections 2.3 and 3.4.7). Although I have already shown that this identity is not absolute—since being is different both from the one in Intellect and from beauty (cf. section 7.3)—I shall, for the moment, continue to follow this line of thought, in order to further develop the notion of beauty as (unilluminated) unity in multiplicity. If Intellect is identified as the primary seat of beauty (cf. sections 2.6 and 3.5) and being (cf. chapter 4), and is the greatest possible unity in multiplicity (cf. section 3.4 and chapter 4), such that it enables beauty to be everywhere in beauty (cf. section 3.4.6), it follows that beauty is, precisely, unity in multiplicity. It is the unique *unitas multiplex* of Intellect that both explains the intermediate position of Intellect between Uranus and Zeus and makes beauty exist itself by itself in

Intellect, since all levels of reality differ insofar as they have or are *one*. Plotinus expresses this clearly in v.8.13, by joining the characteristics of being bound and being different (cf. section 3.5). Moreover, if Plotinus puts unified multiplicity, beauty and being on the same level, this means that the two components of *unitas multiplex* (i.e. unity and multiplicity) each have a different weight. Although multiplicity is a condition for meaningfully calling something beautiful, it is only a necessary condition. Not everything multiple is beautiful: multiplicity itself, i.e. matter, is ugly. Multiplicity is, however, a condition for us to be able to consider attributing the predicate of beauty to something. Unity, which ought to dominate this multiplicity, is, then, a sufficient condition, that is to say, everything that is unified multiplicity is beautiful (in the narrow sense of the word; cf. section 6.6). Multiplicity as such rather qualifies a thing as ugly (cf. section 5.1). In other words, we must understand it as a condition of the possibility of the predication of both beauty and ugliness.

As we have seen, however, unilluminated unity in multiplicity is either terrifying and painful or boring (cf. section 6.6). Unity in multiplicity represents a precondition for being able to predicate beauty of anything, because a thing exists only as unified multiplicity. However, in order for everything to be truly beautiful, it must be illuminated by what is above, in addition to being such unified multiplicity. In the case of bodies, this means relating them to their intelligible paradigms through soul with the help of λόγοι (cf. section 7.1). For soul, it means becoming virtuous, i.e. becoming aware of the intelligible activity of Intellect and becoming illuminated by it, and, in this sense, receiving an impression of it (cf. section 7.2). And for Intellect, it means catching a glimpse of that which enables its intellection, i.e. the light of the Good (cf. section 7.3).

When put like this, it becomes obvious that illumination, as a condition for true beauty, is implicitly present in both treatises on beauty, I.6 and v.8. In VI.7, this dimension only becomes more pronounced. Since, however, each thing has its unity from what is above, understanding a thing as unified multiplicity always implies seeing it as illuminated. Only a puzzled and mistaken soul can fail to understand this and think that what it admires somehow has its unity from itself. The conception of beauty as illuminated unity in multiplicity is not, in this sense, a substantial shift away from that of beauty as the unilluminated one, but rather the same theory thought through in detail.

That beauty is characterised as illuminated unity in multiplicity explains not only why beauty refers primarily to Intellect, but also both of the other features of beauty, namely its all-pervasiveness and its referential character. Since everything that is united is beautiful precisely insofar as it is united, everything that exists can be said to be beautiful, although different unities are more or less beautiful in proportion to their degree of unity. Moreover, those who do not

understand in what sense the intelligible is united can mistake a very beautiful body for the highest possible *unitas multiplex* (think again of the case of Narcissus), while even those who see beauty in soul may be tempted to think that it is already the ultimate (cf. Plotinus' question of whether soul is already what is being sought in VI.9.1, or his statement that it might seem that one could stop at the level of soul in VI.2.4.25–27). This danger is imminent to the highest degree in the case of the inconceivable unity of Intellect, which was said to draw a child away from its father as the young beloved does (cf. section 3.2), and to cause some of the spectators of the royal court's procession to leave before the king himself appears, thinking they have seen enough (cf. section 3.5). The higher the beauty, the more impressive its unity, and therefore also the danger of mistaking it for its source.

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