

The One: The Only Perfection
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BOOKS QUOTED FROM OR REFERENCED:

- Plotinus, *The Enneads* (MacKenna translation, 4th ed.)
- Rene Guenon, *The Multiple States of Being*

PLOTINUS QUOTES REFERENCED: III.8.6, V.3.17, V.4.2, VI.7.36, VI.9.5, VI.9.6, VI.9.11

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NOTES:

- **RETYPE AD PAPER presented in class (V09MP).**
- This is **1982 04/02d, The One: The Only Perfection Paper, and the fourth entry associated with this date. 1982 04/02a = Plotinus; One Class. 1982 04/02b = One Outline. 1982 04/02c = Nature Outline. 1982 04/02e = Astrology; Nature Seminar**, for which we have no audio, just JF notes.
- This paper is read and discussed in WG Class 1982 0402a Plotinus; One.

THE ONE: THE ONLY PERFECTION

[Paper as read by AS in WG Class 1982 0402a Begins]

Plotinus, VI.9.6: “Think of The One as Mind or as God, you think too meanly; use all the resources of understanding to conceive this Unity and, again, it is more authentically one than God, even though you reach for God’s unity beyond the unity the most perfect you can conceive. For This is utterly a self-existent, with no concomitant whatever. This self-sufficing is the essence of its unity. Something there must be supremely adequate, autonomous, all-transcending, most utterly without need.”

The Wisdom of the Philosopher-Sage primarily and jubilantly expresses to us the existence of the Transcendent, the One-Only. Its essential nature is an utter self-sufficiency, by which he indicates to us its completeness and the only perfection. Sufficient and complete in itself, it is beyond any limitations, or duality of any kind, or dependence or need. This transcendence does not mean a blank homogeneity, but unlimited actuality. Its self-existence is a pure be-ness, a super-intelligence inbound with the total of possibilities. V.4.2: “. . . it is therefore no unconscious thing: all its content and accompaniment are its possession; it is self-distinguishing throughout; it is the seat of life as of all things; it is, itself, that self-intellection which, stemming from an inner consciousness, takes place in eternal repose, that is to say, in a mode other than that of the Intellectual-Principle.” The One is so complex in its unique and undifferentiated simplicity as to encompass all within its universal essentiality. It is an absolute positivity, rather than a metaphysical abstraction or teleology as some commentators would make it.

Plotinus makes this clear also in VI.9.6, continuing, where he says that its simplicity is not that of a spatial point nor a quantitative unit to be enumerated with others, [and] its impartibility is not that of ‘minuteness’ but of ‘greatness’. Again, we point out that the negative descriptions of the Absolute as beyond determinations or limitations, in Plotinus and elsewhere, should not be taken as a lack, but as going beyond all possible determinate considerations. We feel that an excerpt from Guenon’s *Multiple States* is worthwhile in expression of this point.

“The Infinite, on the contrary, if it is to be such must admit of no restriction, which supposes that it is absolutely unconditioned and indeterminate, for all determination is necessarily a limitation simply because it must leave something outside itself, namely all other possible determinations. Limitation, moreover, presents a character of real negation: to set a limit (AD handwritten insert: and Being does) is to deny to that which is limited everything that this limit excludes; and the negation of limit is in fact the negation of a negation, which is to say, logically and even mathematically, an affirmation. Therefore the negation of any limits is equivalent, in reality, to total and absolute affirmation. That which has no limits is that to which one can deny nothing; and this idea of the Infinite, which is the most affirmative of all because it comprehends and envelops all particular affirmations, can only be expressed by a negation by reason of its absolute indetermination.” (Rene Guenon, *The Multiple States of Being*)

We can see here also in what sense the One is even beyond God or Mind or Being. Total affirmation is beyond any particular determination. The One is not an abstraction from other principles, but they are all determined unfoldings out of the One. These later principles are all dependent in some way, but the One depends on none. For any principle or being to be at all it must first be a unity. So the first principle of all principles is unity itself. We speak of it as One-Only because from the view of the One there really is no view at all.

For Plotinus, non-duality does not preclude the possibility that the unity of every being is already included in the super-knowledge of the One, but we will have to understand in what precise way this is so.

When our mind tries to grasp this ultimate paradox of pure perfection and infinite immanent actuality, it may burst its limits. Yet, in fact, the very contact with the One, the “Touch of the Untouchable,” is our goal. This is the “Grand Learning,” the learning of the One which Plotinus speaks of. [Note: See Plotinus, VI.7.36.] This is to “cut away everything.” [Note: See Plotinus, V.3.17.] In a flight of the alone to the Alone, [Note: See Plotinus, VI.9.11] Plotinus is inviting us to an ascent, which is the only possible way that we can finally understand without understanding.

Clearly no symbol is apt to this Absolute, but since we must speak of it, he says “there is a certain rough fitness in designating it as unity.” [Note: See Plotinus, VI.9.5.] This is the nearest we can conceive it. You cannot have it without falsifying it, and yet you cannot speak of it at all if you do not use some symbol to point to it. And we do endeavor here to reveal something of its nature. We feel that on this point, the silence of the Buddha or Christ should not be taken agnostically, but perhaps pedagogically. In other times and circumstances such as our own, it may be even more harmful to *refuse* to speak, for this invites a host of skeptics who may claim that even the sage cannot know truth as he has not expounded it or expressed it.

But the knowing it and the expressing it are two things. Plotinus himself says that the sage is all vision within himself, filled with the intelligible contents of the Nous, yet he must use reason in his expression of Reality to others. [Note: See Plotinus, III.8.6.] Plotinus does just this, and his comprehensive and explicit exposition shows us just how much this reasoned revelation can expose.

So, in our attempts at understanding Plotinus, we will use the symbols indicated in our Introduction. We showed there how the One was symbolized as the first quadrant of the four quadrants. The One as immanent is the whole first quadrant. Within this we found the King of All, and we will now equate the transcendent One with this King of All, which we symbolized as the first mansion.

[Paper as read by AS in WG Class 1982 0402a Ends]