

**The Unity, the Paradigm of Paradigms**  
**by Anthony J. Damiani**  
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BOOKS / ARTICLES QUOTED FROM OR REFERENCED:

- Plotinus, *The Enneads* (MacKenna translation, 4<sup>th</sup> ed.)
- John N. Deck, *Nature, Contemplation, and the One: A Study in the Philosophy of Plotinus*

- Swami Nikhilananda, *The Mandukyopanishad with Gaudapada's Karika and Sankara's Commentary*
- Rene Guenon, *The Multiple States of Being*
- Gilbert Durand, "The Image of Man in the Occulted Tradition of Western Culture" in *Spring 1976: An Annual of Archetypal Psychology and Jungian Thought*
- T. Subba Row, *The Twelve Signs of the Zodiac*
- *Shrine of Wisdom*, "The Simple Way of Lao Tzse," v, no. 18

PLOTINUS QUOTES REFERENCED: III.8.6, V.3.17, V.4.1, V.4.2, V.5.11, VI.7.36, VI.8.16, VI.9.1, VI.9.5, VI.9.6, VI.9.11

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- **RETYPE AD PAPER presented in class (V09M).**
- This is **1982 04/16b, The Unity, the Paradigm of Paradigms Paper, and the second entry associated with this date. 1982 04/16a = Plotinus: One Class.**
- This paper is read and discussed in WG Class 1982 0416a Plotinus: One.
- All quotes have been made to conform to the published version.

## THE UNITY, THE PARADIGM OF PARADIGMS

The philosopher-sage enunciates the Logos, and the knowledge that he communicates is primarily Wisdom. He is required to be precise within the given structures, the cultural mores that he operates within, although he stands outside these forms. So it is only natural and first in the order of importance that we should concern ourselves with his remarks about the existence of God, the One-Only. In this Ennead, VI.9.6, he does just that. He describes the essential characteristics of the One-Only. It would, however, be misleading and incorrect to speak of characteristics and attributes of the One except in this very strange and mysterious way. And we hope to unfold in what way we can speak of these characteristics of the One as we proceed.

In this tractate he indicates the utter self-sufficiency by which he means its completeness and the only Perfection. Sufficient and complete in itself, it is beyond any limitation, duality of any kind, dependence or need. Nor does this transcendence mean a blank homogeneity, zero, but unlimited actuality. The One is so complex in its unique and undifferentiated simplicity as to encompass all in its universal essentiality. It is absolute positivity. Its self-existence is a pure be-ness and a super-intelligence inbound with the totality of possibilities. Perhaps it might be more meaningful and provocative to say it is pure intelligence or better still, all-intelligence.

The One is referred to as an eternal wakefulness, wakefulness or a consciousness which cannot be separated or distinguished from the totality of all its contents even though there is a self-distinguishing throughout in a mode above intellection. [Note: See Plotinus, V.4.2.] From Deck's book, *Nature, Contemplation, and the One*, we quote his version.

...the One is called an eternal super-knowledge: "If, now, its [the One's] act does not become but is always, and *is* a kind of wakefulness which is not other than the one who is awake, being a wakefulness and an eternal super-knowledge, it will *be* in the way it is awake. The wakefulness is beyond being and Nous and intelligent life; the wakefulness is itself." [Note: See Plotinus, VI.8.16.] A wakefulness which is a *super*-knowledge, or a wakefulness which is *above* knowledge? (John N. Deck, *Nature, Contemplation, and the One*)

Mr. Deck, a sincere and discriminating devotee of the sage, tends to identify the wakefulness with its super-knowledge. And he goes on to state:

...Plotinus goes on to say that the One is "not, so to speak, imperceptive, but everything of it is in it and with it [i.e., it is entirely self-contained]; it is entirely self-discerning; life is in it and all things are in it; and its self-knowledge is itself, a self-knowledge by a kind of synesthesia being in eternal stasis and in a knowledge otherwise than knowledge according to the Nous." Thus knowledge, which appears in a way in nature, more fully in soul, perfectly in the Nous, is not absent [AS adds: either] from the highest "nature," the One: the continuity of knowledge is not abruptly broken in the ascent from the Nous to the One. (John N. Deck, *Nature, Contemplation, and the One*)

Mr. Deck's concentration is intensely and sharply focused into the true meaning of the One. It is a magnificent exposition of the master's teaching in positive terms. He has seized the jugular vein of the

doctrine when he says further “the self-identical synesthesia of the One can be a super-knowledge in a positive sense.”

The quotation from Plotinus repeats and affirms the identity of wakefulness with existence. It is reemphasized when he says “it will *be* in the way it is awake”. We’ll amplify more fully as we go along that all the contents of this super-intelligence can share in the above description. The intuitive perception of Being and essence reduces the discipline of comparative philosophy to anthropology. There are no new truths in philosophy. When we work our way through the ego’s psychopathology, we will simply rediscover them.

The resulting experience of the flight of the alone to the Alone [Note: See Plotinus, VI.9.11.] is here being articulated by Plotinus. The similarity with that of the unknown Indian sage, the author of the *Mandukya Upanishad*, will be attested to by quoting the seventh Karika.

*Turiya* is not that which is conscious of the internal (subjective) world, nor that which is conscious of the external (objective) world, nor that which is conscious of both, nor that which is a mass [AS adds: (for/or)] all sentiency, nor that which is simple consciousness, nor that which is insentient. (It is) unseen (by any sense organ), not related to anything, incomprehensible...uninferable, unthinkable, indescribable, essentially of the nature of Consciousness constituting the Self alone... (Swami Nikhilananda, *The Mandukyopanishad*)

Consequently, as Plotinus makes clear, “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.” (Plotinus, VI.9.6) The negative descriptions of the Unity as beyond determinations or limitations in Plotinus and elsewhere should not be taken as a lack but as going beyond any possible synthesis of all essences. In this sense the Unity is beyond God or Mind or Being. Total affirmation is not only beyond any particular determination or the totality of all essences but is itself the Alone. Keeping in mind the reference here to the One as infinite, we can justify an excerpt from Guenon’s *Multiple States of Being*, where he says:

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. (Rene Guenon, *The Multiple States of Being*)

The One is not, therefore, an abstraction from other principles. Rather on the contrary, they are divine outflowings from its super-abundance of Perfection. These later principles are all dependent 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 can speak of it as One-Only because from the view of the One, there really is no other view at all.

For Plotinus, non-duality does not preclude the possibility that the unity of every principle 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 the goal. This is the grand learning, the learning of the One which Plotinus speaks of--[Note: See Plotinus, VI.7.36.] that is, to cut away everything. [Note: See Plotinus, V.3.17.] In a flight of the alone to the Alone, Plotinus is inviting us to an ascent, which is the only possible way where we can finally understand without understanding. It is clear that no symbol is apt to this Absolute. But since we must speak of it, there is a certain rough fitness in designating it as Unity, [Note: See Plotinus, VI.9.5.] 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 here he does endeavor to reveal something of its nature. We feel that on this point the silence of Buddha or Christ should not be taken agnostically but perhaps pedagogically. Or in times and circumstances such as our own it may be even more harmful to refuse to speak of Unity or God, for it invites the intellectual skeptics to assert that even the sage cannot know Truth, he has not experienced it.

But the knowing it and expressing it are two things. Plotinus himself says that the sage is all-vision within himself, filled with the Intelligible contents of the Nous, and yet must use reason in his expression of reality to others. [Note: Plotinus, III.8.6.] Plotinus does just this and his comprehensive and explicit exposition shows us how much this reasoned revelation can reveal, keeping in mind of course that the experience of the Void or silence and the intellectual articulation of it must be kept separate.

In our attempts at understanding Plotinus we will use a symbolism which we have indicated in our Introduction. It is our belief that the cosmic mandala is a residue or fragment of a divine wisdom, probably a product of the intellectual imagination, guiding and including which is a formulation of the reason-principles which it includes. The mandala as cosmic in its implications can be used to combine conceptual thought with the advantages of the language of symbolism, a concept which we have adequately stated in the following quotation from G. Durand.

...in its symbolism and the syntax of its aspects, astrology, like all traditional arts, of alchemy, geomancy, palmistry, etc., provides us with a model of elementary, meta-language operating with pure images, with emblems. Our modern Indo-European languages have great difficulty taking their content seriously; they lean toward nominalism, sophistry, formal logic. But astrological language is figurative -- even deific, since it accords divine power to its semantic elements. It operates with the "emblems of things"...not with "mere words". The complexity of its field of possible combinations makes impossible logical permutations, such as those in syllogisms. (Gilbert Durand, "The Image of Man in the Occulted Tradition of Western Culture" in *Spring 1976: An Annual of Archetypal Psychology and Jungian Thought*, pp. 91-92)

We have superimposed or projected upon the astrological mandala all the levels of reality that we will speak of except for one particular one. We can proceed by adding to the symbol meanings which T. Subba Row has evoked from the zodiacal signs in "The Twelve Signs of the Zodiac". The attempt is made there to interpret the underlying Idea behind each of the sidereal zodiacal signs. It seems that the mythology associated with the various zodiacal signs is a depository of the mystical experiences associated with it. And he attempts to decipher and translate those mythologies into concepts about God's Wisdom, that is, the Logos or the Ideas symbolized by the stars. We have referred to these lights in the heavens as the primal scripture. At any rate, we will associate each of these Ideas derived from the zodiac with the corresponding segments of the wheel. This will provide us the necessary information to complete the illustration.

Within this context we can now single out one pure principle at a time for the purposes of our analysis and synthesis. The ultimateless Ultimate, the Unoriginated, the Transcendent can be symbolized by the first mansion or the first house. And we will apply to the first house all the remarks previously made by Plotinus in VI.9.6. That is, the One we symbolize as the first house and the dignities or intelligibles which it contains. He refers to it as the utterly simple, Perfection itself, Transcendent. This One must contain aprioristically all the principles that are to follow or emanate from it, but as we said in a pure or undifferentenced manner.

Now he speaks of the First as infinite in Power. And this Power is even beyond the being and essence of any Idea. And it is undivided from the One. He speaks about this Power as infinite and immeasurable and indeterminate. All other powers and principles are derivatives from it and imitative of it. The consequences of this view of Power can be illustrated by a practical and common sense application. If the world is real, if it is the result of a real power, and if this power is other than the One, then there will be an ultimate dualism of One and Power. Now if on the other hand Power is unreal, then any product of this Power will be also unreal from our universe up to all the levels of reality and even the Divine Mind, which is the second to the One. Both of these alternatives as alternatives, those of metaphysical duality or of illusory being, are unacceptable for Plotinus and therefore he makes the One and its Power synonymous. It is this principle of Power which will establish the levels of reality and also those principles referred to as henads or unities.

If The First is perfect, utterly perfect above all, and is the beginning of all power, it must be the most powerful of all that is, and all other powers must act in some partial imitation of it.  
(Plotinus, V.4.1)

...the First Good, the Power towards all, how could it grudge or be powerless to give of itself, and how at that would it still be the Source? (Plotinus, V.4.1)

...this unseen First is the source and principle of Being and soveran over Reality. (Plotinus, V.5.11)

And also:

It is in virtue of unity that beings are beings [AD addition: and therefore they're not illusory].  
(Plotinus, VI.9.1)

We can see that for Plotinus, perfection and self-sufficiency imply an abundance of Power, not passivity or inaction. The One is overflowing, source of everything. The One produces by its very perfection and infinite Power and not through any necessity of its products. Creation is the result of super-abundance and it does not need. Even in its producing it remains unmoved, for all possible production is already included in its infinite Power.

The words of Lao Tzu have the same taste or flavor, and Plotinus might well be expressing his thought.

How unfathomable is Tao! An infinite depth, the Source of all that is--the Ancient Progenitor before all things. Yet, how pure and still is Tao! (*Shrine of Wisdom*, "The Simple Way of Lao Tzse," v, no. 18, p. 10)

In considering the Power, its twofold nature is observable. On the one hand, its identity with the One, and on the other, an infinite extension or sheer indeterminacy. We cannot by the very nature of our intellect grasp any Unity but only aspects of it. And since this is unavoidable, except for the soul's pure intuition, we must accommodate our mental processes to this doubling of vision. Guenon for example is very lucid on this point and so we quote him.

Thus, when we say that universal Possibility is infinite or unlimited, it must be understood that it is nothing other than the Infinite itself, envisaged under a certain aspect, insofar as one may say that there are aspects to the Infinite. For the Infinite is truly "without parts," and strictly speaking, there can be no further question of a multiplicity of aspects existing really and "distinctively" within it. It is we who in fact conceive of the Infinite under this aspect or that, because we cannot do otherwise... (Rene Guenon, *The Multiple States of Being*, p. 33, Larson, 1984)

Both of the points of view of Power that we spoke of could be referred to as the non-dual double Act in the Divine Mind or to the coincidence of the ultimate opposites. Plotinus refers to these as Act and repose. We could broaden or enlarge this paradoxical theme by bringing it into correlation with other similar views such as active and passive perfection, yin and yang, substance and function. It is an exquisite mystical vagary, a paradoxical statement that is universally diffused in the perennial philosophy. Here in our example we'll find in the One's own self-nature the presentation of the two ultimate principles, Act and repose, which are non-dual and in coincidence in the indistinction of the One. He says:

That his being is constituted by this self-originating self-tendance--at once Act and repose--becomes clear if we imagine the contrary; inclining towards something outside of Himself, He would destroy the identity of his Being. This self-directed Act is therefore his peculiar being, one with Himself. Thus, He created Himself because his Act was inseparable from Himself. (Plotinus, VI.8.16)

[Paper as read by AS in WG Class 1982 0416a Ends]