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The One and the Many: Part I: The One

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This study will proceed according to two primary objectives. The first, to be explicated in the present instalment (Part I), is to adduce, as far as possible, *how it is* that the One, relative to the philosophy of Plotinus, generates that which comes forth from it. The second objective, which shall be presented in Part II, is to discern *what it is* that must thereby come forth from the One. The second objective will be dependent upon the first, since the “how” relative to the generation from the One will entail the general character of the “what”. It will be necessary to discern how the One, in its very remaining or abiding as an exclusive simplicity, can be understood to entail the generation of that which is most primarily generated and that which is primarily generated will be a series of simple unities prior to and the basis of all being and intellection.

I: Objectives and Methods

1. Objective One: On the question as to how the One generates

Regarding the question concerning how it is that anything at all arises from the One, Narbonne has written:

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¹ J.-M. Narbonne, *La métaphysique de Plotin* 26.

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should even need a foundation.² This fundamental question of metaphysics for Plotinus, as Narbonne puts it,³ is the question as to how it is that that which exists. If it is indeed necessary that all things be traced back to the One (which assertion we will soon examine), then this is not only the fundamental question of Plotinian metaphysics,⁴ but of all metaphysics, and if metaphysics is the most fundamental science, then we do not speak in hyperbole when we say that the question as to how anything comes from the One is simply the first and most fundamental question. Heidegger's "question of the meaning of Being", for example, is derivative and cannot be advanced without turning to the question of the One.⁵

The question is perhaps raised most distinctly by Plotinus in V.1 [10]. Having established the dependence of Soul and Intellect upon the One, Plotinus writes:

For the soul now knows that these things must be (ἀνάγκην), but longs (ἐπιποθεῖ) to answer the question repeatedly discussed also by the ancient philosophers, how from the One (πῶς ἐξ ἑνός), if it is such as we say it is (τοιούτου ὄντος, οἷον λέγομεν τὸ ἓν εἶναι), anything else (ὅτιοῦν), whether a multitude or a dyad or a number, came to existence (ὑπόστασιν ἔσχεν), and why did it not on the contrary remain by itself (ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔνεινεν ἐκείνο ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ), but such a great multiplicity flowed from it (ἐξερρύη) as that which is seen to exist in beings, but which we think it right to refer back to the One (ἀνάγειν δὲ αὐτὸ πρὸς ἐκεῖνο ἀξιουμέν). (V.1 [10] 6.3-8)⁶

The beginning of the passage indicates that we already know it is *necessary that* all things *in fact do* arise from the One. The end of the passage tells us that this knowledge is

² Ibid. 58.

³ Ibid. 26.

⁴ Describing Plotinus' philosophy as "metaphysics" could be regarded as objectionable since the term is rarely used by the Neoplatonists (it does not even appear in the *Lexicon Plotinianum*) and Aristotle used the term to designate the study of being *qua* being. Since, however, Aristotle meant this to indicate that which treats the first principle, the term metaphysics could apply to Plotinus if it simply indicates the study of that which is first.

⁵ Heidegger's ontology remains, so to speak, "within the Aristotelian horizon" but simply takes Being as matter/potential to be the true meaning of being.

⁶ All citations from Plotinus, both English and Greek, will be from Armstrong's translation of the works of Plotinus unless otherwise indicated. All such citations of Plotinus will be referenced in text.

possessed in as much as “we agree it is necessary that it is before these.” This priority of the One can be traced back to the end of the *Parmenides*: ἐν εἰ μὴ ἔστιν, οὐδὲν ἔστιν.

Plotinus expounds the necessity of the One at the beginning of VI.9 [9]:

It is by the one that all beings are beings (Πάντα τὰ ὄντα τῷ ἐνὶ ὄντι) [. . .] For what could anything be if it was not one? For if things are deprived of the one which is predicated of them, they are not those things (ἐπεὶ περ ἀφαιρεθέντα τοῦ ἐν ὃ λέγεται οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκεῖνα). (VI.9 [9] 1.1-4)

This idea is most clearly expressed by Proclus in the first proposition of the *Elements of Theology*: “Every manifold in some way participates unity.”⁸ Is it, however, justified to suppose that the necessity for unity precedes being or substance? Plotinus, for example, in VI.9 [9] goes on to assert that “each is one in the way in which it also has what it is (ἕκαστόν ἐστιν ἐν, ὡς ἔχει καὶ ὃ ἐστιν).” (1.26) We are not certain if the “what” in Armstrong’s translation is justified; it may simply be that each is one in as much it also has existence. This places accent on the fact that, in the next chapter, Plotinus addresses Aristotle’s objection that it is no different to say “one man” than simply to say “man.”⁹ It is necessary that the One should have a distinct relation to “all things” when compared to being or substance. Proclus, for example, will argue that unity is prior by virtue of having greater extension, that is to say, “the One is the first principle of things existent and things non-existent.”¹⁰ Even that which is not must be some one thing or a grouped multiplicity; for be it merely imagined, or no-longer, or not-yet, or altogether impossible, the first proposition of the *Elements* still holds while the need for substance would not hold in all these cases. It can then be said that all beings participate in unity but not all unities participate in being.

⁷ *Parmenides* 166c. Platonis, *Opera*, book II.

⁸ Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*.

⁹ *Metaphysics* Γ 1003^b 25-35.

¹⁰ Proclus, *Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides* 1043.

In VI.9 [9] Plotinus takes a different route:

For what can anyone say that it [the One] is besides being and intellect? For it is either the same as being – for “man” and “one man” are the same thing – or is it like a kind of number of the individual (οἷον ἀριθμός τις ἑκάστου); you say “one” of a thing alone (μόνου τινὸς) just as you say “two things.” Now if number belongs to real beings, it is clear (δῆλον) that so does the one. (VI.9 [9] 2.9-13)

Plotinus argues that *either* the Aristotelian critique of the One as first principle is *true*, in which case Platonism (and especially the “Neoplatonism” being initiated by Plotinus himself) is a lost cause, *or* the One is the principle of the individuation or *eachness* of things as something both distinct from and prior to the being and thinking of those things. The One can be defended in this way in so far as it is described as a *kind of* number, or rather, we take it that what Plotinus means to say is that number, or “Platonic number” at any rate, is a *kind of* One.

While Proclus’ argument makes the *priority* of the One more evident, Plotinus here is indicating how it is that the One, as the basis of the unity of things, is primarily the principle of the *individuation* of things.¹¹ In combining these it can be said that the unity of each thing is prior *and* the way in which *each one* is numerically individuated.

In this way, then, the One is prior to all things and, if it is prior to all, it is necessary (ἀνάγκη) that all things are produced or somehow arise from it. Therefore it is known *that* all things arise from the One but, as Plotinus writes, the soul yearns or longs (ἐπιποθεῖ) to provide an answer as to *how* this happens. This is of great importance for our present work. Plotinus will often, as we shall discuss, first explain that it is *necessary*

¹¹ This is not to suggest that Proclus is in disagreement with Plotinus in this matter. In fact, the One in the philosophy of Proclus, followed immediately by the many henads (primal ones), is even more evidently the primary principle of individuation than is the case for Plotinus. For a recent and provocative account of the Procline henads as primal identities, see: E. P. Butler, “Polytheism and Individuality in the Henadic Manifold.” As the title suggests, part of the argument entails a serious consideration of the henads as individual gods and the basis upon which the characteristics of the gods are participated by the various strata of being.

(ἀνάγκη) *that* x be the case but then notes how the soul requires persuasion (πειθῶ), “for necessity is in Intellect but persuasion in the soul.” (V.3 [49] 6.11) At first one might suppose that this need for persuasion would be at best a superficial appendage for those without a strong grasp of philosophy and at worst a potential cause for error. As a matter of fact, however, this is not the case since we are not eternal intellects but souls and, moreover, embodied discursive souls. Thus Plotinus longs for this persuasion of the soul.

The difficulty that Plotinus faces is captured in the phrase: “if it [the One] is such as we say it is (τοιούτου ὄντος, οἷον λέγομεν τὸ ἐν εἶναι).” (V.1 [10] 6.5) This is because, in tracing all things back to the One, Plotinus finds himself with a principle that is really defined in terms of simplicity.¹² Thus the crux of the difficulty is that it does not seem to be possible for anything to arise from such a principle without placing certain differentiations into it upon the basis of which it may be understood to produce something but in that case one will no longer be speaking about the simple principle to which all things can be traced. Bréhier presented this as its *quaestio vexata* of Plotinus’ philosophy¹³ and Narbonne is right in saying that this difficulty holds, not only for the rest of Neoplatonism but also for the Christian doctrine of creation.¹⁴ Strictly speaking it is the vexing question for any philosophy or scientific theology that is both systematic and monistic. That which we have described as the most fundamental question has turned out to be the most vexing and thus also the *most pressing*.

Plotinus proceeds to suggest that if something came from the One, that it would not

¹² It is certainly the case that Plotinus and other Neoplatonists will sometimes say that the First principle is not even “One” or “Good” but this is not to deny that the One is simple as much as it is intended to avoid making the Principle into a mere number or, for that matter, from being too attached to *any kind* of proper name. “One” is true of the principle in terms of both being first or prior and in terms of being simple.

¹³ Bréhier, *La Philosophie de Plotin* 40.

¹⁴ J.-M. Narbonne, *Hénologie, Ontologie, et Ereignis* 33.

simply remain in itself (V.1 [10] 6.6). He is in fact only indicating that it would *seem* necessary that the principle would have to somehow depart from itself in order to produce something¹⁵ and this is evident later in the same chapter (6.19-20), where Plotinus affirms that it is while the One remains/abides that all things come from it.

Finally, the great multiplicity, which we know must come to exist, is said to “flow out” (ἐξεργύη) from the One. This idea that things “flow-out” from the One is quite frequent in the writings of Plotinus, especially in conjunction with what is known as his theory of “emanation,” which does indeed follow within the same chapter (6.28-36). The theory of emanation essentially describes the flowing from the one in terms of solar radiation (περίλαμπιν) which so flows without any deliberate activity or any loss of power on the part of the One. That which arises from the One is *like* the One just as heat is *like* the fire of the sun.

Plotinus attempts to justify this notion of circum-radiation by saying that “all things when they come to perfection produce; the One is always perfect and therefore produces everlastingly.” (V.1 [10] 6.38-39) Why is it that the perfect necessarily produces? Plotinus indicates that that which is perfect will be in some way superabundant (ὑπερπλήρης) such that it overflows (ὑπερεργύη) and in this overflow “make something other than itself.” (V.2 [11] 1.9) The specific reason that the One is perfect and

¹⁵ Numenius is thought to have criticized “certain” Pythagoreans who reportedly thought that the paternal Monad withdrew from its own nature in producing the indefinite Dyad or matter. (See J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* 373). Since we have a report, by way of Simplicius by way of Porphyry, of Moderatus describing the second One producing matter (Ibid. 347) by “making-way” (ἐχώρησε), it is generally presumed that he would count among the Pythagoreans criticised by Numenius. The Moderatus fragment, however, does not seem to necessitate that this One becomes matter, it might simply be producing a *place* for matter, which in the Platonic tradition was often closely associated with the χώρα of Plato’s *Timaeus*. It is possible that Numenius’ account may be polemical as he would not like to consider something like matter to be caused by the One at all, much less as that which is most directly caused by the One. At any rate, this comment by Plotinus may be responding to this sort of debate in which a monistic causal account has been said to require that the One departs from its own nature.

overabundant is that it neither needs nor has anything and, presumably, this not-needing anything would be the basis upon which it can give or produce everything. The problem with the image of overabundance is that usually when something overflows, it is because it “has” its fill and more than its fill, such that the excess overflows its limit but the One does not have anything at all. Moreover, things that are full usually receive their fill prior to their overflowing and this will certainly be the case for Intellect and Soul but the One will not receive abundance from anything. The soul has yet then to be persuaded as to *how* this “over” of the overflow comes about.

Since the “excess” cannot possibly come from anything other than the One itself, it must be the case, in so far as the notion of emanation is accurate, that the One’s very unity is excessive to itself without implying any difference from itself. Could anything be less impossible?

2. Method Part One: The doctrine of the two acts

Plotinus also confronts the “fundamental question” in *Ennead* V.4 [7] in what has come to be known as the “doctrine of the two acts.”¹⁶

But how, when that [the Principle] abides unchanged (μένοντος), does intellect come into being? In each and every thing there is an activity which belongs to substance (ἐστὶ τῆς οὐσίας – of substance) and one which goes out from substance (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας); and that which belongs to substance is the active actuality (ἐνέργεια) which is each particular thing, and the other activity derives from that first one, and must in everything be a consequence of it (ἥν δὲ παντὶ ἔπασθαι ἐξ ἀνάγκης), different from the thing itself. (V.4 [7] 2.27-30)

This “doctrine” is essentially a formalization of the notion of circum-radiation discussed

¹⁶ This doctrine was first made into a theme of scholarly discussion by Rutten in his paper “La doctrine des deux actes dans la philosophie de Plotin.” It has since been employed by many scholars with respect to the problem of procession: Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality*; Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus* 2.vols; D.J. O’Meara, *Plotinus: An Introduction to the Enneads*; Narbonne, *La métaphysique de Plotin*; Lacrose, *L’amour chez Plotin*; Pigler, *Plotin – un métaphysique de l’amour*; Ritsuko Okano, “How Does the One Generate Intellect?” and K. Corrigan, *Reading Plotinus*.

above. It is clear that the first act is identical with the thing itself but that its nature is such that the second act necessarily follows. The passage does not tell us what this act is, but at least presents the condition which must be fulfilled if we are to demonstrate how it is that anything can arise from the One and the few Plotinian scholars who have attempted to explain *how* it is that anything comes from the One have in fact taken up the doctrine of the “two acts”. The approach is attractive because it provides a way to link the One with Intellect in a way that often seems impossible in Greek Neoplatonism.

If the “doctrine of the two acts” is to be helpful to us in our investigation as to how it is that the One produces anything, it is necessary that the “first act” is of such a character or understood in such a way that the “second act” can be seen to logically follow from it. The great difficulty, and indeed danger, in this matter is that it entails that we must somehow describe the One, which is taken to be beyond being and knowing, as it is *in itself*. Is it at all possible to overcome this problem? We will address this matter in the second section on method. For the present, however, let it be known that we shall make use of this “doctrine” and consider its use by other scholars in our study.

There is a certain descriptive passage in V.1 [10] concerning the “first act” which provides us with a rough indication of the solution Plotinus seems to have in mind: “If anything comes into being after it, we must think that it necessarily does so while the One remains continually turned toward itself (ἀεὶ ἐκείνου πρὸς αὐτό).” (V.1 [10] 6.18-19) It will be noted that in this phrase there are in fact no verbs governed by ἐκείνου, which is being taken with ἀεὶ as a genitive of *time* and one could perhaps take the genitive of cause to be at work here along with it. The lack of a verb may well be the result of deliberate avoidance on the part of Plotinus, since he does not really wish to attribute the

sort of reflexivity connoted by “remains continually turned toward itself” and so writes something closer to “while it is always toward itself.” This, we think, is closer to the sense in which Plotinus conceives the way in which the One remains.

3. Objective Two: to demonstrate that the One as the principle of each thing necessitates that number is prior to being¹⁷

The discussion of our first objective already touched upon this since we saw that Plotinus, in responding to the objection that “man” and “one man” mean the same thing, described the “one” as the number of the individual. First of all, it is important to note that Plotinus does not accept the Aristotelian notion that individuation is a product of matter. Aristotle makes his position on the question of individuation clear in *Metaphysics* Z in that “the father begets, a ‘such’ (τοιοῦνδε) out of a ‘this’ (ἐκ τοῦδε); and when it has been begotten, it is a ‘this such.’”¹⁸ In this way the “such” denotes form while “this” denotes some particular matter. Aristotle explains that Callias and Socrates, for example, “are different in virtue of their matter (for that is different), but the same in form; for their form is indivisible.”¹⁹

In V.7 [18] Plotinus rejects this view, affirming that between individuals “the difference must be linked with the form (συνεξεύχθαι δεῖ τῷ εἶδει τὸ διάφορον),” (V.7 [18] 3.11) for “if it is precisely determined (μεμέτρηται) how many there are (ὅποσα τινὰ εἴη), the quantity will be defined by the unrolling and the unfolding of all the forming principles (τὸ ποσὸν ὥρισμένον ἔσται τῇ τῶν λόγων ἀπάντων ἐξελίξει καὶ ἀναπλώσει)” (3.15-16). It is evident that Plotinus believes that the “how many” must be

¹⁷ Again, we only aim to fulfill this second objective in Part II of this investigation but include its statement here as it pertains to the sort of principle that the One must be “if it is as we say it is.”

¹⁸ *Metaphysics* Z 1033^b 23-24.

¹⁹ Ibid. 1034^a 7-8.

measured since he is willing, at the end of the treatise, to accept the notion that there are an infinite number of forming principles in both Soul and Intellect (3.21-22).

While the beginning of V.7 [17] certainly expresses concern for the immortality of the human soul, this is not the only (or necessarily the primary) reason for postulating forms of individuals, because, in the end, *all things* must be measured and so determined by the unfolding of the forming principles.²⁰ Since the metaphysics of Aristotle and the Peripatetics makes substance the first principle and substance is as the active actuality of form, substance is only really the principle of the *kinds* or types of things.²¹ The Neoplatonic One, as the principle of the *unity* of all things, really is the principle of *every single one*, as “it makes each individual thing exist (ποιεῖ ἕκαστον εἶναι).” (V.3 [49] 17.11) And “if it is possible to say of each individual part (ἕκαστον) what it is (τις ὅ ἐστι), one says it because each of them is one (ἐν ἕκαστον αὐτῶν) and it is because of this very fact.” (V.3 [49] 15.15-16)

Thus we will investigate the way in which the One produces and what it primarily produces relative to the exact way in which it is the cause of each single thing. Plotinus will not, of course, maintain that there are an infinite number of intelligible and psychic principles but there *will* be a sense in which they can unfold into the individuals of each lower stratum. This capacity to individuate, however, does not belong to them simply *as* intelligible or rational principles since in general there is nothing about being a form that entails the specific number of participating individuals. The question shall be: “what does making the One the principle of all things ‘add’ to the ontological picture of form and

²⁰ It is generally thought that Plotinus is probably only concerned with individual human forms. See Paul Kalligas, “Forms of Individuals in Plotinus: A Re-Examination”.

²¹ A certain exception is made for the heavenly bodies but the point remains that, unlike the One, substance is not the principle of *each thing*.

matter such that these principles can produce specific individual entities?” Once matter is rejected as the principle of individuation, either something must be added to the nature of the forms relative to their being principled by the One or there must be in infinite number of forms. Rendering the forms equal to the number of individual things, however, makes the notion of “form” redundant and would lead to a radical particularism²² unsupportive of metaphysical science. Plotinus will elsewhere maintain that the number of Intellects must be *limited* in number (VI.6 [34] 18.1-2) and, moreover:

There is [in general]²³ structural organization (σύνταξις) and the realities are not completely cut off from each other, and there is nothing random (εἰκη – without plan) among the realities (as there is not even among bodies), and it follows that there must be a [definite]²⁴ number (καὶ ἀριθμὸν τινα ἀκόλουθόν). For, again, realities must be static (ἑστάναι δεῖ τὰ ὄντα), and the intelligible realities must remain the same, and each must be numerically one (καὶ ἕκαστον ἓν ἀριθμῶ εἶναι): for this is how it is *this* definite reality (οὕτω γὰρ τὸ τόδε (IV.3 [27] 8.20-25)²⁵

The solution to the problem, that the One must be the cause of each individual thing, is to be found in what Plotinus calls essential number. This is in *no way* something merely *added* to the One as Principle but precisely *the way in which* the One is the principle of each and every thing, apart from which, “man” and “one man” mean the same thing and the Neoplatonic doctrine of the One beyond being and knowing is logically redundant.

We consider this difference between Neoplatonic or “henological” metaphysics and ontological metaphysics to be altogether decisive and yet the great tide of recent scholarship on Plotinus has not only largely overlooked the fact that the One must be the basis of individuation more primarily than it is the basis of intelligibility but, as will

²² The interest in singularity present in various contemporary thinkers, such as Derrida, Nancy, Deleuze, and Levinas has been of this non-ordered nature.

²³ Our insertion.

²⁴ Armstrong’s insertion.

²⁵ A full discussion of this passage will appear near the end of the second part of this study.

become evident in Part II of this investigation, the avenues through which such an understanding becomes possible have been actively resisted on many fronts. The result in such cases is a henology which is difficult to distinguish from ontology.

On the other hand, those who have sought to make henology altogether distinct from ontology usually do so in the spirit of contemporary reactions against Modern rationalism and metaphysics. In these cases the One's *dépassement* of being and knowing is really a *rejection* of scientific knowledge and thus the result is a negative theology without a corresponding metaphysics.²⁶ Trouillard, for example, will indeed say that the Plotinian universe "est le lien des singularités, non une forme abstrait,"²⁷ and he also points us in the right direction with respect to the role of number in the philosophy of Plotinus, affirming that "la participation à l'Un, dès qu'elle s'exprime, est le nombre."²⁸ Trouillard's primary interest in henology, however, concerns the negativity of the principle such that the principled should be underdetermined by the principle and hence free to determine itself.²⁹ In this way, he does not follow through on this insight regarding number since doing so would make the One's causal role more determinate than is in his interest.

Collette, in *Dialectique et Hénologie chez Plotin*, is among the few scholars for whom henology's distinction from ontology is not simply by way of negativity and the

²⁶ The first group mentioned, those who do not strongly distinguish henology from ontology, being in the greater majority, cannot be defined together relative to what might be at the heart of their resistance and so there is a multitude of probable causes overall. These would include the continued influence of Neo-Kantianism regarding what sort of metaphysics can be rational and acceptable, the continued influence of Aristotelian thought among classicists (including those who would think of themselves as Platonists), the general inability for Moderns to believe in hierarchies of super-sensible beings (or to have any interest in anything so remote from human concerns), and the presence of a doctrinal understanding of Plotinus that would not appear to have a place for essential number prior to Intellect.

²⁷ Trouillard, *La Procession Plotinienne* 68.

²⁸ Ibid. 58.

²⁹ Ibid. 45. Trouillard places much emphasis on the fact that the Good does not give intellection to things but the power to self-engender. While this is true he under emphasises the need for each power to revert upon its prior in its own self-determination.

positive side of his henology concerns “la *suntaxis*, régie par l’Un, divise la réalité qui en procède en différent niveaux topologiques dont chacun conserve sa singularité (et ce au sein de chaque niveau, de chaque être, de chaque âme).”³⁰ In light of this assessment (primarily drawn from IV.3 [27] 8.20-25, cited above) Collette proceeds to conduct a close reading of much of VI.2 [43], *On the Kinds of Being*, with a view to seeing how individuation arises both in the kinds themselves and in their dialectical interrelation rather than perusing the role of number in this σύνταξις.³¹ Much of VI.2 [43] does indeed indicate that the kinds or *genres* of being can produce all the multiplicity found in being but serious doubts are raised in the final chapter and, once again, the notion of number is introduced in order to explain the individual, which is numerically one.³² Collette, at the end of his study, does not shy away from this passage and even concludes that the distinctive character of each intellect “a besoin d’une détermination préalable de son objet.”³³ This determining difference is “inscrit au cœur de l’être”³⁴ and since its source is necessarily beyond being it cannot be directly investigated. His book ends, however, relative to a citation from VI.2 [43] 11.14-19, in which Plotinus says that each thing, in being “more or less one,” is not “more or less being” but “more or less good.” This “more or less one” is taken to be the determining difference “inscribed in the heart” of each being. This “more or less one”, even though it is beyond being, is in fact directly investigated by Plotinus in VI.6 [34] – the *Treatise on Numbers*.

Our investigation of the role of essential number in Plotinus will, then, result in a

³⁰ B. Collette, *Dialectique et Hénologie chez Plotin* 123.

³¹ This dependence of individuation upon number is even more explicit in IV.3 [27] 5, to which we will have occasion to return toward the end of Part II of this study.

³² VI.2 [43] 22.10-12. Number comes up in the solution at lines 20-22. We will discuss this passage in Part II.

³³ B. Collette, *Dialectique et Hénologie chez Plotin* 209.

³⁴ Ibid.

theory that is very similar to Proclus' doctrine of the divine henads.³⁵ In the philosophy of Proclus the divine henads designate the set of simple unities prior to being,³⁶ each one being a god. Proclus speaks of the individuals members of Soul and Intellect as constituting a series (σειρά) and the henads constitute the series or proper manifold (οἰκείου πλήθους) relative to the One.³⁷ There is then, for Proclus, is a pure unitary manifold produced by the One prior to being.

Proclus frequently uses the adjective “ἰδιότης” relative the distinctive character of each henad³⁸ which is multiplied and communicated through the appropriate members of all the secondary orders³⁹ such that “it is evident that the order of real-existents reflects its prior and corresponds in its sequence with the order of henads, so that the more universal existents are united by their nature to the more universal henads and the more particular to the more particular.”⁴⁰ We shall argue that this sort of doctrine is already emerging in the role of essential number in the philosophy of Plotinus.

Corrigan has suggested a correlation between essential number in VI.6 [34] and the

³⁵ Proclus may not in fact be the originator of this doctrine as it may have already been present in the philosophy of his master, Syrianus (see Dodds commentary on *The Elements of Theology* 258 and we will note here that Dodds also describes the henads as “the transcendent sources of individuality.” 259) Number already had a pre-eidetic role in Neopythagorean thought but the textual evidence is not substantial enough to tell if such numbers would be the basis of individuation. If we are successful in demonstrating that this sort of theory is already operative in Plotinus, however, it will be seen as a doctrine which was already present but which simply became more explicit over time.

³⁶ Proclus, *The Elements of Theology* Prop. 6, in which the henads are defined as the multiplicity of which every member is a singularity (indivisible). This evidently renders it the most perfect multiplicity possible.

³⁷ Ibid. Prop. 113. Also see Prop. 64 *Cor.* The relation of the henads to the One cannot, of course, be simply equal to the relation of intellects to Intellect or souls to Soul. We do not have the space to address this matter relative to Proclus but will certainly, in this study, have to be clear as to how the relation numbers to the One in Plotinus differs from the relation of intellects to Intellect.

³⁸ Ibid. Prop. 121, 123, 125, 133, 135, 137-38, 145. In addition, “ἰδίωμα” in Prop. 133 & 134 and “ἰδιον” in Prop. 152 & 155. This, of course, is in the *Elements* alone. Again, for a recent study on the individuating function of the henads in the philosophy of Proclus, see: E. P. Butler, “Polytheism and Individuality in the Henadic Manifold.”

³⁹ Ibid. 125.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 136.

divine henads in the context of a close reading of III.8 [30] 10.1-26,⁴¹ where Plotinus speaks of the *one* to which each thing can be traced and writes that “Plotinus bites the bullet on the hyperdeterminate multiplicity issue [. . .] even in the unity of all things with their source, there is still a kind of individual identity in each.”⁴² In this way, Corrigan points to number in VI.6 [34] as a rather distinct instance of such “hyperdeterminate multiplicity” which seems to be required and, let us note, it is specifically the multiplicity of *individual identities* that is so required. The only other instance we have witnessed in the literature in which the theory of essential number is directly compared with the henads of Proclus, again in passing, is at the end of the *Commentary* to the French critical edition of VI.6 [34]. It comes at the end of a list of possible ways in which one might possibly interpret the treatise:

Or le néoplatonisme a été conscient de l’insuffisance de l’Un a’il s’agit d’assurer la structure de tout. Entre l’Un et le tout, un intermédiaire doit fonder la normativité de passage. Cet intermédiaire s’appelle « nombre » chez Plotin ; il s’appellera « hénades » chez Proclus.⁴³

During the course of our examination of VI.6 [34] (in Part II of this study) it will be seen that the entire *Commentary* up to that point, being the penultimate paragraph, is almost completely dedicated to making this sort of interpretation impossible. We will maintain that this “mediation” is required not because the One is insufficient, but because numbers (or the henads) *really do follow* from the One and if this is not understood the One is not yet understood as the principle of all things. One need only ask, “if there is a One, then what follows concerning the others?” The others will proceed according to

⁴¹ K. Corrigan, *Reading Plotinus: A Practical Introduction to Neoplatonism* 181-82.

⁴² Ibid. 180. Corrigan has also developed a theory of matter in which there are various matters descending from intelligible matter to bodily matter and, it is eventually suggested that Plotinus’ theory of matter anticipates the various form of the unlimited in the philosophy of Proclus. C.f. K. Corrigan, *Plotinus’ Theory of Matter – Evil and the Question of Substance* 291. A similar account of matter in Plotinus has also been produced by Breton (See S. Breton, *Matière et dispersion* 126-27).

⁴³ Plotin, *Traité sur les Nombres (Ennéade VI.6 [34])* 84. Since the number of contributors is so great in number we shall simply refer to it as the “*Commentary*” in our text.

number.

4. Method Part Two: On the Relation between Doctrine and Discursive Thought or between Negative and Positive Henology

When discussing the passage in V.1 [10] 6, we noted that, according to Plotinus, the soul longs to know *how* it is that anything follows from the One even if it already knows *that* the One necessarily generates all things. We mentioned that in V.3 [49] Plotinus contrasts knowing by necessity (ἀνάγκην) with knowing by persuasion (πειθῶ).

In V.3 [49] Plotinus attempts to overcome the way in which the skeptics had argued against the possibility of self-knowledge. The basic critique, given by Plotinus at the very beginning of that treatise, is that for something to know itself it is necessary that one part know another part.⁴⁴ In this way, the part that knows is not that which is known and the part that is known does not know.⁴⁵ After explaining this difficulty, chapters 2-3 discuss the discursive nature of the human soul while chapter 4 goes on to discuss the way in which the soul above (the real soul) knows intellectually. Finally, in chapter 5, Plotinus discusses Intellect as that in which being and knowing are the same and such knowing must exist if there is really such a thing as truth. In chapter 6, however, it is asked whether or not this sort of argument activates belief (ἐνέργειαν πιστικὴν) (6.9) and the response is “No, it has necessity (ἀνάγκην), not persuasive force (πειθῶ); for necessity is in Intellect but persuasion in the soul. It does seem that we seek to persuade ourselves

⁴⁴ This problematic is logically identical to Aristotle’s argument against self-motion in *Physics* VIII. 257^a 30-258^b 10, which is repeated in *On the Soul* 406^a 5-10. Aristotle, of course, would have denied that this argument could be applied to the divine Intellect as it does not involve motion. Nevertheless, this thinking is said to necessarily think itself (*Metaphysics* λ 1074^b 32-34) and this thinking “deals with that which is best in itself” (*Metaphysics* λ 1072^b 18) and thus evidently some “part” of it is being known by some other part.

⁴⁵ See Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Logicians* I 310-312 for his own articulation of the argument.

rather than to behold truth by pure intellect.” (6.10-13). Persuasion requires that we “contemplate the archetype in the image (ἐν εἰκόνι τὸ ἀρχέτυπον).” (6.18) We must learn to contemplate intellect according to the highest capacity that we have as embodied soul: διανοητικὸν (discursive intelligence).⁴⁶ This is discursive reasoning in conformity with Intellect:

But since the things which it speaks are above, or come to it from above, whence it also comes itself (ὅθεν περ καὶ αὐτό), it [self-knowledge]⁴⁷ could happen to it, since it is a rational principle and receives things akin to it (συγγενῇ λαμβάνοντι), and fits them to the traces in itself (καὶ τοῖς ἐν αὐτῷ ἵχνεσιν ἐφαρμόττοντι), in this way to know itself. Let it then transpose the image to the true Intellect.” (6.27-29)

This kind of reasoning, then, *deals with* what it receives from Intellect by fitting what is given into to the traces in itself, which were also received from above. If there is such a reception, then it follows that we can reason about intellect with what Intellect itself gives us. By knowing in this way, soul also knows itself because, in fitting the illumination from above to its potential to receive, it realizes the potentiality to become what it is.⁴⁸

To become what it is soul must *discourse with what immediately comes to it from above*. This is why the soul is, in fact, perfectly justified when it is not content with “necessity.” Necessity is, to be sure, better *in itself* since it is, in a sense, actually in the *mode* of Intellect but *we are embodied souls*. The arguments of necessity do not illuminate our souls or turn us back to ourselves as they do not enable the discursive re-production/construction of the higher in the mode of the lower.

Plotinus then, will proceed to produce a discursive account of the *very birth of*

⁴⁶ Collette has written an entire chapter on the distinction between this kind of reasoning and λογιστικόν, διανοητικόν being the higher form of reasoning and that which is in an unfolded likeness to Intellect. See Collette, *Dialectique et Hénologie chez Plotin* 41-67.

⁴⁷ Our insertion.

⁴⁸ The necessity for πειθώ can arise in similar contexts in VI.4 [22] 4.4.11 (and VI.5 [23] 11.3-7 & 23-28, where encouragement [παραμυθίων] is needed for our reasoning); VI.7 [38] 40.1-5 (which will be a very important passage for our interpretation of the doctrine of the two acts) and VI.8 [39] 13.1-6.

Intellect relative to the One, for we know things through their causes, and this account must divide Intellect into phases and reduce the unity of knower and known while multiplying that which is so known. In so doing, however, we actually have *thoughts* about Intellect whereas in chapter 5 we did not. Moreover, this later account *will* confront the skeptical criticism of self-knowledge. In chapter 5 the conclusion that being and knowing are the same was only maintained as the condition for the possibility of real truth. The Sceptic is not forced to concede to such a necessity and would be completely justified in accusing Plotinus of being a dogmatist had that been the end of the argument.

In fact, the point of this discussion is precisely this: the arguments from necessity in and of themselves are the doctrinal and dogmatic side of the philosophy of Plotinus. Knowledge of this by itself constitutes *right opinion* on the matters but does *not* constitute *philosophy*. Philosophy is primarily the discursive activity in which the simple is ordered in sequence.⁴⁹

An *enormous* amount of confusion has been caused by the inability of scholars in general to take note of the distinction Plotinus makes between necessity and persuasion. A great number of studies and debates have been bogged down and confounded by the conflicting reports Plotinus issues about the simplicity of Intellect in one instance and the great complexity of Intellect in another. In all of this there is a general preference for the dogmatic accounts of Intellect as simply the identity of being and knowing, the perfect co-equality of the five kinds of being, or the notion that Intellect simply proceeds from the One and Soul simply proceeds from Intellect.

The doctrinal arguments/accounts, however, are required in order to maintain the difference between that which is above and our way of knowing that which is above.

⁴⁹ Intellect as such does not need to do philosophy.

Without this difference it is possible to regard discursive knowledge as “absolute knowledge” and this is in some ways worse than simply maintaining right opinion as it can be considered an offence against the gods themselves. In this way negative theology is generally doctrinal and it must always be maintained because it prevents us from forgetting that, while the transcendent is certainly not opposed to the immanent, it always *exceeds* the immanent. It is because Hegel’s system failed to maintain this sort of negative transcendence that he presented a discursive construction of the divine as “absolute” and the negative henology of Trouillard and those who follow him have responded by prohibiting positive discourse on the One altogether.⁵⁰ We wish to argue that a progressive construction is permissible if it is conscious of its restricted truth domain (discursive soul’s way of knowing) and if it *does not contradict* the results of strict negative henology. Such a positive progressive construction we shall call “positive henology”.

The purely static and simple descriptions of the transcendent as produced by arguments of necessity (negative henology) and expounded in doctrinal teachings (dogma) are also *repeated* as a “moment” within discursive thought about these matters. Within the discursive discussions of Intellect, for example, the simple doctrinal understanding of Intellect is precisely maintained as the moment of *remaining*, as that *in which* Intellect moves from one thing to another such that it moves only in itself or, in other cases, as the division of many beings/intellec[t]s within the single substrate of Being/Intellect. In this way the discursive accounts of Intellect relate the progression as *within* the simple and so this understanding of Intellect remains clearly distinct from the

⁵⁰ For an excellent summary of the negative henology of Trouillard and Duméry see W.J. Hankey *On Hundred Years of Neoplatonism in France* 154-55.

way we understand soul's discursive nature, which is always occupied with things either above or below itself.⁵¹

After providing a description of real being according to simple/negative necessity in VI.4 [22], Plotinus raises the question as to how there could be many intellects and souls if both Intellect and soul are one:

How then [does Plato speak of]⁵² being and beings, and many intellects and many souls, if being is everywhere one and not only in the sense of specific unity, and intellect is one, and soul is one? [. . .] Even if it has a certain [logical] necessity (εἰ τινα ἀνάγκην), is not convincing (ἀλλ' οὐ πειθώ), since the soul thinks it unconvincing (ἀπίθανον) that the one should be everywhere present in this way. Perhaps it would be better to divide the whole (βέλτιον γὰρ ἴσως μερίσαντα τὸ ὅλον) in such a way that that from which the division originates is in no way diminished, or to put it better, to generate from it (γεννήσαντα ἅπ' αὐτοῦ), and so to allow one thing [, the soul of the All], to be derived from it (τὸ μὲν ἐκᾶσαι ἐξ αὐτοῦ εἶναι), and the ones which have come to be like parts, souls, then to fill up the number of all things (συμπληροῦν ἤδη τὰ πάντα). (VI.4 [22] 4.1-11)

Once again the need for persuasion arises relative to necessity, which is always the first side to be offered. When we divide according to our discursive power, we begin with the simple and let it be the moment of abiding, regarding it as the *origin* of the progression. Armstrong adds “the All soul,” to fill out “τὸ” as the single hypostatic reality produced from Intellect and then the many souls will fill out all things. In Procline language, what Plotinus is saying is that the *simple monad* of each of these orders remains a simple *whole before the parts* while generating the next order both as a whole and in its parts.⁵³ Plotinus will, however, find that there is still a problem regarding the question of the many beings, intellects, and souls:

But how are there many souls and many intellects and being and many beings? And furthermore, since they come forth from what is before them as numbers (καὶ προϊόντα ἐκ

⁵¹ V.3 [49] 2.25-26.

⁵² Armstrong's insertions.

⁵³ Proclus, *The Elements of Theology* Prop. 66-74.

τῶν προτέρων ἀριθμοὶ ὄντα), not magnitudes, they will cause a difficulty in a similar way about how to fill the All. (VI.4 [22] 4.18-21)

The problem of the many beings, intellects, and souls, then refers back to what Corrigan called a “hyperdeterminate multiplicity” since Intellect’s ability to produce both soul and many souls means that Intellect must already have many intellects as the basis of the many souls and this leads back to the notion of number as the basis upon which there may be many intellects.

In this study we will borrow the vocabulary of “tense aspect” to distinguish these two ways of speaking about the transcendent. The doctrinal kind of argument, according to necessity, attempts to think the eternal without any implication of motion and can obtain the correct answers but in a manner that leaves soul unaffected; the result of this kind of argument we call the “simple aspect” of the object as it tries to speak of the eternal without implying temporality. The discursive kind of argument, according to persuasion, attempts to think the eternal by introducing motion and is how the soul reproduces the higher in itself; the result of this sort of argument we will call the “progressive aspect” of the object as it introduces logical sequences within the eternal. The simple aspect of Intellect is, again, the simple identity of being and knowing, or “the abiding in one of eternity (ἀϊῶνος [. . .] τὸ μένειν ἐν ἐνί);” (III.7 [45] 2.35), or the simple monad of Being. The progressive aspect, on the other hand, adds discursive progression and *power*,⁵⁴ by which each order generates a *series* of parts or members in or about itself. In this way, it will also be *figurative* in that it will provide *images* upon

⁵⁴ One of the other texts in which Plotinus, after a very negative description of Intellect, decides to offer something to discursive reason (VI.5 [22] 11.4) adds power as opposed to size (11.13-14) and “time by analogy.” (11.22)

which to discourse⁵⁵ while arguments according to necessity do not think upon images but upon the propositional meaning of the terms it employs.⁵⁶ While arguments from simple necessity only tell us *that* x is the case and cannot account for the multiplicity of entities in each transcendent order, the truths of such arguments are in need of no qualification (i.e., they are absolute or unconditionally true). Arguments from progressive persuasion can tell us *how* x is the case and can account for the multiplicity of entities on each hypostatic order, but the truths of such arguments are relative to the discursive reason of embodied souls.⁵⁷

It is altogether crucial, however that the “simple aspect” as it is taken *alone* according to necessity and the simple as it is *included* as the beginning of the “progressive aspect” should not be identified; for in that case it would be “sublated” into the more “concrete” whole produced in the latter. The simplicity of the transcendent (be it Intellect or the One) by itself remains beyond all possible discourse and negative henology has the final word regarding the One by itself. Therefore, when we make the simple into the beginning of a series of differences, we should not take that simple entity “with the many” to be identical with the simple entity alone and prior to the many, as “it is necessary for there to be a one by itself (ἐν ἑφ’ ἑαυτοῦ) before the one with another.”

⁵⁵ Plotinus’ expresses strong approval of Egyptian ideograms as opposed to propositional language in V.8 [31] 6.1-9, where he says that such images express the non-discursive nature of Intellect. In this way our “discursive” account is less discursive than the simple negative account, which uses propositional language. Arguments according to necessity, however, are still more pure on account of the negativity of the propositions relative to their objects. Images, by definition, presuppose the imagination and so it is still the case that we are knowing according to our kind of activity. On the other hand, what Plotinus indicates here, is that ideograms and conceptual models are superior to propositional language when it come to positive accounts of the eternal.

⁵⁶ In this way arguments according to simple necessity tend to be analytic while arguments according to progressive/figurative persuasion tend to be synthetic.

⁵⁷ In this respect the progressive and positive account of the One and Intellect at once constitutes the highest science of the human soul. This self-knowledge, however, does not result from a study of human soul *qua* human soul but from *taking aim* at that which is higher than the soul with the greatest concentration of effort on the part of the soul.

(V.6 [24] 4.8-9)

In applying this “aspect theory” to the way Plotinus treats of the One, we will develop a henological dialectic in which we begin with the simple negative account according to necessity whereby the One will remain in its unknowable transcendence. Then we shall move into the progressive aspect of the One whereby we try to know the One by way of analogy with Intellect’s progressive aspect. Finally, we negate from the analogy what is peculiar to Intellect and which contradicts the nature of the One such that our “progressive” or discursive account of the One will produce a result that is no more like our conception of Intellect than our conception of Intellect is like Soul. This progression of unity will be the “first act” of the “two acts” while the simple aspect of the One is properly above all activity. The “short hand” formula for this is that we shall begin with the One of negative henology and add progression such that positive henology can say: the One + progression = number.

II: Simple Aspect of the One – Remaining

This section will produce a brief account of what can be said about the One when we limit ourselves to arguments from necessity and according to simplicity.⁵⁸ We shall proceed to produce a “triad” of this simple aspect of the One. The first part of this triad will discuss the One as simple Identity or αὐτότης beyond being. The second part, following from the first, will denote the One as intensive. The third part will discuss the One as radically exclusive. This triad is modeled after the Procline triad of limit, the unlimited, and the mixed.⁵⁹ The limit is that which remains or abides, the unlimited is the power which proceeds or generates, and the mixed is that which results from the return of

⁵⁸ By way of analogy with Kant’s critical philosophy, the simple moment could be called the “analytic of the One” while the progressive moment could be called the “dialectic of the One.”

⁵⁹ Proclus, *Théologie Platonicienne*, livre III 30-40.

the second to the first. The “simple” triad we are about to expound is that *of* the “limit” and so all three moments are, as it were, in the mode of the first such that nothing is as yet proceeding or returning, but these moments are prefigured in the simplicity of the One itself.

1. The One as αὐτός

We have set out to demonstrate that the One, as the principle of each and every thing, must be the principle of individuation and shall make our beginning with the way in which Plotinus frequently employs the term αὐτός relative to the One. The One is beyond being because it is *simply* one and one alone “since there is nothing at all present with it,” (V.6 [24] 4.4) for “it is necessary for there to be a one by itself (ἐν ἑφ’ ἑαυτοῦ) before the one with another.” (8-9) The One is alone in that it is not the unity of a substrate which would *have* unity as an attribute – it is simply *identical* with unity *itself*. Or rather, unity itself is identity itself. The One as one alone “is only itself and really itself, while every other thing is itself and something else” (VI.8 [39] 21.32-33) The One then “is primarily self and self beyond being (πρώτως αὐτὸς καὶ ὑπερόντως αὐτός).” (VI.8 [39] 14.42)

O’Daly, in his book *Plotinus’ Philosophy of the Self*, investigates the theme of selfhood in Plotinus and its Platonic roots in the Delphic commandment “Know Thyself.” In the final chapter of that work he proposes that “the One is *par excellence* the Self.”⁶⁰ His primary method of showing this is with respect to Plotinus’ descriptions of *unio mystica*. Plotinus often speaks of the ascent as an entering into oneself such that the self

⁶⁰ O’Daly, *Plotinus’ Philosophy of the Self* 91. O’Daly notes that this notion of the One as Self had been generally indicated by Bréhier in *La Philosophie de Plotin* when the latter says that “l’Un de Plotin n’est ni une chose, ni un objet; il est le sujet pur, absolu, solitaire.” 178. On this matter, however, Bréhier pushes the One toward a Hegelian intellectual spiritualism (180-81) which does not seem to be shared by O’Daly who makes it clear that the One is not in any way self-reflexive.

in union, or the “self-itself,” as it were, can be deemed beyond intellect (IV.8 [6] 1.6) or being (VI.9 [9] 11.42-43), which O’Daly rightly connects with the One “in us” (V.1 [10] 11.10).⁶¹ It is said that we must grasp the One “by the likeness in ourselves” (III.8 [30] 9.22) and we try so to grasp with a direct intuition/close touch (ἐπιβολῇ ἀθρόα, 9.21).

The One itself, being perfectly simple, does not think itself:

but it will have a simple concentration of attention on itself (ἀπλῇ τις ἐπιβολῇ αὐτῷ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἔσται). But since there is no distance or difference in regard to itself, what could its attention be other than itself? (τὸ ἐπιβάλλειν ἑαυτῷ τί ἄν εἴη ἢ αὐτό;) (VI.7 [38] 39.1-4)

Since we relate to the One by way of entering into ourselves and by way of intuitive touching, and the One as a pure touching is “primarily self and self beyond being” (VI.8 [39] 16.42), O’Daly concludes that “on the one hand, the One is a Self, and, on the other, that, of the faculty experiencing *unio*, we can say no more than that it is – ‘the self.’”⁶²

We must make it clear that this identification of the One with αὐτός is *not* to attribute self-reflexivity to the One or, for that matter, the “one” in us; since ἐπιβολή is “an intuition that does not presuppose the duality of subject and object.”⁶³ That the One is that which is primarily “itself” does not mean to indicate that the One is a kind of supreme *subject* or *person*. It is better, O’Daly argues, to say that “the One appears to be conceived of as the principle of pure identity.”⁶⁴ Since he *concludes* his book in establishing this identification of the One and Self, O’Daly does not clearly indicate the implications this insight has for the Plotinian philosophy as a whole.

In his paper “*L’ ‘intellect amoureux’ et l’ ‘un que est’*,” Perczel has criticized O’Daly’s thesis concerning the One as Self. First of all he takes O’Daly to be denoting

⁶¹ Ibid. 90.

⁶² Ibid. 94.

⁶³ Ibid. 92.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 91.

the notion of an absolute subject: “L’ ‘un de l’être’, loin de se présenter comme un Sujet absolu, est plutôt une activité sans sujet.”⁶⁵ In this way, he understands this to be an Augustinian reading of Plotinus.⁶⁶ While we do not quite share this reading of O’Daly we do not think that it is unjustified. For example, O’Daly cites Bréhier on the matter without really distancing himself from that reading.⁶⁷ We, however, wish to make it perfectly clear that by “αὐτός” we mean “itself” in terms of identity and identity, as we shall explain, in terms of specificity or unicity. Whether or not Perczel’s reading of O’Daly in this respect is justified is of no bearing to our own argument as it is not indicative of where we wish to take this notion.

The second side of Perczel’s argument is with respect to the connection that O’Daly seeks to make between the One itself and all the other selves, and specifically that of the human soul, since “l’ ‘un de être’ est un principe universel. Il est formellement identique à lui-même dans chacun des êtres, et ne permet aucune diversification.”⁶⁸ The primary textual evidence Perczel cites regarding this claim is the following from *Ennead* VI.2 [43]: “And if the one is the same in all things which belong to being, as there is no differentiation of it it does not make specific forms; but if there are no specific forms, it cannot be a genus.” (VI.2 [43] 11.47-49) Thus he argues that what is there of the divine in us is “la présence et le reflet du Transcendant dans la sujet conscient.”⁶⁹ If this is the case, how can Plotinus also say that: “we go back everywhere to *one*. And in each and every thing there is *some one* (τι ἓν) to which you will trace it back, and this in every

⁶⁵ Perczel, “L’ ‘intellect amoureux’ et l’ ‘un que est’” 257.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 258.

⁶⁷ O’Daly, *Plotinus’ Philosophy of the Self* 91. See W.J. Hankey *On Hundred Years of Neoplatonism in France* 120-123 for an account of Bréhier’s Hegelian reading of Plotinus.

⁶⁸ Perczel, “L’ ‘intellect amoureux’ et l’ ‘un que est’” 256.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 258.

case to the *one* before it, which is not simply one, until we come back to the simply one.” (III.8 [30] 10.20-22)⁷⁰ It is here evident that, beginning with any one thing, there are *several levels* of “ones” (implying a topology of unity) to follow before reaching the One itself. What could each of these discrete “ones” be according to Perczel’s understanding of Plotinus? Perczel himself, and rightly so, identifies the “one-in-being” with what Plotinus calls the one essential number⁷¹ but refuses to consider the essential numbers thereby generated, which are in fact prior to the real beings that are numbered,⁷² to count as the “one” or “self” in each thing.

2. The One as Intensive

The grammatical function of αὐτός is generally *intensive*. Αὐτός can mean “the very one,” “the same,” “oneself,” “one’s true self,” “soul” “of oneself,” “alone,” and “exactly.” The intensive pronoun does not add anything except stress or intensity. Grammatically this is really an emphasised demonstrative used to *point out* that it is *this* particular one that is indicated.⁷³ In this way αὐτός, in both the attributive and predicate position, *specifies* as “that very one” and for this reason, again, “One” and “αὐτός” mean the same thing. This specificity of the One is, again, indicative of its being the principle of individuation. For each identity, qua identity, will be *some specificity*. Since “itself” intensifies or *stresses* that with which it is taken, it can already be said that the One itself

⁷⁰ We recall that Corrigan perceived a “hyperdeterminate multiplicity” with respect to this passage (See K. Corrigan, *Reading Plotinus: A Practical Introduction to Neoplatonism*. 180-81.

⁷¹ Perczel, “L’ ‘intellect amoureux’ et l’ ‘un que est’” 254.

⁷² VI.6 [34] 15.10-11, 14-16.

⁷³ The relation of the demonstrative “this” to the signification of singularity is in fact indicated in the very first chapter of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, “Sense-Certainty: Or the ‘This’ and ‘Meaning.’” Hegel shows how the demonstrative *intends* to signify the singular existence of that to which it points but that it is forced to employ the same terms (“this” and “that”) in every case such that the demonstrative only points to indeterminate being (the beginning of the *Science of Logic*) and would evidently fail to fulfill the principle of discernability. We do not have the space to fully discuss the matter here, but it will be enough if the way in which the One individuates is able to fulfill the principle of discernability, as we intend to demonstrate in Part II.

is in some way identical with *intensity* or *stress* and the specificity of each thing will be distinct relative to some specific intensity of stress.

In the second moment of the second triad of the One we will see how this very intensity of the One is productive of another in the progression of unity.

3. The One as Exclusive

That which becomes One, becomes itself. This is the henological law that exceeds all possible ontological speculation. Plotinus makes it clear that whatever has not yet become One “is not yet what one would call ‘itself’ (οὐπω ἔστιν ὃ ἂν εἴποι αὐτό)” (V.3 [49] 15.13) and, conversely, “in turning to itself (εἰς αὐτὸν γὰρ ἐπιστρέφων)” it [Intellect] turns to its principle.” (VI.9 [9] 2.35-36) Again, “in thinking the Good it [intellect] thinks itself incidentally (καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸ ἐν τῇ νοήσει αὐτοῦ κατὰ συμβεβηκοῦς αὐτὸ νοεῖ): for “it is in looking to the Good that it thinks itself (πρὸς γὰρ τὸ ἀγαθὸν βλέπων αὐτὸν νοεῖ)” (V.6 [24] 5.16) and those “outside it” are “outside themselves (αὐτῶν ἔξω).” (VI.9 [9] 7.30) With respect to the way in which the soul becomes like the One/Good, it is written that “when it comes to be there it becomes itself (ἐκεῖ γενομένη γίγνεται αὐτὴ);” (VI.9 [9] 9.22) and again, the One is received “as another self (οἷον ἄλλον αὐτόν)” (V.1 [10] 11.10). Thus conversion to the One in no way entails a simple union whereby all things eschatologically collapse back into the principle. Such a collapse is, in fact, structurally impossible. Since the One is “itself” – each thing in becoming “one” becomes itself.

What is the real difference between ontology and henology? Why this apparently impossible insistence on the beyond of Being? This is the difference: *A being belongs to being as a part while a one belongs to the one as itself.* Since being is substance it is

determinable and thus all participation of being belongs to being as one part of its inner determination. In Intellect “each is a special power (ἐκαστον δύναμις ἰδίᾳ). But the whole Intellect encompasses them as a genus does its species (περιέχει ὥσπερ γένος εἶδη) and a whole its parts (ὅλον μέρη).” (V.9 [5] 6.9-10) Thus that which participates in being *belongs* to being as a determination of substance “but each [intellect] remains distinct in otherness (μένει ἐκαστον ἐν ἑτερότητι), having the same essential being (ἔχον τὸ αὐτὸ ὃ ἐστὶν εἶναι).” (IV.3 [27] 5.8-9) Each intellect, *qua* being, is equally a being but only distinct by way of otherness, that is to say, by way of that which is otherwise than being.

Since the One is beyond being or prior to substance, that which becomes One is *not* a determination of the One within the One but it becomes a one *itself outside* of the One. That the One is *itself alone* means that no “one” can be *with* it or a *part* of it, but, insofar as anything becomes one, *it comes to be itself*. For, if the One is primal self, that which becomes one would not be *like* the one if it did *not* become itself. It would not be like the One if it belonged to the One and thus *it can only be like the One in remaining separate from the One*. This logic does not belong to being, the logic of the determination of substance or genus, but is the logical operation of that which is beyond determination, beyond substance, and thus beyond being. Henology does not escape ontology by turning to mere hyperbole and paradox; it has its own logic which *strictly follows* from the One – *that which turns toward the One is turned toward itself*. This formula exceeds all ontological possibility while, at the same time, founds all ontological possibility: it is precisely because the One is *exclusive* that the first indeterminate substance, when converting upon unity, will become reflexive being, that is to say, Intellect. We must still,

however, discern how anything arises from the One in the first place.

While this third term of the first triad of the One clearly prefigures the return of pre-intellectual potentiality upon the One, more importantly for the present investigation it also prefigures the third moment of the second triad of the One as the basis upon which the progression of unity will be excluded from the One itself.

III: The Simple and Progressive Aspects of Intellect

1.1 Simple aspect of the intelligible: Eternal Being

Before we can discuss the progressive aspect of the One it is necessary that we explain how our “aspect theory” applies to intelligible reality so that we can then apply it to the One. As we stated at the end of section one, our “positive henology” requires a moment of analogy between the One and Intellect followed by the negation of what, in that analogy, would contradict the primacy and simplicity of the One.

With respect to accounts of Intellect which make it out to be simple as opposed to progressive in its nature, the most striking example can be found relative to Plotinus’ description of eternity in *Ennead* III.7 (45): *On time and Eternity*. This simple aspect is not intended to be inclusive of intelligible reality but the “abiding in one (τὸ μένειν ἐν ἑνί)” (III.7 [45] 2.35) of real substance, which is substance in as much as it can be “one” and is

a partless completion, as if they [the counterfactual parts] were all together in a point, and had not yet begun to go out and flow into lines (προϊόντων); it is something that abides in the same in itself and does not change at all because always in the present. (III.7 [45] 3.18-20)

Here we have a characterization of Intellect or real being according to its “simple aspect” as “all things at once.” It is not surprising that such an emphasis should be placed in the context of discussing eternity for a progressive description of eternity would not be a

description of eternity at all. In this view, eternal and true reality is not a multiplicity of all real beings in both their self-relation and inter-relations but a single perfect life abiding in itself. For true being

is always the same (ὡσαύτως); and this is being without any difference (ἀδιαφόρως. So it does not have any “this or that”; nor, therefore, will you be able to separate it out or unroll (ἐξελίξει) it or prolong it or stretch it (παρτενεί); nor then can you apprehend anything of it as before or after. If, then, there is no before or after about it, but its “is” (ἔστιν) is the truest thing about it, and itself (καὶ αὐτό), and this is the sense that it is by its essence or its life, then again there has come to us what we are talking about, eternity (III.7 [45] 6.14-21).

Eternity is *being as such* as “the whole before the parts.” For it is being simply in that it really is, that is to say, insofar as it always is: αἰ plus ὧν renders ὁ αἰῶν as true being (III.7 [45] 6.34). It is being apart from all the beings that could be separated out from it or within it.

1.2 Progressive aspect of the Intelligible: Thinking Life

With respect to the accounts of intellect which make Intellect out to be progressive as opposed to simple in its nature, perhaps the most striking is found in *Ennead* VI.7 [38]. Not only does Intellect move, but its motion is not even simple, as it must move in every way.

It must therefore move to all, or rather moved to all. Certainly if it moves a simple (ἀπλοῦν movement it has that one alone; and it is either itself and has not gone forward to anything, or, if it has gone forward, it is another thing as staying behind (καὶ ἢ αὐτὸ καὶ οὐ προὔβη εἰς οὐδέν, ἢ εἰ προὔβη, ἄλλο μένον); so there are two; and if this [one of the two]⁷⁴ is the same as that, its remains one (μένει ἓν) and has not gone forth; but if it is other, it has gone forth with otherness and from the same and another has made a third one. [. . .] It is not then possible for the real beings to exist if Intellect is not actively at work, forever working one thing after another [. . .] But it is everywhere itself (πανταχοῦ δ’ αὐτός ἐστι); so its wandering is an abiding one (μένουσιν οὖν ἔχει τὴν πλάνην). And its wandering is in “the plain of truth”, which it does not leave. (VI.7 [38] 13.16-35)

⁷⁴ Armstrong’s insertion.

The beginning of the passage denotes the need for all kinds of motion, which Intellect must possess if it is going to be “all” and therefore itself: “if it is itself it is all, and if it is not, it is not itself.” (VI.7 [38] 13.53) We then read, however, that if it remains then it is itself or itself goes forward while it is something other as staying behind. Here the “two aspects” that we wish to distinguish are first placed side by side *within* the second aspect. There is a simple abiding that does not move, on the one hand, and a going forward or proceeding that moves in everyway. That which stays is identified with the same (τοῦτο) and simply “remains one” while that which goes forward is identified with otherness. From these two a “third one” (τρίτον ἓν) arises which is both same and other. Evidently Intellect is the *other in the same*. The progressiveness of this proceeding activity is indicated in many ways; it must make “one thing after another”⁷⁵ and must never be still but is always moving through itself. That fact that this movement is *within* itself, as it “moves always to the interior,” (VI.7 [38] 14.16) means that *it never leaves itself* when it leaves off one thought for the next, *for what is left behind is left within itself*.

In the progressive aspect of Intellect, the way in which we can produce a construction of it within ourselves, there is a progression productive of a series of differences within the singular substrate of being.

2. The first act of the One as Self Loving/Willing according to Narbonne, Lacrose, and Pigler

Some scholars have attempted to discern the “first act” of the One by way of analogy with Intellect but have proceeded in such a way that the One is made out to be something of a “proto-subject”. In these treatments the One is described as a kind of pure

⁷⁵ Cf. V.3 [49] 10.19

wakefulness/vision,⁷⁶ as self-loving, or as self-willing. To this end they draw heavily upon *Ennead* VI.8 [39] in which Plotinus describes the One in terms that are usually reserved for Intellect. Lacrose and Pigler have described this first act most specifically as love, Lacrose writes:

Et par cet acte premier et ineffable [. . .], l'Un accomplit éternellement un retour sur soi, manifesté par son 'amour de soi', qui est à l'origine de tout ce qui existe ou subsiste.⁷⁷

The One's act of self-love is employed in a similar way by Pigler, for whom love is that:

Sans quoi la procession de êtres n'aurait pu avoir lieu. L'Érôs se diffuse en effet lorsque l'Un, « se tournant vers lui-même », engendre par ce mouvement, sans en être altéré ni amoindri, la totalité du Réel qui découle de lui.⁷⁸

In this way a sort of “self-conversion” is attributed to the One so that a “first act” is given such that the “second act” can follow. Pigler's argument maintains this self-love as “*une certaine motion du Bien*”⁷⁹ which is the basis of procession, continuity, and conversion.⁸⁰

It is argued that the love of the One is self-diffusive⁸¹ but we are not given a technical explanation as to *how* this is the case aside from the typical notions of emanation and this is in part due to a strong preference for subject-orientated terminology like “will” and “wakefulness” while believing that the Middle-Platonists' discussions of number (object-orientated terminology) were unimportant for Plotinus.⁸² This self-love of the One could

⁷⁶ Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus* 2.vols. vol.1. 320 n4. Narbonne, *La métaphysique de Plotin* 64. Pigler, *Plotin* 44.

⁷⁷ Lacrose, *L'amour chez Plotin* 113. In this he appeals not only to the passages in VI.8 [39], in which the One is described as possessing a self-directed activity, but also to Hadot's translation of V.1 [10] 7.5-6, in which Intellect would be produced by way of a self-reflexivity of the One. Armstrong's translation renders this same passage as denoting something like intelligible matter returning to the One and becoming intellect. For a history of the debate over the rendering of this passage See Ritsuko Okano, “How Does the One Generate Intellect? Plotinus, *Ennead* VI [10] 7.5-6?” French scholars are generally on the same side as Hadot and English scholars are generally on the same side as Armstrong.

⁷⁸ Pigler, *Plotin – un métaphysique de l'amour* 17-18. This renders the self-love of the One as “the rule of procession.” 22 and 57.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 18

⁸⁰ Ibid. 20.

⁸¹ Ibid. 18, 57, 62.

⁸² Pigler, *Plotin – un métaphysique de l'amour* 94.

very well be regarded as a “fulfilling perfection” from which there could be a continued overflow in so far as it is *reflexive*, that is to say, structurally indistinguishable from Intellect. In addressing the problems inherent in this description relative to the pure simplicity of the One, Pigler also wants to maintain that this love is a “vision sans objet”⁸³ and altogether “intransitive.”⁸⁴ In that case, however, it is no longer certain how the One would overflow or, for that matter, why its love is still a self-love.

Another but related approach characterizes the One as freedom and self-willing. Narbonne first discusses how the One can be regarded as a power. This power, characterized as a pure act, is the self-activity of the One: “Pure activité, agir désincarne, l’Un se détermine et se substantif lui-même,”⁸⁵ and even “se communique á lui-même.”⁸⁶ It is in such fashion that the One freely wills itself and engenders itself. In avoiding the more negative ways of speaking about the One,⁸⁷ Narbonne considers the Principle “beyond being” in that “l’Un est au-delà de l’existence déterminée”⁸⁸ while matter is below all determination. Since the One is determined only by itself, this is meant to indicate that the one is beyond being *passively* determined by anything other than itself, and it is in this sense that it is beyond all necessity and thus perfectly free.

Narbonne believes that the “doctrine of the two acts” implies that there must be something that acts *in itself* as the condition of having a productive act.⁸⁹ This is because he understands this production by way of simple analogy, moving from the way Intellect produces another from itself to the way in which the One produces another from itself. As

⁸³ Ibid. 54 and 67.

⁸⁴ Ibid. 52 and 69.

⁸⁵ Narbonne, *La métaphysique de Plotin* 85.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ He makes especial reference to Bréhier’s paper “L’idée du néant et le problème de l’origine radicale dans le néo-platonisme grec.”

⁸⁸ Narbonne, *La métaphysique de Plotin* 81.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 64.

we have observed, the first act of Intellect (its progressive act), *does* in fact act in itself in producing its inner determinations and, from this perfective explication, it can be understood how it would overflow in a “second act” whereby it would generate soul. While we accept the use of analogy applied the progressive aspect of the One, we think that it is both possible and necessary to negate anything about the analogy that would destroy the unity of the One. Nevertheless, from this premise Narbonne concludes that “l’auto-engendrement de l’Un est une pré-condition de la production de monde.”⁹⁰ That which is new and remarkable in Plotinus, he says, is not a principle by *causa sui*, as such notions had already been in circulation,⁹¹ but “le transportation de l’idée de l’auto-causalité dans les catégories de la volonté et la liberté, opérant ainsi une dénivellation au sein du divin entre le vouloir et l’être, la puissance et l’acte.”⁹² Thus the One, according to Narbonne, is the pure act or power that causes itself in willing itself.

We cannot, however, accept the notion the One has an act *in itself* and that it thereby determines itself as this implies that the One is a substance. This is no doubt why Narbonne resorts to calling the One a “*quasi-substantialité*.”⁹³ In fact, making the One undetermined in that it is purely self-determined without any external limit results in a depiction of the One that is almost indistinguishable from the way in which Intellect is presented by the negative henology of Trouillard and those who have followed his lead. On the side of Narbonne it can be said that if the One was so under-determining relative to Intellect that it would no longer really a principle but more like a kind of *néant*. On the side of Trouillard, however, Narbonne is contradicting the conclusions of negative

⁹⁰ Ibid. 105.

⁹¹ Ibid. 94. Specifically among the Stoics. Narbonne’s interpretation of Plotinus in *La métaphysique de Plotin* draws heavily upon Stocism as understood by Hadot.

⁹² Ibid. 103.

⁹³ Ibid. 96.

henology, whose truths, while few, are certain and absolute. Our positive henology will allow us to understand how the One can be a positive principle (relative to a discursive construction) without contradicting the simplicity of the Principle.

These first attempts to discern the first act of the One are not without merit but our approach will, in a certain sense, take an inverse route. From the point of view of our aspect theory, in shifting to a *persuasive* mode of discourse when trying to explain *how* the One produces, these scholars have placed intelligible concepts into the simple aspect of the One and have thus produced the sort of positive account that contradicts the necessary truths of negative henology. In this way we have a hyper-intellect that is still not willing to move from the simple to the progressive or to employ figurative concepts. The result is “the worst of both worlds” as we have a simple-aspect presentation of the One that is no longer truly simple but which still does not please the yearning of the soul. It neither preserves the transcendence of the One nor does it discursively produce the One within the capacity of embodied soul. We, on the other hand, shall expound a positive henology which will negate everything intellective in the “first act” of Intellect such that, in the end, only the notion of a progressive and multiplying act is added to the One. We will, however, pursue the notion of the One as some kind of *inward tendency* or *pressing*.

From considering Pigler’s position, then, we are able to ask: if there is a kind of inward tendency of the One, and this tendency and the “the One” are strictly identical, then in what would this consist?

With respect to Narbonne, we think he is right to pursue a kind of determining act beyond being but we ought to keep the simple aspect of the One as separate from the progressive act. Thus Narbonne’s position leads us to the question: if there were an act of

the One which was determining but not an inward self-determination, what would be the result?

We shall argue that One's *primary act is already productive of another*, as it *keeps nothing* for itself, which is why it is a far higher and more dignified cause than is Intellect and why it can give it all and let Intellect have it all. Intellect only produces by way of its excess *above what it needs*. The first and primary giver keeps nothing prior to its giving – including the explication or expression of its own nature. The progressive remaining of the One cannot be a self-directed and self-determining activity. It must now be proven that, given the remaining of the One, there must also be a progression of unitary power.

IV. The Progressive Aspect of the One - Power

Just as we formed a triad of the simple aspect of the One, so too shall we form a triad of the progressive aspect of the One. Unlike the first triad, the terms of this triad cannot claim to be altogether independent of positive analogy from Intellect to the One. Moreover, this second triad will permit the soul to apply both its progressive and figurative nature in attempting to approximate itself to the One. In both cases, however, the use of analogy is to be kept at the minimum compatible with producing a positive/progressive account of the One as the cause of all things. Where the One was simple αὐτός or identity in the first triad, we shall find it to be an abiding potency prior to all activity in this second triad. Where the One was intensive in the second moment of the simple triad, we shall find it now to be an kind of ἐπιβολή or inward concentration in the second moment of the progressive triad. Finally, where the One was exclusive in the first triad, it will be emanating its own likeness in the progressive triad.

1. The One as Potency

Plotinus frequently presents the One as a power (δύναμις) prior to and greater than active actuality/energy (ἐνέργεια). Since the Peripatetics used the term δύναμις to denote potentiality, which is associated with matter, and ἐνέργεια was closely associated with νοῦς (Aristotle's First principle), the way in which δύναμις is applied to the One must be distinct from these both. Unlike the merely possible/matter, it is not the power to become all things but to make all things.⁹⁴ Is this, however, sufficient to distinguish power from active actuality? In what sense, then, is the One the source of all things by way of power?

The simple power of the One is most clearly presented in *Ennead* V.3 [49]. How did the One bring all things into existence?

By possessing them beforehand. But it has been said that in this way it will be a multiplicity. But it had them in such a way as not to be distinct: they are distinguished on the second level, in the rational form. For this is already actuality; but the One is the potency of all things. (V.3 [49] 15.29-33)

If it is to be said that the One possesses them beforehand without thereby losing its simplicity as “itself alone”, it must be the case that they are already pre-possessed in that the One remains itself. But what does this mean? It is really quite simple. Given the One itself, *there is already presupposed every capacity of unity/self*. Thus we can consistently say that with One simply remaining itself every “one” is pre-possessed. We still, however, have a problem: why should there even be “every capacity” of unity?

Let us take a step back and ask: *is it possible that the One itself could even abide/remain if was it powerless?* Is there no power in simply abiding? Or, to put it negatively, is powerlessness not precisely a *falling-away* of something from its good and

⁹⁴ V.3 [49] 15.34-36.

from itself? Pure multiplicity without a one is “unable to tend to itself (ἀδυνατοῦν εἰς αὐτὸ νεύειν), it pours out and is extended in scattering.” (VI.6 [34] 1.5-6). That the simple remaining of the One is identical with abiding power itself is affirmed in VI.8 [39]. Speaking of the One, Plotinus writes:

But that it did not go was due to itself; it was not because it was hindered but because it was itself it did not go (ἀλλὰ τῷ αὐτὸ εἶναι, ὃ μὴ ἐλήλυθε); and inability to go to the worse does not indicate the powerlessness of what does not go, but its not going comes from itself (παρ’ αὐτοῦ) and is because of itself. And not going to anything else has in it the extreme of power (τὴν ὑπερβολὴν τῆς δυνάμεως). (VI.8. [39] 10.30-34)

It is on account of the fact that the One is simply itself that it “does not go” (remains) and this remaining itself is exceeding (ὑπερβολὴν) power. The One remaining itself is itself excessive! It is perfect as “having never gone from itself” and evidently this pluperfect perfection is more perfect than that which is perfected upon return. Since the perfected proceeds to generate, it follows that the One should generate, but why should remaining perfect yield an excess? Can it be said that the One is excessive relative to itself? What would that mean?

2. The One’s Power as Intensive Concentration

We have encountered the term ἐπιβολή as it is attributed to the One in VI.7 [38] 39.1-4 at the beginning of this study in O’Daly’s characterization of the One as αὐτός. The use of this term has received much attention in Plotinian scholarship beginning with the analysis of Rist, who claims that ἐπιβολή “may be Plotinus’ favourite word for the ‘knowledge’ of the One.”⁹⁵ The term is of significant importance in Perczel’s paper “L’

⁹⁵ Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* 51.

‘intellect amoureux’ et ‘l’un qui est,’” in which it is primarily translated as “touching.”⁹⁶ Since the most literal meaning of the term is “laying on” or “throwing on,” the closest approximation with respect to the way Plotinus applies the term to the One may be that of “pressing-on,” from which we can discern the notion of “touch,” for touching connotes a “press.”⁹⁷ Concerning the One, Plotinus asks: “what could its attention be other than itself?” (τὸ ἐπιβάλλειν ἑαυτῷ τί ἄν εἴη ἢ αὐτό) (VI. [38] 39.4). The One itself would be this very touch/pressure. Later in the same chapter, in differentiating the One from Intellect, Plotinus writes: “that kind of movement, simple and all the same (ἀπλοῦν καὶ αὐτὸ πᾶν), if it is to be something like a touch (οἶον ἐπαφή), has nothing intelligent about it.” (VI. [38] 16.19-20) Thus the One as touching is “like” a simple and self-same movement and we take this to indicate something very much like how it must “be toward itself” (V.1 [10] 6). It is still, however, difficult to suppose a touching which does not pre-suppose some *interval*.

Of all acts, is touching not the least thinkable as intransitive? It is not always necessary for touching to be upon/against *something*? On the other hand, that the One should be a “touch” is not accidental and therefore not simply replaceable by another kind of act. Why is this so? Because what we need to “get things going,” as it were, is some kind of “meeting” or “contact.”

Chrétien in, *L’appel et le réponse*, at the end of a somewhat phenomenological study of touch in Aristotle (and Alexander of Aphrodisias), discusses the subject of intelligible touch. This is first indicated in *Metaphysics* λ in that Intellect becomes

⁹⁶ Perczel accepts Hadot’s translation of ἐπιβολή as “toucher.” His analysis of this term is really with respect to the “pre-intellect” or “intellect in love” and so we will not go into it until we reach that point in the argument.

⁹⁷ We will note that O’Daly, in *Plotinus Philosophy of the Self*, translates VI.7 [38] 39.1 as a “simple intuitive approach to itself” 93.

intelligible in touching (θιγγάνων) and thinking.⁹⁸ Chrétien wants to maintain that this intelligible touching remains, like sensible touch, transitive and yet “il est totalement immédiat [. . .] Il devient ce qu’il touche, et comme il touche.”⁹⁹ He finds a similar notion of intelligible touch in Aquinas’ commentary on the *Metaphysics*: “L’intellect du premier mobile devient intelligent en acte par un contact (*per contactum aliqualem*) avec le première substance intelligible.”¹⁰⁰

C’est d’un contact avec soi comme intelligible qu’éternellement l’esprit divin s’enflamme, et en se laissant toucher qu’il enflamme ce qui vient après lui. Le plus nécessaire est au sens étymologique du terme la *contingence* même, le contact même d’où surgit l’éternel éclair à quoi tout est suspendu et dont tout dépend.¹⁰¹

This is a beautiful passage and certainly touches upon this whole matter of touch in a central way but it does not sufficiently address the objection that there is a duality prior to the unity of this “pure act.” This problem is somewhat greater for Chrétien than for us as we do not need to describe the One as thinking itself and so we can attempt to get at a contact prior to any self-reflexivity, if such a thing is at all possible. The notion of a “contact” is very crucial, for a “contact” is, it seems, exactly what is needed and what is implied by the attempts of Lacrosse, Narbonne, and Pigler to characterize the self love or willing of the One.

The character of the One as a kind of pressing-on or tending toward itself is perhaps best described by Plotinus in the following passage:

There must therefore be a concentration (συστηῆναι) into a real one (ἓν ὄντως) outside all multiplicity and any ordinary sort of simplicity, if it is to be really simple. (V.3 [49] 16.15-

⁹⁸ *Metaphysics* λ 1072^b 19-20.

⁹⁹ J.L. Chrétien, *L’appel et la réponse* 151.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. Citing *In Metaphysicorum*. L. XII, lect. 8 § 2542-2543.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. “It is from a contact with itself as intelligible that the divine spirit/mind is eternally enflamed, and in letting itself be touched it inflames that which comes after it. The greatest necessity, in the etymological sense of the term, is *contingency* itself, the very contact wherefrom the eternal light/flash surges from which all is suspended and on which all depends.”

16)

Narbonne has noted this passage and the unusual use of the term συνίσταμι with respect to the One. He expresses some uncertainty with respect to how it should be translated, suggesting “réunion” and “rassemblement” in addition to “concentration”¹⁰² but ultimately, and in taking it along with the passage that we too have cited above (V.3 [49] 15.29-33), he takes the sense to indicate an “évocation exceptionnelle d’une sorte de *préfiguration* du postérieur dans l’antérieur.”¹⁰³ In this way the passage would indicate the necessity that there be a kind of “construction” in the One prior to all things but relative to our current problematic we wish to take this prefiguration more specifically *as concentration*, which is the positive thought of the One’s intensive nature (from the simple/negative triad) and that from which we may come to understand how the One both prefigures and *generates* an other.

We can find something akin to this notion of “concentration into a one” in Chrétien’s reflections on the Good in the philosophy of Plotinus:

Our desire for the Good supposes that the Good has already been given as the condition of our being. This contraction [of the Good] is not absence of presence, but excessive presence for which no present could suffice.¹⁰⁴

Chrétien finds this “contraction” of the Good not in the characterization of the Good as συστήναι (although he may not have noticed this) but in that the One “did not come as one expected, but he came as one who did not come.” (V.5 [32] 8.14-15) Again, we find a here pluperfect act in this “contraction” and, moreover, it is a helpful figure because a contraction denotes a pressing-in and pressing-in as a kind of *contact* or concentration into one prior to all multiplicity.

¹⁰² Narbonne, *Hénologie, Ontologie, et Ereignis* 175.

¹⁰³ Ibid. 176.

¹⁰⁴ J.L. Chrétien, *The Unforgettable and the Unhoped for* 27.

3. One as emanating its own likeness

“Very well,” one might say, “but what has all this to do with how it is that the One can generate anything without making the One out to be multiple?” We noted in the second section on method that in the progressive account of the One we intended to employ analogy between Intellect and the One but without making the One into a hyperbolic Intellect. We found that Intellect’s progressive act was in fact an inward motion within itself and now we find that the progressive aspect of the One is also a kind of inwardness. This was already obscurely prefigured in the simple triad, when we said that the One itself was *intensive*, but the procedure according to necessity (negative henology) does not permit that we produce a figurative notion of what intensive means. We argued against Narbonne, however, by maintaining that this intensive power cannot be a self-determination of the One in the way that Intellect determines itself since this would contradict the unity of the One by attributing to it a determinable substance and would render it conceptually equivalent to Intellect. If, however, we take progressive intensiveness *without determinable substance*, we will obtain the required formulation.

Taking up the “concentration into a one” as a contraction, we find that, since there is *no place* into which the One should contract, *a place would be made in this very contraction*, such that the result will “have to go on forever” (χωρεῖν δὲ αἰεὶ, or “make way/space” forever) (IV.8 [6] 6.16). Unlimited intensive power yields unlimited extensive power. The displacement will also be *like* Intellect’s inner activity in that it will render the unfolding explication of its nature, but the One’s concentration excludes even its own unfolding explication and this is the primal basis of all emanation from it. Let us briefly go over the argument.

If...

1. The simple unitary remaining of the One must be supreme/unlimited power.
2. This power must be figuratively conceived as a “concentration into a one” or intensive power.
3. This unity is exclusive; figuratively this means that there is no “place” within the One into which it may progress.
4. By analogy with Intellect, we can say that whatever would progress would be an unfolding explication of the One’s unitary nature.

Then...

A. Even in the progressive/positive aspect of the One, as distinct from the simple/negative aspect, the progression of the One’s intensive power is *excluded* by the One while it can only be identified with the *point of departure* of this progression. In Intellect, the simple remaining in the progressive account was simple being as that *in which* the progressive side proceeds while Intellect was really both of these together. Here the One is the simple concentration *from which* its own unfolding is *excluded* – its *first act* already produces something *other* than it. This is the very first otherness, the exclusion of the progression of unity from the intensive abiding of the One itself. The progress will consist of “one after another” and, as we shall see in the second installment of this paper, this will be the production of the essential numbers (the primal henological identities prior to being).

B. If singularity must yield such a displacement, it follows that singularity *qua* singularity is *excessive to itself*. The analysis of the One according to simple

necessity or negative henology would in fact be sufficient to conclude that the One cannot be the One if it includes the explicated nature of the One (each and every real unity) as opposed to Intellect, which can only be true being by including every real being. That analysis, however, was not sufficient to demonstrate how unitary nature would follow from the One itself. According to our progressive figurative account, that of positive henology, we have been able to demonstrate that it follows from the One's intensive and exclusive abiding that there must be an emanation of the progressive unfolding of unity such that: "It is in abiding by himself that he gives them (ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ μένων ἔδωκεν)." (V.2 [11] 2.27) Since the One must be thought of as an inward pressing intensive power, concentration, or "contact itself", the nature of unity will be pressed-out or emanate from the One itself.

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