

PLOTINUS' AESTHETIC APPROACH TO THE ONE

Plotinus uses the terms κάλλος and καλόν to describe the νοητός κόσμος (intelligible world) at the level of Nous: Since we maintain that the man who has entered into contemplation of the intelligible world and understood the beauty (κάλλος) of the true Intellect will be able also to bring into his mind its Father which is beyond Intellect... how it is possible for anyone to contemplate the beauty of Intellect (κάλλος τοῦ νοῦ) and of that higher world¹.

Although Plotinus says the One cannot be named or described, he sometimes refers to the One by using the substantive κάλλος: Its beauty, too, will be unique, a beauty above beauty (κάλλος ὑπὲρ κάλλος) ...as the power to all beautiful shape, it will be the ultimate of beauty (κάλλος καλλοποιόν)². The notion of beauty is important for the soul's ἐπιστροφή to the One. At the early stages of its ascent, the soul is helped by its contemplation of visible beauty. In order to then reach the Intellect, the soul contemplates its beauty together with its moral components. At the end of the ascent, the mystical union with the One takes place, at which time the One itself becomes the Beauty beyond Beauty (κάλλος ὑπὲρ κάλλος). This interpretation of the soul's ascent to the One is unique in that it emphasises the aesthetic dimension of Plotinus' One³. This aesthetic dimension is due to Plotinus' special distinction of κάλλος and καλλονή from καλόν. This paper will explore this aspect of Plotinus' ontology.

Earlier studies of Plotinus' One have paid little attention to its aesthetic character, focusing instead on other aspects of Plotinus' ontology. For example, Plotinus' distinction between sensible beauty and the beauty of soul, i.e. his concern for material beauty as opposed to Plato's disregard of it, has been extensively studied⁴.

1. *Ennead*, V. 8.1, 1-7, A. H. ARMSTRONG, *Plotinus*, 6 vols., Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1966.

2. *Ennead*, VI. 7.32.

3. The term «aesthetic» is first used by Plotinus as «aesthesis», that is as the soul's «perceptive power». This perceptive power is the aesthesis with which the soul appreciates sensual beauty, which then becomes the initial cause of the soul's search for, and elevation to the highest beauty (κάλλος). It appears that aesthesis, after passing the level of nous, loses its sensual content and takes up in Plotinus' thought, an abstract, spiritual character which is analogous to the difference between sensual and intelligent beauty.

4. KRAKOWSKI, *L'Esthétique de Plotin et son Influence*, Paris, De Boccard, 1929. A. H. ARMSTRONG, *Plotinus*, London, 1953. E. BREHIER, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, tr. J. THOMAS, Chicago, 1958. K. S.



Other works have focused on the originality of Plotinus' aesthetics for «his objective beauty is not consisted in the symmetry and perfect position of parts but in the brilliant realization of the archetype in the object»⁵. Another important work analyzed and discussed the validity of Plotinus' argument against the view that beauty is symmetry⁶, finding that Plotinus' position is both too narrow and too broad. It is too narrow «by virtue of being unable to explain the beauty of certain sensible objects»⁷, and too broad because it is based on «composite wholes which are symmetrical but not beautiful and vice versa... Symmetry applies to both truth-beauty and falsehood-ugliness. Because of this wide range of application Plotinus finds symmetry unacceptable as a definition of beauty»⁸.

The simplicity of the beautiful in Plotinus' *Enneads*⁹ has also been analyzed through discussions of Plato's influence on Plotinus and comparisons of Plotinus' thoughts with extracts from the *Protagoras*, *Philebus*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, *Symposium*, and *Hippias Major*. These discussions have emphasized that Plotinus' conception of beauty is inseparable from aesthetics and morality¹⁰. Yet another theory¹¹ distinguishes between the various forms of beauty to which Plotinus refers, such as the beauty of the intelligible world, the beauty of intelligence, and the beauty of soul. Accordingly, whenever Plotinus refers to the beauty of the Supreme Being, of the First Principle, he calls it *ὑπέρκαλος*¹². This theory, however, merely refers to the above distinction, and does not pursue the very important role that terminology plays in Plotinus' theory. Plotinus uses the terms *κάλλος*, *καλλονή*, *καλόν* metaphorically, in both a literal sense and as a means by which to analyze his ontological system¹³.

GUTHRIE, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, London 1910. J. KATZ, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, New York, 1950. KRAKOWSKI, *Plotin*, Paris, 1933.

5. J. COCHEZ, L'Esthétique de Plotin, *Revue Neo-Scholastique de Philosophie*, 1934 v. 21, p. 191.

6. J. ANTON, Plotinus' Refutation of Beauty as Symmetry, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 23 (W 1964), pp. 223-237. See also W. TATARKIEWICZ, *History of Aesthetics*, Paris, B. S. Harell, 1970, p. 319.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 234.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 235, 237.

9. Specifically of *Ennead* I. 6.

10. This leads to the problem of why sensible beauty (a living face) is preferable to a face of a statue for Plotinus. The reason is that for Plotinus a living face «is more desirable». It is more desirable because it possesses a soul. It possesses a soul because it has the advantage of forming the good. It possesses this advantage because the light of the good made its colours shine. J. C. FRAISSE, *La Simplicité du Beau selon Plotin* *Revue de Metaphysique et de Morale* (1983) no 1. pp. 53-63. This idea is involved and included in this paper. My thesis however, discusses the identification of the One with Beauty based on Plotinus' one use of specific terms.

11. J. COCHEZ, L'esthétique de Plotin, *Revue Neo-Scholastique*, v. 20 (1913), p. 306.

12. *Ennead*, I. 8.2, 8.

13. Plotinus' use of language is very ambiguous. At times, his mysticism ignores the precision of the

Dean Inge argued that Plotinus uses three names for the Absolute: the One, the Good, and Beauty¹⁴. J. M. Rist¹⁵ points out that according to Inge, «although Plotinus calls the Absolute the One and the Good, he does not call it the Beautiful» and that while «the term 'Beauty' (καλλονή) will be appropriate to the One, the Beautiful (Καλόν) will not»¹⁶. My intention is to explore Inge's theory, and to argue in support of it that the One can be named Beauty (κάλλος), but not Beautiful (καλόν). To this end, I will examine Plotinus' distinction between κάλλος and καλόν. I will also demonstrate how Plotinus uses this distinction to describe the One, and how his theory of Beauty underlies his notion of the «return» of the soul to the One. Part I will focus on Plotinus' consideration of the ideas of the true, the good, and the beautiful, whose source is the One of Beauty (κάλλος)¹⁷. This discussion will lead to the notion of beauty and the beautiful. Part II will examine the distinction between the various senses of «beauty» and the «beautiful», pointing out the power that the term «beauty» possesses. In Part III, the ascent of the human soul to the One by means of beauty will be considered and the role that the concept of Beauty plays in Plotinus' ontology will be clarified. Finally, in Part IV, the naming of the One as Beauty (κάλλος) will show how it illustrates Plotinus' aesthetic approach, the «return» (ἐπιστροφή), of the soul to the One through κάλλος and καλόν. This will suggest that Plotinus almost «sees» the One under the influence of his «Pythian» mystical contemplation, as an abstract entity of indescribable beauty, as Beauty itself.

I

In the *Enneads*, the terms ἀληθές (true), καλόν (good), and κάλλος (beautiful) are used interchangeably when referring to the One. The distinction between καλόν and κάλλος, which will be explained below, involves the idea of an aesthetic path to the One. In this context, two senses of «beauty» must be considered: Beauty (with capital 'B') which refers to «the One qua Beauty», and beauty (with small 'b') which refers to material beauty, soul, and Nous. Plotinus uses the latter in exchange with the «beautiful» (καλόν). Plotinus has both Beauty (κάλλος) and the beautiful

terms which he expresses with his ideas. In fact, at the beginning of *Ennead*, VI. 8.13, he says that at times, he uses language incorrectly and symbolically. In this same *Ennead*, he names the One ἔρως. I believe that this is why the distinction of beauty and the beautiful is confusing and not very clear in some of his *Enneads*. See R. FERWERDA, *La Signification des Images et des Métaphores dans la Pensée de Plotin* (J. B. Wolters/Groningen, 1965).

14. W. R. INGE, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, London, 1924, p. 124.

15. J. M. RIST, *Plotinus*, Cambridge University Press, 1967, p. 53.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Although the One, according to Plotinus cannot be defined, he repeatedly refers to the true, the good, and the beautiful as being characterizations of the One.



(καλόν) in mind when thinking of the One. Beauty and the beautiful, in turn, influence the ascent of the soul to the One. Beauty, he says, is the true, the good, and the beautiful. This does not mean that the One is a multiplicity, but that it is Beauty, and that the two (One and Beauty) are synonymous. Given this distinction of κάλλος and καλόν, it can be said that the Plotinian system has an aesthetic character, implying an aesthetic dimension to Plotinian morality.

In *Ennead* VI «On Beauty», Plotinus considers the nature of Beauty and its relation to the system of hypostases. He searches for the Idea of the true, the good, the beautiful, frequently treating all three as if they are one and the same¹⁸. In Plotinus' theory, reality can be known in the hypostasis of Nous through the good, the true, and the beautiful. But Beauty (One) is the good, the true, and the beautiful. By thinking of the true, the good, and the beautiful, the soul reaches the top of the triad (matter, soul, Nous) and is united with the One through Nous. Through his free will, man searches for the good. When the soul thinks of Nous, it experiences pleasure, because it sees truth, goodness, and beauty, and feels happy since it is in harmony with the good, the true, and the beautiful.

When the soul is raised to the level of Nous, it increases in intelligible beauty. During this union, the soul becomes «purified...bodiless and intellectual»¹⁹. It is during this union that the soul sees and becomes one with the true, the good, and the beautiful. But the soul experiences its greatest pleasure when it gazes at the One²⁰. Through Nous, man seeks wisdom and thought, and through his emotions, admiration, and love, he is attracted to the beautiful. The beautiful is the most important element²¹. Accordingly, Plotinus describes the way to Beauty (One) as follows: You must become first of all godlike and all beautiful (καλός) if you intend to see God and Beauty. First the soul will come in its ascent to Intellect and there will know the Forms, all beautiful, and will affirm that these, the Ideas, are Beauty (κάλλος); for all things are beautiful by these, by the products and essence of Intellect²².

According to Plotinus, we distinguish «beauty» by degrees under the concrete forms of physical beauty. Plotinus does not ignore the existence of matter, and he posits a hierarchy of the beautiful. The beautiful (καλόν) of the sensible world is of the lowest level in the hierarchy²³. True, intelligible beauty is found in the intelligible world (Nous), but there is another type of «Beauty», namely the One. The One, named the Absolute, the Good, the Infinite, the Father, Beauty, is the transcendent

18. *Ennead*, I. 6.6, I. 6.7., I. 6.9.

19. *Ibid.*, I. 6.6.

20. This kind of pleasure is different from that of Plato's.

21. *Ennead*, I. 6.6.

22. *Ibid.*, I. 6.9.

23. *Ibid.*, I. 6.9-40.

cause of all things. The One is not only the first principle but it is also Beauty that transcends all other grades of beauty, and all beings: ...as the power of all ultimate shape, it will be the ultimate of beauty (κάλλος καλλοποιόν), that which brings all loveliness to be; it begets beauty and makes it yet more beautiful by the excess of beauty (περιουσία τοῦ κάλλους) streaming from itself, the source and height of beauty ...this conferred beauty is not itself in shape. ... Shape and idea and measure will always be beautiful (καλά), but the Authentic Beauty and the Beyond-Beauty (ὑπέρκαλον) cannot be under measure²⁴. Because it is identified with the One, transcendent Beauty takes the first position in Plotinus' theory of hypostasis. As in many other passages, when Plotinus describes the experience and union with the One, he does not name the One καλόν, but κάλλος²⁵.

II

At this point, a distinction should be drawn between the two senses of «beauty» and the «beautiful», on the basis of the Greek terms used in Plotinus' text. The terms καλόν, beautiful or good, and κάλλος, beauty, are different. This difference was first indicated in the Platonic dialogues (*Symposium*, *Philebus*, *Phaedo*). Plotinus follows the Platonic texts and uses the terms accordingly. The adjective καλόν is often used to mean «looking good» and/or «beautiful», and occasionally refers to moral «good» (ἀγαθόν τε καὶ καλόν)²⁶. This reference to beauty (καλόν) emphasizes its sensual and/or behavioral aspects²⁷. «But since his father was too great to be beauty (κάλλος), he remained primarily beautiful (καλός); ... soul is certainly beautiful (καλῆς) ...»²⁸.

On the other hand, the term κάλλος, beauty, which Plotinus sometimes alternates with καλλονή²⁹, means a non-sensual form of beauty³⁰. Κάλλος also has the meaning of a super, perfect, highest form of beauty which can be grasped and contemplated only by the mind, *in addition* to its moral connotations. In order to emphasize the non-sensual aspect of κάλλος, Plotinus at times calls it κάλλος ἀμήχα-

24. *Ennead*, VI. 7.32, 33. Tr. St. Mackenna & B. S. Page. Notice that this expression has a stronger aesthetic character rather than a moral connotation. Plotinus uses alternatively and as having the same meaning, the terms: ὑπέρκαλον, κάλλος, καλλοποιόν, κάλλος ὑπὲρ κάλλος, and κάλλος. The meaning of these terms, even in modern Greek is sharply different from that of καλόν.

25. *Ibid.*, V. 8.1., IV. 8.1.

26. See note 30.

27. *Ennead*, I. 6.1, I. 6.2: 2, 12, 13, 28, I. 6.3: 6, 20, 23, 34, I. 6.5: 3, 48, 53, I. 6.6: 20.

28. *Ibid.*, V. 8.13.

29. *Ibid.*, I. 6.6: 21-22, 24, 25, VI. 7.33: 22.

30. *Ibid.*, I. 6.1: 34, 49, 50, I. 6.2: 24, 27, I. 6.3: 18, 38, I. 6.5: 5, 45, I. 6.6: 18, 22, 25, 27, I. 6.9: 25, 36, VI. 7.32: 1, 29, 30, 31, VI. 7.33: 1.



von (inconceivable beauty)³¹, as does Plato³², or τὸ μέγα κάλλος, meaning the highest Beauty, of the Divine³³. The latter is distinguished from τὸ πρῶτον καλόν (primary beauty) and τὸ νοητὸν καλόν (intelligible beauty)³⁴. This aspect of κάλλος is also suggested by Plotinus when he refers to «τῶν ψυχῶν τὸ καλόν»³⁵ and «κάλλος μὲν οὖν ψυχῆς ἀρετὴ πᾶσα καὶ κάλλος ἀληθινώτερον ἢ τὰ πρόσθεν» (every sort of virtue is a beauty of the soul, a truer beauty than those mentioned before)³⁶. The soul is beautiful (καλόν). It ascends to Nous by thinking and contemplating the beauty (καλλονή) of Nous. Nous is beautiful (καλόν). The human nous' ascent to the One is the result of the contemplation of Beauty (κάλλος), of the One. Traditionally, the aesthetic connotations of the latter term are clearly stronger than that of καλόν. Due to this distinction, Plotinus' system takes on an aesthetic character. He searches for a way to the One by thinking of Beauty, and at times, he names the One itself Beauty. This linguistic distinction which gives Plotinus' One an aesthetic character appeared in Plato's *Symposium*, which influenced Plotinus. In the *Symposium* 198e, Plato refers to ... the beauty of words (κάλλους...), ... love be only love of beauty (κάλλους, 201a)... what love lacks and has not is beauty (κάλλος, 201b), ... what lacks beauty (κάλλος), and in no way possesses it, is beautiful? (καλόν, 201b), ... that god was neither beautiful (καλός), nor good (ἀγαθός, 201e).

Even though Plotinus is not always careful and precise in using these terms, Plato's influence on Plotinus' use of κάλλος and καλλονή can be seen in several *Enneads*³⁷. For the soul to be able to ascend, it must do nothing but understand and contemplate the beauty (κάλλος) of Nous. Hence, the notion of Beauty (κάλλος) occupies a distinct place in Plotinus' hypostasis. The One is Beauty, and Beauty is the source of the beautiful in the way in which the One is the source of Being and all beings. This is why Plotinus significantly expands the meaning of the beautiful and refers to it in several of his *Enneads*: If then one sees That which provides for all and remains by itself and gives to all but receives nothing into itself, if he abides in the contemplation of this kind of beauty and rejoices in being made like it, how can we need any other beauty? For this, since it is beauty, most of all and primary beauty (κάλλος), makes its lovers beautiful and lovable³⁸.

III

We must now examine the nature of the ascent (return or ἐπιστροφή) of the

31. *Ennead*, I. 6.8:2.

32. *Symp.*, 218e2.

33. *Ennead*, I. 6.9.

34. *Ibid.*, I. 6.9.

35. *Ibid.*, I. 6.5.

36. *Ibid.*, I. 6.1.

37. *Ibid.*, V. 8.1-3, 8, 10, 13, III. 5.1, V. 5.8, 12, VI. 7.22, 32, 33, I. 6.

38. *Ibid.*, I. 6.7.



human soul and its mystical union with the One qua Beauty. Beauty is known by means of Nous; it is a Form or Idea in Nous. Nous is beautiful. Its beauty is recognizable through the beauty of nature³⁹ and of the soul, for they mirror the beauty of Nous. Nous goes upward contemplating the One, that is, the true, the good, and the beautiful, and generates the level below. According to Plotinus, sensible beauty stirs the soul to turn toward the changeless realities to which it is akin. What pushes the soul to its ascent to Nous is its love and appreciation of the beauty found in nature and art. Sensible beauty is therefore the initial cause of the soul's ascent to the One, and Beauty is the One. The soul, illuminated by Nous, recognizes and contemplates the beauty of Nous dialectically⁴⁰. At the end of contemplation, one finds the soul in its truthful aspect, purified of all impurities. It is then beautiful and divine: And first we must posit beauty (καλλονή) which is also the good (ἀγαθόν); from this immediately comes intellect, which is beauty; and soul is given beauty by intellect⁴¹.

The contemplation of the soul is an ascent to the source of the beautiful in the realm of ideas going up to the Good, from where the beautiful is derived, and going higher to the first existence (πρῶτον εἶναι), the superior common principle of Beauty (κάλλος) and Goodness where the mystical union occurs: And the man whose love of the beautiful (ὁ τοῦ καλοῦ ἔρως) is pure will be satisfied with beauty (κάλλος) alone, if he recollects the archetype or even if he does not, but the man whose love is mixed with another desire of «being immortal as far as a mortal may», seeks the beautiful in that which is everlasting and eternal⁴².

The good and the beautiful, which join and unite, share the aspirations of the soul. The beautiful addresses itself to intelligence, and the good addresses itself to the will⁴³. As a result, the purified soul becomes form, reason, and incorporeal. The higher the soul ascends to the level of Intellect (Nous), the more it increases in beauty (καλλονή). Beauty takes on a mystical character during the ascent, which is related to soul's being freed into a new way of seeing: And what does this inner sight see? When it is just awakened it is not at all able to look at the brilliance before it⁴⁴.

As the soul climbs the rungs of the ladder of ascent and approaches the One, it becomes purified and free. In being purified, the soul liberates itself from the body and is ready to unite with the One through contemplation. What leads the soul in its ascent to the highest realm of the intelligible is its love for and contemplation of Truth, Goodness, and Absolute Beauty (ὅτι ἐστὶ κάλλος αὐτό)⁴⁵. Plotinus distingu-

39. *Ennead*, V. 8.8.

40. *Ibid.*, VI. 2.8.

41. *Ibid.*, I. 6.6.

42. *Ibid.*, III. 5.1: 38-44.

43. Edouard KRAKOWSKI, *L'Esthétique de Plotin et son Influence*, Paris, De Boccard, 1929, p. 134.

44. *Ennead*, I. 6.9.

45. *Ibid.*, III. 5.1.



ishes between the love of beauty and the love of good. The good, he says, is superior to beauty⁴⁶ and «older in truth». But contrary to the good (καλόν) which is present even «to those asleep», not all see Beauty (κάλλος). However, in *Ennead* V. 7.22, Plotinus explains that since the beauty of Nous is not lovely enough to attract the soul, it becomes capable only when at this stage, it receives the light of the good (ἀγαθόν). Thus, Nous' beauty is enhanced by embracing the light and grace of the good, and becoming capable of lifting the soul. This is why in several *Enneads* Plotinus distinguishes between the good, the beautiful (καλόν), and the true (ἀληθινό). But as noted, at times he places all three at the same level, for they are all found in their source, the One, and therefore in Beauty. Beauty, Plotinus says, «calls out our love» (κάλλος...εἶναι τὸ ἐράσιμον)⁴⁷. Thus the soul «learns» to love beauty, and through the love of beauty, it is attracted to the higher and highest hypostasis during its ἐπιστροφή to the One. Hence beauty is carried from the sensibly beautiful to Intelligible beauty (νοητὸν κάλλος) and to the realm of Absolute Beauty, namely the One, the «beyond Beauty» (ὑπέρκαλον). Beauty has no form or power, for it stands above any form or any power. The authentic, limitless, eternal is the Ultimate Beauty (κάλλος καλλοποιόν); it is the «source and height of beauty» (ἀρχὴ κάλλους καὶ πέρας κάλλους)⁴⁸.

The beautiful (καλόν), for Plotinus, consists of form, which is identical to essence. The beautiful is soul itself, a pure and intelligible essence. But the beautiful cannot be seen before one becomes conscious of internal beauty⁴⁹, which itself is comprised of moral elements. Man's beauty is based on his knowledge of himself, and his ugliness is due to his ignorance. It is through this individual consciousness that one becomes good and beautiful, reaching the «know thyself» stage. It is then that one can go on, take the ἐπιστροφή road and «[see] the great Beauty» (τὸ μέγα κάλλος), the One, and become one with it⁵⁰. The secret of the ἐπιστροφή via Beauty is therefore the «know thyself», when inner beauty is realized. The more one reaches within oneself, the more he knows himself, and becomes more beautiful, thereby coming close to the One, the transcendent Beauty. The return of the soul to the One takes place through the contemplation of Beauty, the beauty of the One, of Beauty itself.

46. *Ennead*, V. 5.12.

47. *Ibid.*, VI. 7.22:26.

48. *Ibid.*, VI. 7.32.

49. In his explanation of internal beauty, Plotinus compares the human eye with the soul. If the eye is not clean it cannot see the sun. Similarly, if the soul does not become beautiful, by its ascent to intellect, it cannot see beauty (*Ennead*, I. 6.9: 30-35).

50. *Ennead*, I. 6.9: 33-35.



IV

As noted earlier, the One is transcendent Beauty (κάλλος). Beauty occupies the *first place* in the hierarchy of the hypostases, and is therefore to be understood as the source of the other bypostatic levels of beauty or grades of beauty. Consequently, Plotinus' aesthetic theory has an ontological basis. Plotinus' aesthetic approach to the One is fundamental also for his moral theory, since it deals with the notion of existence of *being* (εἶναι). His system involves the highest part in man, the contemplative life. Since life is the beautiful and the good, and since Beauty is their source, man's moral life is directly connected with his aesthetic life. Plotinus is very particular in choosing the proper term when he refers to sensual, spiritual, or moral beauty. As mentioned earlier, the term καλόν is used in reference to sensual beauty, and moral beauty or goodness. He uses alternatively τὸ καλόν or τ' ἀγαθόν⁵¹. The term used by Plotinus in reference to the highest, divine Beauty of God, is κάλλος, or, κάλλος ἀμήχανον, τὸ ὑπέρκαλον, κάλλει ἀμπεχάνω, and sometimes καλλονή⁵². This is sharply distinguished from καλόν (beautiful), whose source is κάλλος (Beauty), and not vice versa. The true way to contemplate the beautiful is to: Go back into yourself and look; and if you do not yet see yourself beautiful, then, just as someone making a statue which has to be beautiful cuts away here and polishes there and makes one part smooth and clears another till he has given his statue a beautiful face, so you too must cut away excess and straighten the crooked and clear the dark and make it bright, and never start working on your statue⁵³ till the divine glory of virtue shines out on you, till you see self-mastery enthroned upon its holy seat⁵⁴.

Self-mastery is therefore achieved through the «know thyself» process. At this point, one is beautiful and sees his own beauty. As a result, the virtue of the soul is defined and measured according to its degree of beauty. This explains the aesthetic dimension of Plotinian morality. According to Plotinus⁵⁵, the One is the beginning and the end of the beautiful. At times, he uses «the beautiful» in the same way as he does «truth» and «beauty» (καλλονή). On other occasions, reality (οὐσία), the One, is called Absolute Beauty⁵⁶. The One is the good (ἀγαθόν, καλόν)⁵⁷. The essence of reality is Beauty (κάλλος) and Beauty is the good (ἀγαθόν). Accordingly it may be said that the One=the good (ἀγαθόν), reality=Beauty (κάλλος), and the good (ἀγαθόν)=Beauty (καλλονή). Consequently, the One (Superabundant Life) is iden-

51. *Ennead*, I. 4.1, 2, 3, 4, I. 6.6, 7, 9 and several other passages.

52. *Ibid.*, V. 8.8, III. 5, 1, I. 6.6, 8, 9.

53. *Ibid.*, VI. 1, F. N. «A reference to *Phaedrus* 252d7; but in Plato it is the lover who works on the soul of his beloved, fashioning it into the likeness of the god they once followed together».

54. *Ibid.*, I. 6.9., (*Phaedrus*, 254b7).

55. *Ibid.*, VI. 7.33.

56. *Ibid.*, I. 6.8, III. 5.1.

57. *Ibid.*, I. 6.7: 1-6.



tified with the good (ἀγαθόν)⁵⁸, and Beauty with the One⁵⁹. But if reality is identified with life of Beauty, and since this is the One, then the One qua Beauty is the source of all sensual, moral, and aesthetic concepts of existence. As a result, although for Plotinus the One cannot be described, he does use various names in referring to it. Even though Plotinus sometimes places the good above Beauty⁶⁰, at other times he equates the two: ... so for God the qualities of goodness and beauty are the same, or the realities, the good and beauty (καλλονή) ... beauty is also the good⁶¹.

Since Plotinus occasionally places the beautiful (καλόν) on the same level with the good (ἀγαθόν)⁶², one may interpret his theory by identifying the beautiful (καλόν) with the good (ἀγαθόν), which in turn is identified with Beauty (καλλονή) and therefore with the One⁶³. For Plotinus, the true, the good, and the beautiful are identical. The source of the beautiful (καλόν) is a metaphysical reality (οὐσία). But reality is κάλλος, and as we have seen, Plotinus names the One Beauty, κάλλος, the highest stage of contemplation⁶⁴. Thus, Beauty (the One) is the cause of beautiful things and the essence of everything spiritual. It is Beauty beyond Beauty (κάλλος ὑπὲρ κάλλος)⁶⁵ and the source of the true, the good, and the beautiful.

Plotinus refers to the essence of Beauty, according to which all beautiful things are called beautiful. Beauty consist of unity; that is, it has a form and essence. This harmonious unity is order. The source of Beauty and its essence can only be of a divine nature⁶⁶. It is immaterial forming principle, Beauty (πρῶτος καὶ αὐλός...κάλλος): Is not this beauty everywhere form, which comes from the maker upon the which he has brought into being, as in the arts it was said to come from the arts upon their works? ... are the things made and the forming principle in matter beautiful, but the forming principle which is not in matter but in the maker, the first immaterial one, is that not beauty⁶⁷?

The world for Plotinus, is «an offspring of the intelligible God, an offspring of Supreme Beauty, which alone among all others, manifests itself outwardly, the last born of God»⁶⁸.

58. *Ennead*, I. 6.6.

59. *Ibid.*, I. 6.6, 7, 9, I. 6.9.

60. *Ibid.*, V. 5.12.

61. *Ibid.*, I. 6.7, I. 6.8, I. 6.6.

62. *Ibid.*, I. 6.6, 7, 9, I. 4.1, 2, 3, 4.

63. Plotinus, however, at some point says that the desire for the good is inborn whereas we do not seek the beautiful until we are awakened (V. 5.12: 9-14).

64. *Philebus*, 64e., and *Phaedo*.

65. *Ennead*, VI. 7.32.

66. This is contrary to the thesis that the source of beauty is symmetry. See John P. ANTON, Plotinus' Refutation of Beauty as Symmetry, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 23 W, 1964, pp. 223-237. W. TATARKIEWICZ, *History of Aesthetics*, Paris, B. J. Harell, 1970, p. 319.

67. *Ennead*, V. 8.2.

68. *Ibid.*, V. 8.2.

In conclusion, Beauty is κάλλος, a transcendent and pure Beauty, also named the One. On the other hand, the beautiful is καλόν whose source is κάλλος. Every level of nous and soul contemplates the beauty of the One, or Beauty itself. It is interesting to note that contemplation is due to the Beauty and not the wisdom or goodness of the One. The ascent and return to the One takes place by the contemplations of Beauty (κάλλος) and at times, in terms of the beautiful (καλόν). The Idea of Beauty leads the soul to the One. At this point, it surely appears that Beauty, in a special aesthetic sense, is identified with the One, and that contemplation of Beauty, of the One, is aesthetic in nature.

Although, as we have seen, Plotinus refers to «the beauty of the One», he also calls the One «Beauty of Beauty». Plotinus often names the One Beauty, and he considers both as if they are one and the same thing. In order to reach this highest Beauty one must go beyond sensual beauty to the beauty of soul (καλόν, καλλονή) or Nous, and finally to Beauty itself (κάλλος ὑπὲρ κάλλος), to the One. Since Plotinus names the One Beauty, he «sees» the One as being Beauty itself. But this is a special kind of Beauty. It is through his deep and mystical contemplation that Plotinus is able to almost «see» this Beauty, the One, with its λάμψη, φῶς. This contemplation has no rules or logic. It produces a very special feeling that leads to the belief of the existence of the One and can only be described in terms of a special kind of Beauty. The meaning of Beauty here is that which embraces everything positive, productive, and good: the true, the good, and the beautiful, meaning morality, rightness, wisdom, goodness, knowledge, self-knowing, and everything else that a highest entity should be. Beauty then, is used synonymously with the One. The Plotinus' system is therefore substantially aesthetic in nature, as much as it is cognitive and moral, thereby implying that Plotinian morality has an aesthetic dimension.

Through a great number of scholars have extensively studied Plotinus' One, the above interpretation offers a new approach to the aesthetic dimension of the One, based upon the distinction between the terms (καλόν) and (κάλλος). The interpretation of Plotinus' One presented above differs from that of others by emphasizing the importance of Plotinus' terminology on his ontological system. The attraction of the soul's return to the One is due to the One's beauty (κάλλος), Beauty itself as Plotinus «sees» it ecstatically. Plotinus' special use of aesthetic language is distinct and very important to his theory. This, as shown, suggests an aesthetic dimension to the notion of the One.

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Η ΠΛΩΤΙΝΕΙΑ ΑΙΣΘΗΤΙΚΗ ΠΡΟΣΕΓΓΙΣΗ ΤΟΥ ΕΝΟΣ

Π ε ρ ί λ η ψ η

Στήν Έννεάδα Ι. 6, «περί κάλλους», ό Πλωτίνος διερευνά τις ιδέες του αληθοῦς του καλοῦ καί του κάλλους. Συχνά χειρίζεται καί τὰ τρία ὡς ἓαν ἦσαν ἓνα καί τὸ αὐτὸ πράγμα. Στή μελέτη αὐτή θά προσπαθήσω νά δείξω πῶς, καί σέ ποιά ἔκταση ἡ πλωτίνηια θεωρία του κάλλους ἔχει συνεισφέρει στήν ἐπιστροφή τῆς ψυχῆς στοῦ Ἐν. Παρά τὸ ὅτι ὁ Πλωτίνος διατείνεται ὅτι τὸ Ἐν δέν μπορεῖ νά περιγραφεῖ ἢ νά κατονομασθεῖ μέ σαφήνεια, διότι εἶναι ὑπεράνω ὅλων τῶν ὄντων, χρησιμοποιεῖ ἐναλλάξ τοὺς ὅρους καλὸν καί κάλλος γιὰ νά τὸ περιγράψει. Ἀκόμη πιὸ ἐνδιαφέρον εἶναι τὸ γεγονός ὅτι ὅταν ὁ Πλωτίνος θέλει νά προσδώσει ἔμφαση στοῦ μεγαλεῖο του Ἐνός, τὸ ἀποκαλεῖ: κάλλος του κάλλους ἢ ἀπόλυτον κάλλος. Σύμφωνα μέ τὰ παραπάνω, θά ὑποστηρίξω ὅτι τὸ πλωτίνειο σύστημα εἶναι ὡς πρὸς τὴ φύση του βασικά αἰσθητικό. Μὲ αὐτὸν τὸν τρόπο ὑπαινίσσομαι τὴν ὑπαρξὴ μιᾶ αἰσθητικῆς διαστάσεως στήν Ἠθική του Πλωτίνου. Ὁ ἰδιαίτερος στόχος αὐτῆς τῆς μελέτης εἶναι νά διερευνήσῃ ἀκριβῶς αὐτὴν τὴν ὁψη τῆς πλωτίνειας ὄντολογίας.

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