

THE ONE'S KNOWLEDGE

There are a number of passages in the *Enneads* where it is the aim of Plotinus to demonstrate that the Aristotelian account of God's knowledge is inapplicable to the first principle of the cosmos. Plotinus seems frequently to take as his starting-point the famous section of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (1074b 22-3) where it is laid down that God must either think himself or something else. Here the alternatives are clear. If God thinks himself he does not think other things; if he thinks other things he does not think himself. And Aristotle has no hesitation in his choice. God thinks himself. Nevertheless, whether he thinks himself or other things, there must be a sense in which his thoughts are separate from his essence, at least potentially, for thought is the actualization of the mind of the thinker which in the act of thinking becomes characterized by its objects. In the process of thought, the form of the thought-object and the thinking mind are one, but this unity is a unity formed by the resolution of a duality. As Plotinus might put it, the Aristotelian God is a unity of plurality, a One-Many.

Plotinus handles the question of the One's knowledge, if we may use this word in a rather extended sense, in two ways: he enquires whether the One has intellection, like the Aristotelian God,¹ and he wonders whether it has any kind of consciousness (*συναίσθησις*), and if so of what kind. We should treat these two aspects of the problem separately until we can draw separate conclusions. At that stage it is to be hoped that these conclusions will themselves lead to a further synthesis and that something definitive about the Plotinian One will be revealed.

We shall take the Aristotelian problem, the problem of νοῦς-νόησις and the One, first. The situation is best described

in 6.7.37. At the beginning of this chapter we read that of those who ascribe thought to the first principle some have supposed (with Aristotle) that the One could not know things less than itself. It is unimportant who precisely are the thinkers—if anybody precise—who are under discussion here, but we should observe that, as Plotinus presents them at least, they can hardly be orthodox Aristotelians, for they subscribe to some kind of emanation-theory. The Good, according to this school, can have no intellection of what is inferior and emanating from itself (*τῶν ἕξ αὐτοῦ*). Others of this group, adds Plotinus, think it extraordinary that the One should not in fact know everything. These are presumably persons who suppose (like Aquinas)² that God knows his products not in themselves, but in himself as cause, for even in Plotinus' view the One is the power behind everything (*δύναμις πάντων*).³ Plotinus however never discriminates between the two schools, for both introduce a duality into their conception of the One.

The sixth tract of *Ennead* five is entirely given over to the problem of the intellectual knowledge, or lack of it, that can be ascribed to the One. Fundamentally the same argument recurs. If the One has intellection, we must understand it in the way that Aristotle understood it, and if we understand it in this way then the One itself will seem to need something else to complete itself. But the One needs nothing else (5.6.4), for if it did, it would be other than the thing which it needs, and, as Plotinus is so fond of saying, there is no otherness about the One.

Plotinus never tires of repeating himself. Indeed there is a sense in which his every sentence contains his whole philosophy. And for our present problem of the possible intellection of the One there is a third source in the *Enneads* at which we should look briefly, namely 3.9.9. Here again it seems that Plotinus is conscious of the Aristotelian alternatives. The first line of the chapter—as correctly printed by Henry and Schwyzer—must indicate that the first principle which is 'beyond Being' has no intellection (*οὐ νοεῖ*). Plotinus then

asks in line six whether this means that the first principle which is 'beyond Being' has not even intellection of itself, like Aristotle's God, and decides, as we should now expect, and for reasons which we now know, that it cannot have intellection of itself. For future reference we should observe in line five of this chapter the suggestion that the One may possess itself ("Ἡ ἦ ἔχει ἑαυτό;)—an odd and unfortunate phrase, it would seem, which can hardly avoid introducing notions of duality, of possessor and possessed, where Plotinus would least like to find them.

So much then at this stage for Aristotelian intellection. We should now turn our attention to the question of consciousness of self. If the One has no intellection of itself—provided intellection be understood in an Aristotelian fashion—are we to say that it is conscious of itself?⁴ 3.9.9 gives us a first answer to this question also. The Good has no need of consciousness of itself (παρακολούθησις αὐτῷ). Consciousness of self, like intellection, is a secondary and demands a subject and object. The same idea—with the word συναίσθησις in place of παρακολούθησις—occurs at 5.3.13.21. The very word συν-αίσθησις indicates the plurality, says Plotinus. Just as the One cannot have intellection, neither therefore can it have any kind of consciousness of itself. 5.6.5.4 makes the same point. The One has no need even of consciousness of itself; it is superior to self-consciousness as well as to intellection. And in case we still have any remaining doubts there is 6.7.41.26 to lay them to rest. The One, says Plotinus, is greater than to exist in such a manner as to have knowledge of itself (γνώσις), intellection of itself (νόησις), or consciousness of itself (συναίσθησις). And if we wonder why Plotinus wishes to deny self-consciousness to the One, we have only to look at the end of *Ennead* 1.4.10 for an answer. MacKenna-Page's translation runs as follows: 'So that it would seem that consciousness tends to blunt the activities upon which it is exercised, and that in the degree in which these pass unobserved they are purer, and have more effect, more vitality, and that, conse-

quently, the Proficient arrived at this state has the truer fullness of life, life not spilled out in sensation but gathered closely within itself.' It is true that here Plotinus specifically names sensation as the antithesis of the higher life, but the full significance of his remarks is only to be understood if we realize that it is self-consciousness that is the real weakener of activity. As Plotinus has said earlier in the same chapter: 'A reader will often be quite unconscious when he is most intent: in a feat of courage there can be no sense either of the brave action or of the fact that all that is done conforms to the rules of courage.'

But what we have seen so far is not the whole story of the One in regard to self-consciousness and knowledge. What we have seen so far has been commonly recognized by the commentators; what follows is dark and obscure and has been largely neglected. A hint that we do not yet know the truth in our present investigation is offered by the very puzzling sentence at 5.3.13.6: 'But when we question and ask: "Then is it without perception of itself (ἀναίσθητον ἑαυτοῦ) or consciousness of itself (οὐδὲ παρακολουθοῦν ἑαυτῷ) and does it not know itself?"', we must bear in mind that when we speak in this way we direct ourselves to the opposites.' What this appears to mean is that one must not jump from the view that the One has no συναίσθησις of itself to the conclusion that it must therefore be ἀναίσθητον or from the view that it has no νόησις to the conclusion that it is ἀνόητον. If this is the sense of the passage, however, Plotinus has obscured his meaning in the rest of the chapter by insisting that the One has no συναίσθησις or νόησις but not examining the related question of whether it is therefore ἀναίσθητον or ἀνόητον.

The number of passages attributing some kind of more positive doctrine to Plotinus on these matters is few, but what they have to tell us is of importance. The first we should consider is 5.4.2.14ff. It is worth examining this in detail. It runs as follows: 'But how can the Intellectual Principle (νοῦς) be a product of the Intellectual Object (νοητόν)? In this way: the Intellectual Object is self-gathered (ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ μένον) and

is not deficient as the seeing and knowing principle must be—deficient, I mean, as needing an object; it is therefore no unconscious thing (οὐκ ἔστιν οἶον ἀναίσθητον); all its content and accompaniment are its possession; it is self-distinguishing throughout (πάντη διακριτικὸν ἑαυτοῦ); it is the seat of life as of all things; it is itself that self-intellection which takes place in eternal repose, that is to say, in a mode other than that of the Intellectual-Principle (καὶ ἡ κατανόησις αὐτοῦ αὐτὸ οἶονεἰ συναίσθησει οὔσα ἐν στάσει αἰδίῳ καὶ νοήσει ἑτέρως ἢ κατὰ τὴν νοῦ νόησιν)' (trans. MacKenna-Page).

We must first recall that this is an early tract of Plotinus. 5.4 is the seventh in Porphyry's chronological list, and although this may ultimately appear to have no significance, it should at least be borne in mind, particularly as the description of the first principle as ἐν στάσει αἰδίῳ καὶ νοήσει ἑτέρως etc. cannot but call our attention to those other passages of the *Enneads* (2.9.1.27ff., 3.9.1) which Dodds has taught us are Plotinus' differing reflections on Numenius.⁵ According to Dodds' account, in the early tract 3.9.1 Plotinus holds that the Ideal Living Creature of Plato's *Timaeus* cannot be simply a νοητόν; it must also be a νοῦς which exists ἐν στάσει καὶ ἐνότητι καὶ ἡσυχίᾳ, like the first Νοῦς of Numenius' system.⁶ In 2.9.1.27, on the other hand, there is said to be no νοῦς ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ τι. What can be deduced from this except that in the early period of his life, quite probably under Numenian influence, Plotinus toyed with the idea of a double νοῦς, one active and the other static, the static and higher also being a νοητόν, but that he later came to reject such ideas? There is evidence then that at some time Plotinus might speak of a νοητόν which itself, though inactive, had some kind of intellection. This is almost what we have in 5.4.2. In this passage, which we have quoted at length, we can read of the κατανόησις of the One, of its 'kind of self-consciousness' in *eternal rest*, and of its νόησις which is however different from the νόησις of the Second Hypostasis, the Divine Mind. Furthermore the One here, as elsewhere in Plotinus, is regarded as a νοητόν,⁷ in

some sense, as the thought-object of νοῦς. Are we therefore to assume that in 5.4.2 Plotinus' view of the relation of νόησις to the One is still affected by Numenian ideas which he later discarded?

We might suppose that the word κατανόησις (5.4.2.17) would provide us with some way out of the impasse. In two other passages of Plotinus where this word occurs (5.3.1.13; 4.7.10.45) it is used of Νοῦς and Soul specifically—so our first impression would be that it would normally not be used of the One and that 5.4.2.17 is thus to be accounted to Numenian influence. But 3.9.9.22 should give us pause, for here τὸ κατανοεῖν is specifically denied to the One; and we remember that 3.9 is the *Ennead* with the most obviously Numenian interpretation of the *Timaeus*. The warning must be taken that Plotinus' use of terminology is not always a guide to his thought. It is still possible therefore that even after the influence of Numenius had waned Plotinus might have accepted some kind of κατανόησις of the One, for he might understand κατανόησις differently in 5.4.2 and 3.9.9. Since in 3.9 therefore κατανοεῖν is specifically denied to the One whereas νοῦς is interpreted in a rather Numenian fashion, we cannot assume that in the nearly contemporary 5.4 Plotinus was unaware of the Numenian ring about his words. The position seems to be that in these early days Plotinus more or less accepted a Numenian division of νοῦς (into a νοῦς ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ and a νοῦς κινούμενος), though he already positively rejected the view that the νοῦς ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ was the first principle. The first principle in 3.9.9 is not a νοῦς, and has not therefore that kind of κατανόησις; it is on the other hand the One, with its own kind of κατανόησις (different from that of νοῦς, 5.4.2). Yet though it is the One, it can still be described by the Numenian phrase ἐν στάσει αἰδίῳ.

We have still not said all that can be said of 5.4.2, for it is in that chapter that we find the direct remark that the One οὐκ ἔστιν οἶον ἀναίσθητον which our earlier discussion might have led us to expect somewhere in the *Enneads*. In 5.3 we

saw that Plotinus asked the question whether the One is ἀναίσθητον but declined to give any answer. Here the answer is that the One is not 'in a sense ἀναίσθητον', which tells us no more than we know already, yet which does at least respect that knowledge, namely that there is some undefined kind of consciousness or knowledge which we can attribute to the One.

Finally this chapter gives us the description of the One as self-distinguishing throughout (πάντη διακριτικὸν ἑαυτοῦ). What are we to make of this? Surely not that the One distinguishes itself as an object, for duality would then be implied and the uniqueness of the One would be lost. Perhaps 5.3.15.31 is something of a guide. Here Plotinus considers and rejects a theory that the many are in the One potentially and in an indistinct manner (ὡς μὴ διακεκριμένα). This is rejected on the grounds that such an indistinct potentiality would have to be explained. (Plotinus does not add that if he accepted this he would be coming very close to pantheism.) But if the One were unable to distinguish the others within itself, could it be said to distinguish itself? In the light of this passage at 5.3.15.31, it seems possible that the πάντη διακριτικὸν ἑαυτοῦ is little more than an absolute reaffirmation of the One's simplicity, and that it means little more than would a statement that whatever the One could distinguish would be itself. This is perhaps not the most likely interpretation, but it is a possible one, and general accounts of the passage must take it into account.

Thus we have little further information from 5.4.2. Again we see that there is some sense in which the One is not ἀναίσθητον. We see also that it has some kind of νόησις, though this must be treated with circumspection since the attribution may merely mark a last survival of the Numenian νοῦς in the thought of Plotinus. And that is all. As to the nature of the One's consciousness we still know nothing, except that if πάντη διακριτικὸν ἑαυτοῦ means merely that the One is simple, it tells us that its knowledge must be entirely of its own simplicity.

We can now turn in the hope of further illumination to 6.8.16. This tract has not much to offer to our present enquiry, but what it has is of some value. Unlike 5.4, 6.8 is not an early treatise; it is number thirty-nine in Porphyry's chronological list. This fact makes the recognition of the term ὑπερνόησις, applied to the One in line thirty-three, doubly significant. The mere existence of the word indicates that the νόησις ἐτέρως ἢ κατὰ τὴν νοῦ νόησις of 5.4.2 is not simply a hangover from Numenius. And the idea occurs again at 6.8.18.26, where there is a reference to the One as τὸν οἶον ἐν ἐνὶ νοῦν οὐ νοῦν ὄντα. Plotinus then really did envisage some kind of νόησις as appropriate to the first principle. But beyond this, unfortunately, the treatise gives no further help, except for the reminder that the One is not what it 'happened to be' but what it 'willed to be'.

And so we must turn to another difficult section: 5.1.7.10. Here problems of translation are so great—and are worsened by problems about the correct text—as to make it necessary to quote the Greek in full and follow this up with selections from various modern renderings. Henry and Schwyzer's text runs as follows: Ὦν οὖν ἐστὶ δύναμις, ταῦτα ἀπὸ τῆς δυνάμεως οἶον σχιζομένη ἢ νόησις καθορᾶ: ἢ οὐκ ἂν ἦν νοῦς. Ἐπεὶ καὶ παρ' αὐτοῦ ἔχει ἤδη οἶον συναίσθησις τῆς δυνάμεως, ὅτι δύναται οὐσίαν. Αὐτὸς γοῦν δι' αὐτὸν καὶ ὁρίζει τὸ εἶναι αὐτῷ τῆ παρ' ἐκείνου δυνάμει. MacKenna-Page's translation (based on approximately the same text, though probably reading παρ' αὐτοῦ with all editors since Creuzer) runs as follows: 'The items of this potentiality the divine intellection brings out, so to speak, from the unity and knows them in detail, as it must if it is to be an intellectual principle. It has besides a consciousness, as it were, within itself of this same potentiality; it knows that it can of itself beget an hypostasis and can determine its own Being by the virtue emanating from its prior.' We should notice about this translation first of all that MacKenna-Page makes νοῦς the subject of ἔχει. It is νοῦς that has some kind of consciousness of the potentiality of the One, and

νοῦς that δύνεται οὐσίαν. There seems to be one certain error here. The One must be the subject of δύνεται—which can only mean ‘causes’. Οὐσίαν must mean not ‘an hypostasis’ as MacKenna-Page suggests, but the specific hypostasis of νοῦς. “Ὅτι δύνεται οὐσίαν”⁸ then will mean ‘that the One causes (is the δύναιμι of) Being’. In their *apparatus* Henry and Schwyzer agree about the subject of δύνεται, but they believe that the One is likely also to be the subject of ἔχει, and thus suppose that the One is itself in some way conscious of its own power. The precise wording of Henry and Schwyzer’s note, however, might indicate to the discriminating reader a divergence of opinion between the two scholars, and other evidence would show this to be correct. Henry has remarked elsewhere that he thinks that νοῦς is the subject of ἔχει, on the grounds that the One could not have consciousness of its own power since this would imply a consciousness directed away from itself and towards plurality.⁹ Schwyzer,¹⁰ however, thinks that the word οἶον removes the difficulty about the nature of the One’s consciousness and that τὸ ἓν is thus the subject of ἔχει.¹¹ The point about οἶον seems inconclusive. Schwyzer is right to hold that such a word *could* be inserted to enable Plotinus to speak of the One, but does not demonstrate that he is actually doing so. Henry’s doubts are well founded and could be strengthened by reflecting that making the One the subject of ἔχει would apparently involve introducing further duality into the One itself. When Plotinus wants to express a notion which we can sometimes render only by saying that ‘the One has something’, he often prefers to use the Greek idiom πάρεστιν αὐτῷ in order to avoid making the One the subject of a transitive verb. If the One has something, there is within the One a ‘having’ part and a ‘had’ part, as Aristotle might have put it.

The question of the change of subject is not as difficult as has been supposed. We have been told in lines 9–10 that τὸ ἓν is the δύναιμι πάντων—a common theme in the *Enneads*, as we have seen; hence in lines 12 and 14 there is no difficulty in referring δυνάμεως and δυνάμει to the One, and δύνεται to

the same source in line 13. My translation of the relevant parts of the whole passage therefore would run as follows: ‘Νοῦς perceives these things by splitting them up in some way. If it did not do so, it would not be a νοῦς. And furthermore νοῦς derives from itself a kind of consciousness of the power of the One, a consciousness that the One brings Being into existence. And νοῦς distinguishes its own existence by means of that power derived from the One.’

This passage then affords us no further evidence of the self-consciousness or self-knowledge of the One. The word συναίσθησις does not in fact apply here to the One at all, but to νοῦς. We have thus to content ourselves still with realizing that the One is not ‘such as to be ἀναίσθητον’, that it has ὑπερνόησις, but that we cannot get any further in the search for what Plotinus actually intends by these terms.

The last section of the *Enneads* which may prove of help to us is 6.7.38. In the previous section, as we have already mentioned, Plotinus is arguing in his customary fashion against those who wish to place an Aristotelian νοῦς at the head of the universe. At the beginning of chapter 38 we find him again on the familiar ground of saying that the remark ‘The One is’ does the One an injustice, for such a predicate denies the One’s unity. And when we say: ‘He is the Good’, we do not mean to predicate goodness of him but to call him by the name ‘the Good’. This being so, says Plotinus, even if we cannot imagine the One having knowledge of itself as an existent, can it not have knowledge of itself as good? But the answer to this must also be negative, for if the One could say ‘I am good’, it would be limiting itself by saying ‘I am’, and thus, of course, restricting itself to the finite.

It looks as though the final result of the chapter will be that the One has no knowledge of itself of any kind. As Plotinus puts it: ‘*Qua* good it does not think itself.’ He then however extraordinarily adds ἢ τί; (‘But *qua* what does it think itself?’). And in his elusive way the answer comes back that the One has nothing and thus, we must suppose, cannot think itself

qua anything. It has no νόησις. What it will have (in Plotinus' language, What there will be for it) is some kind of simple apprehension (ἐπιβολή) directed towards itself. And with this cryptic utterance the chapter ends.

The following chapter sheds a little more light on the sources of Plotinus' idea, but does nothing further to indicate the nature of the 'apprehension' he is thinking of. We learn that it is only the One itself that can have this 'apprehension' approach of which Plotinus has been speaking (τὸ ἐπιβάλλον ἑαυτῷ τί ἂν εἴη ἢ αὐτό;), but then the chapter returns to the familiar notions about the One's not having intellection, since if it did, it would admit of 'otherness' or duality. In line 19 we hear that it will know neither anything else nor itself. On the contrary it will maintain in 'august' repose (σεμνὸν ἐστήξεται). Thus we know, for what it is worth, that the apprehension (ἐπιβολή) of the One is somehow associated with absolute immobility. The 'knowledge' then of the One is by implication wholly different from any other knowledge that we can imagine—but this is only to be expected if the One is infinite where all else is finite.

Yet although the One can know neither itself nor anything else in any ordinary manner of knowing, as is repeated in line 27, Providence is saved, in Plotinus' view, by the fact that the One is that from which all else is derived and by which, presumably, all else is stamped. The phrase 'It will stand in august repose' which we first noticed in line 20 is repeated in 27-8 and 29. Plato is said to be the originator of it, and Plotinus is thinking of the extraordinary interpretation he gives of that passage of the *Sophist* (248E-249A) where Plato points out that Being (οὐσία) cannot be without life and mind and cannot exist 'awful and holy...fixed and immovable' (σεμνὸν καὶ ἅγιον...ἀκίνητον ἐστός). Plotinus interprets this as a suggestion that the Second Hypostasis, the existent Forms, cannot be without νοῦς, but that by implication the One *will* be 'awful and holy...fixed and immovable'. Hence Plotinus' σεμνὸν ἐστήξεται.

But although our conclusions are still somewhat tenuous, the use of σεμνὸν ἐστήξεται here, with its obvious reference to the *Sophist*, will add a little more light to a passage from the early treatise 5.4.2 which we considered above, and in particular to the phrase ἐν στάσει αἰδίῳ (l. 18). It was noticed above that in this treatise, which ascribes a κατανόησις to the One and in which Plotinus says that the One is οἰοῖται συναίσθησει οὔσα and that it has a kind of intellection other than that of νοῦς, there are certain suspicions of the influence of Numenius. In particular, the phrase ἐν στάσει αἰδίῳ, with its echoes of the description of Numenius' first principle, made us wonder how far we could take the remarks in 5.4 as an exposition of Plotinus' ultimate position on the One's knowledge or consciousness. But now we can recognize that even the phrase ἐν στάσει αἰδίῳ harks back not only to Numenius but, like the more obvious σεμνὸν ἐστήξεται, to Plato's *Sophist*. We have already remarked that the κατανόησις and the νόησις ἐτέρως ἢ κατὰ τὴν νοῦ νόησιν of the early 5.4 (number 7 in chronological order) are established by the ὑπερνόησις of the much later 6.8.16 (number 39). We can now add that the perhaps even more suspect στάσει αἰδίῳ of the same 5.4 is confirmed—also in a context dealing with the knowledge of the One—by the later 6.7 (number 38). Once again it seems that except possibly in language—ἐπιβολή does not occur in 5.4, and in the later treatise ὑπερνόησις replaces κατανόησις—Plotinus' doctrine of the One's 'knowledge' has not developed.

The only further help to be derived from 6.7.38-9 is the word ἐπιβολή itself. Plotinus may have selected it because it seems to imply duality less than συναίσθησις or νόησις.¹² It appears to have no technical Platonic, Aristotelian, or Stoic senses which could confuse the reader of the *Enneads*. The only philosophers to use the word technically before the days of Plotinus were the followers of Epicurus. Their use of it is still obscure, but one or two points about it may shed a little light on its importance in Plotinus.

The evidence about ἐπιβολή which can be derived from

Epicurus' letter to Herodotus and from the Κύρια Δόξα and other Epicurean sources handed down by Diogenes Laertius in his tenth book can be supplemented by a few passages of Lucretius.¹³ Perhaps the best remarks on this subject, brief though they are, are those of Vlastos,¹⁴ who manages to attribute to the Epicureans a consistent doctrine which is in accord with their general theories of the primacy of sensation as a criterion. According to Vlastos 'ἐπιβολή διανοίας is the term employed. . . of just that mental function which concentrates thinking on the precise image which is "stamped" upon the mind in sensation'. (There are, of course, ἐπιβολαί of the διάνοια and of 'the other criteria'. (D.L. 10.51.)) This picture should be supplemented by the evidence adduced by Bailey that the διάνοια also 'apprehends' images too fine to be grasped by the ordinary senses (διάνοια itself is a 'refined' sense), such as images of the gods and of the dead.¹⁵ Ἐπιβολή then is a comprehensive (ἄθροα, D.L. 10.35) view of the data provided by the senses or the mind, and an ἐπιβολή διανοίας will actually be brought to bear on such facts as are not immediately clear to the five senses, such as the existence and primacy of atoms and the relevance of the void. In addition to its 'comprehensiveness' we should notice that an ἐπιβολή can be not a grasping of new external data but a casting back of the mind on itself and on whatever impressions it has.

A possible reason therefore for Plotinus' choice of the term ἐπιβολή to describe the 'knowing' of the One is now available. No one would confuse the Plotinian process with the Epicurean, for Epicurus' sensationalism is complete. That being so, however, we can see whether any features of Epicurus' ἐπιβολή are also relevant to the *Enneads*. We may concentrate on the 'comprehensiveness' of ἐπιβολή and on the fact that it is a turning back of the mind on itself.

The first section of the *Enneads* that is helpful to us here is 3.8.9.20ff. The One, says Plotinus, exceeds νοῦς, whereas the highest knowledge we ourselves possess is that of νοῦς. By what ἐπιβολή ἄθροα can we then know the One? And the

answer is that we can know it by means of what is like it in ourselves. In other words, as we should expect from the word ἐπιβολή itself, it is only the One in us that enables us to know the One in itself. Ἐπιβολή is then, as for the Epicureans, both ἄθροα and a turning of the self back upon itself.

The phrase ἐπιβολήν ἄθροα occurs again at 4.4.1.20 where it describes the soul's comprehensive grasp of the Intelligible World, and again of the soul at 4.4.8.6; but no further help is offered by these passages. Finally we come to 6.8.11.23 where what we already know is confirmed. If we want to form an ἐπιβολή of God, says Plotinus, we must abolish all notion of place from our considerations. But this merely means that we must be like God to know God, indeed that in a sense it is the One in us that has an ἐπιβολή of the One in the cosmos—and that we know well already.

There appear to be no further passages with much to contribute on this topic¹⁶ and we must therefore sum up what we know. It appears certain that Plotinus wishes to ascribe some manner of knowing to the One, but that he is at a loss to understand its manner of operation. It is analogous to νοῦς if νοῦς is not conceived in the Aristotelian fashion. Its 'object' is the One itself, but a knowledge directed towards the One itself might involve some knowledge of the One as δύναμις πάντων, even though this is not clear in the *Enneads* and Plotinus could only admit it if the One's unity were safeguarded. The problem for Plotinus might be formulated as follows: If the One 'knows' itself as what it is, namely infinite Being, how or in what way does knowledge of infinite Being imply knowledge of finite Being, especially if the knowing is not the knowing of oneself as an object? And the problem of self-consciousness is the same as the problem of self-knowledge.

Nor does the word ἐπιβολή help us much here. This may be Plotinus' favourite word for the 'knowledge' of the One, and it may avoid the Aristotelian implications of ὑπερνόησις or κατανόησις, but it does not get us much further in understanding the *nature* of the One's 'knowledge'. What all this seems

to suggest is that the knowledge of an infinite Being is so different from the knowledge of what is finite that it cannot be described in finite terms. We know that such knowledge is self-directed, but the self is seen not as object but as subject. Only the One itself and the mystic in union with him have knowledge of this kind. Its 'object' is the infinite and indescribable. As of the One itself, so of its knowledge, Plotinus would presumably have to say: 'He who has seen it knows what I mean.'

BEAUTY, THE BEAUTIFUL, AND THE GOOD

Dean Inge tried to show that Plotinus 'has three names for his Absolute—the One, the Good, and Beauty'.¹ He remarks elsewhere, however (p. 122), that although Plotinus calls the Absolute the One and the Good, he does not call it the Beautiful. Inge attempts to show that whereas the term 'Beauty' (καλλονή) will be appropriate to the One, 'the Beautiful' (τὸ καλόν) will not. He admits that there is a certain awkwardness in this, but says that the reasons for it are apparent from his exposition. The reasons, or rather reason, are, according to Inge, that 'Beauty is not embodied in forms'. This is his translation of τὸ κάλλος οὐ μεμόρφωται in 6.7.32.38-9. The One, says Inge, being formless, could hardly be τὸ καλόν. It must therefore be καλλονή, as it is in 6.2.18.1.

But this is to state a problem, not to solve it. If Plotinus thinks that the One is καλλονή but not τὸ καλόν, is he simply juggling with words? Plato surely would speak of αὐτὸ τὸ κάλλος and αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν and mean the same thing. Does Plotinus' distinction, if not merely verbal, indicate a critique of the Platonic? What kind of beauty, if any, is καλλονή? Since Inge's discussion answers none of these questions, it will be worth while looking again at Beauty and the Beautiful in the *Enneads* with a view both to seeing their relation to the One and, if possible, to determining why Plotinus seems to require them to be distinguished one from the other.

The main sources for our discussion will be *Enneads* 1.6.6, 1.6.7, 5.5.12, 6.7.32 and 6.7.33. Despite Inge's account of some of this material, it will be necessary to re-examine it to gain a clear picture of Plotinus' position. We may best start with 5.5.12. In lines 7-19 we learn that everything that exists has a natural and necessary desire for the Good. The recogni-