

# PLOTINIAN HENADOLOGY

In his *Life of Plotinus*, Plotinus' student Porphyry states that there were, in Plotinus' time, "many Christians and others, and sectarians [αἰρετικοί] who had abandoned the old philosophy," from whom came a profusion of "treatises" as well as "revelations" (ἀποκαλύψεις), that Porphyry says "deceived themselves and many others, alleging that Plato had not penetrated to the depths of intelligible substance," and that Plotinus "often attacked their position in his lectures," as well as in the entire treatise that Porphyry says "we have given the title 'Against the Gnostics'" (*Vita Plotini* 16.1-11). The project of refuting these sectarians was so important to Plotinus that not only was it a recurring focus of his own work, but Porphyry speaks of his fellow student Amelius and himself pursuing it in multiple works of theirs as well.

In Plotinus' day, so-called Gnostics and Christians were scarcely distinguishable, and it was surely difficult to imagine any one of this profusion of emerging sects achieving hegemonic status, much less that one of them, through seizing for itself the power of the imperial state, would be able to sweep away before it cults that had existed for thousands of years. Hence Plotinus writes against the new sectarians, not as a threat against the Pagan world, but as a threat to the correct interpretation of Platonism, because some of these sects had adopted elements of it and might, if not critiqued, succeed in positioning themselves as Plato's legitimate interpreters. Indeed, contemporary work on the Gnostics of Plotinus' era indicates that they were in many ways colleagues of the Platonists, members of a community of inquiry sharing a common legacy of Platonic readings and probably pioneering some of the concepts deployed by successive generations of Platonists. It would be a mistake to think that a simplistic distinction could be drawn between Gnostics and Platonists of this era on any particular issue. We know, however, from Plotinus' explicit treatise against them that one of his principal concerns about these "Gnostics" was that they "contract the divine into one" (II.9.9.36-7), that is, that they are what would later come to be known as monotheists. Plotinus therefore must be understood, in his lengthy engagement with so-called "Gnostics," to have pursued the earliest known intensive and sustained intellectual critique of monotheism.

Another key criticism Plotinus levels at the Gnostics in his essay is that they multiply the intelligible unreasonably: "by giving names to a multitude of intelligible realities (...) bring[ing] the intelligible nature into the likeness of the sense-world (...) when one ought there in the intelligible to aim at the smallest possible number" (6.28-32). The integral connection between the Gnostics' contraction of the divine, on the one hand, and their multiplication of the intelligible, on the other, is the focus of the present essay. For the multiplication of which Plotinus speaks it is not difficult to find examples

in surviving Gnostic texts. For example, the Gnostic treatise *Zostrianos*, which is among those Porphyry specifically mentions (VP 6.6, 14), speaks of “the Exile which really exists” (5.24-5) or “the Repentance which really exists” (5.27). The Gnostic terminology of “really existing” in *Zostrianos*, which is applied likewise – and self-referentially, of course – to the salvific value of the λόγος as “the word as it exists” (44.9-10), invites comparison to the terminology of “real being” (ὄντως ὄν) by which Platonists qualify the intelligible, deriving chiefly from the οὐσία ὄντως οὐσα of *Phaedrus* 247c. But the criterion of intelligibility in *Zostrianos* is not like that which applies to the hypostases of Plotinian Platonism. The hypostases from the Gnostic text seem to originate from psychological *experiences* hypostatized into sites of intelligibility. Indeed, such a procedure would make sense in the context of the Gnostic appeal to the epistemic authority of certain privileged kinds of experience.

By contrast, Plotinus begins his essay with a capsule summary of Platonic metaphysics as operating on just three principal planes: that of the One/Good, “which has nothing in itself, but is some one thing [ἔν τι],” (1.3), that of Intellect, and that of Soul:

and we must not posit more principles than these in the intelligible, or fewer. For if people posit fewer, they will either assert that Soul and Intellect are the same, or Intellect and the First; but it has been shown in many places that they are different from each other. It remains to investigate in our present discussion, if we are to posit more than these three, whatever other natures there could be beside them. (1.16-21)<sup>1</sup>

The issue here is not how many *things* there are, but how many *kinds of multiplicity*. Plotinus is arguing that we can determine dialectically that there are three kinds. There is multiplicity consisting simply of ones as such, without intelligible content or rather, as we may say, to the degree we abstract from that content; this is the domain of the One. It is this multiplicity, significantly, to which Plotinus turns in the essay he wrote immediately after the essay on the Gnostics, number 34, the essay on number, which I will argue we should understand as concerning *numerical difference*. Next there is multiplicity consisting of forms, or any multiplicity *qua* intelligible; this is the domain of Intellect. Finally, there is multiplicity consisting of psychological states, or, any multiplicity just insofar as it is psychological; and this is the domain of Soul, of psychological experience. The intelligible is thus a holistic structure, sustaining just as many terms as can be negatively distinguished from one another. It mediates in this fashion between two modes of positivity or givenness, the existential,<sup>2</sup> which is the givenness of ones *qua* ones, and the psychological, in which things are given in the flux of time.

<sup>1</sup> Quotations from Plotinus are generally as translated by A. H. Armstrong, *Plotinus: Enneads*, 7 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1966-88), though I have occasionally modified them.

<sup>2</sup> The “existential” is distinguished in post-Plotinian Platonism particularly by the term ὑπαρξίς, which may have acquired its philosophical usage in part from Gnostic texts. See, e.g., J. D. Turner, “From Hidden to Revealed in Sethian Revelation, Ritual, and Protology,” in A. D. DeConick and G. Adamson, eds. *Histories of the Hidden God: Concealment and Revelation in Western Gnostic, Esoteric, and Mystical Traditions* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2014), esp. 156f.

The place of the existential is occupied in Plotinus and in later Platonists chiefly if not solely by *persons*, and hence to that class of things that are *who* rather than *what*.<sup>3</sup> This is the significance, I would argue, of Plotinus' reference in this essay and elsewhere to an indefinite multiplicity of "Intelligible Gods." Thus, the All "manifests the greatness of the intelligible nature" through its "life [which] is not a disjointed one ... but coherent [συνεχῆς] and clear and great and everywhere life, manifesting infinite wisdom" as "a clear and noble idol [ἄγαλμα] of the intelligible Gods" (8.9-17). Plotinus here makes implicit reference to *Timaeus* 37c, which refers to the cosmos as an ἄγαλμα of "the eternal Gods" – compare Plotinus, "To be among the Gods is to be among intelligibles; for these are immortal," (*Enn.* I.8.7.16-7). The Gods mentioned in the *Timaeus* passage are similarly there indefinitely multiple, although Plato's account up to that point has only posited a single binary relation between demiurge and paradigm as divine spectator and divine object, respectively. The reference to indefinitely numerous Gods shows that already for Plato, *the number of Gods is not determined by the number of places in a noetic structure*. We shall see how this pertains to the role of henads in Plotinus, not yet specified as "divine," as they will be for later Platonists, but recognized as holding down the real existence of pre-formal numerical difference, and hence creating τόποι, or places, for beings (VI.6.10.3).<sup>4</sup> Plotinus' henads, then, not yet designated "divine," or clearly posited as prior to Being, as they will be for Proclus, are already prior to beings and to noetic relations. And this is indeed what makes henads divine, and the Gods henads, namely that the henadic manifold secures in a *positive* and not merely privative sense the disposition of numerical as opposed to formal multiplicity.

With respect to the psychical manifold, Plotinus in his essay notes particularly that Gnostics divide Intellect into "one intellect thinking and the other thinking that it thinks" (I.33-34). By positing self-awareness as a separate, novel intellectual moment, and neither as an inherent property of thought,<sup>5</sup> nor as a psychical moment relative to the intellect, the Gnostics effectively *psychologize the intellect*, which also cleaves the soul, for if "one intellect will be only thinking, and the other will be thinking that it thinks," then "the thinking subject will be another, and not itself" (37-40). By contrast, Plotinus affirms elsewhere (V 3, 13-17) that "when something thinks itself," this is "thinking proper [κυρίως]."<sup>6</sup> The Gnostic will see this alienation at the core of the self as the problem he is diagnosing, but for Plotinus it is the problem Gnostic ideology is creating. The thinking subject so conceived, privileging the empty moment of "consciousness," can never be identical with *what* he thinks, only with the *act* of thought. It is not surprising, in this light, that the Gnostics should stress the idea of a λόγος salvific in itself, the action of which is as traumatic as it is automatic, for it is the alien solution to the soul's self-alienation.

<sup>3</sup> Note already in Plato, *Timaeus* 90a, that the spirit (δαίμων) is given to each (ἐκάστῳ) by the God, establishing the relationship between the mortal and divine individual beyond the register of eidetics, that is, of speciation.

<sup>4</sup> The term "henad" seems also to have acquired already a particular reference to divine individuality in certain Gnostic texts. See, e.g., J. D. Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition* (Louvain/Paris: Peeters, 2001), 508-9, referring to *Zostrianos* VIII 67, 75 and 84.

<sup>5</sup> See on this L. P. Gerson, "Epistrophḗ pros heauton: History and Meaning," *Documenti e Studi Sulla Tradizione Filosofica Medievale* 7 (1997), 1-32.

<sup>6</sup> On this passage, see *ibid.*, 14ff.

(See, in this connection, Plotinus' critique of the Gnostics' "technical λόγοι" in chap. 14.) The distinction between psychical self-awareness and thinking as such is important for Plotinus because the *I-think* has no noetic content, and hence is "epinoetic" (43); but if intellective distinction is grounded in psychical apprehension alone, it has no integral bond with intelligible content, and so "they [the Gnostics] will be abandoning the idea of a plurality of hypostases" (41-2). All plurality will be reduced to moments in a continuum of psychical experience, and difference will be solely experiential and temporal.

We begin to see the outlines, then, of the two multiplicities between which Platonic Intellect mediates, one of which, the psychical, the Gnostics engorge. But what sort of structure do the Platonists accord to the other manifold, the manifold corresponding to the One? The One itself is referred to in the plural at *Enn.* VI.5.4.22 and 25, as "the first things." The latter is noted by Emilsson and Strange (233),<sup>7</sup> who remark that "The reference to the One is given in the plural (τὰ πρῶτα), which may be surprising given that the One is a singularity," and cite Plato, *Epistle 2*, 312e1-4 as precedent, but while that text speaks of all things in relation to a King who is first, it does not refer to "first things" in the plural. Of course, it does not need to, because there is a general understanding that there is a multiplicity specific to any ἀρχή or principle, for otherwise it would be no ἀρχή. In fact, Plotinus refers again to τὰ πρῶτα, "first things," at *Enn.* V.1.8.2-3. Emilsson and Strange also note suggestively, but not in connection with Plotinus' "firsts," the lack of a clear principle of individuation in Plotinus that can cover the gaps left by the doctrine of reception of forms according to the capacity of recipients (2015: 27f, 208, 266). They do not consider the possibility, however, that the ultimate principle of individuation for individuals high and low is none other than "the One," which for its own part, however, "neither is, nor is one" (Plato, *Parmenides* 141e).

What, then, is the structure of the manifold of "first things"? We know that it is not such as to fix a discrete number of entities within it, because then it would be intellective; but it does possess a distinctive structure all its own. We need to turn here to an important passage from Plotinus' essay on intelligible beauty, *Enn.* V.8.9.17-24, written not long before the essay on the Gnostics, and which I would like to quote at length:

each God is all the Gods coming together into one [συνόντες εἰς ἓν]; they are other [ἄλλοι] in their powers, but in that one-many they are all one, or rather the one <deity> is all [ὁ εἷς πάντες]; for he does not fall short if all those come to be. They are all together and each one again apart, in position without separation [ἐν στάσει ἀδιαστάτῳ], possessing no perceptible shape – for if they did, one would be in one place and one in another, and each would no longer be all in himself – nor does each God have parts different [ἄλλα] from himself belonging to other Gods than himself, nor is each whole [ὅλον]<sup>8</sup> like a power cut up [κερματισθεῖσα], which is as large as the measure of its parts.

<sup>7</sup> E. K. Emilsson and S. K. Strange (trans. and commentary), *Ennead VI.4 & VI.5: On the Presence of Being, One and the Same, Everywhere as a Whole* (Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> One could also read here οἶον, "nor is each, as it were, like a power."

Here, in the most significant passage where Plotinus deals explicitly with the multiplicity of the Gods in its formal character, we see many traits of the later technical doctrine of the henads as we find it in Platonists like Proclus.<sup>9</sup> The unity of the divine manifold rests in all the Gods being *in each*, rather than all *in one*, if by that we understood a singularity that, as Plotinus puts it, would “fall short” itself insofar as the many are many, that is, relative to which multiplicity would be an ontological decline, which would be the case if the divine manifold were structured like a whole and its parts.

### **PLOTINUS' ESSAY ON NUMBER IN RELATION TO HIS CRITIQUE OF THE Gnostics**

With this in mind, we can now turn to Plotinus' essay on number, the peculiar character of which, I wish to argue, is that it concerns not merely “number” in the abstract sense in which we use it, but the entire metaphysical problem of ultimate or, as we term it, “numerical difference,” referring to the difference existing between individuals under *infima species*. By recognizing that for Platonists ἀριθμός or “number” connotes, not merely what we count with, but the ultimate manifold of *countables*, ultimate because they are unique, and mathematics hence being the pure form of relation of units *qua* units, we can restore depth and coherence to the entire centuries-long Platonic discourse concerning “number.” With respect to the basic sense Greeks gave to this term, Jacob Klein has argued that ἀριθμός “never means anything other than a definite number of definite objects.”<sup>10</sup> In post-Plotinian Platonism, Proclus refers in the *Elements of Theology* (prop. 113) to the manifold of the Gods, or henads, as an ἀριθμός, rather than a πλήθος or “multiplicity,” inasmuch as the latter would be governed by the rules appropriate to what Proclus distinguishes as manifolds at once themselves “unified” (ἡνωμένος), and composed of “unifieds” (ἡνωμένα), whereas the ultimate manifold must be “unitary” (ἐνωῖος) and composed of henads, in order to avoid an infinite regress. This regress is not cut off by mere stipulation, but rather by the structural solidarity of the henadic manifold, in which all are in *each*, as opposed to all in *one* (or all participating one). At what point this formal structure emerged in Platonic thought is unclear, though it can be inferred from the putatively Pythagorean axiom that “All things are in all things, but in each appropriately.”<sup>11</sup>

Just as we see Plotinus in the passage from V.8.9 in possession of some form of the doctrine of a polycentric divine manifold, so too in the essay on number, we

<sup>9</sup> On which see my series of articles on Proclean henadology: E. Butler, “Polytheism and Individuality in the Henadic Manifold,” *Dionysius* 23 (2005): 83-104; E. Butler, “The Gods and Being in Proclus,” *Dionysius* 26 (2008): 93-114; E. Butler, “The Intelligible Gods in the Platonic Theology of Proclus,” *Méthexis* 21 (2008): 131-143; E. Butler, “The Second Intelligible Triad and the Intelligible-Intellective Gods,” *Méthexis* 23 (2010): 137-157; E. Butler, “The Third Intelligible Triad and the Intellective Gods,” *Méthexis* 25 (2012): 131-150.

<sup>10</sup> *Greek Mathematical Thought and the Origin of Algebra*, trans. E. Brann (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1968), 7.

<sup>11</sup> Attributed by Syrianus to “Pythagoreans” at *In Metaph.* 81.38-82.2 [Kroll], while Iamblichus either attributes the maxim to Numenius, or at least states that “Numenius is unambiguously of this opinion,” (Iamblichus, *De Anima* 6, trans. Finamore and Dillon [Stobaeus, *Anthol.* I, 365], Numenius frag. 41 [des Places]). Hadot, in *Porphyre et Victorinus* I, 243 regards the maxim as “Depuis Numénius d’ailleurs (...) le principe fondamental de la théologie païenne,” though he misconstrues it, in my view, as a principle of “dénomination par prédominance” predicated upon Stoic monism, rather than as an affirmation of *polycentricity* referring to no underlying substance. I have discussed this further in E. Butler, “Polycentric Polytheism and the Philosophy of Religion,” *The Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies* 10, no. 2 (2008): 207-229.

see him wrestling with formal aspects of that doctrine, but without reference to the divine. Thus, in a dense discussion in chap. 11 of VI.6, he begins from the necessity of distinguishing between henads and monads, of which his example is the Decad, or Ten, which is one henad consisting of ten monads. The number here, I wish to argue, operates essentially as a paradigm of a unit to which other units are subordinated as its parts or attributes, and this was its function already at the time of Aristotle's disputes with the Academy. At *Metaphysics* 1080a & sqq., for example, Aristotle criticizes the Academic position concerning "incomparable" monads within numbers. That is, the Academicians apparently regard the two monads in the Dyad, e.g., as in some respect resisting assimilation to the two monads out of the three in the Triad, lest the integrity of the Dyad, the Triad and the other numbers be dissolved. Plotinus defends this same Academic position, which allows for a systematic distinction between "henads" and "monads."<sup>12</sup> "Henads" like the Dyad, Triad, et al. are units with other units subordinate to them as their attributes, and these latter units are "monads." A monadic unit, according to this understanding, would be what Proclus and Damascius will call "the unified" (τὸ ἡνωμένον), as opposed to henads, which are "unitary" (ἐνιαῖος), as in prop. 6 of the *Elements of Theology*, which states that "Every manifold is composed either of unified groups [literally of 'unifieds', ἡνωμένα] or of henads."

The opposition here is between that which actively provides unity, which is ἐνιαῖος, and that which is passively unified, the ἡνωμένον or ἡνωμένα, which can refer either to something whose unity is that of a whole of some sort, or to something which has unity essentially as part of some whole. We see from prop. 66 of the *Elements* that for Proclus the whole/part relationship is exhaustive for beings *qua* beings, ὄντα: "All beings are toward one another either whole or part or identical or different," where the relationship of identity/difference is reducible to being part of the whole constituted by either the intension or extension of some εἶδος. This relational web of beings *qua* beings, however, requires some limit to relation, that there may be terms *in* relation, and this is the role of henads, which are units either in an absolute sense, or at least insofar as any "one" be taken *qua* unitary, rather than unified, as subordinating its attributes, rather than reduced to them as the mere conjunction of them.

Why should the forebear of this wide-ranging doctrine in the later Platonists, when Aristotle treats of it, be understood to apply only to "numbers" in the narrow sense, when numbers can be a paradigm for any unit taken as henadic,<sup>13</sup> that is, as integral and

<sup>12</sup> Xenocrates already speaks of incorporeal multiplicity (πληθος) as composed of "true henads" (ἐξ ἐνάδων ἀληθινῶν, Themistius, *De Anima* 11,20/fr. 260 Isnardi Parente) which suggests the development of a technical sense for this term already in the early Academy. As noted by Slaveva-Griffin (*Plotinus on Number* (New York City: Oxford UP, 2009), 78 n. 39), Xenocrates' formula is echoed by Damascius at *De Principiis* 129.19. But Slaveva-Griffin regards "the clear conceptual distinction between monads and henads" as "at a formative stage" in Plotinus (92), who is still "inconsistent" in his usage of these terms (93), whereas I would wish to resist such a conclusion.

<sup>13</sup> Hence Syrianus, at *In Metaph.* 84.3-5, speaks of "mathematical objects" as having been "customarily taken by those divine men [Pythagoreans and Platonists] as representative of the intelligible nature as a whole," and again at 176.12 that "These people called all beings numbers." (Passages from Syrianus are from J. M. Dillon and D. O'Meara, trans., *Syrianus: On Aristotle Metaphysics 13-14* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), occasionally modified.)

unique, with its attributes inalienable from it and hence treated as incomparable to like attributes of other units? Aristotle would then be observing a mutually understood Academic convention in discussing this problem in terms of numbers, because the parties in the discussion understand that it concerns *numerical difference*. When Plato introduces the terms “henad” and “monad” in the *Philebus* (15a-c, 23c) he does not use them to refer to numbers in any privileged sense, but to any sort of unit taken up as an object of analysis. In this light, Aristotle would be criticizing not a somewhat obtuse Academic doctrine respecting arithmetic in our modern sense, but an Academic henological philosophy of units *qua* units in contradistinction to which he develops his own ontological philosophy of substance.<sup>14</sup>

The Platonic doctrine of henads and monads, which forms the substance of Platonic “henology,” begins with Plato’s *Philebus* and reaches down to Damascius. Its effective termination with the end of the Academy at Athens comes about because of its intimate connection with the polytheism of ancient Platonism and that aspect of Platonic henology which renders it, when properly understood, inassimilable to monotheism, namely the combination of an absolutely negative One Itself as principle of individuation and the positivity of the ultimate individuals. These ultimate individuals are the Gods, because the Gods were grasped as primordial *persons*. Hence the first deployment of the terms “henad” and “monad” in the *Philebus*, albeit they are not distinguished in that dialogue, nevertheless arises in the context of a discussion that begins from Socrates’ intention to distinguish between a “who,” Aphrodite, and a “what,” the concept of ἡδονή or pleasure (12b-c). The essential roots of the henad/monad distinction lies, I wish to argue, in the distinction between *who* and *what* as the basic kinds of unit, with the former, due to its primal simplicity, being designated “henad” as primary product of the One (ἓν), the principle of individuation. This, it seems to me, provides the only basis for recovering a unified sense for the doctrine as it evolved from the earliest Academy to the end of ancient Platonism, regardless of whether expressed as in theological or mathematical terms, for in either case, it amounts to the distinction between ἐνιαῖος and ἡνωμένους units, of which the former are “henads” and the latter “monads.”

Plotinus, after positing the existence of henads and monads, proceeds to a complex argument concerning henadic multiplicity. If there is only one henad, he argues, then it must be “coupled” (συνουσαν) either with supreme Being, or supreme Unity, that is, it must be either the henad of Being Itself, or the henad of the One Itself. The latter he rejects summarily as redundant: “Why would what is one in the highest degree need this monad?” (VI.6.11.17-18). Plotinus thus does away with a singular that would be “the One Itself,” for the One, the principle of individuation, neither is, nor is one. The use of the term “monad” in this passage emphasizes the unit as posited; similarly below (11.23-4) many merely notional “monads” are generated from taking a substantial individual in diverse respects, but also as a singular entity, which the One emphatically is not.

<sup>14</sup> Note, in this respect, that Aristotle himself uses essentially the same argument at 1076b11-39 with respect to the presence of the point in lines and planes and solids, of lines in planes and solids, etc., as he does against the incommensurable monads in numbers, the latter being paradigmatic for all manner of other relations of inherence.

With respect to the other monistic alternative, then, Plotinus argues that if a solitary henad – a “One Itself,” we may say – was identified with Being Itself, “then the other henads will be merely homonymous with the First, and not coordinate with it, or number will consist of unlike monads and there will be differences between monads even insofar as they are monads” (15-18). A fully developed Platonic theory of homonymy in divine series will arrive with Damascius, as I have discussed in a recent article.<sup>15</sup> In the situation Plotinus imagines, however, there would be a single henad that was henadic in the proper sense, with the others having a subordinate and derivative status. This would indeed look not unlike a popular misconception of the Platonic system itself. But Plotinus argues that this will simply return us, in effect, to the notion he criticized at the outset of the chapter, where “the decad is nothing but so many henads” (1-2), that is, autonomous units which do not form a unit in composition. To assert a single eminent henad, with the rest merely homonymously henadic, will be to impose an arbitrary hierarchy upon the system, which by virtue of its arbitrariness will be in fact no proper order at all, a ranking among henads in this way taking the place of the ontological difference between henads and monads.

This error, in turn, is formally identical to the Gnostic homonymy with respect to the term “Gods,” for the Gnostics impose such an order upon the class of Gods. For the Gnostics “contract the divine into one” (II.9.9.36-7), and if there are for them still a multiplicity of “intelligible Gods,” then They are at any rate subordinated to some One in something akin to the fashion that the inferior powers, such as the heavenly bodies, are subordinated to Them (II.9.16.5-13). And of course for the Gnostics there is also such a subordination within the class of humans, between the spiritually “elect” and the rest. These subordinations are not unrelated. In the essay on the Gnostics, Plotinus criticizes this doctrine based on expansive arguments about the nature of the cosmos and the ramifications of Gnostic doctrines; in the essay on Number, I wish to argue, Plotinus’ dense formal analysis renders the same critique. Both essays make the same point, the essay on number arguing that “One henad must not be yoked to some one among beings” (VI.6.11.5-6), that is, collapsing henadic and eidetic difference, while the essay on the Gnostics argues against this same conflation and its cosmological, psychological and ethical consequences.

But what, then, does Plotinus mean when he says that among the things the Gnostics have correctly from Plato is the notion of “the first God” (θεὸν τὸν πρῶτον, II.9.6.39)? The simplest conclusion that takes into account the totality of Plotinus’ testimony is that this is a first *nature*, and not an abstract singularity. The “first God” would thus be the Gods *qua* “firsts,” πρῶτα, which the Gnostics have correctly grasped in its nature, but have failed to distribute. There is more to it than this, however. Plotinus asks us to suppose some important hierarchical distinction among the Gods. “If They” – the Gods who “all and each proclaim to men the things from there,” intelligible things, and hence “intelligible Gods” – “are not what that one is” – namely “king of the Gods” – “this in itself is according to the nature of things” (9.43-44). This κατὰ φύσιν, “according to nature,” comes up again at 13.7, with a very similar sense: “there is an order of firsts, seconds, and thirds in regular succession, and so on to the last, and the things that are worse than the first should not be

<sup>15</sup> E. Butler, “The Henadic Origin of Procession in Damascius,” *Dionysius* 31 (2013): 79-100.

reviled” (3-6). Elsewhere in the essay, the soul descends “according to nature” (4.3.13) and things are “according to nature” in the intelligible world (5.9.10). We may compare Proclus: “All those who have at any time been occupied with theology have termed ‘Gods’ the things first according to nature,” (PT I 3.12 Westerink). What is the sense of this *κατὰ φύσιν*, which transcends the intelligible, so that the latter is not disordered by any order attributable to this *φύσις*, a “nature” transcending even the differences between philosophical systems in Proclus? It evidently does not pertain to “physical” nature as such, but to a field of differences *prior to eidetic determination*, or else the Gnostics would be correct to read off from it a difference of (intelligible) value.

Plotinus argues that even if there is a God who, as a “natural” matter, either rules or even creates the other Gods, this does not affect the “nature,” so to speak, of being a God. Plotinus warns against reifying such a hierarchy as an intelligible structure. For if, as in the essay on intelligible beauty, “each God is all the Gods coming together into one” (V.8.9.17), and this clearly is Platonic technical doctrine, as we can see from its elaboration in subsequent Platonists, then the creative moment of which Plotinus speaks when he speaks of a God “abiding who he is, makes many [Gods] depending upon him and being through that one and from that one” (II.9.9.38-40), must exist as a phase in the activity of a God simply *qua* God, and not limited to some one God to the exclusion of others, in which case there would no longer be a manifold corresponding to Unity, a “numerical” manifold.

Similarly, at VI.5.12.30-7, Plotinus contrasts a God to whom all things revert (*ἐπιστρέφονται*) while he abides in himself to the “other Gods” who “when many [humans] are present often appear to one, because that one alone is able to see them.” We should see this, however, not merely as a difference of “nature,” but a difference of moments in the procession of a henad, which now advances to appearance at a discrete time and place, and now withdraws itself, refusing to be trapped in immanence. This, indeed, is what the Gnostics glean correctly about “the First God,” that is, about primary nature of divinity as such, namely that it is not “enclosed in creation” (*Zostrianos* 9.9). The nature of the Gods, on this understanding, is to show themselves differentially (*Enn.* II.9.9.37: *δειξαι* (...) *ἔδειξεν*) while each abides ineffably. Already in Plato’s *Timaeus* (41a), this “showing” as an expression of divine will is the basis for distinguishing within the Gods between “those who revolve manifestly,” that is, the stars and planets whose appearances are predictable by mechanical methods, and “those who manifest themselves [*φαίνονται*] so far as they choose [*ἐθέλωσιν*].” Indeed, Plotinus uses almost identical language at V.8.1.40-1 in speaking of Pheidias the sculptor having grasped “what Zeus would look like if he willed [*ἐθέλοι*] to manifest himself visibly [*φανῆναι*].” This distinction between active and passive manifestation, in turn, is the most likely origin of that drawn by Plotinus and Gnostics alike – see, e.g., II.9.16.5-6, “the honor which these people [the Gnostics] say they give to the intelligible Gods” – between intelligible and cosmic Gods.

### **PLOTINUS’ ESSAY ON FREE WILL AS INFORMED BY HENADOLOGY**

Jean-Marc Narbonne has noted<sup>16</sup> that Plotinus would have found in the Gnostics many affirmations of the self-causative or self-constituting character of the single God or of

<sup>16</sup> J.-M. Narbonne, *Plotinus in Dialogue with the Gnostics* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 129ff.

whatever “higher” class of Gods they recognize, and has argued accordingly that Plotinus’ essay on free will (ἐκούσιος) and the will (θέλημα) of the One, which is number 39, and hence written not too long after that on the Gnostics (number 33), is in reply to a Gnostic response to treatise 33, in which the Gnostic critic would have charged Plotinus with positing a first principle which merely “happens to be as it is” and hence lacks “freedom” (VI.8.7.11-15). The Gnostic interlocutor criticizes Plotinus based upon the recognition common to them both of the significance of will as a divine attribute. The critic has turned the Gnostic embrace of facticity around rhetorically, by characterizing the lack of intelligible bounds upon divine will in their system as amounting to an affirmation of freedom. In turn, the critic characterizes the Platonic affirmation of the intelligibility of the Gods as relinquishing their agency.

In his response, Plotinus strives to uphold both values, that of divine intelligibility *and* divine agency, and thus demonstrates a continuity in polytheist intellectual self-understanding going back, as I have argued elsewhere, as far as Plato’s *Euthyphro*,<sup>17</sup> and indeed further. For it is deeply rooted, I believe, in the pre-theoretical intuitions of many polytheist traditions to reject any simplistic opposition between divine will and the goodness and intelligibility of that will. To do differently would be to rend the integrity of divine persons, and being grounded in devotion to divine persons makes it relatively easy for even an unschooled polytheist to reject either of these extremes. As Plotinus puts it,

even if Intellect does have another principle, it is not outside it, but it is in the Good. And if it is active according to the Good, it is much more in its own power and free; since one seeks freedom and to be in one’s own power for the sake of the Good. If then it is active according to the Good, it would be still more in its own power; for it has already what goes from itself to it, and in itself what would be better for it, being in it, if it is directed towards it. (VI.8.4.33-40)

Something is “in the Good” not as in something else, but as it is in itself, and not because it has annihilated itself in the Good, for this is not the nature of the Good. The first principle, Plotinus explains, does not “possess uniqueness [τὸ μοναχὸν ἔχον] (...) because it is obstructed by something else but because it is this very thing (...) otherwise one will take self-determination away from what attains the Good in the highest degree” (7.37-42). It is not a question of the uniqueness of a singular entity, “the One,” existential embodiment of ontological parsimony. For this would be a singularity derived from scarcity, what Plotinus characterizes here as being “obstructed” by otherness, or at V.8.9 as a principle of which multiplicity would exhibit the “falling short.” Instead, uniqueness is the property of all that belongs to the first hypostasis, just insofar as it does. Plotinus is affirming that the uniqueness of such units, that is, such “henads,” is not privative relative to some principle, for the first principle is the principle of individuation itself.

<sup>17</sup> E. Butler, “Polytheism and the *Euthyphro*,” *Walking the Worlds: A Biannual Journal of Polytheism and Spiritwork* 2, no. 2 (2016): 20-34.

This same positivity was affirmed by Plotinus at the end of the essay on number, where he stated that “Parmenides (...) was right in saying that being was one; and it is not unaffected [ἄπαθεῖς] because of the *absence* of anything else, but because it really exists; for real being alone can exist of and by itself” (VI.6.18.41-44). Going right back to Parmenides, thus, Plotinus sees a *positivity* of individuation, expressed here by the negation of passive determination. Number, Plotinus explains, “is not bounded by any limit, but by its own agency [ἐαυτῶ] is what it is; for in general none of the real beings is in a limit (...) but those real beings are all measures” (18.8-12). Agency and being a measure for other things are what define the unitary as opposed to the unified.

Returning to the essay on free will and the will of the One, we find the same ideas, but now the language is ethically tuned:

The nature of the Good is in reality the will of himself, a self not corrupted nor following his own nature, but choosing himself, because there was nothing else at all that he might be drawn to (...). It is necessary for the choice and willing of itself to be included in the existence of the Good, or it would hardly be possible for anything else to find itself satisfactory (...). Our discourse has discovered that he has made himself (...). He is not what he happened to be but what he himself willed (VI.8.13.38-59).

The self-making which is the nature imparted by the first principle is one of which neither the *selfhood*, nor the *making*, is to be elided. The personal nature of the henad *qua* henad is stressed here, as often in Plotinus, by the use of gendered rather than neuter pronouns – note, in this respect, that Greek has no neuter term for “God.”

The henadic unit “is primarily self and self beyond being” (VI.8.14.42); but this selfhood is also a primordial and originary being-with-others, for, as he articulates through an organic analogy, “the harmony of all the parts with each other is their reciprocal cause (...) the being and the cause (...) came in this way from a single source [πηγή] which did not reason but gave the reason why and the being together [ἄθρόον] as a whole” (14.27-32). This is a different kind of causality than teleology, or the simple subordination of parts to a whole, which is likely why Plotinus uses here the terminology of a “source,” which will become a technical term in later Platonists for intelligible form as distinct from intellective. Such a cause resists reification, and hence the virtues, e.g., are particularly conceived by Proclus as *πηγαί*.<sup>18</sup>

The intelligible cause is not reified because it is not *alien* to the self, but it does express *relation* within the self: “He himself therefore is by himself what he is, related and directed to himself, that he may not in this way either be related to the outside or to something else, but altogether self-related” (17.25-7) – and not either, evidently, we may add, *without relation*. The henad’s willing of herself thus entails a *continuum* or *coherence* (συνεχές) within the henad, so that such a unit is not merely point-like or atomized. “His holding himself together must be understood ... as meaning that all the other things that exist are held together by this” (VI.8.21.19-21), following from the formal character of

<sup>18</sup> See the discussion in Butler, “The Second Intelligible Triad...,” 150-153.

the ultimate manifold, all of its members being in each, in order that there be no need of a further “one” holding them all.

If we turn again back to the essay on number, we find this continuum/coherence again in the reference to the generation of a “continuous one” (συνεχῆ ἓνα) yielding greater and lesser numbers (VI.6.11.25-9). What is at stake in the emergence of the greater-and-lesser, which is none other than the ἄπειρον of Plato’s *Philebus* in the form it is known to Aristotle, is not an abstract account of how it is that there are many, instead of one alone, but rather the ultimate ontological defeat of *relativism*, by virtue of an account of how multiplicities emerge that *belong to* some unit – in technical terms, how there come to be monads as well as henads. Hence, in the essay on number, after a lengthy argument against psychologism in chapters 12 and 13, Plotinus supplies in 14 the ontological support for what has come before, concluding that number cannot be mere relation, lest all forms be reduced to relations as well (14.27ff). Relativism results if there are not *self-relating* henads creating continuity and coherence within and for themselves.

This self-constitution or ἀθυπόστασις of henads as expressing the nature of the first principle is therefore irreducible to the simple alternative of facticity, of “happening to be,” on the one hand, and of substantial determination, on the other: “Nor should we be afraid to assume that the first activity is without substance, but posit just this as his, so to speak, subsistence [ὑπόστασιν],” (VI.8.20.9-11). The real emergence of substance from henadic activity, where both the *reality* and the emergent and thus dependent nature of substance are simultaneously affirmed, is the crux of the polytheist and Platonic position.

Plotinus’ Gnostic antagonists seem to collapse this position in the name of voluntarism as decisively as modern commentators, in their reading of the Platonic tradition, have collapsed it in the direction of intellectualism. And both, not coincidentally, have also collapsed henadic multiplicity into either a subordinating monotheism, or a substance monism. “He is not what he happened to be but what he himself willed” (VI.8.13.58-9), for the whatness, the essence that emerges from henadic existence is willed, it does not impose itself. “He is not therefore as he happens to be, but as he acts” (16.17-8), for divine action is prior to essence. Plotinus affirms will and action in order to subvert his critics’ opposition between freedom and determinism, their notion that his first principle, just because its activity is intelligible, is stripped of agency.

But Plotinus embraces enough agency to acknowledge facticity, too, in the operations of that principle: “The other things have to wait and see how their king will appear to them and affirm that he is what he himself is, not appearing as he happened to be, but as really king and really principle and really the Good, not active according to the Good” (VI.8.9.17-22). That is, beings will have to *see* what Gods there actually are. Just so, the Platonist Syrianus in his response to Aristotle’s critique of the Platonic doctrine respecting “numbers” will speak of how, though the number of divinities must be finite, “what that number is, however, a partible [μερικῆ] soul could not say, except that it is of such a size as the principles of these extend to in their wish [βούλονται] to produce another for another class of beings.”<sup>19</sup> Note the importance of will (βούλησις) here. *A posteriori* we

<sup>19</sup> *In Metaph.* 145.25-7.

shall be able to set a lower limit on the number of Gods by matching them to ontic classes, but the upper limit expresses Their *will*. But there is both facticity *and* intelligibility, and it is *us* who must hold these two together and not sacrifice one for the apparent sake of the other. Syrianus, again, states that “If, then, the divine number” – i.e., the manifold of the Gods – “knows itself,” – its magnitude – “it is at all events because it is limited as far as it itself is concerned; and it is just so great as the principles wished [ἠβουλήθησαν] it to be, then at all events it is because its measure is pre-ordained to it by the will [βούλησις] of the principles; so that it would not be infinite, except in the sense of being infinite in power, or in relation to us.”<sup>20</sup> In Syrianus we see the same convergence of *number* and of *will* as limit concepts that is implicit in the sequence of Plotinus’ thought. Beings must, so to speak, see what happens, not attempting to determine *a priori* Who there *will be* and how, but knowing and bringing forth the proof that They *have been* Good and grasping their intelligibility. As Plotinus says in the essay on number, “if the beings came into existence before number (...) they would be so many by chance [κατὰ συντυχίαν] (...) casually [εἰκῆ]” (VI.6.10.9-13), that is, the only principle for infra-intellective difference would be privative, there being no principle of positive individuation.

That Plotinus has indeed in these essays, under the pressure of the polemic with the Gnostics, articulated a fundamentally henadological understanding of the first principle is underscored by certain criticisms lodged by Proclus in his commentary on Plato’s *Parmenides* (1146f, 1149f) against a certain unnamed thinker. This anonymous figure regards the first principle as self-constituting, a trait which belongs properly, in Proclus’ own more thoroughly differentiated system, to entities posterior to the henads themselves. John M. Dillon<sup>21</sup> reckons the passage to refer to Plotinus. This ascription, while it is quite plausible in light of the language of self-constitution Plotinus uses with respect to the first principle – that is, to the members of the primary manifold – in *Ennead* VI.8, becomes surprising, however, when Proclus goes on to state that those “authorities” who think of the first principle in this fashion proceed to affirm that the first principle, “as having no cause (...) derives its existence [ὑπαρξιν] from chance [ἄπο ταῦτομάτου]” (*In Parm.* 1146.8-9).

If this unnamed thinker is Plotinus, he would seem to be in agreement with the very critics to whom he is replying in VI.8, on a different conception of “chance,” however, than their own. For, if we accept Narbonne’s conclusion that it is the Gnostics who Plotinus again confronts in VI.8, then their charge that the Platonists’ first principle is merely as it “happens to be” derives from their own conception of intelligibility, which is seen by them as deterministically constraining so many Gods as it applies to, while the God or Gods to whom it does not enjoy an arbitrary “freedom.” In meeting their objections, however, it appears that Plotinus, in Proclus’ eyes, has gone so far as to strengthen too much the voluntaristic character of his own doctrine.

Whatever is self-constituting, according to Proclus, is “both encompassing of itself insofar as it is a cause, and encompassed by itself in so far as it is an effect”

<sup>20</sup> *In Metaph.* 147.18-21.

<sup>21</sup> *Proclus’ Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, trans. G. R. Morrow and J. M. Dillon, introduction and notes by J. M. Dillon (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1987), 502 n. 8, 505 n. 10.

(1146.11-13); indeed, this is the very “cohesion” (19) of which Plotinus spoke in order to express the self-relation he sees as necessary in the first principle in order that both will and thought should have in it their proper ground. But for Proclus, “what is self-constituted must necessarily be divisible into a superior and an inferior element” (1150.6-7), and therefore, to preserve the transcendence of the henads relative to their products and their integrity as units, Proclus rejects the Plotinian attribution of self-constitution to the first principle as such.

Proclus, as usual, is responsive here to the need for an orderly distinction of the scope of activity of principles, but also to a danger that Plotinus’ approach be taken in a direction that would subordinate intelligibility: “some other thinkers, developing a certain recklessness, have before now even declared it [the first principle] to be *self-moved*, proceeding to this from the concept of self-constitution by reason of the kinship between the two concepts,” (1150.2-4). This would be to render again the activity of the first principle arbitrary, even violent, rending the fabric of understanding beyond repair. We hear in this the echo of the literalism that leads Euthyphro to unthinkingly posit strife among the Gods unleavened by the recognition that theomachy can only be a conflict *among goods*, not the equivalent, in a divine register, of the us-or-them disposition of a fevered and acquisitive πόλις confronting a “barbarian” Other. Such a struggle could only be either between some who are “Gods” proper and some others rendered sub-divine through a spurious ontological division of the category, or, on the other hand, among those equal and opposed to one another in purely relative fashion, as when Plotinus, in the essay on number, speaks of how we multiply a city merely by perspective (VI.6.2.14). Proclus thus, though critical of Plotinus, shows himself vigilant with respect to the same concerns as his Lycopolitan predecessor.

#### **APPENDIX: THE DOCTRINE OF “PATERNAL” GODS IN POST-PLOTINIAN PLATONISM**

In the passage discussed above from his commentary on Plato’s *Parmenides*, Proclus distinguishes the henads from being “self-constituted” in the strict sense, inasmuch as they possess rather “paternal and generative rank in respect of all beings” and hence “generate those beings which are self-constituted,” which

receiving their substance from the primal causes, [are] produced also by themselves; and these are dependent upon the paternal causes which generate beings,<sup>22</sup> while they in turn are dependent upon the One which is superior to all such causality ... [I]f we were to seek where that which generates itself is situated finally, we would say that it is where actuality first comes into play; and actuality first occurs at the level of being, even as potentiality occurs in the henad prior to being and existence in the henad prior to this, so that the primal being is productive of itself (...) (*In Parm.* 1151.1-5; 20-24)

<sup>22</sup> Accepting Steel’s reading here of ὄντων rather than εἰδῶν.

The self-constituted proper, therefore, is according to Proclus' more exacting classifications placed at the level of the henad's ontic self-explication, while the henads as "paternal cause" only produce, and are in no respect produced, even by themselves.

"Paternal" causality is defined by Proclus in prop. 151 of the *Elements of Theology*, which states that "all that is paternal in the Gods is of primal operation and stands in the position of the Good at the head of all divine organizations [διακοσμήσεις]." This phase of the henad's activity corresponds particularly to its status as an intelligible God, as we see from Proclus' remark in his *Platonic Theology* (III 21.74.7-8) that "just as the intelligible Gods are henads primarily," i.e., in the primary sense, "so too are they fathers primarily." The systematic basis for the equivalency of these terms lies in their both situating the henad prior to the classifications of divine activity that express a God's particular role in the cosmic organization. The intelligible God, the God as "father," is thus the God simply *qua* God, not as this or that *kind* of God. Accordingly, Gods in this primal phase of their activity possess a one-to-one relationship to the totality of Being, as in effect, each one the sole producer of all that is, rather than a part of the cooperative work of a pantheon. Since this disposition is given by the very nature of the henadic manifold, the "Intelligible Gods" are in Proclus not a particular class of Gods, but that class to which every God belongs just by virtue of being a God.<sup>23</sup>

Platonic speculation on the "paternal" as a causal category likely goes back to Plato's dual characterization of the demiurge as "maker and father" relative to the cosmic organization at *Timaeus* 28c. By the time of the anonymous commentary on Plato's *Parmenides* often attributed to Porphyry, but which may well be pre-Plotinian, it is already recognized that the term "Father" is commonly used in a manner akin to the "One Itself," inasmuch as it does not refer to one thing, lest it be intelligibly determined, rather than determining, for the anonymous commentator states that "some see fit to abolish number" with respect to the "Father" "in that they absolutely refuse even to say that he is one" (frag. 9). In Plotinus' essay on the Gnostics, we see a connection between the intelligible Gods and the status of "father," as well as an indifference to number with respect to "the Father," when Plotinus states that "the honour which these people say they give to the intelligible Gods would be of a very unfeeling sort" if they do not honor as well the "children" of the intelligible Gods, "for every soul is a child of that father," referring thus collectively to the intelligible Gods (II.9.16.5-10).

In the *Sentences*, definitely the work of Plotinus' student Porphyry, a hierarchy of the virtues and their embodiments proceeds from the sage, acting in accordance with the political virtues; to the daimonic man or good daimon, acting in accordance with the purificatory virtues; to the God, acting in accordance with the intellectual virtues; and finally, acting in accordance with the paradigmatic virtues, to "the father of the Gods."<sup>24</sup> This position, however, is clearly not restricted to one "father" alone inasmuch as it, like the previous stages in the progression of virtue laid out in this text, is expressly

<sup>23</sup> I have discussed the disposition of the Intelligible Gods in Butler, "The Intelligible Gods..." 131-143.

<sup>24</sup> *Sentences* 32, p. 31 Lamberz. See the discussion of this passage by M. Chase, "What Does Porphyry Mean by *Theōn Patēr?*" *Dionysius* 22 (2004): 77-94.

occupied by whomever – even, apparently, extraordinary mortal beings – can practice “paradigmatic” virtue.

Michael Chase points out that another text possibly by Porphyry, *On the Life and Poetry of Homer*, in commenting on *Iliad* I, 498-9, where Thetis finds Zeus sitting apart from the other Olympians, states that “This isolation and this failure to mingle with the other Gods, but to rejoice in frequenting and relating to himself, remaining still and constantly setting the All in order, presents the nature of the intelligible God; for he [Homer] knows that the God who oversees and manages the All, is Intellect.”<sup>25</sup> Chase appropriately associates these remarks on Zeus as displaying in the *Iliad* passage characteristics typical of a God as “intelligible God” with the above doctrine from the *Sentences* concerning “paradigmatic virtue” and the state of being “father of the Gods.”

We can see from this that the close association between the “paternal” and “intelligible” disposition of the Gods that exists in Proclus is already present in these texts in some form. In the exegesis of the *Iliad* passage, Zeus “presents the nature of the intelligible God,” that is, what it is to be an intelligible God, what it is to be a God *qua* intelligible, when he isolates himself from determination by all things. This is essentially the same doctrine as Proclus presents in *ET* prop. 151, where the God as “paternal” “stands in the position of the Good at the head of all divine organizations,” thus separated in his<sup>26</sup> individuality from the intellective nexus informing the cosmos.

Moreover, the association of “paternal” godhood with “paradigmatic” virtue, and the positing of such godhood relative to “the All,” τὸ πᾶν, argues for something like the doctrine of the third intelligible triad or intelligible intellect as it ultimately emerges in Proclus, largely from his reading of the *Timaeus*.<sup>27</sup> For Proclus, the third intelligible triad, which expresses the intellective activity of the Gods, is the paradigm Plato discusses in the *Timaeus*, which is also the form of Animality, “Animal Itself.” The God as intelligible intellect is the paradigm for the order which the demiurge, as intellective intellect, imparts to the cosmos; hence the God as paradigm is the determination of Totality, the All (as distinct, i.e., from the determination of Wholeness – τὸ ὅλον, ὁλότης – through the activity of the second intelligible triad).

The God, therefore, as paradigm – intelligible object in the strict sense as object of divine intellective activity – exhibits a particular aspect of the general henadic disposition of all henads (and hence all things) in each one. For insofar as all things are present in each God, so to the degree that each God is intelligible, all things are intelligible through her. The God thus presents herself both as the paradigm for things and as the intelligible expression of the totality of things through lending herself to them as framework within which they are intelligible, that is, have meaning and value, and not merely as they hold

<sup>25</sup> Pseudo-Plutarch, *De vita et poeseos Homeri* 1243–1247, quoted and discussed *ibid.*, 83.

<sup>26</sup> Or “her,” inasmuch as Proclus makes it clear that a Goddess such as Rhea can be considered a “father” even in the more differentiated, intellective divine organizations (*Theol. Plat.* V 3.16.18-23), and hence *a fortiori* on the universal plane represented by the classification of “intelligible” or “paternal” God. Indeed, it is not the feminine, but the *neuter* gender which apparently presents an obstacle to “paternity” in this respect. (Cf. *Theol. Plat.* III 21.74.1-8)

<sup>27</sup> See my discussion in Butler, “The Third Intelligible Triad..,” 131-150.

together coherently, which is the function of the God through the second intelligible triad, and still a moment marked by relativity.

Rather, the God as “paradigmatic” possesses the finality that comes only with the actual experience by beings of this formative function, that which Plotinus referred to as beings, having “waited,” at last “see[ing] how their king will appear to them” (VI.8.9.17-19). That this structure should resemble at once that of the “call” which certain proponents of a “theological turn” in phenomenology have inferred from the primordial “givenness” of Being, and also the call to which Gnostics spoke of responding, should not, however, prevent us from recognizing that this cardinal facticity is embedded, for the Platonist, in an intelligible structure. The peculiar virtue of Platonism, therefore, is to maintain, against every pressure to collapse them, at once the irreducibility of the call to which a being responds, and the universalizability of the call as such. In doing so, the Platonist resolutely affirms the unique personhood of the God who wills to be known and of the being who wills to know her as the only ground adequate to the intelligibility born and sustained in that relationship.