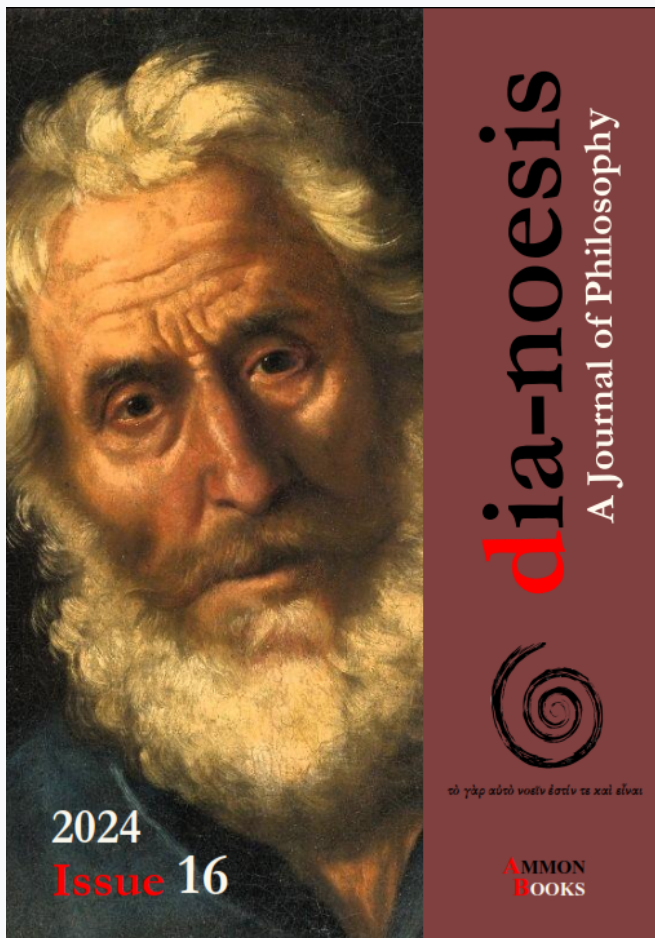


## dianoesis

Vol 16 (2024)

Philosophy in Late Antiquity Middle Platonism, Neopythagoreanism, and Neoplatonism



### The “intentional” benevolent self-sufficiency of the One according to Plotinus

*Apostolos Kaproulias*

doi: [10.12681/dia.39533](https://doi.org/10.12681/dia.39533)

## The “intentional” benevolent self-sufficiency of the *One* according to Plotinus

Apostolos A. Kaproulias,  
*Doctor of Philosophy,*  
*Academic Staff of the Hellenic Open University*  
aakaproulias@yahoo.gr

### **Abstract**

The hypostasis of the *One* in Plotinus’ ontological system involves structural and functional value and contribution. It exists within the boundaries of its “benevolent self-sufficiency”, as a mobile force of production (immanence) and, at the same time, as absolutely oriented and enclosed in itself (transcendence). It is a dual state, which is perpetually stable and, therefore, not subject to any circumstances. At the same time, however, it is also a reality which is circulated in the realm of “intention” since the *One* is absolutely free to choose the quality of its self-determination. In a different approach: the “intention” of the *One* ultimately suggests that it is from its domain that the perfect union of nature with the will, of substance with "intention", of "remaining" with "movement", draws its culmination or even its prototypes.

**Keywords:** One, Plotinus, good, self-sufficiency, unity, simplicity, perfection, intention.

Plotinus' ontological system is admittedly structured under the obvious influences of the Platonic, Aristotelian and Stoic doctrines and, therefore, draws its inspiration from its extreme end, that of the One, an Entity "frantically" active and eternally immobile.<sup>1</sup> According to this axiomatically accepted as a constitutive principle, therefore, the One constitutes a transcendental reality with a structural and functional presence.<sup>2</sup> It is an Entity, which first of all arranges in a strictly hierarchical way anything that exists and, at the same time, adds possibilities of self-determination corresponding of their status to all of its products.<sup>3</sup> So, it defines first of all positions and relations and, of course, compatible functions. The *One* itself does not "interact" with all those which are active in the region of becoming, it is posited beyond them and, precisely because it does not develop relations of interaction or dependence with worldly beings, it has, according to Plotinus, a "benevolent self-sufficiency".<sup>4</sup> This description actually restrains and delimits

<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. H. ARMSTRONG, "The Apprehension of Divinity in the Self and Cosmos in Plotinus», *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, 1976, p. 192.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. W.Z.MAZUR, "To Try to Bring the Divine in Us Back Up to the Divine in the All": The Gnostic Background of Plotinus's", *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 25/4, 2017, p. 568.

<sup>3</sup> PLOTINUS, *Enneades*, V, 4, 1, 1- 5: «Εἴ τι ἔστι μετὰ τὸ πρῶτον, ἀνάγκη ἐξ ἐκείνου εἶναι ἢ εὐθὺς ἢ τὴν ἀναγωγὴν ἐπ' ἐκεῖνο διὰ τῶν μεταξὺ ἔχειν, καὶ τάξιν εἶναι δευτέρων καὶ τρίτων, τοῦ μὲν ἐπὶ τὸ πρῶτον τοῦ δευτέρου ἀναγομένου, τοῦ δὲ τρίτου ἐπὶ τὸ δεύτερον». "If there is something after that which is first, it is necessary that what comes from it does so either immediately, or else it has its ascent back to it through intermediaries and there is an ordering of things second and third,1 with the second ascending to the first and the third to the second" [Plotinus, *The Enneads*, L.P. Gerson (ed.) J.M. Dillon et al. (trans), Cambridge: University Press 2018, 577]. Cf. J. BUSSANICH, *Plotinus' s metaphysics of the One*, Cambridge: University Press, 2006, p. 38.

<sup>4</sup> PLOT., *Enn.*, I, 7, 1, 7-13: «Εἰ οὖν τι μὴ πρὸς ἄλλο ἐνεργοῖ ἄριστον ὄν τῶν ὄντων καὶ ἐπέκεινα τῶν ὄντων, πρὸς αὐτὸ δὲ τὰ ἄλλα, δηλον, ὡς τοῦτο ἂν εἴη τὸ ἀγαθόν, δι' ὃ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἀγαθοῦ μεταλαμβάνειν ἔστι. τὰ δὲ ἄλλα διχῶς ἂν ἔχοι, ὅσα οὕτω τὸ ἀγαθόν, καὶ τῷ πρὸς αὐτὸ ὠμοιωθῆναι καὶ τῷ πρὸς αὐτὸ τὴν ἐνέργειαν ποιεῖσθαι». "If, then, something were to act not for something else, since this is the best among Beings, or transcending them, and since it is in relation to it that the other things act, it is clear that this would be the Good because of which it is possible for the others to partake of good. Other things which have

the *One*, even if this is not, at first sight, entirely interpretable.<sup>5</sup>

But, before we attempt to explain the term “benevolent self-sufficiency” of the One under a “challenging”, as we shall see, relevance, we need to point out from the outset that, precisely because of this property, the first Principle constitutes permanently the field of reference of the beings produced by it. Nevertheless, it does not possess the characteristic or even the tendency to relate with an existentially superior or even inferior being.<sup>6</sup>

However, Plotinus clarifies, right from the beginning, that the *One* is ontologically beyond *substance*, *energy*, *intellect* and any intelligible activity and, therefore, is considered to be a self-caused and self-producing Being.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, it is at the top of the ontological hierarchy and, that is why, everything

---

the Good like this, have it in two ways, by assimilating themselves to it, and by directing their activity towards it” [L.P. Gerson (ed.), 105].

<sup>5</sup> Cf. J. BUSSANICH, *Plotinus’ s metaphysics of the One*, p. 39.

<sup>6</sup> PLOT., *Enn.*, I, 7, 1, 20-24: «Καὶ γὰρ αὖ τοῦτο δεῖ τὰγαθὸν τίθεσθαι, εἰς ὃ πάντα ἀνήρτηται, αὐτὸ δὲ εἰς μηδέν· οὕτω γὰρ καὶ ἀληθὲς τὸ οὐ πάντα ἐφίεται. Δεῖ οὖν μένειν αὐτό, πρὸς αὐτὸ δὲ ἐπιστρέφειν πάντα, ὡσπερ κύκλον πρὸς κέντρον ἀφ’ οὗ πᾶσαι γραμμαῖαι». “For, once more, we must posit the Good to be that upon which all things depend, whereas it depends on nothing. For in this way it is true that it is ‘that which all things desire’. It must, then, remain, and all things must revert to it, like the centre of a circle from which all the radii come” [L.P. Gerson (ed.), 105-106].

<sup>7</sup> Cf. PLOT., *Enn.*, I, 7, 1, 13-20: «Εἰ οὖν ἔφρσεις καὶ ἐνεργεῖα πρὸς τὸ ἄριστον ἀγαθόν, δεῖ τὸ ἀγαθὸν μὴ πρὸς ἄλλο βλέπον μηδ’ ἐφιέμενον ἄλλου ἐν ἡσύχῳ οὐσαν πηγὴν καὶ ἀρχὴν ἐνεργειῶν κατὰ φύσιν οὐσαν καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἀγαθοειδῆ ποιοῦσαν οὐ τῇ πρὸς ἐκεῖνα ἐνεργείᾳ – ἐκεῖνα γὰρ πρὸς αὐτὴν – οὐ τῇ ἐνεργείᾳ οὐδὲ τῇ νοήσει τὰγαθὸν εἶναι, ἀλλ’ αὐτῇ μονῇ τὰγαθὸν εἶναι. Καὶ γὰρ ὅτι ἐπέκεινα οὐσίας, ἐπέκεινα καὶ ἐνεργείας καὶ ἐπέκεινα νοῦ καὶ νοήσεως». “If, then, desire and activity towards that which is best is good, the Good must not look to something else nor be desirous of something else, but be in tranquillity, ‘the spring and source of activities’ according to nature, and make other things Good-like not by an activity in relation to them, for it is they that are active in relation to it.<sup>6</sup> It is not due to activity or thinking that it is the Good, but by remaining in itself. And because it transcends Substantiality, it also transcends activity and transcends Intellect and thinking” [L.P. Gerson (ed.), 105]. Cf. R. MORTLEY, «Negative Theology and Abstraction in Plotinus», *The American Journal of Philology*, 94/4, 1975, p. 372.

that exists follows the *One* in terms of value and hierarchy. So, since the first Principle is not related, as we have mentioned, to any other being, the *One* will develop a dynamic state of relations only in reference to itself.<sup>8</sup>

So, the One has its own self-determination and stands “isolated” from any interaction, which, first and foremost, means that it exists free of any restrictions that external relations of any kind would introduce.<sup>9</sup> In this sense, the One will constitute a strictly defined “unity” and, consequently, a correspondingly defined “simplicity”, since it does not “allow” in its own nature ontological additions, changes and alterations, that is, what is consistent with external interactions in general.<sup>10</sup>

The question that arises here, however, is whether the “unity” of the One, also understood as “simplicity”, refers to an exclusive or an inclusive “unity”. It should be stressed that this question also concerned J. Bussanich, who probably settles on the first version. But, how would such an

<sup>8</sup> Cf. J. BUSSANICH, *Plotinus' s metaphysics of the One*, p. 45.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. R.T.WALLIS, *Neoplatonism*, London: G. Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1995, p. 57.

<sup>10</sup> PLOT., *Enn.*, V, 4, 1, 5-13: «Δεῖ μὲν γάρ τι πρὸ πάντων εἶναι – ἀπλοῦν τοῦτο – καὶ πάντων ἕτερον τῶν μετ' αὐτό, ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ ὄν, οὐ μειγμένον τοῖς ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, καὶ πάλιν ἕτερον τρόπον τοῖς ἄλλοις παρεῖναι δυνάμενον, ὄν ὄντως ἔν, οὐχ ἕτερον ὄν, εἶτα ἔν, καθ' οὗ φεῦδος καὶ τὸ ἐν εἶναι, οὗ μὴ λόγος μηδὲ ἐπιστήμη, ὃ δὴ καὶ ἐπέκεινα λέγεται εἶναι οὐσίας – εἰ γὰρ μὴ ἀπλοῦν ἔσται συμβάσεως ἔξω πάσης καὶ συνθέσεως καὶ ὄντως ἔν, οὐκ ἂν ἀρχὴ εἴη – αὐταρκέστατόν τε τῷ ἀπλοῦν εἶναι καὶ πρῶτον ἀπάντων· τὸ γὰρ τὸ μὴ πρῶτον ἐνδεές τοῦ πρὸ αὐτοῦ, τό τε μὴ ἀπλοῦν τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ ἀπλῶν δεόμενον, ἢ ἡ ἔξ ἐκείνων». “For there must be something simple prior to all things and different from all things after it, being by itself, not mixed with the things that come from it, all the while being able to be present to other things, having what those other things have in a different manner, being truly one, and not having its existing different from its being one. Given this, it is false that that of which there is no ‘account or scientific understanding’ is even one; it is actually said to ‘transcend Substantiality’ – for if it is not simple, beyond all combination and composition and not truly one, it would not be a principle. And it is absolutely self-sufficient by being simple and first of all. For that which is not first needs that which is prior to it, and that which is not simple is in need of the ‘simples’ in it in order that it be composed of them” [L.P. Gerson (ed.), 577]. Cf. PLATON, *Res Publica*, 509 d. Cf. J. BUSSANICH *Plotinus' s metaphysics of the One*, pp. 42-43.

assumption justify by implication the term "benevolent self-sufficiency" as, in our view, a synoptic description of the reality of the One?

The One actually keeps its “unity” in a unique and unrepeatable way, a fact which constitutes the main property of its self-existence. In its territory, as already mentioned, there is no form of composition or division, not even one that could be defined or considered as implicitly existing. However, although the “unity” and “simplicity” of the One imply a state of inner “remaining” in the sense that it is an integral existence, the One itself also reveals a creative energy. So, it progressively communicates its presence in a particularly “special” way, i.e., as "unmoved mover" since it “challenges”, supervises and "inspires" the descending and ascending moves of beings, without, however, moving with them.<sup>11</sup>

J. M. Rist points out that the One develops such a type of kinetic activity, since by nature and position has no need to engage in any type of creative transformations and, consequently, it has no need for anything more than itself.<sup>12</sup> This explanation leads to an interesting, for the moment, relation between “unity”, “simplicity” and “self-sufficiency”. The Self is self-evidently one, simple and self-sufficient, for it remains in every perspective “itself”.<sup>13</sup> So, any separations-multiplications that arise in the existing world, occur out of how the creative energy of the One works in beings and, in this sense, the being with accepts this energy is the one that

---

<sup>11</sup> Cf. PLOT., *Enn.*, V, 4, 1, 15-19: «Τὸ δὴ τοιοῦτον ἐν μόνον δεῖ εἶναι· ἄλλο γὰρ εἰ εἶη τοιοῦτον, ἐν ἂν εἶη τὰ ἄμφω. Οὐ γὰρ δὴ σώματα λέγομεν δύο, ἢ τὸ ἐν πρῶτον σῶμα. Οὐδὲν γὰρ ἀπλοῦν σῶμα, γινόμενον τε τὸ σῶμα, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἀρχή· ἢ δὲ ἀρχὴ ἀγένητος.» “That which is indeed one like this must be unique. For if there were something else like this, the two of them would be one. For we are not speaking about two bodies or saying that the One is the first body. For no body is simple. And a body is generated, and not a principle; ‘a principle is ungenerated’” [L.P. Gerson (ed.), 577]. Cf. PLAT., *Phaidrus*, 245 d.

<sup>12</sup> J.M.RIST, «Forms of Individuals in Plotinus», *The Classical Quarterly*, 13/2, 1963, pp. 223-231.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. C.M.COHOE, «Plotinus on Divine Simplicity, Ontological Independence, and Perfect Being Theology», *Philosophical Quarterly*, 67/269, 2017, p. 752.

remains exposed or dependent on the circumstances and the multiple forms.<sup>14</sup>

The “self-sufficiency” of the One implies, according also to J. Bussanich, that the first Principle is ultimately in a state of exclusive and “unique” unity. Hence, a determination of the form *one-multitude* is excluded from the domain of the One, since, if in the spiritual range of the *True Being*, “unity” was understood as “inclusive” or even “all-inclusive”, then by logical implication not only its “simplicity” but also its “self-sufficiency” would be questioned.<sup>15</sup>

According to all these, the One is both a self-sufficient and a perfect Being, two attributes which are directly intertwined, mainly because they fully justify its state of “kinetic immanence”. Actually, “perfection”, as its characteristic idiom, indicates its “completeness” as well as its “self-sufficiency”. However, “perfection” is also related with the productive unfolding of the One, if one considers that the One, as a perfect Being, is governed by the principle of the inexhaustible offering, of endless/unlimited creation, which is understood as the overflow of its productive power.<sup>16</sup> This point, however, about the metaphysics of immanence confirms, also from this line of reasoning, the “self-sufficiency” of the *One*, in the sense that, through its own

<sup>14</sup> PLOT., *Enn.*, V, 4, 1, 20-23: «μὴ σωματικὴ δὲ οὐσα, ἀλλ’ ὄντως μία, ἐκείνο ἂν εἶη τὸ πρῶτον. Εἰ ἄρα ἕτερόν τι μετὰ τὸ πρῶτον εἶη, οὐκ ἂν ἔτι ἀπλοῦν εἶη ἔν ἄρα πολλὰ ἔσται. Πόθεν οὖν τοῦτο; Ἀπὸ τοῦ πρώτου· οὐ γὰρ δὴ κατὰ συντυχίαν, οὐδ’ ἂν ἔτι ἐκείνο πάντων ἀρχή». “Since the One is not corporeal, but truly one, it would be that which is first. If, therefore, there should be some- thing different after that which is first, that thing would not itself be simple; it will, therefore, be a one-many” [L.P. Gerson (ed.), 577].

<sup>15</sup> Cf. J. BUSSANICH *Plotinus’ s metaphysics of the One*, p. 43.

<sup>16</sup> PLOT., *Enn.*, V, 2, 1, 7-10: «ὄν γὰρ τέλειον τῷ μηδέν ζητεῖν μηδέ ἔχειν μηδέ δεῖσθαι οἷον ὑπερερρὴ καὶ τὸ ὑπερπλήρες αὐτοῦ πεποίηκεν ἄλλο». “Since it is perfect, due to its neither seeking anything, nor having anything, nor needing anything, it in a way overflows and its superabundance has made something else” [L.P. Gerson (ed.), 549]. Cf. G. LEKKAS, «Plotinus: Towards a Ontology of Likeness (On the One and Nous)», *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 13/1, 2005, pp. 37-39. Cf. J.H.HEISER, «Plotinus and the Apeiron of Plato’s Parmenides», *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review*, 55/1, 1991, p. 62.

unceasing activity, it remains permanently or eternally self-sufficient. So, the *One* seems to develop its activity in a fixed and inexhaustible way,<sup>17</sup> without existential changes,<sup>18</sup> an intelligible, rational or even or even desirable preparation,<sup>19</sup> but also without its products having actual knowledge of its ontological status.<sup>20</sup>

The above further confirms that the One permanently develops a benevolent activity, i.e., it is characterized as *Good*, since what takes place in the existent is not conceived outside or beyond its creative power. Or, else, the existence of the produced beings is directly interwoven with the projections of the existence of the One, in contrast, obviously, with this first Principle which, as has already been shown, does not depend for its presence on any other entity. Therefore, by the term "benevolent self-sufficiency" we mean the state of a perfect and self-sufficient Being, which «τίκτει ἐν τῷ καλῷ», decorates the existent, without, for the most part, being dispersed in the contexts of the world.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> PLOT., *Enn.*, VI, 9, 9, 3-4.

<sup>18</sup> PLOT., *Enn.*, III, 8, 8, 46-49.

<sup>19</sup> PLOT., *Enn.*, V, 3, 12, 28-33. A.H. ARMSTRONG, "Beauty and the Discovery of Divinity in the Thought of Plotinus", *Plotinian and Christian Studies*, XIX, 1975, p. 158.

<sup>20</sup> PLOT., *Enn.*, VI, 7, 39, 19-33. Cf. J. BUSSANICH *Plotinus' s metaphysics of the One*, p. 49.

<sup>21</sup> PLOT., *Enn.*, III, 8, 11, 10-13: «Τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἄλλα περὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ διὰ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἔχει τὴν ἐνέργειαν, τὸ δὲ ἀγαθὸν οὐδενὸς δεῖται· διὸ οὐδὲν ἐστὶν αὐτῷ ἢ αὐτό. Φθελγζάμενος οὖν τὸ ἀγαθὸν μηδὲν ἔτι προσνόει.» "For other things have their activity with respect to and for the sake of the Good, whereas the Good has no need of anything. And so it has nothing but itself. For this reason, when you have uttered 'the Good', don't make any mental additions" [L.P. Gerson (ed.), 367]. PLOT., *Enn.*, V, 4, 1, 23- 27: «Πῶς οὖν ἀπὸ τοῦ πρώτου; Εἰ τέλειόν ἐστι τὸ πρῶτον καὶ πάντων τελεώτατον καὶ δύναμις ἢ πρώτη, δεῖ πάντων τῶν ὄντων δυνατώτατον εἶναι, καὶ τὰς ἄλλας δυνάμεις καθόσον δύνανται μιμεῖσθαι ἐκεῖνο». "How, then, does it come from that which is first? If that which is first is perfect, that is, the most perfect of all things and the first power, it must be the most powerful of all things, and the other powers imitate it as much as they are able" [L.P. Gerson (ed.), 578]. Imitation obviously does not refer to ontological affinity, much less to identity, since pantheism does not find a privileged field of presence in the Neoplatonic School.



And a further, final, question: Could “benevolent self-sufficiency” also be seen from a different perspective? Could it be considered that, as a “motionless movement”, it concerns or, more correctly, confirms the “intention” of the *One* to behave in such a way? Scholars seem to arrive at the conclusion that, according to Plotinus, the *One* forms a mode of presence, different but corresponding to its essence/nature, without itself entering into any preparations, especially emotional, ones.<sup>22</sup> However, such a view raises issues, since it defines the activity of the *One* as an essential property of it and, at the same time, makes it a “victim” of its physical dispositions. The interpretative-research difficulty is overcome, however, as soon as we understand that the *One* constitutes by its nature a dynamic state, which produces a further activity such that it could in no way be identified with its “Being”.<sup>23</sup> In this sense, it would not be too risky, in the first place, to understand “intention” as the generating power of this activity, or, even further, to consider that within the limits of “intention” exists what ultimately draws a parallel between the *One* and a “closed circuit of electric charge”.

Besides, from the *One*, as a perfect “unity” and as an already complete “self-sufficiency”, it would not be possible to lack the “intention”, which, under an advanced reading, indicates the willingness of the first Principle to combine its choices/actions with its inherently “technical” specifications. Moreover, no one would dispute that the highest confirmation of the “unity” and “perfection” of a Being is the absolute agreement between nature and will, substance and “intention”.

In Plotinus, the existence of “intention” in the *One* must not, in any way, be questioned for an additional reason as well; any entity that participates - to whatever extent - in the

---

<sup>22</sup> Cf. E.F.BALES, «A Heideggerian Interpretation of Negative Theology in Plotinus», *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review*, 47/2, 1983, p. 202. Cf. J. BUSSANICH *Plotinus' s metaphysics of the One*, p. 49.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. G. LEKKAS, «Plotinus: Towards a Ontology of Likeness (On the One and Nous)», p. 55.

processes of production as a “producer”, participates by “intention” of its own.<sup>24</sup> So, how could the “intention” be missing from the *One*, since it too must be included in the scope of the first Principle’s gifts to the produced animate entities? After all, it is not possible for the *One* to bequeath properties which it does not possess to an absolute degree.<sup>25</sup> It is also not susceptible to any external accident.

On the other hand, since the Neoplatonic philosopher admits that “intention” constitutes, apart from being structural, also a dynamic element of animate beings,<sup>26</sup> it

<sup>24</sup> PLOT., *Enn.*, VI, 1, 12, 32-37: «Ἄρ’ οὖν ἄλλη τις ὑπόστασις κατὰ τὸ ποιητικὸν τοῦ ποιητικὸν οὐκ ἄλλου τινὸς ὄντος ἢ καθόσον ποιόν; Τάχα μὲν γὰρ ἂν τις ἐπὶ τῶν ἐμφύχων καὶ ἔτι μᾶλλον ἐπὶ τῶν προαίρεσιν ἐχόντων τῷ νενευκέναι πρὸς τὸ ποιεῖν ὑπόστασις εἶναι καὶ κατὰ τὸ ποιητικόν». “Is there not, then, another real existent in respect of the productive thing, without the productive thing being different from being qualified in a certain way? For one could very well assume in the case of living beings and even more in the case of things with choice, because of their inclination to production, that there is also a special form of real existence in respect of being productive” [L.P. Gerson (ed.), 663]. In the *One* no property is attributed (apophaticism and metaphysics of transcendence), a detail which however does not remove its productive and categorically describable emanation. Cf. PLOT., *Enn.*, III, 4, 5, 1-3: «Ἡ καὶ ἡ αἴρεσις ἐκεῖ ἢ λεγομένη τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς προαίρεσιν καὶ διάθεσιν καθόλου καὶ πανταχοῦ αἰνίττεται». “In fact, choice, too, as it is spoken of in the intelligible world, is an allegorical way of referring to the intention and disposition of the soul for life generally and everywhere” [L.P. Gerson (ed.), 287].

<sup>25</sup> PLOT., *Enn.*, V, 4, 1, 27- 34: «Ὁ τι δ’ ἂν τῶν ἄλλων εἰς τελείωσιν ἴη, ὁρῶμεν γεννῶν καὶ οὐκ ἀνεχόμενον ἐφ’ ἑαυτοῦ μένειν, ἀλλ’ ἕτερον ποιοῦν, οὐ μόνον ὃ τι ἂν προαίρεσιν ἔχη, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅσα φύει ἄνευ προαιρέσεως, καὶ τὰ ἄψυχα δὲ μεταδιδόντα ἑαυτῶν καθόσον δύναται· οἷον τὸ πῦρ θερμαίνει, καὶ ψύχει ἢ χιών, καὶ τὰ φάρμακα δὲ εἰς ἄλλο ἐργάζεται οἷον αὐτά – πάντα τὴν ἀρχὴν κατὰ δύναμιν ἀπομιμούμενα εἰς ἀιδιότητά τε καὶ ἀγαθότητα». “In the case of other things, we see whatever comes to perfection, generating, and not holding back so as to remain self-contained, but rather making something else. This is the case not only for things that have choice, but also for things that grow without choice – and even for things without souls, which give of themselves to the extent that they are able. For example, fire warms, and snow chills, and drugs which act on something else according to their own nature. Everything imitates the principle according to its capacity by tending towards eternity and goodness” [L.P. Gerson (ed.), 578].

<sup>26</sup> PLOT., *Enn.*, II, 3, 2, 16-21

could not, therefore, be recognized as the absolutely dynamic expression of the *One*. But even further: while scholars focus on the free self-determination of the *One*, which certainly possesses the ontological prerequisites to set itself as unfolding in its self-sufficiency, they do not insist on this: that the freedom of the first Principle is strictly and exclusively intertwined with its “intention”, since any peculiar activations of it cannot be seen either as a circumstantial, or, certainly, as an emanating phenomenon of the effects or reactions of the produced multitude.<sup>27</sup> Thus, it does not develop inherent accidents as well.

According to all these, we would add that the “free intention” of the *One* is not ultimately confirmed in the truth of the essence of the *One*, but rather the truth of the essence emanates, on a strictly epistemological or declarative level, from the creative freedom which the *One* also provides to the animate beings.<sup>28</sup> Its “intention”, therefore, indicates its absolute self-consciousness and, at the same time, demonstrates that it is an entity with an objective presence, even if the human intellect rather perceives it as oscillating between its creative indeterminacy and its static immensity.<sup>29</sup>

## Conclusions

In Plotinus, the *One* constitutes a “peculiar” presence, which, although it is located in a relational-dynamic reference exclusively to itself, nevertheless is the supreme productive cause of the entire existent. It develops a distinctly decorative orientation, as it evokes a wide range of generations, which in the first place aim to establish to the utmost the order and regularity of the universal world. This activity of the *One* does not raise any complication or alteration of its ontological characteristics, namely its “unity”, “simplicity” and “self-

---

<sup>27</sup> PLOT., *Enn.*, II, 3, 14, 27-28.

<sup>28</sup> J. TROUILLARD, *La Mystagogie de Proclus*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1982, p. 31

<sup>29</sup> Cf. A.H. ARMSTRONG, *Plotinus*, Greek trans. N. Papadakis-M.koffa, Athens: Enalios, 2006, p. 96.

sufficiency". Thus, it emerges as an entity which enjoys its "benevolent self-sufficiency", for it constitutes that creative Principle which produces without assigning even the least of itself to its products. This special limitation of the *One* in itself demonstrates its free "intention" to combine in a perfect and complete way its essential selfhood and its ontological self-efficiency with its eternally circulating creative presence, which, however, does not lead to any expression of pantheism, despite the fact that we are in a clearly monistic system.

### Bibliography

- Armstrong A. H., *Plotinus*, Greek trans. N. Papadakis-M.koffa, Athens: Enalios, 2006.
- «The Apprehension of Divinity in the Self and Cosmos in Plotinus», *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, 1976, pp. 187-197.
  - «Beauty and the Discovery of Divinity in the Thought of Plotinus», *Plotinian and Christian Studies*, XIX, 1975, pp. 155-163.
- Bales E.F., «A Heideggerian Interpretation of Negative Theology in Plotinus», *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review*, 47/2, 1983, pp. 197-208.
- Bussanich J., *Plotinus' s metaphysics of the One*, Cambridge: University Press, 2006.
- Cohoe C.M., «Plotinus on Divine Simplicity, Ontological Independence, and Perfect Being Theology», *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 67/269, 2017, pp. 751-771.
- Heiser J.H., «Plotinus and the Apeiron of Plato's Parmenides», *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review*, 55/1, 1991, pp. 53-81.
- Lekkas G., «Plotinus: Towards a Ontology of Likeness (On the One and Nous)», *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 13/1, 2005, pp. 53-68.
- Mazur W.Z., «To Try to Bring the Divine in Us Back Up to the Divine in the All»: The Gnostic Background of Plotinus's», *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 25/4, 2017, pp. 561-580.
- Mortley R., «Negative Theology and Abstraction in Plotinus», *The American Journal of Philology*, 94/4, 1975, pp. 363-377.
- Rist J.M., «Forms of Individuals in Plotinus», *The Classical Quarterly*, 13/2, 1963, pp. 223-231.
- Trouillard J., *La Mystagogie de Proclus*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1982.
- Wallis R.T., *Neoplatonism*, London: G. Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1995.



# ΣΧΟΛΗ

ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY AND  
THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

VOLUME 18

ISSUE 1

2024



<https://classics.nsu.ru/schole/>