

Unity, Multiplicity and the Highest Kinds (Treatise VI.2)

Although certain details about the relationship of beauty to the Good remain unclear, the enquiry has thus far led to a relatively clear identification of Intellect as the primary seat of beauty, an identification which is linked with its specific unity and multiplicity. In section 3.4.4, I sketched five interconnected reasons for why the Intellect has this unique characteristic. One of these reasons, the *πρῶτα* or *μέγιστα γένη*, will be the topic of this chapter, in which I shall seek a deeper understanding of the unity and multiplicity of Intellect, and thus also of its beauty. I shall start in section 4.1, by identifying the question of the unity and multiplicity of Intellect and its highest kinds as the central topic of treatise VI.2, proposing an interpretation of Plotinus' quest for the *μέγιστα γένη* as a search for genera that are also principles. In section 4.2, I shall examine Plotinus' answer to the question of the number and nature of the highest kinds, namely that they are five: Being, Motion, Rest, the Same and the Other. In section 4.3, I shall then turn to Plotinus' reasoning for why the one should not be counted among the highest kinds. His thoughts on this issue provide some clues about how to distinguish the one from Being. At the same time, however, he insists that they have a close relationship: Being and the one are to be considered siblings, as it were. In section 4.4, I shall provide a tentative summary of the results so far and start to link these conclusions to the question of beauty. In particular, the metaphor of closeness to the Good might be read as implying that the highest kinds (or Being, as their representative) are the most beautiful "part" of Intellect. Finally, section 4.5 will summarise and discuss the brief section at VI.6.18, where Plotinus considers whether beauty is to be counted among the highest kinds. In doing so, he sketches several options for how we can understand beauty. Each of them might be read as a partial insight that should be integrated into the correct conception of beauty, which is, of course, Plotinus' own conception.

4.1 The Focus of VI.1–3 and the Quest for the Highest Kinds (VI.2.1–3)

The topic of *Enneads* VI.1–3 is the number of kinds into which the one-being, i.e. the Intellect, is divided (cf. VI.1.1.6–7). Treatise VI.1 is devoted to refuting the

Peripatetic and Stoic doctrines of categories. The Stoic position is, in essence, considered to be completely wrong (cf. VI.1.25–30), while the Peripatetic teachings are adapted to the sensible world, where they have their place, albeit in a modified form and reduced in number (cf. VI.3). As Plotinus clearly states at the very beginning of the treatise, the Peripatetics do not apply categories to intelligible being, i.e. to that which truly exists (cf. VI.1.1.19–30). Therefore, the kinds of the intelligible being, i.e. the highest genera, must be examined in their own right. As Plotinus indicates, it is of importance whether these genera are to be considered principles (ἀρχαί) or simply beings (ὄντα; VI.1.1.13–14). This enquiry is then carried out in VI.2, which presents the richest account of Plotinus' adaptation of the doctrine of the μέγιστα γένη from Plato's *Sophist*.

Plotinus' starting point is that being is not one (as Plato and others have shown). As a result, we must determine how many kinds we must posit and in what way. This enquiry concerns what is called "being" as opposed to "becoming", i.e. the realm of intelligible forms (cf. VI.2.1.14–20). This formulation of the scope of the treatise brings us directly to the core of the enquiry into the unity and multiplicity of Intellect. The thesis that being is not simply one means that Intellect does not possess complete unity or, more precisely, is not as thoroughly one as the One is, since it is also always multiple. To ask about how many kinds of being there are is, in this sense, to ask about the essential multiplicity of Intellect, but its unity will nonetheless also come under consideration. That Plotinus himself understands his enquiry in this fashion can be demonstrated by the way in which he specifies the meaning of the claim "being is not one". For him, this does not mean that being is infinite (ἄπειρον), but rather that it is number (ἀριθμός; cf. VI.2.2.1–3), i.e. at the same time one and many or "a richly variegated one keeping its many together in one" (τι ποικίλον ἐν τὰ πολλὰ εἰς ἓν ἔχον; VI.2.2.3). As such, it must in some way be unified by a limited number of highest kinds that resemble elements in this respect,¹ out of which the intelligible cosmos is constructed.² In other words, the kinds Plotinus is looking for cannot be mere genera (γένη), in the sense of that under which lesser genera, species and individuals fall (cf. VI.2.2.12–13), but must simultaneously be principles (ἀρχαί), out of which being is composed and from which the whole of being is derived (ἐκ τούτων τὸ ὅλον ὑπάρχει; cf. VI.2.2.13–14).³ The question of the number of kinds and the manner in which they are posited or in which they

1 In VI.2.2.17, they are referred to only as τέσσαρες (four), but later explicitly as στοιχεῖα; cf. VI.2.3.22.

2 Cf. the use of σύστασις in VI.2.2.10 and σύνθεσις in VI.2.2.29.

3 On this point, see Horn's discussion (1995, pp. 136–143) of the alternative options and the defence of the *genera-archai* model against Wurm's objections (1973, pp. 221–233).

(co-)exist, is thus narrowed down to an enquiry into the number and mutual differences of genera that are, at the same time, principles (cf. VI.2.2.27–31).

Moreover, the enquiry into this richly variegated one is to be understood as an enquiry into a plurality of kinds that derive from one, or rather from the One (ὅφ' ἓν; cf. VI.2.2.5–6). The unity and multiplicity of Intellect is, in this sense, not only determined by the highest kinds, but is to be found in these genera themselves, i.e. we must ask how these kinds are one and many. The plurality of the highest kinds is considered necessary, among other reasons, because a single genus would be unable to create plurality by itself, i.e. to give rise to all of the forms of Intellect (cf. VI.2.2.34–46). At the same time, it is not by chance (κατὰ τύχην) that there are several such kinds. Therefore, they are somehow derived from a one (ἀφ' ἑνός), but from a one that is transcendent (ἐπέκεινα), i.e. from the One (cf. VI.2.3.1–9). If we are to consider the relation of the kinds to one-being, i.e. to Intellect itself, Plotinus explains, we must take them as something like its parts (οἶον μέρη) or elements (οἶον στοιχεῖα), but only as “something like” them, because they appear as parts or elements to us only in our thinking (ἐπίνοια). In themselves, however, they are a single nature (μία φύσις; cf. VI.2.3.20–31 and also VI.2.8.30–38).

4.2 Establishing the Five Highest Kinds (VI.2.4–8)

Having further specified the question in this way, in VI.2.4 Plotinus begins his enquiry into the highest kinds themselves. He draws a contrast between bodies, which are multiform, composite and various, and soul, in which there is no spatial separation of parts and no magnitude. Consequently, if we have correctly understood what soul is, we should ask the opposite question “how can it be many?” instead of “how is it one?”. The question about the unity and multiplicity of soul, formulated more precisely as an enquiry into a single nature that is many (μία φύσις πολλά), should also reveal the truth about the genera we are looking for (cf. VI.2.4.1–35). The one from which bodies come, soul, is itself more one than these bodies, which also signifies that it possesses a higher degree of being (cf. VI.2.5.7–8). Nevertheless, it is not the absolute One, but a sort of plurality which is one (πλήθος ἓν, cf. VI.2.5.9–10). The plurality of soul is based, on the one hand, on its activity in relation to other things (cf. VI.2.5.14–15) and, on the other hand, on its contemplative activity in relation to itself. This activity breaks down its unity, so to speak, with the result that it manifests as many. In describing the being of soul, Plotinus says that it is life, in opposition to the being of a stone, and that life and being are one in soul. Moreover, soul's act of self-contemplation may be described as its movement (cf. VI.2.6.6–20). More

precisely, its being as life is movement, because Being (and life) in the Intellect is also Movement (cf. VI.2.7.1–8).⁴

Plotinus goes on to subsume life—that of all soul, but also that of Intellect—under the genus of Movement, which he claims must be posited in Intellect along with Being (μετὰ τοῦ ὄντος), i.e. not under it (ὑπὸ τὸ ὄν) or over it (ἐπὶ τῷ ὄντι; cf. VI.2.7.1–18). Plotinus once again reminds his readers that it is our understanding that separates these two kinds, Being and Movement, although they are actually one in Intellect (cf. VI.2.7.7–9, or “one nature”, φύσις, in VI.2.7.18–20). Movement is the life and actuality of Being (ζωή, ἐνέργεια; cf. VI.2.7.18, VI.2.7.34–36), the being of Being (αὐτοῦ τοῦ εἶναι, scil. τοῦ ὄντος; O.G.; cf. VI.2.7.36) and it makes it perfect (τέλειον; cf. VI.2.7.25–27). Nonetheless, our thought does not separate them arbitrarily, because they can, in fact, be separated in what comes after them, as in a portrait of a man (cf. VI.2.7.9–14). Moreover, the attempt to separate them in our reasoning is never really possible, because Being always appears when we think Movement and vice versa. Consequently, we should rather say that both the form of Movement and the form of Being are a “double one” (διπλοῦν ἓν) in our thought (cf. VI.2.7.20–24). Plotinus now claims, with reference to Plato’s *Soph.* 248a12, that it would be even stranger not to posit Rest along with Being, than it would be not to introduce Movement into Being, because Being always exists in the same state and in the same way (cf. VI.2.7.25–28). Rest, as the third genus, must be separated from Being and Movement, although they are actually one, or rather one-many, and Intellect thinks them simultaneously (ἄμα; cf. VI.2.8.2–3). Otherwise, Rest would be the same as Being and even as Movement (cf. VI.2.7.31–45). Furthermore, Intellect in reality thinks all three of them separately (χωρίς; cf. VI.2.8.1–2 and VI.2.8.2–3). There is, on the one hand, activity (ἐνέργεια) and Movement (κίνησις) in Intellect’s thinking and, on the other hand, substance (οὐσία) and Being (τὸ ὄν), since it thinks itself as that from which this activity comes and towards which it is directed. Being, as that which is most firmly established (ἐδραιότατον) among all beings, caused Rest to exist and came to be that from which the thinking starts and where it ends (cf. VI.2.8.12–23). In this sense, Plotinus concludes, “the Form (ιδέα) at rest is the defining limit (πέρας) of Intellect, and Intellect is the movement of the Form” (VI.2.8.23–24).

4 The claim that there is movement, life and intellection in the Intellect is, of course, derived from Plotinus’ understanding of Plato’s *Soph.* 248e–249d. It is said there that it would be a dreadful thing to claim that motion, life, soul and thought are not present in what is completely. For a discussion of Plato’s *Sophist*, see de Rijk 1986; for its place in the trilogy *Theaetetus—Sophistes—Politicus*, see Klein 1977; for a systematic discussion, cf. Sayre 2005; and for its influence on Plotinus, cf. Gerson 2013 and Perl 2014.

If we try to think these genera, we distinguish them as three different kinds. By contrast, if we try to posit them as they are in Intellect, we collect them into unity or sameness. Distinguishing and mingling the three kinds is, according to Plotinus, based on two other genera that must be posited along with these three, namely the Same and the Other (cf. VI.2.8.28–44). Hence, we end up with five genera: Being, Motion, Rest, the Same and the Other,⁵ which mutually condition each other and which are all-pervading, in the sense that all other forms are particular instantiations of them (cf. VI.2.8.42–50). It is not possible to think any of the kinds without the others, because each of them must exist (i.e. partake in Being), exist as itself and be differentiated from the other kinds (i.e. partake in the Same and the Other), and think and be thought (i.e. partake in Movement and Rest). Similarly, all of the other forms in Intellect must partake in these genera. Each individual form's being, sameness, otherness, motion and rest are particular, in the sense of each individual form being what it is in relation to all of the others.

Note how Plotinus tries to simultaneously claim that, on the one hand, the highest kinds are by their own nature *one*, divided only by our thought, and, on the other hand, that Intellect thinks all of them separately and that their difference is essential to them, since the Other is one of the highest kinds. This ambiguity reflects the extent of their unity. In comparison to the Good, however, they are many (see section 4.3).

4.3 Is the One To Be Counted among the Highest Kinds? (VI.2.9–11)

Having established the five highest kinds, Plotinus raises a crucial question: how do we know that there are only these five genera and not others, such as one (τὸ ἓν), quantum (τὸ ποσόν), quale (τὸ ποιόν), the relative (τὸ πρὸς τι) or others, as proposed by earlier philosophers, such as Aristotle and his followers, with most of the kinds under consideration being Aristotelian categories (cf. VI.2.9.2–6 and later a complete list of categories in VI.2.13–16). Plotinus first addresses the one as a candidate for being an additional kind in VI.2.9. These passages are of the utmost importance for us, because they examine the relation of the highest kinds and the whole of Intellect to the one.

5 For a discussion of the strange passages VI.2.8.39, VI.2.15. 1, VI.2.19.1, VI.2.19.7 and VI.2.21.2, which speak of fewer kinds, see Hoppe 1965, pp. 78–80.

As a first step, we must distinguish between the One, on the one hand, which is absolutely one (πάντως ἓν), which is added to nothing (μηδὲν ἄλλο πρόσεσσι) and which therefore cannot be a genus, and one-being (τὸ ἓν ὄν), on the other hand, which is added to being (τὸ προσὸν τῷ ὄντι; cf. VI.2.9.5–10). Nevertheless, it cannot be a genus either, as Plotinus shows by exploring different options for how it would be possible to rank the one among the highest kinds:

- 1) The one as a potential genus would not be primarily one, since each highest kind must be primarily what it is, just as Being is the primarily existent. However, the One is primarily one, so that the one as genus cannot fulfil this requirement (cf. VI.2.9.8–10).
- 2) The one is not and cannot be differentiated in itself (ἀδιάφορον ὄν αὐτοῦ). A genus, however, is differentiated because it creates species. In this sense, the one as a genus would destroy itself, because it would also be many. As Plotinus mentions in this passage, Intellect allows differentiations in Being, but not in the one. Or perhaps we should strengthen this statement and say that Being is necessarily many since it is essentially linked with all of the other primary kinds, whereas the one is not (cf. VI.2.9.10–18).
- 3) Plotinus addresses a potential opponent, who might object that the one is a common term among the genera, since all of them are one. Moreover, according to this unknown opponent, perhaps an Aristotelising Platonist (cf. Aristotle *Met.* 1003b22–27), such a common one is to be identified with being. However, Plotinus objects that being cannot be a common term, in the sense of a superordinate genus. Being *exists* primarily, while all the other kinds *exist* in a different way. The same is true for the one (cf. VI.2.9.18–23).
- 4) If the opponent introduces the one as a kind that is not superordinate to the other kinds, but still identical with being, then the one is nothing but a different name for being (cf. VI.2.9.23–25).
- 5) If the opponent insists that each of the kinds is one, then he designates a nature in this way. Either this nature will be a particular one (φύσις τις) or, if he understands the one as a nature generally, he must refer to the One itself, which is not a genus. And if it is the one which is with being (τὸ τῷ ὄντι συνόν, scil. τὸ ἓν; O.G.), it cannot be one primarily (cf. VI.2.9.25–29) as was explained at the very beginning (see the first point above) and as Plotinus repeats once again (cf. VI.2.9.29–33).
- 6) Plotinus proposes a rather confusing thought experiment in which we separate the one from being in our mind and try to think it as one of the following: prior to, simultaneous with or posterior to being. If it is prior, it will be a principle of being and thus the genus neither of being, nor of

the other kinds. If it is simultaneous with being, it will be simultaneous with everything, but a genus is not simultaneous. And if it is posterior to being, it cannot be a genus either, because a genus is prior (cf. VI.2.9.33–39). In the refutation of all three proposed options, Plotinus seems to make use of his unusual conception of the highest kinds as simultaneously genera and principles. Genera as such are posterior to principles, while in themselves they are both prior to species and simultaneous with all species since they exist in them (cf. VI.2.12.11–15 and VI.2.19.13–18). Principles themselves are prior to all things as the source of everything, but as that from which everything is constructed (cf. the analogy with elements above), they are at the same time simultaneous with everything. The highest kinds that are both genera and principles are a combination of the designation “prior” and “simultaneous”. Plotinus employs an interesting strategy in the discussion with his interlocutor here, in which he objects that his opponent thinks of the one either only as a principle (in cases where the one is prior to and simultaneous with being) or only as a genus (in the case where the one is posterior to being). In his refutation, Plotinus always places—perhaps exaggerated—emphasis on the lack of designation (prior or simultaneous) in each particular case.

Plotinus now concludes his enquiry by highlighting the important similarities and differences between the one and Being. The one in being did, in a sense, fall out (οἶον συνεκπίπτων) of the One together with Being, and Being is one since it is near to the One. On the other hand, Being is posterior to the One, and therefore can be and is in fact many (*polla*). This is why the one in being remains itself one and cannot be divided into parts and consequently cannot be a genus (cf. VI.2.9.39–43). Being, by contrast, is a genus, divisible and multiple. It is important to notice, however, the following points: 1) the one is, in some sense, present in Intellect, i.e. not as a genus but remaining itself; 2) this one in being is produced by the One along with Being; 3) they are closely connected.

A closer specification of the way in which the one in being is in Intellect is given in the next section (VI.2.10), where we find further reasons why the one cannot be a genus:

- 7) Each particular form in Intellect as particular is not only one, but also many, and each form is one equivocally (cf. section 5.3). Therefore, the one cannot be a genus because it is not a common term and is predicated differently of different forms (cf. VI.2.10.1–6).
- 8) Furthermore, truly predicating a genus of a thing prevents us from truly predicating the opposite of it. However, we can truly predicate both one and many of all forms and thus the one cannot be predicated of them as

their genus.⁶ This is true not only of all forms, which in contrast to the highest kinds are here said to be “in every way many” (πάντως πολλά), but also of the five highest kinds themselves. Plotinus even says that they are all one to the same degree as they are many (cf. VI.2.10.6–13).

- 9) In this sense, Plotinus once again reminds us that the one as a genus would destroy itself (see the second point above). This time however, he reformulates the same argument and says that the one is not a number, but a genus is. A genus cannot be properly (κυρίως) one since it is many. The one in being is one in number (cf. VI.2.10.13–16). Plotinus immediately explains this claim with the analogy of the relation of the one to the numbers. On the one hand, the one is present in them; on the other hand, it is not present as their genus, but rather as their principle (in VI.2.10.35–38 this comparison is extended to the relation of a point to lines). In this sense, the one in being is present in all of the kinds, but only as their principle and not as their genus (cf. VI.2.10.16–23). The difference between the one and the other kinds is that the latter are both genera and principles, while the former is merely a principle.

In the last passage of the tenth section, Plotinus sketches some other problems that would need to be dealt with, if the one were a genus, e.g. “how would its species differ from each other?” (cf. VI.2.10.23–29). He concludes that it is neither necessary nor possible for the one to be a genus, because it is a principle. An attempt to incorporate it into the highest kinds leads to its being identified with Being, such that the former becomes merely a different name for the latter (cf. VI.2.10.29–43).

Dwelling a bit further on the topic of how the one in being is in Intellect, Plotinus adds a new dimension to it when he asks how division (μερισμός) in Intellect works. First, he claims that the one is different in sensible and intelligible things, and that it is different even among individual sensibles or intelligibles (cf. VI.2.11.1–9). All things nevertheless imitate (μιμῆται) the One, insofar as they can. Their resemblance to the One depends on their distance from it.

6 It must be noted, however, that Plotinus does not have the same problem with the other highest genera: the Same and the Other or Movement and Rest. He probably does not consider them opposites, as Plato had already suggested (cf. *Soph.* 256b). In this case, however, we could ask why the one and many must be considered opposites. Plotinus does not give an answer, but the tension between what is one and what is multiple is for him, in fact, the primary opposition, although it is necessary to distinguish defined multiplicity, which is born from the One and interacts with unity, and utter multiplicity, which is conceived of as στέργησις. Cf. also section 5.1. Similarly, the oneness of the One does not mingle with any kind of multiplicity, but only the one in being does. Cf. also sections 6.6 and 6.7. Moreover, the one in being has several subtypes. See my analyses of VI.2.11 below.

In this sense, being and Intellect are more one—or more truly (*ἀληθέστερον*) one—than soul (cf. VI.2.11.9–12). Plotinus now claims, however, that it is not the same to be and to be one, or that these are the same only accidentally. An army and a chorus exist to the same extent as a house, although they are less one. To what extent a thing is one depends on how that thing's one looks to the Good (*πρὸς ἀγαθὸν βλέπειν*) and to what extent it attains the Good (*καθόσον τυγχάνει ἀγαθοῦ*). In this sense, each thing wants not only to be, but to be with the good (*μετὰ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ*; cf. VI.2.11.12–21). The One is, in this respect, at both extremities of all things: it is their source (*τὸ ἀφ' οὗ*; all things *ἄρχεται ἀπὸ τοῦ ἓν*) and goal (*τὸ εἰς ὃ*; all things *σπεύδει εἰς τὸ ἓν*) and it even maintains everything in being (cf. VI.2.11.21–29). Being itself attains the one most fully, since it is nearest to the Good. We call it one-being to indicate its very close being with and towards the One (*σφόδρα πρὸς τὸ ἀγαθὸν συνουσία*; cf. VI.2.11.31–38). Being has the one as its principle and goal (*ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος*). It is, however, one in a different sense than the One. The one in being allows for prior and posterior, as well as simple (*ἀπλᾶ*) and composite (*σύνθετα*), beings to exist as different unities, similarly to the one which is different in itself, in a unit and in various numbers (cf. VI.2.11.38–49).

4.4 Tentative Summary: The Unity and Multiplicity of Intellect in VI.2

To summarise the outcome of my inquiry so far: The unity of Intellect may be based on the highest kinds, but they themselves are, at the same time, multiple. Being is always multiple, so that Intellect in itself is the most unified multiplicity, i.e. it is “a richly variegated one keeping its many together in one” (VI.2.2.3) or a number (cf. VI.2.2.1–3). The highest kinds, Being, Motion, Rest, the Same and the Other which are themselves termed numbers (cf. VI.2.10.13–16), unite Intellect both as genera and as principles. This means that they are not only superordinate to all species which they produce (cf. VI.2.21), but also something resembling elements out of which all intelligibles are composed and from which the whole of being is derived. The highest kinds themselves are united not only by the fact that all of them imply all of the others, but also by being derived from the One (cf. VI.2.2.5–6 and VI.2.3.1–9). The one does not belong to the highest kinds for several reasons, of which Plotinus repeatedly highlights two: it would not be one primarily (since the primarily one is the One; cf. VI.2.9.8–10) and the one cannot be differentiated in itself (but a genus is because it creates species; cf. VI.2.9.10–18). This highlights the important difference between the one that remains itself one and cannot be divided and being, which is necessarily many. Plotinus even says that a thing may be more

or less one, even if it has the same share in being, such that the overlap between them is only incidental (cf. VI.2.11.12–21). Nevertheless, the one and being did, in a sense, fall out of the One together: the one is present in the Intellect and being is one because it is near to the One (cf. VI.2.9.39–43). The presence of the one in Intellect is described as the presence of a principle (cf. VI.2.10.16–23), as opposed to the highest kinds, which are both principles and genera (VI.2.2.12–14). Each intelligible (and even each sensible thing) is one differently according to its closeness to the One and to its ability to imitate it (cf. VI.2.11.5–12 and 40–49). Being, as the closest intelligible, attains the one most fully and is consequently one-being (cf. VI.2.11.31–38).

To return to my main question: how, then, is Intellect one and many? It is one as one-many and as the mutual interconnectedness of the highest kinds. The latter qua genera contain the rest of the intelligible forms and qua principles constitute them. At the same time, Intellect is one-many as Intellect, i.e. because it thinks and, moreover, because it thinks itself. Being, the most firmly established among all beings, thinks itself and, as thinking, is Motion, but motion that originates in Rest and comes to a stop in Rest (cf. VI.2.8.21–23). These three highest kinds, Being, Motion and Rest, are to be distinguished from each other through the Other and they constitute a unity through the Same. The unity of the two descriptions of Intellect's plurality can be observed in this formulation. What Intellect thinks is Being, while the act of thinking is Motion—but Motion that has Rest—and all three are grounded in the Same and the Other.⁷

Why, then, does Intellect think itself and why is it constituted as one-many in the plurality of the highest kinds which all refer to each other? Because it attempts to imitate the One in its own way, which is by thinking. This thinking does not, however, reach the One itself, but is directed at the trace of it in being, i.e. the one in being, which is a principle that is different from the One. If it holds that the closer a thing is to the One, the more it is one, and if beauty was correctly identified with unity in multiplicity, then the highest kinds might be said to be the most beautiful "part" of Intellect. Given that Plotinus sometimes uses Being as a representative for the other kinds,⁸ designating it as the most firmly established of all beings, Being is the beauty we sought in Intellect. Beauty cannot be the one in being, since the latter does not allow for multiplicity, but remains in itself. This consideration might serve as a more developed

7 But Plotinus also tries to describe this unity from a different perspective in v.1.4. Hereto, cf. Atkinson 1983, pp. 96–98.

8 Cf. also the discussion of the problem of two different notions of being in Horn 1995, pp. 119–120 and 127–128.

explanation for the identification of being and beauty observed elsewhere in Plotinus' works (cf. the discussion of v.8.9 in section 3.4.7).⁹

4.5 Is Beauty To Be Counted among the Highest Kinds? (VI.2.17–18)

If beauty is so closely connected to Being and, through Being, to all of the other highest kinds, we might ask whether beauty itself is to be counted among these kinds. This is precisely what Plotinus briefly considers in VI.2.18. After rejecting the Aristotelian categories as candidates for additional highest kinds (i.e. quantum, quale, relation, place, time, acting, being affected, having and being in a position in VI.2.13–16), Plotinus turns to other, this time more Platonic candidates: the beautiful (τὸ καλόν), the good (τὸ ἀγαθόν), virtues (ἀρεταί), knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) and intellect (νοῦς; cf. VI.2.17.1–2).

Plotinus considers several options for dealing with beauty. First, if what we mean by beauty is καλλονή, i.e. the One itself (cf. VI.7.33.20–22 and my discussion of it in section 6.6), then it cannot be a genus for reasons already mentioned (cf. VI.2.18.1–3). Plotinus probably means by this above all the previous section, which rejected the Good as a primary kind because it is not predicated of anything (cf. VI.2.17.2–7) and because it is before being (οὐσία, cf. VI.2.17.7–8). Then again, he may also be referring to the passages where one of the options under consideration was that the One is a genus. However, this option was rejected for the same reason, i.e. because the One is not added to anything (cf. VI.2.9.5–10).

A second option would be to take beauty as referring to what shines, as it were (οἶον ἀποστίλβον), upon the forms (cf. again my discussion of this in section 6.6). But even so beauty could not be one of the highest kinds because it shines in a different way on different forms¹⁰ and because shining presupposes the forms on which it shines (cf. VI.2.18.3–5). The third option would be to identify beauty with being (οὐσία). In this case, however, it would already be included in it, i.e. in the highest kind Being (cf. VI.2.18.5–6). The fourth option that Plotinus considers is to understand beauty as existing in relation to and

9 But see section 5.4, where I discuss this question further.

10 This part of the argument seems to be weak, with respect to the analysis performed in treatise VI.7. The fact that light shines on different forms does not, according to these passages, prevent us from being able to say that it is the same in each of these, although it enables each of these forms to be seen as different. Cf. sections 6.3, 6.4 and 6.6. The point here must therefore lie in the reason mentioned next, i.e. that shining presupposes forms.

affecting the observer (πάθος ποιεῖν; cf. VI.2.18.6–7). It seems that we must distinguish two perspectives here: First, there is the observer directed towards the beautiful and the beautiful affecting this observer. This affecting is, however, according to Plotinus, an activity (τὸ ἐνεργεῖν) and therefore motion, and even the activity of the observer, i.e. being directed towards the beautiful, is an activity (ἐνέργεια) and therefore motion (cf. VI.2.17.7–8). As such, beauty would be included in the highest kind Motion.

However brief this passage may be, it contains interesting revelations about beauty, most obviously that beauty is not one of the highest kinds. However, the options for the different meanings that Plotinus considers attributing to beauty should also be noticed, or, more precisely, what this indicates for the reconstruction of his own notion of beauty. As I shall show (cf. section 6.6), under the name *καλλονή*, beauty may, in a sense, refer to the Good itself. It may also be identified with Being for the reasons given above. Furthermore, it is something that shines, as it were, upon the forms, i.e. something which comes from the Good and stands for it, so to speak, in what comes after the Good. It does so in such a way that it affects all who see it and awakens motion in them (cf. sections 6.4 and 6.6).¹¹ The impact which beauty has on the observer is something that has already been noticed. It arouses erotic desire, which is ambiguous: if not understood properly, it can bind the lover to the beautiful object, but if understood correctly, it motivates the lover to search for the true source of beauty. What the shining of beauty means is less clear here, but it will be discussed in more detail in treatise VI.7 (see sections 6.4 and 6.6). For now, we may speculate that it perhaps captures the above-mentioned aspect of the correct understanding of a beloved object. Only when the beloved is understood as an expression of a higher beauty, or perhaps even of the Good—i.e. when the lover sees it in the light of its source—will the lover avoid the fate of Narcissus and love truly. In this sense, true beauty comes from what is above and the light of the source enables a beautiful object to be seen as truly beautiful. The various meanings of beauty which Plotinus considers here might therefore be read as being, in some sense, relevant, but by themselves inadequate. They must be integrated into a broader conception of beauty, which will turn out to be Plotinus' own view.

11 The notion of beauty as shining and awakening love is, of course, derived from Plato's *Phdr.* 249d–252c.