

Beauty as the Manifestation of the Good (Treatise VI.7)

In the previous chapter, we encountered the interesting statement that Intellect becomes more majestic when life is mixed with thought and when it is given the colour of greater goodness (cf. VI.6.18.20–25). I have tentatively tried to explain the relationship between the notion of life and that of beauty, but it still stands in need of further exploration. This inquiry is carried out in parts of treatise VI.7 (cf. sections 6.1 and 6.4). It also remains unclear what Plotinus means by the colour of greater goodness. The answer to this, can, I think, also be found in VI.7 (cf. sections 6.2, 6.4 and 6.6). Additionally, in my analysis of this treatise, I shall further examine the genetic unity and multiplicity of Intellect (cf. section 6.3), Plotinus' conception of ἔρως (cf. section 6.6) and the relationship between beauty and the Good (cf. sections 6.5, 6.6 and 6.7). As noted in the “Introduction”, treatise VI.7 is one of Plotinus' longest treatises and covers a variety of topics, which makes it a rich source, when it comes to reconstructing Plotinus' understanding of beauty.

6.1 The Ascent to Intellect as Life (VI.7.1–12)

Plotinus opens the treatise with a paraphrase of the creation of man from Plato's *Timaeus* (44c–47e; VI.7.1.1–5). He focuses on the fact that God, or one of the gods, gave man sense organs, foreseeing (προοράω and προείδον) that this would ensure his safety. This account opens a vast field of questions, which Plotinus discusses in sections 1–12, and, in a sense, throughout the whole treatise (cf. the final derivation of sight from the Good in VI.7.41.1–3). It is necessary to clarify: 1) how the creator—i.e. for Plotinus, the Intellect—could plan and have foresight (cf. VI.7.1); 2) how sense-perception—i.e. something belonging to the sensible world—can be derived from Intellect (cf. VI.7.1–7), what the contents of Intellect are (cf. VI.7.8–11) and 3) how these contents exist in it (cf. VI.7.11–12). In trying to answer these questions, Plotinus enters into dialogue with Aristotle's biology and teleology, while developing his own theory of causation (cf. esp. VI.7.1–2). Where appropriate, Plotinus' account is, of course, presented as the correct interpretation of Plato (cf. VI.7.3.5–6; 4.10–11; 5.23–26; 8.23–32).

Plotinus' answer to the question of whether Intellect has foresight (προόρασις) and planning (λογισμός) is quite straightforward.¹ No, it does not. This way of talking is merely the result of speech trying to capture the fact that Intellect has eternal and complete knowledge of itself (ἐπιστήμη). Foreseeing and planning presuppose a step by step progression of thought—i.e. change and time—as well as deciding between different options, both of which are absent from Intellect. Since, however, the sensible world imitates the intelligible, its perfection is reflected in the sensible world, giving the impression that it had been planned and that the needs of all beings had been foreseen (cf. VI.7.1.24–58 and also V.8.7.36–44).

In answer to the second question, concerning how sense-perception is derived from Intellect, Plotinus must first elaborate a non-Aristotelian theory of causality. The goal is to be able to show that Intellect is the cause of the sense organs of living beings, and, in this sense, also the cause of sense-perception itself.² Rappe (2002, p. 71) points out that, on the basis of Aristotle's teleology from the *Physics* and *De partibus animalium*, one could think that man possesses all of his different parts because of the actualisation of his form in matter. Different bodily organs are, in this sense, parts of the form of man for different reasons, e.g. as a safeguard (cf. VI.7.3.16–20). For Plotinus, however, this is impossible, since a form cannot, in fact, be fully actualised in matter and some organs are present rather as a substitute for this incomplete actualisation of form (cf. VI.7.9 and Rappe 2002, p. 83). Instead, Plotinus presents a theory of the *coordinate arising of everything*, as Rappe (2002, p. 74 and pp. 77–78) aptly formulates it, i.e. of the coordinate arising of all parts of the sensible world, of all parts of individual beings and of the mutual causality of all of these parts. Consequently, the true cause of each thing is the fact that it is a part of a totality, as well as the fact that there are no substances that exist in themselves in the sensible world, but only relative images of such substances or forms (cf. VI.7.2.31–38 and the commentary of Rappe, 2002, pp. 77–79). Plot-

1 I shall not present here the whole refutation of foresight and planning in Intellect, but only those parts I consider most important for my purposes. As usual, Plotinus discusses different versions of the theory and highlights their contradictory implications. For a thorough discussion, cf. the commentary by Hadot (1988).

2 I shall not follow Plotinus' line of thought here precisely. Once again, there are many digressions to different positions and counter-positions. Rather, I shall try to extract the position Plotinus advocates for, in the face of numerous objections. Especially interesting in these passages is the transformation of Aristotle's terminology to serve Plotinus' own purposes, as well as the attack on the distinction between essence and accidents. However, the analysis of these passages is beyond the scope of the present chapter. An interesting discussion can be found in Rappe 2002.

inus illustrates this counterintuitive theory of causation later in the treatise by saying that it is not friction that causes fire in the sensible world, because fire must already exist in Intellect and bodies being rubbed together must participate in it (VI.7.11.39–41).

This notion of cause is based once again on Plotinus' understanding of Intellect as a specific unity in multiplicity, where all of the parts are both all of the other parts and the whole (see section 3.4.4). In treatise VI.7, he formulates this in Aristotelian terminology, saying that, in Intellect, the essence of a thing— $\tau\acute{o}$ $\tau\acute{\iota}$ $\eta\grave{\nu}$ $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha\iota$ —and its cause— $\tau\acute{o}$ $\delta\iota\acute{\alpha}$ $\tau\acute{\iota}$ —coincide (cf. VI.7.2.13–16 and 3.20–22). In saying this, however, Plotinus does not merely want to claim that the cause of everything is form, which is true in each case (cf. VI.7.2.16–18). Rather, he means that if we unfold each and every form back upon itself, we shall discover its cause in it (cf. VI.7.2.19). Plotinus paradoxically uses the verb $\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\pi\tau\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\sigma\omega$ with $\pi\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$ $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}$ (scil. $\tau\acute{o}$ $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\delta\omicron\varsigma$; O.G.) here: “unfolding” corresponds to relating each form to the rest of the intelligibles and to Intellect as a whole, while “back upon itself” corresponds to continuing to focus on coming to know that very form.³ If understanding the cause of a thing means to understand it as a part of a totality, where everything is related to everything else, then, in Intellect, the cause is the same as what a thing is, because it is all of the other things and the whole (cf. Rappe 2002, p. 85).

It comes as no surprise that Plotinus repeatedly remarks in this context that Intellect is beautiful in virtue of having all of the causes within itself ($\acute{\epsilon}\chi\epsilon\iota$ $\kappa\alpha\iota$ $\tau\acute{o}$ $\kappa\alpha\lambda\acute{\omega}\varsigma$ $\acute{o}\mu\omicron\upsilon$ $\tau\eta\varsigma$ $\alpha\iota\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$; cf. VI.7.2.29), that its beauty is with the cause and in the cause ($\tau\acute{o}$ $\kappa\alpha\lambda\acute{\omega}\varsigma$ $\mu\epsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}$ $\tau\eta\varsigma$ $\alpha\iota\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$ $\kappa\alpha\iota$ $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ $\tau\eta$ $\alpha\iota\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha$; cf. VI.7.3.20–22) and that each form in Intellect is beautiful by being with its cause ($\mu\epsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}$ $\tau\eta\varsigma$ $\alpha\iota\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$) and by being a form, i.e. everything (cf. VI.7.3.9–11). These claims are to be understood as highlighting once again two points: the specific *unitas multiplex* of Intellect (cf. VI.7.2.31–38, VI.7.3.10–11 and VI.7.3.20–21) and the fact that there must not be any external causation in order for a thing to be truly beautiful (cf. VI.7.2.40–45 and VI.7.3.20–22), a motif known to us from VI.6.18.7–8 (see section 5.5). Furthermore, Plotinus expands on this comment, when he adds that there is another condition for a thing's being beautiful, namely the dominance of form over matter (cf. VI.7.3.11–12), known to us already from treatise I.6 (see section 2.3). However, it is not quite clear in this passage, whether Plotinus is referring to the specific characteristics of intelligible matter which allow beauty in Intellect to be everywhere in beauty (cf. II.4.4–5 and section 3.4.6), or whether

3 A detailed analysis of these passages with respect to their Aristotelian and Platonic origins can be found in Schiaparelli 2010.

he is rather broadening his scope and positing this condition with respect to the beauty of the sensibles. The latter seems more probable, considering the passages that immediately follow, in which Plotinus explains that the domination of form over matter is apparent if no part of a thing is left unshaped, i.e. if a living organism does not lack any of its organs, e.g. an eye. This example is immediately transformed into a universal Plotinian causal explanation of a sensible object and all of its parts: these all exist so that “there shall be everything” (ἵνα πάντα; VI.7.3.12–18).

The next step, then, is to specify what is meant by “man”, when we say that “man has sense-perception”.⁴ The distinction between three different kinds of man—one on the level of Intellect (cf. VI.7.4.21–31 and 6.12–14), the second on the level of soul (cf. VI.7.4.11–13 and 6.9–11) and the third on the level of embodiment (cf. VI.7.4.13–21 and 6.11–12)⁵—allows Plotinus to outline how sense-perception imitates the activity of the man in Intellect, i.e. intellection (cf. VI.7.6.1–19 and more explicitly 7.19–32). Plotinus is even ready to lay such a strong emphasis on the continuity of the three men here that he not only calls sense-perception “dim intellection” (ἀμυδρὰς νοήσεις), but intellection is said to be “clear sense-perception” (ἐναργεῖς αἰσθήσεις; cf. VI.7.7.30–31).⁶ In conclusion, not only is the true cause of the presence of an sense

4 The target of Plotinus' criticism is, once again, Aristotle and his account of man as a hylomorphic compound of body and soul from the second book of *DA*. Plotinus here uses Aristotle's own rules of definition (cf. *Met. Z* 4–5, 1029b1–1030a14) against him (cf. VI.7.4.21–28). The correct account of man, Plotinus assumes, is to be found in Plato, although it must be properly interpreted. The reference in VI.7.4.10–11 and VI.7.5.23–26 is to *Alc. Mai.* 129e–130a.

5 The precise meaning of these difficult passages is not particularly clear. Together with Siegmann (1990, p. 47), I prefer a rather simple interpretation, which connects the three men with Intellect, soul and embodied soul. Thaler (2011, p. 170) suggests the correspondence of the first man with a form in Intellect, the second with the form's intelligible λόγος actualised in soul and the third with a compound of body and the lowest part of soul. Similarly, Hadot (1988, pp. 210–211) connects the first man with intelligible form in Intellect, the second with rational and more divine soul, defined by λόγος of the rational man, and the third with the sensitive soul, defined by the λόγος of the sensitive man. Since, however, the λόγοι of man are, at the same time, said to be the activity of soul (cf. VI.7.5.8–9), there seems to be little—if any—difference between all of these formulations.

6 It seems to me that the identification of intellection with clear sense-perception goes a bit too far. The relation of sense-perception to intellection must be asymmetrical: sense-perception could be called dim intellection, since it is an image of intellection. To say, however, that intellection is clear sense-perception suggests that there is only a quantitative difference between the two, whereas the difference is—from the perspective of sense-perception—qualitative. As I pointed out in my brief summary of III.8 (cf. section 3.1), Plotinus wants to present the universe simultaneously as a continuum (from a top-down perspective) and as a hierarchy (from a bottom-up perspective).

organ (a form in) Intellect, but sense-perception itself imitates intellection, i.e. the activity of Intellect.

Plotinus then turns to the discussion of the origin of irrational animals (ζῶα ἄλογα) and of those body parts which serve as defence (e.g. horns and claws). How can the irrational be a part of Intellect (cf. VI.7.8.17 and VI.7.9.1–5) and how can there be defensive organs if there is no threat *there* (cf. VI.7.10.1–2)? In order to answer these questions, Plotinus shifts his focus to a certain extent,⁷ and begins to discuss the question of whether we are to posit Intellect as containing everything or only as being multiple in the most minimal sense, i.e. as being two, a dyad (cf. VI.7.8.23–29). The correct answer is, of course, that Intellect is everything because division in the dyad is infinite, since nothing below the One can truly be one such that “each of the ones in the dyad [...] must again be at least two, and again it is the same with each of those” (ἐκότερον τῶν ἐν τῇ δυάδι οὐχ οἶόν τε ἦν ἐν παντελῶς εἶναι, ἀλλὰ πάλιν αὖ δύο τοῦλάχιστον εἶναι, καὶ ἐκείνων αὖ ὡσαύτως; VI.7.8.23–25). Moreover, there must be movement and rest in the dyad, as well as intellect and life, and it becomes everything as the complete living being (ζῶον παντελές) and lives truly (cf. VI.7.8.26–32). The reasoning here is presented in an exegetical manner, because the infinite division of the dyad is taken from Plato’s *Parmenides* (cf. 142b–143a), movement and rest, together with intellection and life, are taken from the *Sophist* (cf. 248e–249c; 254b) and the complete living being is taken from the *Timaeus* (cf. 31b). With this support from three of Plato’s great works, Plotinus is able to provide the proper background for the two above-mentioned questions. How are we to understand that Intellect contains everything? Does it also contain the irrational (cf. VI.7.9.1–2), i.e. something of no value (εὐτελής or not having τὸ τίμιον), and bodily organs like horns and claws (cf. VI.7.10.1–2), which are connected with deficiency (ἐλλείπω)?⁸

Plotinus addresses the first question by pointing out that a form in Intellect exists in a different way than its image in the sensible world, such that even rational beings do not reason in Intellect, because there is no reasoning there (cf. VI.7.9.5–10). In this sense, the distinction between rational and irrational animals only imitates the difference between the intelligible causes of both, a difference based on the proximity to the first principles in Intellect. Conse-

7 There is probably also an exegetic motif here: a commentary to Plato’s *Parmenides* (143a–145a).

8 I have rephrased the question in this fashion in order to emphasise the link to one of the crucial questions for Platonists formulated in Plato’s *Parm.* 130c5–7: “Are you also puzzled, Socrates, about cases that might be thought absurd, such as hair or mud or dirt or any other trivial (ἀτιμότερον) and undignified (φαιλότατον) objects?” (transl. Cornford).

quently, there are three groups of beings: gods, rational beings in the sensible world and irrational beings (cf. VI.7.9.16–23). Plotinus' answer to the question of those contents of Intellect linked with deficiency (e.g. horns and claws) is based on an expansion of the proximity analogy: it is the source that goes out or unfolds (πρόειμι and ἐξελίσσω; cf. VI.7.9.34–39). In the descent, however, something is always lost and the living beings become less and less perfect. In order to compensate for this loss, the nature of nails, claws, fangs and horns appeared (cf. VI.7.9.38–46). But then why are they there in Intellect? For the sake of the self-sufficiency (πρὸς τὸ αὐταρκες) and completeness (καὶ τὸ τέλειον) of Intellect (cf. VI.7.10.2–3), which is everything in a variegated unity (cf. VI.7.10.7–12 and the commentary of Thaler 2011, pp. 176–177). In order for Intellect to be everything, each of its individual forms must be different and it itself must be perfect, so that each contains all of the necessary causes of all of the parts of an animal as we know them from the sensible world (cf. VI.7.10.5–16).⁹ Moreover, an idea familiar to us from VI.6.18 (cf. section 5.5) emerges once again here, in the context of Intellect as life or as a living being: the all-encompassing multiplicity of Intellect is not something that makes Intellect worse; on the contrary, it makes it better (cf. VI.7.10.15).¹⁰

9 In Thaler's interpretation (cf. 2011, pp. 178–179), Plotinus induces here a revised teleological explanation, which Thaler relates to the whole Intellect, including the highest kinds on the basis of VI.7.13. Consequently, everything in Intellect, including the μέγιστα γένη, is there in order for Intellect to be alive. This claim seems quite exaggerated and is based on two assumptions I consider wrong: 1) Thaler says that Plotinus “specifies the reason why it is good that Intellect stay in motion—that if it were to stop, it would cease from thought and life—is again an idea that presupposes the notion of a beneficial end” (p. 177). However, I do not see this claim anywhere in VI.7.13 and Thaler gives no precise reference. In lines 38–41 Plotinus does indeed consider the option that Intellect does not move, but rejects it, because this would entail that it would cease to think and *exist* (ὥστε καί, εἰ ἔστη, οὐ νενόηκεν· εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, οὐδ' ἔστιν), not to live. Of course, the Intellect would also cease to live in this case, but in order to support his strong claim about the subordination of the μέγιστα γένη to life, Thaler would, in fact, need the text to say “live” and not “exist”. 2) Thaler assumes that the final answer of *Ennead* VI.7 to the presence of the Good in Intellect is life (cf. p. 179). This is, however, explicitly called into question in VI.7.18 and 21 and is not considered a completely satisfactory answer, because it is true only from the top-down (genetic) perspective. From the bottom-up perspective, Intellect is ἀγαθοειδής qua beautiful. See my discussion of this topic in sections 6.4 and 6.6.

10 Interestingly, the last sentence of the section might be read as linking this variegated unity to beauty: “Καὶ ἀρετὴ δὲ τὸ κοινὸν καὶ τὸ ἴδιον καὶ τὸ ὅλον καλὸν ἀδιαφόρου τοῦ κοινοῦ ὄντος” (VI.7.10.16–18). This reading is suggested by Armstrong's translation and, to a certain extent, also by that of Harder. Nevertheless, I consider Hadot's translation and explanation better. Consequently, this sentence is not a general statement about beauty, but rather an example of how to define moral beauty (*la beauté morale*) by means of something general

After dealing with these two difficulties, Plotinus thinks it possible to draw a general conclusion about the contents of Intellect. It contains “everything that is made by forming principle, i.e. according to form” (ὅσα λόγῳ πεποιήται καὶ κατ’ εἶδος; VI.7.11.4–5, transl. modified¹¹). But how (πῶς) does it contain all things (cf. VI.7.11.8), e.g. plants (cf. VI.7.11.6), the elements (cf. VI.7.11.6–7, 12.7 and 10–13), heavens and stars (cf. VI.7.12.4–6) and all living beings (cf. VI.7.12.8 and 14–15)? They are there qua living (cf. VI.7.11.15–18), so that Intellect is a complete living being (cf. VI.7.12.1–19). In order to demonstrate this claim, Plotinus first turns to plants in the sensible world, which are unquestionably alive. Since there is a rational forming principle active in them (λόγος), which accounts for their existence, this λόγος must itself be alive and, *a fortiori*, that from which this λόγος is derived, i.e. Intellect (cf. VI.7.11.10–18). But why should we suppose that the earth lives there, if it does not live here? Plotinus tries to show that, even in the sensible world, earth is alive on account of the activity of its rational forming principle (VI.7.11.20–22 and 33–36). Fortunately, he is more specific here about what the activity of λόγος in a thing means. This activity accounts not only for the existence of the thing, but also for its generation (γεννάω) and growth (αὔξησις), shaping (πλάσσω), external shape (πλάσις) and inner pattern (μόρφωσις; cf. VI.7.11.22–27). All of this can be seen in the case of mountains and stones, which are like wood chopped from a tree. Once again, in Intellect, earth must be even more fully alive and, correspondingly, it must be primarily earth. Similarly, as shape-giving (μορφώω), the rational forming principle in fire is alive, and its paradigm in Intellect even more so. Since Plotinus emphasises above all here that λόγος gives form and shape, it is not particularly clear how water and air can be alive, given that they have no obvious external shape. Although Plotinus claims that even in them the shaping activity of λόγος is present (cf. VI.7.11.29–49), he gives three additional reasons for seeing life as present in them. First of all, living beings are generated in them (especially in water, but he also mentions air and even fire) and consequently they must be alive (cf. VI.7.11.53–55). Second, the fact that they are in constant flux (as fire is too) conceals the presence of life or soul in them. Interestingly, if they were static, their life would be more obvious (cf. VI.7.11.56–60). Third, it can be said that they resemble the fluids in our body, like blood, whose life is also not apparent, but which obviously contributes to the constitution of a living being and ensouls flesh (cf. VI.7.11.60–71), just as water and air contribute to the

(like a disposition or habit) and particular (like “which chooses good” or “which makes man good”). Cf. Hadot 1988, com. ad loc.

11 I consider καὶ in this sentence to have an explicative, rather than connective, function.

constitution of universal living being, i.e. the whole sensible world (VI.7.11.50–52). Indeed, the whole cosmos is there in Intellect, containing all living beings. Intellect is, in fact, the paradigm of this kind of life because everything in Intellect—including the intelligible sky and stars—is a living being, while, as a whole, Intellect is a complete living being, seething with life (cf. VI.7.12.1–25).

What conclusions can we draw about the life of the Intellect from these passages? If what ensouls and animates all things in the sensible world is the aforementioned activity of λόγος, and if what is before λόγος is even more alive or primarily alive, how does Intellect live? I would venture to infer that life in Intellect does not primarily mean forming something, but rather being form itself, that it does not primarily mean accounting for existence and generation, but rather being in the true sense, that it does not primarily mean being soul, but rather being Intellect, and that it does not primarily mean enabling the generation of beings in it, but rather containing all beings as intelligibles in itself and in identity with itself. This last formulation also evokes a further meaning of life in Intellect, i.e. the fact that it is a living being—or rather the complete living being—and as such a paradigm of all organisms and organisation in general. How is it a paradigm of this sort? Once again, by being a unique, unified multiplicity, i.e. by each of its part being both all of the other parts and the whole.

It is precisely in this context of Intellect as a paradigm of everything and life itself that Plotinus begins to draw our attention to its source (πόθεν), to this “single spring” (μία πηγή) from which everything flows (cf. VI.7.12.19–25). In other words, he sets up the proper background for raising the central question of the treatise: how is the Good present in Intellect? One of the answers will be that it is present “as life” (cf. VI.7.17–18), i.e. as the first ἐνέργεια coming from the Good (cf. VI.7.18.41).

6.2 The Context of the Question of the Presence of the Good in Intellect (VI.7.13–14)

However, the question has not yet been raised and we should follow Plotinus closely here, because a proper understanding of this question is essential for making sense of the answer.

His starting point is the simultaneous simplicity and multiplicity (or even wholeness; cf. VI.7.13.3–5) of Intellect. Intellect is said to be a principle (ἀρχή) and activity (ἐνέργεια). The activity of Intellect is further specified as movement on an eternally identical course, a course which is not, however, to be understood as homogeneous (ὁμοιομερές) and unvarying (ἀποίκιλον). There would

be no majesty (σεμνόν) in being like that, because there would be no variation (ἐξαλλαγή) and no otherness (ἑτερότης), and consequently also no life (τὸ ζῆν) and activity (ἐνέργεια).¹² But because there is otherness—i.e. universal otherness or the Other as one of the highest kinds—and life, there must be everything and all life must be there (cf. VI.7.13.1–28). The activity of Intellect refers to the fact that it is “eternally actualizing one thing after the other” (ἐνεργήσαντος δὲ αἰεὶ ἄλλο μετ’ ἄλλο; cf. VI.7.13.29, transl. modified) and that it is, as it were, “wandering down every way and wandering in itself” (οἶον πλανηθέντος πᾶσαν πλάνην καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ πλανηθέντος; cf. VI.7.13.29–30), that is “among substances while the substances run along with its wanderings” (ἐν οὐσίαις πλανᾶσθαι συνθεουσῶν τῶν οὐσιῶν ταῖς αὐτοῦ πλάναις; cf. VI.7.13.29). I quote these passages in order to show that Plotinus is willing to go quite far with his language, and to risk being misunderstood, as a result of all of the succession that is implied in Intellect’s doing. Nevertheless, if we pay close attention, we observe that Plotinus tries to avoid these implications by highlighting that it is an eternal process¹³ and that in the implied succession, that which is left behind moves along with the wandering Intellect. This means that there is no succession, because nothing is left behind, but everything is always present together with everything else. Rather, there is a certain hierarchy of forms. It is no coincidence that at least some of the highest kinds appear in this context,¹⁴ because these are, as γένη, at the very top of this intelligible hierarchy, and, as ἀρχαί, its constitutive elements (cf. section 4.1). The interplay of the highest kinds makes it possible for Intellect to exist as every being (cf. VI.7.13.24–28 and 52–58), to think (cf. 39–44) and to be alive (cf. 11–16). But although Plotinus does mention the whole triad (being, intellection, life), he puts greater emphasis here on life in the context of previous sections and of what is to come (cf. VI.7.15–18). He underlines that the whole activity of Intellect is through life (διὰ ζωῆς) and through beings that are alive (διὰ ζώων; cf. VI.7.13.44–46).¹⁵ As

12 Moreover, in VI.7.14 Plotinus also adds that a forming principle (λόγος) derived from such homogeneous Intellect, or at least from Intellect that would not be everything, would not be able to form the whole of matter, such that some parts of sensible things would be nothing but unformed lumps of matter (ᾄργος). Since, however, this is not the case, Intellect must be everything.

13 Cf. Plotinus’ claim in VI.7.3 that Plato indicates that there is no reasoning, i.e. succession in Intellect, by saying that generation is eternal.

14 Obviously, Movement, the Other and the Same are mentioned, but abiding and standing still (μένω in VI.7.13.33 and ἵστημι in 39–40), as well as being (cf. 40–41), substance (οὐσία; cf. 41) and actuality and activity (τὸ ἐνεργεῖα and ἡ ἐνέργεια; cf. 51), also play a role here. One might be inclined to identify these with Rest and Being respectively.

15 Cf. my comment to Thaler’s interpretation of these passages in footnote 9 of this chapter.

such, it is both one and many (cf. VI.7.14.11–12), because this is what it means to be an organism: i.e. to have “parts” that are connected to all of the other parts and to the whole. Plotinus once again illustrates this specific unity and multiplicity of Intellect by saying that it is held together by true love (ἀληθῆς φιλία; cf. VI.7.14.19–21). This love means “all things being one and never separated” (πάντα ἐν εἶναι καὶ μήποτε διακριθῆναι; VI.7.14.22).¹⁶ But from where does the movement of Intellect through life and through beings that are alive originate (ἀπὸ τίνος) and to where is it directed (ἐπὶ τί ὡς ἔσχατον; cf. VI.7.13.8–9)?

6.3 The Presence of the Good in Intellect: The Top-Down Answer (VI.7.15–17)

The question needs to be slightly modified, however, since Intellect has its life (τὸ ζῆν) in the contemplation (θεωρέω) of all of its contents, i.e. the forms, and in being so, it is good (cf. VI.7.15.11–12). The search for the ἀρχή of this life is consequently a quest for the origin of contemplation and forms. But what does Intellect contemplate? It contemplates itself, as all of the forms, and it has the Good through them, because they are ἀγαθοειδής, i.e. they have the form of the Good (cf. VI.7.15.9–11), as Plato says (*Rep.* 509a3).¹⁷ Moreover, all of these forms came to be in Intellect when it contemplated the nature (φύσις) of the Good. However, they did not come to Intellect from the Good, as if they had previously been there, but rather when Intellect looked to the Good (βλέποντα εἰς ἐκεῖνον, scil. ἀγαθόν; O.G.), it generated them itself, such that they are derived from the Good as from a principle (ἀρχή). In other words, Intellect received the power (δύναμις) to generate forms as its offspring and to be filled up with them.¹⁸ In this sense, the Good gave Intellect what it itself did not have.¹⁹ Every

16 The reference is to Empedocles, as Plotinus himself uncharacteristically makes clear (cf. DK 31 B 17 and B 26).

17 For a brief discussion of the term ἀγαθοειδής and its use in Plotinus, see Baierwaltes 1991 (pp. 243–244) and Montet 1999 (pp. 131–149). The answer that Intellect is ἀγαθοειδής because it has the good (ἀγαθόν) in the forms (ἐν τοῖς εἶδεσι) is, of course, a play on words (cf. Hadot 1988, p. 259).

18 An obvious allusion to the name of Intellect which Plotinus sometimes uses, i.e. Cronus (cf. V.8.12–13 and sections 3.4.9 and 3.5). The allusion was already noticed by Hadot (1988, p. 263) and Tornau (2011, com. ad VI.7.15.18–20).

19 On the topic of intelligible causality and the causality of the Good, see D’Ancona Costa 1996.

δύναμις was one in the Good, but Intellect was unable to hold it as one, breaking it up (συνθραύω) into many powers in order to be able to bear it part by part (cf. VI.7.15.11–23).²⁰ This “holding” was not an act of contemplation because Intellect was not yet Intellect, when it first looked to the Good. Rather, it was an unintellectual looking (ἔβλεπεν ἀνόητως, scil. νοῦς; O.G.) that never sees the Good but lives towards the Good (ἔζη πρὸς αὐτό, scil. νοῦς πρὸς τὸ ἀγαθόν; O.G.), depends on it (ἀνήρητο αὐτοῦ, scil. νοῦς τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ; O.G.) and turns to it (ἐπέστραπτο πρὸς αὐτό, scil. νοῦς πρὸς τὸ ἀγαθόν; O.G.). Or it is a movement around it (κίνησις περὶ ἐκεῖνο, scil. περὶ τὸ ἀγαθόν; O.G.), as Plotinus puts it a bit later, correcting himself (cf. VI.7.16.11–19). In any case, the multiplicity which came to be in Intellect was derived from the Good and, as such, it had its form: it was ἀγαθοειδής (cf. VI.7.15.23–24). As Hadot points out (1988, p. 265), this actually means that Intellect becomes fully constituted, i.e. unwound and, in this sense, many, paradoxically, by looking to the Good from which it receives limit. Therefore, not only its unity, but also its defined multiplicity is precisely what makes it ἀγαθοειδής.

Plotinus illustrates this point by saying that the unitary δύναμις of the Good became a richly varied good in Intellect (ἀγαθὸν ποικίλον), which may be imagined as a richly varied, living sphere, as an entity shining with living faces²¹ or as a summit of pure souls illuminated by Intellect (cf. VI.7.15.23–33). In mentioning the richly varied, living sphere—along with the earlier implicit allusion to Cronus—Plotinus is probably referring to his discussion of intelligible beauty in V.8.12–13, where a similar analogy is presented. The reference is further underlined by the first sentence in section 16, where Plotinus suddenly appeals to us to leave “this manifold beauty” and “go on still darting upwards, leaving even this behind” (VI.7.16.1–3; cf. VI.9.4, VI.9.11, V.8.8, V.5.12). However, if leaving beauty means leaving this *richly varied good* (ἀγαθὸν ποικίλον), then beauty is this *richly varied good* which reflects the Good. If I were to press my point even further, I would add that since the Good is also the One, it is present in Intellect not only as *richly varied good*, but also as *richly varied one* (ἐν ποικίλον), i.e. as unity in multiplicity, which I have so far identified with beauty.

However that may be, Plotinus leads us once more to the very border of the Good and Intellect and wants to explore their relationship anew. He is at first interested in the generation of Intellect from the Good (cf. VI.7.16.3–4), because he wants to know what all of the forms “have in common that runs over them

20 I agree with Hadot (1988, pp. 265–266) that it was not, in fact, the power to generate forms that was broken, but rather the forms born in Intellect.

21 As Hadot (1988, p. 260) aptly comments, we are to imagine these faces as individual intellects contemplating each other.

all" (κοινὸν τὸ ἐπιθέον ἐπὶ πᾶσι πάντα ἔχει; VI.7.16.5–6). Moreover, he says that there are further common features of this kind that run over all of the contents of Intellect, such as being (τὸ ὄν), common life (ζωὴ κοινή) and so on. However, not all of these features are that "according to which and by which they [scil. the contents of Intellect; O.G.] are good" (καθ' ὅσον ἀγαθὰ καὶ δι' ὅτι ἀγαθὰ; VI.7.16.8–9). Unfortunately, Plotinus does not specify what these other features are, but since he mentions being, other μέγιστα γένη could be considered, and since he mentions life, intellection might be a further candidate. If we recall that Plotinus considers the one in Intellect to be a principle that is different from the highest kinds, while being present in all forms without being superordinate to them as a genus (cf. VI.2.9–11 and section 4.3), he might also have in mind this monad (cf. V.5.4–5 and section 5.1 and 5.3). If this is the case, however, would he also add in the multiple, i.e. the dyad? And should we also include number? Moreover, how do all of these potentially common features relate to each other and how do they differ? Is beauty to be considered one of them? Not much can be deduced from this passage. Let us keep these questions in mind for the time being, while following Plotinus' line of thought further. Nonetheless, there is one thing that can probably already be said at this stage, as Siegmann points out (1990, p. 77): Plotinus is looking for the common feature of the whole Intellect insofar as it is the *richly varied good*, which means that the one and the multiple probably cannot be the answer. The one does not account for Intellect being multiple, and the multiple for it being one. Rather, Plotinus is looking for something that makes Intellect ἀγαθοειδής, i.e. both one and many.

Consequently, Plotinus sketches the birth of Intellect from the Good. As already mentioned, he begins by elaborating on his claim from VI.7.15 that Intellect broke the unitary δύναμις of the Good into many by looking to the Good, and adds that this first looking towards it was unintellectual and never really reached as far as the Good (cf. above). Moreover, the Good is not only the donor of all forms, i.e. of being, but enables intellection itself, because intellection is possible only in the light of the Good (cf. VI.7.16.19–23). Plotinus refers to Plato's analogy of the sun from the *Republic* (509b), inferring from it that the Good is the cause of thinking and being thought, while it is itself neither being nor Intellect. Consequently, Intellect has a double source, as it were: 1) itself, as it was before being filled with forms, and 2) the Good, which gave it the power to be filled from within itself (cf. VI.7.15.14–18 and 16.23–36). By shining on it, the Good created the proper environment, so to speak, in which Intellect could see and its sight could be filled (cf. VI.7.16.23–33).

However, this description of the generation of Intellect still raises doubts (cf. Hadot 1988, p. 271). Where do the contents of Intellect come from if they are

neither in the unintellectual look—i.e. in what is filled—nor in the Good—i.e. in what fills it? Plotinus tries to answer this question by pointing out that the giver does not need to possess what he gives, because the giver is greater (*μείζον*) and stronger (*κρείττον*). Consequently, the Good—as the giver—transcends the gift—i.e. actuality and life. Moreover, Plotinus identifies this transcendence with being more beautiful (*καλλίων*) and worth more (*τιμιώτερος*) than actuality and life. He then calls the as yet unconstituted Intellect “unlimited life” (*ἀόριστος ζωή*) and says that life in Intellect is a trace of the Good (*ἵχνος τι ἐκείνου*, scil. τοῦ διδόντος; O.G.). It is not clear, however, whether he is referring here to the life which is inchoate Intellect or rather to the life of the fully constituted Intellect. In any case, this manifold and unbound life (*ζωή πολλή και ἄπειρος*) looks to the Good (*βλέπουσα πρὸς ἐκεῖνο*) and immediately becomes delimited (*ὄρος*), receives limit (*πέρας*) and form (*εἶδος*) and is shaped (*μορφώω*) by the Good, but not from outside. Consequently, it becomes the life of a single, manifold thing (cf. VI.7.17.1–23).

However, the problem of how Intellect could receive something from the Good which does not have what it gives, recurs even in this formulation, since the Good itself is shapeless (cf. VI.7.17.17–18) and has no delimitation (cf. 15–16), no form (cf. 36) or, as we might infer, no limit. Nevertheless, in the constitution of Intellect, the multiplicity of its life (*τὸ πολὺ τῆς ζωῆς*) is that which accounts for the fact that it is many (*πολλά*), while the defining limit (*ὄρος*) causes its unity (*ἕν*). Furthermore, Plotinus identifies this defined and limited life with Intellect, and its being multiple with many intellects that are both the same and different. Summing up, he tells us that the life coming from the Good is all power (*δύναμις πᾶσα*), the sight coming from the Good is the power to become all things (*δύναμις πάντων*), Intellect is the actualised totality of all things (*τὰ πάντα*) and the Good “sits enthroned upon them, not that it may have a base but that it may base the ‘Form’ of the first ‘Forms’” (*ὁ δὲ ἐπικάθεται αὐτοῖς, οὐχ ἵνα ἰδρῶθῃ, ἀλλ’ ἵνα ἰδρύσῃ εἶδος εἰδῶν τῶν πρώτων*; VI.7.17.34–36).

In order to understand these passages properly, let me first extract how Intellect is said to be derived from the Good here. It enabled the constitution of Intellect by: 1) emanating life (called *πρώτη ἐνέργεια*), which was an unintellectual looking towards the Good and life towards it; 2) enabling this sight to see as a result of emanating light; 3) limiting this living sight (enabled by the light) as all beings of which the Good is the source. As Siegmann (1990, pp. 86–87) points out, these three causes correspond to the triad life-intellection-being.

How, then, does this fit with the other descriptions of Intellect’s genesis, especially those found in *Ennead* VI.6? To a certain extent, I have tried to answer this question already when discussing VI.6 (see section 5.3), where I pointed out

that the interaction between the monad and the dyad may be described from two perspectives: 1) from that of the inchoate Intellect—i.e. the indefinite dyad or unlimited life—as an attempt of it to attain the One, which is impossible; 2) from the opposing point of view, namely as a vague presence of the One in Intellect, in the form of an image or a trace. A similar structure is also attributed to the genesis of Intellect in VI.7. First, there is a looking towards the Good (cf. VI.7.15.11–14), which is later specified as being unintellectual and unable to reach as far as the Good (cf. VI.7.16.11–19). Thanks to the light emanated from the Good, this sight—which sees nothing—becomes true sight. However, it still does not see the Good directly (which is impossible), but only its reflection in itself. In doing so, this looking receives limit, and this limit comes to it both from itself and from the Good as from its principle (cf. VI.7.15.14–18). Finally, even here, Plotinus occasionally refers to the highest kinds (cf. VI.7.13.10–13, 24–28 and 16.6–8), but it is not explicitly stated how they fit into the process of generation.

This description is not so far removed from that of *Ennead* VI.6. One might speculate that if the unintellectual looking does not reach as far as the Good, while still becoming limited by it, but in such a way that this limit comes from Intellect itself, it is possible that this situation is enabled by the presence of the monad in Intellect. After all, this defining limit is what is said to be the cause of Intellect's unity (cf. VI.7.17.24–25). Moreover, the notion of unlimited life here is not far removed from the description of the activity of the indefinite dyad in the genesis of Intellect, especially if we take into account the fact that life is said to be in the dyad (cf. VI.7.8.27) and that Otherness—whose activity is once again described in a very similar fashion—is said to wake Intellect to life (cf. VI.7.13.11–12). But from where does the monad arrive in Intellect? In one sense, from the Good, because the monad would not come to be, if the unlimited life were not in the presence of the Good, since this life would not be able to turn to the Good in its desire to attain it. In another sense, however, it comes from unlimited life itself, because its limitation is a product of the conversion based on the desire of unlimited life for the Good (cf. Hadot 1988, pp. 271–278). Even on this optimistic synthetic interpretation, however, we can observe that the role of the light emanated from the Good is a new element, or at least receives particular emphasis in treatise VI.7.

If we were to look for inconsistencies, we ought to consider the central parts of VI.6, where the division of Intellect is described by means of the notion of number, or the power of number. Here, the correspondence with VI.7 becomes more blurry. How do they fit together, if, in fact, they do at all? Once again, one should distinguish different perspectives. In VI.7, Plotinus describes how the emanated, unlimited life became limited, whereas in treatise VI.6, by con-

trast, he describes how being, which was still one, became many by division (cf. VI.6.9.24–26).²² It seems that both accounts are to be understood as a description of the same process, albeit from different perspectives: in VI.7 from the perspective of life, multiplicity or the dyad, and in VI.6 from the perspective of limit, unity or the monad. If so, we could perhaps point out Plotinus' own remark in V.5.1.8–11 that the monad comes into existence prior to the dyad. Consequently, if this "prior" signifies the ontological priority of the monad over the dyad, then the Platonic-Pythagorean perspective in treatise VI.6 might be said to be superior to the description found in VI.7.²³ Why, then, does Plotinus appeal to an inferior explanation here? Probably precisely because of the context. We should not forget that the question of the Good's presence in Intellect was raised by the description of Intellect as a complex living being which has its life in contemplation. Consequently, Plotinus started to look for the trace of the Good in Intellect in its genesis and, from this perspective, it is precisely life—i.e. the very first emanation from the Good—which is formless and shapeless in a way similar to the Good, the giver of all form and shape (cf. VI.7.32–33 and the comments of Hadot 1988, pp. 288–289).

As was also the case in treatise VI.6, it is difficult to determine how the highest kinds fit into this picture, especially because Plotinus sometimes uses Otherness and Movement to describe the generation of Intellect (cf. V.1.1.4, 6.53, II.4.5.29–34), while he also subsumes life under the genus of Movement

22 It ought to be noted however, as Bussanich points out, that unlimited life is also said to be one prior to being limited and formed, i.e. prior to becoming many (cf. VI.7.16.13–16 and Bussanich 1988, com. ad loc.). This might then, in a way, connect both perspectives, but it would do so, or so it seems to me, at a cost. The notion of "unlimited life" which is one becomes quite incomprehensible and the connection between life and the dyad is significantly obscured. Nevertheless, Plotinus does mention that the unlimited life is one. He does so, however, only in a question about one possible way of thinking about Intellect's constitution. Since this possibility is later rejected, the option that unlimited life could be one is probably rejected as well. Then again, in II.4.4 too, Plotinus describes intelligible matter as one. However, since the distinction between matter and form can be applied only imprecisely on the level of Intellect (see section 3.4.3), and since the claim that intelligible matter is one tries to qualify its use as imprecise by contrasting it with (non-intelligible) matter which is many (see section 3.4.6), I remain sceptical about the prospect of considering unlimited life to be one.

23 Cf. a similar comment by Bussanich (1988, comment ad VI.7.17.26–34), who supplements the ontological priority of limit with the chronological priority of unlimited life. It is not quite clear, however, what this chronological priority means, since there is no time. For this reason, I prefer to talk about genetic priority, which would refer to the necessary condition of what follows. In this sense, although limit ontologically precedes unlimited life, the latter must already be there in order for the former to limit it.

(cf. VI.2.7.1–6). If we leave this difficulty aside,²⁴ however, it seems that they come into the picture as soon as limit and life—or monad and dyad—start to interact, i.e. as soon as we are able to talk about Being and beings in Intellect. All beings can be thought of only if we simultaneously posit μέγιστα γένη.

In conclusion: what have we learned about the ἀγαθοειδής in Intellect? What is the one thing that all of the contents of Intellect have in common, that runs over them all and that gives them the form of the Good? Is it their origin, such that they are ἀγαθοειδῆ as being derived from the Good? Plotinus presents this derivation as a three-phase process in which life is: 1) emanated as an unintellectual looking toward the Good, 2) able to see by the light of the Good and finally, 3) limited so that it becomes intellection directed at itself and, in seeing itself, Intellect unwinds and gives rise to the totality of beings. This answer is not, however, satisfactory. Although we may now have a clue about how Intellect derives from the Good, we still do not know how the Good is present in it (cf. Siegmann 1990, pp. 89–91).

6.4 The Presence of the Good in Intellect: The Bottom-Up Answer (VI.7.18–23)

In light of these considerations, the question must be taken up anew (cf. VI.7.18.1), with Plotinus reminding us that we are looking for a unique feature that is both common to all of the contents of the Intellect and, at the same time, intrinsic to each intelligible (cf. VI.7.18.9–12; and the comments of Siegmann 1990, p. 92). It does not suffice, in this sense, to say that each thing in Intellect is ἀγαθοειδής simply by being from the Good. Although this might be true, all of these things derive from the Good qua different and not qua the same

24 Cf. my comment on this topic in section 5.3, footnote 10. It seems to me that Plotinus is trying to make use of different inherited philosophical conceptions (μέγιστον μάθημα etc.) without worrying too much about their compatibility. He probably does so not out of a lack of precision, but because of the fact that all of this is but an attempt to express something which cannot, in the end, be expressed. It can only be experienced, when we become one with Intellect (in this case) or with the Good. Support for such an interpretation can be found in Plotinus, although in a different context. In VI.7.39, he interprets Plato's remark that being thinks and, for that reason, does not stand still in majesty, as suggesting that the Good does not think. According to Plotinus, Plato speaks in this manner "because he could not explain what he meant in any other way" (VI.7.39.33–34). Similarly, philosophers are said to express the fact that all activity, state and life requires something more only metaphorically, because "they cannot find an appropriate way of speaking about it" (VI.7.30.26).

(cf. VI.7.18.2–9). Is it then their being form (ιδέα) that makes them ἀγαθοειδῆ? Or their being beautiful (κάλλος) or alive (ζωή) or Intellect (νοῦς; cf. VI.7.18.1–2 and 8)?

However, life is not good as such. Rather, it is good insofar as it comes from the Good, i.e. being the first and true life which has something of the Good in itself (cf. VI.7.18.16–23). The case of Intellect and Form is the same, such that they are good only as true Intellect and true Form (cf. VI.7.18.23–27), i.e. as Intellect and Form derived from the Good.²⁵ In this case, however, there are three candidates to explain why Intellect is ἀγαθοειδῆς—life, intellection and form. Nevertheless, each of them is good in a different sense: life, or the first activity (πρώτη ἐνέργεια; cf. VI.7.18.41),²⁶ is good as something brought into being by the Good (cf. 43), intellection, or what is defined following upon the first activity (cf. 42), as an ordered world which comes from the Good (cf. 43–44) and Form, or both of them taken together (cf. 42) as both of them together (cf. 44).²⁷ But are we to take these explanations for the good in life, intellection and form as constituent parts of the Intellect's mode of being ἀγαθοειδῆς? Or is there rather a succession of goods, such that life is good primarily, intellection secondarily and form tertiarily (cf. VI.7.18.14–16 and 26–41)? Moreover, have we really found the good in Intellect that we were looking for, i.e. that which is both common and intrinsic to all intelligibles? In a way we have, but we are still unable to provide another explanation (διὰ τί and κατὰ τί) for the goodness of all intelligibles beyond their origin in the Good (cf. VI.7.18.49–52).

Consequently, Plotinus starts his enquiry anew, but before we follow him, let me first summarise what we have learned so far in treatise VI.7 about life, because Plotinus will, to some extent, shift his attention elsewhere. We have encountered two meanings of life:²⁸

25 Siegmann (1990, p. 92) accurately illustrates this argument by comparing it to pictures which are good, not insofar as they are pictures, but rather insofar as they contain something essential of their paradigm.

26 As Hadot (1988, p. 274) points out, however, this first ἐνέργεια corresponds rather to the second or external ἐνέργεια on the double activity model. For the double activity model, see section 3.1.

27 Against Hadot (1988, cf. pp. 279–283), but with Siegmann (1990, cf. pp. 91–94), I think that τὸ μὲν in VI.7.18.42 refers to life, the first τὸ δέ in line 43 to intellection, and the second τὸ δέ in line 43 to form. Although Hadot's reading makes good sense, I find it difficult to believe that Plotinus would suddenly change the order of life-intellection-form after repeating it in this sequence three times in the same section.

28 Cf. Ciapalo 1987, pp. 213–218, who distinguishes life as πρόοδος and as ἐπιστροφή, which corresponds to my observation. Nevertheless, Ciapalo does not comment on the fact that life as πρόοδος is called πρώτη ἐνέργεια by Plotinus rather than δύναμις, although I would agree

- 1) Life refers to the movement around the Good (cf. VI.7.16.11–19) and the first ἐνέργεια from it (cf. 18.41), which was manifold, unlimited and unin-
tellectual (cf. 16.11–19 and 17.20). Life was, in this sense, a trace of the Good
(cf. 13–14). Something from the Good entered into it (cf. 18.16–23) and it
was, genetically speaking, the primary ἀγαθοειδής (cf. 18.14–16 and 26–41).
However, when it became illuminated, it constituted itself as Intellect and
became delimited and, as such, both one and many (cf. VI.7.17.13–23). Life
as the first ἐνέργεια accounted for Intellect's multiplicity and the defining
limit of its unity (cf. VI.7.17.24–25).
- 2) Life denoted the complete living being, namely Intellect, which contains
all forms as individual living beings (cf. VI.7.11.15–18 and 12.1–19). Its life
was said to consist in the contemplation of this seething life (cf. VI.7.15.11–
12 and 12.24–25). I attempted to infer what this life of Intellect is like from
Plotinus' description of what it means to be alive below the level of Intel-
lect (cf. VI.7.11–12). For Intellect, to live means to be form itself, true being,
true intellection and to contain all beings as intelligibles in itself and in
identity with itself. Life qua this living being is consequently the paradigm
of all organisms and organisation in general. Plotinus' later description
of the life in Intellect connects it with a variegated movement of think-
ing, which comprises change and otherness (cf. VI.7.13.5–28), and which
proceeds through life, i.e. through forms as living beings (cf. 13.44–46). In
other words, life in this sense describes the fully constituted Intellect in
its very activity of self-contemplation, which differentiates all forms and
unites them again, as well as all of the contents of this Intellect.

However, these two meanings of life are probably not to be understood as two distinct conceptions of life. Rather, the same life in Intellect is described as the first moment in the genesis of Intellect and as a distinctive feature of the fully constituted Intellect. The latter sense is derived from the former and, in a way, completes it. To be life, in this sense, means both to be something begotten (which corresponds to the first meaning) and to be able to beget (which corresponds to the second meaning). In Plotinus, however, only a fully constituted activity is productive and begets what will further become a lower image of

that life, in this sense, is in fact δύναμις of intellection. Also, I find Ciapalo's explanation of the relation of life to the μέγιστα γένη perhaps too quick. A more careful interpretation of the relationship between the highest kinds and life is to be found in Lo Casto 2017. However, not even Lo Casto gives a clear answer, perhaps because Plotinus does not express himself clearly enough to enable us to synthesise his various claims. An interesting account of life, in the sense of a complete living being, is also to be found in Nikulin 2002, pp. 152–157. However, not even Nikulin explicitly reflects on life as πρώτη ἐνέργεια in his book.

this fully constituted activity. We can see the similarity to beauty, which, in a way, depicts the same fully constituted activity, but rather as something derived from and referring to what is above than as itself begetting. However, where there is life, there is beauty (cf. Vassilopoulou 2014). As such, life is also mentioned by Plotinus as a common feature in Intellect, which connects it with other such predicates (cf. VI.7.16.5–9), like being and intellection, the highest kinds, and probably others as well, e.g. the monad and the dyad. Plotinus enigmatically comments on the relation of life to such predicates only in the case of the dyad, otherness and movement. Life is said to be in the dyad (cf. VI.7.8.27), to be awakened by otherness (cf. 13.11–12) and to be (at least one type of) movement (cf. 13.5–28, 16.11–19 and VI.2.7.1–6). Since the life of the fully constituted Intellect lies in its self-contemplation, which presupposes μέγιστα γένη, one might relate them to life precisely as highest kinds, i.e. as genera and principles which make it possible for Intellect to think all forms. On the other hand, their relation to life is likely more complicated, because some of Plotinus' aforementioned statements seem to imply that the highest kinds play a role in the actual birth of Intellect. Life as the first ἐνέργεια is, in a sense, a movement from the Good and around it. Also, since something other than the Good comes to be from the Good, there must be otherness present in it. Similarly, as something different from the Good, which is the One, this life is unlimited—i.e. the absolute otherness or a dyad. However, Plotinus is not particularly clear about the compatibility of these claims. Are we simply to identify life, the dyad, otherness and movement? Are we to identify them only relatively, because they capture the same phenomenon, but from different perspectives? Or do they rather capture different features of Intellect and relate to each other only loosely?

But let me return to the enquiry about the form of the Good in Intellect. Since the genetic answer represents merely one type of explanation, and a different one is sought, Plotinus suggests two basic ways of proceeding. Either we identify the good in Intellect with the object of the soul's desire (cf. VI.7.19.1–3) or we identify the Good with Intellect itself (cf. 20.1–13). Both ways are, of course, incorrect per se (cf. VI.7.19.5–6 and 20.16–19). In the first case, the good would become a mere aspect of soul (cf. VI.7.6–7 and the comments of Wiitala 2013, p. 658) and we would be unable to distinguish better and worse. If the good were to be understood according to each thing's excellence (ἀρετή), it would not be able to signify that which is prior to form and λόγος (cf. VI.7.19.9–13). In the second case, we would not be able to explain what is desired on the level of Intellect, i.e. the Good (cf. VI.7.20.19–22). This option is also incorrect, because we do not desire life (ζωή), eternal existence (τὸ ἀεὶ εἶναι) and activity (τὸ ἐνεργεῖν) as Intellect. Rather, we desire all of them as something good derived from the Good (cf. VI.7.20.22–24). However unsatisfactory these

attempts might seem, they show us that the good in Intellect cannot simply be either what is desired or what is simply thought (cf. Siegmann 1990, p. 97).

Hence, Plotinus asks once again what is the one common element that makes each and every thing in Intellect good, such that they have the form of good (cf. VI.7.21.1–2). This time, however, he dares to answer (τολμάω). Intellect and its life have the form of the Good as the first activity from the Good (ἐκ τᾶγαθοῦ ἐνέργεια), in the case of life, and as this determinate activity (ὀρισθεῖσα ἐνέργεια; cf. VI.7.21.2–6) in the case of Intellect. They are themselves full of glory (ἀγλαΐα), but this does not suffice to attract the soul (cf. VI.7.21.6–9). They attract it as “good-looking” or as related to the Good (οἰκεῖα),²⁹ such that they awaken intense love (ἔρωσ σύντονος) in the soul not simply as themselves, but as receiving something more from the Good (cf. VI.7.21.12–13). Plotinus illustrates this enigmatic claim by comparing the intelligibles to sensible objects, which are in need of another light for their colour to be seen, although they themselves possess light. Similarly, the intelligibles themselves possess much light, but need the light of the Good to be seen in their glory (cf. VI.7.21.15–17). As Siegmann points out (1990, pp. 99–101), the analogy is extremely appropriate, since light comes from something else, but enables the illuminated thing to show its own colour, which is itself of a luminous nature, i.e. akin to light. Moreover, light is precisely what is one and the same everywhere, but still allows everything illuminated to appear different. From a bottom-up perspective, this simile is, in other words, precisely what brings us to the problem of how Intellect is ἀγαθοειδής, because we were looking for a common feature running through all of the intelligibles and the whole Intellect, according to which and through which they are all good (cf. VI.7.16.5–6 and 9). Moreover, this common feature must be intrinsic to each thing (cf. VI.7.18.9–12 and 21.1–2).³⁰ The new clue we are given here is the more explicit claim that this form of the Good in Intellect is something extra, something in addition to Intellect given by the Good, which,

29 This may be read as an allusion to Plato's *Lysis* 159e–223a.

30 Hadot (1988, pp. 286–287) correctly summarises the features of the explanation sought for Intellect's being ἀγαθοειδής. However, he does not clearly distinguish the top-down perspective from the bottom-up one. In different terms—genetic and phenomenological—such a reading is also advocated by Siegmann (1990, pp. 70–107). Hadot rather talks of a shift in perspective from the genesis of Intellect to the point of view of the soul discovering Intellect and the Good. In this sense, he is close to the bottom-up perspective, but despite this shift in perspective, he still advocates for a single explanation for Intellect's having the form of good: i.e. life as the first ἐνέργεια. Consequently, he is unable to distinguish between life, beauty and light and identifies them, which I think obscures important distinctions and forces him to interpret the language of the *Phaedrus* used in VI.7.22 in a considerably un-Platonic manner (cf. Hadot 1988, pp. 289–293).

however, also means that it is something which allows us to see to the Good as it were, which opens our eyes to it (cf. Siegmann 1990, pp. 98–99).

What, then, does this light of the Good show? What is this glory which is seen only in the light of the Good, this colour of all intelligibles which attracts soul and through which the Good is manifest in Intellect? Plotinus' answer is indirect: it is the light (φῶς) of the Good which moves us (κινεῖται) to the forms and makes us long (γλίχομαι) for the light which plays upon them (ἐπιθέοντος), causing us to delight in it (εὐφραίνεται), just as what we desire in bodies is not the underlying material substrate (ὑποκείμενον), but the beauty imaged upon them (ἐμφαντάζομαι; cf. VI.7.22.1–5). On this analogy, beauty corresponds to the light playing upon the forms, which are not the object of the soul's erotic desire, but account here for the ὑποκείμενον. Plotinus' expression seems to suggest that what the light of the Good allows us to see—i.e. the colour of the forms, which is itself luminous—is beauty.³¹ It is interesting to note, however, that he does not say this directly, concluding instead that this light which arouses desire is grace (χάρις). It is through grace that the Good colours the forms (ἐπιχρώννυμι) and makes them ἀγαθοειδῆ (cf. cf. VI.7.22.5–8 and 33). Consequently, we can conceptually distinguish two possible states of Intellect: one unilluminated, the other illuminated. It is worth noticing that Plotinus explicitly calls Intellect beautiful only in the former case (cf. VI.7.22.10–11 and 21–23), where its beauty is said to be inactive (ἀργός), the soul's interest is not aroused (νωθής) and it does not move (cf. VI.7.22.10–14). Nevertheless, what it sees is still something beautiful and majestic (καλὰ μὲν καὶ σεμνά; cf. VI.7.22.21–23). In the latter case, Plotinus rather talks about warmth emanating from the Good (θερμασία) or its grace (χάρις), which strengthen the soul (ῥώννυται), awaken it (ἐγείρεται), so that it becomes winged (πεπερούται), and naturally (φύσει) raise it up both to Intellect, which attracts it, and to what is greater (μεῖζον). When this happens, the soul remembers and is lifted up by the giver of love (cf. VI.7.22.14–25). Clearly, the impact of grace on the soul is described in the language of Plato's *Phaedrus* (246a–252c).³² However, Plato's image of a soul in love is, at the same time, used in quite an unusual way: the description of the amazement of soul when it sees true beauty, its falling flat on its back (*Phdr.* 254b8), is used rather to express its lack of interest and boredom, as it were, when encountering unilluminated Intellect (cf. VI.7.22.10–14).

31 This interpretation is held by Siegmann (1990, pp. 101–105) and Tornau (2011, com. ad VI.7.24.1–4), and is also implied in the interpretations of Halfwassen (2003), Narbonne (2002) and Beierwaltes (2011, p. 347).

32 For more exact references to the *Phaedrus* see Tornau 2011, com. ad VI.7.22.7–17.

The fact that Plotinus does not use the word “beauty” to denote the illuminated Intellect can be interpreted in one of two ways: either it is insignificant, and we are free to add in the term “beauty”, or Plotinus wants to reserve the notion of beauty for unilluminated Intellect and purposefully avoids mentioning it here. It is quite difficult to decide between these options, because there are good reasons for both positions. The first claim—i.e. it is insignificant that Plotinus does not use the term beauty for illuminated Intellect—could be supported by the following considerations: 1) such an understanding is suggested by the context of the whole section; 2) there are repeated references to Plato’s *Phaedrus*; 3) other passages on beauty from different treatises provide evidence for this view. On the other hand, one could try to undermine these points, arguing that the references to the *Phaedrus* are not used properly (cf. the soul’s boredom above and the interpretation of Hadot 1988, pp. 292–293) and that there are also other passages in the *Enneads* which seem to suggest the insignificance of the beauty of the Intellect as compared to the Good (cf. VI.9.4 and II, V.8.8, V.5.12 and VI.7.32–33). Most important, however, one might object that it is unwise to risk overlooking an important distinction between beauty and something more, perhaps grace. This consideration provides strong support for the other interpretation, according to which Plotinus intentionally avoids the term beauty here, in order to emphasise the substantial contribution made by the Good to beauty, namely the fact that without the Good, there is no (erotic) longing. Evidence for this claim can be found in Plato’s *Symposium* (204d–206a) and, of course, in I.6.7. Nonetheless, we might object that 1) Plato does not avoid the notion of beauty in his description of love and it is precisely through beauty that the desire for good is fulfilled, by procreating and giving birth in the beautiful (cf. *Symp.* 206e), 2) avoiding the term beauty in relation to illuminated Intellect seems to contradict Plotinus’ standard claims about beauty in other *Enneads* and 3) even in VI.7.22, this position represents, to a certain extent, a counterintuitive reading.

I would therefore suggest adopting an intermediary position, according to which Plotinus does indeed avoid the term beauty here in order to emphasise the substantial contribution of the Good to beauty. This does not mean, however, that on a different occasion, he would not call the illuminated Intellect beautiful. The crucial point here is once again the context of the claim: to find that which is given to Intellect by the Good as something, so to speak, extra and which makes it ἀγαθοειδής. Therefore, in this context, it makes sense that Plotinus would try to accentuate this added value.

The examples Plotinus uses to illustrate his point can be read as supporting this interpretation, because they are oriented precisely at highlighting this “something extra” added by illumination. The first example is that of a beauti-

ful face, which does not catch the eye if there is no grace (χάρις) on top of its beauty (cf. VI.7.22.23–25). The second example relates to symmetry in the sensible world, which is beautiful only if beauty shines upon it (cf. VI.7.22.25–27).³³ The third example is the well-known case of the still-fresh face of a corpse in contrast to that of a living person (cf. VI.7.22.27–29). The fourth example is that of a more lifelike statue as opposed to a more symmetrical one (cf. VI.7.22.29–31). Finally, the last example compares a beautiful statue with an ugly living man, who is more beautiful because he has soul, which shares in what it means to be ἀγαθοειδής (cf. VI.7.22.31–36). As can be seen, all of these examples show that there is something added to sensible things, which must be granted to them from above, i.e. beauty. Similarly, there is something extra, grace, which needs to be added to the beauty of the unilluminated Intellect.

These examples, however, seem to call into question my choice of an intermediary position. The second example, involving symmetry, seems, at first sight at least, to reopen the question of the beauty of illuminated Intellect, because it is beauty that shines on symmetry. Consequently, illuminated Intellect could be said to be beautiful *per analogiam*. However, as Plotinus explicitly states, we are talking about things here below (ἐνταῦθα), whereas, in my interpretation, the point of the passage under discussion (VI.7.22) was to highlight the uniqueness of the illumination by the Good in the case of Intellect, as opposed to all other kinds of illumination below. Therefore, this would provide relatively weak support for claiming that the illuminated Intellect is beautiful, although along with all of the other reasons mentioned above (the context of the passage, references to the *Phaedrus* and the claims of other treatises), it is difficult to simply dismiss this option.

Then again, the third example, which contrasts a living face with that of a corpse might be more persuasive. It is an example that we have already encountered in connection with beauty—or rather ugliness.³⁴ Moreover in the last two examples, beauty is predicated of both the lifelike statue and the symmetrical one, and again of the statue and the ugly living man. Hence, in the end, why should we refrain from saying that illuminated Intellect is beautiful? Because the risk that we might miss an important distinction by simply adding in the

33 Siegmann (1990, p. 104) infers from this that beauty should always break the rule (i.e. symmetry). This is an incorrect deduction from the example. It also contradicts what Plotinus says about beauty and symmetry (cf. I.6.1 and section 2.2). Moreover, it makes no sense in the case of simple beautiful objects (like colour, light or gold) which Plotinus uses to attack the symmetry theory.

34 We have encountered Plotinus talking about a corpse with respect to ugliness in section 3.4.6 when discussing *Ennead* II.4.5.18 (hereto cf. II.4.16.3–16 and II.9.17.18–21, and indirectly also v.1.2.17–28).

term “beauty” to VI.7.22 still seems too high to me. Let me rather deepen or refine my intermediary position.

As we have seen in the previous discussion of VI.2.17–18 (cf. part 4.1.5), the idea that beauty might be identified with something which, as it were, shines upon the form, i.e. with the light of the Good, is present in Plotinus’ thought. Of course, VI.2[43] was written after VI.7[38]. Nevertheless, VI.2 seems to summarise various important motifs for Plotinus’ understanding of beauty, and many of these are to be found already in I.6[1], such as the identification of beauty with the Good as *καλλονή*, with being, and with what affects all who see it and what awakens motion in them. However, the way in which Plotinus usually presents beauty—i.e. as unity in multiplicity of the Intellect—is now, in VI.7.22, inappropriate for capturing this “something extra” that needs to be added to unilluminated Intellect, which is already one-many. Beauty as a unified multiplicity is rather intrinsic to Intellect and is, consequently, not suitable for depicting this “something extra”. Therefore, I would once again suggest maintaining the position that Plotinus is deliberately avoiding this term here and rather introduces a deeper concept of beauty.

According to this conception, beauty would be the manifestation of the Good in Intellect, that which makes Intellect *ἀγαθοειδής* or good-looking. Plotinus might, in this sense, find support in Plato’s *Philebus* (64e) as well, where the power of the good is said to have taken refuge in the nature of the beautiful. Intellect might consequently be said to be *ἀγαθοειδής* from two perspectives, a top-down one and a bottom-up one. From the first perspective, Intellect is *ἀγαθοειδής* qua derived from the Good and this derivation has different phases: the emanation of life as *πρώτη ἐνέργεια*, the formation of this life into intellection by conversion and its becoming constituted as being. The triad life/intellection/being is used by Plotinus to describe Intellect’s genesis and reflects a genetic hierarchy of what it means to be *ἀγαθοειδής*. Intellect has the form of the Good as life, intellection and being. This answer is correct insofar as we are looking for a common feature that runs through all of the intelligibles, making them *ἀγαθοειδής* insofar as they are different (cf. VI.7.18.2–9).

But what makes them *ἀγαθοειδής* also insofar as they are the same? This is where the bottom-up perspective enters the discussion. From this perspective, the question is rather the following: how is this intelligent life, which is being—i.e. life formed by itself and simultaneously by the Good in the light of the Good—*ἀγαθοειδής*? The answer is: insofar as it is beautiful. Consequently, the primary beauty in Intellect is the contemplating life, which is being, i.e. a unity in multiplicity *illuminated by the Good*. This intimate connection with the Good is precisely what makes beauty the object of desire, a desire which is, in fact, always a desire for the Good through beauty or in beauty, as Plato would

put it (cf. *Symp.* 206a–e). Both the top-down perspective—which identifies life (intellection and being) as the reason for the fact that Intellect is ἀγαθειδής—and the bottom-up answer—which concludes that the common feature which runs through everything in Intellect (including its life, intellection and being), is beauty *referring back to its source*³⁵—thus establishes the relation of Intellect and the Good vertically: life in a descending direction and beauty in an ascending one. Being and the highest kinds are, by contrast, used rather for a “horizontal” description of the inner differentiation of Intellect, although I use quotation marks here because there is indeed a vertical differentiation of Intellect in the sense of the establishment of genera and species. Nevertheless, it is still a “horizontal” differentiation insofar as it takes place inside Intellect, so to speak.

In conclusion, this more profound conception of beauty does not involve a rejection of the earlier one—beauty as unity in multiplicity—but places it into a new, broader perspective, which enriches it in two ways. First, it better captures the referential character of beauty to the Good because it presents it as the way in which the Good itself can be seen in Intellect as a unique feature common to everything in Intellect which has a different status than the highest kinds. Second, since life accounts for the multiplicity of Intellect and is genetically primarily ἀγαθειδής, the enriching role of multiplicity for Intellect is once again underlined here. This has consequences for multiplicity in beauty, as well. The explanation of Intellect’s beauty in v.8.4 and v.8.8 (cf. sections 3.4.6 and 3.5) still holds: beauty is that which lies between what is more than beautiful and what is deficiently beautiful. Beauty in Intellect is everywhere in beauty, because illuminated beauty was identified as a common feature that runs through all of the intelligibles and the whole of Intellect, and through which everything is ἀγαθειδής, both insofar as it is the same and insofar as it is different.

Moreover, in the description of Intellect’s genesis, the inchoate Intellect became a defined multiplicity when it was enabled by the Good to see, such that not only its limit, but also this multiplicity, is what makes it ἀγαθειδής. There is beauty in Intellect only when the latter is constituted, and therefore this beauty emerges first from the bottom-up perspective. Since, however, the life of Intellect, its intellection and their combination, being, are ἀγαθειδής, both its multiplicity and its unity are beautiful when combined. Thus, whereas from the top-down perspective, there is a descending hierarchy of derivation

35 Even Hadot (1988, p. 284) admits that there is a new perspective in play and a new solution to the problem of ἀγαθειδής. According to him, these passages show that the Intellect as ἀγαθειδής refers to the Good.

from the Good and, in this sense, also of the use of ἀγαθοειδής with respect to life, intellection and being, from the bottom-up perspective, there is a counter-vailing ascending hierarchy. Multiplicity in Intellect is enriching for its beauty qua seething with life, but this multiplicity is still subordinate to the role of limit and unity. Their combination, beauty itself, is that in which the Good manifests itself in Intellect and through which it attracts everything to itself.

How, then, can this still be considered an intermediary position? The proposed interpretation enables us to be sensitive to what is new in VI.7.22, i.e. it allows us to suppose that Plotinus intentionally avoids using the term beauty for illuminated Intellect, while not dismissing the possibility of using the term beauty for illuminated Intellect, even if this beauty must be correctly reinterpreted.

However, there seems to be another serious problem with this interpretation, or rather with the very text of treatise VI.7. The Good seems to have more than one external activity: it emanates life, “then” it emanates limit to bind the multiplicity of life, and “then” it allows these two to interact by emanating light. Even if we abstract from the idea of a temporal sequence of events—which there is not, of course—we are left with life, limit and light as three different emanations from the Good. As was already noted by Emilsson both in the case of pre-Intellect, or the subject of thinking (= life), and in that of imbuing, or the object of thinking (= limit), “there is every reason to suppose that there is just one external act of the One, which somehow contains both a subject and object aspect” (Emilsson 1999, p. 287, cf. also Emilsson 2017, pp. 94–100). Similarly, there is every reason to suppose that there is just one external act of the Good, which somehow contains life, limit and light. But how can this be so? Is everything life because life is the first ἐνέργεια from the Good? No, because life would not only need to be manifold and unbound, but also one and bound, or rather “the bind”, since it would need to bind itself. That said, this role is attributed in treatise VI.7 to limit, as something different from life. Are life and light, at least, the same, as Hadot tends to say (cf. 1988, pp. 290–291; and also Vasiliopoulou 2014)? Our answer must once again be negative, because Plotinus distinguishes between the top-down and bottom-up perspective by pointing out that the former explains how everything is ἀγαθοειδής insofar as it is different, whereas the latter does so insofar as it is the same. Or is it rather that all three (i.e. life, limit and light) coincide with limit? This cannot be the case, because this limit would have nothing to bind, such that there would be no multiplicity. Are they, then, rather all light, as that which manifests the Good in Intellect? One could perhaps say so insofar as both life and limit emanate from the Good. I propose therefore to posit one external activity of the Good, which is simultaneously life (or multiplicity or the dyad) and limit (or unity

or the monad). These two always already interact with one another. Moreover, this external activity comprises the fact that life and limit come from the Good (as light does) and in this sense they become its manifestation (beauty).³⁶ Plotinus' description of the generation of Intellect is to a certain extent inaccurate, since every genesis is a process which presupposes some sort of sequence: first, there is something to be formed, then it is formed and, as such, it becomes visible qua similar to its paradigm. However, as Plotinus himself repeatedly points out, the birth of Intellect is to be understood atemporally, i.e. as comprising all of its moments simultaneously.

Moreover, we have already noticed that the reason for Intellect's being ἀγαθοειδής must be a common feature of the whole richly varied Intellect, such that the one and the multiple alone could not be the answer. What is ἀγαθοειδής is both one and many (cf. section 6.3). It should come as no surprise that defined multiplicity is derived from the Good, because Intellect became many precisely by looking to the Good from which it received limit (cf. section 6.3). The point of the whole top-down and bottom-up answer would therefore be that the Good emanates interacting unity (i.e. limit, the monad) and multiplicity (i.e. life, the dyad), which is to say beauty, as it is used with respect to non-illuminated Intellect. Since, however, these come from the Good, this beauty becomes illuminated and refers to the Good, i.e. it becomes grace or beauty in the more profound sense. The addition of light highlights the importance of the referential character of beauty and the fact that there is something more beyond unity in multiplicity, through which the good-looking (ἀγαθοειδής) Intellect refers to the Good.

This point will, however, be made even more explicitly in VI.7.32–33. We should therefore advance in our analysis of treatise VI.7, which from this point on starts to focus on the Good itself. The Good, which emanates Intellect and leaves a trace of itself in it, is, at the same time, that which attracts everything to itself. The Good, which is itself absolutely self-sufficient and above which there is nothing superior, is the condition of all that is, of all of the intermediate goods, and there is a step by step decrease in resemblance to the Good

36 In the same vein, Nikulin (1998b) talks of Intellect as being simultaneously otherness and sameness (with reference to V.3.15.40) and stable movement (with reference to VI.9.5.14–15). The unity of thinking and thought as light is also advocated by Beierwaltes (1961, p. 359) who also notices that light not only allows everything else to be seen, but is itself manifest through it (p. 349). This idea is to be found, of course, already in Plato (cf. *Rep.* 507b–509c) where the light of the sun is said to account for the ability to see and to be seen by the eye, and the light of the Good for the power of knowing and for the truth (cf. Beierwaltes 1961, p. 350). Plotinus in fact refers to these passages in VI.7.16.21–31 (see section 6.3 and the commentary of Smith 2012, pp. 16–19).

down to that which has no share in it, i.e. evil. The fact that there is evil is, in this sense, a proof of the Good, because without the Good, everything would be indifferent. The Good is the giver of Intellect and life, and through them of soul and everything that has a share in λόγος, intellection (νοῦς) and life (ζωή). This process is not a one-time creation, but a constant maintenance of thinking in thinking, of being in being, of life in life and of inspiring (ἐμπνέω) thinking, life and being (cf. VI.7.23.1–25).

6.5 Alternative Notions of the Good and the True Meaning of Plato's Doctrine (VI.7.24–30)

Since the question about the form of the Good in Intellect presupposes that there is the Good, from which Intellect is born as life, intellection and being (the top-down perspective) and which presents itself in Intellect as beauty (the bottom-up perspective), it is necessary to explain how we are to understand this Good. Plotinus presents a number of serious questions about the Good which draw on the previous philosophical tradition and obviously allude to some alternative doctrines about what is to be considered good:³⁷

1) The first dilemma (cf. Siegmann 1990, pp. 112–116, and Hadot 1988, pp. 296 and 301–303)—consisting of two opposing possibilities for relating the good and desire—asks whether the former has its own nature (φύσις; VI.7.24.8) which attracts our desire, or whether, on the contrary, the latter defines what the good is (cf. VI.7.24.4–10). Plotinus' answer is, of course, that the good is desirable because it is good and not vice versa (cf. VI.7.25.17–18 and 27.26–27). The contrary answer would make the good a relative notion, i.e. relative to a subject feeling pleasure. Consequently, Plotinus' answer might be interpreted as a rejection of the Sophistic concept of the good (cf. Anonymous, *Δισσοὶ Λόγοι* and Siegmann 1990, p. 113).

2) Similarly, the second dilemma (cf. Siegmann 1990, pp. 112–113 and 117–120, and Hadot 1988, pp. 296 and 303–305) draws an opposition between pleasure derived from the good and something else received from it. Do we desire the good because of the former, as perhaps Epicurus would say (cf. DL 10.127–130), or the latter? And if it is because of the former, why do we find pleasure in this and not in something else? And if it is because of the latter, what do we acquire from the good (cf. VI.7.24.10–13)? Plotinus answers again quite clearly that pleasure, since it is a πάθος (cf. VI.7.26.17), is not the reason why

37 For a general outline of ancient ethics, see Annas 1992.

we desire the good. Pleasure is rather an epiphenomenon of the acquisition of the good (cf. VI.7.27.27 and Siegmann 1990, p. 119) which is, by definition, self-sufficient (cf. VI.7.26.14, 34.21–38 and *Phileb.* 20c–e and 22b). Pleasure, by contrast, requires the constant input of new arousals, and we feel pleasure only in the presence of something that arouses us (cf. VI.7.26.14–16).³⁸ When the soul acquires the good, it knows, because it stops looking for anything else (μη ἄλλο ζητῆ), does not regret (ἀμετανόητος), is filled (πεπληρωσθαι αὐτῷ γίγνηται) and remains with the good (ἐπ' ἐκείνου μένει; cf. VI.7.26.1–2 and 12–14). Moreover, since this good does not come to the soul from something external—as in the case of a corpse, for which the good is burial—it itself becomes something better (βέλτιόν τι γίγνηται; cf. VI.7.26.12), i.e. more ἀγαθοειδής (cf. Hadot 1988, p. 304). This improvement is enabled by the fact that we do indeed receive something from the good (cf. VI.7.25.28–29). There is a hierarchy of goods, form for matter, virtue for soul and the Good for Intellect (cf. VI.7.25.25–28), and each being receives something from that which is above it (cf. VI.7.25.18–24). Inanimate objects receive order (τάξις) and arrangement (κόσμος), while living beings additionally receive life (ζωή), rational beings thought (φρονεῖν) and living well (ζῆν εὖ) and Intellect actuality (ἐνέργεια) and light (φῶς; cf. VI.7.25.29–33). Moreover, since there is a hierarchy of goods derived from the Good, and since the Good manifests itself in what is lesser as beauty, this hierarchy is, in fact, the *scala amoris*.

3) The hierarchic perspective is also important for the third question (cf. Siegmann 1990, pp. 120–123, and Hadot 1988, pp. 305–306): is the good to be understood as what is proper to everything or one's own (οἰκεῖον), as the Stoics advocate (cf. VI.7.24.13–14 and SVF I.197, III.178, III.183)? It seems to me that Plotinus' answer is ambivalent. On the one hand, he rejects the applicability of the concept of οἰκεῖον because the good for each thing lies in what is superior, whereas what is its own is on the same level as it (cf. VI.7.27.3–9). On the other hand, those who desire this good, which is superior to them, direct themselves toward it as toward their own potentiality, because not possessing it actually is precisely what arouses their desire (cf. VI.7.27.8–17). In this sense, after they have reached this superior good and actualised it in themselves, it is present as something which is their own. This might be the reason why Plotinus, in a different context, does admit that the good is οἰκεῖον (cf. VI.5.1). Then again, as Siegmann points out (1990, p. 121), speaking this way is imprecise, because as

38 Plotinus even strengthens his argument here by using an interesting, *Matrix*-like mind experiment, in which we are able to enjoy erotic pleasure without the desired person or feel the joy from tasty food without actually eating it. We would not accept such pleasures, Plotinus claims, prior to Lana and Lilly Wachowski (cf. VI.7.26.20–24).

soon as we have reached our good, we discover that this good has withdrawn to the next highest level. Consequently, it is not the good that participates in the *οὐκ ἐστὶν*, but vice versa (Hadot, 1988, p. 306).

4) However, this raises a further series of questions (cf. Siegmann 1990, pp. 123–127 and Hadot 1988, pp. 307–311): is the good good for itself or for another, and if for another, what is it, if it is not good, and is there in fact any such nature for which there is no good (cf. VI.7.24.14–17)? Plotinus' answer is again somewhat complicated. Every good is good for itself and since the lesser is potentially that which is its own good (the superior), the good is good also for the lesser through being good for itself (cf. VI.7.27.13–18). Furthermore, Plotinus specifies here what it means to be good for itself, namely to be some part of the good (*τὶς ἀγαθοῦ μοῖρα*; VI.7.27.18). Then again, there is an exception to this, namely the Good itself, which cannot be good for itself, because this expression presupposes a distinction in the Good between its being the Good and it itself for which it is the good. Since, however, there is no such distinction in the Good, it cannot be good for itself “as if it would have as regards itself to get out of its own nature and not be joyful with itself as good” (VI.7.27.21–23, transl. modified). As can be seen from this formulation, the denial of being good for itself in the case of the Good is not a simple rejection. Plotinus rather posits more than identity of the Good with itself, namely “being joyful with itself” (*ἀγαπᾶω*). Nevertheless, on the standard way of speaking, the Good is good only for others (cf. also VI.7.41.28–29), i.e. for the lesser. But does this mean also for what is lowest, i.e. matter, which is evil (cf. VI.7.28.1–4)? Plotinus tries to answer this question in two steps. First, he points out that the problem appears only from one perspective, namely from that of the matter: for how could it desire form, i.e. its own destruction (cf. VI.7.28.4–6)? However, Plotinus reminds us, we might turn the problem on its head and formulate the desire of matter—which is evil and non-being—as a desire for form, i.e. for being (cf. VI.7.28.6–7). Consequently, matter does not desire its own destruction, because it is not a being, and in this sense cannot be destroyed. At the same time, insofar as the desire for the good can be formulated in terms of a desire for what a thing is potentially, then matter cannot desire the good, because it is nothing potentially, but only absolute privation.³⁹ Therefore, the question still stands, and Plotinus offers a second, implicit answer, expressed in the form of rhetorical questions. Matter as pure evil does not desire. Only matter which has perception (*αἴσθησις*) desires (cf. VI.7.28.8–10). However, this matter is not matter as such, but only

39 For matter as absolute privation, see II.4.16. However, besides other things, Plotinus also says here that matter is in need, or, in fact, that it is need itself (*πενία*) which lacks everything.

something that has become bad, i.e. something originally good (cf. VI.7.28.11–20). Forms are present in matter rather as opinions or mental pictures in soul, i.e. matter and form do not mix or interact in any fashion that would make it possible to say that the one gets anything from the other (cf. III.6.15).

However that may be, the whole polemic about the desire of matter is probably directed against Aristotle (cf. *Phys.* 192a19, *Met.* 1075a28) and the Gnostics (cf. Siegmann 1990, p. 126), and Plotinus will be able to draw some more important characteristics of the Good from it later. Since he has established the opposition between matter as evil and form as good and since there is a hierarchy of goods, he is able to say that the higher the ascent, the more there is form. Consequently, it would seem, the Good should be form itself. However, Plotinus has a different conception in mind. The Good, which has never come anywhere close to matter, has instead taken refuge in its formless nature (ἀνείθεος φύσιν), because it is even beyond the first form and is the giver of the first form (cf. VI.7.28.27–29). Moreover, since pleasure is caused by the acquisition of good, it is, as such, a symptom of the previous privation of it (cf. VI.7.29.10). However, this privation diminishes in the ascent, because the higher we go, the more there is form and thus, simultaneously, the less need we find. In this sense, there is a continuous decrease in pleasure in the ascent and when united with the Good, we no longer feel pleasure, because we are beyond pleasure (cf. VI.7.29.1–10).⁴⁰

5) Plotinus then turns to a further question (cf. Siegmann 1990, pp. 129–132 and Hadot 1988, pp. 314–316) he considers particularly weighty, because it is the question of a troublesome or peevish (δυσχεραντικός) person. As Siegmann points out (1990, p. 129, footnote 136), such a person is described in Plato's *Philebus* (44b–c), where it is said that he should be taken seriously as someone who divines the truth. This Cynic considers the debate about the Good to be just “pompous language up and down and all around” (VI.7.24.18–20), does not understand what good someone who thinks could acquire from the contemplation of forms (cf. VI.7.24.21–22), because he looks for the good in some form of property (ἐν χρήμασιν; cf. VI.7.29.16–17), namely his own, such that in the end he despises everything and does not see the difference between existence and non-existence unless “one makes selfish love the reason for all this” (εἰ μὴ τις τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸν φιλίαν αἰτίαν τοῦτων θεῖτο; VI.7.24.27–28, transl. modified). Plotinus begins his response to this person by saying that he too posits something good which directs his claims, probably himself in some sense, but since he does

⁴⁰ These parts (VI.7.29.1–10) should be also read as a brief discussion of Aristotle's claim that we would choose seeing, remembering, knowing and possessing virtues even if they were not accompanied by pleasure (cf. *EN* 1174a).

not understand what Plotinus is saying about the good, he cannot simply deny it. In order to explain his position, Plotinus tries to show this Cynic what is evil according to common sense: lack of intelligence (ἄνοια). Moreover, he brings to his attention that in despising being and life, he actually contradicts all experience and implicitly claims that there is merely earthly intelligence, being and life, whereas, in fact, there is also true intelligence, being and life in Intellect (cf. VI.7.29.17–32). But what is so prophetic about the claims of this Cynic? In despising everything, he prophesies the radical worthlessness of everything as compared to the Good (cf. Siegmann 1990, p. 131), he “has a prophetic intuition of what is above Intellect” (VI.7.29.21–22).

6) The last dilemma (cf. Siegmann 1990, pp. 132–141 and Hadot 1988, pp. 316–319) deals with the heritage of Plato and Aristotle and their conceptions of the good and Intellect. How could Plotinus’ conception be consistent with *Philebus* (61b–c), where the good is said to be a mixture of intellect and pleasure? In addressing this difficulty, Plotinus proposes two ways of interpreting this mixture. Either the good is intellect and pleasure is mixed with it, in the sense of an experience of soul when possessing it (cf. *EN* 1174b), or the good is a single thing made up of intellect and pleasure (cf. VI.7.30.4–12). Plotinus seems to choose the former interpretation (cf. VI.7.30.14–18), but in a modified version. He avoids using the word pleasure—which he considers to be a metaphorical attempt to express something more or extra that runs over all, as it were⁴¹—that is needed for every activity (ἐνέργεια), state (διάθεσις) and life (ζωή; cf. VI.7.30.18–26). Similarly, we should interpret the notion of pure and unmixed activity (καθαρόν καὶ εἰλικρινές τὸ ἐνέργημα; cf. *Phileb.* 52d), where there is no opposition and hindrance (cf. *Met.* 1072b), as a sign of the state which the soul experiences when it is in Intellect and illuminated by the Good (cf. VI.7.30.30–33). As not only Plato, but also Homer, metaphorically express it, it is an experience of drunkenness on nectar (cf. *Symp.* 203b), feasting and entertainment (cf. *Phdr.* 247a) or Zeus’ smile (cf. *Iliad* 5.426 and 15.47; cf. VI.7.30.26–30). For this reason, Plotinus concludes, Plato also adds truth to the mixture, claiming that there is a measure before this mixture. It is because of this measure that the symmetry and beauty of the mixture become beautiful (cf. VI.7.30.33–35 and *Phileb.* 64b–65a). These claims should obviously be inter-

41 There is a dispute among translators about the text here. Sleeman, Henry and Schwyzer read in line 19 τὸ ἐπιθέον, and Armstrong and Siegmann τὸ ἐπιθέον, Harder τὸ ἐπὶ πλέον, Beutler, Theiler and Hadot τὸ ἐπιθέτον. I consider all of these possible and if taken in the context of the whole treatise the difference seems to me marginal. Therefore, I speak of “something more or extra that, so to speak, runs over all” to cover all these possibilities.

preted in the context of previous sections, where this something extra running over all forms was light, which made Intellect beautiful, in the sense of having the form of Good (*ἀγαθοειδής*), and therefore pointing behind or above to the Good itself (cf. Hadot 1988, p. 324).

This issue is exactly what Plotinus will now focus on: establishing the relationship between beauty and the Good more precisely. However, before we follow him, let me briefly summarise the outcomes of the polemic with different notions of the good that we have just examined.⁴² The Good was said to be a nature which is desired because it is the good and not vice versa (cf. point 1 above). Therefore, it is not desired because of pleasure, but because of what it gives, i.e. perfection in being, which comes from a superior level (cf. point 2 above). In this sense, it could not be what is one's own (*οἰκεῖον*), but rather what is ontologically superior, or what has more form (cf. point 3 above). The Good is an exception to this increasing presence of form, because it is itself formless as the giver of form (cf. point 4 above). Below the Good, there is a scale of goods—or perhaps beauties—with Intellect on top and matter, as evil, on the bottom (cf. point 4 above). The Good is that which makes this scale possible and, compared to it, everything is in a sense worthless (cf. point 5 above). Similarly, the Good is exceptional in not being good for itself, but only for everything else, whereas the other goods were said to be good for themselves and, as such, also for what is inferior (cf. point 4 above). Finally, Plotinus interpreted Plato's (and Aristotle's) claims about the good as being compatible with his own, claiming that there is something extra in Intellect which the soul experienced, metaphorically, as pleasure. This something extra is Intellect's beauty, aroused by the light of the Good as a reference to the Good itself (cf. point 6 above).

6.6 The Good from the Perspective of Beauty and Love (VI.7.31–36)

Plotinus now returns to what he wanted to discuss already before his digression on the alternative notions of the good (cf. VI.7.24.1–3), namely the light of the Good. And since we so far inferred that this light is what makes Intellect truly beautiful, these passages will be of the utmost importance.

Plotinus begins by reminding us what the light of the Good does. This time however, he widens the scope so that not only Intellect, but also soul comes in to play. Everything that is, becomes itself and becomes beautiful because of

⁴² I closely follow Hadot's minutious summary (cf. Hadot 1988, p. 319).

what is above it, and by being illuminated by it (cf. VI.7.31.1–2).⁴³ This becoming itself means, for Intellect, to think and, for soul, to give life (cf. VI.7.31.2–4). But a part of Intellect was raised up (ἀείρω) to the Good and was joyful (ἀγαπάω) around it (cf. VI.7.31.5–6). Similarly, that soul which could turn to it “when it knew and saw, rejoiced in the vision and, in so far as it was able to see, was utterly amazed” (ὡς ἔγνω καὶ εἶδεν, ἤσθη τε τῇ θέᾳ καὶ ὅσον οἶα τε ἦν ἰδεῖν ἐξεπλάγη; VI.7.31.6–8). And since soul had something from it also in itself, it knew it intimately (συναισθάνομαι) and started to desire it, as lovers desire the beloved, when they see an image of him and want to see him in person (cf. VI.7.31.8–11). And as lovers make themselves like the beloved, so too does the soul make itself as ἀγαθοειδής as possible (cf. VI.7.31.11–17).

These passages require some comment. First, Plotinus is obviously ready to describe the hierarchy of ontological levels as a hierarchy of resemblance to the Good, where each superior level illuminates the inferior one, as it were, similar to how the Good illuminates Intellect. Consequently, there is a continuous hierarchy of beauty grounded in the Good and the light it gives off. Second, Plotinus seems to suggest that a part of Intellect is elevated by the Good. The concept of a part of Intellect being lifted up to the Good—and through it also a part of the soul—raises several difficult questions:

- I) Does this mean that Intellect is sometimes raised up and sometimes not? We should probably interpret Plotinus’ formulations here in a similar way to how he himself interpreted foreseeing and planning in Plato’s *Timaeus* at the very beginning of VI.7 (cf. section 6.1). Consequently, we should claim that everything that is suggestive of the existence of time events in Intellect is merely a mythical expression, as Hadot puts it (cf. Hadot 1988, pp. 325–326). Since there is no time in Intellect, part of it must be raised up eternally, just as part of it is always descending from the Good.
- II) This brings us to the second problem, i.e. the relationship of the descending and the ascending part of Intellect. Are they the same or are they different, so that we should rather distinguish three moments of Intellect, namely Intellect coming into existence, Intellect thinking itself and Intellect raised up? Most scholars agree that the first and the third moment are the same and that Intellect undergoes birth when elevated to the Good (cf. Hadot 1988, pp. 57–67; Rist 1989 or O’Daly 1970; for the contrary position cf. Bussanich 1988, pp. 2–3).

43 This could be also read as a supporting claim for the unity of the external activity of the Good as discussed above (cf. section 6.4).

- III) Moreover, it is not exactly clear whether *ἐνωσις* means actually becoming the Good or “merely” uniting with the nascent Intellect. Plotinus sometimes uses the analogy of the merging of the centres of two circles (e.g. in VI.9.10.17–18), which would suggest the former,⁴⁴ but other times (e.g. in VI.8.18.8) he uses the analogy of radii touching the centre of a circle, which rather corresponds to the latter.⁴⁵ I will restrict myself here to agreeing with O’Daly’s observation (cf. 1970) that Plotinus’ statements can support both readings.
- IV) Furthermore, there has been a dispute about how the elevated and/or nascent Intellect relates to the thinking Intellect, i.e. whether the relation of the former to the Good is hyper-noetic (cf. Beierwaltes 1974 and 1987) or pre-noetic (cf. Hadot 1985).⁴⁶ Without getting bogged down in this debate that goes beyond treatise VI.7, let me just state, for the moment, that Plotinus’ description of the elevated Intellect echoes that of the nascent intellect to a certain extent. Both are said either to move—i.e. the nascent Intellect in VI.7.16.16–18—or to be—the elevated Intellect in VI.7.31.5–6—*around* the Good. Similarly, as we shall see later in VI.7.35.23–24, Plotinus will identify the Intellect drunk with love with nascent Intellect. Therefore, at least in treatise VI.7, Hadot’s position seems to me better supported by the textual evidence.⁴⁷

Returning to my analysis of the passages under discussion from VI.7, there is a third point, in addition to: 1) Plotinus’ willingness to describe the hierarchy of ontological levels as a hierarchy of resemblance to the Good, and 2) his claim that a part of Intellect is elevated by the Good. The part of the soul that can turn to the Good must be the one which is in Intellect, by which Plotinus can hardly mean its lower parts. This claim can be supported by the observation that its love for the Good is described here as having three phases: 1) knowing, 2) seeing and 3) wanting to see. The first phase is probably to be identified with Intellect’s contemplation of itself, the second with spotting the trace of the Good in itself—i.e. with realising that Intellect is *ἀγαθοειδής*, or beautiful in the sense of grace. This, then, arouses love (= the third phase), i.e. a longing for the beloved, which a part of Intellect wants to “see”, although it cannot be seen.

44 This position is held e.g. by Emilsson (cf. 2017, pp. 335–347), Bussanich (1988, pp. 180–181) or Armstrong (2013, pp. 44–47 and 110).

45 This interpretation is advocated by Hadot (cf. 1985, pp. 27).

46 For a comparison of both, see Karfik 2002, pp. 206–220, and 2007, pp. 162–164.

47 This should not come as a surprise, because Beierwaltes’ interpretation is based rather on treatises V.4.2 and VI.8.18. Cf. Beierwaltes 1961, p. 349.

This is the Good itself. If so, Plotinus' comparison with lovers in the sensible world, who are reminded of their beloved by an image, makes perfect sense.

A fourth point that I would like to draw attention to is the strong influence of Plato's *Phaedrus* in these passages. He who loves tries to be more like the beloved, which, for Plotinus, is ultimately the Good. Therefore, the lover becomes more and more ἀγαθοειδής and, in so doing, he diminishes the distance between himself and the beloved, as Siegmann points out (1990, p. 147), which is the point of ἔρωσ and a useful tool for the description of ἔνωσις. At the same time, there are also important differences between VI.7.31 and *Phdr.* 250c–256e.⁴⁸ The soul in Intellect which is in love does not need sensually perceptible beauty as a reminder. On the contrary, it distrusts bodily beauty, because it sees that the latter is polluted by bodies and dissolved in magnitudes, and thus understands that bodies are not truly beautiful in themselves (cf. VI.7.31.19–27). Consequently, soul in love aspires to go beyond body, because it understands that bodily beauty has its light from something superior. When it is raised up to the level of Intellect, where all things are beautiful and true (καλὰ πάντα καὶ ἀληθῆ ὄντα), it becomes stronger because it lives true life (οὐσα ζωῆ) and has true awareness (σύνεσις ὄντως) of the ultimate object of its desire, the Good, which it is near (cf. VI.7.31.27–34).

From the perspective of the ascent along the *scala amoris*, Plotinus turns to the source of beauty, life and substance in Intellect. As a source, it is different from beauty which “rests upon the very Forms, all of them richly varied” (VI.7.32.2–3). When contemplating them, we naturally ask from where they derive their beauty. This source cannot have any of the characteristics of Intellect: it must not be any of the forms or have shape (μορφή) or size (μέγεθος), and it must be without any specific power (δύναμις), not in the sense it would need any of these, but being beyond them and being their source (cf. VI.7.32.1–10). However, being such a transcendent source means that it is, at the same time, none of the things that come from it—insofar as they are posterior to it—and all of them—insofar as they come from it (cf. VI.7.32.13–14). Then again, we should specify in what sense the Source can be said to have what comes from it. Plotinus gives size as an example. Size may come from the Good, but the Good cannot have size in a spatial sense. Rather, its greatness lies in its unmatched power (cf. VI.7.32.14–22). Its being beyond all such predicates is then stressed further in the case of measure (μέτρον), because it is said to transcend both measure and measurelessness (cf. VI.7.32.22–24). In this sense, says

48 Hadot aptly captures the main difference in saying that “la dimension de l’amour humain disparaît complètement” (Hadot 1988, p. 328). The ascent to the Good rather resembles the *scala amoris* in *Symp.* 209e–212a.

Plotinus, we must understand what it means for the Good to transcend both form and formlessness (cf. VI.7.32.24).⁴⁹ It makes our love unlimited (*ἄπειρος*) and immeasurable (*ἄμετρος*), as there is nothing that we could, so to speak, reach for and thus we continue to reach further and further (cf. VI.7.32.24–28).

The case of beauty is similar. Its beauty “is of another kind and beauty above beauty” (*ἄλλον τρόπον καὶ κάλλος ὑπὲρ κάλλος*; VI.7.32.29–30). Plotinus even says here that such “productive power of all is the flower (*ἄνθος*) of beauty,⁵⁰ a beauty that makes beauty (*κάλλος καλλοποιόν*)” and that it “makes it more beautiful by the excess of beauty which comes from it, so that it is the principle (*ἀρχή*) of beauty and the term (*πέρας*) of beauty” (VI.7.32.31–34). He is even prepared to go a step further and says that the Good as the source of beauty and forms—i.e. as shapeless—creates beauty as shapeless as it itself is, but in shape in another way (*ἄλλον δὲ τρόπον ἐν μορφῇ*; cf. VI.7.32.34–39).⁵¹ This very complicated statement should be interpreted in the following way: The shapeless Source of beauty can be said to be beautiful as the source of beauty. If it creates Form—i.e. Intellect—which is beauty, its original shapelessness becomes Form, as it were, or comes to be in shape, and thus starts to exist in a different way—because it is now in shape. In this sense, the primary beauty—the Source as the source of beauty—is not shaped, and only that which participates in it, as Plotinus puts it here, i.e. the Forms themselves, is shaped.⁵² Or, to put

49 Hadot (1988, pp. 330–331) connects these claims with the notion of measure from *Phileb.* 64e and the fact that the Good is without limit, measure and shape with the characteristics of the one from *Parm.* 137d–e.

50 Siegmann (1990, p. 154) thinks that *ἄνθος* is to be identified with the blooming of a flower, i.e. what is present in the whole flower and allows each part of it to be variegated and beautiful. I would be inclined to understand it instead as a sudden and brief shift from a top-down perspective to a bottom-up one, in which the Good might indeed be seen as a flower of beauty from the perspective of a rising soul, because, as it were, it flowers from the beauty which is Intellect, and this flower is its actual *τέλος*.

51 Siegmann (1990, p. 154) understands these passages to be positing an intermediary beauty between the Good as *ὑπέροικλον* and the beauty of Intellect. I find this unnecessary and wonder about the status of an intermediary beauty of this kind.

52 Hadot (1988, pp. 332–336) interprets these passages as referring to the shapelessness of life, as the first *ἐνέργεια* from the Good and, simultaneously, as a characteristic of a fully constituted Intellect, which is formless in the sense of forming itself. Hadot understands the claim that what gives form is formless to represent a general ontological statement valid not only for the Good, but also for all lower levels. Insofar as each of them gives form, they are formless. As that which gives form, Intellect is, in this sense, also formless. However, I do not see any good reason for taking these passages to be making a general ontological statement. This claim would also imply that Intellect, as the source of all things, is none of them. It seems to me that Plotinus rather understands Intellect as being what it gives to the highest degree. On my reading, Hadot’s claims are to be applied only to the Good. But even here, I remain sceptical about the connection of shapelessness to life as the first

it differently, drawing on the conclusions from section 6.4, when the original goodness of the Good becomes Form, it starts to exist in a different way, i.e. as beauty. Since, however, the Good is the source of beauty, Intellect must participate in its shapeless goodness in order to be beautiful, i.e. it must be illuminated by it. In this sense, the illuminated beauty of Intellect, as we shall see, is soon termed “shapeless form”. But we must bear in mind that Plotinus is using the predicate “beauty” here—as he also did in treatise 1.6—to lead our soul toward the Good. We should thus be very careful about drawing conclusions from this usage. From a different perspective, one could try to describe the Good by saying precisely the opposite—i.e. that it is beyond beauty, has no need of it and is absolutely unrelated to it—since it transcends both positive and negative attributions.

Plotinus’ intention to lead our soul toward the Good can further be seen in the passages that follow, where he addresses the soul that tries to ascend to the shapeless from Intellect and states that the shapeless form, i.e. the beautiful Intellect, is proportionate to the lengths to which the soul goes in trying to strip all shape from it (cf. VI.7.33.4–8). As shapeless, the Good cannot be seen, such that every shape must be avoided (cf. VI.7.33.1–2)—otherwise one will fall out of the Good, here called the beautiful (τὸ καλόν; VI.7.33.3), to a different beauty (καλόν; VI.7.33.3) which is called “beauty” in virtue of a kind of “obscure participation” (ἀμυδρᾶ μετοχή; VI.7.33.3). Intellect thinks itself, i.e. everything at once and, at the same time, as differentiated, and by both of these intellectual acts—which are one in Intellect—it is diminished and pulled away from the Good, since it sees only either a single form or a variety of forms (cf. VI.7.33.8–10). However, the Good which is here called the all-beautiful (πάγκαλος) is both variegated and not variegated (cf. VI.7.33.11–12). Intellect as form is measured and limited (μεμετρημένον), and therefore neither self-sufficient (οὐδὲ αὐτάρκης) nor beautiful of itself (οὐδὲ παρ’ αὐτοῦ καλόν). We thus desire to transcend to its source, the super-beautiful (ὑπέρκαλον; cf. VI.7.33.16–20). Intellect, as the form, is also said to be a trace (ἵχνος) of the shapeless (cf. VI.7.33.30–31). In this very special sense of being the ultimate shapeless object of desire, it can be said that beauty is the nature of the Good—or, as Plotinus puts it a bit later, the first nature of the beautiful is formless (cf. VI.7.33.38–39).

Let me now summarise what Plotinus says here. First of all, from the perspective of form and shape, we should distinguish three combinations: There

ἐνέργεια from the One, because this would mean that life as ἀόριστος is ἀγαθοειδής to the highest degree. But does Plotinus, the forceful advocate of forms, really think this? And why then is matter also not more like the Good than Intellect? However tempting Hadot’s interpretation may be, in the end, it seems to me substantially un-Plotinian.

is ἀρχή—the Good—which is both ἀνείδειον (cf. VI.7.32.9, 33.13, 21, 38) and ἄμορφον (cf. 32.6–7, 33.20–21, 28). Then there is the beauty of Intellect, which is ἄμορφον εἶδος (cf. VI.7.33.4). Finally, all of the forms are εἶδη and μορφαί. The notion of ἄμορφον εἶδος aptly describes beauty, because it captures well its intermediary character, shedding some light on the passages about the shapeless source of beauty which creates beauty as shapeless as it itself is, but in a shape in another way (cf. VI.7.32.34–39). Beauty leads to the Good, i.e. the ἀνείδειον, because it is itself ἄμορφον, while still being an εἶδος, i.e. a visible—or rather intelligible—manifestation of the shapeless. Therefore, this formulation enables a better understanding of the reaching above which is connected with beauty, because it both entails and actually draws its power from the presence of the shapeless in itself. As ἄμορφον εἶδος, it is precisely the shapeless beauty in shape, the Good in another, the form of Good in Intellect, i.e. what makes it ἀγαθοειδής.

If we now focus on the Good itself in these passages, then we may extract the following negative statements about it:

- 1) it lacks shape (μορφή; VI.7.32.6–7, 33.20–21, 28)
- 2) figure (σχῆμα; VI.7.32.25)
- 3) and form (εἶδος; VI.7.32.9, 33.20–21, 38; it does not have it at all; 33.13)
- 4) and it is none of those things which have come to be and exist here above, i.e. forms or shapes (πάσαι αἱ γεγενημέναι καὶ οὔσαι ἐνταῦθα; VI.7.32.7–8; and it has none of these shapes, not even the last and lowest ones; 33.33–34)
- 5) it lacks size (μέγεθος; VI.7.32.16)
- 6) any specific power (τις δύναμις; VI.7.32.7)
- 7) and limit (πέρας; VI.7.32.15–16)
- 8) it transcends both measure (μέτρον; VI.7.32.22–23)
- 9) and measurelessness (ἀμέτρια; VI.7.32.22–23)
- 10) as well as variety (ποικίλον; VI.7.33.11)
- 11) and non-variety (οὐ ποικίλον; VI.7.33.11)
- 12) it cannot be compared to anything (VI.7.32.19–21) and is, in this sense, great (τὸ μέγα; 32.19, cf. also point 20 below)
- 13) has nothing in common with anything (VI.7.32.22)
- 14) was not made by anyone (VI.7.32.12–13)
- 15) was not made anything specific (VI.7.32.12–13)
- 16) is, in fact, nothing (οὐδέν; VI.7.32.29)
- 17) and it is implied that it has no parts (μέρη; VI.7.32.5–6)

The positive statements can be divided into four groups. The first one follows the negative statements, supplements them and presents the Good as the ultimate generative principle. The Good is:

- 18) beyond all powers and shapes (ὑπὲρ πάσας [...] δυνάμεις καὶ [...] μορφάς; VI.7.32.8–9)
- 19) and this “beyond” means that the Good is the power of everything (δύναμις παντός; VI.7.32.31) and has the power to create everything (πάντα ποιεῖν δυνάμενον; 32.14)
- 20) or is even said to be the most powerful of all (μηδὲν αὐτοῦ δυνατώτερον; VI.7.32.19–21) and is, in this sense, great (τὸ μέγα; 32.19, cf. also point 12 above)
- 21) it is the creator of such beauty and such life, and is the generator of substance (ὁ ποιήσας τὸ τοσοῦτον κάλλος καὶ τὴν τοσαύτην ζωὴν καὶ γεννήσας οὐσίαν; VI.7.32.1–2)
- 22) and it is that from which all intelligible forms come (ἀφ’ οὗ πάσα μορφή νοερά; VI.7.32.10)
- 23) it generates form (τοῦτο γεννᾷ τὴν μορφήν; VI.7.33.30–31)
- 24) and is the source of everything and every form (ἀρχή; VI.7.32.9–12, 14)
- 25) and as their source it is all of these things (VI.7.32.13)
- 26) and it measures them (μετρέω; VI.7.32.23)

The second group of predicates relates directly to beauty. The Good is called:

- 27) beauty, the beautiful or the beautiful (καλόν; VI.7.33.3, 38; κάλλος; 32.29–30, 39, VI.7.33.1; καλλονή; 33.22)
- 28) but this beauty is of another kind (κάλλος αὐτοῦ ἄλλον τρόπον; VI.7.32.28–29)
- 29) beauty above beauty (κάλλος ὑπὲρ κάλλος; VI.7.32.29–30)
- 30) the all-beautiful (πάγκαλον; VI.7.33.11)
- 31) the really beautiful (ὄντως; VI.7.33.19)
- 32) the super-beautiful (ὑπέρκαλον; VI.7.33.20)
- 33) beauty which makes beauty (κάλλος καλλοποιόν; VI.7.32.31–32)
- 34) and the generator of beauty (τὸ γεννῶν τὸ κάλλος; VI.7.32.30)
- 35) the flower of beauty (καλοῦ ἄνθος; VI.7.32.31–32)
- 36) the principle of beauty (ἀρχὴ κάλλους; VI.7.32.34, 35)
- 37) and term of beauty (πέρας κάλλους; VI.7.32.34)
- 38) as such, it is desired by soul (VI.7.33.12)
- 39) moreover, the beauty it generates—i.e. Intellect—is made more beautiful by the excess of beauty which comes from it (γεννᾷ αὐτὸ καὶ κάλλιον ποιεῖ τῇ παρ’ αὐτοῦ περιουσίᾳ τοῦ κάλλους; VI.7.32.32–34), i.e. by the light of the Good (cf. 33.29–30)

The third group of predicates relates neither to the fact that the One is a generative principle, nor to beauty, but presents it as a superlative. It is:

- 40) the best (τὸ ἄριστον; VI.7.33.14)
- 41) the most lovable (ἐρασμιωτάτον; VI.7.33.14)

42) and the really real (τὸ ὄντως; VI.7.33.13)

And the last group comprises what is implied about the Good. It is:

43) self-sufficient (αὐταρκες; VI.7.33.18)

44) beautiful of itself (παρ' αὐτοῦ καλόν; VI.7.33.18)

45) and not mixed (VI.7.33.19)

Plotinus is using all of these predicates to present the Good as a superlative all-powerful source and principle of everything, which is beyond everything—i.e. different from it and also independent of it. As Siegmann (1990, pp. 155–156) aptly comments, Plotinus uses negative (e.g. ἄμορφον), paradoxical (ἄμορφον εἶδος), superlative (ἄριστον, ἐρασμιωτάτον), absolute (αὐταρκες) and hyperbolic formulations (ὑπέρκαλον) to ascend to the Good. The predicates that relate to beauty should be interpreted in this context. After all, Stern-Gillet (2000, p. 55) makes a comment about Plotinus' language with respect to beauty which is very similar to Siegmann's more general observation. She says that Plotinus uses rare terms (καλλονή), neologisms (καλλοποιόν, ὑπέρκαλος) and metaphors (καλοῦ ἄνθος) to describe the Good or the Beautiful.

In interpreting these statements about beauty in the context of predication about the Good, we should take into account the following points: 1) We should not overestimate their importance, because all positive statements—e.g. that beauty is the nature of the Good—are ultimately to be transcended, as well as their opposites. In this particular case, it means that we should remain sceptical about the identification of the Good and the beautiful. It still seems to me to be a safe starting point to claim that the primary beauty is the Intellect, and that the Good may be said to be the primary beauty as the source of beauty, although it is, in fact, beyond beauty.⁵³

But as I said, this is just a starting point, because only now are we able to ask the crucial question with which Plotinus has, in reality, been struggling since at least section 18: why is the Good manifest as beauty? And I do not mean here that it is the source of beauty, because the Good is, in the end, the

53 Omtzigt (2012, pp. 85–90) also claims that the Good is to be differentiated from beauty, which is primarily to be connected with Intellect. However, she claims that Plotinus identifies the Good with beauty in VI.7.32–33 only from a subjective perspective, that of ἔρωσ. This is only partially true, and obscures important exegetical and systematic repercussions of this identification as described below. Rist (1967, pp. 53–65) also argues for the distinction of the Good from beautiful. By contrast, their identification is advocated by Stern-Gillet (2000). However, my reading of VI.7 and VI.2 differs to some extent from hers (cf. chapters 4 and 6) and I take Plotinus' refusal to identify the Good and the beautiful in the *Enneads* (cf. VI.9.4, VI.9.11, V.8.8, V.5.12, VI.7.32–33) more seriously than she does.

source of everything.⁵⁴ What is important in saying that the Good is manifest as beauty is, rather, that this beauty is the form of the Good in another and that everything below the Good is ἀγαθοειδής, i.e. beautiful. Therefore, we should 2) not underestimate the importance of these claims. If the point of the use of language in the ascent to the Good is to continuously point beyond what is being said, then beauty is perhaps an ideal tool for this, because it is in its very nature to refer to something above and to arouse ἔρωσ, which is, in the end, a desire to become one with the beloved—i.e. a desire for ἔνωσις. However, this claim might be further strengthened because beauty is not only a useful tool in a language play, but the Good is, in fact, manifest through it. If all desire is directed toward some good and, ultimately, toward the Good, then it must show itself as beauty, which is precisely that which arouses desire and refers to what is above, ultimately the Good. Therefore, the fact that the Good is manifest as beauty means that it is the Good in another, i.e. in a diminished way, but what is preserved in this diminishment is precisely what is needed to attain the Good, namely the energy required for the ascent—ἔρωσ—and the direction—reference upwards.⁵⁵ Moreover, since we have so far maintained that beauty is unity in multiplicity referring to the Good, we might add in a further feature of the Good preserved in beauty, its oneness. Since, however, it cannot exist in another as such, it is preserved in this other—in multiplicity—as unity. As already Plato says, beauty is μονοειδής (*Symp.* 211b1 and 211e4).⁵⁶

Then again, we should refine our claim that, in the end, all predicates are to be transcended, as well as their opposites. This claim implies that each predicate and each of their opposites are equally inappropriate for the Good. This might *in the end* be true, but it seems to me that if one does try to use language to talk about the Good, there is an asymmetry in the appropriateness of at least some predicates and their opposites. If we take as an example two predicates discussed in VI.7.32–33, namely greatness (τὸ μέγα) and beauty, we can observe that Plotinus never uses their opposites to describe the Good, although he does

54 Rist (1967, p. 63) seems to understand the identification of the Good and beauty here in the sense that the Good is the source of beauty, and points out that the Good is, in this sense, the source of everything else. However, this interpretation misses precisely the uniqueness of beauty, the fact that it is to be identified with being ἀγαθοειδής. Emilsson's observation (2017, p. 114) is more precise: "it is noteworthy that Plotinus does not in general suggest that the very prototype of any Form is to be identified with the One. There must be something special about beauty."

55 As far as I understand it, this is exactly Tornau's point (2006, p. 203). He claims that the Good is beyond beauty, but manifest through it, and that it accounts for the ἔρωσ aroused by beauty.

56 Cf. Halfwassen 2003, who traces this motif back to Plato.

abstract from these predicates (e.g. from beauty in v.8.8). One might argue that, in the end, the Good could be said to be small in the sense of having no size, or even ugly in the sense of not being intelligible beauty. Obviously, however, it would be strange to say this. Moreover, we can think of cases where it would be utterly inconceivable to predicate the opposites of certain predicates, as in the case of the one (i.e. many) and the good (i.e. evil). I cannot think of a context in which it would make sense to call the Good evil or the One many.⁵⁷ Plotinus himself comments on this asymmetry in VI.7.20.1–11, when trying to discover what ἀγαθοειδής means. The appropriateness of the predicate of beauty for the Good seems once again to result from the fact that beauty is the manifestation of the Good, or to put it the other way around, that the Good is the final cause of the ascent along the *scala amoris*. This close connection between beauty and the Good is also something that seems to disrupt the previously repeated identification of beauty and being (cf. v.8.9, VI.2.17–18 and sections 3.4.7 and 4.4–5) above the level of Intellect. Whereas it is possible to say, in the sense just outlined, that the Good is beautiful, I cannot see how this could be possible for being. On the contrary, “beyond being” is along with “beyond intellection” one of the most common epithets of the Good (cf. I.7.1.19, I.8.6.28, III.8.9.9, III.9.9.1, V.1.8.7, V.3.11.28, V.3.12.47, V.3.17.13, V.4.1.10, V.4.2.2, V.4.2.38–39, V.4.2.42, V.6.6.30, V.8.1.3, V.9.2.24, VI.7.35.21, VI.7.40.26, VI.8.16.34, VI.8.19.13, VI.9.11.42). However, as we shall see in the next section, things are more complicated, at least in the case of intellection. In sum, if beauty is a useful predicate for the ascent to the Good because the beautiful is ἀγαθοειδής, it is perhaps also a predicate, whose appropriateness for the Good is asymmetrical to its opposite, i.e. ugliness, and to other predicates designating Intellect, such as being or intellection.

Moreover, Plotinus has yet another reason for calling the Good the primary beauty here, namely an exegetical one.⁵⁸ He tries to merge together several claims made by Plato in the *Phaedrus*, *Symposium*, *Philebus*, *Parmenides* and *Republic*. As we have seen, beauty was interpreted as a reference to the Good because it was its image or its trace, or again because the Good can be seen in all beings since they have the form of the Good, i.e. they are ἀγαθοειδής. For Plotinus, this referential character of beauty, together with the description of the ascending movement caused by ἔρωσ is the main lesson which is to be taken from the *Phaedrus*. Moreover, Plotinus combines the claims 1) that all desire is according to *Symposium* (204d–206a) ultimately directed to the Good and

57 D’Ancona Costa (1992, pp. 98–109) makes a similar observation.

58 The texts Plotinus has in mind might not be only those of Plato. He might also be alluding to Numenius of Apamea and Alcinoüs. Cf. Edwards 1991.

2) that the good has taken refuge in the nature of the beautiful from *Philebus* (64e), with 3) the passage from *Republic* (509a) where Socrates is said to speak of an overwhelming beauty that provides knowledge and truth but is itself beyond them in beauty. Plotinus concludes from this that beauty is the medium through which the soul ascends to the Good. The Good has the characteristics of the one from *Parmenides* (137d–e)—i.e. it is unlimited and without shape—and of the Good from the *Republic* (509b)—i.e. it provides being and intelligibility to everything, while it is itself beyond being, exceeding it in dignity and power. Then again, since, in the *Symposium* (211b–212c), Plato places true beauty at the top of the *scala amoris*, Plotinus has an additional exegetical reason for understanding the Good as beauty, in order to present his own theory as compatible with that of Plato.

The sections under discussion (VI.7.32–33) may further be illuminated by the previously discussed *Ennead* v.5.12 (cf. section 3.5). The beautiful (Intellect) was said there to need the Good, but not vice versa (cf. v.5.12.33). This claim is very close to being the opposite of that statement which I earlier claimed was possible when using language to approach the Good (see above, p. 145). Moreover, the gentle (ἡπιος), kind (προσηγής) and gracious (ἀβρός) Good was contrasted to the beautiful, which rather brought “wonder (θάμβος) and terror (ἔκπληξις) and pleasure (ἡδονή) mingled with pain (ἀλγύνω)” (v.5.12.33–36, transl. modified). From a systematic point of view, it would be perhaps more accurate to select a different word than κάλλος, but with the same erotic connotations with regard to the Good, for instance καλλονή, which is only used four times in the *Enneads* (I.6.6.21, I.6.6.26, VI.2.18.1, VI.7.33.22) and, in each case, for the Good as beauty.⁵⁹ Moreover, καλλονή also has the advantage of being used in a similar way by Plato (cf. *Symp.* 206d), which Plotinus could not have ignored. Another possible candidate is ἀγλαΐα, which is used in relation to the Good in VI.9.4.18, where Plotinus also compares the erotic relation to the Good with resting in the beloved (ἐν ᾧ ἐρᾷ ἀναπαύω).⁶⁰ But, as we know, Plotinus cared little about such trifles.

59 This has been noticed by Rist (1967, pp. 53–65) who interprets καλλονή as δύναμις τοῦ καλοῦ. I agree with this definition, but it should be noted that he gives an incorrect reference to VI.7.33.30, where this phrase is not used, and I was not able to find it anywhere else in the *Enneads*. The closest formulation is δύναμις οὖν παντός καλοῦ ἄνθος ἐστὶ, κάλλος καλλοποιόν in VI.7.32.31–32. Even there, however, it makes more sense to connect δύναμις with παντός and καλοῦ with ἄνθος. However, cf. also Halfwassen’s translation and interpretation (2007, pp. 51–52).

60 Nevertheless, the word ἀγλαΐα is probably a less suitable candidate than καλλονή because it also occurs in relation to the beauty of Intellect in v.8.12.7, VI.2.21.12 and VI.7.21.6, to that of body as compared to intelligible beauty in I.6.8.5, to that of virtue in I.6.9.14, to the beauty of all in III.8.11.30, and also in contexts not directly related to beauty (cf. IV.3.17.21, v.3.8.31).

What is also interesting, both in VI.7 and in V.5, is what might be called the shaping of the notion of the sublime which has its own history in aesthetics.⁶¹ The Good is here said to be μέγα and ὑπέρκalon and our attitude towards it is erotic desire which is ἄπειρος and ἄμετρος. Simultaneously, the relation of soul to the Good was distinguished from its relation to the beauty of Intellect. This might suggest a preliminary distinction of the sublime (in the case of the Good) from the beautiful (in the case of Intellect), but there are also significant differences as compared to the traditional distinction. Plotinus connects gentleness, kindness and grace with the Good (which was traditionally connected rather with beauty), whereas the beauty of Intellect is said to arouse wonder, terror and pleasure mixed with pain (which traditionally corresponds rather to the sublime). Consequently, both of the required distinctions, namely 1) between beauty and something more, something μέγα, and 2) between a gentle nature and a terrifying one, seem to be present in Plotinus, but they are mismatched from the point of view of the tradition.

Moreover, Plotinus is prepared to talk about awe or terror (πλήσσω and ἐκπλήσσω) in the case of the Good in VI.7.31. This may once again be interesting in relation to the history of the concept of the sublime, but it is disturbing from a systematic point of view, because it seemed in the interpretation of V.5.12 that Plotinus uses this concept for the beauty of Intellect. Then again, one might argue that in both cases of the use of (ἐκ)πλήσσω in VI.7.31, Plotinus adds “in so far as it was able to see” (ὅσον οἶα τε ἦν ἰδεῖν; VI.7.31.7) or “it saw” (εἶδε; VI.7.31.8), which is, of course, impossible in the case of the Good. Thus, he might be still talking about the beauty of Intellect. However, this does not fit into the context of the passage and even if it did, it would still mean that the beauty of Intellect—when illuminated by the Good—would necessarily be terrifying, which is probably not the case. I am, therefore, rather inclined to explain Plotinus’ choice of words here by the context, which is obviously that of Plato’s dialogues. Plotinus alludes to them repeatedly and (ἐκ)πλήσσω is used many times in connection with beauty in both the *Phaedrus* (250a6, 255b4 and partly also 259b8) and the *Symposium* (192b7, 198b5, 211d5, 215d6, 216d3, 218a4). Therefore, I would urge against overestimating the systematic implications of the occurrence of (ἐκ)πλήσσω here. Rather, we should interpret these occur-

61 This claim would be especially interesting if we date Pseudo-Longinus’ treatise *On the Sublime* to after Plotinus, e.g. if we attribute it to Cassius Longinus (cf. Heath 1999, Grube 1991). However, the arguments against his authorship are strong (cf. Fyfe and Russel 1995, pp. 145–148) and the consensus view is that it was written earlier, for instance in the 1st century AD (by an unknown person rather than by Dionysius of Halicarnassus). For the history of the concept, see Shaw 2006, Costelloe 2012 or Doran 2015.

rences exegetically as showing compatibility with Plato, or perhaps even more strongly, as signifying that Plotinus is Plato's true heir.

In any case, these passages (VI.7.32–33 and V.5.12) might also be read as describing two possible reactions on the part of the soul to the beauty of Intellect taken as such, i.e. to the beauty of the unilluminated Intellect. As it does not provide what the soul ultimately seeks—the Good—it might be conceived of as either still mixed with pain, i.e. ultimately repulsive, or as not providing enough, i.e. ultimately boring.

We could also enrich the conception of ἔρωσ we have encountered by means of a digression on one of Plotinus' latest treatises, *Ennead* III.5 *On Love*. The majority of this treatise is devoted to the interpretation of Plato's myth of the birth of ἔρωσ in the *Symposium* (203b–d and 180d–185c). In brief, ἔρωσ is born from Aphrodite, but there are at least two such goddesses (cf. III.5.2.14–15). The first one is to be identified with soul in Intellect (ὄλη ψυχῆ; cf. III.5.4.2), which is the motherless daughter of Zeus or Intellect (cf. III.5.2.15–25). Ἐρωσ was born from her, but there are two moments in this birth that can be distinguished: the plenitude of λόγοι emanating from Intellect or Poros (cf. III.5.9.1–8), and the need of the intelligible matter which corresponds to Penia (cf. III.5.6.44–7.12).⁶² This ἔρωσ, child of the heavenly Aphrodite, refers to the desire for Intellect and for the Good—i.e. it is the love of a daughter for her father and grandfather respectively (cf. III.5.2.33–40). The second Aphrodite, born from Zeus and Dione, corresponds to the world soul (ψυχῆ τοῦ παντός; cf. III.5.3.27–38), i.e. a soul which descends to the sensible world and governs it. Insofar as it has descended, its ἔρωσ accounts for marriages, but insofar as it is derived from the soul in Intellect, it has the same function as the heavenly ἔρωσ: it leads souls upwards, i.e. to Intellect and to the Good (cf. III.5.3.31–37). Individual souls may also be called Aphroditēs and they give birth to individual ἔρωτες, but Plotinus only says that these are comprised by the ἔρωσ of the world soul, since individual souls are immersed in the world soul (cf. III.5.4.10–24 and IV.9). Also, both the individual ἔρωτες and the ἔρωσ born of the world soul are said to be daemons, as opposed to the heavenly ἔρωσ which is a god (cf. III.5.2.25–27 and 4.23–25). One of the basic characteristics of Plato's ἔρωσ—that it is ultimately a desire for the Good—is thus preserved in Plotinus along with several others (cf. Armstrong 1961, p. 113 and see further below).

The first section of the treatise III.5, which is more important for our purposes here, enquires into the πάθος caused by ἔρωσ in the soul (cf. III.5.1.10–12). There are two types of πάθη caused by ἔρωσ: one occurs among those who

62 For further details, see Karfik 2003, pp. 166–168.

are temperate (σώφρων) and akin to beauty, while the other occurs among those who desire sexual intercourse with bodily beauty (cf. III.5.1.12–14). However, both have a common source, which is the desire for beauty itself, with which we have an intimate relationship (οἰκειότης; cf. III.5.1.16–19). This desire may be interpreted differently by different souls (cf. III.5.1.59–65). Those who desire bodily beauty do not understand that it is merely an image of a higher beauty, and therefore desire these images of it thinking that it is what they seek (cf. III.5.1.30–36 and 50–55). However, as Plotinus says—in a surprisingly accommodating gesture—even those who remember the paradigm are satisfied with these images as images (cf. III.5.1.34–35), which are even said to be the completion (ἀποτέλεσμα τι) of the paradigm (cf. III.5.1.61). Insofar as lovers of this kind remain temperate (σώφρων) and do not engage in unnatural sexual intercourse, there is nothing wrong with desiring bodily beauty (cf. III.5.1.36–38 and Kalligas 2014, com. ad III.5.1.10–14). To direct our love toward what is above, we must desire beauty as well as eternity, because we want to procreate in beauty and become immortal insofar as possible (cf. III.5.1.36–43). This process is enabled by the kinship (συγγένεια) of beauty and eternity (cf. III.5.1.43–44), i.e. by the fact that both characterise Intellect. As Armstrong (1961, p. 113) once again puts it, the second basic characteristics of Plato's ἔρωσ is maintained in Plotinus: when one attains what one desires, this desire remains and does not vanish.

When compared to treatise VI.7, the fundamental elements of the account of ἔρωσ seem to correspond and are slightly more elaborated in the interpretation of the *Symposium* myth. The only difference seems to be Plotinus' accommodating attitude towards bodily beauty, which is also known to us from treatise II.9. Similarly, just as I emphasised the need for a perspectival reading there (cf. section 3.2), I would suggest understanding these claims here in such a way as to try to capture the continuity of beauty throughout Plotinus' whole universe. In other words, it is predicated from a top-down perspective and does not necessarily contradict Plotinus' claims from a bottom-up one, which rather highlights the qualitative differences between the use of a given predicate on each different level. On my reading, when Plotinus talks about despising beauty, he simply means that higher beauty is much better. However, if we truly understand this higher beauty, we comprehend that it emanates necessarily and is thus manifested in what is below to the greatest extent possible. The engagement of treatise III.5 in the discussion with the Gnostics has, for that matter, been noted in the scholarly literature (cf. Kalligas 2014, "Introduction" to III.5).

To continue my analysis of VI.7, Plotinus will now focus on the description of the union with the Good against the background of the whole ascent

along the *scala amoris* (cf. especially VI.7.34) and a broadened conception of Intellect (cf. especially VI.7.35). He starts by summarising the previous account of the Good as *καλλονή*. It has no intelligible form (*μορφή νοητή*) and brings about a powerful longing (*δεινὸς πόθος*) that makes the soul strip away all form, even intelligible form (cf. VI.7.34.1–4). This stripping away enables the soul to be adapted to or fitted in (*ἐναρμόζω*) the One because it alone—i.e. without anything attached to it, so to speak—is able to receive the One alone (*δέξεται μόνη μόνον*; cf. VI.7.34.5–8). The process of disposing of every evil or even good attached to the soul is described as becoming as beautiful as possible, i.e. as similar to the Good as possible (cf. VI.7.34.6–7, 10–11), which confirms my former identification of being beautiful and being *ἀγαθοειδής*. If these preparations are made, the soul has good fortune (*εὐτυχέω*) and the Good suddenly (*ἐξαίφνης*; cf. *Symp.* 210e) appears in it (*φαίνω*) as always already present, the soul becomes one with the beloved and fulfils its erotic desire (cf. VI.7.34.13–16). Such a soul ceases to perceive itself as being in a body, stops speaking about itself as being a human or any kind of living being, or even as a being (*ᾧν*) or being all (*πάν*; cf. VI.7.34.16–18). All of these things would disturb it and it has no need of any of this, including itself, because it already feels good (*εὐπαθέω*). This feeling can, of course, only be reflected afterwards, i.e. after the soul has disengaged from the Good (cf. VI.7.34.18–31). Such an experience of “happiness” is the ultimate experience, above which there can be no other and which does not allow for deceit (cf. VI.7.34.22–29). The absolute focus on the Good, or rather identity with it, means ceasing to care about all the rest to such an extent that “if all the other things about it perished, it would even be pleased, that it might be alone with this” (VI.7.34.36–38). However, when the soul disengages from the Good, this experience has an impact on its embodiment. It now knows that the true good is the Good and it despises (*ὑπεροράω*) all other things: bodily pleasures, offices, powers, riches or even beauties and sciences (cf. VI.7.34.31–35).

Plotinus now focuses on explaining how soul can ascend to the Good, i.e. ascend beyond Intellect. Since soul is able to become aware of itself as a part of Intellect, its ascent to the Good is, in fact, an ascent of the “part of Intellect” that the soul has become. Plotinus begins by drawing a contrast between Intellect and the Good from a double perspective: that of an ascending soul and that of a soul which has already ascended to the Good. The latter despises (*καταφρονεῖν*) intellection because the Good is beyond intellection. Plotinus expresses himself here in terms of movement and rest: when united with the Good the soul “looks” at that which does not move and since intellection is movement, it does not want it, although it welcomed (*ἀσπάζομαι*) it before, i.e. during the ascent (cf. VI.7.35.1–4). It even first had to become this movement and contem-

plation, but when it “sees” the Good it leaves everything behind (cf. VI.7.35.4–7). Plotinus illustrates this ascent by means of the image of a guest who enters a wonderfully decorated, beautiful house (οἶον εἶ τις εἰσελθὼν εἰς οἶκον ποικίλον καὶ οὕτω καλὸν), which he contemplates. However, when the master of the house appears, he pays attention only to him as to someone worthy of genuine contemplation (ἄξιον τῆς ὄντως θεάσεως) and admirable (ἄγαμαι), who is not of the nature of the images in the house (οὐ κατὰ τὴν τῶν ἀγαλμάτων φύσιν ὄντα; cf. VI.7.35.7–12). In looking at the master, the guest’s contemplation starts to change such that he does not actually see a sight, “but mingles his seeing with what he contemplates, so that what was seen before has now become sight in him” (ἀλλὰ τὴν ὄψιν αὐτοῦ συγκεράσασαί το τῷ θεάματι, ὥστε ἐν αὐτῷ ἤδη τὸ ὄρατὸν πρότερον ὄψιν γεγεμέναι; VI.7.35.14–16). And, as Plotinus further explains, the master should rather be taken as a god, who does not appear to sight, but in the guest’s soul (cf. VI.7.35.17–20).

These passages show that the ascent of the soul to the Good happens necessarily through Intellect, whose beauty is worth admiring as long as the master is not present. And perhaps this simile is also useful for shedding more light on the aforementioned boredom of the soul that has ascended to unilluminated Intellect. As a matter of fact, one could easily imagine a beautiful house becoming boring after a while, if no other living being is present. After all, it was quite clearly stated that the guest did not come to the house to see its decorations, but to see its master.

The appearance of the Good was also previously (cf. VI.7.34.13–16) described in such a way as to give the impression that it acted deliberately when the soul merged with it. This motif is similarly present here because the master, as a living being, decides when to appear. However, both of these passages (i.e. VI.7.34.13–16 and 35.7–12) should be interpreted with caution, because the Good does not act in this manner—that is, as if it were sometimes present and sometimes not. Furthermore, it does not decide when to appear. It is rather always present, and the guest is the one who needs to realise this. The choice of the master of the house in the story is more likely to be understood as illustrating the qualitative difference between Intellect and the Good and the rule of the latter over the former.

The transformation undergone by the contemplation of the master has led Hadot (1988, pp. 341–342) to understand the master as Intellect, which created the forms—the decorations in the house—and the vision without object as the Good. However, I would prefer to keep things simple, i.e. to identify Intellect with the household and the master with the Good. This “simplest interpretation” (Hadot 1988, p. 341) faces two difficulties, according to Hadot. Not only does it identify the Good with an object of vision, whereas the Good cannot

be seen, it also has difficulties explaining why the visitor forgets all objects of vision, when his sight merges with what it sees (VI.7.35.16). However, I do not think that these are serious difficulties, since Plotinus often corrects his own images in the process of elaborating them, something he also does here: the master is to be considered a god and he does not appear to sight (cf. VI.7.35.17–20). Similarly, the description of the transformation of the contemplation of the master can be read as such a correction of the image. By contrast, Hadot undermines, to a certain extent, the very point of the story, which is to show the radical difference between Intellect (i.e. the household) and the Good (i.e. the master), as well as to illustrate the shift of the soul's focus when it encounters the Good/master. On Hadot's interpretation, there would be a more pronounced difference between individual forms (i.e. decorations) and Intellect as their creator (i.e. the master), in contrast to Intellect (i.e. the master) and the Good (i.e. objectless vision).

At any rate, Plotinus now returns to the necessary prerequisites for such an ascent, distinguishing two powers (*δυνάμεις*) in Intellect: one for contemplating itself as all its contents and the other for looking toward the Good (cf. VI.7.35.20–23), in the sense of “direct awareness and reception” (*ἐπιβολῆ καὶ παραδοχῆ*; VI.7.35.21–22). Moreover, the latter power is identified with the looking of the nascent Intellect toward the Good, as described in VI.7.16, by means of which it acquired the one and intellection (cf. VI.7.35.23–24). This looking is said to be different than the one involved in intellection (cf. VI.7.35.30–31). The Intellect using the former power is called *νοῦς ἔμφορων*, whereas the one using the latter power is said to be drunk with nectar, as it were, and is called *νοῦς ἐρῶν* (cf. VI.7.35.24–25, an obvious allusion to *Symp.* 203b). The drunken Intellect is the one that eternally returns to the Good (cf. VI.7.35.29–31) and is, in this sense, simplified into feeling good by being filled (*γίνεται ἀπλωθεὶς εἰς εὐπάθειαν τῷ κόρῳ*; cf. VI.7.35.25–26). Since the erotic Intellect is closer to the Good, Plotinus does not hesitate to say that it is better for Intellect to be drunk in this fashion than to be more dignified (*σεμνότερος*), but sober (cf. VI.7.35.26–28; a possible allusion to *Phdr.* 244d). Plotinus once again reminds us about the generation of Intellect saying that when the nascent Intellect looked to the Good, it generated its offspring (i.e. forms) in itself, and its awareness of them is its intellection (cf. VI.7.35.31–34). Hence, the ascending soul must first unite with this contemplating Intellect and only through it can it be lifted up (*αἰείρω*) as *νοῦς ἐρῶν* beyond itself by the Good (cf. VI.7.35.37–41). In this way, it acquires blessed perception and vision (*μακάρια αἴσθησις καὶ θέα*; again a possible allusion to *Phdr.* 250b) from the Good and is displaced from place itself, such that soul is no longer soul—because it is beyond life—nor even Intellect—since it is beyond intellection (cf. VI.7.35.39–44).

In the last section of this part of treatise VI.7, Plotinus presents a systematic summary of the soul's ascent to the Good and a reflection of our abilities to get to know it by means of rational discourse (λογισμός). He distinguishes, on the one hand, knowledge of (γνώσις) or touching (ἐπαφή) the Good, which is the greatest kind of knowledge (μέγιστον), and, on the other hand, learning about the Good beforehand (περὶ αὐτοῦ μαθεῖν τι πρότερον), which is what Plato, according to Plotinus, calls μέγιστόν μάθημα (cf. VI.7.36.4–6, and *Rep.* 504e, 505a, *Ep.* VII 341c and *Symp.* 211c). This learning about the Good beforehand proceeds by analogies (ἀναλογίαι), negations (ἀφαιρέσεις), by coming to know that which is from the Good (γνώσεις τῶν ἐξ αὐτοῦ) and by gradually ascending (ἀναβασμοί τινες; cf. VI.7.36.6–9 and *Symp.* 210a–212b). This knowledge of or touching the Good also proceeds gradually, as Plotinus explained in previous sections. It begins by the purification (κάθαρσις) of the soul, acquiring virtues (ἀρεταί) and adornings (κοσμήσεις), i.e. by settling down in Intellect, becoming one with its contemplation and thus becoming Intellect itself or being, intellection and complete living being (ζῶον παντελές; cf. VI.7.36.9–13). In doing so, the soul comes close to the Good, which already shines toward it (cf. VI.7.36.13–15). At this stage, the soul must let go of all knowledge (πᾶν μάθημα) which led it to Intellect or beauty (καλός). It may be carried away from intellection, as if by a wave (κύμα) or a swelling (οἰδέω) of the erotic Intellect. Then, it suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) beholds the light of the Good which fills its sight, such that it only sees this light and it itself becomes this light from which Intellect is born (cf. VI.7.36.18–27).

Let me now summarise what we have learned about beauty in VI.7.31–36, which were announced as sections dealing with the light of the Good, and which they did, in a way. They focused, namely, on the ascension of soul through Intellect to the Good which is enabled by light. It is light as the single threefold emanation from the Good (cf. above, pp. 130–131) which allows everything to become itself, i.e. to be constituted as a unified multiplicity referring back to its source, that is, as beauty. Beauty in this sense is the manifestation of the Good at all lower levels, with the result that there is a hierarchy of beauties or levels that are ἀγαθοειδής, where each higher level, so to speak, illuminates the lower one in a similar fashion to how the Good illuminates the Intellect. In contrast to the conception found in Plato's *Phaedrus*, the ascending soul does not need sensible beauty as a reminder. Rather, it was described as distrusting bodily beauty and after it became one with the Good, it even started, in a way, to despise all other things, including the beauty and knowledge which characterise the Intellect.

In discussing these passages, I have encountered several controversies about ἔνωσις which go beyond *Ennead* VI.7 and I have tried to briefly and carefully

align myself with certain interpretations of this process. Both the birth of Intellect and its return to the Good, which are probably to be identified, are eternal processes, although some of Plotinus' formulations might seem to suggest succession in time. In any case, on the basis of VI.7, it seemed to me more probable that the ascending Intellect has a pre-intellectual relation to the Good rather than a hyper-intellectual one. In the end, however, I am undecided about the outcome of ἔνωσις because Plotinus' statements could support both the conclusion that the soul merges with the Good itself and the conclusion that it unites "only" with the nascent Intellect.

The process of the soul's ascent was said to have several phases. It begins with purification, acquiring virtues and adornings. Then the soul merges with the contemplating Intellect, starts to see the form of the Good in it and consequently wants to see the Good, i.e. become more than Intellect. In order for that to happen, however, it must let go of all knowledge. This is possible because a part of Intellect—drunk Intellect or Intellect in love—is always ascending to the Good or returns to the state when it was born and looks to the Good unintellectually. This type of knowledge of the Good was distinguished from learning about it beforehand, which proceeds by analogies, negations, by getting to know what is from the Good, and by means of gradual ascensions, which is what Plotinus is doing in the *Enneads*.

I have also analysed the famous sections VI.7.32–33 where Plotinus distinguishes the Good as ἀρχή, which was said to be both ἀνείδειον and ἄμορφον, the beauty of Intellect which was called ἄμορφον εἶδος and all of the forms as εἶδη and μορφαί. I have proposed to interpret the notion of ἄμορφον εἶδος as capturing the intermediary character of beauty, since it is ἄμορφον, like the Good, but, at the same time, it is an εἶδος, i.e. an intelligible manifestation of the Good. As something shapeless, it draws its power from the Good, the power by which it stimulates an erotic ascent. I have also distinguished negative and positive statements about the Good which present it as a superlative all-powerful source and principle of everything which is beyond everything, i.e. which is different from everything and independent of it. In this sense, the Good was also said to be the source of beauty, but it was simultaneously termed καλλονή, κάλλος ὑπὲρ κάλλος, πάγκαλον, ὑπέρικαλον or κάλλος καλλοποιόν. Despite this, I still thought it possible not to overestimate the significance of these claims and to maintain that the primary beautiful is Intellect. Nevertheless, I urged that the importance of these claims not be underestimated either. Beauty allows this unusual predication, because it is in its very nature to refer to something above it and to arouse ἔρωσ which is, in the end, a desire for ἔνωσις. Moreover, it is the very manifestation of the Good and several of the Good's characteristics are preserved in it: the aforementioned energy required for the ascent, the direction or refer-

ence upwards and, so far as possible, also its oneness as unity (in multiplicity). I have also tried to point out an interesting asymmetry in the use of at least some opposite predicates, which enables Plotinus to call the Good beautiful (*καλλογή*) and not ugly, and which might also distinguish beauty from being above the level of Intellect, since the former might, in a sense, be applied to the Good, whereas the latter scarcely can. Finally, I tried to briefly sketch some exegetical reasons for calling the Good beautiful. I then turned to a comparison of section VI.7.32–33 with V.5.12, where Plotinus also tries to distinguish beauty of Intellect from the Good, but uses different means to this end, which are also interesting for the history of the concept of the sublime. In contrast to the boredom of soul in Intellect and to the terrifying nature of the Good in VI.7, treatise V.5 associates excitement with the beauty of Intellect and gentleness with the grace of the Good.

6.7 The Good and Intellection (VI.7.37–42)

The last parts of treatise VI.7 are devoted to the discussion of Aristotle's account of *νόησις νοήσεως* as the ultimate principle. Plotinus explains here why and in what sense the Good does not think. Since these parts are less important for our purposes, I shall only briefly summarise the most important arguments which indirectly shed some light also on the question of beauty. These arguments exemplify in what sense a predicate—intellection—can or cannot be used for the Good. This discussion has consequences for a better understanding of the predication of beauty in relation to the Good.

Plotinus first draws our attention to one of the controversies between the advocates of the idea that the first principle thinks. For it is not clear, he says, what it actually thinks (cf. VI.7.37.1–3): only itself as is the case of Aristotle's unmoved mover (cf. *Met.* 1074b17–35) or everything, i.e. also the things after it, as the Stoics claim (cf. e.g. SVF I.172, SVF II.1106, SVF I.537 and Hadot 1988, p. 252)? In any case, Plotinus wants to focus especially on Aristotle's account of *νόησις νοήσεως*. He attacks it from several different angles:

First, he questions the value (*σεμνόν*) of the unmoved mover, because Aristotle attributes thinking to it, in order for it to be the most valuable (cf. section 5.4). Plotinus interprets this as a sign of its lack of value, if taken by itself. Consequently, he outlines two possibilities: either the unmoved mover is valuable as thinking, but then it has less or no value itself, or it has value itself, but then it does not need thinking (cf. VI.7.37.3–10).

Second, Plotinus lays bare the fact that Aristotle speaks about the first principle as both a substance (*οὐσία*) and an active actuality (*ἐνέργεια*). In this case,

however, it will be double, i.e. not simple (ἀπλοῦς), as the first principle must be. By contrast, if it is pure thinking without anything added, it does not think since there is no subject of thinking, nor is there any object which could be thought, because, as has already been said, nothing is added to pure thinking of this sort (cf. VI.7.37.10–19 and the commentary of Siegmann 1990, p. 169). Consequently, the first principle is correctly said by Plato to be above Intellect (ὑπὲρ νοῦν; cf. *Rep.* 508c1) and thinking can be attributed only to Intellect, which is many (cf. VI.7.37.18–34). If Intellect did not think, it would be unintelligent (ἀνόητος). However, saying that the Good does not think cannot mean the same thing, because its nature does not involve thinking. Hence, if we say that the Good does not think, this negative statement cannot be taken to indicate privation. If it were, we would be arbitrarily attributing to the Good some task to do and then predicating its absence. Plotinus illustrates the absurdity of this by saying that the Good could, in this sense, be said to be unmedical (ἀνίατρον). What a negative statement such as “the Good does not think” rather means, is that it is prior to thinking, such that it does not need to do anything, but is completely self-sufficient by being what it is (cf. VI.7.37.24–31). However, Plotinus continues, it cannot in fact *be* anything: we cannot use *being* as a copula when predicating of it, because it is no substrate and thus we cannot predicate of it. The copula we use should be interpreted as a mere reference (σημαίνω) to what it is (cf. VI.7.38.1–4).

Third, Plotinus challenges the object of the potential knowledge of the first principle, which here designates the Plotinian Good rather than Aristotle’s unmoved mover. What would it know? It cannot know that it is, or what it is, since it *is* not. The content of its thinking cannot be solely “the Good” because it would not, as such, be connected with the Good as thinking. Moreover, there would be at least a duality between it as thinking and the Good as what is thought (cf. VI.7.38.10–20). Consequently, as Plotinus puts it, “if the thought of the Good is different from the Good, the Good is there already before the thought of it” (VI.7.38.21–22). As such, it does not need to think (cf. VI.7.38.22–25). Rather, there is something like a simple concentration with respect to itself (ἀπλή τις ἐπιβολή αὐτῷ πρὸς αὐτόν). However, this must be thought of as involving no difference of any kind, because difference exists in Intellect along with all of the other highest kinds, and in fact along with everything (cf. VI.7.39.1–16).⁶³ Any relation to the Good must, therefore, be non-intelligent (οὐδὲν νοερόν

63 I agree with Hadot (1988, p. 358) that Plotinus does not posit the self-consciousness of the Good here. He is attempting to present a more intimate self-relation than that of Intellect. However, the denial of such a self-relation is rather to be interpreted as positing more than

ἔχει), because intelligibility is necessarily linked with multiplicity. Therefore, it is more like touch (οἶον ἐπαφή) or a “movement, simple and all the same” (ἀπλοῦν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ πᾶν οἶον κίνημα; VI.7.39.18–19). The quasi-self-relation of the Good is to be understood as standing still in majesty (σεμνὸν ἐστήξειται), which is Plotinus’ interpretation of Plato’s words from the *Sophist* (248d–249a).

Fourth, in order to change the mind of someone who is still unconvinced, Plotinus claims that it is necessary to add persuasion (πειθῶ) to necessity (ἀνάγκη) and to encourage (παραμύθια) this person. He begins his attempt to persuade with a general statement that one must distinguish between the origin of thought (νόησις πᾶσα ἔκ τινός ἐστι) and its object (νόησις τινός). Whereas the thinking intrinsic to soul is an actualisation of pre-existing intelligible forms, the thinking in Intellect is not similarly derived from the Good, which does not contain the intelligibles coming to be in Intellect. The Good is rather the very power to generate (δύναμις τοῦ γεννᾶν ἐφ’ ἑαυτῆς), such that it created substance and thinking as one and many. This is, in fact, another meaning of the predicate μέγας (cf. section 6.6): being powerful enough to generate being itself. Since, however, Intellect is the first actuality and the first thought, that which generated it cannot itself be actuality and thought. Rather, it must be something wonderful (τι θαυμαστόν) above these, so that it is not the first principle that needs thinking to have value as it is in Aristotle. On the contrary, Intellect derives its value from the Good which is pure (καθαρόν) from thought and from everything else remaining one in itself (cf. VI.7.40.4–49). In this way, Intellect has an object to “think” when it is born, because “when it thinks itself it is in a way comprehending what it had from the vision of another in itself” (VI.7.40.50–51). Then again, the Good does not think, since it has nothing to think and does not need to think itself, because it is one with itself and thus seeks nothing (cf. VI.7.40.51–56).

Fifth, Plotinus demonstrates that the Good does not think by pointing out the fact that thinking is an aid for those who are in need. It is the ability to find light in darkness, but light itself does not need this. Since thinking always presupposes multiplicity, the Good must be simple and whatever is added to it in fact diminishes it because it needs nothing. If this Good is something, says Plotinus, it is so in a greater way than through knowledge (κατὰ γνῶσιν), thought (νόησιν) or self-perception (σύνεσιν αὐτοῦ). Nor is it in need, in the sense that it does not provide anything to itself but suffices. Therefore, it is not even good for itself but only for others. It does not need to look at itself and nothing can be said to be present with it (cf. VI.7.41.1–38).

self-relation, i.e. simple identity of the Good with itself, which is even above the identity provided by the Same as one of the highest kinds.

Therefore, Plotinus concludes, one must respect the natural order of things and posit values (σεμνά) of a second order (like thinking) around the Good and those of the third order around them. This is the proper interpretation of what Plato says (cf. *Ep.* II 312e) about the King, as the source of everything beautiful, around whom everything is set and for the sake of whom all are, while the King remains different from everyone else. In this sense, too, when Plato says that the Good is the cause of all beauty (αἴτια πάντων καλῶν), beauty itself (τὸ καλόν) is to be posited among the intelligible forms (ἐν τοῖς εἶδεσι), while the Good is above beauty (ὑπὲρ τὸ καλὸν πᾶν τοῦτο), such that there is the Good as a centre around which is Intellect, and around Intellect soul and around soul the sensible world. The point of this image is that everything depends on the first radically different centre and is either closer to it or more distant from it (cf. VI.7.42.1–24).

In summary, these sections of VI.7 exemplify how it is possible to predicate something of the Good. Denying a predicate to the Good, for instance, intelligence, cannot be taken to indicate privation. Rather it indicates priority with respect to the predicate. Plotinus also tries to positively describe this priority, or the fact that the Good is the source of the predicate. He does so by attributing simple concentration with respect to itself to the Good. This concentration, however, is to be thought of as involving no difference. Or, alternatively, he says that it is standing still in majesty. Similarly, the relation to the Good must be non-intelligent, which can positively be likened to touching it or moving to it, without any change. By using these paradoxical phrases and images, Plotinus tries to simultaneously maintain the continuity of a predicate from the Good to the lower levels and the transcendence of the Good, which necessitates a radical shift in the meaning of the predicate when applied to the Good. The very last section of VI.7 claims that beauty is to be posited of Intellect and that the Good is above beauty as its source. Therefore, saying that the Good is not beautiful should not be taken to indicate privation of beauty. Rather, the Good is to be understood as being more than beauty, or the source of it, similar to the case of intellection. As we have seen in analysing sections 32–33 (see section 6.6), this is precisely what Plotinus is trying to express positively by saying that the Good is the beautiful, beauty above beauty, the super-beautiful, beauty which makes beauty, etc. The identification of the Good and beauty (or rather the beautiful, καλλονή) in VI.7.32–33 should therefore be read in the context of the whole treatise. Their identification is not Plotinus' final word.