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PLOTINUS ON THE ROLE OF NOUS IN SELF-KNOWLEDGE

by

Mark Reuter

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of Philosophy
University of Toronto



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An Abstract of

PLOTINUS ON THE ROLE OF NOUS IN SELF-KNOWLEDGE

by Mark Reuter
A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of Philosophy
University of Toronto

This study aims to explicate the role that $vo\hat{v}\varsigma$ ['intellect'] plays in self-knowledge in the philosophy of Plotinus. It does not offer itself as a historical study or as an exhaustive account of the hypostasis nous. Rather, it assumes that the most promising way forward to a correct understanding of what this controversial term means is to consider how Plotinus puts it to work. Consequently, it limits itself to the examination of nous as Plotinus uses it to solve problems concerning self-knowledge and personal-identity.

After presenting enough of the historical background to frame a working idea of nous (chapters 1-2), it proceeds in three steps of uneven length, the aim of which is to show how Plotinus relates these two problems. The first step defends Plotinus' claim that we do not know who we are (chapters 3-5). It compares his claim with similar claims put forward by Thomas Nagel and Bernard Williams. The second step argues that Plotinus maintains that our true identity is that of a νοῦς ἔκαστος, a particular nous (chapters 6-11). This claim reveals that Plotinus' conception of the self is complex, for it introduces a tension between our true self, a νοῦς ἔκαστος, and the 'we' [τὸ ἡμεῖς] or the empirical self that is the subject of our first-person experiences. It then argues that Plotinus uses the Stoic conception of οἰκείωσις to describe a process of internalization whereby we come to know what our true identity consists in. In this connection, and contrary to two well entrenched views, it is argued that $\pi i \sigma \tau i \varsigma$ has role to play in the acquisition of self-knowledge, or the Return to nous, and that it is not a concept solely related to sensory perception. Finally, the third step (chapter 12) follows up the discussion of identity by looking at Plotinus' ethical theory. It argues that a discussion of nous that failed to note its normative aspects would be incomplete, for it is knowing what we are our true identity — that Plotinus is able to prescribe how we ought to live.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout the course of my doctoral studies I have incurred many debts. I mention here only the ones that are most closely connected with this project.

Upon first arriving in Toronto I had the good fortune to meet Calvin Normore. His advice and encouragement were an important help along the way. Many of the ideas of this study were first subjected to his kind and careful scrutiny in conversations we had over breakfast.

Brad Inwood gave generously of his time and discussed various parts of the project with me. More than once he was an anchor of common sense and sound philological method. He kindly read through an earlier version of the whole thesis, and his criticisms led me to revise my argument and improve my translations in a number of places.

In Lloyd Gerson I had the very good fortune to have an advisor hard at work on the same author. Studying Plotinus was a lonely endeavor at times, but from the beginning he let it be known that his door was always open if I ever wanted to talk. Often I would come by beset with $\partial \pi o \rho i \alpha$ and leave with renewed encouragement. He advised me early on that there could be no shortcuts to understanding Plotinus. So for nearly a year I read Plotinus and nothing else. This enabled me to lay the foundations for this study and avoid wasting time on reading secondary literature which at that point I was neither competent to understand or judge. As his own ideas and book progressed he was always willing to share his time and materials. Without his support this already lengthy project would have taken much longer. Without his criticism it would not be nearly as focused.

I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to my supervisor, John Rist. It was under his tutelage that I first learned how to unify my scattered and piecemeal studies of philosophy and classics. It was often in his chance remarks more than in his lectures that I was able to connect large pieces of the ancient world that had previously remained disparate and dormant in my thoughts. In a course of lectures on Aristotle it was his passing remarks on

Plotinus that first prompted me to open the *Enneads*. There I met, in addition to the obscurity and confusion that confronts any first reader of the *Enneads*, a philosopher who knew a great deal about Aristotle. It was Rist who supported me in my first and feeble attempts to interpret and to clarify what Plotinus was doing. I am grateful to him both for his initial suggestion that I take Plotinus seriously as a philosopher (and abandon my plans for a translation and commentary of a set text) and his initial belief that I was capable of doing so. If there is any philosophical merit in the study that follows, it is in a large measure due to his clear and careful criticism. Its shortcomings and deficiencies are entirely my own.

To François and Anne-Marie Tressard I owe much more than thanks. Their very generous financial gift enabled me to continue work on this project after my university fellowship had run out. I am happy to have this opportunity to thank them publicly.

I should also like to thank my stepdaughters, Mary and Katherine, for their kindness and patience through the ups and downs of this project. For the past three years they had to deal with someone who, unlike Plotinus, was scarcely able to be present with himself $-\nu o \hat{v} \varsigma$? — let alone with them.

Finally, my largest debt of gratitude is to my wife, Françoise. Without her help and support this project would never have been completed. She typed large portions of my initial manuscript and made many helpful comments. In the final stages she helped with proofreading. Along the way she unwittingly transformed my bookish knowledge of Plato into something resembling understanding. It was she who first asked me to address the question of self-knowledge directly, apart from the anodyne analysis of academia. It is to her, with heartfelt thanks, that I dedicate this study.

A MA FEMME

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- ANRW = Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt. Edited by W. Haase and H. Temporini. Berlin: 1987-1990.
- Armstrong = A. Hilary Armstrong. *Plotinus*. 7 vols. The Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Masschusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966-1988.
- Bréhier = Emile Bréhier. *Plotin: Ennéades, texte établi et traduit.* 7 vols. Budé Classical Texts. Paris: 1924-1938.
- Bruns = I. Bruns. De Anima Liber cum Mantissa. CAG Supplementum Aristotelicum 2. Berlin: 1887.
- CAG = Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca. Berlin: 1882-1909.
- Cilento = Vincenzo Cilento. Plotino: Enneadi. Prima versione integra e commentario critico. 4 vols. Bari: 1947-1949.
- DK = H. Diels and W. Kranz. Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker. 6th edition Berlin: 1952. 18th edition 1989.
- DL = Diogenes Laertius. Lives and Opinions of the Eminent Philosophers.
- HBT = Richard Harder. Plotins Schriften. Neubearbeitung mit griechischem Lesetext und Anmerkungen fortgeführt von Rudolf Beutler und Willy Theiler. 10 vols. Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1956-1967.
- HS¹ = Paul Henry and Hans-Rudolf Schwyzer. *Plotini opera*. 3 vols. Paris: 1951-1973.
- HS² = Paul Henry and Hans-Rudolf Schwyzer. *Plotini opera*. 3 vols. Oxford Classical Texts. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1964-1982.
- LS = A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley. *The Hellenistic Philosophers*. 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- LSJ = H. G. Liddell and R. Scott. A Greek-English Lexicon. New edition revised and enlarged by H. S. Jones, et al. 9th edition Oxford: 1940. Reprinted 1961. Supplement edited by E. A. Barber et al., 1968.
- OED = Oxford English Dictionary.
- Sleeman and Pollet = J. Sleeman and G. Pollet. Lexicon Plotinianum. Leiden: 1980.
- SVF = I. von Arnim. Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta. 3 vols. Leipzig: 1903-1905. Vol. 4, indices, M. Adler. Leipzig: 1924.
- VP = Vita Plotini by Porphyry.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The following investigation aims to explicate the 10le that nous plays in selfknowledge in the philosophy of Plotinus. In broad outline it proceeds in three steps of uneven length. The first step defends Plotinus' claim that we do not know who we are. The second step examines Plotinus claim that the 'we' or the self is a νοῦς ἔκαστος, a particular nous.² The bulk of this investigation is devoted to an examination of this claim (chapters 6-11). Finally, the third step (chapter 12) follows up the discussion of identity by looking at Plotinus' ethical theory. Having argued that our identity is found in nous this is what we are - Plotinus founds his ethical programme on this nature: knowing what we are he is able to prescribe how we ought to live. This chapter introduces the normative aspect of nous and relates this aspect to the term par excellence that Plotinus uses to describe nous, $\kappa\alpha\lambda\delta\nu$, 'beautiful'. Nous as an object of 'beauty' has an attractive or drawing power. Given this power and given its central position in Plotinus' philosophy - between the One and psyche - it is not surprising to find that it is the cardinal feature in Plotinus' ethical doctrine of the Return. The final chapter, while not presenting a complete account of the Return, asks why nous has this attractive power and why Plotinus was so interested in the experience of $\tau \delta$ $\kappa \alpha \lambda \delta \nu$. The notion of $\tau \delta$ $\kappa \alpha \lambda \delta \nu$ will turn out to be more than simply Platonic baggage, for it will be seen to mitigate some of the problems

¹ The transliteration of the term 'nous' and other technical terms in Plotinus' philosophy is defended below in section (iv).

² For the use of this expression by Plotinus see V 9.8.4 and cf. IV 9.3.26-27; VI 2.20.2; V 3.2.14; V 3.2.17. One of the goals of this study is to offer an interpretation of what exactly this expression means.

raised in earlier sections. Nous is $\kappa\alpha\lambda\delta\zeta$ and we, too, Plotinus maintains, are $\kappa\alpha\lambda\delta\iota$ when we attain self-knowledge.

Though nous is the cardinal feature of this study, this investigation does not claim to be a complete account of the hypostasis nous in the philosophy of Plotinus. Rather, it limits itself to the examination of nous as Plotinus uses the notion to solve questions concerning personal identity. A more complete account of nous would have to look at the way in which it relates to the hypostases below and above it. But given that these relations have received earlier treatment, 3 this investigation seeks to look more closely at specific philosophical problems that nous is meant to solve. It assumes that the most promising way forward to a correct understanding of what this term means is to consider how Plotinus puts it to work. Consequently, the focus of this study will be on Plotinus. Questions concerning his historical background or contemporary concerns about personal identity and the philosophy of mind will not receive detailed treatment. When it seems that Plotinus' ideas cannot be understood without reference to the historical background, or that some contemporary discussion helps to illuminate Plotinus' treatment, these issues will be brought in.

(i) Prospectus

The investigation opens by presenting a working idea of nous, and then proceeds with an examination of the terms 'nous' and voeiv. The important ambiguities are flagged and the difficulty of translating either term is discussed. In particular, the sense of voeiv

³ The former was covered in part by the study of H. J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology: His Doctrine of the Embodied Soul* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), the latter by the study of John R. Bussanich, *The One and its Relation to Intellect in Plotinus* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988).

as 'non-discursive thought' shows the limitations of using words connected with thinking to translate voeiv. Following a suggestion made by Rist, that words relating to experience better capture Plotinus' sense of voeiv, it proceeds in chapter 3 to consider the experience that the self has of itself, for this is thought to be the experience that best reveals what Plotinus means by voeiv.

The next step is to clarify what Plotinus means by the 'self'. This is the problem of discovery. Plotinus maintains that we lack self-knowledge and thus need to discover and learn who we are. Chapter 4 explores this claim of ignorance and defends the claim against the charge of incoherence. Chapter 5 provides an overview of how Plotinus thinks we move from a state of ignorance about ourselves to a state of self-knowledge. It looks at what this study calls the process of 'internalization', the move whereby we come to see or know ourselves from the inside. After looking at a text in which Plotinus describes this process, it will be shown that many astute commentators and translators fail to understand the problem Plotinus is working on; so it is not surprising that they also fail to understand his solution. To clarify Plotinus' distinction between the 'inner' and the 'outer' and the way this distinction pertains to self-knowledge this study draws upon the recent work of John Perry and David Lewis. Both contemporary philosophers work with a distinction that is similar to the one used by Plotinus and it will be employed to show why Plotinus thinks that nous alone is able to know itself, but psyche is not.

Central to this study is the Cartesian style argument whereby Plotinus demonstrates the reality of the true self (chapter 7). It aims to show that the true self is the Platonic 'inner man' [\dot{o} $\dot{e}\nu\tau\dot{o}\zeta$ $\ddot{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\sigma\zeta$] and that this 'inner man' is identical with 'a particular nous' [$\nu\sigma\dot{v}\zeta$ $\ddot{\epsilon}\kappa\alpha\sigma\tau\sigma\zeta$]. But before this argument can be understood the notion of 'knowing $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\nu\sigma\dot{v}\nu$ ', which is central to the argument, needs to be explained. This is the subject of chapter 6. It is there argued that this phrase has two distinct meanings: (i) a transcenden-

tal sense and (ii) an experiential sense. These differ in the way the objects of knowledge relate to nous. The former gives knowledge of nous in an indirect way. It is argued that the transcendental condition explains the discursive reasoning of psyche. The latter entails the direct experience of nous. It entails 'becoming nous'. This phrase is glossed as 'appropriating' $[\dot{\varphi}\kappa\epsilon i\omega\sigma\epsilon\nu]$ or 'identifying' with nous.

Chapter 7 makes use of this second sense of knowing $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\nu\sigma\dot{\nu}\nu$ and argues that we can have a direct experiential knowledge that we ourselves are nous. The experience we have is the same, i.e., in complete accordance with, that had by separate nous, though in our own case it is limited in scope. Separate nous has direct knowledge of all the Forms. We only have direct knowledge of as many forms as we have clearly recollected. The import of the argument is important for the teaching of the Return. For Plotinus' argument only makes sense if the experience he is talking about is attainable while still in the body. It is generally granted that with the separation of the psyche from the body the psyche is united with nous directly. The argument shows that Plotinus believed that direct contact could be experienced while still in the body. Also important to the argument is Plotinus' notion of $\pi i\sigma \tau \iota \varsigma$. Chapter 8 examines it and argues (controversially) that $\pi i\sigma \tau \iota \varsigma$ is not to be restricted to sense perception $[\alpha i\sigma \theta \eta \sigma \iota \varsigma]$, for although it is connected with vision, there are two types of vision in Plotinus: internal and external. It is argued that $\pi i\sigma \tau \iota \varsigma$ has a role to play in the internal vision of the self and thus is important to the Return.

The investigation then seeks to place Plotinus' central argument in a historical context. It is claimed that his argument is best understood when it is viewed as playing a role in the process of $oikei\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$. Chapter 9 argues that Plotinus was influenced by the Stoic theory, but that he adapted it to fit his teaching concerning the three natures $[\phi i\sigma\epsilon\iota\varsigma]$ or hypostases. In making the self identical with nous, Plotinus views the 'appropriation',

'identification', or 'perfection' of this rational nature as consisting in the activity of 'thought in the strict sense' [$\kappa\nu\rho i\omega\zeta$ $\nu o\epsilon i\nu$] which is the exclusive and essential property of nous.

The investigation goes on to explore the notion of $\kappa\nu\rho\hat{\iota}\omega\varsigma$ $\nu\sigma\hat{\epsilon}\hat{\iota}\nu$ by looking at Plotinus' definition of it in terms of $\sigma\nu\nu\alpha\hat{\iota}\sigma\theta\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$. Plotinus defines this activity as perfect self-knowledge, for (i) it consists in the thought $[\nu\sigma\hat{\epsilon}\hat{\iota}\nu]$ of the self directly knowing the self and all its parts, and (ii) it consists in the thought of the self seeking nothing 'outside'. Chapter 10 treats the first condition, chapter 11 the second.

The investigation concludes by looking at the normative dimension that Plotinus finds in nous. The final chapter aims to summarize the previous discussion as well as to broaden it out by suggesting a further area of profitable study. In ancient terms Plotinus is attempting to ground his ethics on physics. This is part of what his doctrine of oiκείωσις aims to achieve. The idea of deriving an 'ought' from an 'is' is far from absent in our own debates. Calling attention to this controversial move helps to show that the concept of the self is much more than a metaphysical notion. It is often articulated in ethical terms. The chapter examines Plotinus' description of nous as το καλου and why Plotinus thinks that when we acquire self-knowledge we ourselves are καλου. Perhaps more than any other feature of his philosophy it is his description of the life according to nous, the life that consists in the perfection of our rational nature, which makes his philosophy seem absurd and foreign to many philosophers, for it posits such a wide gulf between the life that we should be living in our true selves and the life that we are in fact living in our empirical selves. Plotinus, too, would have been aware of such a great

⁴ See MacIntyre, After Virtue (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), esp. chapter 5, 'Why the Enlightenment Project of Justifying Morality Had to Fail'.

⁵ So Williams, Shame and Necessity (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p 42, 'the account of what human beings are and how they do anything, is a theory that must be expressed in ethical terms'; and in much more detail Parfit, Reasons and Persons (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1984).

divorce, and it is argued that he looked upon the experience of $\tau \delta \kappa \alpha \lambda \delta \nu$ as an experience that bridges the gap between the ideal and real and helps the self to become united to its true self.

(ii) Historical Background

The idea that personal identity is found in nous is not original with Plotinus. Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics each have their own ways of identifying the person with the 'commanding faculty'. 6 How these conceptions influenced Plotinus can best be seen by looking at a text in which Plotinus sets out most of the ideas that will be central to the following investigation. The following text introduces the ideas of nous, self-identity, Plotinian $\partial i\kappa \epsilon i\omega \sigma i\zeta$, and the distinction between the inner and the outer. It occurs within a discussion where Plotinus draws upon the common conception $[\epsilon \nu \nu o i\alpha]$ which says that god is one and the same in each of us. He makes use of this conception to make a new beginning of his study of being $[\tau \delta \ \epsilon i \nu \alpha i]$. He raises the question whether everything desires unity and he contrasts the One with 'the ancient nature' $[\dot{\eta} \ \dot{\alpha}\rho \chi \alpha i\alpha \ \phi \dot{\nu} \sigma i\zeta]$.

ή δ' ἀρχαία φύσις καὶ ἡ ὅρεξις τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, ὅπερ ἐστὶν αὐτοῦ, εἰς εν ὄντως ἄγει, καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦτο σπεύδει πᾶσα φύσις, ἐφ' ἐαυτήν. τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τὸ ἀγαθὸν τῆ μιὰ ταύτη φύσει τὸ εἶναι αὐτῆς καὶ εἰναι αὐτήν τοῦτο δ΄ ἐστὶ τὸ εἶναι

^{6 &#}x27;Commanding faculty' is the LS translation of τὸ ἡγεμονικόν; cf. LS 53F, 53M with notes ad loc. vol 2, and Plotinus IV 7.7. For more on the Stoic view of the self see Long, 'Representation and the Self in Stoicism', in *Psychology*, ed. by Everson, Companion to Ancient Thought 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 102-120. For more on Plato and Aristotle in addition to the texts that are discussed below and how their ideas differ from later philosophers see Rist, 'Prohairesis: Proclus, Plotinus et Alii', in *De Iamblique à Proclus*, Entretiens Hardt 21 (Geneva, 1975), 103-117, which in spite of the title includes an important discussion of Plato, Aristotle, and Epictetus.

μίαν. οὕτω δὲ καὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ὀρθῶς εἶναι λέγεται οἰκεῖον· διὸ οὐδὲ ἔξω ζητεῖν αὐτὸ δεῖ.

But the ancient nature $[\dot{\eta} \ \dot{\alpha}\rho\chi\alpha\dot{\alpha}\alpha \ \phi\dot{\nu}\sigma\iota\varsigma]$ and the desire of the good which is [the desire] of itself truly leads to unity. And every nature hastens to this, that is to itself. For this is the good for this particular nature, that is to belong to itself or to be itself. And this is to be a unity. And so the good is correctly said to be one's own $[oi\kappa\epsilon\dot{\imath}o\nu]$. That is why one must not look for it on the outside. [VI 5.1.16-21]

This text, besides serving as a model of Plotinian obscurity, will also show that, like most difficult passages in Plotinus, when the problems are properly teased out and pursued, Plotinus is revealed to be a most astute and learned philosopher. It brings several questions immediately to mind. What does Plotinus mean by 'the ancient nature' $[\dot{\eta} \ \dot{\alpha}\rho\chi\alpha\hat{\iota}\alpha]$? Why does he agree with the claim that the good $[\tau \dot{\sigma} \ \dot{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\theta\delta\nu]$ is $\tau \dot{\sigma} \ oi\kappa\hat{\iota}\hat{\iota}o\nu$? And, what does he mean when says that 'every nature is hastening to itself'?

As the following study will make clear there can be little doubt that by 'ancient nature' $[\dot{\eta} \ \dot{\alpha}\rho\chi\alpha\dot{i}\alpha \ \phi\dot{\nu}\sigma\iota\varsigma]$ Plotinus means nous. Yet, even given that interpretation it is not immediately clear why this should be $\tau\dot{o}$ oixeio ν or good. What is the connection? It is in looking for this connection that his debt to earlier philosophers, at first obscure, can be teased out of the text.

Plato uses the phrase $\dot{\eta}$ $\dot{\alpha}\rho\chi\alpha\dot{\alpha}$ $\phi\dot{\nu}\sigma\iota\zeta$ in two passages in which he is discussing (amongst other things) the kinship of the psyche with the divine.⁸ He uses the phrase to refer to how the psyche really is (611b10). For Plato such a state is one where the psyche is not degraded by its association with the body or by other evils (611c1), but one where it

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⁷ Translation adapted from Armstrong. Throughout the study, unless otherwise indicated, the text used will be that of HS² and the translations my own.

⁸ Cf. Republic 611d2 and Timaeus 90d5 and the surrounding context. In both texts Plato refers to the psyche (or more specifically to motions [κινήσεις] of the psyche) as being συγγενής τῷ θείῳ; cf. 611e2 and 90a4 and 90c7-8.

then compares the current state of the psyche to the sea god Glaucus, whose 'ancient' or 'original' nature $[\dot{\eta} \ \dot{\alpha}\rho\chi\alpha i\alpha \ \phi \dot{\nu}\sigma\iota\varsigma]$ is obscured by the accretion of shells, seaweed and rocks. It is the psyche's impulse $[\dot{o}\rho\mu\dot{\eta},\ 611e4]$ and desire for philosophy that brings about the requisite purification and recovery of the 'original' nature $[\dot{\eta} \ \dot{\alpha}\rho\chi\alpha i\alpha \ \phi\dot{\nu}\sigma\iota\varsigma]$. The *Timaeus* passage provides more detail. It speaks of the best life for human beings as one that is 'in accordance with our original nature' $[\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}\ \tau\dot{\eta}\nu\ \dot{\alpha}\rho\chi\alpha i\alpha\nu\ \phi\dot{\nu}\sigma\iota\nu\ 90d4-5]$. And Plato spells out what he thinks this good life consists in. The philosopher by studying the harmonious motions of the universe aspires to make the part of him that is thinking like that which is being thought. 10

Before returning to Plotinus it should be noted that both of these texts had an undeniable influence on Aristotle's conception of the good life for man. In the well known passage in the Nicomachean Ethics he contrasts the human life $[\kappa\alpha\tau'\ \check{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\sigma\nu]$ with the life according the divine aspect of human nature, or as he spells it out more clearly later in the passage, the life according to nous $[\dot{o}\ \kappa\alpha\tau\grave{\alpha}\ \tau\grave{o}\nu\ \nuo\hat{\nu}\nu\ \beta(o\varsigma)]$. Even though Aristotle talks about a divine aspect of human nature he has no trouble in equating the life according to nous with the good life for man, for he views it in some way as our own. If it were not ours, he reasons, it would be strange for us to choose it. Why should we choose another's life rather than our own? He defends his claim with the following reasoning.

⁹ Cf. 611c4 κάλλιον and ἐναργέστερον. Plotinus is much taken with both of these descriptions. See below, chapter 12 for his discussion of the former, and chapter 8 for his discussion of the latter.

¹⁰ The text reads: δεί ... τῷ κατανοουμένψ τὸ κατανοοῦν ἐξομοιῶσαι κατὰ τὴν ἀρχαίαν φύσιν

⁽⁹⁰d1-4).
11 Cf. EN X 7, 1177^b26-28 and 1178^a7-10. See also *Metaphysics* Λ 7, 1072^b14-30 where this divine life (which we sometimes share) is described in terms of nous knowing itself.

τὸ γὰρ οἰκεῦν ἐκάστῳ τῆ φύσει κράτιστον καὶ ἤδιστόν ἐστιν ἐκάστῳ.

For what is appropriate for each thing by nature is best and most pleasant for it. [EN 1178a5-7]

What Aristotle offers in support reveals again his debt to Plato, for when Plato defends the claim that the wise part of the psyche $[\tau \delta \phi \rho \delta \nu \iota \mu o \nu]$ has the truest pleasures and the best life, he relies on the principle that

τὸ βελτιστον ἐκάστφ, τοῦτο καὶ οἰκειότατον

The best for each [part], this is also what is most appropriate [to it]. [Republic 586e2]

Adam in his commentary notices the connection between this text and that of EN X 7, but is content to describe the phrase in a way that leaves Aristotle out of the account. He says that it 'reaches to the very foundations of Plato's philosophy'. This line of reasoning, however, goes deep for other philosophers as well. Where Plato and Aristotle agree is in thinking that once the nature of something is understood, it is easy to see how it is best for that nature to live. Consequently, though they disagree about what a human being is, they can agree that it is best for a human being to live according to his nature. Likewise for Plotinus. The following study will show how this line of reasoning 'reaches to the very foundations' of Plotinus' philosophy as well. This will be seen when it is discovered that

¹² See Adam, *The Republic of Plato*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), note ad loc. His insight is compelling, but he fails to see the implication it has for other philosophers as well. Moreover, more premises need to be supplied before he can paraphrase the above statement to mean 'the cause of all existence is the Good'.

our original nature $[\dot{\eta} \dot{\alpha}\rho\chi\alpha\dot{i}\alpha \dot{\phi}\dot{\nu}\sigma\iota\zeta]$ is nous and that this is what is $\tau\dot{o}$ oikelov for us. Thus, he will be able to conclude that our good will consist in the life according to this nature.

This Platonic and Aristotelian background provides the context in which to understand Plotinus' agreement with the claim that the good $[\tau \hat{o} \ \hat{\alpha} \gamma \alpha \theta \hat{o} \nu]$ is correctly said to be to oixelov. His reference to a particular nature 'hastening to itself' can now be understood as the desire of a particular nature for its good, what is its own [τὸ οἰκεῖον]. And this desire, Plotinus says, is to 'belong to itself' or 'to be itself'. What then is latent in the above text and what the Platonic and Aristotelian background help to reveal is Plotinus' own theory of οἰκείωσις. As the following investigation will show, for Plotinus a nature 'hastening to itself', or desiring 'to belong to itself', or 'to be itself' can be interpreted in light of the Glaucus image as 'a nature hastening to undergo a purification, to become what it in fact truly is'.13 As will be argued below, Plotinus' theory owes much to the Stoic theory of the same name, but it should be noted here that it is the Stoic influence on Plotinus that goes some way in explaining what has puzzled many Plotinian scholars for some time: How is it that in Plotinus the Platonic ἔρως becomes transformed into a 'spiritualized self-love'?¹⁴ As will be seen, Plotinus goes some way with the Stoics when they say that the 'first impulse' $[\pi\rho\dot{\omega}\eta$ $\dot{\rho}\rho\mu\dot{\eta}]$ of every animal is for selfpreservation. 15 As Plotinus interprets the Timaeus text noted above, the 'first impulse' we

¹³ The idea of purification has been treated at length by Trouillard, La purification plotinienne (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955), though he makes no attempt to relate this idea to the Stoics.

14 The phrase is Harder's and is discussed below in chapter 12.

¹⁵ Cf. LS 57A discussed below in chapter 9. The influence is not simply and straightforwardly Stoic. Another text that was highly influential in Plotinus' thinking is Symposium 205e. There Plato raises the question of the difference between τὸ οἰκεῖον and τὸ ἀγαθόν, for he mentions men who would cut off their own hands or feet if they thought that these parts had become evil [πονηρά]. In this case τὸ οἰκεῖον cannot be τὸ ἀγαθόν (cf. VI 7.21, discussed below in chapter 9). He then seems to rule out such cases by stipulating that τὸ ἀγαθόν will be called οἰκεῖον: οὐ γὰρ τὸ ἐαυτῶν οἶμαι ἔκαστοι ἀσπάζονται, εἰ μὴ εἴ τις τὸ μὲν ἀγαθὸν οἰκεῖον καὶεῖ καὶ ἐαυτοῦ, τὸ δὲ κακὸν ἀλλότριον ὡς οὐδέν γε ἄλλο ἐστὶν οὖ ἐρῶσιν ἄνθρωποι ἢ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ. As the text quoted above shows, Plotinus follows Plato in thinking that everyone (every nature) desires the good, but he goes beyond Plato (or at least states more explicitly) that the desire of the good is at bottom a 'desire of itself'. Without a doubt Plotinus was helped in this direction by Aristotle's

have is to recover our 'original nature' $[\dot{\eta} \dot{\alpha}\rho\chi\alpha\dot{\alpha} \phi \dot{\nu}\sigma\iota\varsigma]$. In doing so we 'hasten to ourselves', and it is at least prima facie plausible to claim that this is to be found 'inside' rather than 'outside', though much more needs to be said before this distinction becomes clear.

This text from VI 5.1 has served to introduce not only the ideas that will be featured in the following investigation, but also to provide a glance — all too brief — at the treatment of some of these ideas by earlier philosophers. It suggests three important claims that will be defended at length below: Plotinus maintains (i) that our 'original nature' $[\dot{\eta}]$ ἀρχαία φύσις] is nous and this is what our self-identity consists in (in Plotinus' own words we are this when we 'belong to ourselves' or when we 'are ourselves'); (ii) that we have an impulse, not so much to preserve as to recover our nature which to some extent remains hidden from us; and (iii) that once we understand our nature - what we are we will know how we ought to live our lives.

(iii) Status Quaestionis

That there should be another study of nous in Plotinus needs little justification, for nous, although a cardinal notion in his philosophy, has not received detailed study. To date there is no study devoted strictly to the hypostasis nous as Blumenthal's earlier study was devoted to psyche. 16 There are, however, a number of studies on the self and selfknowledge in Plotinus. This ground has been covered by (in chronological order) Gerard

discussion of friendship, which raises questions about the true self and self-love; cf. EN IX 1066^a13-24, 1168^b25-31, and 1170^b1-20.

16 See n. 3 above.

J. P. O'Daly, *Plotinus' Philosophy of the Self* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1973), A. Hilary Armstrong, 'The Apprehension of Divinity in the Self and Cosmos in Plotinus', ¹⁷ and George Wald, *Self-Intellection and Identity in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1990). ¹⁸ Hence, a few remarks are in order to show how this study continues as well as contradicts some of this earlier work.

O'Daly's study (1973) carries on the work begun by Bréhier (1928), Trouillard (1955), Harder (1958), Himmerich (1959) and Dodds (1960). He aimed to 'investigate the concept of 'self' in the philosophy of Plotinus' (p. 4), and when carried out he claimed that it 'underlined the variety and subtlety of the flexible notion of self in Plotinus' (p. 5). O'Daly's study is short (less than 100 pages) and he tries to cover, in addition to the scholarship just mentioned, all the relevant texts in the Plotinian corpus. The result is that the problems surrounding the concept of the self receive superficial treatment and that he can do little more than 'paraphrase' the texts that he considers. Still, when these weaknesses are duly noted and taken into consideration, this study can now be useful in providing the reader with a synopsis of the problem, a survey of the relevant texts, and an historical overview of the status of the problem before and after Plotinus. Some problems nevertheless remain. Most worrisome is O'Daly's contentedness to settle upon a 'flexible notion' of the self. It is more likely that the reader is left with a concept that is hazy or confused. The reader is told (p. 27) that Plotinus coined the term $\hat{\eta}\mu\hat{e}\hat{i}\varsigma$ for 'self', but no attempt is made to explain or understand why the coinage is made. He is told that

¹⁷ in The Significance of Neoplatonism, ed. R. Baine Harris, Studies in Neoplatonism Ancient and Modern, vol. I, (Norfolk: Old Dominion University Press, 1976), 187-198.

¹⁸ Szlezák, Platon und Aristoteles in der Nuslehre Plotins (Basel: Schwabe, 1979), covers some of this ground, especially in chapter 4, 'Der Nus der Seele und der nicht herabgestiegene Seelenteil', but he is more interested in Plotinus as an interpreter of Plato.

¹⁹ See p. 27 for an example and his admission of this type of treatment.

²⁰ Chapter 1, 'The Delphic Commandment as Philosophical Propaedeutic' provides a good survey of the use of the Delphic command in philosophy from Socrates to Proclus.

'the value of the self as a principle of identity at several levels [i.e., psyche, nous, and the One] is to be observed' (p. 58). But again no reason is given, and no attempt is made to understand the metaphor of 'levels'. O'Daly interprets this phrase to mean that the self is 'common to both levels', i.e., nous and psyche. But this talk of levels, which began with Bréhier $(1921)^{21}$ and runs though the scholarship right up to O'Daly and beyond, is highly misleading, for it obscures the question of the identity of the self.²² Is it psyche? Is it nous? Or is it some third thing capable of moving from one 'level' to the other? When this question of identity is pressed O'Daly's account comes up short, for he fails to see that Plotinus himself is interested in pressing the question, what is a person $[\check{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\sigma\varsigma]$?, and in re-defining and restricting the notion of what a person is, i.e., nous.²³ What O'Daly is missing is some account of how Plotinus thinks that the self that is part of the historical process is connected with the real self $[\nu o \hat{\nu} \varsigma \ \tilde{\epsilon} \kappa \alpha \sigma \tau \sigma \varsigma]$. He is aware of this problem (p. 56), but rather than look for an answer to it he settles for a 'flexible notion'.

The following study seeks to go beyond O'Daly in claiming that such a 'flexible notion' cannot answer the question of the identity of the self. Furthermore, it argues that the problem of the relationship of the 'two selves', one historical, one ideal, does not generate a tension in Plotinus' philosophy (as is often thought) between his objective categories, on the one hand, and his psychological or ethical categories on the other. Rather, this problem is better understood as similar in type to the problem posed by Thomas Nagel: How do we hold together our objective and subjective points of view of the world?²⁴

²¹ Bréhier's views are quoted and discussed below in chapter 4.

²² Schroeder, Form and Transformation: A Study in the Philosophy of Plotinus (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), p. 92 speaks with somewhat more clarity of a 'scale of identity'.

²³ O'Daly lacks an account of how Plotinus seeks to connect 'the man in process' with the 'real self'; cf. pp. 56-59 and pp. 23-24.

24 Nagel's question is discussed below in chapter 4.

Armstrong seems to have a clearer view of where the identity of the self lies, but again like O'Daly many of the details are missing. He tends to work on the level of generality and survey. When confronted by the phrase 'The boundaries of the self are those of the intelligible cosmos' (p. 195), the reader is left to his own devices to understand it. Rather than explain what Plotinus may mean by such an idea, his discussion at this point trails off into a discussion of the religious thought of our time. No mention is made of what the self is exactly or how Aristotle's theory of cognition may help to explain the relation of the self to the intelligible world.

The following study proposes to show how the identity of the self as a 'particular nous' $[\nu o \hat{v}_{\zeta} \ \tilde{\epsilon} \kappa \alpha \sigma \tau o_{\zeta}]$ entails that it is part of the intelligible world and how Plotinus drew upon Aristotle's idea (that in the case of immaterial objects thinker and object of thought are the same) to explain the relation between the self and the 'intelligible cosmos'. Moreover, it also seeks to go beyond Armstrong by showing that the emphasis placed upon the self by the Stoics and other Stoic ideas influenced Plotinus' own views. In particular when Armstrong says in a parenthetical remark, 'in the Plotinian universe everything is alive and in some sense thought' (p. 190), this is an example of the sort of simplification and bald assertion that gives Plotinus a bad name as a philosopher. What is frequently missing in such claims is enough historical or philosophical context that would show how a serious philosopher might come to hold such a view. The following investigation will offer an interpretation of this Plotinian claim along Stoic lines: the idea that everything is in some sense thought means that the $\pi \rho \omega \tau \eta$ $\dot{\sigma} \rho \mu \dot{\eta}$ of every living thing is a desire for thought $[\nu \dot{\sigma} \eta \sigma \iota \varsigma]$. This interpretation reveals again how important the ideas of nous and $\nu \dot{\sigma} \eta \sigma \iota \varsigma$ are in Plotinus' philosophy.

Wald's study covers some of the same ground as the present investigation, but his emphasis is different. This is obvious in the statement of his aims. He wants to argue

two claims: (i) that Plotinus' notion of ascent is the central aspect of his thought, and (ii) that the Forms can be the content of intellect [nous] without thereby losing their own content (pp. 18, 185). Where the present study overlaps with his it has sought to avoid the confusion present in some of his key ideas and to pursue in more detail what he was content to leave hanging. (See next paragraph.)

From our survey of O'Daly's book we saw that it has been suggested that Plotinus' objective categories are at odds with his psychological or ethical ones. Wald is aware of this problem but it is not clear how he proposes to treat it. Following the statement of the problem made by Bréhier he says:

It is perhaps possible to speak of two different impulses here, one speculative and one concerned with the purification of the soul. But then we must inquire what the relation between these two impulses is (pp. 22-23).

But then, not more than a page later he says, 'Plotinus does not separate these two interests at all' (p. 24). But one is left wondering how Wald has succeeded in connecting the two, or at least showing how Plotinus connected them. All that intervenes between these two sentences is an account of Schelling's *Erzählung* approach to philosophy, but this is an explanation of obscurum per obscurius.²⁵

In talking about Plotinus' use of the pronoun 'we' $[\dot{\eta}\mu\epsilon\hat{\iota}\varsigma]$ Wald is content to say that Plotinus uses it to pick out 'general consciousness as a particular point of view' (p.

²⁵ Or circular; cf. p. 152 n. 3 where Wald notes that Schelling has read Plotinus. Nor is this the only time that Wald lets Schelling do his thinking for him; cf. pp. 63-64.

152), and that 'it can mean "man" in his essence, as a source of freedom, and it can mean more specifically the "I"' (p. 152). He thus presents the reader with at least three different ideas that require sorting out. And when one turns to where this work is claimed to be done (pp. 153-155) one has to be content with a quotation from Plotinus that is as long as the accompanying commentary. The reader will not easily learn from Wald what $\dot{\eta}\mu\epsilon\hat{\iota}\varsigma$ has to do with personal identity.

Wald's treatment of identity is also somewhat confused. It is not just that the reader has to wade through sentences like, 'Beyond "identity" is a loss of identity, which is itself an ulitmate [sic] achieving of "identity" (p. 178).²⁶ That is bad enough. But in discussing how identity is something to be achieved one reads, 'one must undergo a transformation of being in order to get to what was always there' (p. 151, my emphasis) or in talking about the entry of the self into nous he says, 'But the we or I is no longer engaged in its own activity' (p. 154, my emphasis). In neither case is it clear that Plotinus looks upon our achievement of identity as a recovery of our original nature.

The following study while seeking to avoid and to resolve some of these confusions — all too frequent in Plotinian scholarship — also seeks to explicate the similarity and difference between nous and psyche, the role played by Forms of individuals, and why Plotinus works with such a broad conception of thought $[\nu \hat{o} \eta \sigma \iota \varsigma]$. It attempts to do so in a way that seeks to avoid what may be called the Plotinian paradox. Plotinus is a notoriously obscure writer. His texts mean little or nothing to all but the scholar who is intimately familiar with them. Consequently, secondary literature tends to the extremes:

26 Wald's book is marred by many typographical errors.

Wald touches on each of these issues, but without much comment: on nous and psyche (p. 77), Forms of individuals (pp. 63-64), truth in intellect (p. 67), and a broad sense of $\nu \delta \eta \sigma \iota \varsigma$ (p. 86). Each of these examples point to a major shortcoming in Wald's study. He often tends to assume that he can explain Plotinus simply by quoting from him. Such a practice is dangerous for explaining any philosopher, but with Plotinus it borders on the disastrous.

it is either of the superficial survey sort or a model of learned erudition, inaccessible to the person with genuine philosophical or historical interest. The following investigation seeks to avoid these extremes by confining Plotinus to a particular problem that he himself thought was important: Why is it that nous alone has self-knowledge? It is within this context that the reader with general philosophic interest will see that Plotinus treats personal identity. It is also within this context that the reader familiar with ancient philosophy will see that Plotinus' interest in the question of self-knowledge was likely stimulated by Stoic influences.

(iv) Transliteration of Technical Terms

The Greek terms for the three Plotinian realities or natures $[\phi i \sigma \epsilon \iota \varsigma]$ are $\tau \delta \ \epsilon \nu$, $\nu o \hat{\nu} \varsigma$, and $\psi \nu \chi \hat{\eta}$. Another somewhat technical term will be added to this list which will feature prominently in the discussion of chapter 12, $\tau \delta \kappa \alpha \lambda \delta \nu$. While this last term can also be used to name the realities, it refers more commonly to an important and ignored attribute of nous.²⁸ This investigation adopts the policy of transliterating rather than translating all but one of the above terms. ($\tau \delta \ \epsilon \nu$ is exempted because the rarefied concept of the number one or of a unit seems more immune from misleading associations than the others and because the transliteration introduces more problems than it solves.)²⁹

Why present transliterations rather than translations? Consider Armstrong's translation, which is now the standard for English speakers. Armstrong consistently translates

²⁸ For the use of this term to refer to the One see V 5.8.10; for nous see V 9.2.22-23.

²⁹ Why not transliterate $\tau \delta \tilde{\epsilon} \nu$? The obvious difficulty with this term compared with the others is that while it is easy to say or write in English 'nous', 'psyche', or 'kalon', the use of 'hen' in speech or print invokes images of the barnyard. The older 'henology' is awkward.

the terms for the realities as 'the One', 'Intellect', and 'soul'. He renders $\kappa\alpha\lambda\delta\nu$ 'beauty' or 'beautiful' depending upon whether it is a noun or adjective. These translations are acceptable, provided that one takes the English words as ciphers which stand in for whatever the original Greek terms mean. While acceptable in theory, this approach does not work in practice. Three objections immediately present themselves. Firstly, the danger with this approach is that the denotations and connotations of the English terms may obscure the meaning of the Greek. The vigilance required to empty the English terms of their unwanted shading is arduous and we often flag in our efforts. The result is not incomprehension, but comprehending too much. Foreign ideas and associations are read back into the text. Any translation can fall victim to this criticism, but it is especially poignant when technical, philosophical terms are involved. Hence, secondly, translating obscures the fact that these are technical terms. The terms for the realities express the cardinal points of Plotinus' philosophy. Finally, and more importantly, as will become most clear in the case of 'nous', translation forces the issue of interpretation. The whole slant of Plotinus' philosophy can be changed by translating 'nous' as 'Intellect' or 'Spirit'. Again any use of 'spirit' as a translation reinforces the first objection.

To be fair, transliteration has problems of its own. Nevertheless, for the purposes of the following study it is thought that the advantages in this case outweigh the disadvantages. We may at first be puzzled and not understand what Plotinus means by these terms, but at least we shall know that we do not know. Such a state, as Socrates maintained long ago, is not a bad thing. In our own case if we begin from here, we may better learn what Plotinus has to teach us about these realities and we reduce the chance of foreign associations creeping into the text. The case of 'psyche', which the OED lists as an English word, shows that we cannot have complete success. It is assumed, however, that 'psyche' is a somewhat less misleading term than 'soul'.

For simplicity 'kalon' will, for the most part, be left uninflected. The meaning of this term in Greek, its importance to the philosophy of Plotinus, and why 'beauty' is a misleading translation are discussed below in chapter 12.

Aller Anfang ist schwer.

CHAPTER 2

A Working Idea of Nous

The aim of this preliminary chapter is to provide us with a working idea of nous and to introduce us to the problem of how Plotinus distinguishes between nous and psyche. It will be argued that Plotinus thinks of nous as a 'divine mind' and that his conception owes much to earlier philosophers. Furthermore, it will be shown that this conception of nous as divine raises a problem of how to characterize our relation to it, for, on the one hand, as something divine it seems to be 'above' or 'beyond' our present human condition; but, on the other hand, Plotinus sometimes speaks of nous as a 'part' of psyche.\frac{1}{2} It is this problem that emerges from Plotinus' conception of nous that will be the focus of the following investigation.

The best place to go for an introduction to both of these issues is a text of Plotinus in which he himself introduces the problems that he thinks surround his own conception of nous. This text will provide us with the material from which to construct a working idea as well as show how Plotinus' idea relates to other conceptions offered by different schools.

We must consider the nature $[\phi \dot{\nu}\sigma \iota \varsigma]$ of this nous, which our reasoning $[\lambda \dot{\delta} \gamma \delta \varsigma]$ tells us is the genuine reality $[\tau \dot{\delta} \ \dot{\delta} \nu \ \dot{\delta} \nu \tau \omega \varsigma]$ and true substance $[\delta \dot{\nu} \sigma \dot{\iota} \alpha]$, when we have first confirmed by

¹ Cf. I 1.8; I 6.6.14-21 (quoted and discussed below in chapter 12, p. 206); V 3.2.14, 17; and Meijer, Plotinus on the Good or the One: Enneads VI 9 (Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1992), 166-167. Meijer equates 'the nous of psyche' with ψυχὴ λογική, διάνοια, and τὸ διανοητικόν οι τὸ λογιζόμενον. As will emerge later on in this investigation Meijer's equation ignores an important dimension of nous.

following a different course that something of the sort must exist. It is perhaps ridiculous to inquire whether there is nous in the world, though there are, it may be, people who would dispute even this. But it is more disputable if it is the sort of nous we say it is, and if it is a separate $[\chi\omega\rho\iota\sigma\tau\dot{\alpha}]$ one, and if it is the real beings $[\tau\dot{\alpha}\ \delta\nu\tau\alpha]$ and if the nature of the Forms $[\epsilon\iota\delta\eta]$ is there: this is our present subject. [V 9.3.1-8].²

Here we have five claims made about nous which Plotinus is willing to defend: (1) its existence and nature can be discovered by reasoning; (2) it is true substance; (3) it is separate; (4) it is the place of the Forms; and (5) it is difficult to deny the presence of nous in the world. Since all these claims will receive more detailed treatment in later chapters, what it is important to note at this initial stage is that all the prominent schools of philosophy in the ancient world are represented here. We need not assume, however, that the ideas which Plotinus borrows always wear their school colours. So, provided that we understand 'represented' in a generous sense, the following broad outline is uncontroversial.

Let us look at the influence of the schools in chronological order beginning with the Academy. Nous is the place of the Forms. One way to understand this claim is to see Plotinus following up Plato's own, admittedly mysterious, attempts (begun in the Republic and arguably continued in the Sophist and Timaeus) to organize the world of Forms. In Plotinus' own day this debate was carried on by other Platonists such as Longinus.⁴

The claim that nous is $\dot{\alpha}\lambda\eta\theta\dot{\eta}\varsigma$ où $\sigma\dot{i}\alpha$ is reminiscent of Aristotle's claim about the unmoved mover. Aristotle takes the unmoved mover to be the paradigm instance of

⁴ Cf. VP 18.8-9 and 20.89-95.

² Translation Armstrong, but 'nous' is substituted for all his instances of 'intellect'.

That nous can be discovered by reasoning is the background theme of the first seven chapters of this study; that it is true substance is explored in chapter 10; that it is separate is implied by the arguments presented in chapters 7 and 10; that it is the place of the Forms is further explored in chapter 11; that it is difficult to deny the reality of nous is touched on below and in more detail in chapter 8.

 $o\dot{v}oi\alpha$. The perfect instance of $o\dot{v}oi\alpha$ he then takes to be perfect $\dot{\varepsilon}v\dot{\varepsilon}\rho\gamma\varepsilon\iota\alpha$. This perfect $\dot{\varepsilon}v\dot{\varepsilon}\rho\gamma\varepsilon\iota\alpha$, or life, he takes to be the life of nous. As we shall see Plotinus takes Aristotle's claims seriously and agrees with him in some of these equations.

Moving on to the Stoics, we can see that his debt to them emerges from his opposition. With the claim that nous is separate, Plotinus rejects the Stoic view that the organizing principle of the world was an immanent divine logos. While he agrees with the Stoics (against the Epicureans) that it is hard to deny the providential arrangement of the world, he opposes their materialism and makes his organizing principle immaterial and transcendent.

Finally, talk of providence leads to his opposition to the Epicureans.⁷ It is plausible to identify the people who deny the presence of nous in this world as the Epicureans.⁸ Two reasons might be offered for their denial. Firstly, as will emerge from chapters 7 and 8, Plotinus thinks that their empiricist epistemology prevents them from discovering the reality of nous. Secondly, their theory of the random origin and ordering of the world excludes the idea of providential order. Hence, the claim that there is no nous in the world operates on these two levels.

⁵ Cf. Metaphysics Λ 7 and the discussion of ἐνέργεια below in chapter 10.

⁶ This opposition should not cause us to overlook the fact that Plotinus borrows and uses the Stoic notion of the σπερματικοί λόγοι; cf. LS 46A (with commentary) for the Stoic idea, and V 9.9.10, III 1.7.3-4, IV 3.11, IV 4.12, and IV 4.36 for Plotinus' adaptation of it.

⁷ Plotinus' detailed discussion of providence is found in III 2 and III 3.

⁸ Plotinus would have noticed that in the few uses of the term 'nous' by Epicurus it means little more than 'good sense' or 'common sense'. It has none of the importance Plotinus wishes to attribute to it. DeWitt's earlier remark (that 'in the extant remains of Epicurus the word nous does not occur; it seems to have been deliberately avoided', Epicurus and his Philosophy (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1954), p. 124) we now know to be false, but it still does seem to capture Epicurus' attitude. Arrighette, Epicuro opere (Torino: Guilio Einaudi, 1960) lists only 5 occurrences of the term. Plotinus equates the denial of nous with the denial of providence, though he is aware that the assertion of nous does not necessarily amount to an assertion of providence. Nonetheless, he brings both of these ideas together in his own teaching. He mentions Epicurus explicitly at II 9.15.8 as denying providence. This view also seems to be the target of his 1 emarks made in the opening of V 9.1 and VI 9.5.1-5. This latter text is discussed below in chapter 8.

We can begin to see from this text one of the reasons why Plotinus is a difficult philosopher and why his conception of nous is so difficult to understand, for Plotinus is immersed in a tradition (more than eight centuries old by his time) which shapes his arguments, objections, and views. Often, Plotinus' own views are best appreciated when seen as emerging out of his dialectical encounters with the other philosophical schools in the ancient world. Nevertheless, though difficult, we can put together a working idea of nous based upon this text. What we have so far is that nous is something like Aristotle's god and Plotinus accepts it as such and as the paradigm instance of οὐσία. Following Aristotle he makes nous 'outside' or 'above' the sensible cosmos.9 It remains to be seen how Plotinus will characterize the relationship between nous and the cosmos — is it to be explained as formal, final or efficient causality? We know that he wants to hold that nous providentially orders the world. In this respect nous is more like Plato's demiurge. Though the relationship between Aristotle's god and the world remains a moot point, Plotinus and Aristotle agree in this much, that they both describe the relation as one of dependency. 10 Yet, there is nothing to suggest that Aristotle's god is aware of the world. It all depends on how one interprets the obscure remark that its activity is $\dot{\eta}$ $\nu \dot{\phi} \eta \sigma \iota \zeta$ νοήσεως νόησις. 11 In contrast, for Plotinus, it is clear that he considers nous to be linked to the world in a way that he describes as 'providential'. 12 In the simplest terms we can

⁹ Aristotle's view is usually pieced together from *Physics* 267^b24-26; *de caelo* 279^a15-18; *Metaphysics* Λ 7-9; and *de generatione animalium* 736^b27; for Plotinus' view see V 9.5. For an excellent discussion of Plotinus' criticism of Aristotle's god see Gerson, *God and Greek Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 191-201.

¹⁰ Cf. Metaphysics 1072b13-14 and Plotinus V 9.5.

¹¹ Metaphysics 1075b34-35; discussed below in chapter 10.

¹² For its assimilation to Plato's demiurge see V 9.3.26; V 8.2.31-32; II 9.6; III 9.1; for its providential ordering see VI 2.22 and VI 7.1-2.

think of Plotinian separate nous as a hybrid obtained from combining Aristotle's god and Plato's demiurge. 13

The question of the relationship between Plotinian nous and the world leads us back to the issue of his opposition to both Aristotle and to Stoicism. As we have seen Plotinus wants nous to be the ordering principle of this world — the 'material' world — yet he also wants nous to be separate from it. Hence, he rejects the Stoic view of the immanent, divine logos as providing the complete account and he agrees with Aristotle that nous is something transcendent. Yet, he disagrees with Aristotle's claim that nous is the highest principle $[\dot{\alpha}\rho\chi\dot{\eta}]$. For Plotinus, the highest principle is the One. Without going into the details of this opposition we should nevertheless be able to see that nous for Plotinus is an intermediate principle. He situates it between psyche - which we can think of at this introductory stage in terms of (animate) nature - and the One, the utterly transcendent principle, the ultimate source.

Thus, from what has been said, we have the following working idea. For Plotinus, nous is a divine reality. It is transcendent from the material world, i.e., it is immaterial and more real for being so. (Plotinus uses the word 'separate' to capture both notions.) Yet it is also immanent in the sense that it is responsible for the ordering of the world. It can order the world because it has within it the Forms. Simply put nous is a divine mind. Understood in this way we can refer to it in Plotinus' own terms as 'separate nous'.14

other. This will be seen more clearly below in chapters 5 and 7.

¹³ The term 'hybrid' is accurate provided that Aristotle's god is not originally a version of Plato's demiurge. For the details of this background see Armstrong, 'The Background of the Doctrine "That the Intelligibles are not Outside the Intellect", in Les Sources de Plotin, Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique V (Geneva: 1960); and more recently 'Aristotle in Plotinus: The Continuity and Discontinuity of Psyche and Nous', in Aristotle and the Later Tradition, ed. Henry Blumenthal and Howard Robinson, Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy Supplementary Vol. 1991.

¹⁴ O'Meara refers to it as 'divine intellect'; he says: 'I shall refer in what follows to 'divine intellect' so as to indicate that Plotinus is thinking primarily, not of human intellect, but of an intellect which is independent of the world and is presupposed by the soul which produces the world', Plotinus (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 33. One of the aims of this study is to show that for Plotinus knowledge of the divine intellect stands and falls with knowledge of the human intellect. To meet the one is to meet the

Then, because it is an intermediate principle, we can at this stage guess that its role will be to mediate between psyche and the One.

Calling nous, however, a 'divine mind' or claiming that it is 'separate' presents us with a problem, for Plotinus talks about 'nous' as a part of us.

And thought $[\nu \acute{o}\eta \sigma \iota \varsigma]$ belongs to us in this way [i.e., as the life of psyche], because psyche is thoughtful $[\nu o \epsilon \rho \acute{\alpha}]$ and thought $[\nu \acute{o}\eta \sigma \iota \varsigma]$ is the better $[\kappa \rho \epsilon \acute{\iota} \tau \tau \omega \nu]$ life both whenever psyche thinks $[\nu o \hat{\eta}]$ and whenever nous acts in relation to us. For this is a part of us and to this we return $[\check{\alpha}\nu\iota\mu\epsilon\nu]$. 15 [I 1.13.5-8]

Texts like this one raise the question of how nous as a divine mind can be a part of us. Obviously, we are not the transcendent $\dot{\alpha}\rho\chi\dot{\eta}$ that is nous. But, equally clear, Piotinus maintains that this principle is a part of us. He sometimes speaks of 'nous' as something present in the psyche. Plotinus' usage allows two inferences. On the one hand, either he equivocates on the term 'nous', so that the nous in psyche is one thing and separate nous another. Or, on the other, he must account for the relation between nous and psyche. He must show us how nous can still be separate yet nevertheless remain a part of psyche. If his account is convincing, then we shall be able to say that nous — whether human or divine — is essentially the same.

This investigation will argue that the key to the resolution of this difficulty lies in examining how Plotinus characterizes the relation between the highest part of the psyche

¹⁵ The translation of & reperts as 'return' needs no apology, but more needs to be said before we can see how the idea of 'return' is linked to the Plotinian theme of the Return to our origin. This study will further explore this connection. A more literal translation of the last line would be 'we reach (or extend) to this'; cf. Plato's use of this verb at Republic 531c and 614d. The Greek leaves no question; 'this' refers to nous.

¹⁶ See n. I above.

¹⁷ This is the view that Meijer adopts; cf. pp. 166-167.

and what he calls a 'particular nous' [$\nu o \hat{\nu} \xi \kappa \alpha \sigma \tau o \zeta$]. 18 It will argue that these are the same when psyche is 'looking within', i.e., thinking non-discursively, but different when psyche is 'looking without', i.e., thinking discursively. As we shall see in more detail in chapter 5, the look within is the attempt by the psyche to see itself, to catch a glimpse of itself, to think itself. Such self-reflexive thought is difficult and fraught with paradox. But before this paradox can be explored we must first ask whether there is a distinction to be drawn between discursive and non-discursive thought. Such a distinction has been the subject of a recent controversy, which the following chapter will explore.

¹⁸ Cf. n. 2 in chapter 1 above, p. 1.

CHAPTER 3

Is 'Nous' or voeîv Something We Experience?

It will not be controversial to tell you that in addition to the reading you are now doing you are also thinking. It is not controversial but disturbing. At one point we are reading and not aware of it; at another point we are so aware of our reading that we soon realize that we have lost track of what the author is up to. The reason for this seems to be that as we become more aware of our thought processes we seem to become less aware of their contents. Still, there is no controversy in saying that in all this we are thinking. The controversy comes in when we begin to chase our tail, when we begin to ask, Who is reading? Who is it that is aware of the reader? These questions point to a controversial issue that will be pursued throughout this study: How is the self aware of itself?

The purpose of this chapter is to clear the ground in order to show why this was a natural question for Plotinus to raise and to offer a suggestion about why he thinks this question is connected to his idea of nous. The focus of this chapter will be the Greek term vosiv which is often translated as 'thinks' or 'thinking'. Plotinus uses it to describe the 'thinking' of nous, the psyche, and the self. Thus, because he seems to mean something different in each case our problem is set: What does Plotinus mean when he uses vosiv?

The difficulty in translating voeiv is connected with difficulties in translating 'nous'.

When faced with this last term translators render it either by 'intellect' or by 'spirit'.

Both translations have their shortcomings, as we shall see. Moreover, the problem of

¹ Guthrie, Bréhier, MacKenna, and Armstrong favour 'intellect'; Inge, Harder, Cilento, Igal favour 'spirit'. Meijer and Oosthout favour 'mind', but this is likely to drag in problems associated with Idealism or suggest the Cartesian mind/body dualism.

translating 'nous' is compounded by the difficulty of two other related terms: $\nu \acute{o}\eta \sigma \iota \varsigma$ and $\nu o \eta \tau \acute{o}\nu$. All four Greek terms openly display their etymological connections. One of the attractions of 'Intellect' as a translation is that 'intelligence' and 'intellection' can sometimes be used for $\nu \acute{o}\eta \sigma \iota \varsigma$ and 'intelligible' for $\nu o \eta \tau \acute{o}\nu$. 'Intelligize' is thought by some to work for $\nu o s \acute{e}\nu$. Those who think it does not work fall back on 'to think' or 'thinking' for this last term, content with illuminating three out of the four connections. But it is precisely here that translation is misleading. Plotinus often describes the activity of separate nous by the Greek word $\nu o s \acute{e}\nu$. But if this is translated as 'thinking', we shall be unable to see that the type of thinking done by nous — whether it be separate nous or nous present in psyche — is quite different from discursive thought which we take to be thinking.

Thus, we find that Plotinus takes 'thinking' to be a genus with two species. He draws a distinction between the 'thinking' of nous and the 'thinking' of psyche. The former is more properly [$\kappa\nu\rho\iota\dot{\omega}\tau\epsilon\rho\sigma\nu$] called 'thinking'.³ The latter is thinking in a derivative [$\pi\rho\dot{\alpha}\varsigma\ \tilde{\epsilon}\nu$] sense. The differentia which distinguishes the two is expressed in Aristotle's claim about the identity of thinking and object of thought. Aristotle maintains that 'where the objects are immaterial that which thinks and that which is thought are identical'.⁴ We may put this thought in more modern dress by talking about intentional objects. There is less difficulty with the claim that the thought of a subject is identical with an intentional object (whatever that is) than with an immaterial object. My thinking of a Fuchsian mathematical function, provided I have got it right, just is thinking about the function. My

² Bussanich, The One and its Relation to Intellect in Plotinus (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988) uses 'intelligize' (apologetically). He wishes to clearly mark a distinction between discursive and intuitive reason, referring to the latter as 'a sort of transcendental cognition' (p. 6).

³ Cf. V 3.6.1-6.

⁴ De Anima 430a3-4: ἐπὶ μὲν γὰρ τῶν ἄνευ ὕλης τὸ αὐτό ἐστι τὸ νοοῦν καὶ τὸ νοούμενον; translation Hicks, Aristotles De anima (1907; reprint. Zürich: Georg Olms, 1990). This phrase is quoted by Plotinus with approval at V 9.5.30-31; V 4.2.48; VI 6.6.19-20; VI 6.15.19-20.

thought.⁵ The problem we have is over what sort of immaterial objects exist apart from thought.⁶ Without becoming embroiled in difficulty, and assuming that *prima facie* we can make some sense out of Aristotle's claim, we must ask how this differentia defines two classes of thought.

To see how Plotinus come up with two types of thinking we must introduce the question of self-thought and self-knowledge.⁷ If we only work with the Aristotelian claim mentioned above and we make the assumption (reasonable for Plotinus) that both nous and psyche are immaterial entities, then assuming that nous and psyche engage in self-reflexive thought, we might think that they both have perfect self-knowledge. For according to the Aristotelian claim since they are both immaterial their thoughts of themselves would be identical with themselves. Thus, in some way, they would both have perfect selfknowledge. But this is not the case. Plotinus maintains that while nous has this perfect self-knowledge, psyche does not. What accounts for this difference? It is tempting in this context to say that matter makes the difference. For an embodied psyche would not have perfect self-knowledge because such a psyche can never fully know itself because it is entangled in a material body which obstructs the psyche's knowledge. Its knowing could never become identical with that part of itself which was caught up in matter. The difficulty with this is that it seems to imply that a disembodied psyche would have perfect selfknowledge, that it just would be identical with nous. Hence, the type of thinking done by this psyche would be no different from the type of thinking of nous. Such a claim, as we shall see later on, leads to the difficulty of how Plotinus can distinguish between separate

⁵ This example is discussed in more detail below, p. 37.

⁶ This is a problem I wish to avoid, but see the mathematical example I discuss below. The existence of mind-independent, immaterial objects in mathematics, which is often labeled 'Platonism', I take to be a type of Platonism more accessible to us than some of its ancient forms.

⁷ This question is discussed in detail below in chapter 5.

nous and a disembodied psyche.⁸ Looked at in this way the Aristotelian requirement does not seem to give us enough to distinguish clearly between the thought of psyche and the thought of nous.

But let us look at the question of self-knowledge from another angle. Plotinus maintains that the life of nous is eternal life while the life of psyche is everlasting. The former life is without any interval, complete and altogether. It has nothing whatsoever to do with time. The latter is sequential, incomplete and spread out in time. Thus, Plotinus can describe the life of psyche as really a succession of lives. This temporal distinction really amounts to a unity criterion which, as we shall see later, Plotinus uses to draw a difference between the thinking of psyche and nous. The criterion is most apparent in the case of self-knowledge. Psyche can never have the same perfect self-knowledge as nous because psyche can never really know itself. For the moment psyche has self-knowledge, that knowledge is no longer of itself, but of another. It cannot grasp itself because it is caught in the flux of time. This interpretation gives one way of accounting for Plotinus' cryptic remark that psyche 'thought itself as belonging to another'. In contrast to

⁸ Plotinus' views of reincarnation suggest that a disembodied psyche inhabits some sort of purgatory. It is not the case that the psyche at the death of the body immediately is one with nous. For more on these views see A. N. M. Rich, 'Reincarnation in Plotinus', *Mnemosyne* 4 (1957), 232-238.

⁹ This distinction is worked out at length in treatise III 7. For the characterization of the life of nous see III 7.3.36-38: γίνεται τοίνυν ἡ περὶ τὸ ον ἐν τῷ εἶναι ζωὴ ὁμοῦ πᾶσα καὶ πλήρης ἀδιάστατος πανταχῆ τοῦτο, ο δὴ ζητοῦμεν, αἰών. Plotinus' characterization of eternity is more widely known through its presence in Boethius de Consolatione Philosophae V 6: Aeternitas igitur est interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio, quod ex collatione temporalium clarius liquet. For the life of psyche see III 7.11, esp. lines 35-45.

¹⁰ V 3.6.3-4. Translation Armstrong. The text reads: $\dot{\eta}$ μèν γὰρ ψυχὴ ἐνόει ἑαντὴν ὅτι ἄλλου. Cf. III 7.11.39-41 where the life of psyche is described as a succession of lives spread out in time. There each life is called 'another life' [ζωὴ ἄλλη]. Another way of accounting for the ἄλλου would be to take it as a reference to the compound of psyche and body. The sense would be that when psyche 'thinks itself as belonging to another' it is identifying itself with the compound of psyche and body. In so doing it forgets that in its pure nature it remains different from the compound. This distinction between the psyche and the compound is discussed below in chapter 4. Still a third way of understanding this phrase would put the emphasis on 'thought'. A psyche thinking itself as belonging to another is dividing itself into subject and object, i.e., it is thinking of itself discursively. Cf. III 8.6.17-19. This text is discussed in detail below in chapter 9. These different senses should not be thought to exclude one another. Rather, they again reveal the subtlety and complexity of Plotinus' thought.

psyche, nous has perfect self-knowledge because it is entirely present to itself. As we have seen Plotinus takes this self-thinking of nous to be the paradigm case of thinking. He describes this type of thinking as 'more authoritative' [κυριώτερον].¹¹

Plotinus can distinguish two types of thought as the respective activities of nous and psyche. We have 'eternal thought' and 'temporal thought'. The former has been labeled 'non-discursive' or 'non-propositional' thought; the latter 'discursive' or 'propositional' thought. On this characterization of the two species of thinking, the thinking that most closely corresponds with what we take to be thinking is an activity of psyche. Psyche (or a part of psyche, the $\delta\iota\dot{\alpha}\nu\iota\iota\alpha$ or $\lambda\sigma\gamma\iota\sigma\mu\dot{\alpha}\varsigma$) is involved in propositional or discursive thought. This discursiveness is both temporal and logical. Plotinus frequently uses the image of the unrolling of a scroli to illustrate the contents of this type of thinking [$\dot{\alpha}\nu\epsilon\iota\lambda\iota\gamma\mu\dot{\epsilon}\nu\alpha$]. We follow ideas (logically) from premises to conclusion. We follow a narrative (temporally) from beginning to end. 'Thinking' for us tends to mean discursive thought. And 'intellect' for us tends to be what does the thinking or is the place of such thinking. Because of these assumptions and associations it is misleading to translate nous as 'Intellect' and its activity as 'thinking'.

But what then is the activity of nous? Is 'eternal thought' a coherent notion? This characterization of the voeiv of nous has been the subject of recent controversy. 14 'Non-

¹¹ The issues of self-thought and the unity requirement, and why Plotinus thinks self-thought is 'more authoritative' are taken up below in chapter 10.

¹² Here I follow the terminology of Lloyd, 'Non-discursive Thought — An Enigma of Greek Philosophy', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* N.S. 70 (1969-70), 261-74; and his 'Non-propositional Thought in Plotinus', *Phronesis* 31 (1986), 258-265.

¹³ Cf. I 1.8.7.

¹⁴ In addition to the work of Lloyd see Sorabji, 'Myths about non-propositional thought' in Language and Logos ed. by Nussbaum and Schofield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); and Sorabji's discussion in Time, Creation and the Continuum (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 152-156. Rist responds to both authors in 'Back to the Mysticism of Plotinus: Some More Specifics', Journal of the History of Philosophy 27 (1989), 183-197.

propositional thought' or 'non-discursive thinking' is taken to be a concept that comes dangerously close to contradiction.¹⁵ In a moment we shall look to see where the contradiction is supposed to lie. For now we need to note the lay of the land. We tend to subsume all thinking under propositional thought. But to simply make this assumption is to beg the question. Plotinus maintains that there are two different types of thinking. Thus, a case needs to be made at the beginning that not all thought is discursive thought. Moreover, the argument will remind us whenever we fall back on the terms 'thinking' and 'thought' (as we must in such a study as this) that these terms do not bear their ordinary sense when applied to nous.

Let us begin by considering the enigma raised by Lloyd. He begins by distinguishing two types of non-discursive thought. One is what he calls 'immediate thinking'. It is opposed to inference and demonstration. The problems surrounding this notion are the problems of intuitive knowledge, e.g., Descartes' cogito or recognition of the premises of a syllogism. 16 (These examples are discussed below.) The other (which he takes to be the more radical notion) he labels 'non-propositional'. It is associated with notions like 'intuition' and 'contemplation'. He characterizes it as a case of thinking of something, e.g., beauty, without thinking something about beauty. No proposition is being entertained, e.g., that beauty is truth. Lloyd in his discussion set the first notion aside and focuses all of his attention on the latter, more enigmatic, more radical notion. He takes the puzzlement in this notion to come from three sources. He claims, firstly, that 'it is not obvious that Aristotle, or even the Neoplatonists believed that anything in fact corresponded to the notion'; secondly, that even if some philosophers did accept such a notion, it is not clear what led them to do so; and thirdly, that 'there is a philosophical

See Lloyd 'Non-propositional Thought', p. 262, quoted below p. 40.
 Aristotle discusses this last problem in several places; cf. An. Po. 72^b23-24, 88^b36, 100^b15, and Metaphysics 1151b33-1152a4.

puzzle what, if anything, such a belief could mean'. 17 It is this third claim which Lloyd tries to get to the bottom of. (The other two claims are dropped in his later paper.) 18

I offer two objections to the approach taken by Lloyd. To begin with, why should we separate non-discursive thought into these two types? Lloyd's own suggestion that one is 'more radical' than the other hints at continuity. What is more, it may be the case that the one type, which because of its *immediacy* does not involve time, will help us to understand the *eternality* of the other type. ¹⁹ If the simpler type which we sometimes experience helps to illuminate the more difficult, then it is unwise to ignore it. I shall argue that some cases of immediate intuition will help us to understand the thought of nous.

What can we offer as examples of this so-called 'immediate thinking'? Lloyd mentions the examples of Aristotle and Descartes. For Aristotle 'nous' is what grasps the premises of a demonstration. There is no need for a further demonstration of these. They are immediately known. So far so good. Descartes also claims to have immediate knowledge. His notion of the *cogito* is the classic example. To these two examples I wish to add a third. It will be useful later on when we come to compare Lloyd's two types of non-discursive thought to have this example on the table. It involves the mathematician Poincaré and his work on the problem of Fuchsian functions. After working a fortnight trying to show that there could not be such a function Poincaré had the following experience.

¹⁷ Lloyd, 'Enigma', p. 261.

¹⁸ Even in the earlier paper Lloyd says, 'it is well known how Aristotle and his heirs believed that the thinker to whom per [sic] excellence non-discursive thinking might be attributed, namely God, was anyway nothing but a mind'; 'Enigma', p. 266.

¹⁹ Even if someone objects that 'immediacy' does involve time, though a very small amount of time, I would nonetheless claim that our experience of this small amount of time does help us to understand something of eternality. This point is further clarified by the example of Poincaré discussed below.

Just at this time, I left Caen, where I was living, to go on a geologic excursion under the auspices of the School of Mines. The incidents of the travel made me forget my mathematical work. Having reached Coutances, we entered an omnibus to go some place or other. At the moment when I put my foot on the step, the idea came to me, without anything in my former thoughts seeming to have paved the way for it, that the transformations I had used to define the Fuchsian functions were identical with those of non-Euclidian geometry. I did not verify the idea; I should not have had time, as, upon taking my seat in the omnibus, I went on with a conversation already commenced, but I felt a perfect certainty. On my return to Caen, for conscience' sake, I verified the result at my leisure.²⁰

Because many of us may not be familiar with Fuchsian functions we may be helped by another mathematician, Roger Penrose, who comments on this example.

What is striking about this example...is that this complicated and profound idea apparently came to Poincaré in a flash, while his conscious thoughts seemed to be quite elsewhere, and that they were accompanied by this feeling of certainty that they were correct — as, indeed, later calculation proved them to be. It should be made clear that the idea itself would not be something at all easy to explain in words. I imagine that it would have taken him something like an hour-long seminar, given to experts, to get the idea properly across. Clearly it could enter Poincaré's consciousness, fully formed, only because of the many long previous hours of deliberate conscious activity, familiarizing him with many different aspects of the problem at hand. Yet, in a sense, the idea that Poincaré had while boarding the bus was a 'single' idea, able to be fully comprehended in one moment! Even more remarkable was Poincaré's conviction of the truth of the idea, so that his subsequent detailed verification seemed almost superfluous.²¹

²⁰ Jacques Hadamard, The Psychology of Invention in the Mathematical Field (1945; reprint.. New York: Dover, 1954), 13.

²¹ Roger Penrose, The Emperor's New Mind: Concerning Computers, Minds and The Laws of Physics (1989; reprint. New York: Vintage, 1990), 542. Penrose describes an experience that he himself has had that was similar to Poincaré's.

The point of this example is that it shows what I take to be an experience of non-discursive thought which is decidedly more complex than the examples of immediate knowledge given by Lloyd. As Penrose who himself has had similar experiences describes it, Poincaré had the immediate experience of thinking a single yet complex idea in a flash. I take this to be some form of non-discursive thought. Yet this idea — the same idea — could be communicated discursively to other mathematicians in the course of an hour. I do not wish to claim that this example falls midway between our immediate experience of the cogito and the kind of insight Plotinus wishes to attribute to nous. All I wish to claim is that this sort of experience can help us to understand both 'non-discursive thought' and the 'thinking' which Plotinus attributes to nous. Consequently, I think Lloyd is wrong for ignoring it.

My second objection to Lloyd can best be considered after presenting his account of non-discursive thought. According to Lloyd advocates of non-discursive thought (such as Plotinus) offer the following description of it: (1) there is no transition from concept to concept; (2) there is no distinction between the thinker (or his thinking) and the object of thought; (3) it involves thinking of everything at once; (4) it is unaccompanied by images; and (5) its objects are matterless forms.²² In his analysis of this notion Lloyd singles out the first two claims as forming the core of this notion. The latter three are set aside. It is this move, however, which produces a tension in Lloyd's account. On the one hand, he approaches the subject historically by looking at what Plotinus has to say about the subject. On the other hand, he wants to isolate the notion for analysis. This move leads him to drop certain aspects of Plotinus' theory, but on his own admission he claims that part of

²² Lloyd, 'Enigma', pp. 266-267.

the explanation 'cannot really be understood except as part of a philosophical theory'.²³ In the end, I think that it is this tension that undermines his objection to non-discursive thought. Let us consider it.

Lloyd describes the first two claims in this way. In saying that there is no transition from concept to concept, Plotinus and other advocates of non-discursive thought are looking for a type of thought 'which would be simple, that is, contain no complexity'.²⁴ This strict claim excludes not 'just discursive thought, but language itself (cf. V 8.5.21-22) and a fortiori propositional thought and definitions'.²⁵ With so much seemingly excluded the second claim comes in to support the first. The thinker is identical with the object of thought. As we have seen this claim comes right from Aristotle, and as I suggested it is prima facie plausible for mathematical objects.²⁶ Lloyd thinks that with these two claims his opponent has enough to offer a plausible theory about non-discursive thought. His opponent can now draw a distinction between thinking of Fuchsian functions (non-discursive thought) and thinking about the same, only this time discursively, e.g., that they are quite difficult to understand and that they take a long time to explain.

With this distinction in place, Lloyd now offers what he takes to be the decisive objection to non-discursive thought. Non-propositional thinking involves a contradiction. He extracts one in the following way. Lloyd presents his argument in the abstract. Here I present his argument in terms of the example presented earlier. This makes the argument easier to follow and reveals its central weakness.

²³ 'Enigma', p. 263-264. Lloyd himself seems aware of this problem, for while he ignores the eternity or the *totum simul* of nous in the earlier paper, in the later paper he sees the need to consider it in order to make sense of Plotinus' account. See 'Non-propositional thought', pp. 262-263.

²⁴ Lloyd, 'Enigma', p.262. Strictly speaking this claim is false for Plotinus. I take issue with it in objection three below.

²⁵ Lloyd, 'Non-propositional thought in Plotinus', pp. 260-261.

²⁶ See n. 6 above.

Let us imagine Poincaré thinking of a mathematical object, a Fuchsian function. This object of thought must be both abstract and general. That it is abstract is understandable, for mathematical thought and objects — especially these complex functions - are removed from concrete particulars. That the function is general is also easy to see, for it must be general in the sense that more than one mathematician can think of it at the same time. Given these two characteristics, the crux of the difficulty lies in relating this abstract mathematical object to Poincaré's own, individual thought. For what Poincaré is thinking of Lloyd thinks is best described by calling it an intentional object. But this description raises the question of how this intentional object is related to the mathematical object. To say that the intentional object is a mental concept that represents the mathematical object, and that what Poincaré is thinking of is a mental concept is to deny the hypothesis that in this type of thinking thinker and object of thought are identical. Consequently, Lloyd argues, if this hypothesis is accepted, then the abstract, general mathematical object becomes identified with a concrete, particular act of thinking, which occurs at a datable event. Thus, non-propositional thinking claims to be thinking of objects that are both general and particular, abstract and concrete. Therefore, such thinking must be nonsense.

The crux of the argument is the nature of thinking (vosiv or $\tau o \phi \rho ovsiv$).²⁷ More precisely, it is the relation of thinking to object of thought. To call one's thinking a concrete, particular event, as Lloyd does, is to mask the problem. There are two difficulties with the way Lloyd presents the problem: (i) how is it that my particular thinking is my own? and (ii) how is it that my particular thinking can be shared with others and so be general and common? It is here, I take it, that the mathematical example will help, for to

²⁷ Cf. n. 30 below.

think of a mathematical object is to think of an immaterial form.²⁸ On the one side, there is the problem of how *I* can be thinking about this object: how am I linked up with it? how can it be in a sense 'my own'? This problem is masked by calling the object an 'intentional' object. While the label 'intentional' helps us make sense of the identity claim that holds between thinker and object of thought, it does not really seem to get at Plotinus' claim. For Plotinus wants to maintain that in thinking of the object we are 'grasping' or 'seeing' (we need some metaphor) the object itself. The thinker has a direct and unmediated grasp of the object.²⁹ On the other side, there is problem of how this object can be a general, common object: how is it that many mathematicians can be thinking about the same mathematical object?

Lloyd's objection forces the question of how the universal object of thought can be identical with a particular. The objection presents us with a choice. On the one hand, if we follow Lloyd and maintain that our thinking is a concrete, particular act, then it remains something of a mystery as to how we are able to share ideas. On the other hand, if we follow Plotinus, we may be able to explain the idea of shared thoughts, but only by paying the price of granting that thought is immaterial. What the mathematical example shows and what Lloyd omits to take into consideration is the hypothesis that thought is immaterial — the very hypothesis that Plotinus embraces. For Plotinus can see no contradiction in saying that a thought is both general and particular: it is general when many people are thinking of it; it is particular (to me) when I think of it. The same holds for the (immaterial) object of thought. It is along these (not entirely idiosyncratic) lines that Plotinus interprets the remark of Heraclitus $\xi \nu \nu \hat{\rho} \nu \tau \hat{\rho} \phi \rho o \nu \epsilon \hat{\nu} \nu$.

²⁸ As the example shows, Lloyd was wrong for ignoring this aspect of the problem. See condition no. 5 (above, p. 35).

no. 5 (above, p. 35).

29 Chapter 6 will show that Plotinus labels the type of knowledge that comes from such thinking as 'knowledge κατὰ νοῦν'.

³⁰ VI 5.10.12 = Heraclitus DK B113. The whole of VI 5. 10 is an interpretation of this fragment along the lines I have suggested.

St. Augustine is one who understood the type of relation Plotinus was trying to describe. He goes some way to explaining it in De Libero Arbitrio II.31 There he asks us to contrast the experiences of our senses. With some of our senses we can be said to truly share the same experience; with others we do not. We taste parts of the same loaf, but we do not share in the taste of the same part. In this case the experience is similar but not the same. We may see or hear an object of beauty. In this case we both share the same experience. We both see Michelangelo's David. We both hear Mozart's Clarinet Concerto. My experience of seeing or hearing does not leave less for you to see or hear. Indeed we can say that many can share in the same experience of the beautiful object without its being lessened. Thus, if we can say this about an empirical object, then, both Plotinus and Augustine want to argue that, a fortiori, this relation will obtain for immaterial objects of thought. Consequently, they can see no problem in saying that the one object of thought can be thought at one and the same time by many people. The mathematical example, perhaps, makes this claim at least prima facie plausible for us.

If Plotinus' supposition that thought is immaterial successfully avoids Lloyd's objection, there is still one more difficulty that needs to be considered. We must try to explain what is meant by labeling this type of thought 'non-complex'. It is here that I think Lloyd is wrong when he describes it as thought 'which would be simple, that is, contain no complexity' and which excludes not 'just discursive thought, but language itself (cf. V 8.5.21-22) and a fortiori propositional thought and definitions'. 32 But where exactly is he wrong? The difficulty here is in trying to make sense out of the notion of non-complexity without at the same time smuggling in propositional thought. As he himself says:

³¹ De Libero Arbitrio II 15-27.

³² The first quotation is from 'Enigma', p. 263. The second is from 'Non-propositional Thought', pp. 260-261.

Plotinus often requires thought to be complex, or what is equivalent, to contain otherness. There is little question but that this amounts to requiring it to be propositional. This follows from its having also to be discursive in the sense of being a transition from one concept to another, subject and predicate. For instance, thinking without internal divisions implies inactivity, according to VI 7.13-14, instead of activity which it is by definition. So a non-discursive thinking in the sense of a timeless or simultaneous apprehension of subject and predicate is sailing close to the wind of contradiction...³³

I take Lloyd to be saying that the difficulty we face is in trying to put together a notion of thinking with the requirement that it be non-propositional or non-discursive. The former is an active notion, while the latter is a static one. The crux of this problem is the non-complexity requirement.³⁴ One way out of this dilemma was tried by Sorabji. He comes down for making the contents of nous propositional. In this way he is trying to introduce enough complexity to get 'thinking' off the ground, and yet by limiting the propositions to propositions of identity he thinks that he can still affirm that the thinking of nous is non-complex.³⁵ As he himself says, 'non-discursive thought seems to involve contemplating these definitions arranged into a unified network'.³⁶ This network is thought to capture the idea of nous as the $\partial\mu\partial\bar{\nu}$ $\pi\dot{\alpha}\nu\tau\alpha$. The network, because it is a single network, preserves the unity of nous. But because it is propositional it introduces the idea of complexity, for even the most basic type of proposition introduces a distinction between the subject and predicate, e.g., A is B or A is A.³⁷

23 Lloyd, 'Non-propositional thought', p. 262.

36 Time, Creation and the Continuum, p. 153.

³⁴ Lloyd, 'Non-propositional thought', p. 259, I think, is right when he makes this his central disagreement with Sorabji.

³⁵ Sorabji, Time, Creation and the Continuum, 139-142, and 153.

Note that even the identity statement 'A is A' is complex, for it contains within it the distinction between the subject, A, and the property of being self-identical with A.

Sorabji is right to oppose Lloyd's earlier treatment which placed excessively stringent requirements on the non-complexity of nous, for after all Plotinus himself says:

We grant that Being $[\tau \delta \ \delta \nu]$ is many through difference $[\dot{\epsilon}\tau\epsilon\rho\delta\tau\eta\varsigma]$, not place $[\tau\delta\pi\sigma\varsigma]$. For Being is something altogether $[\dot{\epsilon}\mu\rho\delta\ \pi\hat{\alpha}\nu]$, even if it is in this way many. For Being draws near to Being' and is 'something altogether'. And nous is many through difference, not place. And it is altogether. [VI 4.4.23-26]³⁸

Plotinus here affirms both aspects of nous. On the one hand, it is something 'altogether', a $\dot{o}\mu o \hat{v} \tau \hat{\alpha} v$. This is the unitary side of nous. On the other hand, nous is a many, i.e., something complex. The complexity is given by difference $[\dot{e}\tau \epsilon \rho \dot{o}\tau \eta \varsigma]$. We need some way of accounting for both aspects. Sorabji, however, is wrong in trying to account for the complexity of nous in terms of propositions. Firstly, he argues that Plotinus is committed to propositions because nous must be capable of truth. While this is what Plotinus says, Sorabji's case is based on a misunderstanding. When Plotinus uses the words 'truth' $[\dot{\alpha}\lambda\hat{\eta}\theta\epsilon\iota\alpha]$ or 'true' $[\dot{\alpha}\lambda\eta\theta\hat{\eta}\varsigma]$ we should take them to be nearly synonymous with 'reality' or 'real'. I say 'nearly synonymous' because ultimately these words will refer to the relationship that obtains between separate nous and its contents, the Forms. For now all we need to know is that for Plotinus truth is not primarily a predicate that applies to propositions. Hence, Sorabji is wrong when he makes this connection. Secondly, it follows that

³⁸ The quotations within this quotation are from Parmenides DK B8.25 and 8.5. Nous is frequently called a πλήθος and described as ὁμοῦ πάντα. See V 3.10-13 and passim.

³⁹ As it will turn out, nous is different from itself in its role of subject of thinking and as object of thought and this complexity is further compounded by the presence of the Forms within nous. These issues are discussed below in chapters 9-11. For now it should be noted that Plotinus is opposing this notion to that of place [τόπος]. This latter can serve to distinguish material objects. Because nous is immaterial Plotinus needs a different criterion.

Sorabji is wrong to talk about the contents of nous as though they were a unified network of propositions of identity. Rather, Plotinus takes the contents of nous to be the Platonic Forms, the realities $[\tau \tilde{\alpha} \ \tilde{o} \nu \tau \alpha]$. We need to recall our picture of nous given in the last chapter. For Plotinus nous is something like Aristotle's god with the addition of the Platonic Forms. Because it contains the multiplicity of Forms we can say that nous is complex. But can we say that because nous is a single mind and because it is 'thinking' them all at once that we have a case of non-complex, non-discursive thought?

This last question is just the issue under investigation. For we want to know if the notion of non-discursive thought is a coherent one. Following Lloyd we have been led to focus on the issue of complexity, and we have been looking for a type of thinking that is non-complex, and so non-discursive. Following Sorabji, we have seen that the non-complexity requirement has been made too strict. When nous is thinking itself, it is thinking of the Forms, and this implies complexity. But we have also seen that Sorabji was mistaken in taking this thought to be propositional, for the truth that Plotinus is talking about is not the truth of propositions, but the truth or reality of the presence of the Forms within nous. This exchange seems to have led to an impasse. For we still seem to be searching for some notion of thinking that is complex enough to be considered an activity, yet simple enough to be considered non-propositional or non-discursive.

A way out of this dilemma has been suggested by Rist. On the one hand, he argues against Sorabji's claim that the thought of nous $[\tau \hat{o} \ \nu o \epsilon \hat{i} \nu]$ is primarily propositional. The formulation of propositions of any sort is not the distinctive aspect of nous.⁴⁰ On the other hand, while it can be agreed that the activity of nous is non-propositional, he argues against Lloyd that this activity need not be understood as 'the enigmatic and indeed

⁴⁰ Rist, 'Back to the Mysticism of Plotinus', p. 192.

unintelligible phenomenon, non-propositional thought'.41 Rist argues that talk of 'thinking' and 'thought' is construed by us as propositional. Consequently, we stumble over this notion and miss completely what Plotinus has to say about nous. 42 In the place of thought, we shall have a better chance of understanding nous, Rist argues, if we focus upon experience.⁴³ As he says:

> It [nous] is not merely a world whose existence we simply infer; it is a reality which we come to experience empirically, not purely by reasoning. We must see what is there by a kind of awakening (4.4.5.9).44

What does it mean to say that we come to experience the world of nous? Rist argues that what this means is that we come into contact with a 'spiritual dimension'. 45 We can understand this notion in the following way. Our working idea of nous has given us a pic-

42 Ibid., p. 197 says: 'If "thinking" in English means "thinking about," then it is even misleading as a rendering of nous... If we assert that nous "thinks," we must add that for a modern it may seem to be a very special sort of thinking.' Thus, I take it that Rist is objecting to the misleading character of the expression 'non-propositional thought', not to the notion itself.

⁴¹ Rist, 'Back to the Mysticism of Plotinus', p. 192.

⁴³ Here Rist is following Wallis, 'Noûc as Experience', in The Significance of Neoplatonism, ed. Harris (Norfolk, Virginia: Old Dominion University Press, 1976), 121-153. Wallis' article, however, is limited in aim. He seeks to look at examples of Plotinus' experience of nous and other examples of this experience both in the tradition in which Plotinus is working and in modern writers or writers in non-Western religious traditions. The article is offered as no more than a collection of data. Thus, interpretive issues are avoided. Rist's article is an attempt to offer an interpretation of Plotinus' account of this experience.

⁴⁴ Rist, 'Back to the Mysticism of Plotinus', p. 194. I am not sure I understand the 'empirically' in Rist's phrase 'experience empirically'. The focus on experience must be right, but as we shall see below in chapter 5 the direct access we have to nous is not and indeed cannot be empirical in the strict sense of confronting it with one of our five senses.

45 Ibid.

ture of Aristotle's god or Plato's demiurge. Furthermore, we have seen that Plotinus embraces the idea that thought is immaterial. Thus, once we put these two notion together and link this type of thinking with god, talk of a spiritual dimension may not come as much of a surprise. But more specifically, the term 'spiritual' is meant to capture the idea of a reality which differs in kind from our common, everyday experience. It is also meant to capture the idea that such a reality is always present to us though we often remain unaware of it. To deny this reality is to limit ourselves to the sensible world. Plotinus likens such people to people who have been asleep all their lives. They mistake their dreams for reality. And should they awaken for a moment they take their waking reality for a dream and immediately go back to sleep. He Existence on the level of sleep and existence in waking reality are two different levels of existence or awareness. If someone has truly awoken, then he can no longer mistake the world of dreams for reality. Plotinus applies the analogy to nous. Once we awaken to this spiritual reality, then we can no longer deny it. Rist likens the view of this reality to the experience of one who has climbed to a mountain top.

When I look away from a mountain top I cannot express the beauty I see, but I "know" it is beautiful without reflection, without propositions, simply, as Plotinus would put it, by vision and contact. It is not the sudden flash of insight by which we "see" the answer to a problem — though this may be one of the sources of Plotinus' notion — for that realization is propositional, despite its flashing immediacy at times.⁴⁷

47 See Rist, 'Back to the Mysticism of Plotinus', p. 194.

⁴⁶ See V 5.11.19-22 for the dream image. Though he is not quoting, Plotinus seems to have in mind Heraclitus' use of the same image; cf. DK B1 and DK B71-B74 (which are not mentioned by HS). That the image is meant to apply to those who limit their experiences to sensible things $[\alpha l \sigma \theta \eta \tau \dot{\alpha}]$; cf. V 5.11.5-8. The contrast between $\alpha l \sigma \theta \eta \tau \dot{\alpha}$ and $\nu \sigma \eta \tau \dot{\alpha}$ is discussed in more detail in chapters 7 and 8.

Such a person has a view which those in the valley do not. He also has the immediate experience of knowing without reflection that such a sight is beautiful. The vision is not something which can be expressed. It can be experienced and shared by others who ascend, but to try and express it will be to leave the vision behind and to substitute descriptions for the actual experience. For Plotinus this is to descend to the level of propositional knowledge.⁴⁸

In his reference to the sudden flash of insight Rist is criticizing Wallis who takes this experience as descriptive of the experience of nous.⁴⁹ But if we recall Poincaré's experience, his mathematical vision is no more propositional than Rist's vision from the mountain. Poincaré may communicate his insight to other mathematicians through propositions. But the propositions are not what they are intended to see. In Plotinian language the propositions are merely a device to put them in a position so that they too can see the result.⁵⁰

The experience of insight is helpful in showing what the experience of nous is like, though it has its limitations. The very fact that we call it 'insight' suggests that it is something different from thought. Poincaré had the sudden vision of a single yet complex idea. The suddenness and immediacy of the presentation give us a taste (admittedly a very small one) of what the activity of nous must be like. Where the mathematical example is misleading is in its object. Poincaré was aware of a mathematical reality which was other than himself. For Plotinus the claim to experience nous is a claim to experience ourselves. As Rist puts it, 'in so far as there is any awareness at this level, it is experiential

48 Cf. n. 50 below.

⁴⁹ See Wallis, 'Noῦς as Experience', p. 127.

⁵⁰ Cf. VI 9.4.11-14.

awareness of the nature of oneself'.51 Plotinus is going to claim that the experience of ourselves - self-knowledge - is going to reveal to us that we have a 'spiritual dimension'. In coming to know ourselves we are going to discover that we are nous.

We began with a threefold classification of voeiv: (i) that of psyche, (ii) that of nous, and (iii) that of the self. We set the first notion aside as being readily comprehensible and devoted most of the chapter to showing that the eternal thought of nous is a coherent notion. Our argument proceeded by offering two supports. Firstly, it showed that this notion was not logically contradictory. And, secondly, it sought to make sense out of the notion by drawing analogous comparisons with the type of thought that we experience. But we can see now that Plotinus' claim about nous is more radical than this. The 'thought' of nous is not something we reason to transcendentally or by analogy. Rather, it is something we awaken to; we see it; we experience it. But the question remains, how do we experience nous? Rist provides us with a hint that reveals the relevance of our third category. We need to look at ourselves. In Rist's phrase it is 'the experiential awareness of the nature of oneself' that will bring about our awareness of nous. As we shall see Plotinus' word for this type of experience is συναίσθησις.⁵² In the subsequent chapters we shall use Rist's hint to follow out Plotinus' claim. In looking at the way the self thinks of itself we shall be led to the experience of nous, but our focus on this experience raises the question of who or what this self is that is thinking itself. Who are we? We seem to be more than psyche, yet less than separate nous.

<sup>Rist, 'Back to the Mysticism of Plotinus', p. 194.
Cf. III 4.4.10 and IV 4.24.22, and chapters 7 and 10-11 below.</sup>

CHAPTER 4

Plotinus' Question: Who are we?

The last chapter followed and tried to flesh out the suggestion that an explanation of nous should avoid words connected with thinking and instead focus on experience. This prompted the question, what experience should we focus on? Plotinus' answer to this question is simple and direct: Know thyself! The Delphic command enjoins us to look at ourselves. Who are we?

This question will serve as the focus of this chapter, for it reveals Plotinus' debt to Plato and in examining the extent of this debt we shall be led to see that Plotinus values the experience we have of ourselves for two different and paradoxical reasons. Firstly, it teaches us that we do not know who we are; and, secondly, it teaches us who we are. These two reasons provide the content for the subsequent chapters. It will be the aim of this chapter to clear up the first part of the paradox, to show that Plotinus' question and his claim that we do not know who we are — a claim antithetical to the Cartesian bias that the 'I' is utterly transparent to itself — make sense. The subsequent chapters (5-7) will fill in the positive account of how Plotinus thinks we come to discover our true self by looking at the experience we have when we reflect upon ourselves. Enough, however, will be said in this chapter to show that Plotinus thinks that self-reflexiveness is key to the discovery of nous.

Conspicuous throughout the *Enneads* is Plotinus' use of the pronoun 'we'. This use of the pronoun has often been thought integral to his account of the self, and Plotinus has

long been considered the ancient philosopher par excellence who was concerned about the self. I Consider two examples.

And we — who are we? Are we that or are we what draws near and becomes in time? [VI 4.14.16-17]

The activities of nous are thus from above, as those of perception $[\alpha i\sigma\theta\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma]$ are from below. And we are this, the authoritative part $[\tau \delta \ \kappa i\rho\iota\sigma\nu]$ of the psyche, that which is between a two-fold power, a better and a worse. The worse is perception. The better is nous. [V 3.3.36-40]²

Two things are evident from these quotations. Firstly, Plotinus frames the question of identity in the first person. His use of 'we' signifies interest in us as the subjects of experience. Through his use of the first-person perspective he is able to focus on the problems surrounding this question. The Plotinian 'we' seems to mean more than 'we who are attending this lecture' or 'we who are members of this school' (as it might, for example, mean in the writings of Aristotle). And it is because something more is sought that it is often assumed that Plotinus uses 'we' in a technical sense.³ Secondly, these texts show

¹ See O'Daly, Plotinus' Philosophy of the Self (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1973), and more recently Emilsson Plotinus on Sense-Perception: A Philosophical Study (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). In talking about Plotinus' discussion of the self Emilsson remarks, 'It is an open question to what extent his theory of the self coincides with those of later philosophers. The concept is however unquestionably the same. Plotinus' attempts to come to grips with it sometimes suffer from vagueness and he is not always consistent. But his keenness and, I am tempted to say, natural talent for gaining insight into this subject have rarely been surpassed' (pp. 29-30).

² Cf. V 3.4.13 where Plotinus refers to this as the 'better' [ἀμείνων] part of psyche.

³ Henri Oosthout, Modes of Knowledge and the Transcendental: An Introduction to Plotinus Ennead 5.3 [49] with a Commentary and Translation (Amsterdam: B. R. Grüner, 1991), pp. 32-33 is one example and he refers to many others. He says, 'Plotinus may be given credit for having introduced the pronoun $\eta \mu sic$ ('we') as a technical term to denote what man really and essentially is, more than a century before Augustine, in the tenth book of his Confessions, described the memory as the faculty where man meets with his most intimate self [my emphasis]. As will become clear in the following discussion I do not think that it is immediately clear that 'what man really and essentially is' and a man's 'most intimate self' refer to the same thing. See below for my remarks about this 'technical' sense.

that Plotinus' answer is contained within a complex (Platonic) metaphysical theory. In the first text we may be identified with something either in the eternal, stable world or with something in the realm of becoming. In the second we are identified with 'the authoritative part of psyche'.

A good place to begin sorting out the issues surrounding Plotinus's use of 'we' is Ennead I 1, which Porphyry has entitled 'About what is the Animal $[\zeta \bar{\varphi} o \nu]$ and what is man $[\alpha \nu \theta \rho \omega \pi o \varsigma]$ ', for it contains his most complete discussion of personal identity. What is behind this title will become more clear in a moment. For now all we need to note is the structure of Plotinus' argument. In this treatise he is interested in discovering which of our activities belong to the animal part of us and which belong to the human part of us.⁴ Or, to frame the question in the first person, Plotinus is trying to determine which activities of the 'living thing' $[\zeta \hat{\varphi} o \nu]$ belong to us — which are properly our own. In the course of his argument Plotinus concedes that there is an ambiguity surrounding the identification of us with the higher part of psyche.

Therefore, the 'we' $[\tau \hat{o} \ \hat{\eta} \mu \epsilon \hat{i} \varsigma]$ is a double. In one way the beast is counted in, in another way what is above it.

[1 1.10.5-7]

⁴ This form of dualism is discussed in more detail in chapter 11. Porphyry's title (which I think truly captures Plotinus' approach) introduces a strong antagonism between the biological organism and the person. This question and this framework has received much discussion recently. For an overview of the controversy see *The Person and the Human Mind: Issues in Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, ed. Gill (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1990). Gill summarizes the debate this way: 'The core of the issue ... is whether we are to understand ourselves, essentially, as human beings (with all that this implies, as regards our psycho-physical nature and our specific forms of shared life and self-understanding) or whether we are to identify ourselves rather with a certain set of mental capacities, conceived as constituting our 'personhood' or 'divine' essence, which are in principle shared by, and normative for, other forms of life and intelligence' (p. 17). As will be seen, Plotinus argues for this latter view.

The following lines make clear that what Plotinus means by 'beast' is the composite $[\tau \delta \sigma \nu \nu \alpha \mu \phi \delta \tau \epsilon \rho \sigma \nu]$ or living body. The image of the beast is meant to fulfill two purposes. In one way it is to remind us that we ourselves are involved in a struggle with the beast. The image is meant to bring home to us the difficulties of our incarnate existence, difficulties which were well described by Plato in the *Phaedo*. Plotinus follows Plato in thinking that the study of philosophy is an attempt to free the philosopher from the beast. In another way, this image is meant to recall Plato's image of the multifarious beast in the *Republic*. To better understand Plotinus' claim, we must look more carefully at Plato's image. In setting up the image Plato has Socrates say,

Model around them [the beast, lion and man] on the outside the appearance of being one, a man, so that anyone who cannot see what is inside but only the outside cover will think it is one creature $[\zeta \hat{\varphi} o \nu]$ a man $[\tilde{\alpha} \nu \theta \rho \omega \pi o \varsigma]$. [588d10-e1]⁶

Plato's image already contains an ambiguity, for there is a distinction between 'the inner man' [ὁ ἐντὸς ἄνθρωπος 589b1] and 'man' the animal [τὸ ζῷον], a complex of body and

⁵ Plotinus uses the word τὸ συναμφότερον in I 1 and elsewhere. His use of this term and his discussion in I 1 show his debt to the discussion in Alcibiades I, 129e-130a.

⁶ Translation Grube, Plato's Republic (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1974). The Greek text shows more clearly the contrast between ζώον and ἄνθρωπος which Plotinus explores in Ennead I 1. Περίπλασον δὴ αὐτοῖς ἔξωθεν ἐνὸς εἰκόνα, τὴν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ὥστε τῷ μὴ δυναμένω τὰ ἐντὸς ὁραν, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἔξω μόνον ελυτρον ὁρῶντι, ἕν ζῷον φαίνεσθαι, ἄνθρωπον.

psyche. This ambiguity provides Plotinus with both the problems and structure of Ennead I 1. The interim conclusion of I 1, quoted above — that we are a double — calls attention to this ambiguity. Behind that conclusion is Plotinus' use of Plato's distinction between the animal $[\zeta \hat{\varphi} o \nu]$ and the person $[\alpha \nu \theta \rho \omega \pi o \varsigma]$. But in following Plato, Plotinus is here doing more than spinning abstract philosophical theory. The distinction between the person and the animal, Plotinus argues, is something to be met with in our experience: the subject of the first-person perspective will experience himself as a double. Simply put this means that when the self reflects upon itself it divides itself into subject and object. This division gives two dimensions to our experience of ourselves. On the one hand, there is our immediate experience. We experience ourselves as wrapped up in corporeal existence and the swirl of all that passes in our experiences of the here and now. On the other, we can abstract ourselves from this immediate experience. We can experience ourselves as above it. By reflecting upon our immediate experience we objectify it and so abstract ourselves from our contingent historical setting; we can see ourselves as standing over and against our ordinary human experience. Thus, Plotinus is claiming that we are a double, we have two selves.

A remarkably similar claim has been put forward more recently by Thomas Nagel. In discussing the problem of how to relate a subjective conception of the world to an objective conception he says:

What really happens in the pursuit of objectivity is that a certain element of oneself, the impersonal or objective self, which can escape from the specific contingencies of one's creaturely point of view, is allowed to predominate. Withdrawing into this element one detaches from the rest and develops an impersonal conception of the world and, so far as possible, of the elements of self from which one has detached. That creates the new problem of reintegration, the problem of how to incorporate these results into the life and

self-knowledge of an ordinary human being. One has to be the creature whom one has subjected to detached examination, and one has in one's entirety to live in the world that has been revealed to an extremely distilled fraction of oneself.⁷

According to this description we have two selves: one objective, one subjective. The problem we face is to hold the two together in some form of unity. Nagel describes the problem from the first-person point of view. His description draws upon our own experience of self-reflexive consciousness. When I begin to think about myself, the 'I' becomes elusive. Am I subject or object? Through this experience the abstract problem of identity suddenly becomes my problem. With which self do I identify? Just what 'identify' means will become more clear in what follows.

Bernard Williams has also discussed this problem from a more general standpoint. He, too, describes the difficulty of integrating a third-person (objective) perspective with first-person experience. He asks how the first person perspective fits into an 'absolute conception' of the world that is given by science. For Williams the difficulty lies in the tension between the demands of an (abstract) explanatory theory, which tells us who or what we are, and our every-day, ordinary experience. For Williams, it is science which aims to give such an absolute or ultimate conception; for others, at least in the past, it was religion that provided an ultimate conception of reality that many now feel grates against our ordinary experience. When we experience this tension we can respond to it either by

⁷ Nagel, The View From Nowhere (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 9.

⁸ He presents this problem in a number of places. See his Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry (London: Penguin, 1978), chapter 3, 'Cogito and Sum' and chapter 10, 'Mind and its Place in Nature'. In 'A Critique of Utilitarianism' in Utilitarianism: For and Against (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), he contrasts the view of the world sub specie aeternitatis with the view from the human perspective. This contrast is given extensive treatment in Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985. See chapter 6, 'Theory and Prejudice', especially pp. 110-111. On the whole I have found Williams' discussions more lucid than Nagel in trying to get to the bottom of this problem.

Procrustean, or we can reject the claims of the theory and hold on to our experience, a move that while it enables us to remain integrated leaves us lacking in understanding of ourselves and our world, for we lose the larger perspective that was given to us by the theory. Neither alternative looks attractive. Unlike Williams who makes the problem one for explanatory theory or science, Nagel makes the problem a personal one by locating this tension within ourselves. In our own case, it seems that we cannot do without the objective or the subjective aspects of ourselves.

What is interesting about the claims advanced by both Nagel and Plotinus is that neither offers any arguments that demonstrate that we are a double. Rather, they both think that first-person experience will generate a problem to which we must apply reason and arguments in order to gain understanding of ourselves. For Nagel, the cardinal point of the experience is that of reflexive consciousness. For him it is our ability to reflect on ourselves that generates the tension between the objective and subjective self. Plotinus, too, is aware of this feature of our experience. I shall argue, however, that Plotinus focuses on first-person experience, not simply to discover a problem, but also to discover a solution. What I mean to claim can best be brought out through the following paradox.

I suggest that Plotinus is interested in first-person experience for two reasons that appear to conflict. On the one hand, as we have seen, he argues that our experience leads us to conclude that we are a double. On the other hand, he argues that our experience leads us to conclude that we are a unity. How is it that he can argue for both conclusions?

On the one side there is his debt to Plato. Having recalled Plato's image of the beast we should also recall that many of his arguments to show that the psyche is complex draw on our own experience. The story of Leontius shows that we experience the presence of conflicting desires within ourselves: we experience ourselves as complex

creatures. It is important to note that for both Plato and Plotinus the complexity we experience is real. The psyche is truly complex. Talk of complexity is not merely an image or a façon de parler. Thus, Plotinus reasons that if we pay attention to our own experience as Plato has taught us, we are led to the conclusion that we are genuinely complex creatures.

On the other side, having reached this conclusion, both Plato and Plotinus apply themselves to the question of unity.¹⁰ Both want to understand what unifies the motley collection, what unites man and beast. Both differ, however, in the way they view the image of the beast. Plato's image of the beast is meant to illustrate graphically the complex psyche. Through the image Plato attempts to look at the problem of inner complexity from a third-person (objective) perspective. If we follow Plato in this treatment, we are tempted to say that there is a part of the psyche that corresponds to the beast, another part that corresponds to the lion, and still another part that corresponds to the person. From this perspective talk of 'parts' is irresistible. This talk, however, (before we know it) leads to a multiplicity that is incapable of unity. Plato's image again shows this difficulty, for given that the image is meant to illustrate the complex psyche, it is difficult to ask what unifies the collection of man, lion and beast. If we ask (more properly) what unifies the psyche, the answer in Plato's case is not easily forthcoming. Tempting though the answer is, we cannot say that the psyche provides the unity (at least not without giving some story of how this is so), for the psyche has been discovered to be complex. As an alternative, to claim that the unity comes from the presence of the parts in a biological

10 Republic 436ab shows that Socrates takes the question of unity to be the difficult one. I take this as Plato's signal that this is the issue which needs to be addressed.

Thus, I think it wrong to interpret Plato's claim about the psyche as a mere analogy. For an excellent defense of this reading see Jon Moline, 'Plato on the Complexity of the Psyche', Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie, 60 (1978), pp. 1-25; and Jonathan Lear, 'Inside and Outside the Republic', Phronesis 37 (1992), pp. 184-215.

organism is mistaken on two counts. Firstly, it is not an answer that Plato would accept. And, secondly, locating the parts in a biological organism only gives them spatial location. It does not say why these parts belong together. Talk of parts, thus, leaves us with a collection, not a unity.

We can leave Plato's resolution of this difficulty as a moot point. What I wish to call attention to is how his view of the psyche from the third-person perspective quickly leads us to objectify or reify the divisions within psyche into parts. From this perspective the internal perspective of the ego quite naturally vanishes. Consequently, we are left talking about parts, but there is now no longer anything in which the parts can adhere.

Plotinus, I argue, uses this distinction in perspectives to his advantage by framing the issue around the first-person perspective. His focus on the first-person pronoun is his way of coming to grips with the problem of unity. His solution might be put as follows. Suppose I wish to acknowledge my agreement with Plato that the psyche is complex, but suppose, also, that I am puzzled by it. Then I can pose the problem to myself. I may say (to myself or out loud), 'I believe that Plato is correct about the complexity of my psyche; my rational part reasons, my spirited part rages, and my desiderative part desires, but who am I that views myself as having these three parts?' The advantage of framing the question in this way is that from this perspective the question of unity cannot be lost. By holding to the first-person perspective Plotinus does not lose the subject of experience. His question, 'Who are we?' is aimed at uncovering this subject that stands out over and against the experiences. Plotinus is asking who or what am I that experiences myself as complex. When the question is posed in the first person, the ego assumes itself to be a unity. Yet, while commenting on itself, it experiences itself as complex. Hence Plotinus claims that our own experience teaches us that we are a double, both one and many.

This interim conclusion that 'we are a double' comes in the midst of his attempt to sort out the unity question. It is also his abbreviated way of telling us that a philosophical

account of our identity will be a long and complex one. When the unity issue is pressed two different accounts of our identity begin to vie with each other. Hence, the corollary to the conclusion that 'we are a double' is that we do not know ourselves, for we do not know which account to apply to ourselves. This corollary, I argue, has not received the attention that it deserves and this in spite of Plotinus' frequent use of the Delphic command, 'know thyself' $[\gamma\nu\hat{\omega}\theta\iota\ \sigma\epsilon\alpha\nu\tau\acute{o}\nu]$. Plotinus thinks that this is a task that demands real philosophical work. It is not merely some rhetorical device.

Before taking up this corollary, however, we must look again at Plotinus' use of 'we', for it has been at the center of a long standing controversy in Plotinian scholarship. The debate centers on why Plotinus chooses to focus on this pronoun. Is it a technical term, and if so, what does it mean? As we noted earlier some commentators take Plotinus to be using the pronoun in a technical sense. Not all commentators agree, however, on the meaning of this supposedly technical term. Some take Plotinus to be using it in a psychological sense. They take it to be synonymous with the 'self', the 'ego', or the 'ego-consciousness' (terms which require unpacking, but are often taken to be transparent). 12 Others give the term special place in Plotinus' metaphysics. When, for example, Plotinus claims that 'we are the authoritative part of psyche', this is taken to be a statement of real identity. 13 Thus, Plotinus' use of 'we' is the center point of the debate that has been

¹¹ See IV 3.1.9 and V 3.4.8 and O'Daly's chapter entitled 'The Delphic Commandment as Philosophical Propeideutic'. O'Daly's discussion, however, is more of a paraphrase of *Ennead* I 1. He does not draw out any of the claims I think need to be discussed, as will become clear in what follows.

¹² E. R. Dodds, 'Tradition and Personal Achievement in the Philosophy of Plotinus', Journal of Roman Studies 50 (1960); reprinted in The Ancient Concept of Progress and Other Essays on Greek Literature and Belief (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1973), 126-139. Dodds maintains that Plotinus was 'the first to make the vital distinction between the total personality $[\psi \nu \chi \hat{\eta}]$ and the ego-consciousness $[\hat{\eta} \mu \nu \hat{\iota} \hat{\iota}]$; in the Enneads, as Stenzel observed, 'the ego' becomes for the first time a philosophical term' (p. 135). The reference to Stenzel is to Metaphysik des Altertums (1934), p. 191. See also the discussion of Himmerich (n. 23 below) who interprets Plotinus along these lines.

¹³ Oosthout is one who downplays the psychological aspects, p. 30.

around since Zeller of how to relate the psychological side of his philosophy with his metaphysical side.¹⁴

But before we can see what to make of this problem some clarification of terms is needed. In what follows I shall distinguish between 'person' and 'ego-consciousness' (or more simply 'ego'). I shall reserve the term 'person' for the metaphysical or objective contexts and 'ego-consciousness' for the psychological contexts. These two terms are meant to capture the different aspects that commentators have found in Plotinus' use of Let me briefly characterize each. I use 'ego-consciousness' to refer to the ήμεῖς. psychological state that characterizes a person's awareness of himself and his identity. This use is meant to capture what I have been calling the 'first-person perspective'. From this perspective I am aware of myself, and my awareness of myself includes an awareness of (some) of my abilities and (some) of my experiences. I am aware of myself as a creature (rational and thoughtful to be sure, but also one full of fears, desires, loves, pleasures and pains) who inhabits a world in which I think and act upon all these variegated experiences. It seems essential to this first-person perspective that the ego remain aware of itself as the same self, for the loss of this awareness results in the loss of the ego. Its identity extends back in the past as far as it is aware that some past action or thought was indeed

¹⁴ For an overview of this problem see H. -R. Schwyzer, 'Plotinos', Paulys Realencyclopādie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft, vol. 21, edited by K. Ziegler (Waldsee: Druckenmüller, 1951). See especially columns 547-550. Schwyzer maintains, 'In einem freilich sind sich alle Interpreten P.s seit Zeller einig, daß seine Philosophie eine zwiefache Wurzel habe. Zeller III 2⁴, 473 unterscheidet eine subjektive und eine objektive Grundlage; jene ist die Sehnsucht nach Einigung mit der Gottheit, diese die Unterscheidung der übersinnlichen und der Erscheinungswelt' (col. 549). After discussing this contrast Schwyzer continues, 'P.s Philosophie als Ganzes kann als das stete Bemühen aufgefaßt werden, diese beiden Aspekte miteinander in Einklang zu bringen. Dies betont auch Bréhier [La philosophie de Plotin (Paris: 1923), p. 23] «le trait caractéristique du système de Plotin me paraît être l'union intime de ces deux problèmes (le problème religieux = das aktuale Problem und le problème philosophique = das gegenständlich Problem), union telle que la question de savoir lequel est subordonné à l'autre ne peut plus se poser» (col. 550). Schwyzer seems to take Bréhier's remark as the final word on the subject. This is misleading, for while I agree with Bréhier that we do not want to subordinate one side to the other, I argue that a correct interpretation of Plotinus must provide an account of how the two aspects are related.

done by itself.¹⁵ In contrast to this sense I take 'person' to be a metaphysical place-holder. It must be defined and explained by a metaphysical theory. Depending on whether the theory is true or false, the place may be occupied by something real or it may not. That question must be determined by an investigation. These two senses need not be radically divergent. One may embrace a theory (such as Locke's) which claims that a person is to be identified with ego-consciousness. Or, to anticipate Plotinus' argument, it may turn out that a person is an objective phenomenon quite distinct from 'ego-consciousness'. What is needed in either case is some account of the identity or difference.

Raising the question of whether or not 'we' is a technical term in Plotinus, however, is a red herring, for it generates the wrong sort of argument. It begins by taking it as given that Plotinus uses 'we' as a technical term and then various factions contend for the sense that they wish to give to this supposedly technical term. Some argue that it is synonymous with ego. Others claim that it is more metaphysical, like 'person'. And still others take it to be synonymous with psyche. All parties in the dispute, however, grant that Plotinus' use of 'we' is peculiar. Thus, it is more appropriate to ask not what the term means but why he has this peculiar use to begin with. To ask this question broadens the discussion by trying to bring to light the philosophical problems Plotinus is working on, rather than maintaining a more narrow focus on Plotinus' use of language.

To see why Plotinus' use of 'we' in the *Enneads* is prominent and peculiar, we need only recall the paradox that we discussed earlier. We saw that he had two reasons for examining the first-person perspective. On the one hand, it presented him with the problem of identity: Who are we, given that we experience ourselves as a double? On the

¹⁵ This notion of the ego or self is famously characterized by John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Book II, Chapter 27, section 9, entitled 'Personal Identity'.

other hand, given this problem and this question, he thinks that the first person-perspective will reveal a unified and independent subject that will solve the identity problem, i.e., like Descartes, Plotinus thinks that his first-person perspective enables him to reach the conclusion that he himself exists as a real, objective, independent self. Thus, a major problem for Plotinus is how he can relate his first-person perspective (' am thinking') to the third-person perspective ('A thinks'). ¹⁶ More specifically, it is not the general problem of how someone can make objective statements about the world based on his own subjective experience. Rather, it is the application of this general problem to the self: What can our own subjective experiences (our first-person perspective) tell us about what we really are (what we are objectively, from the third-person perspective)?

Once we understand that this is Plotinus' problem we can avoid the mistakes of some of the earlier (and contemporary) commentators who regard Plotinus as the champion of one or the other side of the debate: either as the metaphysician par excellence who is objective and rigorous, or as the great psychologist whose sensitivity to human experience is unparalleled in the rest of Greek philosophy. Painted in these extremes the dichotomy is false, but each side has had its advocates. Since Zeller it has generally been agreed that Plotinus' philosophy has two roots: one subjective, the desire for unity with god, and one objective, the difference between the world of being and the world of becoming. 17 Bréhier puts the matter this way:

Tous les interprètes s'accordent à reconnaître chez Plotin la coexistence de deux ordres de questions: le problème religieux, celui de la destinée de l'âme, le moyen de la restaurer dans son état primitif; et le problème philosophi-

¹⁶ For help in formulating this problem I am indebted to Williams. See his *Descartes*, n. 8 above; this problem is discussed in more detail below in chapter 7.

¹⁷ See n. 14 above.

que, celui de la structure et de l'explication rationnelle de la réalité. Mais, sur le rapport que ces deux problèmes ont entre eux, les interprétations divergent. 18

But while commentators generally agree that Plotinus' philosophy has both these aspects and that his use of 'we' gives expression to both, Bréhier was right in maintaining that there is little agreement on how to relate the objective and subjective sides of his philosophy. If one looks for such an account, one finds little more than a mere assertion that both sides relate or a simple reaffirmation that Plotinus' thought has these two sides. The accounts offered by Bréhier, Kristeller and Himmerich all have this characteristic.

In discussing Plotinus' view of the descent of the psyche, Bréhier locates a problem — he goes so far as to call it a 'contradiction' — in Plotinus' claim that the psyche can be both occupied with the affairs of the intelligible world and with the sensible world, the image of that world. This claim seems to make psyche schizophrenic, for it seems to entail that psyche must bear the contrary properties of being oriented 'upward' and 'downward' at one and the same time. It is one thing to claim that the psyche mediates between the two realms, or that it can live on both levels. Al! parties agree with these claims. But Bréhier wants to maintain that it cannot live on both levels at once. His solution to this problem is to distinguish between the hypostasis psyche and our own psyche, and to this distinction he seems (but this is not clear) to add another: that of psyche vis-àvis the ego. He takes the hypostasis psyche to be the spiritual activity that extends down from the intelligible world to the sensible. This is in keeping with the role of psyche as mediator. But he goes on to make the following distinction.

¹⁸ Bréhier, La Philosophie de Plotin (1928; reprint. Paris: J. Vrin, 1968), 23.

Mais cette hypostase qui constitue notre âme, ce n'est pas nous-mêmes, ou, du moins, ce n'est pas tout à fait nous-mêmes; à cette réalité existant en soi qui constitue notre âme s'ajoute notre propre attitude à son égard; nous pouvons être en elle à des niveaux différents; nous pouvons nous séparer de sa partie supérieure. 19

Bréhier's distinction between the hypostasis that makes up our psyche and we ourselves that take up an attitude towards it eliminates the contradiction, because it is we ourselves who are able to orient ourselves 'upwards' or 'downwards'; the contrary predicates no longer apply to psyche. We are the ones who live at the different levels of the hypostasis psyche, either mired in the material world or raised up through philosophy to the intelligible level.

Looked at in this way, we can see that Bréhier treats Plotinus' problem as the attempt to show how the third-person perspective (the hypostasis psyche in Bréhier's terms) relates to the first-person perspective (notre âme and notre propre attitude à son égard). But this distinction between the hypostasis psyche and we ourselves naturally prompts the question: Wino are we? Bréhier raises it and proposes an answer. (This text continues the earlier quotation.)

Mais qu'est donc ce nous qui est distinct de l'âme sans en être tout à fait distinct? Il semble parfois que Plotin ait l'intuition d'une activité proprement subjective qui, elle, ne peut se transformer en chose et s'hypostasier. Notre âme s'étend devant nous comme un object; ce n'est pas en elle qu'il y a, à proprement parler, mouvement et descente; c'est le corps qui s'approche d'elle pour en être illuminé; mais nous pouvons nous identifier avec ce reflet et nous séparer; nous introduisons ainsi comme une coupure entre nous et la

¹⁹ Bréhier, p. 68.

partie supérieure de notre âme, coupure qui n'existe que pour nous, mais qui n'empêche pas la continuité réelle entre le monde intelligible et le monde sensible. En d'autres termes, notre moi, ce que nous sommes pour nous n'est pas adéquat à notre âme. 20

Bréhier's answer is disappointing on two counts. Firstly, it seems rather half-hearted: we are distinct from psyche but not altogether distinct. And, secondly, this answer does not speak to the question at issue. The identity question followed upon the more fundamental question of how the first-person perspective relates to the third-person perspective, and Bréhier's remarks show that he has drifted.

Leaving aside, for a moment, our fundamental question, it remains worth asking why Bréhier's answer to the identity question is so ambivalent, for this will help to reveal some of the underlying problems that our own account must also avoid.

If we read between the lines of the above quotation we can see two difficulties that thwart Bréhier's solution. On the one hand, Plotinus is specific that his philosophical system is comprised of three hypostases or natures.²¹ Thus, to make the ego something altogether independent of these realities would be tantamount to claiming that Plotinus was wrong about his own assessment of his system in that he requires four, not three hypostases. This approach is obviously false and Bréhier is correct to see that one needs to explain the first-person perspective in terms of one or more of the hypostases. None-theless, more needs to be said than that the ego both is and is not the psyche. What is missing is the account of how it is and how it is not. On the other hand, he is also

²⁰ Bréhier, p. 68

²¹ For more about these three hypostases see V 1 and Atkinson, *Plotinus: Ennead V.1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983). Gerson, *Plotinus* (London: Routledge, 1994), has argued (p. 3) that it is 'more helpful and accurate to refer to the One, Intellect, and Soul as ἀρχαί or principles' rather than as 'hypostases'; cf. II 9.1.12-16; V 1.9.23-24; V 2.1.1.

worried about introducing movement or change into the hypostases. That is why he makes movement — the ascent or descent of the psyche — part of our experience. Strictly speaking (à proprement parler) there is no movement in the psyche.²² Our psychai move and change, but the hypostasis remains stable and unchanging.

In trying to move beyond Bréhier's disappointing account, Kristeller has been taken to task for falling into one of these problems.²³ Like Bréhier, Kristeller recognizes the objective and subjective side of Plotinus' philosophy, but he seems to go too far in making the ego independent. He says:

> Während die Psyche in der gegenständlichen Philosophie ein Prinzip ist, das mit den Dingen in objektiver Beziehung steht, ist die Psyche hier Bewußtsein, steht also außerhalb der objektiven Betrachtungsweise. Sie ist indifferentes Bewußtsein, das verschiedener Verhaltungsweisen fähig ist, andererseits wertbetontes Bewußtsein, sofern sie erst in der metaphysischen Bewußtseinsstufe ihre eigentliche Verwirklichung findet.²⁴

Like Bréhier, Kristeller distinguishes between the psyche that is a principle, the hypostasis, and the psyche that is the consciousness [Bewußtsein].25 But unlike Bréhier,

²² Cf. I 1.13.

²³ I take the following criticism from Himmerich, Eudaimonia: Die Lehre des Plotin von der Selbstwirklichung des Menschen, (Würzburg: Konrad Triltsch, 1959); see especially chapter 8 'Bereich und Funktion des menschlichen Ich', 92-100. Himmerich accuses Kristeller of making the 'we' completely independent: 'Kristeller nimmt diesen Ansatz auf, und — obwohl er die gegenständliche Seite in der Philosophie Plotins mit Bréhier zugibt — löst er die "aktuale Betrachtung" der Seele völlig davon ab' (p. 96). He frames the discussion of the difference between psyche and the ego (following Bréhier and Kristeller) in terms of objective and subjective. For Kristeller's discussion see Der Begriff der Seele in der Ethik des Plotin, (Tübingen: J. C. B Mohr, 1929), p. 13. 24 Kristeller, p. 13.

²⁵ For more on this notion of Bewußtsein in Plotinus see Schwyzer, 'Bewußt und Unbewußt bei Plotin', in Les Sources de Plotin (Geneva: 1960), pp. 341-390.

he makes it independent of the hypostases. At least that seems to be the import of the phrase 'außerhalb der objektiven Betrachtungsweise'.

Himmerich thinks that the problems confronting Bréhier and Kristeller can be avoided if we investigate the ontological structure of the person [Mensch]. He maintains that the person contains within himself the Plotinian realities of nous and psyche.²⁶ These realities within the person mirror the realities in the Plotinian world. Given this resemblance of structure, Himmerich can claim that the identity of the person is not simply founded in consciousness, but in the structure of reality. This structure within the person provides the ego with the capability of ordering itself on different levels: the person can be united with the One in mystical union, 'journey on high' [μετεωροπορεί] into nous, lead a human life, or even sink to the life of a beast or plant.²⁷ Himmerich can now explain cases of Plotinian conversion or reversion in terms of this scheme.²⁸ Imagine the case of someone turning from a decadent life of politics to philosophy. explains this case of conversion as the choice of the ego to live the life according to nous.²⁹ Such a change involves more than simple changes in behavior. In Plotinian terms, it involves the elevation of the ego into the level of nous.30 The same considerations would hold for a case of reversion, mutatis mutandis. Does such a change mean that the Plotinian realities are subject to change? To avoid this conclusion Himmerich seems to argue that while it makes a difference to the ego which level of reality it lives on, there

²⁶ Himmerich, p. 95. Strictly speaking this way of stating the matter puts the emphasis in the wrong place. Plotinus wants to say that we are in the realities, not that they are in us.

²⁷ Himmerich, p. 95. For μετεωροπορεί see V 8.7.34; it is a reference to Phaedrus 246c.

²⁸ This notion of conversion is important to Plotinus. Some of its importance can be seen in the way

Porphyry describes the case of conversion of Rogatianus and others in V.P. 7.

29 Strictly speaking, by focusing on choice and freedom of choice Himmerich is in danger of distorting the issue. In his explicit discussion of these issues Plotinus focuses on the 'up to us' [ἐφ' ἡμῖν]; cf. VI 8.1-6.

³⁰ Himmerich is vague about what 'elevation of the ego into the level of nous' means. What this claim means is discussed below in chapters 7, 9 and 11.

is no disruption in the Plotinian order of reality if the ego either ascends or descends. For the structure of reality and the structure of the person is the same. The same person remains, but the ego is at a different level.

Although Himmerich's account is confusing, its strength lies in his realization (not fully articulated) that the identity of the ego cannot simply be grounded in consciousness. It requires some metaphysical foundation, some explanatory theory that shows how the ego and the person relate. Hence in his attempt to ground the identity of the ego within the person he moves beyond the explanations offered by Bréhier and Kristeller. Unfortunately, although Himmerich has put all the pieces onto the table, i.e., he has introduced 'psyche', 'ego', 'person', and 'individual' into the discussion, he has not provided a coherent theory that explains how all these terms relate. Our fundamental question of how to relate the first-person and third-person perspectives remains unanswered. All he says is the following.

Ohne in eine Auseinandersetzung um die Terminologie eintreten zu wollen, stimmen wir zu, daß das Ich sich drei verschiedene Vorstellungsweisen von sich selbst machen kann. Das ist aber nur die eine Seite des seelischen Problems. Es bleibt nicht nur bei den Vorstellungsweisen seiner selbst, wenn das Ich sich als ein strebendes, ein denkendes oder ein transzendierendes erlebt, sondern es geht über zu Verhaltungsweisen; und noch mehr als das, es modifiziert seine Seinsweise und seine Seinswert und kann die Welt modifizieren. 31

All that is said is that there are two sides of the problem. On the one hand, there is the psychological side. The ego is capable of living on three different levels: psyche

³¹ Himmerich, p. 96.

[strebendes], nous [denkendes], and the One [transzendierendes]. On the other hand, there is the objective side [Verhaltungsweise]. On this side, psyche seems to be able to change both itself and the world. But on this side Himmerich falls into the second problem that Bréhier was trying to avoid. In trying to hold the ego and psyche together he seems to introduce motion into the Plotinian realities.³²

Our examination of the interpretations of Bréhier, Kristeller, and Himmerich has led us to an impasse. In asking how the ego and psyche relate, or how the first-person and third-person perspectives relate, we have looked at Bréhier's unsatisfactory solution which says that the ego both is and is not psyche. Though unsatisfactory, Bréhier avoided two problems that undermine the other two. Kristeller in making the ego independent of the hypostases not only introduces a new reality into the Plotinian system, but also fails to answer the question. Himmerich, by trying to hold ego and psyche together introduces change into the hypostasis of psyche. Having reached this impasse we are left without an account of how to relate the psyche that is the Plotinian hypostasis and the ego that is 'the focus of conscious activity'. We are thus left without an explanation of ourselves. What is this 'fluctuating spotlight of consciousness', this first-person perspective which Plotinus thought was so important? Do we have any way of accounting for this from an objective, third-person perspective?

³² This charge is brought by Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology: His Doctrines of the Embodied Soul* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), 109-111. The clearest evidence of this claim is found by comparing Plotinus' claim that 'we are the authoritative part of the psyche' (quoted above, p. 48) and his claim (discussed below in chapter 6) that 'we become nous'. Assuming that the 'we' remains constant and taking these claims at face value, we would be forced to conclude that one hypostasis (or part of one) has changed into another hypostasis (or part of one).

³³ See the text quoted above, p. 65.

³⁴ The expression is Blumenthal's, p. 110. He follows Dodds's view, Les Sources de Plotin, p. 385. Dodds says, 'Soul is a continuum extending from the summit of the individual $\psi v \chi \hat{\eta}$, whose activity is perpetual intellection, through the normal empirical self right down to the $\epsilon l \delta \omega \lambda o \nu$, the faint psychic trace in the organism; but ego is a fluctuating spotlight of consciousness.' Cf. n. 12 above.

These questions lead us back to Plotinus' question with which we began this chapter: Who are we? We have seen that Plotinus was led to focus on the first-person perspective because this perspective introduces a problem: with which 'we' do we identify, the one that is part of the beast, or the one that is above it? The corollary of being a 'double', as we saw, is that we do not know who we are, for we have two competing explanations of what to make of ourselves. Plotinus thinks that an examination of our first-person experience will help us decide between these competing accounts. But this way of looking at the question moves the problem to a deeper level. For it is no longer a question of deciding whether the identity of a person is to be given by an hylomorphic account, or by one that equates the person with an immaterial mind — no small matter in itself. Rather, Plotinus' emphasis on the 'we' forces the questions of the ontological status of this first-person experience and of how to account for it in objective terms. However Plotinus solves the problem of which account of the person to give — hylomorphic compound or immaterial mind — he is still left with the more fundamental question of explaining how first-person experience can be fitted into his philosophy.

What exactly this problem is and how it is to be solved will form the subject of the following chapter. Our excursus in this chapter has introduced us to Plotinus' question and made clear the ways in which it makes sense for him to say that we do not know who we are. To translate this claim into more contemporary philosophical terms we can say that personal identity is not given a priori.³⁵ We can now begin to see why Plotinus was interested in the 'we' and how he used the term. Moreover, our discussion of the failed attempts of Bréhier, Kristeller, and Himmerich to explain his interest brings certain assumptions about the self to light. We need to be clear about these before we go on. I take them to be the following and discuss each in turn.³⁶

³⁵ See Kant's discussion in Kritik der reinen Vernunft A398-399; B409; and B429-B430.

³⁶ I am indebted to Nagel's discussion 'The self as Private Object', pp. 32-43.

- (i) The self is something subjective but not something purely subjective
- (ii) The self is an objective phenomenon
- (iii) 'The self' is a theoretical construct

In claiming that the self is subjective Plotinus asserts that subjective experience reveals the self to itself. When asked what the self is we respond by pointing: what is meant by 'I' is simply this, and by 'this' we mean what is going on in here, i.e., in our present state of consciousness. This characterization of the self makes it out to be a Cartesian ego. Plotinus goes along with this claim, but only so far. In claiming that the self is not something purely subjective Plotinus is allowing the realm of the mental to be broader than our awareness of it. Or, to frame the matter more in Plotinus' terms, we can say that there is an important difference between the psyche and the 'we' or between psyche and ego-consciousness. At any time the psyche contains more than we are consciously aware of. We might best understand this claim by saying that it is antithetical to Descartes' presumption (most evident in Meditation II) that the realm of the mental is coextensive with the realm of awareness. Plotinus is opposed to this equation. Subjective experience reveals the self to itself, but this revelation is not assumed to be exhaustive.

Plotinus needs to maintain that the self is an objective phenomenon, for it is only in the context of objectivity that mistakes about the self make sense. Plotinus' claim that we do not know who we are shows us that there may be a gap between what we are and what we think we are. The problems here are twofold. Firstly, we must avoid false objectification. In talking about the self we need to be talking about an object that is in fact real. And, secondly, we need to remember that in talking about the objectivity of the self we are talking about the objectivity of something subjective. It is that mental activity that is going on in my head when I say, 'This is what I am.'

Finally, to look upon 'the self' as a theoretical construct is to look for an explanatory theory that holds together assumptions (i) and (ii). The theory will attempt to make sense of the subjective side of our experience. The data from our first-person perspective will be used to construct a concept of the self, but the data, as we already know, do not give us an exhaustive or pure description of the object. The theory will have to go beyond the experience of our given conscious awareness of ourselves. It is the attempt to get at the objective something that underlies our experiences. This is what Plotinus is doing we he says that we are the authoritative part of psyche, or Locke when he says that we are what we are consciously aware of, or more modern theorists when they claim that what we are really is our brain. It is 'the self' as a theoretical construct that attempts to explain the difference between appearance and reality.

Once we unpack these assumptions we can see that Plotinus holds that the concept of the self is not something transparent. For after all it is not the *concept* that can tell us who or what we are. For this is what we have formulated in trying to understand ourselves. Nor do our experiences immediately disclose the answer. Looking at the 'we' is not all that we need to do. Hence Plotinus invokes the Delphic command. There is real work to be done not merely in paying attention to our immediate experiences, but also in looking to see what these experiences tell us about ourselves *sub specie aeternitatis*. We can now look upon such work, in terms of the contrasts drawn in this discussion, as an attempt to

reconcile our first-person (subjective) perspective with a third-person (objective) perspective. In more Plotinian terms we can say that the self needs to look at itself from both the 'inside' and the 'outside'.

In the previous chapter we saw that Plotinus thinks that we can have an experiential awareness of nous, and it was there suggested that we should focus on the experience of ourselves. In following the Delphic command through our investigation in this chapter, we have only learned the negative side of the injunction. Our experience of ourselves shows that we do not know who we are and this discovery reveals several assumptions we have made about the nature of the self. We have not yet got as far as discovering in our experience a 'spiritual dimension' which is nous. But we have a hint of what we must do. We have seen that in our state of ignorance we are torn between an 'inner man' $[\dot{o} \ \dot{e}\nu r\dot{o}\varsigma \ \ddot{a}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\sigma\varsigma]$ and an animal $[\tau\dot{o}\ \zeta\dot{\varphi}\sigma\nu]$. Perhaps, in order to find out who we are, we need to look within to find $\dot{o}\ \dot{e}\nu r\dot{o}\varsigma \ \ddot{a}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\sigma\varsigma$. What 'looking within' means and how Plotinus goes about making this identification will form the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

Plotinus' Problem: Self-knowledge

In the last chapter we looked at Plotinus' claim that we are a double. The corollary of this was that we do not know who we are. These claims present Plotinus with two problems. Firstly, how is it that we can be fundamentally mistaken about something we are familiar with, namely, ourselves? And, secondly, how do we come to know ourselves? The focus of this chapter will be upon how we move from a state of ignorance about ourselves to a state of self-knowledge. By focusing on this second question we shall find, in part, an answer to the first. As we shall see in the course of our discussion, a host of commentators and translators is unaware of these problems and so is even more unclear about the solution.

We shall begin by looking at a contemporary problem of self-knowledge presented by John Perry, which will be shown to be similar to the problem that Plotinus is working on. This problem will be used to interpret the opening lines of V 8.11. These line have been frequently misunderstood, and the misunderstanding has been compounded by a needless emendation of the text. I argue that the text makes good sense as it stands, and that in it Plotinus is discussing how to move someone from a state of ignorance to a state of self-knowledge. The solution he proposes is a process of 'internalization'. (We shall examine his detailed discussion of this process below in chapter 9). As we shall see, nous plays the key role in this solution.

How is it that we discover our true self? Before we can answer this question we need to recall some of our earlier discussion that will help us to understand some distinctions Plotinus wishes to make and some terminology he uses. We have already seen that

Plotinus is sensitive to the distinction between perspectives. His interest in the first-person perspective was an interest in the subject of experience, the 'I'. We also saw that he was interested in the third-person perspective. From this perspective he raised the question of how this 'I' fits into reality. It was hinted at the end of the last chapter that this difference in perspectives is synonymous with the attempt to view the self from both 'inside' and 'out'. In this chapter we shall find that this is exactly how Plotinus discusses the issue. We shall examine more closely what these terms mean in a moment. For now we can understand this contrast in the following way. On the one hand, when I look *out* upon the world, I am looking out at the objects which I find there. On the other, when I look *in*, I am looking at what goes on inside of me, my own first-person experiences. I want to argue that Plotinus in V 8.11 puts our problem of the lack of self-knowledge in this framework. In particular, we shall see that Plotinus poses the problem of the two selves in terms of the inner versus the outer self. Moreover, we shall see that our lack of self-knowledge arises not just from the experience we have of ourselves as a double, but also from our tendency to identify ourselves with the 'outer self'.

Before turning to V 8.11, however, we must put Plotinus' problem into clearer focus by looking at a problem of self-knowledge formulated by John Perry. In addition to helping us understand the claims Plotinus makes about the 'inner' and the 'outer' it will also present us with a useful overview of the discussion of V 8.11. Perry presents an imaginative scenario that states the problem succinctly.

An amnesiac, Rudolf Lingens, is lost in the Stanford library. He reads a number of things in the library, including a biography of himself, and a detailed account of the library in which he is lost. ... He still won't know who he is, and where he is, no matter how much knowledge he piles up, until that moment when he is ready to say, 'This place is

aisle five, floor six, of Main Library, Stanford. I am Rudolf Lingens.'1

The example of Rudolf Lingens raises the problem of self-knowledge, but it does so in a peculiar way. Lingens lacks knowledge. That is the reason he does not know who he is. But the question needs to be put more precisely: What sort of knowledge does he lack? Perry's example is set up in such a way that we can give to Lingens any amount of propositional knowledge that we want. But he still will not be any nearer to knowing who he is. Therefore, the knowledge that Lingens lacks, we are forced to conclude, is not propositional knowledge.

One analysis of the problem (that of David Lewis) involves making the distinction between knowledge de se (non-propositional knowledge) and knowledge de dicto (propositional knowledge).² Knowledge de se is taken to subsume knowledge de dicto, but not

¹ Perry, 'Frege on Demonstratives', The Philosophical Review, 86 (1977), 474-497. Perry's example is discussed by David Lewis in 'Attitudes De Dicto and De Se', The Philosophical Review, 88 (1979), 513-543; reprint. in Philosophical Papers, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 133-159. Both discussions credit the earlier work of Castañeda, '"He": A Study in the Logic of Self-Consciousness', Ratio, 8 (1966), 130-157; 'On the Logic of Self-Knowledge', Nous, 1 (1967), 9-21; 'Indicators and Quasi-Indicators', American Philosophical Quarterly, 4 (1967) 85-100. Castañeda's most accessible article is 'On the Logic of Attributions of Self-Knowledge to Others', Journal of Philosophy, 65 (1965), 439-456. Similar arguments are to be found in Geach, 'On Beliefs about Or-self', Analysis, 18 (1967) and Prior, 'On Spurious Egocentricity' Philosophy, 42 (1967), 326-335.

Lewis, Philosophical Papers, p. 139. Those who may be suspicious of this distinction or doubt the conclusion about Lingens should consider Lewis's example (p. 139) of the two gods. Both inhabit a possible world and are omniscient with respect to that world, i.e., they know every proposition that is true in their world. But they both suffer ignorance: 'neither one knows which of the two he is. They are not exactly alike. One lives on top of the tallest mountain and throws down manna; the other lives on top of the coldest mountain and throws down thunderbolts. Neither one knows whether he lives on the tallest mountain or on the coldest mountain; nor whether he throws down manna or thunderbolts' (p. 139). These gods lack knowledge, but the knowledge they 'ack cannot be propositional, for they are omniscient with respect to propositional knowledge. Lewis analyzes the difference in terms of the self-ascription of properties. If or when the gods learn who they are, they are not gaining in knowledge. Rather, they are able to self-ascribe more of the properties that they possess. Lewis labels this self-ascription of properties as belief or knowledge de se. His thesis is that any general account of belief or knowledge must be an account of belief or knowledge de se, for knowledge de se subsumes knowledge de dicto, or propositional knowledge, but not vice versa (p. 139).

vice versa. Knowledge de se is then explained in terms of the self-ascription of properties. Lingens lacks suc. knowledge because he fails to ascribe to himself the (unique) property of being Rudolf Lingens. From a modal realist perspective we can conceive of this problem as a problem of self-locating knowledge. Thus, when Lingens comes to believe propositions he comes to locate himself in a region of logical space (in Lewis's forms he comes to narrow down the set of possible worlds to which he belongs, e.g., if Lingens comes to believe the true proposition that water freezes at O'C., then he belongs only to that set of worlds in which that proposition holds). Then, further, he needs to locate himself in ordinary space and time (i.e., the actual world in which he lives). Ultimately, he needs to identify himself as a member of a sub-population 'who-e sole member at Lingens's own world is Lingens himself'.³ On Lewis's analysis we can see that when Lingens accumulates propositional knowledge it puts him in a better position to be able to self ascribe properties, but it is not certain that he will do so. He may read his biography, but that alone will not guarantee that he will take the properties expressed therein as belonging to himself. Lewis himself does not give an account of how this selfascription is supposed to come about. He is merely interested in arguing the negative case: knowledge de se cannot be conjured up out of knowledge de dicto.

Given this problem and Lewis's analysis, I argue that we can best understand Plotinus' distinction between the 'inner' and 'outer' and the claims he makes about 'inner' and 'outer' vision if we think of it as expressing the difference between knowledge dc se and knowledge de dicto. Indeed, as I shall argue, the problem presented by Lingens gives us an overview of the problem Plotinus takes up in V 8.11. In the opening lines of V 8.12 Plotinus summarizes the discussion of the previous chapter. He says, 'We have explained how he can do this as another [ετερος] and how as himself' [αὐτός 12.1-2]

³ Lewis, p 138.

trans. Armstrong, my emphasis]. As will become clearer below, the pronoun 'this' in these lines refers to vision. Since vision in these chapters (10-12) is tied up with the issue of self-knowledge, we can understand Flotinus' cryptic remark as saying that he has explained how someone can have knowledge of himself as another $[\tilde{\epsilon}\tau\epsilon\rho\sigma\varsigma]$ and how someone can have knowledge of himself as himself $[\alpha \dot{\nu}\tau\dot{\rho}\varsigma]$. The case of Lingens shows how this can happen. In Plotinus' terms Lingens cannot really see himself, because he lacks internal vision, i.e., he lacks knowledge de se. Nonetheless, he does see himself as a different person, as when he reads his biography. In so doing, Plotinus claims, he looks upon himself with external vision; he looks upon himself as $\tilde{\epsilon}\tau\epsilon\rho\sigma\varsigma$, i.e., he only knows himself de dicto.

Now that we have a preliminary understanding of the terms 'inner' and 'outer' and a statement of the problem Plotinus is interested in, we must now turn to the details of V 8.11, in order to show that this problem is indeed Plotinus' problem and to examine his proposed solution. It is here that we confront the problem of an emended text and difficulties with translation. It is these difficulties, I argue, that have prevented many from understanding the problem Plotinus is working on. The Greek text presented below is the emended text found in HS². Most recent editors, including Armstrong, accept Gollwitzer's correction.⁵ Moreover, I have marked with emphasis those parts of Armstrong's translation where the obscurity seems due to more than Plotinus' oracular pronouncements.

⁴ There is much emphasis put on vision in V 8.10-12; cf. 10.1-25 where Plotinus makes much use of the vision described in *Phaedrus* 264e-247a. There is a reference to vision in 8 of the last 10 lines of this chapter. As we shall see this emphasis is repeated in chapter 11 and the opening of 12. For more on the connection between self-knowledge and self-vision see below chapter 8 on $\pi i \sigma \tau c$, and Phillips, 'Plotinus and the "Eye" of Intellect', *Dionysius* 14 (1990), 79-103.

^{5 (}f. n. 9 below. The correct text and translation is given below, p. 80.

ἔτι* δέ τις ήμῶν ἀδυνατῶν ἐαυτὸν ὑρᾶν ὑπ' ἐκείνου τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπὰν καταληφθεὶς εἰς τὸ ἰδεῖν προφέρη τὸ θέαμα, ἐαυτὸν προφέρει καὶ εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ** καλλωπισθεῖσαν βλέπει ἀφεὶς δὲ τὴν εἰκόνα καίπερ καλὴν οὖσαν εἰς ἔν αὐτῷ ἐλθῶν καὶ μηκέτι σχίσας ἔν ὁμοῦ πάντα ἐστὶ μετ' ἐκείνου τοῦ θεοῦ ἀψοφητὶ παρόντος, καὶ ἔστι μετ' αὐτοῦ ὅσον δύναται καὶ θέλει.

*Gollwitzer: ĕτι εὶ Enn. **aὐτοῦ: HBT

Further, one of us, being unable to see himself, when he is possessed by that god brings his contemplation to the point of vision, and presents himself to his own mind and looks at a beautified image of himself; but then he dismisses the image, beautiful though it is, and comes to unity with himself, and, making no more separation, is one and all together with that god silently present, and is with him as much as he wants to be and can be. [V 8.11.1-7, emphasis added]

Armstrong's translation raises two questions: (1) What does the phrase 'brings his contemplation to the point of vision' mean? And (2) if the opening line begins with someone who is 'unable to see himself', how can such a person (just three lines later) 'present himself to his own mind'? I take it that Armstrong's translation shows that he does not have a clear view of what Plotinus is up to, for if someone is unable to see himself, it is wrong to think that the solution consists in having the person simply 'present himself to his own mind'. This expression denies the problem stated in the opening line. In contrast, I want to argue that Plotinus begins chapter 11 with someone who cannot see himself. Like Lingens, such a person lacks a special kind of self-knowledge. But in order to understand the connection between vision and self-knowledge we must first look at what Plotinus says about vision in chapter 10.

In chapter 10 we meet Plotinus' contrast between the inner and outer. He maintains that 'accurate vision' $[\partial\chi\dot{\epsilon}\omega\varsigma\ \partial\rho\dot{\omega}v\ (10.36)]$ is to be had when one has the object of vision

inside oneself. *Prima facie*, we can interpret this claim as stating that the contents of consciousness are more accurately present to us than our vision of the external world.⁶ Plotinus then argues in somewhat Cartesian fashion that though we have this accurate vision inside ourselves we focus on the external and thus ignore the internal. He maintains

...but the keen sighted has what is seen within, although having it he for the most part does not know that he has it, and looks at it as if it were outside because he looks at it as if it was something seen $[\dot{\omega}_{\varsigma} \ \theta \epsilon \alpha \tau \acute{o} \nu]$, and because he wants to look at it. [V 8.10.36-39, trans. Armstrong]

Descartes argued a similar point.⁷ He maintained that the majority of us have things backwards. We think that ordinary objects, e.g., tables, chairs, etc., are more easily known than the soul. The point of the *Meditations* is to show us the reverse is true. Likewise, Plotinus maintains we are distracted by our external vision, and, even more strongly, he explicitly states that we want to be distracted.⁸ Because we are focused on externals we miss the fact that we have this accurate, internal vision.

A problem, however, emerges for this inner/outer contrast. It is the problem we noted before that confronts the subjective/objective or the first-person/third-person con-

⁶ As we shall see later on, what Plotinus means by 'having the object of vision inside oneself' is not quite as innocent as this.

⁷ Cf. Meditations II, Oeuvres de Descartes, ed. Adam and Tannery, vol. IX, (Paris: J. Vrin.), pp. 18-26.

⁸ Why should we be distrept and or want to be distracted? The long answer (which I do not wish to treat) will have to do with the fall of psyche into matter. But within this context Plotinus is making the more general Platonic point that the experiences of the senses and the body distract us from the life of the mind; cf. Phaedo 66bd. And this point is at least prima facie plausible. Those who think not should try reading Plotinus in a room where a television is blaring. I have more to say on Plotinus' idea of distraction below in chapter 11.

trast. It is the problem of self-reflexiveness. What happens when I look upon myself as object? If the contrast between the inner and outer is to hold, then I must be able to look upon myself as an object, or in Plotinus' terms as a $\theta \epsilon \alpha \tau \delta \nu$. Yet, I must also be able to see myself from within. The contrast implies that I have two ways of coming to know myself. I can know myself from within or I can know myself from without. Plotinus, however, is not content to leave the matter here. He wants to privilege one of these senses of knowing. He wants us to know ourselves from the inside. In the passage immediately following the above quotation, he is concerned with the self as object. He says:

But one must transport what one sees into oneself, and look at it as one and look at it as oneself... [V 8.10.39-41 trans. Armstrong]

Plotinus here suggests that we need to shift from looking at ourselves as an external object of vision, a $\theta \epsilon \alpha \tau \delta \nu$, to looking at ourselves from within. The question, then, becomes, how does one do this? How do we see ourselves (as it were) from the inside? How do we get in touch with our true self? All these questions point at the basic issue of self-knowledge, and it is this issue that Plotinus seeks to address in chapter 11.

In order to understand the grammar of the opening sentence of chapter 11 we need to settle a question concerning the text. The manuscripts give ϵi for what is now the first word, but most editors accept the emendation ϵn proposed by Gollwitzer. I want to show that this emendation is not require ϵ and obscures the issue. The editors who accepted the

manuscript reading (here I single out Bréhier and HS1) did not seem able to come up with a conditional sentence that made any sense. They took the initial εi as governing all the following verbs down to line 7 where they regard the εί in the phrase εί δ' ἐπιστραφείη as picking up and re-expressing the conditional force that has been implicit since the first Thus, we have a list of activities performed by the subject: 'brings' (twice) [προφέρη, line 2 and προφέρει, line 3], 'looks' [βλέπει, line 3], 'is' [ἐστί, line 5] 'wants' [θέλει, line 7], 'turns' (twice) [ἐπιστραφείη, line 7 and στρέφοι, line 9]. These verbs form the protasis. And finally the verb 'has' [ĕxɛı, line 10] forms the apodosis. The difficulty with this reading is that the force of the conditional is lost. Plotinus presents us with a set of conditions, but nothing clearly or explicitly follows from them. To be sure Plotinus can sometimes drift from the main issue and then make a new beginning. But I think there is no reason to suppose that Plotinus is drifting and there are telling reasons against this. To begin with I argued that by the end of chapter 10 Plotinus has the particular problem of self-knowledge clearly in his sights. This is, then, an unlikely moment for him to drift. Furthermore, this reading reduces the text not to obscurity but to nonsense. Thus, we should try to find some sort of argument in these lines. Gollwitzer's emendation is not much of an improvement on ei. Armstrong translates Gollwitzer's žti as 'further' and the verbs that follow form merely a list of activities, as we have seen. On this reading, too, no clear picture emerges of what these activities amount to. Neither Gollwitzer's emendation nor Bréhier's punctuation give us anything more than a lengthy, rambling sort of sentence that does not make much sense. But before giving up and attributing the matter to Plotinus' characteristic obscurity, let us look again at the conditional expressed in

⁹ HS² and HBT accept Gollwitzer's emendation. HS¹ follows Bréhier's defense and punctuation of the text. Bréhier remarks on the emendation ad. loc.: 'inutilis lectio si rectam interpunctionem restitueris.' For Bréhier this means letting the sentence run on to line 13. Within this sentence his first full stop is a colon at line 10. I go on to discuss his punctuation in more detail below. For HBT's translation see n. 10 below.

the opening lines.

Against the editors who accept Gollwitzer's emendation or who punctuate or understand the text as Bréhier does, I argue that we should accept the manuscript reading εi and be clear about the inference Plotinus wants to make. I read εi as governing $\pi \rho o \phi \varepsilon \rho \eta$ in line 2. The verb is subjunctive because of $\dot{\varepsilon} \pi \dot{\alpha} \nu$ (line 2), which I take to reinforce the initial condition. Plotinus begins with the supposition that there might be one of us who is unable to see himself. He then slides into talking about what would happen when $[\dot{\varepsilon} \pi \dot{\alpha} \nu]$ such a person takes action. Consequently, I argue that we can translate the conditional in the following way.

εί δέ τις ήμων άδυνατων έαυτον όραν ύπ' ἐκείνου τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπὰν καταληφθεὶς εἰς τὸ ἰδεῖν προφέρη τὸ θέαμα, ἐαυτὸν προφέρει καὶ εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ καλλωπισθεῖσαν βλέπει

And if there is one of us who is unable to see himself — if, seized by that god, he should at some point bring his vision into view, then he [in fact] brings himself [into view], that is $[\kappa\alpha i]$ he sees a beautiful image of himself. [V 8.11.1-3]

That this conditional gives Plotinus an intelligible inference can be seen by looking at how it solves the problems raised by Armstrong's translation. His translation had left us wondering (1) how someone who was unable to see himself could 'present himself to his own mind' and (2) what the phrase 'bring contemplation to the point of vision' could

¹⁰ HBT prints Gollwitzer's emendation and notes, 'Gollwitzer schrieb vortrefflich επ statt εἰ; επ zu ἀδυνατῶν gehörig.' But in spite of this note this is not how they translate these lines. Their translation reads: Wenn aber einer von uns, der noch unfähig ist, sich selber zu sehen, von jenem Gott ergriffen das Schaunis zum Ansehen hervornimmt, so nimmt er sich selber hervor und erblickt ein verschönertes Abbild des Gottes;' (my emphasis). They read αὐτοῦ and so take the vision to be of god. I have followed HS² and read αὐτοῦ and so taken the vision to be of the self. HS¹ read αὐτοῦ, but gloss it as sui ipsius. As we become clear later on in chapter 7, whether the vision is of god or the self does not matter, since for Plotinus the true inner self is something divine and ever-pres at with god.

mean. Let us consider this second problem first. Above I have translated the problematic phrase as 'bring his vision into view'. We can see that in his translation Armstrong is pressing the term $\theta \acute{e}\alpha \mu \alpha$ pretty hard. (He usually reserves the term 'contemplation' for $\theta \epsilon \omega \rho \acute{e}\alpha$.) Literally, $\theta \acute{e}\alpha \mu \alpha$ means 'sight' or 'spectacle'. In translating it as contemplation he is clearly trying to make sense of and avoid the redundancy in what Plotinus in fact says, viz. 'bring the vision into view' $[\epsilon i \zeta \ \tau \delta \ i \delta \epsilon \hat{\iota} \nu \ \pi \rho o \phi \acute{e}\rho \eta \ \tau \delta \ \theta \acute{e}\alpha \mu \alpha]$. In light of the problem Plotinus is working on we may now be tempted to take the sentence to mean how someone 'brings an external object of vision into internal view'. But this is a temptation, I think, that needs to be resisted. The phrase may mean nothing more than that someone focuses upon the object of vision. What we need to understand is how this focusing is connected to the process which he mentioned in chapter 10: 'But one must transport what one sees into oneself and look at it as one and look at it as oneself' (V 8.10.39-41). This question leads us back to the first question: How does someone who is unable to see himself bring his vision into view?

This question can now be answered if we recall that chapter 10 led us up to the problem of self-knowledge and if we recall Perry's illustration of this problem in the person of Lingens. Thus, I argue that in these lines Plotinus is trying to show how someone arrives at knowledge *de se*. This is the move that Lingens needs to make if he is to discover himself. What we have in this conditional and in the lines that follow is a description of a process of 'internalization' that leads to self-knowledge. We can describe it as a three step process. 11 Step one: focus on the external vision. Thus the phrase 'bring his vision into view' should be read in the most non-committal way. Here Plotinus is simply saying 'focus on the external object'. It is puzzling to think of the self as focusing on the

¹¹ In chapter 11 Plotinus only give a bare outline of this process of internalization. He presents the process in more detail in III 8.6, discussed below in chapter 9.

self as external object, but if we remember that when Plotinus talks about 'looking out' or 'looking in' he is trying to contrast two different types of knowledge, it may not seem so strange. Or again recall Lingens reading his own biography. In this way he looks upon himself as external or $\tilde{\epsilon}\tau\epsilon\rho\sigma\varsigma$. Step two: realize that this external object of vision is an image of yourself. Plotinus is not explicit about how one comes to this realization. Here he merely thinks that at some point the person will realize that the object he is looking at is himself. It is interesting in this context to compare the experience of a child or of someone who has never seen a mirror before. It seems to be the case that such persons come to understand that the reflection in the mirror is their reflection by first focusing on and paying attention to the image as an external object of vision. 12

What is at stake in this step might be described in this way. Suppose that Lingens' family or friends find him in the library and tell him that the book he is reading is a biography of himself. He may come to believe that what they say is true. But what Plotinus is here suggesting is that there is a world of difference in how he comes to believe this claim. If he takes it on the authority of his family or friends that the person described in the book is Lingens himself, then the realization is still in a sense external to him. But if at some point he says, 'Ah! ah!, the person described in the book is me', then this realization is internal to him. Once someone has reached this point, he can proceed to the next step. Step three: let the image go and pay attention to the original, that of which the image is a copy: pay attention to the true self.

In these lines Plotinus is merely interested in describing the process of 'internalization'. He does no more than present an outline. He is not interested in trying to show how these steps 'work'. How this process works will be investigated in detail below in chapter 9. What we can see now is what Plotinus takes to be the result of the process. At

¹² That this is the case with psyche made explicit at IV 3.12.1-3.

this point the person is no longer divided into subject and object, but has come into unity with himself. Such a person, Plotinus wants to maintain, has proper self-knowledge. In Lewis's terms this is knowledge de se. In Plotinian terms this is knowledge from within, or κατὰ νοῦν. Unlike Perry, Plotinus will maintain that such a person is completely integrated.

The process of internalization that leads to self discovery presents us with two issues that need to be further explored. What is this internal knowledge that is knowledge of the self, or in Plotinus' phrase, what is knowledge $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\nu\sigma\dot{\nu}\nu$? Also, how is it that the possessor of such knowledge is looked upon as 'integrated', unified, or no longer divided? These questions will be taken up in the next chapter. But before moving on to treat them we need to look at the role that nous plays in this process of self-discovery.

At the conclusion of the text we have considered Plotinus maintains that the person who is united with himself is united with the god who is silently present. We must thus confront the question of who this god is? I argue that it is best to identify the god with separate nous. ¹³ I present three reasons. Firstly, the language that is used to describe the individual's relation to god $(\tilde{\epsilon}\nu\ \delta\mu\sigma\tilde{\nu}\ \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\alpha)$ is the language used frequently to describe separate nous. ¹⁴ Secondly, the description in the last line of the quotation is more appropriate to nous than to either psyche or the One. Plotinus says that the completely integrated person is 'with the god as much as he is able to and wants to be'. Psyche is ruled out on two counts. Plotinus nowhere use the language of $\tilde{\epsilon}\nu\ \delta\mu\sigma\tilde{\nu}\ \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\alpha$ to describe psyche. Also, he never says anything to suggest that we become separated from psyche. Indeed, such a view would be absurd. While we are alive, no one is going to deny that

¹³ For more on this connection see Armstrong, 'The Apprehension of Divinity in the Self and Cosmos in Plotinus', in *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, ed. Harris (Norfolk: Old Dominion University Press, 1976), pp. 187-198.

14 Cf. I 1.8.8; III 6.6.23; V 3.15.18-23; V 8.9.1-4; V 9.6.1-3; V 9.7.8-12; VI 5.6.1-4; VI 6.7.4.

we have a psyche. The Epicureans may be mistaken about the nature of the psyche and about life after death, but even they do not deny that we have a psyche. It is they who believe that we are separated from our psyche at death: Plotinus does not.

The One is excluded from this discussion of god because the implication of the opening lines of V 8.11 is that the relationship with god is something that we have control over. More specifically, it is something that is 'up to us', i.e., dependent on us. Thus, Plotinus cannot be talking of our mystical union with the One, for he is clear that that is a relation that is in not 'up to us' but up to the One. 15

Thirdly, there is a further argument based on language and theme. Plotinus often speaks of us being forgetful of our origins; in his words, 'we have forgotten our father god'. ¹⁶ As the rest of the chapter and treatise makes clear Plotinus is using the phrase 'father god' to describe rous. Thus, my claim is that there is nothing unusual in his referring to nous as god in the text of V 8.11. Furthermore, I argue that Plotinus' claim of V 8.11 that when we find ourselves we find the god who is silently present is to be interpreted as expressing the theme of our Return. Elsewhere Plotinus has likened us to children who were taken away from our parents and raised in a foreign land. As adults we no longer know who we are or who our parents are. ¹⁷ Thus, just as it would not be surprising for the children to discover their parents once they learned who they truly were so it is not surprising that we should discover nous once we discover our true identity, for nous is our forgotten 'father god', the god who has been silently present all along.

17 V 1.1.9-11.

¹⁵ The comparison between the rising of the sun and the appearance of the Oze confirms this point; cf. V 5.8.1-7. For Plotinus' discussion of what is 'up to us' $[\dot{\epsilon}\phi'\,\dot{\eta}\mu\bar{\iota}\nu]$ and his claim that what is 'up to us' is the activity of nous see VI 8.1-6 and the commentary by Leroux Plotin: Traité sur la liberté et la volonté de l'Un, (Paris: J. Vrin, 1990).

¹⁶ Cf. V 1.1.1-2 and the commentary by Atkinson, *Plotinus: Ennead V.1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) for a detailed discussion of this theme.

We have seen how Plotinus describes the discovery of our true identity through a process of internalization. This movement to the interior world is graphically described by him through the image of divine possession. After talking about moving the object of vision $[\theta \epsilon \alpha \tau \delta \nu]$ to the interior world he makes the following comparison.

as if someone possessed by a god, taken over by Phoebus or one of the Muses, could bring about the vision of the god in himself, if he had the power $[\delta \hat{\nu} \nu \alpha \mu \iota \zeta]$ to look at the god in himself. [V 8.10.41-43 trans. Armstrong]

This image that concludes chapter 10 and opens chapter 11 shows that the idea of looking within to find the true self and looking within to find god are intimately connected. Furthermore, the equivalence of 'god' with separate nous in these passages yields the claim that our true identity is intimately connected with separate nous. The image and our discussion thus far suggests that there is something in the way we experience ourselves that will enable us to say that we experience nous. Nevertheless, this image, the interpretation of god as nous, and loose talk about experience leave several questions before us. Do we have this power of turning to see which god has possessed us? Do we have the ability of

¹⁸ Notice that when Plotinus uses this same image to describe our relationship to the One there is no talk of vision and what we may be able to deduce from the experience is much more vague: He says: 'But just as those who have a god within them and are in the grip of divine possession may know this much, that they have something greater within them, even if they do not know what, and from the ways in which they are moved and the things they say get a certain awareness [$\alpha i \delta \eta \sigma i \nu \tau \nu \alpha$] of the god who moves them, though these are not the same as the mover; so we seemed disposed towards the One...' [V 3.14.9-13 trans. Armstroug].

turning inward to look at our true self? How is our identity 'intimately connected' with nous? Is nous something we can experience, and if so, how?

CHAPTER 6

An Interpretation of the Phrase 'Becoming Nous'

The last chapter presented in outline the process of internalization through which we come to know our true self. It was there suggested as an interpretive hypothesis that the person who has acquired self-knowledge, or more precisely, the person who is integrated with his true self is 'one' ["ev" $"o\mu o"$ $"av\tau \alpha$] with the god — nous — who is present. The knowledge that results from this process was taken to be a type of internal vision and was likened to the concept of knowledge de se used by Lewis. Plotinus' phrase for this type of knowing is knowing κατὰ νοῦν. 1 It is the aim of this chapter to examine what Plotinus means by this expression. This investigation is necessary, for the concept of knowing something κατὰ νοῦν is central to the argument (presented in the following chapter) whereby Plotinus demonstrates that the ideas of self-discovery and unity with nous are one and the same. Before we can understand this argument we must first see whether we have the capacity $[\delta \hat{\nu} \nu \alpha \mu \iota \varsigma]$ to know things $\kappa \alpha \tau \hat{\alpha} \nu \delta \hat{\nu} \nu$ and whether this type of knowing involves becoming nous. The basis of discussion will be two texts from V 3.4 (lines 1-4 and lines 7-15).

We need to recall that in chapter 4 we saw that Plotinus identified 'us' with the authoritative part of psyche [τὸ κύριον]. This part is located between a two-fold power: sense perception $[\alpha i\sigma\theta\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma]$ and nous.² When we ask Plotinus what makes this part of the psyche authoritative, he responds by making it clear that nous is the locus of authority.

¹ My use of the phrase 'knowing κατὰ νοῦν' is based on the text in V 8.11.33-34 where it occurs in the phrase ἴσμεν κατὰ νοῦν. How Plotinus is using this phrase in this text will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

2 Cf. V 3.3.36-40.

We have this authority $[\dot{\eta}\gamma\epsilon\mu\sigma\nu\dot{\alpha}]$, he asserts, when we are $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\nu\sigma\dot{\nu}$. We can be in this state in either of two ways. He says:

Yet we are also kings, when we are in accordance with the mind $[\kappa\alpha\tau\grave{\alpha}\ \grave{\epsilon}\kappa\epsilon \hat{\nu}\nu\nu]$, i.e. $\nuo\hat{\nu}\nu$]. And we can be in accordance with it in two ways: either by the signs that are written in us, so to speak, like laws, or being filled with it, as it were, or even being able to see and perceive it as present. [V 3.4.1-4]⁴

Plotinus here explains the phase $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\nu\rho\hat{\nu}\nu$ in two distinct ways. On the one hand, there is what we might call the transcendental function of nous. Nous provides discursive reason [$\delta\iota\alpha\nu\rho\dot{\alpha}$] with what it needs in order to function. In this way nous is known indirectly. Once we understand how reasoning works, we shall see that it requires nous as a transcendental condition. On the other hand, Plotinus claims that we have a more direct contact with nous. We are 'filled' with it or we are able to 'see' and 'perceive' that it is present. From our discussion of V 8.11 this sense of $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\nu\rho\dot{\nu}\nu$ should come as no surprise, for we have seen that when we look within, we discover that our true self is $\xi\nu$ $\delta\mu\rho\dot{\nu}$ $\tau\dot{\alpha}\nu\tau\alpha$ with the god — nous — who is silently present. This sense of $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\nu\rho\dot{\nu}\nu$ refers to a direct contact with the self and nous. Oosthout notices these two senses of $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\nu\rho\dot{\nu}\nu$ and remarks on them as follows.

Let us now summarize and try to grasp the essence of what Plotinus is saying in this chapter [V 3.4]. The pure mind provides human reason with certain standards or notions that

³ Cf. I 1.7.15-16 for the term ηγεμονία.

⁴ Translation Oosthout, Modes of Knowledge and the Transcendental (Amsterdam: B. R. Grüner, 1991), p. 95. He consistently translates 'nous' as 'mind'.

enable reason to make judgments on things perceived. We thus use the mind, although we may not always be aware that we are doing so. However, self-knowledge, even the deficient kind of self-knowledge that we human beings are capable of, requires that we realize that our reasoning needs the mind to function properly. Moreover, Plotinus suggests that we can incidentally lift ourselves beyond the power of reason and gain a more direct kind of self-knowledge, when we «see» the mind and think like it.⁵

Oosthout describes what we have labelled the transcendental sense of $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}\ \nu\sigma\dot{\nu}\nu$; this is the pure mind — separate nous — providing human reason with what it needs in order to function properly. He also suggests that there is another sense which refers to a more direct kind of self-knowledge. But as we can see from our earlier discussion this is much more than a suggestion: it is a sense of $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}\ \nu\sigma\dot{\nu}\nu$ that Piotinus is committed to. This is the sense of $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}\ \nu\sigma\dot{\nu}\nu$ that I earlier labeled knowledge de se. As we have seen this is not a type of knowledge that can be communicated in propositions. As Plotinus' metaphors of 'seeing' and 'being filled' suggest, this self-knowledge is something we experience. Oosthout does not pick up on this sense of self-knowledge, and his claim that we gain this type of knowledge 'when we «see» the mind and think like it' is vague. It does not get beyond Plotinus' metaphors. From our discussion of V 8.11 we can see that our self-knowledge is intimately bound up with our knowledge of nous — separate nous — which is the god who is silently present. We see this again in another text from V 3.4.

Therefore, he who comes to know himself is twofold $[\delta\iota\tau\tau\delta\nu]$: on the one hand he who knows the nature of the soul's reasoning, and on the other hand he who stands on a higher level $[\tau\delta\nu$ $\delta\dot{\epsilon}$ $\dot{\nu}\pi\epsilon\rho\dot{\alpha}\nu\omega]$, he who knows himself in accordance with the mind $[\gamma\iota\nu\dot{\omega}\sigma\kappa\sigma\tau\alpha$ $\dot{\epsilon}\alpha\nu\tau\dot{\delta}\nu$ $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\tau\dot{\delta}\nu$

⁵ Oosthout, p. 99.

νοῦν], when he becomes that mind [ἐκεῖνον γινόμενον]. And «to think oneself through the mind» [κάκείνω έαυτον νοείν] does not mean that one still thinks of oneself as a human being, but that one has become completely different and has snatched oneself on high, drawing with oneself only the better part of one's soul, precisely the part that can get «wings» to thought, in order that one can hold in trust what one saw there.⁶ [V 3.4.7–15]

That Plotinus should characterize the knower as double should come as no surprise, for we have again the picture of the self knowing itself through discursive reasoning and we have a picture of the self on a higher level knowing itself κατὰ τὸν νοῦν. 7 What this higher level of knowing is is not yet clear. But what Plotinus says here is that we have this type of knowledge when we 'become nous'. Whatever the phrase 'become nous' is going to mean it seems reasonable to assume that he is talking about 'we' in the sense of the true self, not in the sense of the compound of psyche and body [τὸ συναμφότερον]. Moreover, the assumption becomes more plausible in light of the reference to Phaedrus (246a ff.)

6 Translation Oosthout, p. 99

⁷ The significance of the phrase κατὰ τὸν νοῦν, rather than κατὰ νοῦν in this text comes from the influence of Aristotle, EN 1177b26-1178a9, quoted below p. 95. Furthermore, it should be noted that the interpretation of this phrase is not without controversy. Gerson, Plotinus (London: Routledge, 1994) disagrees with the interpretation that is offered below. He says, 'Plotinus' characterization of Intellect [nous] does not depend on an appeal to our own experience, for we are not aware of the activity [ἐνέργεια] of separate intellect, neither our own nor that of the demiurge' (p. 55). Later (p. 103) he says, 'We cannot in our incarnate lives know forms as nous knows them.' The reasons we cannot know or experience separate nous are three: (i) nous is eternal; (ii) the knowledge of nous is universal - it knows all the forms at once; and (iii) the very locution κατά νοῦν suggests an activity 'in accordance with' or patterned after the original activity, not the original activity itself. In contrast, I want to argue that the only solid objection is the first, but even this is not telling. For as Geach ('What Do We Think With', in God and the Soul (London: Routledge, 1969), 30-41) argued, it is difficult to assign the activity of thinking a place in the physical time series. Thus, when Plotinus uses the phrase κατὰ νοῦν, the problem is not how to relate the temporal and eternal. For all thought is atemporal. Rather, the problem is how to describe the type of thinking that is κατὰ νοῦν. I interpret this phrase to mean that some of our activity of thinking [νόησις] matches that of separate nous (cf. LSJ IV 3), i.e., we experience the thought of separate nous by having the identical thought content. (This removes the third objection.) Then, I argue that our thought differs from the thought of separate nous in extent. We do not have universal knowledge of all the forms, but only as many as we have recollected and are occupied with in contemplation. This removes the second objection and is dealt with in more detail in chapter 9.

and Plotinus' explicit mention of not thinking of oneself as a human being $[\tilde{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\sigma\varsigma]$. These ideas, however, raise an important question. If knowing ourselves $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\nu\sigma\dot{\nu}\nu$ has something to do with our becoming nous, and our becoming nous entails that we should no longer think of ourselves as human beings, does this mean that we can only gain true self-knowledge at the end of our human lives?

This question is important in forming an interpretation of Plotinian nous, for what we want to know is whether we — here and now — have one or two ways of coming to understand nous. As we have seen, in one way, separate nous can be seen as a transcendental condition that explains why we are able to reason discursively. The question raised by the above text and the idea that we have been tracking all along is whether we are able to 'see' or experience nous in the here and now, i.e., while we are still human beings. Since the argument presented in the next chapter will clearly show that Plotinus does think that we can have knowledge of our true selves while we are still human beings, we must look for a way of reading the text of V 3.4 that makes sense out of what Plotinus says and does not undermine the argument of the following chapter.

The key to understanding the above text lies in understanding the phase 'he who knows himself in accordance with nous, when he becomes that nous'. What does 'becoming nous' mean? This phrase is puzzling, for Oosthout takes Plotinus to be using it in different — indeed incompatible — senses. In V 3.3.29-31 Plotinus talks about our 'using' [$\tau \delta \pi \rho \sigma \chi \hat{\eta} \sigma \theta \alpha \iota$] nous. This term he thinks requires explanation.

8 The Greek is τον γινώσκοντα έαυτον κατά τον νοῦν έκεῖνον γινόμενον [V 3.4.9-10].

⁹ So Oosthout claims: 'It might be argued that this fourth chapter, as a whole, appears incongruous with Plotinus's earlier argument, in 3.29 ff., on *becomming mind*. There, Plotinus suggested that by being *in accordance with the mind* we do not actually *become mind*. Here, however, *becoming mind* exists as one of the meanings of *being in accordance with mind* (p. 100).'

But what does «to make use of» mean? Is it when we become mind ourselves and speak like it?

— No, when we are in accordance with it, for we are not mind. Yes, in accordance with it, through the principal part of the ratiocinative function, which is able to receive it. IV 3.3.29-321¹⁰

This text, although not overtly contradictory, is nevertheless thought to be 'incongruous' with the text quoted above from chapter 4. Here when posing the question of whether we become mind, Plotinus responds by denying that we are identical with nous and by falling back on the notion of $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\nu\sigma\dot{\nu}\nu$. He then enlists 'the principal part of the ratiocinative function' $[\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\lambda\sigma\gamma\iota\sigma\tau\iota\kappa\dot{\alpha}\nu$ $\pi\rho\dot{\omega}\tau\sigma\nu]$ in his explanation. Given that he uses this term and that in the following lines he draws upon sense perception as an example shows that what he has in mind here is what we earlier called the transcendental function of nous. This part of psyche receives standards or notions that enable it to form concepts, reason, and judge. Furthermore, when Plotinus here explicitly denies that we are nous we should understand him to be denying that we are identical with separate nous understood as divine nous or the demiurge. Thus, to put the matter anachronistically he is here denying an Averroistic interpretation of nous. We are not identical with separate nous, but we reason in accordance with it.

10 Translation Oosthout, p. 92. The Greek is as follows: τὸ δὴ προσχρῆσθαι τί ἐστιν; ἀρα αὐτοὺς ἐκεῖνο γινομένους, καὶ φθεγγομένους ὡς ἐκεῖνος; ἢ κατ' ἐκεῖνον οὐ γὰρ νοῦς ἡμεῖς κατ' ἐκεῖνο οὖν τῷ λογιστικῷ πρώτῳ δεχομένῳ.

12 Speaking more historically Plotinus is denying Alexander's interpretation. See the brief discussion of Alexander's views in Rist, *The Mind of Aristotle* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), pp. 180-182.

Beierwaltes, Selbsterkenntnis Und Erfahrung der Einheit (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1991) agrees with at least this much. He glosses the text as, 'Nicht Geist sind wir nämlich in seiner absoluten, in sich seienden Form' (p. 104; cf. p. 106). Though he talks about the presence of nous in psyche he treats it only as a condition (ontologische Bedingung) for thought (pp. 103-106), and so he has little to say about 'becoming nous' and how this relates to the question of identity.

As we have seen in V 3.4.1-4, however, Plotinus distinguishes between two senses of $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}\ \nu\sigma\dot{\nu}\nu$. The first agrees with what is found in V 3.3, and corresponds to the function of discursive reason. The second is new and corresponds to knowledge *de se*: the experience of ourselves and our connection with separate nous. I see no difficulty in Plotinus at first setting aside the notion of becoming nous and introducing instead the notion of $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}\ \nu\sigma\dot{\nu}\nu$, but then going on to separate two senses of $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}\ \nu\sigma\dot{\nu}\nu$ in the later chapter, one of which might be described as 'becoming nous'. Indeed one almost expects these later clarifications as part of the style in which Plotinus writes.¹³

But at this point the objection changes ground. Even if Plotinus can be shown to have two separate senses of $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\nu\sigma\dot{\nu}\nu$, the transcendental sense and the more experiential sense that entails 'becoming nous', the notion of becoming nous is thought to be problematic because it entails a denial of our human aspect. As Plotinus says becoming nous means that one does not 'still think of oneself as a human being'. Elsewhere again with echoes of the *Phaedrus* he talks about ceasing to be human and how one 'journeys on high and controls the whole world'. These remarks lead Oosthout to maintain:

Plotinus definitely emphasizes that man cannot simply «become mind». Man's characteristic mode of thinking is discursive reason, which is primarily directed towards objects outside itself. According to Plotinus, man cannot «become mind», for to do so would require transcending one's own nature. 15

¹³ Cf. VP 8, 13, 19-20. O'Daly, Plotinus' Philosophy of the Self, finds no conflict between the two passages, though for different reasons than I suggest; cf. pp. 55-56. Nor does Beierwaltes, n. 11 above.

¹⁴ Cf. V 8.7.28-35. The phrase 'journeying on high' is Hackforth's translation of μετεωροπορεί.

¹⁵ Oosthout, p. 100.

Oosthout is worried about the phrase 'becoming nous' in V 3.4.10 so he interprets the remarks that follow this phrase to count decidedly against this notion: '[no longer] thinks of oneself as a human being'. In contrast, I take this phrase to show just how Plotinus understands the idea of becoming nous.

But before going on to discuss this notion it is interesting to note the way in which Oosthout (like many others) equates human thought with discursive thought. If this identification were convincing for Plotinus, then to participate in another type of thought, namely non-discursive thought, would be to transcend one's human nature. But our discussion has shown that such an equation does not hold for Plotinus. To limit human thought to discursive thought begs an important question. Plotinus leaves room for selfthought which is non-discursive. It was earlier suggested (and we shall see more fully in the next chapter) that we can experience non-discursive thought when the self [ο ἐντὸς ανθρωπος] experiences itself as itself. The phrases 'snatch oneself on high' or 'drawing with oneself only the better part of one's psyche' only hint at such an experience. But one point from our earlier discussion can now help us with this text. We saw in chapter two that Plotinus has two perspectives from which to view the inward self. He can look at the matter from the human perspective. In this case the true self $[\dot{o} \dot{e}\nu\tau\dot{o}\varsigma \, \check{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi o\varsigma]$ is looking down upon the animal self. He can also look at the self from outside the human condition. In V 3.4.7-15 Plotinus can look at the self from the divine perspective $[\tau \partial \nu \ \delta \hat{\epsilon}]$ υπεράνω V 3.4.11]. Here from the god's eye view the true self is looking up to nous. From this perspective the human condition seems left behind. Plotinus here talks about the better part of the psyche rather than the inner man, for the human perspective has been left behind — the inner man has become another [ἄλλον γενόμενον V 3.4.10]. The inner man has now become the better part of psyche by drawing up this part of himself into

¹⁶ Cf. chapter 3 above.

nous. This drawing up of the better part of psyche into nous is what I take Plotings to mean by 'becoming nous'. It does not entail the denial of the human condition. It tries to view this condition from another perspective.

> But such life would be too high for man; for it is not in so far as he is man that he will live so, but in so far as something divine $[\theta \hat{\imath}\hat{i}\hat{o}\nu \tau \iota]$ is present in him; and by so much as this is superior to our composite nature [τοῦ συνθέτου] is its activity [ἐνέργεια] superior to that which is the exercise of the other kind of excellence. If intellect [voûs] is divine, then, in comparison with man, the life according to it is divine in comparison with human life. But we must not follow those who advise us, being men, to think of human things, and, being mortal, of mortal things, but must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing [τὸ κράτιστον] in us; for even if it be small in bulk, much more does it in power and worth surpass everything. This would actually seem to be each man, since it is the authoritative [τὸ κύριον] and better part [austrov] of him. It would be strange, then, if he were to choose not the life of himself but that of something else. And what we said before will apply now; that which is proper [70 oikslov] to each thing is by nature best and most pleasant for each thing; for man, therefore, the life according to intellect [ὁ κατὰ τὸν νοῦν] is best and pleasantest, since

intellect more than anything else is man. This life therefore is also the happiest. 17

In this text Plotinus finds four statements about nous that he is willing to make use of. Two we have seen, two are new to the discussion. The two we have seen are the claims (i) that nous is something divine $[\theta \epsilon i \delta \nu \tau]$ and (ii) that nous is the best or most authoritative part in us $[\tau \delta \kappa \rho \acute{\alpha} \tau \iota \sigma \tau \nu \tau \delta \kappa \acute{\nu} \rho \iota \sigma \nu]$. That nous is something divine should be clear from previous chapters. But that nous is the authoritative part of us is somewhat puzzling, for earlier we saw that Plotinus identified $\tau \delta \kappa \acute{\nu} \rho \iota \sigma \nu$ with the higher part of psyche. Nevertheless, we can see that his talk of psyche's 'becoming nous' creates an ambiguity that allows room for him to agree with Aristotle. The two we have not seen are (iii) that in talking about the life according to nous Aristotle is talking about the activity $[\dot{\epsilon} \nu \acute{\epsilon} \rho \gamma \epsilon \iota \sigma]$ of nous, and (iv) that Aristotle identifies us with nous on the grounds that it is what is proper $[\tau \delta o i\kappa \epsilon \iota \sigma \nu]$ to us.

We must turn in later chapters to sort out how it is that Plotinus makes use of these four ideas. For now what we need to see is that this text gives us a way of interpreting the phrase 'becoming nous' that does not entail the denial of the human condition. In the text that follows this quotation Aristotle makes clear that the life $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\tau\dot{o}\nu$ $\nu\sigma\dot{v}\nu$ is the activity of 'contemplation' $[\theta\epsilon\omega\rho\epsilon\dot{v}\nu$ or $\theta\epsilon\omega\rho\eta\tau\kappa\dot{\eta}$ $\dot{\epsilon}\nu\dot{\epsilon}\rho\gamma\epsilon\iota\alpha]$. Leaving aside for a moment what this activity amounts to, we can see that for Aristotle the fact that a human being can enter into this activity makes his human status ambiguous. Though the passage is filled with hesitations and qualifications he does separate the activity of the compound from the activity of nous, the divine element within that compound which he takes to be the true person. To enter into the activity of nous is thus to become divine and immortal, at least

¹⁷ EN 1177^b26-1178^a9 The Revised Oxford translation.

for as long as the activity lasts. When we tire of this activity or are interrupted, we return to our more ordinary, human pursuits. Whatever Aristotle's belief about the immortality of the psyche may have been or whether he may have changed his mind on this issue is beside the point. Aristotle is contrasting the human and divine life of one and the same person, or to use his phrase 'compound' $[\sigma \hat{\nu}\nu\theta\epsilon\tau o\varsigma]$. He is not contrasting the human condition of the here and now with that of an afterlife. Rather, what he seems to be saying is that it would be nice to be separate nous, but regrettably we are not.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the influence that this text had upon Plotinus. 18 What Aristotle here expresses with doubts, qualifications, and hesitation, we shall see Plotinus appropriate and state with full-blooded Platonic vigour. For Plotinus nous is divine and this is indeed what each of us most truly is. Because we are compounds our life is a composite of human and divine aspects. Being a double means that we are amphibious creatures whose existence (at least for our allotted time) bridges the human and divine worlds. 19 Thus, when Plotinus talks about our 'ceasing to be human' (V 8.7.33-34) or our 'thinking ourselves [ἐαυτὸν νοεῦν] again as no longer human' (V 3.4.11), he is referring not only to some disincarnate state the psyche enters into after the death of the body, as expressed in the myth of the *Phaedrus* (246a-247c), but also to Aristotelian contemplation. When we enter into this activity we 'become nous'. 'Becoming nous' does not mean that we become other than what we are. Just as a person who runs does not become other than he is while running, and can be identified in accordance with his activity, i.e., as a runner, so we can enter into the life κατὰ νοῦν and not become other than we are. We can now interpret this phrase to mean that we 'appropriate'

¹⁸ Some of this influence is clearly seen in the way Plotinus sets up the discussions of I 4.1 and I 7.1, but its more subtle and pervasive presence is better seen in Plotinus' struggle to reconcile the contrast Aristotle draws between the life of the compound and the life of nous.

19 Cf. IV 8.4.31-32.

 $[\dot{\varphi}\kappa\epsilon\dot{\iota}\omega\sigma\epsilon\nu]$ or 'identify' with the highest aspect of ourselves.²⁰ In acting in this way we become 'filled' with nous and are able to 'see' it. In chapter 9 we shall look more closely at what it means to 'appropriate' or 'identify' with this divine part of ourselves that is in fact our true self. But we must first prove that such a self exists.

20 Cf. III 8.6.18, discussed below in chapter 9.

Now, in calm weather, to swim in the open ocean is as easy to the practised swimmer as to ride in a spring-carriage ashore. But the awful lonesomeness is intolerable. The intense concentration of self in the middle of such a heartless immensity, my God! who can tell it? Herman Melville

CHAPTER 7

An Argument for the Existence of the True Self

This chapter intends to defend two claims. Firstly, it shows that the argument whereby Plotinus demonstrates the reality of the 'inner man' $[\dot{o} \ \dot{e}\nu\tau\dot{o}\zeta \ \ddot{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\sigma\zeta]$ is valid. And, secondly, it shows the identity of this 'inner man' with nous. This latter claim is noteworthy, for it is connected to Plotinus' notorious doctrine of forms of individuals. It will not be my aim to review this controversy in detail. Rather, as there seems to be tentative agreement that Plotinus admits Forms for individual human beings, my aim will be to exhibit the problems that motivated him to adopt this position. But before taking up the argument and becoming embroiled in these controversial issues, we will do well to summarize our discussion thus far, for the argument of this chapter presents the cardinal issue of this entire investigation.

After the historical introduction in chapter 1, chapter 2 introduced the problem of our relationship to nous. It showed that sometimes Plotinus uses 'nous' to refer to 'separate nous' $[\nu o \hat{\nu} \zeta \ \chi \omega \rho \iota \sigma \tau \delta \zeta]$ something divine and above our human condition, and sometimes he uses 'nous' to refer to 'particular nous' $[\nu o \hat{\nu} \zeta \ \tilde{\kappa} \kappa \alpha \sigma \tau o \zeta]$, the nous of the psyche. Chapter 3 then introduced a type of thinking $[\nu o s \hat{\iota} \nu]$ that was non-discursive. It suggested that, in order to understand this activity of nous, we examine our own experience of it. Following a lead offered by Rist, that this experience is best exemplified in the experience we have of ourselves, chapter 4 introduced the question of personal identity:

¹ For the relevant literature see n. 21 below. To say that Plotinus maintains that there are Forms for individual human beings needs one qualification. Given his views of reincarnation it might be the case that an animal or a plant has an individual Form, for that animal or plant might be a 'human being', albeit one that has sunk rather low.

Who are we? The self-reflexive character of first-person experience brought to light the paradoxical claim that this experience would teach us both that we are ignorant of our true nature (because we are a double), and that this experience would reveal our true identity. This latter claim was set aside to be taken up in this chapter. Moreover, chapter 5 picked up the contrast between the first and third-person perspectives that emerged from our examination of Plotinus' use of the pronoun 'we' and demonstrated that Plotinus takes this contrast to be equivalent to the contrast between the inner and the outer. It was then shown that Plotinus' problem of identity has to do with 'harmonizing' the 'inner' versus the 'outer' self. It was there suggested that nous is what establishes the 'harmony' between these two selves, and because the argument of this chapter requires the notion of knowing something κατὰ νοῦν, chapter 6 determined that there was a sense of knowing something κατὰ νοῦν that was equivalent to 'becoming nous'. This phrase was then glossed as meaning to 'appropriate' [ψκείωσεν] or 'identify' with the highest aspect of ourselves. This aspect was taken to be what was most 'proper' [oikelov] to us. Having set aside what 'appropriate' or 'identify' mean for a later chapter, we have arrived at the argument of this chapter which sets out to show that there exists an inner man that is the unified subject of our experience and that this is what we are 'identified' with. I shall use Plotinus' language (who follows Aristotle) in saying that this is what is $\tau \hat{o}$ oikelov for us. The argument will provide grounds for identifying what is τὸ οἰκεῖον with νοῦς ἔκαστος. Then, in looking at the way νοῦς ἔκαστος is related to νοῦς χωριστός we shall be in a position to see how Plotinus 'harmonizes' the inner with the outer or the first with the third-person perspective.

Plotinus' problem — How do we discover our real nature? — can now be seen in context. We have seen that our ignorance comes from the opposition between $\dot{\delta}$ $\dot{\delta}\nu\tau\dot{\delta}\zeta$ $\ddot{\delta}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\delta\zeta$ and $\tau\dot{\delta}$ $\zeta\dot{\omega}\rho\nu$. This is a conflict we find within ourselves. This type of dualism

was linked to the problem of self-knowledge in the following way. On the one hand, Plotinus argued that the true self, $[\dot{o} \ \dot{e}\nu\tau\dot{o}\zeta \ \ddot{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\sigma\varsigma]$ knows itself as another $[\ddot{\epsilon}\tau\epsilon\rho\sigma\varsigma]$. This is the inner man $[\dot{o} \ \dot{e}\nu\tau\dot{o}\zeta \ \ddot{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\sigma\varsigma]$ knowing the animal self $[\tau\dot{o} \ \zeta\dot{\varphi}\sigma\nu]$. On the other hand, Plotinus argued that the true self, $[\dot{o} \ \dot{e}\nu\tau\dot{o}\zeta \ \ddot{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\sigma\varsigma]$ can know itself $[\alpha\dot{\nu}\tau\dot{o}\varsigma]$ directly. In each case not only is the known object different, the animal self versus the true self, but also the way in which these objects are known is different, $\nu\sigma\epsilon\dot{\nu}\nu$ versus $\lambda\sigma\gamma\dot{\iota}\zeta\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$. The latter is knowledge $de\ dicto$, the former knowledge $de\ se$. What is Plotinus' argument for the distinction?

Plotinus does not present a formal argument (he seldom does), but his position is set out at the end of V 8.11, a text we considered earlier in chapter 5. He says:

What belongs to us and we [ourselves] are imperceptible [ἀναίσθητοι]. Since we are like this we understand ourselves [ἐσμὲν αὐτοῖς συνετοί] most of all when we make our knowledge of ourselves and ourselves one. Moreover there [in the intelligible world] when we especially know according to nous [κατὰ νοῦν] we seem to be ignorant because we are waiting for the experience of sense perception $[\tau \hat{\eta} \zeta]$ αἰσθήσεως] which says that it does not see. For it does not see and could never see such things. Therefore, that which does not apprehend $[\tau \delta \dot{\alpha} \pi \iota \sigma \tau \delta \bar{\nu} \nu]$ is sense perception $[\dot{\eta}]$ αἴσθησις]. The other one is the one who sees [ὁ ἰδών]. Or [to put the matter the other way around] if that one should not apprehend, then he could not apprehend his own existence. For he himself can in no way place himself outside as though he were a perceptible object and see himself through the eyes of the body. $[V 8.11.31-40]^3$

2 The translation of the verbs πιστεύειν and ἀπιστεύειν by the expression 'to apprehend' or 'not apprehend' is defended below in chapter 8.

³ The Greek text reads as follows: τὰ δὲ ἡμῶν καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀναίσθητοι· οὕτω δ' ὅντες μάλιστα πάντων ἐσμὲν αὐτοις συνετοὶ τὴν ἐπιστήμην ἡμῶν καὶ ἡμᾶς ἔν πεπαιηκότες. κἀκεῖ τοίνυν, ὅτε μάλιστα ἴσμεν κατὰ νοῦν, ἀγνοεῖν δοκοῦμεν, τῆς αἰσθήσεως ἀναμένοντες τὸ πάθος, ἡ φησι μὴ ἐωρακέναι· οὐ γὰρ εἶδεν οὐδ' ὰν τὰ τοιαῦτά ποτε ἴδοι. τὸ οὖν ἀπιστοῦν ἡ αἴσθησίς ἐστιν, ὁ δὲ ἄλλος ἐστὶν ὁ ἰδών ἡ, εἰ ἀπιστοῦ κἀκεῖνος, οὐδ' ὰν αὐτὸν πιστεύσειεν εἶναι· οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδ' αὐτὸς δύναται ἔξω θεὶς ἑαυτὸν ὡς αἰσθητὸν ὄντα ὁφθαλμοῖς τοῖς τοῦ σώματος βλέπειν.

The text here is not a model of lucidity, but from the discussion thus far the main lines of what Plotinus is up to should be clear. His claim that we are imperceptible $[\dot{\alpha}\nu\alpha\hat{i}\sigma\theta\eta\tau\alpha]$ identifies us — the 'we' — as the inner man $[\dot{o}\ \dot{\epsilon}\nu\tau\dot{o}\varsigma\ \dot{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\alpha\varsigma]$. Further he claims that this subject, the true self, is not discovered by any observations of the senses — certainly none that we ourselves can make. The contrast between sense perception $[\alpha\tilde{i}\sigma\theta\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma]$ and what is 'imperceptible' $[\dot{\alpha}\nu\alpha\hat{i}\sigma\theta\eta\tau\alpha\varsigma]$ supports this identification, for Plotinus attributes sense perception to the animal self $[\tau\dot{o}\ \zeta\dot{\varphi}\sigma\nu]$. Given this contrast what claims about self-knowledge are made here?

Our investigation in chapter 3 showed that Plotinus makes use of Aristotle's claim that for immaterial entities knowledge and the known object are one. Plotinus interprets this claim to refer to the unmediated, direct contact that obtains between knower and known object, which constitutes knowledge par excellence. It is now clear that such knowledge can only occur on the level of nous, for only there are the thought and the object of thought one and the same. Thus, according to this standard of knowledge there are two types of self-knowledge. On the one hand, the true self $[\dot{o} \ \dot{e}\nu r \dot{o}\varsigma \ \ddot{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\sigma\varsigma]$ can never fully know its animal self; for it can never be fully united with it, since the animal self is a material object. Its knowledge of itself is never completely one with its object of knowledge. On the other hand, the true self $[\dot{o} \ \dot{e}\nu r \dot{o}\varsigma \ \ddot{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\sigma\varsigma]$, can be fully united with itself as an object of knowledge. When this happens a complete form of self-knowledge is

4 IV 5.8.20-22; I 1.7.5, and chapter 11 below.

The motive behind this requirement is (in part) epistemological. For the objects that exist in nous are the same as their essences $[\tau \hat{\sigma} \ \hat{\tau} \hat{\eta} \ \hat{\eta} \ \hat{\nu} \ \hat{s} \hat{v} \alpha \hat{\iota}]$, or, as he also puts it, the reason that these things are the way they are $[\tau \hat{\sigma} \ \delta \hat{\iota} \hat{\sigma} \hat{\tau}]$ cannot be separated from the fact that they are $[\tau \hat{\sigma} \ \delta \hat{\tau} \hat{\tau}]$; cf. VI 7.2 where the latter terminology is indebted to the distinction Aristotle draws in *Posterior Analytics* B 2 90³2-34. For the epistemological requirement — that we know something when we know its essence — cf. *Metaphysics* Z 6 1031^b3-7. For Plotinus the Platonic Forms as well as some parts of psyche fall into the category of things that are identical with their essences.

obtained. Thus, as the chapter will go on to show, the claim that we are imperceptible entails that the true self is known $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\nu\sigma\hat{\nu}\nu$. In outline, the argument is as follows. Plotinus assumes that we have two ways of coming to know things: one involves sense-perception $[\alpha i\sigma\theta\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma]$ in the strict sense, the other does not. Thus, if the self is $\dot{\alpha}\nu\alpha i\sigma\theta\eta\tau\sigma\varsigma$, then we cannot come to know the self by $\alpha i\sigma\theta\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$. Hence, we come to know the self in some other way. As we shall see this 'other way' will be 'knowing $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\nu\sigma\hat{\nu}\nu$ ', and this phrase will be interpreted to be an experience that we have that puts us in direct contact with our true self. Thus, what Plotinus is claiming in the above text is that self-knowledge in the strict sense demonstrates that we have an imperceptible inner man that is known $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\nu\sigma\hat{\nu}\nu$. It is in this chapter that we shall see that what Rist earlier referred to as our 'spiritual dimension' can be understood as the experience we have of this inner man $[\dot{\sigma}$ $\dot{\sigma}\nu\dot{\sigma}\dot{\rho}$ $\dot{\sigma}\nu\dot{\sigma}\rho\omega\pi\sigma\varsigma$.

Having made this claim about self-knowledge and self-identity, Plotinus turns to consider an objection. Talk of an inner, spiritual self (i.e., an immaterial self) that knows itself $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}$ voûv sounds rather mysterious. An empiricist is going to object that this sort of talk is a masquerade for ignorance and that there is no such self and no such means of knowing it. Plotinus would not have been at all surprised by the celebrated remarks of Hume.

For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception. When my perceptions are remov'd for any time, as by sound sleep; so long am I insensible of myself, and may truly be said not to exist. ... If any one, upon serious and

⁶ Cf. above, p. 43.

unprejudic'd reflection, thinks he has a different notion of himself, I must confess I can reason no longer with him. ... He may, perhaps, perceive something simple and continu'd, which he calls himself; tho' I am certain there is no such principle in me. 7

An empiricist like Hume may not be able to reason with Plotinus, but Plotinus is interested in showing the empiricist that his premises are false. He wants to claim that there is more to the picture than meets the empirical eye. He concedes to the empiricist the difficulty of self-knowledge. When he says 'when we especially know according to nous $[\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}\ \nu\sigma\hat{\nu}\nu]$ we seem to be ignorant', he admits that even the knowledge that he says he comes up with is a sort of ignorance. Thus, it is easy for the empiricist to label Plotinus' 'ignorance' as nonsense. But Plotinus would rejoin that the empiricist puts too much emphasis on sense perception. That is why he misses the knowledge $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}\ \nu\sigma\hat{\nu}\nu$. Plotinus would claim that Hume has knowledge of himself $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}\ \nu\sigma\hat{\nu}\nu$, but that he misses it because he gives too much emphasis to sense perception. Plato's quip to Diogenes illustrates the same point. When Diogenes said that he could perceive table and cup but not tablehood and cuphood, Plato is reported to have said, 'Though you have senses to see with, you just don't have any sense' [nous].8

If this exchange is any evidence of what an imaginary debate between Hume and Plotinus would be like, then we can see that it does not have much chance of reaching a resolution, for each seems to reject the premises of the other and the one accuses the other of begging the question. Hume would claim that Plotinus gets himself into a muddle

⁷ David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature Book I, part iv, section vi, Vol. I, p. 534 of the edition of Green and Grose (Darmstadt: Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1964).

⁸ DL VI 53. It is difficult to convey both the humour and the emphasis given to nous in this remark. The Greek is: κατὰ λόγον, ἔφη, οἶς μὲν γὰρ κύαθος καὶ τράπεζα θεωρεῖται ὀφθαλμοὺς ἔχεις · ψ δὲ τραπεζότης καὶ κυαθότης βλέπεται νοῦν οὐκ ἔχεις.

because he does not pay strict attention to sense perception. Plotinus would maintain that Hume's oversight stems from giving sense perception predominant importance. Is there a way out of this impasse?

Plotinus thinks that he can show that the empiricist's premise is false by arguing that there is at least one thing, namely, the self, that exists and is not an object of sense perception. In the argument that follows I use the term 'self' as short for what Plotinus means by \dot{o} $\dot{e}\nu\tau\dot{o}\varsigma$ $\ddot{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\sigma\varsigma$. This imperceptible self, \dot{o} $\dot{e}\nu\tau\dot{o}\varsigma$ $\ddot{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\sigma\varsigma$, must be known $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\nu\sigma\dot{\nu}\nu$. It is the need to explain this experience that we have of ourselves that shows that Plotinus is not begging the question when he rejects the empiricist premises. The following argument can be extracted from the above quotation once we settle the question of who the subjects of the sentences are and what it is that they fail to apprehend.

The implicit contrast in the above text (V 8.11.31-40) is between things known from sense perception and things known $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\nu\sigma\dot{\nu}\nu$. But this contrast is implicit, not explicit. All Plotinus says is that 'that which does not apprehend $[\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\dot{\alpha}\pi\iota\sigma\tau\sigma\dot{\nu}\nu]$ is sense perception $[\dot{\eta}$ $\alpha\dot{\iota}\sigma\theta\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma]$ ' and that 'the other is the one who sees'. Who is this other? Because Plotinus attributes sense perception to $\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\zeta\dot{\varphi}\sigma\nu$, we can understand sense perception as an implicit reference to $\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\zeta\dot{\varphi}\sigma\nu$. What sense perception fails to apprehend is the reality of things known $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\nu\sigma\dot{\nu}\nu$. Thus, when Plotinus talks about 'the other' I think it is safe to conclude that he is talking about 'the inner man' $[\dot{\alpha}$ $\dot{\alpha}\nu\tau\dot{\alpha}\varsigma$ $\dot{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\sigma\varsigma$]. Thus, the contrast is between $\dot{\alpha}$ $\dot{\alpha}\nu\tau\dot{\alpha}\varsigma$ $\dot{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\sigma\varsigma$ and $\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\zeta\dot{\varphi}\sigma\nu$.

We are now is a position to understand the conditional that I take to be the key to the interpretation of the above text: 'if that one should not apprehend, then he could not

⁹ Cf. n. 4 above. The neuter subject [τὸ ἀπιστοῦν] confirms this implicit identification.

apprehend his own existence'. ¹⁰ Based upon the above reasoning the subject of the sentence, 'that one' must be the one who is opposed to sense perception. Hence, it must be \dot{o} $\dot{e}\nu\tau\dot{o}\zeta$ $\ddot{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\sigma\zeta$. Implicit within this conditional is the argument that Plotinus thinks will disarm the empiricists. I reconstruct it as follows. To make the argument easier to understand I substitute 'self' for \dot{o} $\dot{e}\nu\tau\dot{o}\zeta$ $\ddot{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\sigma\zeta$, and I use the conception of vision which is explicit in the text in place of the verbs $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\dot{e}\dot{\nu}\dot{e}\nu$ and $\dot{\alpha}\pi\iota\sigma\tau\dot{e}\dot{\nu}\dot{e}\nu$. ¹¹

- (i) If the self should be unable to see things known
 κατὰ νοῦν, then the self could not see its own
 reality.
- (ii) But the self must see itself.
- (iii) Therefore, the self does see at least one thing
 known κατὰ νοῦν, namely itself.

This argument is in the form of modus tollens and is therefore valid. The general argumentative strategy is that of the $\pi \epsilon \rho \iota \tau \rho o \pi \hat{\eta}$ or self-refutation. Any attempt by the self to deny the self only succeeds in reaffirming its own reality. Thus, Plotinus' argu-

¹⁰ Cf. V 8.11.37-38; the Greek is as follows: εἰ ἀπιστοῖ κἀκεῖνος, οὐδ' ἀν αὐτὸν πιστεύσειεν εἶναι. I take this to be a contrary to fact conditional stating a (psychological) impossibility. Strictly speaking this conditional would be classed as a future less vivid, but as Smyth, Greek Grammar, notes: 'Anything physically impossible may be represented as supposable, hence this construction may be used of what is contrary to fact' [2329a].

¹¹ Chapter 8 argues that πίστις is often connected with 'vision', whether empirical or intellectual.
12 For more on this style of argument see Burnyeat, 'Protagoras and self-refutation in later Greek Philosophy', The Philosophical Review 85 (1976), 44-69.

ment seems to be along the same lines as the standard rejoinder to Hume. When Hume says 'I can never catch *myself*' when he undertakes his introspection, one is left wondering who the 'I' is that can never really find itself. But Plotinus' argument offers more than this simple rejoinder. To see this we must look more closely at the premises.

Since premise (i) relies on the notion of $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\nu o\hat{\nu}v$, it will be helpful to recall the interpretation of this phrase given in the last chapter. There Plotinus' expression of knowing something κατὰ νοῦν was taken to be equivalent to Aristotle's talk of the life κατὰ τὸν νοῦν which makes use of the notion of a θεωρητική ἐνέργεια. This ἐνέργεια or activity, as the context made clear, is a form of contemplation that human beings can engage in. It involves the unity of the knower with the known object. As Aristotle puts it, voûç becomes the same as its νοητόν. 13 The objects of knowledge for Plotinus are, of course, different from those of Aristotle, but the underlying theory about the activity of voeiv or Thus, when the self knows things κατὰ νοῦν it 'shares in' or $\theta \epsilon \omega \rho \epsilon \hat{\imath} \nu$ is the same. 'touches' $[\theta \iota \gamma \gamma \acute{\alpha} \nu \omega \nu]$ them. ¹⁴ The quotation from V 8.11 shows Plotinus drawing these ideas into his argument: 'we understand ourselves most of all when we make our knowledge of ourselves and ourselves one'. 15 It is when we engage in this activity, he maintains, that we know ourselves $\kappa \alpha \tau \hat{\alpha} \nu o \hat{\nu} v$. It was therefore argued in the last chapter that when we 'appropriate', or 'identify with' or 'use' this 'activity' [ἐνέργεια] we 'become nous'.

As will become more clear below in chapter 10 this activity is the attempt to make ourselves and the essence of ourselves one and the same: all that is not nous is taken away.

¹³ Metaphysics Λ 1172^b21. The important lines here are 19-21: αὐτὸν δὲ νοεῖ ὁ νοῦς κατὰ μετάληψιν τοῦ νοητοῦ νοητὸς γὰρ γίγνεται θιγγάνων καὶ νοῶν, ὥστε ταὐτὸν νοῦς καὶ νοητόν. The interesting phrase here is κατὰ μετάληψιν, which if one translates as 'by participation', then Aristotle is left explaining the self-thought of nous with a Platonic metaphor. (For Plato's use of μετάληψις cf. Parmenides 131a5.) The other metaphor he uses to elucidate this activity of νοεῖν is that of touch. The two metaphors together certainly do not explain the relation but they suggest that it involves some type of direct and intimate contact. How this relation is to be understood is taken up below in chapter 10.

¹⁴ Cf. n. 13 above.

¹⁵ Cf. V 8.11.32-33: μάλιστα πάντων ἐσμὲν αὐτοῖς συνετοὶ τὴν ἐπιστήμην ἡμῶν καὶ ἡμᾶς ἔν πεποιηκότες.

Talk of 'becoming nous' raises the question of the truth of the first premise. The conditional will be false if it turns out that the self is unable to see things known $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}$ vouv and yet is able to see its own reality. If one adopts a Cartesian view of the self, the difficulty of trying to formulate some view of the self for which this is true reveals the strength of Plotinus' conditional. In this case one must imagine a Cartesian ego stripped of its cogito and told to come up with sum, a project that does not look promising.

There is, however, a more commonplace objection that appears more threatening. Suppose, as will almost certainly be the case, that someone denies the reality of Plotinian nous and hence cannot hold that there are things to be known $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\nu\sigma\dot{\nu}\nu$ or that one can become nous. He will thus fulfill the conditions stated in the protasis. Furthermore, suppose that — as seems reasonable — the person nevertheless claims to have self-knowledge. In this case the apodosis of the conditional will not be fulfilled. *Prima facie*, most of us, I suppose, would identify with this objection, for we deny Plotinus' metaphysics but nevertheless maintain that we have self-knowledge. Does this objection undo Plotinus' argument?

Plotinus' response to this objection will be to claim that the experience of self-knowledge and of nous stand and fall together. Thus, if the objector claims to have self-knowledge — real self-knowledge from the inside — then it must be the case that he is leaning on an experience that Plotinus labels with the verb voeîv. One can of course admit the experience without taking on the whole of Plotinus' metaphysics, but the admission certainly gives Plotinus enough room to drive in the wedge. To see what this experience is we must turn to examine premise (ii), which has been supplied to make the argument work.

Premise (ii) states, 'the self must see itself.' What reasons do we have for ascribing it to Plotinus? To begin with we might assume that when the self knows itself $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\nu o \hat{\nu}\nu$,

it is a νοῦς ἔκαστος, the assumption being that thinking κατὰ νοῦν can only take place within a particular nous or that becoming nous is something that can only be done by something that already is nous. In making this assumption we attribute to Plotinus a view somewhat like that of Descartes. The self, for Descartes, the res cogitans, is directly and immediately aware of the activity of itself, namely its thoughts, and the presence of the thoughts within the self constitutes sufficient grounds for its existence. Descartes sums up this relation in his famous dictum: cogito ergo sum. For Plotinus the self is aware of its activity, namely its voeiv, but its awareness is not as immediately transparent as it is in Descartes; it is obscured by the presence of the compound, τὸ ζώον. Nonetheless, the presence of this activity together with our dim awareness of it offers sufficient grounds for the existence of a nous in which such activity takes place. For Descartes the existence of the self as a res cogitans introduces an opposition between two different realities, the mental and the physical. For Plotinus, the opposition takes place within one reality, the psyche. The lower part of the psyche is bound up with matter which constitutes the compound 'animal'. The higher or κύριον part of the psyche is tied to nous. As we have seen¹⁷, when this part of the psyche is looking 'down' or 'out' we may describe it as o ἐντὸς ἄνθρωπος. When this part is looking 'up' or 'in' we may describe it as a νοῦς ἔκαστος. In saying that the inner self is a νοῦς ἔκαστος, Plotinus would then be saying that the inner self thinks, and in its thinking it thinks itself. Thus, because of its direct contact with itself in its thought, it could not doubt its own existence.

But is Plotinus assuming too much when he assumes that knowing $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\nu\sigma\dot{\nu}\nu$ can only be done by an inner self that is a $\nu\sigma\dot{\nu}\zeta$ $\tilde{\epsilon}\kappa\alpha\sigma\tau\sigma\zeta$? An empiricist might make things uncomfortable for Plotinus by claiming that even if one grants that there is an inner

¹⁷ Cf. chapter 6, above p. 94.

¹⁸ In querying this assumption I present an argument offered by Bernard Williams in Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry (London: Penguin, 1978), pp. 95-100.

activity of voeiv, it does not follow that there is a subject of this activity. To put the objection in Cartesian terms, the most that could be gotten from introspection would be cogitatur, 'thinking is going on'. To claim that there is something, a res or an 'I' that is doing the thinking, a cogito, is going beyond what there is evidence for. ¹⁹ By exploring this objection we come to understand three important features of Plotinus' philosophy: his claim that there are forms of individuals, his use of perspectives, and his perspicuous use of demonstratives. How do all these come together?

We need first of all to understand the objection. It contrasts two states of affairs, one more, the other less substantial. Because these are objective states of affairs we should be able to contrast them from the third-person perspective. Thus, in the more substantial case, there will be a thinker. Let the label for this thinker be 'A'. When it is said that 'A thinks' it asserts that there is a *person* who is thinking.²⁰ In the less substantial case all we can say is that thinking is going on, but in this case there is no identifiable subject that is doing the thinking. Given this understanding of the two cases, the following argument can be used to undermine the objection and vindicate Plotinus' claim that there is a real self that can think itself.

The less substantial case can be represented in the following way.

(T1) It is thought: thinking is going on.

¹⁹ Husserl at one time embraced a similar view, but then later changed his mind; cf. Logische Untersuchungen, Untersuchung V, §§ 4 and 8; Husserliana vol. 19, parts 1-2, ed. Panzer (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1984), pp. 365-367 and 371-372.

²⁰ We should recall the distinction made in chapter 4 between 'person' and 'ego-consciousness'; cf. p. 57 above. 'Person' is what I called a place-holder, which stands in for an identifiable subject. Thus, it leaves open the question of how this subject is to be under tood: whether a person is a Cartesian ego or something like ourselves (whatever that is); it even leaves open the possibility that a person could be something impersonal, like a thinking machine. What counts here is that a person be a particular, identifiable subject.

What is to the left of the colon will represent the objective state of affairs. Ex hypothesi, it is impersonal. What is on the right of the colon will be the content of the thought.

We can now generate a problem for the view that denies that there needs to be a subject of thought. Suppose there are two thoughts:

- (T2) It is thought: p.
- (T3) It is thought: q.

Does it follow that there is another thought?

(T4) It is thought: both p and q.

The content of (T4) differs from (T2) and (T3) and there is nothing in these latter two thoughts that requires that (T4) be thought. The problem for the impersonal view is that if we deny that (T4) follows, we separate (T4) from (T2) and (T3) and any idea of separation among thoughts is going to require that something do the separation. To allow that (T4) follows from (T2) and (T3) will not avoid the difficulty altogether, for some thoughts are contradictory.

- (T5) It is thought: p.
- (T6) It is thought: not-p.

If the impersonal view is committed to holding all thought together, then we shall have to conclude

(T7) It is thought: both p and not-p.

To avoid this problem some notion of separateness must be introduced. One candidate — an obvious one — to do the separating is that of a person. In this case there will be a person for each case of separate thinking. Let 'P' be used to label such a person. It thus looks as though the objection can be undone in the following way.

- (T8) It is thought: P_1 thinks (that p).
- (T9) It is thought: P_2 thinks (that not-p).

This way of putting the matter makes a slight advance over the original formulation. That is, we are now in a position to prefer

(T10) It is thought: P_n thinks.

over

(T1)* It is thought: thinking is going on altogether.

These formulations show that the objector was right about the state of affairs. There is no identifiable subject doing the thinking. The mistake lies in the content of the thought. It is not thinking going on altogether, but the thoughts are somehow separated.

What Plotinus, however, requires in order to overturn the objection is the following.

(T11) A thinks: Pa thinks.

This move marks an advance, for it clearly shows that the impersonal state of affairs has been left behind and we now have an objective subject, A.

To see why Plotinus is entitled to this move let us look more closely at the convention of subscripts in (T11). While subscripts appear to separate thought contents from one another, they serve only to conceal the real difficulty. If we return to (T8) and (T9) we still find a contradiction

- (T8)* It is thought altogether: P_1 thinks (that p).
- (T9)* It is thought altogether: P_2 thinks (that not-p)

Here the convention of subscripts appears to succeed in separating the different thought contents, but both contents belong (ex hypothesi) to the same thought world. Hence, they collapse together. But because these thought contents are contradictory, they cannot collapse together. If a contradiction is to be avoided we need to introduce a separation within the objective world of thought. Thus we have

- (T13) It is thought here: P_1 thinks (that p).
- (T14) It is thought there: P₂ thinks (that not-p).

But now the convention of subscripts that separate the thought contents is irrelevant, for all the work is done by the demonstratives on the objective side. But how do these demonstratives separate the objective world of thought? By taking these demonstratives to be literally 'pointing out' or 'demonstrating' different points within an objective world of thought, we can take these points to be identifiable thinking subjects. We thus seem compelled, if we accept that there is separateness within the objective world of thought, that there are distinct thinking subjects. We are thus to understand (T13) or (T14) as

(T11) A thinks: Pa thinks.

We can now see that the objection launched against Plotinus fails. This argument thus provides grounds for maintaining that wherever there is an identifiable locus of thinking [νοεῖν], there must be a νοῦς ἔκαστος within which such thought takes place.

We should notice, however, that something important is missing from Plotinus' picture. At present (T11) does not entail that A is aware that his thought is about himself. A is only entitled to look at things from the third-person perspective. We have not yet got as far as a subject with self-awareness, i.e., we have not yet arrived at

(T15) A thinks: I am thinking.

We have not yet arrived at an ego-consciousness. What Plotinus has succeeded in showing his objector is that for any activity of thinking there must be a thinking subject, but he has not succeeded in showing that this subject is anything more than a place holder: he has not succeeded in showing that it is personal. What is missing is some awareness that links the thought content 'Pa thinks' to the objective state of affairs 'A is thinking'. The missing piece brings us once again to the gap which remains between the third-person perspective and the first-person perspective. As we have seen before this is not a gap that Plotinus has an easy way of bridging. He does not argue his way across. Rather, as we have seen, he thinks that our own experience provides us with what we need to bridge it. Thus, given his reliance on experience Plotinus is entitled to conclude that 'the self does see at least one thing known $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha$ $\nu\sigma\partial\nu$, namely, itself'. What the argument has shown is that the true self experiences itself as a $\nu\sigma\partial\varphi$ $\xi\kappa\alpha\sigma\tau\sigma\varphi$.

Is this $\nu o \hat{\nu} \zeta \ \tilde{\epsilon} \kappa \alpha \sigma \tau o \zeta$ the Form of the individual person?²¹ From our discussion thus far, not only does it seem safe to conclude that this $\nu o \hat{\nu} \zeta \ \tilde{\epsilon} \kappa \alpha \sigma \tau o \zeta$ is the Form of the individual person, but that it is the person. Recall a text that we considered in the last chapter, V 3.4.7-15.²² The human being who 'snatches himself up into the higher world' and 'becomes nous' leaves behind all that is not nous. What remains is the $\nu o \hat{\nu} \zeta \ \tilde{\epsilon} \kappa \alpha \sigma \tau o \zeta$.

In maintaining that this $\nu o \hat{\nu} \zeta \ \tilde{\epsilon} \kappa \alpha \sigma \tau o \zeta$ is both an individual Form and a Form of an individual we uncover part of the Platonic motivation behind Plotinus' claims about $\nu o \epsilon \hat{\iota} \nu$ that are found in the argument we have been considering. We know that there was a stock Platonic argument from thinking $[\nu o \epsilon \hat{\iota} \nu]$ to the Forms. It is virtually certain that Plotinus was aware of this argument as well as the criticisms brought it against it by Aristotle.²³ A brief consideration of Aristotle's criticisms will help us to understand the claims that Plotinus is making about $\nu o \epsilon \hat{\iota} \nu$ and Forms of individuals. Aristotle's criticisms are reported by Alexander as follows.

Now he [Aristotle] says that this argument [from thinking, $\tau o \hat{v} v o \hat{\epsilon} \hat{v}$] also establishes Ideas of things that are perishing

²¹ The issue of Forms of individuals has been much discussed. See John Rist, 'Forms of Individuals in Plotinus', Classical Quarterly N.S. 13 (1963), 223-231; Blumenthal, 'Did Plotinus Believe in Ideas of Individuals?', Phronesis 11 (1966), 61-80 together with the relevant chapter in Plotinus' Psychology: His Doctrine of the Embodied Soul (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971); Rist, Plotinus: The Road to Reality (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 86-88 and 'Ideas of Individuals in Plotinus: A Reply to Dr. Blumenthal', Revue Internationale de Philosophie, 92 (1970), 298-303; Mamo, 'Forms of Individuals in the Enneads', Phronesis 14 (1969), 77-96; Armstrong, 'Form, Individual and Person in Plotinus', Dionysius 1 (1977), 49-68; and chapter 4, section two, 'Forms of Individuals' in Gerson, Plotinus (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 72-78. Armstrong's article provides a good summary of this debate and he concludes (somewhat tentatively) that Plotinus maintains that a person is identical with his individual Form which is an intelligence, i.e., a nous. Gerson's discussion (to my mind) removes all the doubt on this point and provides an important corrective to Armstrong's view. Armstrong maintains that 'all Forms are living intelligences' (p. 58), but as Gerson shows each νοῦς ἕκασστος is a Form of an individual, but not every individual Form is a νοῦς (p. 55).

The argument and Aristotle's criticisms are discussed by Alexander, CAG supplement vol. 1, pp. 81.25-82.7, and we know from Porphyry that Alexander was read in Plotinus' school; cf. VP 14.13. I am grateful to Lloyd Gerson for drawing my attention to this argument.

and have perished, and in general of things that are both particulars and perishable — e.g., of Socrates, of Plato; for we think $[\nu oo \hat{\nu}\mu e\nu]$ of these men and preserve some image $[\phi \alpha \nu \tau \alpha \sigma (\alpha \nu)]$ of them even when they no longer exist. And indeed we also think of things that do not exist at all, like a hippocentaur, a Chimaera; consequently neither does this argument show that there are Ideas.²⁴

It is clear from these remarks that Aristotle is trying to work a *reductio* on the Platonic argument, for the argument he claims produces 'Forms' for things that would be anathema to any orthodox Platonist. The original argument maintained that there must be Forms because when we are thinking our thinking must be about things that are, but what our thinking is about cannot be perishables or particulars, for the same thought remains even when these things perish, e.g., our thoughts of Man remain the same even though particular men come to be and pass away. In the above text Aristotle raises the example of Socrates as a counter-example. Why cannot our thought of Socrates be the same whether he is alive or dead? This example is especially pointed, for it raises two issues at once. Not only is there the worry that this may generate Forms for perishable things, but it also raises the question whether a particular like Socrates has any intelligible content, a point that gives Aristotle a great deal of trouble in his own philosophy.

Aristotle's criticism works because he maintains an unequivocal sense of voelv. Thinking about Forms or thinking about particulars just is the same kind of thinking, for all thought (either immediately or ultimately) is dependent upon sensible particulars. Thinking about Socrates when he is present or absent involves different levels of abstraction and a different use of $\phi a v r a \sigma i \alpha$, but nonetheless it remains the same activity. Plotinus, however, rejects the limitation that Aristotle places on thinking and he seems to

²⁴ Alexander, see n. 23 above; translation Gerson, n. 21 above, p. 73.

do so on good Aristotelian grounds. For as we have seen in chapter 3 Aristotle admits that there is a type of thinking in which the thinker is united to the object of thought. Plotinus takes this type of thinking to be thought in the strict sense $[\kappa\nu\rho\hat{\iota}\omega\zeta \ \nu\sigma\epsilon\hat{\iota}\nu]$. Thought involving perception $[\alpha\hat{\iota}\sigma\theta\eta\sigma\iota\zeta]$ and discursive reasoning $[\delta\iota\dot{\alpha}\nu\sigma\iota\alpha]$ is a different type of thinking. Thus, we can see that Plotinus accepts the argument for Forms based on thinking $[\nu\sigma\epsilon\hat{\iota}\nu]$ by drawing a distinction between two kinds of thinking.

It is this distinction between a loose sense of voelv and a more strict sense, the $\kappa v \rho l \omega \varsigma$ voelv, that we find in the argument for the existence of the true self. Thought in the strict sense entails that there is a volls $\tilde{\epsilon}\kappa\alpha\sigma\tau o\varsigma$ which is engaged in such thought. The argument does not yield Forms of individuals as an untoward consequence: it requires them. Nor is Plotinus embarrassed by this requirement. In allowing individuals each of which exist as a volls $\tilde{\epsilon}\kappa\alpha\sigma\tau o\varsigma$ he is claiming that the individual contains an ineliminable amount of intelligible content. It is not surprising, then, that Plotinus stands out against his tradition in devoting much time to thinking about the individual person.

The argument that we have been considering from the end of V 8.11 shows that the self knows that it exists. Furthermore, it shows that the self, or the individual person is a $\nu o \hat{v} \in \tilde{\kappa} \kappa \alpha \sigma \tau o \varsigma$. Our examination has shown that the experience we have of thinking in the strict sense $[\kappa \nu \rho \hat{\iota} \omega \varsigma \ \nu o \hat{\imath} \nu]$ reveals to us the reality of things known $\kappa \alpha \tau \hat{\alpha} \ \nu o \hat{\nu} \nu$ and the existence of the self as a particular nous that is engaged in such thought. Both are revealed in one and the same experience. In other words Plotinus is not arguing in a circle. He is not claiming, on the one hand, that because we have this experience we are individual $\nu \delta \varepsilon \varsigma$, and, on the other, that because we are individual $\nu \delta \varepsilon \varsigma$ we have this experience. Rather, the activity of thought in the strict sense stands and falls together with the reality of nous. The self-reflexive activity is built into the very notion of nous: nous in

²⁵ For more on the particular νόες that we are cf. IV 3.5.6-8; IV 3.12.1-5; VI 5.7; and VI 2.20-22.

thinking, thinks itself. Therefore, the self that is a nous and knows κατὰ νοῦν must see itself.

We have seen that Plotinus' argument for the true self requires a special sense of voeiv in order to work and that if the argument is to be of any use to us in our present condition we must be able to utilize this type of thought that gives us knowledge of ourselves. So far this type of thought has only been given a negative characterization: it has nothing to do with sense perception and it is non-discursive. A consideration of the following texts will establish two points. Firstly, Plotinus talks as if the type of self-knowledge is something we can have — and he seems to mean the we of the here and now. Then, secondly, they will establish the claim that the special sense of voeiv required by his argument is labeled with the term $oveio\theta\eta oue$.

Twice in discussing the Joon teleon of the Timaeus Plotinus draws a comparison with ourselves. 26 The Joon teleon or universe contains everything. Nothing remains outside. For this reason Plato claimed that it does not have need of any sensory organs since there is nothing outside of it to be sensed. Following up Plato Plotinus says:

καὶ γὰρ εἰ δεῖ τὸ μὲν ὄργανον τοῦ αἰσθανομένου εἶναι, ἔτερον δὲ παρὰ τὸ ὄργανον τὸ οὖ αἰσθάνεται ὑπάρχειν, τὸ δὲ πᾶν ὅλον ἐστίν, οὐκ ᾶν εἴη αὐτῷ τὸ μὲν δἰ οὖ, τὸ δὲ οὖ ἡ αἴσθησις. ἀλλὰ συναίσθησιν μὲν αὐτοῦ, ὥσπερ καὶ ἡμεῖς ἡμῶν συναισθανόμεθα, δοτέον.

And if the organ of the perceiver must be one thing and the object of perception something different from the organ, and if the universe is a complete whole, then neither sensory organs nor objects — perception in short would not belong to

²⁶ Cf. Timaeus 32c5-34a7 and III 4.4.10-11 and IV 4.24.21-22.

it. But it must have a consciousness of itself just as we are conscious of ourselves.²⁷ [IV 4.24.17-22]

However the term $\sigma u v \alpha i \sigma \theta \eta \sigma \iota \zeta$ is translated this text makes clear that it is an activity that is in no way connected to perception, and yet it is equally clear that this is something that we can have in relation to ourselves. But what is it exactly that we have? Before setting up the argument that we have considered Plotinus contrasts it with sensory vision. Sensory vision looks on the objects as external and other. Contrasted with this type of vision is a vision of a different type.

εἰ οὖν ὄρασις τοῦ ἔξω, ὄρασιν μὲν οὐ δεῖ εἶναι ἢ οὕτως, ταὐτὸν τῷ ὁρατῷ· τοῦτο δὲ οἶον σύνεσις καὶ συναίσθησις αὐτοῦ εὐλαβουμένου μὴ τῷ μᾶλλον αἰσθάνεσθαι θελειν ἐαυτοῦ ἀποστῆναι.

If [sensory] vision is of the external, [internal] vision must not be other than this: the same as the object of vision. And this is a type of understanding, a consciousness of oneself that takes care not to stand apart from oneself by wanting to perceive more. [V 8.11.21-24]

We have already seen how Plotinus thinks sense perception takes us away from our true self. As this text makes clear, our true self is grasped in another way. Taking this text in the light of our discussion it seems safe to conclude that the special sense of voeiv that makes Plotinus' argument work is what he refers to here as $\sigma v v \alpha i \sigma \theta \eta \sigma \iota \varsigma$. If there remains any doubt about this connection the following text should remove it.

²⁷ The passage in III 4.4.10-11 is virtually identical, though in the light of this text it seems better to change the punctuation from a question to a statement. After explaining that the universe has no sense organs Plotinus asks: $\tau i \ o v r$; I take the following line to contain Plotinus' answer: it has $\sigma v r \alpha i \sigma \theta \eta \sigma \iota \zeta$ just like we do. 'Consciousness' may not be the best translation, for we can be engaged in this activity and yet not be aware that we are. I give a more detailed discussion of $\sigma v r \alpha i \sigma \theta \eta \sigma \iota \zeta$ below in chapter 10.

In a discussion of sense perception $[\tau \delta \alpha i \sigma \theta \dot{\alpha} \nu \epsilon \sigma \theta \alpha \iota]$ and the relevant understanding $[\dot{\alpha} \nu \tau i \lambda \eta \psi \iota \zeta]$ that goes with it Plotinus wonders whether this is an activity undertaken by the psyche or by the animal, the compound of psyche and body. He then sets up the following disjunction. Either it is done by the psyche alone or the psyche plus something else — the body. He then says:

μόνη μὲν οὖν καὶ ἐφ' ἐαυτῆς πῶς; ἐφ' ἑαυτῆς γὰρ τῶν ἐν αὐτῆ, καὶ μόνον νόησις.

How [could it perceive] alone by itself? For by itself there is only thought and this is of things inside itself. [IV 4.23.5-6]

This text makes clear that the psyche alone by itself engages in one activity: $\nu \delta \eta \sigma \iota \varsigma$. Plotinus' language recalls again the contrast drawn in the *Phaedo*. Like Plato, Plotinus takes the image of the psyche being alone to refer to its isolation from sensory perception since this belongs to the body. Isolated from the body the psyche engages in $\nu \delta \eta \sigma \iota \varsigma$. This internal $\nu \delta \eta \sigma \iota \varsigma$ must be what was described in the other texts as $\sigma \nu \nu \alpha \delta \sigma \eta \sigma \iota \varsigma$.

This chapter has sought to defend two claims. Firstly, it has presented an argument whereby Plotinus demonstrates the existence of the true self. Then, secondly, it was shown that this true self is identical with a $vo\hat{v}\zeta$ $\tilde{\epsilon}\kappa\alpha\sigma\tau\sigma\zeta$ that is essentially characterized by the activity $[\dot{\epsilon}v\dot{\epsilon}\rho\gamma\epsilon\iota\alpha]$ of $\kappa\nu\rho\dot{\iota}\omega\zeta$ $vo\epsilon\hat{\iota}v$. Furthermore, it has shown that this activity of nous was equated by Plotinus with the activity of $\sigma\nu\alpha\dot{\iota}\sigma\theta\eta\sigma\iota\zeta$, the activity whereby we become 'conscious' or 'aware' of the reality of the true self. This is the activity through which we gain self-knowledge.

Several questions, however, remain before we can evaluate the full import of these claims. To begin with, given that this experience is so different from sense perception,

what 'apprehension' $[\pi i\sigma \tau i\varsigma]$ do we have that we can engage in it? It is to this question that we turn in the next chapter. But given, too, that the internal activity of psyche is thought $[\nu \delta \eta \sigma \iota \varsigma]$, we need to know how exactly Plotinus draws a distinction between the two. This question forms the backdrop against which the discussions of chapters 9 and 10 take place. Then, finally, given that this chapter has argued that we have a true self that we need to discover, some account needs to be given of why this is such a difficult discovery to make. This account forms the subject of chapter 11.

CHAPTER 8

The Role of mioric in Self-knowledge

Building upon the argument of chapter 7, this chapter aims to query and to challenge two notions that are well entrenched in Plotinian scholarship: (i) that the notion of $\pi i\sigma \eta \zeta$ is a concept that is solely and strictly related to sensory perception $[\alpha i \sigma \theta \eta \sigma \iota \varsigma]$, and (ii) that $\pi i\sigma \tau \zeta$ has no role to play in the Return or ascent of the psyche to nous. 1 It will begin with the question of how this term is to be translated. In the last chapter $\pi i \sigma \tau i \zeta$ was connected to the notion of 'apprehension' and the verbs πιστεύειν and ἀπιστεύειν were translated as 'to apprehend' and 'to not apprehend'. The justification for this translation will be made by arguing that $\pi i\sigma \tau i\varsigma$ is a concept connected with mental cognition. By making this connection explicit, we shall learn something important about Plotinus' use of the term. For πίστις in Plotinus, like other terms relating to our mental states, remains ambiguous. It is not clear whether it applies to the content of our thoughts or to the attitude that we take towards our thoughts. For example, one can say, 'I understand (or comprehend) what you are trying to say, but I refuse to accept it.' Paradox, however, seems to result when we try to do this with belief statements. It does not appear that one can say, 'I believe what you are trying to say, but I refuse to accept it'; for 'belief' already seems to express our willingness to accept the ideas. Thus, in some cases attitude and content cannot be divorced.

¹ For the first point see n. 14 below; L. J. Rosán, The Philosophy of Proclus (New York: 1949), 215, n. 152, speaks for the second point when he says: It is in this doctrine of faith that the ascent of the soul in Proclus is distinguished from its ascent in Plotinus. For the latter had the soul ascend through love or through truth but not through faith.' This passage is quoted by Rist, Plotinus: The Road to Reality (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967) p. 231. Though I reject Rist's interpretation of $\pi i \sigma \pi i \sigma$

In coming to understand Plotinus' use of $\pi i\sigma \tau i \varphi$ what we need is a term that will not prejudice this issue. As we shall see, Plotinus' usage is vague. Sometimes he use the term $\pi i \sigma \tau i \varphi$ to refer to our attitudes; other times he uses it to refer to the contents of our thoughts. To capture this vagueness, I propose to use 'apprehension' as a stand in translation. In addition to preserving Plotinus' usage it has the additional advantages of being a noun that is hungry for qualification: 'apprehension' on its own does not seem to be enough. We want to know what kind of apprehension it is. Is it *clear*, *firm*, or *certain*? Moreover, it also carries with it the implicit metaphor of grasping. We frequently understand mental cognition in terms of the metaphors of either grasping or vision. We shall meet both of these points in the following discussion. Plotinus is no stranger to either metaphor, and in important instances he uses the adjective $\dot{e}\nu\alpha\rho\gamma\dot{\eta}\varphi$, 'clear', to modify $\pi i\sigma\tau u\varphi$.

Furthermore, as the last chapter argued, Plotinus holds that there are two types of mental cognition, internal and external. Thus, as we shall see, there will be two types of $\pi i \sigma \tau \iota \varsigma$ corresponding to these two types of mental cognition. In both types, however, it will be argued that the fundamental concept is 'apprehension'. The justification of this interpretation rests not so much in the proper and strict translation of $\pi i \sigma \tau \iota \varsigma$, but in providing an interpretation of Plotinus that takes seriously the two different senses of $\nu o \varepsilon i \nu$ that were discovered in the last chapter: $\kappa \nu \rho i \omega \varsigma \nu \sigma \varepsilon i \nu$ that related to internal vision and was isolated from $\alpha i \sigma \theta \eta \sigma \iota \varsigma$, and a sense of $\nu \sigma \varepsilon i \nu$ that was working with $\alpha i \sigma \theta \eta \sigma \iota \varsigma$ in the perception of externals. Two noteworthy points will emerge from this investigation that are important for the construction of an overall interpretation of Plotinus. Firstly, it will be seen that $\pi i \sigma \tau \iota \varsigma$ is an epistemological notion, but that epistemology for him is centered more on the broader issue of understanding than on the narrower question of justification that is central to contemporary concerns. Then, secondly, it will be seen that $\pi i \sigma \tau \iota \varsigma$ is

connected with the idea of apprehending what is our own [oikelov]. Thus, will turn out to be connected with the notion of οἰκείωσις that is discussed in the next chapter. Together these two notions explain how it is that Plotinus distinguishes between the hypostases of nous and psyche. Therefore, the interpretation of $\pi i \sigma \tau i \zeta$ offered here must await the discussion of the following chapter before it can be definitively judged.

Is the concept of πίστις connected solely with αἴσθησις? In order to query this assumption we shall need to note the occurrence of πίστις in several texts. III 8.6.14, IV 7.15.2, V 5.1.11, VI 9.4.32 and VI 9.10.6 provide a diverse enough sample of $\pi i \sigma \tau i \varsigma$. To this list may be added the occurrence of the verbs πιστεύειν and ἀπιστεύειν that were noted in our discussion of V 8.11, and which also occur in the text at III 8.6. Since this last text is discussed in detail in the next chapter it will not receive detailed treatment here.

How, then, is the term mioric translated? Meijer in his commentary on VI 9 translates the two occurrences of $\pi i\sigma \tau i\varsigma$ in this *Ennead* by 'proof'.² In defense of his translation he notes simply: 'πίστις in Plotinus sometimes means proof' and he cites VI 9.10.6 to support his claim, and he further notes that Plotinus' use of $\pi i \sigma \tau i \varsigma$ goes far beyond Plato's use of the term in Republic passage of the divided line.³ In his translation Meijer seems to be following Bréhier who translates πίστις as 'preuve' in the two passages in question as well as in IV 7.15.2 and V 5.1.11. As was noted by Arnou this sense of the term matches a use of the term Aristotle sometimes employs.⁴ He quotes Rodier's remark in his commentary on the de Anima on the occurrence of πίστις at 428^a20: 'si «conviction» est trop fort, «croyance» serait trop faible.'5 'Certitude' is taken by Rodier to be too

² P. A. Meijer, Plotinus on the Good or The One (Enneads VI, 9): An Analytical Commentary (Amsterdam: Gieben, 1992) cf. ad loc. VI 9.4.32 and VI 9.10.6.

³ Meijer, p. 156 and note 463. 4 René Arnou, Le désir de Dieu dans la philosophie de Plotin (2nd edition revised and corrected Rome: Presses de l'Université Grégorienne, 1967), pp. 27-29.

5 Arnou, pp. 27-29.

strong. When we carry all the different nuances suggested by these terms back to Plotinus we can see why Armstrong translates the term as 'confidence' (V 5.1.11. cf.III 8.6.14), 'assurance' (VI 9.4.32) and 'evidence' (VI 9.10.6). But if we look at the terms 'proof', 'confidence', and 'assurance' it is hard not to connect them with a psychological state that involves some form of certainty. This leaves the term with a strong subjective flavour and connects it with contemporary epistemology questions of evidence and justification. Thus, even if 'certainty' is too strong a rendering of $\pi i \sigma \tau i \varsigma$, the opposite of $\pi i \sigma \tau i \varsigma$ taken in this way seems to be some form of doubt or uncertainty. And here again for us a lack of certainty entails a lack of justification. The proof is not valid or there simply is not enough evidence.

That these translations together with their contemporary associations take us away from Plotinus' notion of the term is clear if we look more carefully at the wider context within which $\pi i\sigma\tau\iota\zeta$ occurs. In every context noted so far the issue of $\pi i\sigma\tau\iota\zeta$ is connected with either the idea of seeing or the contrast between what is inside and what is outside. In III 8.6.24 Plotinus talks about the psyche as subject looking out on the object. His use of $\theta\epsilon\alpha\tau\delta\nu$ in this text for the object of vision external to psyche (and in others we have called attention to) highlights the division between subject and object and the difference between external and internal vision. Later in the text this contrast is brought out more clearly. In line 38 he remarks that the wise man may express his reasoning process to another, but in relation to himself he simply sees $[\pi\rho\delta\zeta \delta\epsilon \alpha\nu\tau\sigma\nu \delta\psi\iota\zeta]$. In IV.7.15 and V 5.1 the notion of vision is implicit because Plotinus is there talking about sense perception. In the case of sense perception even what has $\pi i\sigma\tau\iota\zeta \epsilon\nu\alpha\rho\gamma\epsilon\sigma\tau\dot\alpha\tau\eta$ still requires the judgments of reason and nous to be sorted out (cf. V.5.1.13-15).6 In VI 9.4.12-14 Plotinus states openly that it is the aim of all his teaching to move the student to have the

⁶ See n. 15 below.

vision $[\theta \hat{\epsilon} \alpha]$ for himself. He views the person as in need of the help offered by reasoning in order not to remain 'outside'. It is the impediments to vision that keep him outside. The association of vision with the contrast between the inner and the outer should come as no surprise given our discussion of the previous chapters. The need to internalize the vision is Plotinus' way of saying that we need to make it our own. Furthermore, when the vision is of what is our own $[\tau \hat{\epsilon} \ oik \hat{\epsilon} \hat{\epsilon} o \nu]$ the gap between subject and object is reduced. The knower is brought more into unity with what is known. As we shall see in the next chapter $\pi \hat{\epsilon} \sigma \tau \iota \zeta$ has a role to play in this process.

From the little that has been said the connection of $\pi i \sigma r i \varphi$ with a conception of mental apprehension or vision (whether internal or external) might not be understood or might be easily misunderstood. Hence, it is best to turn to consider what is driving Plotinus' epistemological programme. To bring out the contrast we may simply say that Plotinus' epistemology centers on questions of understanding; it differs markedly from contemporary epistemology which centers on questions of justification and evidence. To illustrate this difference and to make it plausible we need only consider Plato's example (Theaetetus 201ac) of the different epistemological states of an eyewitness to a crime and the jury that hears the testimony. Burnyeat in his discussion of the example takes it that there is a significant gap between what the eyewitness knows and what the jury knows. 8

⁷ I am influenced in drawing this contrast by Burnyeat's work; cf. 'Aristotle on Understanding Knowledge', in E. Berti, ed., Aristotle on Science: 'The Posterior Analytics' (Atti dell' VIII Symposium Aristotelicum) (Padua and New York: 1980); 'Socrates and the Jury', PAS sup. LIV (1980), 175-191; 'Wittgenstein and Augustine De Magistro', PAS sup. LXI (1987), 1-24. Burnyeat's work is focused explicitly on Plato, Aristotle and Augustine. Though Burnyeat seems aware of Plotinus' views — he uses some of Plotinus' examples — he does not discuss Plotinus' views explicitly, except once and then only in a footnote to his discussion of Augustine.

⁸ Cf. Burnyeat, 'Socrates and the Jury'; Plato is interested in pointing out the difference between δόξα ἀληθής and ἐπιστήμη. The eyewitness alone is able to 'know' [εἰδέναι, 201b8]; what the jury is left with is τὸ πεῖσαι [cf. 201b4-5]. Cornford translates this last term as 'conviction'. I have used the term 'know' to cover both the eyewitness and the jury because in English 'know' is ambiguous between a strict and loose sense. How this ambiguity is to be sorted out is what calls attention to the 'gap' and demands an explanation.

The eyewitness knows first-hand what the jury only knows based on his testimony. Thus, in a way both the jury and the eyewitness know the same thing: they both know who the guilty party is. But in another way the epistemological state of the jury will be quite different from that of the eyewitness, for while we can say that both the jury and the eyewitness know that p (e.g., that Smith is the culprit), this knowledge is for the eyewitness connected to other facts of the case, many of which the jury might not have been informed about. The eyewitness has a 'synoptic grasp' (to use Burnyeat's phrase) of the event. The specific bit of information that constitutes the knowledge that p is only one small part of this whole. It is the difference between the synoptic grasp and the piece-meal state of knowledge that the jury has that makes a cognitive state of difference between the two. In his explanation of what this gap amounts to Burnyeat falls back on the same example that Plotinus uses to make the same point. Burnyeat says:

I can of course be given information that p is connected with q, r etc., just as I can be given the information that p is true because q is true. What is more, I can accept that this is so with adequate justification and thereby, in the ordinary sense, know it. But every schoolboy is familiar with the fact that it is one thing to know in an external way that the connection holds (e.g., that these propositions constitute a proof of the theorem), and quite another to understand the connection, to see how the elements hang together. That is something one can only do for oneself. And we still describe the moment when this is achieved as illumination.

The example of the school-boy is one employed by Plotinus to emphasize the connection between knowledge and the synoptic grasp.¹⁰ We can now see that for Plotinus

⁹ Burnyeat, 'Wittgenstein and Augustine de Magistro', PAS sup. LXI (1987), p. 21. 10 Cf. IV 9.5.12-28; the example of the student is picked up in the next chapter.

'you cannot have pieces of knowledge without their connections.'11 Plotinus expresses this idea by using the example of a science $[i\pi\iota\sigma\tau\eta\mu\eta]$ and its theorems. The whole of the science is potentially present in each one of the theorems.¹² That is, the person who has the theorem and knows the science is able to see the place of the theorem within the whole. The person is able to do this because he is able to see or understand the connections between the theorem and all the other parts of the science. But Plotinus is aware that we often fail to make these connections. We fail to analyze a science into all its theorems and we fail to see the theorems as part of a larger whole. This failing Plotinus expresses through the verb $i\pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsiloni\tau\alpha\iota$, which, in keeping with the interpretation of Plotinus' epistemology that has been offered, it makes good sense to translate as the negative counterpart to $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ as 'apprehension'.

άλλὰ ταῦτα διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν ἀσθένειαν ἀπιστεῖται, καὶ διὰ τὸ σῶμα ἐπισκοτεῖται· ἐκεῖ δὲ φανὰ πάντα καὶ ἔκαστον.

But these [theorems] are not apprehended because of our weakness, that is because of the body they are overshadowed. But there [in nous] each and every thing is clear. IIV 9.5.26-28]¹³

The contrast in this text is between the clarity that exists on the level of nous and the obscurity that exists on our level. Thus, what we need is a $\pi i \sigma \tau i \varsigma$ that helps us clear up

12 For his use of this idea see IV 9.5.12-28; V 9.8.5-8; VI 2.20.3-10; VI 9.5.16-20 and discussions of this idea by Meijer, pp. 167-168 and Gurtler, *Plotinus: The Experience of Unity* (New York: Peter Lang, 1988), pp. 9-14.

¹¹ Meijer, pp. 167-168; cf. p. 100.

¹³ The use of ἀπιστεῖται is reminiscent of the use of ἀπιστίη in Heraclitus DK B86 quoted by Plutarch: τῶν θείων τὰ πολλὰ ἀπιστίη διαφυγγάνει μὴ γινώσκεσθαι. This reference is not listed in HS². Also, it is worth noting here that Plotinus' use of πίστις doubtless owes something to the πίστις ἀληθής of Parmenides; cf. DK B1, line 30.

the obscurity we find within ourselves. When we have this clarity and have made this apprehension we are in a state of $\pi i \sigma \tau i \varsigma \epsilon \nu \alpha \rho \gamma \dot{\eta} \varsigma$. I claim that this is not a state that results from proof or which depicts some level of epistemic certainty. It is not a state that describes our attitude towards our thoughts. Rather, it stands for the synoptic grasp that the psyche has of its own contents. In saying that psyche has a 'synoptic grasp' of what belongs to it, I do not mean to suggest that it has a complete understanding of itself and all its parts. What psyche grasps is only those parts that it can clearly recognize as its own. It refers to what the psyche has understood about itself and its objects. To use the metaphor of vision, it refers to what the psyche can see.

Thus, I think that it is a mistake to understand $\pi i\sigma \tau \iota \varsigma$ as associated solely with sense perception and the issues of certainty, evidence and justification that are commonly associated with problems arising out of sense perception (as do Arnou and Rist). This comes from leaning too much on the $\pi i\sigma \tau \iota \varsigma$ $\dot{\epsilon} \nu \alpha \rho \gamma \epsilon \sigma \tau \dot{\alpha} \tau \eta$ of V 5.1.12-13 where Plotinus is talking about sensory vision. He claims that even objects in which we have the 'clearest apprehension' can be doubted. That is because these objects remain 'outside' and are in need of the judgments of nous and the discursive reason $[\delta \iota \dot{\alpha} \nu \iota \iota \alpha]$. What discursive reason does is to attempt to grasp the internal natures of the objects of perception. In order to do so it must not be taken in by the superficial features presented by perception. Plotinus is saying that sense perception $[\alpha i \sigma \theta \eta \sigma \iota \varsigma]$ leaves a residual doubt about the precise nature of the object in question. Even when perceptible objects seem to have been fully sorted out and their natures seemingly grasped, one may still be mistaken.

16 Cf. Emilsson, p. 121.

Arnou, n. 4 above; Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality*, p. 235; and they are followed by most other scholars. See the discussion of Emilsson, *Plotinus on Sense Perception: A Philosophical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 113-125, but he does not discuss $\pi i \sigma \tau \iota \varsigma$ explicitly.

¹⁵ Cf. V 5.1.15 where the texts reads: καὶ νοῦ δεῖ ἢ διανοίας τῶν κρινούντων. I take Plotinus to be saying that the discursive reason is making use of the Forms provided by nous in its judgments of perceptible objects; cf. Emilsson, pp. 133-140.

If that is what Plotinus says about sense perception $[\alpha i\sigma\theta\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma]$ or external vision, then the implication by contrast is that the objects 'inside', which have a $\pi i\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma \dot\epsilon\nu\alpha\rho\gamma\dot\eta\varsigma$ that has nothing to do with sense perception, do not leave a residual doubt. They do not need to be sorted out by $\delta\iota\dot\alpha\nuo\iota\alpha$ and nous. The implication is that these internal objects are grasped in a more immediate manner. In the last chapter we saw that this was the case with the self. The self does not require $\delta\iota\dot\alpha\nuo\iota\alpha$ because it bears a more direct relation to itself than discursive reason can be cognizant of. We saw that the self that is known $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot\alpha$ $\nuo\bar\nu\nu$ is clear with respect to itself. It was argued that if the self were not to apprehend $[\dot\alpha\pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\dot\nu\epsilon\iota\nu]$ $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot\alpha$ $\nuo\bar\nu\nu$, then it could not apprehend $[\pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\dot\nu\epsilon\iota\nu]$ its own existence.

Thus, when the argument of the last chapter is seen in the larger context of Plotinus' epistemology, $\pi i\sigma \eta \varsigma$ can now be interpreted as a type of 'apprehension' or 'synoptic grasp'. Those who have it will be those who have made some progress in the discovery of their true nature. Further confirmation of this interpretation is obtained by looking again at the occurrence of $\pi i\sigma \eta \varsigma$ in VI 9.4.31-32. Rist summarizes this passage as follows.

At Ennead 6.9.4.31-32 Plotinus tells us that failure to achieve the desired union with the One may be due to lack of a guiding reason to provide conviction ($\pi i\sigma\tau\iota\zeta$). People who lack this conviction, he continues, must be won over by reflection such as he goes on to prescribe. But before giving his prescription in the beginning of the next chapter, there is a caveat. Those who believe that the world is governed by chance are excluded from the discussion. Plotinus is only concerned with those who admit extra-temporal reality and have made some progress towards the notion of a soul. Those who are excluded are primarily the Epicureans. What we should like to know is whether Plotinus is led to think of Epicureanism by his talk of $\pi i\sigma\tau\iota\zeta$. 17

I think Rist is correct to query 'whether Plotinus is led to think of Epicureanism by his talk of $\pi i \sigma \tau \iota \varsigma$ ', but I disagree with the reasons he provides. To begin with, he follows Arnou in thinking that $\pi i \sigma \tau \iota \varsigma$ in Plotinus is connected with sensory knowledge of the material world. The connection, then, with the Epicureans would be obvious, for they made sensory impressions the source of all knowledge. Furthermore, he makes use of the connection between $\pi i \sigma \tau \iota \varsigma$ and the adjective $\dot{\epsilon} \nu \alpha \rho \gamma \dot{\eta} \varsigma$. A cognate word $\dot{\epsilon} \nu \dot{\alpha} \rho \gamma \epsilon \iota \alpha$ is used by the Epicureans in talking about the criteria of knowledge. It is used to refer to the evidence of the senses that forms the basis of all knowledge. Then, leaning on these conjectures and on the text at V 5.1 he concludes:

What we have here [i.e., V 5.1] then is a further use of $\pi i\sigma \tau i\varsigma$ in a peculiarly Epicurean context. It is conviction based on sense-data; which is precisely the significance which all the evidence thus far accumulated leads us to believe is frequently found in Plotinus. 19

But Rist's interpretation fails once it is realized that not all the evidence points to a sense of $\pi i \sigma \tau i \varsigma$ as 'conviction based on sense-data'. But if this interpretation fails, then seemingly so does the connection between $\pi i \sigma \tau i \varsigma$ and the Epicureans. How then does one

¹⁸ Cf. Rist, p. 236; he is citing Sextus Empiricus Adv. Math. 7.26. Since I go on to reject Rist's reasons for seeing a connection between $\pi i \sigma \tau_i \zeta$ and the Epicureans, I should here say that the connection between $\pi i \sigma \tau_i \zeta$ and the adjective $\dot{\epsilon} \nu \alpha \rho \gamma \dot{\eta} \zeta$ is better explained by noting that $\dot{\epsilon} \nu \alpha \rho \gamma \dot{\eta} \zeta$ is the adjective that Plotinus frequently uses to describe the 'clarity' of nous; cf. V 5.2.15. Thus, a $\pi i \sigma \tau_i \zeta$ that is $\dot{\epsilon} \nu \alpha \rho \gamma \dot{\eta} \zeta$ is one that corresponds more closely to the clarity of nous. Since, $\pi i \sigma \tau_i \zeta$ in the next chapter will be found only on the level of psyche, a $\pi i \sigma \tau_i \zeta$ $\dot{\epsilon} \nu \alpha \rho \gamma \dot{\eta} \zeta$ will always refer to the state psyche is in as it 'returns' or approximates itself to nous.

¹⁹ Rist, I think, is overstating his case. The two passages that explicitly link $\pi i \sigma r i \varsigma$ to sense perception $[\alpha i \sigma \theta \eta \sigma i \varsigma]$ are IV 7.15.2-3 and V 5.1.12-13. The other texts, e.g., VI 9.4.31-32 and III 8.6.13-14 (discussed in detail in the next chapter) are open to interpretation. I am not denying that $\pi i \sigma r i \varsigma$ is linked with perception in these contexts, i.e., IV 9.4.31-32 and V 5.1.12-13, and I think Rist is correct when he says that in the latter text Plotinus is doubting the Epicurean claim that 'all 'evidence' is equally true' (p. 236). What I am denying is that it must be exclusively linked to sense perception.

explain the mention of $\pi i \sigma \tau \iota \varsigma$ at the end of VI 9.4 and the *caveat* against the Epicureans that opens VI 9.5?

The connection between $\pi i\sigma \pi \zeta$ and the Epicureans becomes clear once we make the controversial move and assume that $\pi i\sigma \pi \zeta$ has a role to play in Plotinus' notion of the Return. As the opening of VI 9.5 makes clear Plotinus intends his discussion for those who posit another nature besides body and who have 'returned' $[\dot{\alpha} n i \sigma \tau \alpha \zeta]$ as far as psyche.²⁰ The Epicureans are excluded, but on what grounds? All that the text says is that they believe that reality is governed by chance and that they admit only corporeal causes.²¹ As was suggested in chapter 2, either one of these claims amounts to a denial of nous. The first contradicts Plotinus' claim that reality is subject to the providential ordering of nous.²² The second contradicts Plotinus' claim that bodies are causally ordered by nous through the mediation of psyche. But so far this looks to be no more than a dogmatic rejection of an opposing philosophy on the part of Plotinus. To see that there is more involved we have to consider another text.

In the opening of V 9.1 Plotinus notes that all men begin by using sense perception $[\alpha i \sigma \theta \eta \sigma i \varsigma]$, but he then measures philosophical progress, in a typical Platonic manner, by the distance philosophers are able to move beyond it. The Epicureans according to this standard of measurement remain on the bottom rung, for they remain stuck on the level of sense perception $[\alpha i \sigma \theta \eta \sigma i \varsigma]$ and they think that this is all there is. ²³ But Plotinus' argument of the last chapter maintained that this is not all that there is. In particular we saw that his argument revealed a higher level of psyche and nous, provided that one did not remain under the spell of sense perception. The self that discovers its true self realizes

²⁰ VI 9.5.4-5. Also, cf. the use of απμεν at I 1.13.8. and Republic 614d and 531c. The translation of this term as 'return' is somewhat technical as is explained below.

²¹ VI 9.5.1-2.

²² Cf. above p. 22.

²³ Cf. V 9.1.1-7.

that its nature and place are to be found on the level of nous. Sense perception [aĭσθησις] is not only the one who lacks self-knowledge, who fails to apprehend $[\tau \hat{o} \ \hat{\alpha} \pi \iota \sigma \tau \hat{o} \hat{\nu} \nu]$ its true nature, but it also prevents us from discovering our true nature.24 Epicureans whose very philosophy keeps them tied to sense perception will be incapable of the sort of mioric that Plotinus' argument is meant to produce. Therefore, I think that in the context of VI 9.4 πίστις brings the Epicureans to mind, not because the term has any connections with sense perception for Plotinus, but because he thinks that they will never be able to attain any 'apprehension' of their true nature. Hence they will remain incapable of the Return.²⁵

What I am suggesting by pursuing this line of thought — in the face of most scholarship on Plotinus — is that πίστις does have a role to play in our assent or return to nous. $\pi i \sigma \tau i \varsigma$ can be seen to emerge as a by-product of self-discovery. The more the person discovers what is his own [οἰκεῖον] and what is not [ἀλλότριον], the more that person enters into a state of clarity with regard to himself. πίστις emerges as a person is able to see internally, to catch a vision of his true self. It is this apprehension or as much of it as the person has worked out that provides him with a grasp of his own nature and origin, a grasp that becomes more 'synoptic' the more this is worked out. If this interpretation is correct, then we should not be surprised to find that $\pi i \sigma \tau i \varsigma$ is connected by Plotinus with οἰκείωσις. It is this connection that will be explored in the next chapter. From the

24 Cf. V 8.11.36.

²⁵ In commenting on VI 9.4 Bréhier remarks (ad loc.): 'Il faut remarquer comment s'introduit ici la foi $(\pi i\sigma \tau i\varsigma)$, liée à l'instruction: ce passage nous donne quelque lumière sur l'auditoire de Plotin et sur le scepticisme qu'il devait parfois rencontrer chez ses disciples: par foi, il entend d'ailleurs non pas la foi en une révélation, mais la confiance en des raisons, confiance qui peut préparer la vision mystique, mais qui n'y équivaut pas. Le début du chapitre v exclut pourtant de ses auditeurs les partisans du matérialisme épicurien.' He offers no explanation of why the Epicureans are excluded. According to Bréhier, the answer should be because they lack $\pi i\sigma \eta c$, i.e., 'confiance en des raisons'. But this is not what they lack. If, however, we understand Bréhier's 'confiance en des raisons' as a 'apprehension' in the special sense of κυρίως νοείν that comes from direct experience which was noted in the last chapter, then we can see that this is precisely what the Epicureans lack.

vantage point of that investigation we shall be able to see how Plotinus uses $\pi i \sigma \tau i \varsigma$ and $\sigma i \kappa \epsilon i \omega \sigma i \varsigma$ to mark the fundamental difference between psyche and nous.

CHAPTER 9

Οἰκείωσις in Plotinus

In the last chapter an interpretation of $\pi i\sigma \tau \iota \varsigma$ was offered that suggested that it was connected with self-knowledge. One acquires $\pi i\sigma \tau \iota \varsigma$ as one begins to acquire self-knowledge. Self-knowledge originates as one begins to sort out what is one's own $[\tau \delta i\kappa \epsilon i\sigma \nu]$ from what it not $[\tau \delta i\kappa \lambda \delta \tau \rho \iota \sigma \nu]$. It is the aim of this chapter to bolster this interpretation of $\pi i\sigma \tau \iota \varsigma$ by showing that it fits within Plotinus' theory of $\sigma i\kappa \epsilon i\omega \sigma \iota \varsigma$. It begins by presenting an overview of the Stoic theory of the same name and by looking at the way Stoic ideas influenced Plotinus' own conception. Then, it looks at a text in III 8.6 where Plotinus presents his own version of $\sigma i\kappa \epsilon i\omega \sigma \iota \varsigma$. Once this text is understood, it can be seen how $\pi i\sigma \tau \iota \varsigma$, $\sigma i\kappa \epsilon i\omega \sigma \iota \varsigma$, and $\sigma \iota \iota \varsigma$. Once this text is Plotinus, i.e., one cannot be properly understood without the others. Finally, with these concepts sorted out, it will conclude by showing how Plotinus uses these concepts to mark a difference between the hypostases of nous and psyche.

It is hardly controversial to talk of a Stoic theory of οἰκείωσις, for in the light of recent work it is both well known and well understood. To talk of a Plotinian theory is much more so.¹ Hence, much of the work of this chapter is breaking new ground. My reason for referring to a Plotinian 'theory' is because I believe Plotinus to be following the broad outlines of the Stoic theory. Moreover, I think that it will help us understand Plotinus' thought if we see him as having appropriated certain elements of the Stoic

¹ Graeser, Plotinus and the Stoics: A Preliminary Study (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972) makes no mention of a Plotinian theory. He mentions the Stoic theory on pp. 126-127, but makes no attempt to explore its influence on Plotinus.

theory.² The cardinal text on Stoic οἰκείωσις is found in Diogenes Laertius (7.85-86). For our purposes of sketching a broad outline we need only consider a short fragment from it.3 Plotinus is certain to have been aware of the following ideas, for Stoic views about the πρῶτον οἰκεῖον were discussed by Alexander, 4 and we know that Alexander was read in Plotinus' school.⁵ Moreover, we should not forget that one of Plotinus' important students, Amelius, studied with the Stoic Lysimachus and seems to have kept in contact with other Stoics.⁶ Diogenes offers the following report.

> They [the Stoics] say that an animal has self-preservation as the object of its first impulse [πρώτην ὁρμήν] since nature from the beginning appropriates it [οἰκειούσης αὐτὸ τῆς φύσεως] as Chrysippus says in his On Ends book I. The first thing appropriate [πρῶτον οἰκεῖον] to every animal, he says, is its own constitution [σύστασιν] and the consciousness [συνείδησιν] of this.⁷

In broad outline it is helpful to compare Plotinus' theory to the Stoics' on three main points. Firstly, any claims about οἰκείωσις take place within a teleological framework. In the barest outline such a theory has two basic points. Firstly, there is a goal or end $[\tau \hat{\epsilon} \lambda o \varsigma]$ or σκοπός]. And, secondly, there is a description of the actions or activities $[\pi \rho \alpha \xi \epsilon \iota \varsigma]$

3 The text and translation are taken from LS 57A.

6 Cf. VP 3.43; 20.47; 17.3.

² For a more detailed discussion of the Stoic theory see LS vol. I, 350-354; Brad Inwood, Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1985), 182-194; and Troels Engberg-Pedersen, The Stoic Theory of olusiwous (Aarhus University Press, 1991).

⁴ SVF III 183 = Bruns 150.25-33, but the whole passage, pp. 150-153, should be considered.

⁵ Cf. VP 14.13, and the opening of this chapter (lines 4-5) where Porphyry mentions that Plotinus mixed in many Stoic doctrines into his writings.

⁷ This text is difficult and contains several problems. For the meaning of πρώτην ὁρμήν see Inwood, Appendix I, pp. 218-223; for the meaning of πρῶτον οἰκεῖον see Pembroke, 'Oikeiosis' in Problems in Stoicism ed. by A. A. Long (London: The Athlone Press, 1971), 114-149; for reading αὐτο «αὐτῷ» see Inwood, n. 30, p. 311; for the reading συναίσθησιν in place of συνείδησιν see Pembroke' discussion, Inwood, n. 42, p. 313, and n. 13 below.

that lead to the end.⁸ For the Stoics this framework is given by nature which is synonymous with god or cosmic reason and they defined the goal as 'living in accordance with nature'. Plotinus, too, can define the goal as 'living in accordance with nature'. 10 In each case 'nature' includes both a general and a specific sense. Thus, both Plotinus and the Stoics share the general view of ethics as the science whereby man begins to learn to live according to nature in the general sense, e.g., child, parent, citizen, etc.; then through ethical instruction he comes to realize that his goal consists in living according to his proper, human nature, i.e., nature in the specific sense. 11 Both agree that this specific sense has something important to do with reason $[\lambda \delta \gamma \delta \gamma]$ and that life in accordance with reason does not manifest itself on its own accord. Though it is natural, its normal emergence is blocked by stringent factors, which the agent must learn to minimize and avoid. Of course, it goes without saying that Plotinus means something very different from the Stoics when he talks about nature, but both Plotinus and the Stoics appeal to nature as the basis of their ethical views expressed in the doctrine of οἰκείωσις. 12 Secondly, in order for the theory to work the agent (whether it be a person or an animal) must have awareness of itself. This is brought out in Diogenes' text with the word συνείδησις which Long and Sedley translate as 'consciousness'. Hierocles in his expression of the

⁸ The terminology comes from Aristotle; cf. the opening lines of *EE* and *EN*; the same issue are discussed in *Politics* H 13 which appears to be an early sketch. For more on the Stoics see LS sections 63-64. Plotinus' views are perhaps best brought out in I 4, his treatise on eudaimonia.

⁹ Cf. LS vol. I p. 351; and 63D: 'What is best in man? Reason: with this he precedes the animals and follows the gods. Therefore perfect reason is man's peculiar good, the rest he shares with animals and plants...' (translation LS). Again, Plotinus would have been aware of this debate about living in accordance with nature from many sources. The question of whether such a life is good or olesion comes up in SVF III 145 = Alexander, Bruns 167.13 ff.

¹⁰ At I 4.1.29 he asks if τὸ κατὰ φύσιν ζῆν is the same as τὸ εὖ ζῆν. The answer is given later at I 4.3.31-37 where he interprets this to be life in accordance with our noetic nature [τῆνοερᾶ φύσει].

¹¹ My formulation of this issue here owes something to MacIntyre, After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory 2nd ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 52-53.

¹² For Stoic texts see LS section 57; for Plotinus see n. 19 below.

Stoics theory uses the term συναίσθησις. 13

The first proof of every animal's perceiving itself is its consciousness [$\sigma u \nu \alpha i \sigma \theta \eta \sigma \iota \varsigma$] of its parts and the functions for which they were given. [LS 57C]

With Hierocles' use of συναίσθησις to describe an animal's rudimentary awareness of itself, its parts and their functions, we are close to Plotinus' use of συναίσθησις. ¹⁴ In our discussion in chapter 7 we noted that Plotinus uses this word to refer to the internal 'consciousness' or 'awareness' that we have of ourselves. Enough was said to show that for Plotinus συναίσθησις comes in degrees. Self-awareness or self-knowledge is a cloudy notion. It is not immediately clear for Plotinus what belongs to the *true* self and what does not. Like the Stoics he believes that we have a rudimentary awareness of ourselves, and also like the Stoics he believes that for rational agents this rudimentary awareness needs to be educated. This is the moral side of οἰκείωσις.

14 Cf. V 3.13.12-16 (quoted and discussed in chapter 10) and IV 4.24.17-22 and III 4.4.10-11 discussed at the conclusion of chapter 7, above, p. 118.

¹³ Based on the evidence of Hierocles and the use by Cicero and Seneca of sensus sui to express the idea of συναίσθησις οι αἴσθησις ἐαυτοῦ, Pohlenz emended the συνείδησις of Diogenes' text to συναίσθησις. He is followed in this by Pembroke and Inwood. See Inwood p. 313, note 42 for details. I am less interested in the textual discussions than in the general emphasis placed upon the self by the Stoics. οἰκείωσις requires at least a rudimentary amount of self-consciousness or self-awareness. This much seems agreed upon, though Inwood maintains (p. 310, note 18) 'the precise meaning of the Greek term [συναίσθησις] is uncertain'. For a more recent discussion of Hierocles' use of this term see Corpus Dei Papiri Filosofici Greci e Latini, vol. 1, ed. Olschki (Firenze: 1992), 379-390. For more on the background of this term and an overview of Plotinus' usage (along with σύνεσις, συνείδησις, and παρακολουθεῖν) see Schwyzer, 'Bewusst und Unbewusst bei Plotin', in Les Sources de Plotin, Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique, V (Genève: Foundation Hardt, 1960), 343-390. For more detailed discussion see Gurtler, Plotinus: The Experience of Unity (New York: Peter Lang, 1988), chapter 2, 'Consciousness', 49-90.

Thirdly, the πρώτον οἰκεῖον together with the πρώτη ὁρμή is used by the Stoics to explain a wide range of behaviour. As Inwood makes clear, the word $\pi\rho\tilde{\omega}\tau\sigma\nu$, 'first', does not carry a reference to time. 15 Rather, 'first' in these contexts means 'first in order of explanation'. It is what one looks to to explain a whole collection of things. In Inwood's phrase it is 'a point of reference which accounts for other affinities and behaviour patterns'. 16 For the Stoics the impulse to self-preservation explains a wide range of animal behaviour. For humans this includes their commitment to virtue. This is explained by their rational capabilities and the aim to preserve and develop these capabilities within the teleological framework that has been given by nature. This is all straightforward Stoicism. More controversially, Plotinus, too, seeks to construct an economical explanation of animal behaviour around a πρώτη όρμή. For Plotinus this impulse is expressed in the desire for the good and any movement towards the good is interpreted as 'thinking' [voeîv]. 17 That is why he thinks that all animate behaviour can be explained by regarding it as an attempt to think [voeiv] and thus engage in contemplation [$\theta e\omega \rho i\alpha$]. 18 This is our πρώτη ὀρμή. What may now seem outrageously odd about these claims can be somewhat mitigated by recalling the teleological framework within which Plotinus worked.

Thus, to sum up, I argued that it is best to look at Plotinus' treatment of oixeiwoic as influenced by the broad outlines of the Stoic theory: (i) the teleological framework, (ii) the emphasis placed on the awareness of the self, and (iii) the attempt to explain animal behaviour — and in the case of rational animals their moral behaviour — in terms of a primary impulse. Plotinus works within a different teleological framework. He has an

¹⁵ Inwood, p. 219.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Cf. V 6.5.8-9.

¹⁸ This view is discussed and defended at length in III 8.

understanding of 'nature' - the specific nature as a goal - and of 'living in accordance with nature' that is different from the Stoics, i.e., he thinks that a different set of activities will lead to this end. Thus he refers to a different primary impulse to explain animate behaviour, but he seems at one with them on their emphasis on self-awareness.¹⁹

More speculatively, before we examine Plotinus' theory of οἰκείωσις, an interesting comparison between Plotinus and the Stoics suggests itself. Recall the image used by Hierocles in his exposition of οἰκείωσις.²⁰ Hierocles views a person's relationship to himself and others as a collection of circles, with the smaller ones being enclosed by larger circles. The innermost circle is taken to be the person himself and the outermost circle contains the whole human race. Moving out from the center these circles would contain one's wife and family, relatives, neighbors, fellow citizens, etc. Given this picture, Hierocles argues that it is the task of the well-tempered man to seek to draw the outer cir-This is the moral application of οἰκείωσις whereby we cles towards the center. 'appropriate' other people to ourselves and in so doing extend to them the same favourable treatment that we extend to ourselves.²¹ In Hierocles' image this pulling towards the center is really an expansion of the self outwards whereby the sage becomes a fellow citizen

¹⁹ In VI 7.27 Plotinus presents his criticisms of the Stoic theory. Most of them seem to be based on Symposium 205e1-206al. His criticisms are nuanced and he is careful not to rule out the theory entirely. They might be usefully summarized under three points that correspond to the Plotinian hierarchy: (i) those that apply to psyche in matter, (ii) those that apply to higher psyche and nous, and (iii) those that apply to the absolutely simple. On the lowest level it is not clear why the completion or perfection [τελειότης] of the nature [φύσις] of an organism is a good. Just because something is 'most appropriate' [οἰκειότατον] to the organism is no guarantee that it is good (cf. lines 16-18 and VI 6.21.9-10). Plato (loc. cit) mentions men who would cut off their own hand or foot if it became evil. On the next level, the notion of oixsiwoic makes most sense, but it seems in danger of being trivial because tautological. If at this level one's nature is good, how could one fail to desire or appropriate it (cf. lines 18-22). Then, finally, because the theory is selfreflexive and so implies a dualism between thinker and object of thought, it seems to bear no application to the One.

What Plotinus does in this text is to limit the application of the Stoic theory to the upper level of psyche or nous. This is in keeping with what he says elsewhere; cf. VI 5.1.20-21, quoted in the introduction, p. 6 and SVF III 86. 20 Cf. LS 57G.

²¹ Cf. LS vol. I. p. 353.

of the whole human race. When the sage reaches this stage he is in harmony with himself and all of nature. For the Stoics this is the same as being in agreement with god.²² Plotinus, on the other hand, is not seeking to pull things towards the center, but he does turn inwards. As we have seen he invites us to look inside for our true self. This look within and the discovery of the true self reveals the self not only as united to the whole community of other true selves $[\nu \delta e \varsigma]$, but also as 'one with the god who is silently present'.²³ Such ideas suggest that Plotinus was influenced by the general picture of agreement with god and the unity of the human race as expressed by the Stoic doctrine of $\delta i\kappa \epsilon i\omega \delta \iota \varsigma$ and quite possibly by Hierocles' image of the circle.²⁴

Plotinus maintains that the psyche knows itself and its objects of thought through the process of $oi\kappa ei\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$. A passage from III 8.6 introduces us to this relation. It occurs within an argument whereby Plotinus wishes to show that action $[\pi\rho\alpha\xi\iota\varsigma]$ is really an inferior form of contemplation $[\theta\epsilon\omega\rhoi\alpha]$. He argues that the good or goal for which an

²² The expression in Greek is $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\phi\dot{\nu}\sigma\nu$. For the equivalence of nature and god see p. 137 together with n. 9 and Diogenes' report: 'living in agreement with nature comes to be the end, which is in accordance with the nature of oneself and that of the whole, engaging in no activity wont to be forbidden by the universal law, which is the right reason pervading everything and identical to Zeus, who is this director of the administration of existing things' (LS 63C). We can see how close Plotinus is to the sentiment expressed here, if in place of 'Zeus' we read 'nous' and we recall Plotinus' use of $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}$ $\nu\sigma\partial\nu$; cf. chapter 6 above.

²³ Cf. V 8.11.5-6, quoted above p. 76. For the community aspect see IV 3.5.6-8 and VI 5.7.

²⁴ For Plotinus' own image of the circle see VI 5.5. Though parts of the image are obscure, the one point that is clear is that Plotinus puts the emphasis on the center (cf. lines 8-9 and 17-19). Did Plotinus actually read Hierocles? There is no mention of Hierocles by Porphyry in his list of authors studied in Plotinus' school (VP 14), but we need not assume that Porphyry's list includes every book that Plotinus ever read. Moreover, some members of his school were well versed in Stoicism (cf. nn. 5-6 above). The use of this image and his adoption of the term συναίσθησις suggest that Plotinus was acquainted with Hierocles' work, either by having read it himself or by having aspects of the work related to him from his disciples. The latter is more likely, for the image was perhaps a commonplace in imperial Stoicism, but not enough evidence has survived to make this more than a reasonable guess.

action is done is something which the person regards as an object of vision $[\theta \epsilon \alpha \tau \delta \nu]$.²⁵ Plotinus maintains that the person pictures or visualizes the good of the action but in such a way that the good is looked upon as external to the agent. The point of performing the action is to make this 'external' good a part of the psyche. In this way the $\theta \epsilon \alpha \tau \delta \nu$, the good pictured as an object of vision, is internalized.²⁶ As we saw in chapter 5, when looking at the case of the self, everything that is looked upon as a $\theta \epsilon \alpha \tau \delta \nu$ is 'outside' of the agent [V 8.10.39-40].²⁷ It is up to the agent to internalize this good by making it his own. As we shall see this process of internalization is called by Plotinus οἰκείωσις. The text makes clear that what can be internalized into the psyche are λόγοι. And when the process is completed the $\lambda \delta \gamma \omega$ are silently present in the psyche. At this point the psyche can look inward at itself with a quiet contentment. Since the $\lambda \delta \gamma o \iota$ have become part of the psyche the agent does not need to trouble himself or busy himself with acquiring them.²⁸ Plotinus then says:

> For at that time the psyche leads a quiet life and seeks nothing because it has been filled. The contemplation $[\theta \epsilon \omega \rho i\alpha]$ present in such a person is placed inside by his

²⁵ It is likely that Plotinus is following Aristotle. For an interpretation of Aristotle along these lines see Richardson, 'Desire and the Good in De Anima', in Essays On Aristotle's De anima, ed. Nussbaum and Rorty (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 381-399. Plotinus, I think, would agree with Richardson's interpretation. Richardson says: 'In arguing that Aristotle thinks the orekton is the singly internal mover. I am thereby both making room for an important place for nous and phantasia in apprehending the good and more generally defending the parity of discernment and desire in the account of animal movement' (p. 393). He goes on to argue that for Aristotle the orekton is the good and that our apprehension of it can be correct and incorrect. Plotinus does the same. To bring his remarks in line with Richardson's we need only substitute θεοττόν for Richardson's orekton.

²⁶ This process of internalization was sketched above, p. 81. Cf. the remarks of Jonathan Lear, 'Inside and Outside the Republic', Phronesis 37 (1992), 184-215, who talks about the process of internalization in Plato.

27 Cf. above p. 78.

²⁸ Plotinus seems to be expressing the Aristotelian sentiment that 'those who know will pass their time more pleasantly than those who inquire' (EN 1177^a25-30 trans. Ross).

being able to apprehend $[\hat{\tau}\hat{\varphi} \pi \imath \sigma \tau \epsilon \hat{\nu} \epsilon \nu \hat{\nu} \epsilon \nu \epsilon \nu]^{.29}$ And the more clear the apprehension $[\hat{\epsilon} \nu \alpha \rho \gamma \epsilon \sigma \tau \hat{\rho} \alpha \hat{\eta} \pi \hat{\iota} \sigma \tau \iota \varsigma]$ the more contemplation will be quieter, in as much as the person comes more into unity, that is $[\kappa \alpha \hat{\iota}]$ the knower to the extent that he knows — for one must aim for this — comes into unity with what is known. For if there are two, there will be one thing and another thing [i.e., knower and known object]. So, these will lie side by side, as it were and the person will not have appropriated and arranged into a unity $[\hat{\varphi} \kappa \epsilon \hat{\iota} \omega \sigma \epsilon \nu]$ this double object, just as when reasons $[\lambda \hat{\sigma} \gamma \sigma_i]$ are present in the psyche, but they do nothing. That is why the rational principle $[\lambda \hat{\sigma} \gamma \sigma_i]$ must not be from the outside, but must be united to the psyche of the student until he finds that it is his own $[\sigma i \kappa \epsilon \hat{\iota} \sigma \nu]$. [III 8.6.12-21]

This short text contains many important ideas and one important problem which need to be sorted out and explained, but before turning to these details we will do well to grasp the whole picture. Plotinus is sketching out his theory of $oi\kappa ei\omega\sigma\iota c$: the unity of knower and known object. (In this text only the verbal form $\dot{\phi}\kappa\dot{e}i\omega\sigma\epsilon\nu$ is used, but elsewhere Plotinus uses the noun.³⁰) Later on in this chapter (lines 25-29) he illustrates his point with the example of rote learning, of the psyche rehearsing a speech or an argument to itself in order to master it.³¹ While it still needs to rehearse the argument the psyche has not yet succeeded in making it its own. But when the psyche knows the argument it will employ the argument automatically in the right context. There is no need now for rehearsal.

Within our quotation we see Plotinus use the example of the student who needs to appropriate the $\lambda \delta \gamma \omega$ and make them his own. Failure to do this is obvious in cases where the reasons $[\lambda \delta \gamma \omega]$ are present, but 'ineffective'. Plotinus may mean two different things by 'ineffective'. On the one hand, examples of akratic behavior come to mind, for

²⁹ My translation of $\pi \iota \sigma \tau \epsilon \iota \epsilon \iota \nu$ as 'to apprehend' and of $\pi \iota \sigma \iota \iota \varsigma$ as 'apprehension' was defended (in part) in the previous chapter. Extending the same interpretation to this text both confirms and supports the hypothesis that was offered there.

³⁰ See III 8.8.1-8 discussed below p. 152.

³¹ Cf. III 8.6.21-29.

the akratic has reasons but fails to act on them. Such a person is a divided self, for his thought and his actions cannot form a coherent whole. But the akratic may be the extreme case of what Plotinus has in mind. He is calling our attention to the difference between someone merely entertaining arguments or reasons (e.g., why someone should act to benefit a person in need) and another who says, 'These are my reasons for helping this person.' In the former case the speaker has stepped back to look at the reasons. He has detached himself from the reasoning and in Plotinus' terminology he looks upon them as external objects, $\theta \epsilon \alpha \tau \dot{\alpha}$. As long as the arguments are merely entertained in this way, the person will not act. But once the person appropriates the reasons and makes them his own, action will result. Unlike the akratic we ourselves tend to think of such persons as 'integrated', for their thoughts and their actions are unified. On the other hand, what the example of the student also shows is that at times the student's reasons may be 'ineffective' in the sense that they do not give him understanding.³² We are all familiar with the case where the student has given the correct answer on a test (the reasons are present), but has no real understanding of the issue. (I shall return to this example below.) We must not, however, let these examples lead us away from Plotinus' point. He is trying to get us to see that the most important activity we can engage in is contemplation $[\theta \epsilon \omega \rho i\alpha]$ rather than action $[\pi\rho\hat{\alpha}\xi\iota\varsigma]$, for it is in this activity more than any other that knower and known object are most intimately united. As we shall see below it is in this activity that thought in the strict sense [κυρίως νοείν] comes to take place.

Ideas of a divided self or the integrity of the agent bring us back to the text under consideration and a textual problem central to it. If oineiωσις is what Plotinus is discussing in this text, then the question is, Who is the agent performing this action and who or

³² In Plotinus' language (following Aristotle) this would be a case of the student having the 'thing' $[\tau \delta \pi \rho \hat{\alpha} \gamma \mu \alpha]$ but not knowing the reasons why $[\delta \iota \hat{\alpha} \tau i]$; cf. VI 7.2.10-11 and lines 23-37.

what is on the receiving end of it? Put more simply, who or what is the subject of the verb ψκείωσεν? The critical sentence is as follows:

εὶ γὰρ δύο, τὸ μὲν ἄλλο, τὸ δὲ ἄλλο ἔσται· ὥστε οἶον παράκειται, καὶ τὸ διπλοῦν τοῦτο οὕπω ψκείωσεν, οἶον ὅταν ἐνόντες λόγοι ἐν ψυχῆ μηδὲν ποιῶσι. [ΙΙΙ 8.6.17-19]

HS¹ and HS² claimed that $\dot{\varphi}\kappa\epsilon\dot{\iota}\omega\sigma\epsilon\nu$ was intransitive. Presumably they took $\tau\dot{o}$ $\delta\iota\pi\lambda\sigma\hat{\upsilon}\nu$ $\tau\sigma\hat{\upsilon}\tau o$ as the subject. This is the reading and translation offered by HBT (discussed below). There are two objections to this reading, one grammatical, the other philosophical, though both are related. To begin with LSJ lists no intransitive uses of this verb. Plotinus's usage here would thus have to be idiosyncratic or ungrammatical. Plotinus is not above idiosyncratic usage, but our other reason prevents us from taking this route. It is not clear what the sentence means when the verb is taken as intransitive and $\tau\dot{o}$ $\delta\iota\pi\lambda\sigma\dot{\upsilon}\nu$ $\tau\sigma\dot{\upsilon}\tau o$ is made the subject. HBT translates as follows:

und diese Doppelheit hat noch nicht zur innern Aneignung geführt....

Understanding the verb führen as fahren machen we are left wondering what has not been brought 'zur innern Aneignung'. This translation can only make sense if we assume that

implicit in *führen* is the idea sich führen. But what we need to supply in order to make sense of this translation is not found in the Greek. The Greek verb is active and transitive, not middle or passive. But the question remains who or what has not been led 'zur innern Aneignung'. This reading of the verb as active and intransitive fails to offer a complete sense. It is also unparalleled grammatically.

HS recognized the force of these objections, for in their addendum ad textum in HS2 where they give their final thoughts on the text, they state that the psyche is the subject of the verb and that the verb is transitive.33 With this decision they seem to return to the reading and translation of Bréhier: 'l'âme ne se serait pas encore assimilé ce double object.' I take it that this reading makes more sense than the previous one, though it still leaves the question of what the relationship between psyche and 'this double object' is, for the double object was to begin with the psyche in its attempt to know something. Armstrong has tried to avoid these problems altogether by making $\theta \epsilon \omega \rho i \alpha$ the subject of the verb in question. He renders the phrase this way: 'contemplation has not yet unified the double object'. This reading makes sense, though the idea of contemplation — an abstract activity — as the active subject seems a bit strained. Apart from the fact that $\theta \epsilon \omega \rho i \alpha$ must be supplied from three lines back (line 15), it obscures the question of who the agent is who is performing the activity of contemplation and what is this double object that contemplation is performed on? Elsewhere Plotinus does speak of contemplations hastening towards nous (III 8.8.6 quoted below), but this way of speaking seems to be short for the contemplations of the wise man - or wise psyche - who is hastening towards nous. Strictly speaking, it is the wise man or wise psyche that is the agent.

By following Bréhier and the last thoughts of HS² I think we can find a solution to this problem. The double object $[\tau \delta \delta \iota \pi \lambda o \hat{\nu} \nu \tau o \hat{\nu} \tau o]$ must be the psyche. This is made

³³ See HS², addendum ad textum III 8.6.18, p. 320.

clear by two points from the text. In line 22 the verb $oi\kappa\epsilon\iota o \bar{\nu}\nu$ occurs, but this time it is in the passive $[oi\kappa\epsilon\iota\omega\theta\hat{\eta}]$ with psyche as subject. Thus, clearly, Plotinus intends that the activity of $oi\kappa\epsilon\iota\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$ be performed on the psyche.³⁴ Furthermore, the sense of the passage would indicate that the double object is the psyche before it has appropriated the object of knowledge. Lines 15-17 express this clearly:

the knower to the extent that he knows...comes into unity with what is known. For if there is two, there will be one thing and another thing [i.e., knower and known object].

But if psyche is clearly the recipient of the activity of oixeiwoic, who then is the agent performing this action? Does it make sense to say that the psyche as agent is acting upon itself as object?

I think that this does make sense, and, moreover, once we understand this relation between psyche and itself and between psyche and its object of knowledge, we shall be able to see the way psyche and nous differ and why nous is the paradigm of self-knowledge. For when psyche is engaged in thinking about itself it will always be a double object. In its self-thought psyche divides itself into subject and object. This division indicates that psyche is thinking [$\nu o e \bar{\nu}$] about itself in an 'external' way. The part of psyche that is thinking (the subject) will never be grasped as an object of its thought. Hence, on this level of thinking psyche can never achieve a unified state. In making this claim I am

³⁴ I am grateful to Brad Inwood for stressing this point in a conversation he had with me about this difficult text and for his insistence on trying to find a reading that is both grammatical and makes good sense.

not saying that there is anything inherently vicious about self-reflexive activities, about the activity of the agent being addressed to himself, for there are lots of self-reflexive activities that present no difficulty, e.g., washing or talking. Some self-reflexive activities, however, do give rise to problems and self-knowledge is one of them. At this point what we need to see is how the psyche as agent can perform the activity of $oikei\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$ on itself and how this process leads to self-knowledge. This question can be answered once two other issues have been sorted out. How exactly does Plotinus understand $oikei\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$? And how is this process connected to $\pii\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ and $\theta\varepsilon\omega\rhoi\alpha$?

Plotinus thinks that oixeioou; is the process whereby one seeks the completion or perfection [$\tau \epsilon \lambda \epsilon \iota \delta \tau \eta \epsilon$] of one's nature. But what is the nature that one has? The Stoics start with the $\pi \rho \hat{\omega} \tau o \nu oixeio\nu$ which is clearly given. We might say that for them the nature that an animal has is transparent to itself. To be sure, the nature must be educated and trained, but what needs to be educated and trained is clearly there. Plotinus, however, begins in the reverse way. Our nature is not immediately transparent to ourselves. For him our $\pi \rho \hat{\omega} \tau o \nu oixeio\nu$ is not something that simply requires education: it needs to be discovered. In more contemporary terminology we might say that the Stoics begin with an individual who has a strong sense of self. In Hierocles' image the center circle is what is given, and everything else is defined outwards. For Plotinus, the sense of self is not a given. It is something that has to be worked out and discovered by the agent. For him the outer circles are given and one must work inwards to discover what is at the center. As we have seen this movement inwards is a movement towards unity. Through oixeiooic one learns that one has an identity that is not bound up with country, city or family, but is one's own. How does one learn what is one's own? Plotinus simply says:

Take a look at yourself.³⁵ Then, as a person begins to sort out what is his own $[\tau \hat{o} \ oi\kappa \hat{e} \hat{o}\nu]$ from what is not $[\tau \hat{o} \ \hat{\alpha}\lambda\lambda \hat{o}\tau\rho\iota\sigma\nu]$, he acquires $\pi \hat{\iota}\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$.

It has been argued that $\pi i \sigma \tau \iota \varsigma$ is a type of apprehension. To see how this results from $oi\kappa\epsilon i\omega\sigma\iota \varsigma$ we might draw upon a comparison that Aristotle makes and look at it in Plotinian terms. In the opening book of the Nicomachean Ethics Aristotle contrasts three different types of lives: the life of pleasure $[\dot{o} \ \dot{\alpha}\pi o\lambda\alpha u\sigma\tau\iota\kappa\dot{o}\varsigma]$, the life of politics $[\dot{o} \ \pi o\lambda\iota\tau\iota\kappa\dot{o}\varsigma]$, and the life of contemplation $[\dot{o} \ 6\epsilon\omega\rho\eta\tau\iota\kappa\dot{o}\varsigma]$. Each one of these lives is seeking after the good as it is conceived within the life. The life of pleasure, as the name implies, seeks after pleasure and this is defined as bodily goods. The life of politics seeks after honour $[\dot{\eta} \ \tau\iota\mu\dot{\eta}]$. And the life of contemplation seeks after knowledge and truth. Given this scheme we can then see Plotinus like Aristotle as trying to determine which good is more proper to us and more enduring.³⁷

Let us imagine, then, a person who turns from a life of pleasure to a life of politics that consists in noble actions, and then later converts to a life of contemplation. How are we to understand this in Plotinian terms? To begin with we can say that this person has undergone a process of oineiooo. In the first step the agent has discovered that his identity has less to do with what happens to the body and more to do with his psyche. He has made some progress in the discovery that he is a rational agent and that his rationality is better employed in seeking to implement noble actions than is scheming to obtain pleasures of the body. Then, to recall the text we have been discussing at III 8.6, such a person begins to want to internalize the good that is the aim of his actions. It is here that his emphasis switches (to the extent that he can) from trying to accomplish just actions to thinking about what is just. This is a shift from having actions $[\pi p \acute{\alpha} \xi \epsilon \iota \varsigma]$ govern one's

 $[\]frac{35}{36}$ xŵς är oùr idoiς ψυχὴν ἀγαθὴν οἱον τὸ κάλλος ἔχει; ἄναγε ἐπὶ σαυτὸν καὶ ϊδε. $\frac{1}{6}$ 6.9.6-7. $\frac{36}{6}$ EN I 5, $\frac{1}{6}$ 1095 $\frac{1}{6}$ 10.

³⁷ As Aristotle says: τάγαθὸν δὲ οἰκεῖόν τι καὶ δυσαφαίρετον εἶναι μαντευόμεθα ΕΝ 1095b25-26.

At each step our imagined agent has apprehended more about himself. The experience that this cognitive clarity affords must give the agent a type of vision or apprehension $[\pi i\sigma \eta \varsigma]$ that he is on the right path. The actual accomplishment of noble actions provides the agent with a vantage point to judge the life he has left behind. It is only by having reached and lived on that level that the agent will have the $\pi i\sigma \tau i\zeta$ to see in what the goodness of his life consists and why it is superior to his former life. This will not be idle speculation, for it comes directly out of his own experience. Then, again, at the next step, when he moves to the life of contemplation, his own experience of $\theta \epsilon \omega \rho i \alpha$ will show him that this has been the right way. As the text in III 8.6 makes clear $\theta \epsilon \omega \rho i \alpha$ will proceed when the person acquires $\pi i \sigma \tau i \varsigma$. I have preferred the term 'apprehension' because it brings out the idea that this is something that the agent must 'see', 'grasp' or understand for himself; it is something he obtains by direct acquaintance. 'confidence', 'conviction', 'belief' or 'faith' do not as readily bring out this direct connection. If one of them is used we need to remind ourselves that its sense must be that which is gained by an apprentice who is on the way to becoming a master craftsman.⁴⁰ It is not epistemic or psychological certainty. Looked at in this way, $\pi i \sigma \tau i \varsigma$ can now be seen as the by-product of οἰκείωσις. The the person acquires πίστις by entering into a state of

³⁸ Cf. EN X 7, quoted above p. 95; and IV 4.44.3-4 where Plotinus makes it clear that our $\tilde{\epsilon}\rho\gamma\rho\nu$ consists in contemplation and that what we contemplate is really ourselves. What he means is best explained by III 4.3.22 where he claims that each one of us is an intelligible universe $[\kappa\delta\sigma\mu\rho\varsigma\nu\rho\eta\tau\delta\varsigma]$.

³⁹ III 8.6.13-14.
40 This distinction also touches on another Stoic theme. The progress of becoming a wise man after a point does not entail any new knowledge or behaviour, just a 'setting' [ίδια πῆξις]; cf. SVF III 510.

clarity about himself that comes from the discovery and experience of his true nature. It is this discovery or as much of it as the agent has worked out — this $\dot{\epsilon}\nu\alpha\rho\gamma\epsilon\sigma\tau\dot{\epsilon}\rho\alpha$ $\dot{\eta}$ $\tau\dot{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\dot{\epsilon}$ — that allows a purer form of contemplation to proceed.

It is the idea of contemplation that brings us back to the idea of self-reflexiveness. How does psyche perform the process of $oi\kappa si\omega\sigma\iota\zeta$ on itself? In chapter 7 we saw that thought in the strict sense was self-reflexive. This thought $[\kappa\nu\rho i\omega\zeta \nu osi\nu]$ belongs to a nous and nous in thinking thinks itself.⁴¹ In carrying over this notion to contemplation we can see that the highest form of contemplation we can engage in will involve this type of thinking. Thus, contemplation in its highest form will involve self-thought that is equivalent to self-knowledge.⁴² How, then, does psyche reach this stage of contemplation?

Going back to the text at III 8.6 we need to recall that each of these notions — οἰκείωσις, πίστις, and θεωρία — admits of degrees. Furthermore, we saw that psyche was supposed to 'appropriate' [ὑκείωσεν] the divided or double object that was itself [τὸ διπλοῦν τοῦτο]. This double object is psyche because the type of thinking that is proper to psyche — discursive reasoning — always entails that psyche divides itself into thinking subject and object of thought. Hence, psyche can never fully know itself.⁴³ The type of thinking that is above discursive reasoning is the thought of nous. Thought in this strict sense overcomes the subject/object divide. Hence, if psyche were to get beyond the subject/object divide it would become nous, and, if that were to happen it would no longer be

This point is discussed in more detail below in chapter 10.

⁴¹ Above, p. 117. For Plotinus' debt to Aristotle on this point see below, chapter 10.

⁴² As IV 4.44.3-4 makes clear that in this highest form of $\theta \epsilon \omega \rho i \alpha$ what is being contemplated is part of the thinker himself. This question of the identity of thinker and object of thought is taken up below in chapter 10.

psyche.⁴⁴ All that can be done on the level of psyche is to reduce this divide to a minimum. As Plotinus says:

Contemplation $[\theta \epsilon \omega \rho i\alpha]$ ascends from nature $[\phi i\sigma \iota \varsigma]$ to psyche and from this to nous. And always the contemplations become more one's own $[oi\kappa \epsilon \iota \delta \tau \epsilon \rho \alpha \iota]$, that is they become one with those who are contemplating. And in the case of the wise psyche the contemplations known approach identity with the subject in as much as these are hastening towards nous. But in the case of nous both [subject and object] are one, not through $oi\kappa \epsilon i\omega \sigma \iota \varsigma$, as is the case with the best psyche, but essentially $[oi\sigma i\alpha]$ that is by being 'the same thing for being $[\epsilon i\nu \alpha \iota]$ and for thinking $[\nu o\epsilon i\nu]$ '. [III 8.8.1-8]⁴⁵

This passage makes clear that the notion of oineiωσις marks a fundamental distinction between nous and psyche. Nous does not need to struggle to unite itself to its objects of thought or to make them its own. It does not go through a process of identification. Nous simply is what it thinks: its eiναι is identical with its νοείν. It is Plotinus' approval of this Parmenidean dictum that establishes nous as the paradigm of thinking [νοείν] and of

45 Plotimus is here loosely quoting Parmenides (cf. DK B3).

⁴⁴ How exactly Plotinus thinks of the difference between psyche and nous is a notorious crux. See Henry J. Blumenthal, 'Nous and Soul in Plotinus: Some Problems of Demarcation', in Plotino e il Neoplatonismo in Oriente e in Occidente (Rome: Academia Nazionale Dei Lincei, 1974), 203-219. It seems to me that some progress could be made if we look upon Plotinus' doctrine of the two acts [ἐνέργειαι] (cf. V 4.2.27-33) in conjunction with IV 4.23.1-6 (discussed above p. 120) to explain the difference. Given that every reality [οὐσία in the loose sense, i.e., not confined to nous] has two acts, an internal and an external, then we seem able to say that the internal activity of psyche is identical with the external activity of nous (cf. V 1.6.45 where in speaking of what is after nous Plotinus says: ἡ ψυχὴ λόγος νοῦ και ἐνέργειά τις, and III 5.9.19-20; V 1.3.9). Thus, given that the external activity of nous is νόησις, and that the internal activity of psyche is the same, there can be no distinction between nous and a psyche that has turned inward to be alone. This would be Plotinus' technical way of saying that the highest part of psyche is identical with nous, i.e., a νοῦς ἔκαστος. At IV 3.5.8-9 he speaks of ψυχαὶ ἐφεξῆς καθ΄ ἔκαστον νοῦν ἐξηρτημέναι. Thus, when the psyche makes its Return, by turning inward, it becomes nous. See also IV 4.2.27-32.

self-knowledge.⁴⁶ It is because of this identity that Plotinus can speak of nous as transparent $[\dot{\epsilon}\nu\alpha\rho\gamma\dot{\eta}\varsigma]$ to itself.⁴⁷ Thus, consequent upon $\dot{\epsilon}i\kappa\epsilon\dot{\epsilon}\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$, Plotinus makes clear that $\pi\dot{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ also marks a fundamental point of difference between psyche and nous.⁴⁸ This is seen most clearly in the case of the wise man.

The sage is considered to be the one who has completed the process of oineiωσις and has discovered that his identity is found in nous. Thus, his state of πίστις ἐναργής — the apprehension that reveals the connection between his nous and as many intelligible objects as he can see — is the inferior counterpart to the clarity [ἐναργής] that separate nous has 'from itself' [αὐτόθεν]. For a point that Plotinus makes repeatedly is that separate nous is entirely clear to itself [ἐναργής αὐτὸς αὐτὸς]. Through his emphasis on the clarity of nous Plotinus is saying that it does not need to work out its own identity through a process of oineiωσις. Nous has a synoptic grasp of itself and all that is its own. This is the ideal that the sage seeks to emulate. But as the text quoted above makes clear, though he may indeed be hastening towards nous, his results will always be proximal and the result of a long struggle. 51

Before turning to consider in more detail Plotinus' interpretation of Parmenides and why it is that nous is the paradigm of self-knowledge, it is best to summarize the results

⁴⁶ It remains a matter of debate whether Plotinus is correctly interpreting Parmenides. For more on how to interpret this dictum see Gallop, *Parmenides of Elea* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), p. 8 and notes 22 and 23, p. 57; and A. H. Coxon, *The Fragments of Parmenides* (Assen: 1986), p. 131; for more on Plotinus' use of Parmenides see Atkinson *Plotinus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) ad. loc. V 1.8.15-18.

⁴⁷ See V 8.4.1-10 and V 5.2.14-15.

⁴⁸ See V 5.2.14-15.

⁴⁹ V 5.1.7-8.

⁵⁰ V 5.2.15

⁵¹ Though open to dispute, I do think that Plotimus allows that the sage, even in his condition here below, is able to 'become nous'. At IV 4.2.4 he talks about someone who is engaged in a high level of contemplation while still in this earthly life: καὶ ἐνταῦθα θεωρῆ καὶ μάλιστα ἐναργῶς (lines 4-5). In what follows Plotinus seems to be saying that in such a state his thought [νόησις] is too rarefied to pick out himself as he is in his material condition. Nevertheless, he is able to become nous [κὰκεῖνο γίνεται, lines 6-7] and that he himself [αὐτός, line 22] is able to be all that is there.

achieved by this investigation. It was argued that Plotinus was influenced by the Stoics in his development of two ideas: οἰκείωσις and συναίσθησις. The first idea was explored in detail and was shown to be connected closely with two others: $\pi i \sigma \tau i \varsigma$ and $\theta \epsilon \omega \rho i \alpha$. It was argued that οἰκείωσις is the process whereby a person begins to make a discovery of his It was then shown that as the person makes progress in this discovery he acquires $\pi i \sigma \eta \varsigma$, that is the 'apprehension' which the direct experience of the activity of his own nature gives him. $\theta \epsilon \omega \rho i \alpha$ was then seen to play a part in this process, for in searching for his own the person begins gradually to turn away from externals and to look within. The look within reveals what is to oikelov, and this turns out to be nous. After making this discovery, the wise man seeks to hasten to nous by uniting himself to his objects of knowledge. This unity is obtained most fully in the life of contemplation. It was then shown that by admitting that each of these notions comes in degrees, Plotinus indicates that a person's progress will always be proximal and the result of a long struggle. 52 The discussion, then, concluded by showing that οἰκείωσις and πίστις are characteristics particular to psyche and are not to be found in nous. Nous, in contrast, does not need to struggle to attain self-knowledge, clarity, or its objects of knowledge. It has no need of οἰκείωσις because it is identical with its objects of knowledge.

Three issues remain that will be explored in the three remaining chapters. The next chapter will pick up Plotinus' notion of $\sigma \nu \nu \alpha i \sigma \theta \eta \sigma \iota \zeta$ and show how it is used to interpret the Parmenidean dictum that the $\nu o \varepsilon \tilde{\iota} \nu$ and $\varepsilon \tilde{\iota} \nu \alpha \iota$ of nous are identical. Chapter 11 will examine how we relate to the $\sigma \nu \nu \alpha i \sigma \theta \eta \sigma \iota \zeta$ of nous. If we are identical with nous, Plotinus needs to explain how it is that we lack this elevated awareness. In particular it will show how the activities of the animal body block our awareness of nous. Then, the final chap-

⁵² Note that the standard of measure will be different depending upon the concept: progress in observations, will be measured in terms of self-knowledge; $\pi i \sigma \tau \iota \varsigma$ will be measured by the extent of its 'synoptic grasp'; and $\theta s \omega \rho i \alpha$ will be measured by the gap (or lack thereof) between knower and known object.

ter will conclude by looking at how our 'internal' vision and 'external' vision hold together in the life of the sage.

CHAPTER 10

Separate Nous as the Paradigm of Self-Knowledge

It is the aim of this chapter to examine why separate nous [voi $\chi\omega\rho\iota\sigma\tau\delta\varsigma$] is the paradigm of self-knowledge. In the last chapter it was argued that nous is identical with its objects of thought, and it was shown that Plotinus approved of the Parmenidean dictum whereby the thinking of nous, its $vos\hat{u}v$, is identical with its being, its $s\tilde{u}v\alpha\iota$. This chapter will examine Plotinus' interpretation of this dictum, for it is this identity that is behind the claim that nous is the paradigm of self-knowledge. In broad outline what this examination will reveal are the reasons why psyche fails but nous succeeds in obtaining self-knowledge. It will thus pay a promissory note that was offered in chapter 3. It was there suggested that Plotic us takes thought [$vos\hat{u}v$] to be a genus of which there are two species. It was also suggested that self-knowledge serves as the differentia. In comparison with psyche the self-thought of nous was said to be more authoritative [$\kappa v \rho \iota \omega \tau v \rho v v$]. By examining more closely the thought of separate nous as opposed to psyche we shall now be able to see why Plotinus thinks this is so.

We shall begin with an examination of a text in V 3.13, in which Plotinus describes thought in the strict sense $[xv\rho i\omega \zeta \ vo\epsilon iv]$. Such thought will be defined in terms of a 'consciousness of the whole' $[\sigma vv\alpha i\sigma\theta \eta\sigma v\zeta]$. This idea together with an argument of Sextus Empiricus, which contends that there can be no self-knowledge, will show that psyche fails but that nous succeeds in self-knowledge. We shall then see that Plotinus' response

¹ See above p. 28.

² The text cited above was V 3.6.1-7.

to Sextus' argument leaves him with two problems.³ Firstly, he must explain, given this identity between thinker and object of thought that obtains on the level of nous, how it is that nous is *thinking*. Then, secondly, he must explain how this type of thinking is self-thought.

In V 3.13 Plotinus explains his reasons for focusing on self-thought as thought in the strict sense.

For thought in general $[\delta\lambda\omega\varsigma \ \tau\delta \ \nu o\epsilon \tilde{\iota}\nu]$ seems to be a consciousness $[\sigma\nu\nu\alpha i\sigma\theta\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma]$ of the whole once the many parts have come together in the same thing. This happens when something thinks $[\nu o\epsilon \tilde{\iota}\nu]$ itself, and this indeed is thought in the strict sense $[\delta \ \delta\dot{\eta} \ \kappa\alpha\dot{\iota} \ \kappa\nu\rho i\omega\varsigma \ \dot{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\dot{\iota} \ \nu o\epsilon \dot{\iota}\nu]$. And this something is one particular thing which seeks nothing. But if its thought $[\nu\dot{\epsilon}\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma]$ is going to be of something outside, this thing will be in need and its thinking $[\nu o\epsilon \tilde{\iota}\nu]$ not thinking in the strict sense $[\kappa\nu\rho\dot{\iota}\omega\varsigma \ \nu o\epsilon\dot{\iota}\nu]$. [V 3.13.12-16]

This text offers two hints as to why self-thought is thought in the strict sense $[\kappa\nu\rho\hat{\iota}\omega\varsigma\nu\rho\hat{\iota}\nu\rho\epsilon\hat{\iota}\nu]$: (i) strict self-thought is a consciousness of the whole — in this case the whole [self]; (ii) this type of thinking seeks nothing outside of the self. As we shall see in more detail, the motive for the first step is skeptical. *Prima facie*, thought that is directed at oneself and what is one's own seems less likely to go astray than thought directed at what does not belong to oneself, i.e., what is foreign $[\dot{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\delta\tau\rho\iota\nu\nu]$. The motive for the second step will become clear as we follow out the first. It illustrates the difference between thinking what is *inside* and thinking what is *outside*. This requirement will be better understood once we have sorted out the first, and we shall leave it for the next chapter.

³ For the influence of Pyrrhonism on Plotinus see Wallis, 'Skepticism and Neoplatonism', ANRW 36.2 (1987), 911-54 and Emilsson, 'Plotinus on the Objects of Thought', Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie (forthcoming).

Thus the specific aim of this chapter will be to try to understand the first condition and why Plotinus thinks that only separate nous is capable of thought in the strict sense. But before turning to do this we need to make a clarification.

Are we allowed to slip from talk about 'thought in general' to talk of self-knowledge? The text we have looked at does not mention self-knowledge. We may well wonder why claims about self-thought entitle us to make claims about self-knowledge. This connection, however, will best emerge ambulando. The text above, however, does provide a clue. Self-thought in the strict sense is a consciousness $[\sigma v \nu \alpha i \sigma \theta \eta \sigma \iota \zeta]$ or knowledge of the whole self. As we shall see there is one type of self-thought that yields self-knowledge (that of separate nous) and another type which does not (that of psyche). In Plotinus' terms the former serves as a paradigm for the latter, or (he will sometimes say) that the latter is an image of the former.

In setting up separate nous as the paradigm of self-thought and in taking such thought to be self-knowledge Plotinus is well aware of certain logical objections to the possibility of self-knowledge. By looking at the way Plotinus responds to these objections we can begin to see the epistemological requirements behind $\kappa\nu\rho\hat{\iota}\omega\varsigma$ $\nuo\hat{\epsilon}\hat{\iota}\nu$ and $\sigma\nu\nu\alpha\hat{\iota}\sigma\theta\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$.

In the opening of V 3.5.1-28, Plotinus responds to an argument that can be found in Sextus.⁶ The argument is designed to show that self-knowledge is impossible. Sextus'

⁴ Talk of self-thought and self-knowledge has advantages. Besides avoiding some of the vagueness inherent in terms like 'awareness' and 'consciousness' it is faithful to Plotinus who is careful to distinguish a strict and loose sense of posip. For a discussion of differences in terminology among recent writers on Plotinus see Wijsenbeek, 'Man as a Double Being: Some Remarks on Plotinus', Diotima 13 (1985), 172-191.

⁵ VI 7.7.17-31 describes αἰσθήσεις as 'dim intellections' and νσήσεις as 'clear sense-perceptions'; cf. I 8.11.17; III 3.3.34; V 1.6.46 where psyche or the things of psyche are called 'images' of nous.
6 Adv. Math. 7.310-312.

argument turns on the notion of $\kappa\alpha\tau\hat{\alpha}\lambda\eta\psi\iota\varsigma$. Adapted to Plotinus' investigation, it can be put in the form of modus tollens.⁷

- 1. If nous comprehends itself, then either (a) it comprehends itself as a whole or (b) it comprehends itself with a part of itself.
- 2. But neither (a) nor (b).
- 3. Therefore, nous does not comprehend itself.

Support for premise two is easily forthcoming. The denial of (a) is secured, because if ex hypothesi the whole of nous is what is comprehending, then there is nothing comprehended. The denial of (b) is secured by parallel reasoning. If one part of nous comprehends another part, then the part that comprehends will never be comprehended. Thus, nous will never comprehend itself in its entirety. And since part of itself always remains outside of its grasp, it is true to say that nous never has knowledge $[\kappa \alpha \tau \hat{\alpha} \lambda \eta \psi \varsigma]$ of itself.⁸

The term $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}\lambda\eta\psi\iota\zeta$ does not appear in Plotinus' discussion, but the assumptions involved in this notion do, for as the etymology of the term suggests $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}\lambda\eta\psi\iota\zeta$ requires a grasping subject and a comprehended object. Rather than $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}\lambda\eta\psi\iota\zeta$ Plotinus uses

⁷ Plotinus is trying to explain not κατάληψις but τὸ νοοῦν ἐαυτὸ, or as he sometimes abbreviates it αὐτὸ ἐαυτό; cf. V 3.1.1; V 3.5.3; and V 3.6.1-2.

⁸ This is looking at nous in Sextus' terms. V 3.1.20-21 suggests that ἀντίληψις is not to be had by nous. See next note.

ἀντίληψις. The subject/object dichotomy is built into the terms of thinking and knowing. Plotinus is aware of the dichotomy inherent in either κατάληψις or ἀντίληψις. What he wants to know is whether the term νόησις implies the same dichotomy and likewise falls victim to Sextus' argument. Thus, later on in the treatise the vocabulary shifts and he tends to talk of νόησις and νοητόν: thinking and the object of thought. The problem presented by Sextus' argument can then be applied to this set of terms. One might say that if thinking is focused on an object of thought, then it is the object of thought that one thinks. In this case the act of thinking is not thought or comprehended. In the case of nous, if its activity is thinking [νόησις], then it will grasp its object of thought but not its own activity. Thus, it cannot truly be said to think itself. In this case νόησις and νοητόν remain distinct.

Before looking at how Plotinus responds to the argument when it is applied to $\nu \delta \eta \sigma \iota \zeta$, we can see how it is that psyche falls victim to it by recalling the conclusion reached in the last chapter. There it was shown that psyche knows itself through a process

⁹ The word κατάληψις does not occur in Plotinus, though verbal forms of καταλαμβάνειν do occur (cf. V 3.1.7; V 1.7.6; and IV 7.8.5). (Sleeman and Pollet (who do not list an occurrence of κατάληψις) translate the verb 'to apprehend mentally'.) Nevertheless, Plotinus' use of the term ἀντίληψις seems to be equivalent to Sextus' κατάληψις, for it is used in connection with the type of knowledge that is obtained through sense perception and it implies a grasping subject and a comprehended object (cf. V 3.2.5; IV 5.8.20-22; and I 4.10.4-6; this last text is important, for it draws an explicit contrast between ἀντίληψις and τὸ πρὸ ἀντιλήψεως ἐνέργημα and it describes this prior type of activity by quoting Parmenides DK B3; for more on this text and Plotinus' use of this term see Schibli, 'Apprehending Our Happiness: Antilepsis and the Middle Soul in Plotinus, Ennead I 4.10', Phronesis 34 (1989), 205-219; as his title suggests he takes a view that differs from my own).

loc. translates ponytop as 'what can be thought'; Armstrong renders it as 'intelligible'. I have settled on the phrase 'object of thought', for it expresses the ambiguity found in this term and leaves out the determinate modal notions expressed in these other translations. In what seems to be an analytic sense the object of any thinking will always be a thought, but the thought that one is thinking will also have contents. As will be see the problem Plotimus is struggling with turns on the relation between thinking and contents of thought. German is more flexible than English in rendering Greek. Hence, Beierwaltes can bring out this difference using 'gedacht' and 'das Gedachte', Selbsterkenntnis und Erfahrung der Einheit: Plotins Enneade V 3 (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1991), pp. 183-184. Neither Oosthout nor Armstrong is helpful in making this point explicit.

of οικείωσις. Prior to the completion of this process psyche remains a double [τὸ διπλοῦν τοῦτο]. We can now see clearly what Plotinus means by 'double', for psyche will be a knowing subject and what it knows (whether itself or something other than itself) will remain a separate object. Given this subject/object dichotomy, psyche falls victim to Sextus' argument, for the part of it that is the knowing subject will stand outside of what the other part of psyche comprehends. In Plotinus' terms, until psyche completes the process of οἰκείωσις — and as we saw it does this when it attains the highest form of $\theta \epsilon \omega \rho i \alpha$ — it cannot think itself in the strict sense [$\epsilon \nu \rho i \omega \zeta \nu o \epsilon \hat{\nu}$], for it will not have a consciousness [συναίσθησις] of itself and all its parts. Nous, in contrast, has an ever present consciousness [συναίσθησις] of itself and all its parts. This consciousness or selfknowledge is guaranteed because unlike psyche nous is identical with its objects of knowledge. Our discussion of οἰκείωσις has shown that psyche must work to 'appropriate' its objects of knowledge. However complete the process may be it still falls short of Having set out the shortcomings of psyche, we can now straightforward identity. understand more clearly how nous succeeds.

Let us return to Sextus' argument. We have seen how psyche encounters difficulties when it attempts to think itself. We must now see how nous can think itself and why its self-thought is self-knowledge.

Recall the dilemma forced by the argument. Self-thought takes place either when the self thinks itself as a whole or when one part of the self thinks the other part. In neither case can self-thought take place. As we saw, the latter half of the disjunction holds true of psyche. In the case of nous, Plotinus seeks to avoid the dilemma by grasping the horn posed by the first half of the disjunction. If the problem for self-thought arose because thought and object of thought were distinct, what prevents us from taking them to be one and the same? We can see Plotinus raising this question in the following passage.

But if thinking $[\nu \acute{o}\eta \sigma \iota \varsigma]$ and the object of thought $[\nu o\eta \tau \acute{o}\nu]$ are one, how for this reason will what thinks think itself? For thinking in a way will encompass the object of thought or will be identical to the object of thought, but that nous is thinking $[\nu o \acute{\omega} \nu]$ itself is not yet clear. [V 3.5.29-31 my emphasis]

Plotinus suggests that what prevents us from making thought and the object of thought one and the same is the question of whether, when we do this, thinking can be said to be going on at all. Not all commentators agree, however. Oosthout takes it that the problem presented here is that there is no thinking subject and takes a number of modern interpreters to task for having missed it. 11 After stating the dilemma posed by Sextus, he argues that because Plotinus takes there to be real self-knowledge nous must avoid dividing itself into subject and object. As we saw this was the horn of the dilemma that impaled psyche. This leaves us with the first half of the dilemma. Oosthout then claims:

On the other hand [i.e., taking up the other horn of the dilemma], the assumption that true self-knowledge exists now appears to lead to the surprising conclusion that the mind that fully thinks itself is indeed completely thinkable to itself, yet without there being an actual subject that thinks this pure object of thought.¹²

This view, I argue, puts the emphasis in the wrong place. Plotinus cannot simply be worried about whether there is 'still room for an actual thinking subject' once the

¹¹ Oosthout p. 106 with n. 1.

¹² Oosthout, p. 106.

dichotomy between $v \delta \eta \sigma \iota \varsigma$ and $v \sigma \eta \tau \delta v$ collapses, for it would be equally a problem on this picture whether there is an object of thought. I take it that the problem Plotinus is worried about is whether once $v \delta \eta \sigma \iota \varsigma$ and $v \sigma \eta \tau \delta v$ are made one and the same thinking can be said to be going on at all. This is what it is incumbent upon Plotinus to explain: not whether there is a nous at all (this is not put into question), but whether if its $v \delta \eta \sigma \iota \varsigma$ and $v \sigma \eta \tau \delta v$ are identical it can be said to think. Plotinus must solve two problems. Firstly, he must show that if nous is described in this way it can truly be said to think. Then, secondly, he must show that nous is capable of thinking itself. 13

Plotinus' solution to the first problem may strike us as evasive, for it is dependent on Aristotle's notoriously obscure conception of god. When asked if nous can think itself, given its identity with its object of thought, Plotinus seems to answer, 'Yes, if Aristotle's god can.' The closest we come to an explanation of this complex idea is in Plotinus' use of $\dot{\epsilon}\nu\dot{\epsilon}\rho\gamma\epsilon\iota\alpha$, and here his dependence on Aristotle is transparent. Thus, before we look at Plotinus' solution we must first understand this term as it is used in Aristotle.

To simplify for the sake of clarity we might say that there are two acceptable translations of this term in Aristotle. 14 One is 'activity', the other is 'actuality' (a state of being). The former is inspired by contexts that relate to movement and action. The later is inspired by contexts that require a more stable state. In these contexts one might indeed gloss $\dot{\epsilon}\nu\dot{\epsilon}\rho\gamma\epsilon\iota\alpha$ (or 'actuality') as a 'non-variable state of being', e.g., Socrates in actuality is an adult male; while at the Symposium he actually enjoyed himself, i.e., was in a

14 In the discussion that follows I am indebted to chapter 6, 'The Development of Energeia: Activity and Actuality', of Rist, The Mind of Aristotle: A Study in Philosophical Growth (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 105-119.

¹³ My approach thus differs sharply from Oosthout's. He interprets Plotinus as making the assumption that strict self-knowledge exists. Plotinus is then seen as looking for an explanation to account for this phenomenon. I take it that Plotinus begins with the more primitive notion of self-thought. I then see him (i) as defending this notion against logical objections, and (ii) as showing that there is one type of self-thought that is equivalent to self-knowledge.

pleasant state which lasted for some time.¹⁵ Thus, prima facie, the same word is used in contexts that seem incompatible. One use expresses a stable state, the other a movement, activity or function. One way to mitigate this contrast is to view Aristotle's interest in substance $[o\dot{v}oi\alpha]$ not so much as an interest in the category of entity (i.e., asking what kind of things there are), but as an interest in being: i.e., in specifying the $o\dot{v}oi\alpha$ of an entity one specifies 'the specific mode of activity involved in the acting out of that entity's substantial nature'.¹⁶ Nevertheless, both contrasting notions are found within Aristotle's god. How is this so?

In Metaphysics Λ 6 Aristotle argues to the conclusion that there must be a principle $[\dot{\alpha}\rho\chi\dot{\eta}]$ whose reality or substance $[o\dot{\nu}o\dot{i}\alpha]$ is $\dot{e}\nu\dot{e}\rho\gamma\epsilon\iota\alpha$ (1171b19-20). This conclusion occurs within an argument about motion $[\kappa\dot{\iota}\nu\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma]$. One premise in this argument states that 'if it [namely this principle] does not act $[\dot{e}\nu\epsilon\rho\gamma\dot{\eta}\sigma\epsilon\iota]$, there will be no movement' (1071b17). This premise makes clear that Aristotle expects his first principle to be doing something, which in turn suggests the translation of $\dot{e}\nu\dot{e}\rho\gamma\epsilon\iota\alpha$ as 'activity'. On the other side, the same argument makes clear that the $o\dot{\nu}\sigma\dot{\iota}\alpha$ of this principle must exclude potentiality, otherwise there would not be eternal motion. Hence, the $o\dot{\nu}\sigma\dot{\iota}\alpha$ of this principle must also be $\dot{e}\nu\dot{e}\rho\gamma\epsilon\iota\alpha$ in the sense of 'actuality'. Thus, the $o\dot{\nu}\sigma\dot{\iota}\alpha$ of this principle is both a state of being, pure actuality, that excludes all matter (i.e., potentiality) and an 'activity'. This activity in turn expresses the essence of this principle: what it does is what it is. Given the requirement of finding an $\dot{\alpha}\rho\chi\dot{\eta}$ whose $o\dot{\nu}\sigma\dot{\iota}\alpha$ is an $\dot{e}\nu\dot{e}\rho\gamma\epsilon\iota\alpha$, Aristotle had to find an activity that was also a state of being. For Aristotle this principle

¹⁵ The gloss is Rist's, p. 111. In his discussion of pleasure (p. 110) he concludes: '...in the Nicomachean Ethics the sense is developed so that energein almost means simply 'to be'.'

¹⁶ Kosman, 'Divine Being and Divine Thinking in Metaphysics Lambda', Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy 3 (1987), 177. For a more detailed account of this interpretation of the Metaphysics see his 'Substance, Being, and Energeia', Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy 2 (1984), 121-149.

¹⁷ Cf. Rist p. 116.

could only be nous. Thus, within Aristotle's god we find these two aspects of $\dot{\epsilon}\nu\dot{\epsilon}\rho\gamma\epsilon\iota\alpha$. As the paradigm of $o\dot{v}o\dot{\iota}\alpha$ its state of being is complete actuality, but this state of being is also the actualization of an activity, not an activity as we normally understand the term (i.e., movement), but the immaterial, unmoving activity of thought. 18

To return then to Plotinus, we can see that he solves his first problem — that the identity of thinking and object of thought still allows room for thought — by relying on the notion of ἐνέργεια that is found in Aristotle's god. For he says:

If thinking $[\nu \delta \eta \sigma \iota \varsigma]$ and the object of thought $[\tau \delta \nu \sigma \eta \tau \delta \nu]$ are the same ... then the object of thought is the first $o \nu \sigma \delta \alpha$. [V 3.5.31-35]¹⁹

The term 'first $o\dot{v}o\dot{t}\alpha$ ' is a clear reference to Plotinus' separate nous which is much like Aristotle's god.²⁰ He does not so much explain how thinking can take place given the identity of thinking $[v\dot{o}\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma]$ and object of thought $[\tau\dot{o}\ vo\eta\tau\dot{o}v]$ as assume that in the highest case — that of separate nous, where these are identical — thinking can still go on. The conditional makes this assumption clear. Where the identity holds, we must be talking about separate nous. Nevertheless, our excursus on Aristotle's notion of $\dot{e}v\acute{e}\rho\gamma\epsilon\iota\alpha$

¹⁸ In the de Anima Aristotle says: ἔτι δ' ἡ νόησις ἔοικεν ἡρεμήσει τινὶ καὶ ἐπιστάσει μᾶλλον ἢ κινήσει (407^a 32-33). For more discussion of Aristotle and why he thinks the first principle is a mind, see Rist.

¹⁹ The Greek text reads as follows (without the omission): άλλ' εἰ ἡ νόησις καὶ τὸ νοητὸν ταὐτόν — ἐνέργεια γάρ τις τὸ νοητόν οὐ γὰρ δὴ δύναμις οὐδέ γ' ἀνόητον* οὐδὲ ζωῆς χωρὶς οὐδ' αὖ ἐπακτὸν τὸ ζῆν οὐδὲ τὸ νοεῖν ἄλλῳ ὄντι, οἶον λίθῳ ἢ ἀψύχῳ τινί — καὶ οὐσία ἡ πρώτη τὸ νοητόν.

^{*} γ' ἀνόητον Theiler: γε νοητὸν Εππ. For a defense of this emendation see Oosthout, p. 107.

 $^{20^{\}circ}$ This point can be further strengthened if we recall that 'the first mention of $voi\varsigma$ in connection with divine substance does not characterize that substance as $voi\varsigma$, but rather as $voi\gamma v$: not as thinking but as that which is thought'. This is Kosman, 'Divine Being and Divine Thinking', pp. 182-183 referring to Metaphysics Λ 1072^a26 ff.

goes some way in helping us to understand this thinking process and why it is instantiated in nous. On the one hand, talk about first $o\dot{v}\sigma\dot{l}\alpha$ brings out the sense of $\dot{e}v\dot{e}\rho\gamma\epsilon\iota\alpha$ as the highest actualization. On the other hand, talk about first $o\dot{v}\sigma\dot{l}\alpha$ brings out the sense of $\dot{e}v\dot{e}\rho\gamma\epsilon\iota\alpha$ as 'the specific mode of activity involved in the acting out of that entity's substantial nature'.²¹ Plotinus takes it that the first $o\dot{v}\sigma\dot{l}\alpha$ or highest actualization $[\dot{e}v\dot{e}\rho\gamma\epsilon\iota\alpha]$ is nous. He also takes it that its specific mode of activity is thinking $[v\dot{o}\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma]$. It is thinking that expresses what nous really is. He seems to capture both notions when he uses the expression $o\dot{v}\sigma\iota\dot{\omega}\delta\eta\varsigma$ $v\dot{o}\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$.²²

But before looking at the reasons why Plotinus thinks this highest reality must be nous and its activity thought we need first to see that the notion of $\dot{\epsilon}\nu\dot{\epsilon}\rho\gamma\epsilon\iota\alpha$ also solves the second problem posed above: not only does nous think, it thinks itself. The notion of $\dot{\epsilon}\nu\dot{\epsilon}\rho\gamma\epsilon\iota\alpha$ allows Plotinus to identify $\tau\dot{\delta}$ $\delta\nu$ and $\tau\dot{\delta}$ $\nu o\eta\tau\dot{\delta}\nu$ and this identification enables him to claim that nous thinks itself. For $\dot{\epsilon}\nu\dot{\epsilon}\rho\gamma\epsilon\iota\alpha$ serves as the bridge concept between $\nu\dot{\delta}\eta\sigma\iota\zeta$ and $\tau\dot{\delta}$ $\nu o\eta\tau\dot{\delta}\nu$. Given that the $\dot{\epsilon}\nu\dot{\epsilon}\rho\gamma\epsilon\iota\alpha$ of nous is $\nu\dot{\delta}\eta\sigma\iota\zeta$ and the object of this $\nu\dot{\delta}\eta\sigma\iota\zeta$ is $\tau\dot{\delta}$ $\nu o\eta\tau\dot{\delta}\nu$, what Plotinus needs to show is that this $\tau\dot{\delta}$ $\nu o\eta\tau\dot{\delta}\nu$ is really nous itself. To show this we need to retrace our steps. We know that the $\dot{\epsilon}\nu\dot{\epsilon}\rho\gamma\epsilon\iota\alpha$ of nous is identical with its $\sigma\dot{\delta}$ σ of nous will be as a $\tau\dot{\delta}$ $\nu o\eta\tau\dot{\delta}\nu$. Thus, if the $\nu\dot{\delta}\eta\sigma\iota\zeta$ of nous is directed at $\tau\dot{\delta}$ $\nu o\eta\tau\dot{\delta}\nu$ and this $\tau\dot{\delta}$ $\nu o\eta\tau\dot{\delta}\nu$ is nous itself, then in thinking nous will think itself.

21 See n. 16 above.

²² V 3.5.37. Armstrong renders this expression as 'substantial intellection' and Oosthout as 'real thought', but no translation is adequate to the thought Plotinus packs into this phrase. The phrase is a succinct expression of what has been called 'Plotinus' doctrine of two acts [ἐνέργειαι]'. See Rutten, 'La doctrine des deux actes dans la philosophie de Plotin', Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Etranger CXLVI (1956) 100-106, and Lloyd, 'Plotinus on the Genesis of Thought and Existence', Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy, 5 (1987), pp. 155-186. The doctrine is most clearly expressed at V 4.2.27-33. Reading this text along with II 6, I take Plotinus to be saying that any οὐσία has two ἐνέργειαι, one internal, one external. The internal ἐνέργεια 'fills up the οὐσία' [συμπληροῦσα τὴν οὐσίαν V 4.2.31]. The metaphor of 'filling' I interpret as 'the specific mode of activity involved in the acting out of that entity's substantial nature'. In this way the internal ἐνέργεια becomes in a certain sense an οὐσιώδης ἱδιότης τις οὖσα τῆς οὐσίας [II 6.1.24-25].

αύτὸν ἄρα νοεῖ (εἴπερ ἐστὶ τὸ κράτιστον), καὶ ἔστιν ἡ νόησις νοήσεως νόησις.

Therefore, nous thinks itself (since it is the most excellent of things), and its thinking is a thinking on thinking.²⁴ [A 9 1074^b33-35]

This phrase of Aristotle's contains the two requirements of κυρίως νοεῖν laid down by Plotinus in the text quoted at the beginning of this chapter. The paradigm case of thinking

²³ DK B3.

 $^{^{24}}$ I have slightly revised the *Revised Oxford Aristotle* in making nous the subject rather than 'thought'. That nous is the subject is clear from the opening line of the chapter (1074^b15) and the masculine, reflexive pronoun $\alpha \dot{v}r\dot{v}r$.

must (i) be self-thought and (ii) seek nothing outside of itself.²⁵ Our discussion has focused mainly on the first requirement. We began by looking at an argument that called into question the possibility of self-thought and in showing how Plotinus responds to the argument we have been led to separate nous which is the paradigm of self-thought. But at this stage we might still be left wondering what it is about nous that makes it the paradigm.

To answer this question we need to look again at the notion of $\sigma \nu \nu \alpha i \sigma \theta \eta \sigma \iota \varsigma$. In the text quoted in the beginning of the chapter Plotinus identified 'thought in general' $[\delta \lambda \omega \varsigma \tau \delta \nu \nu \sigma \epsilon i \nu]$ with $\sigma \nu \nu \alpha i \sigma \theta \eta \sigma \iota \varsigma$. In chapter 9 it was noted that this term was used in Stoic contexts to mean 'self-consciousness' or 'self-awareness' and that in Plotinus it is connected with self-knowledge. In the discussion of $\sigma \nu \nu \epsilon i \omega \sigma \iota \varsigma$ in chapter 9, it was noted that self-knowledge comes in degrees. We linked this idea of gradation to his view that nature and psyche embody less perfect forms of $\nu \nu \epsilon i \nu$ than does nous. What we now need to realize is that Plotinus does not understand this term so much as 'awareness' or 'consciousness', but as 'knowledge' or 'understanding' $[\sigma \dot{\nu} \nu \epsilon \sigma \iota \varsigma]$. Plotinus thinks that (self-conscious) awareness tends to get in the way of our activities. We will read or perform an act of bravery much better if we remain unaware of what we are doing. When we become aware that we are reading, we no longer read as well, and in the case of the act of

The first is explicit in the text; the second (to be taken up in the next chapter) needs to be unpacked from the phrase 'its thinking is a thinking on thinking'. This phrase suggests that thinking, for both Aristotle and Plotinus, is a self-contained activity. It is perfect $[\tau \epsilon \lambda \epsilon i\alpha]$. It is not in need of something external to bring about its completion, nor does it require time in order to reach its completion. In this sense thought $[\nu \delta \eta \sigma \iota \varsigma]$ is like vision $[\ddot{\nu} \rho \alpha \sigma \iota \varsigma]$ and other senses. Cf. EN IV $1074^{2}14-30$ and Metaphysics $1074^{6}14-27$.

²⁶ Cf. above pp. 137 and 141, n. 24.

²⁷ In equating $\sigma v r c i \sigma \theta \eta \sigma v c$ with 'self-knowledge' or 'understanding' rather than 'awareness' Plotinus would part company with Kosman, 'Divine Being and Divine Thinking' who interprets Aristotle's nous as the paradigm instance and thus $\dot{c} \rho \chi \dot{\eta}$ of the many different animate modes of awareness. In explaining this thought Kosman says: 'To understand this, we need to surrender our inclination to think of $v \dot{v} \dot{v} \dot{v} \dot{v}$ primarily as a mode of discursive cognition and to realize that thinking is, as it will be for Descartes much later, a notion meant to capture the most general form of animate awareness' (p. 184).

bravery, should we suddenly become aware of what we are doing, we might even become afraid.²⁸

Self-conscious awareness is a vague notion and Plotinus avoids it in favour of knowledge. What he has been after all along is a sense of voeiv that is linked to self-knowledge. Nous is the paradigm instance of voeiv because in its thinking it has perfect self-knowledge. The following text makes this clear and summarizes some of the main points of our discussion.

For thirking $[\nu\acute{o}\eta\sigma\iota\zeta]$ is a fine thing $[\kappa\alpha\lambda\acute{o}\nu]$ for us, because the psyche needs to possess nous, and for nous, because its being $[\tau\grave{o}\ \imath\acute{e}\iota\nu\alpha\iota]$ is the same as thinking, and thinking $[\nu\acute{o}\eta\sigma\iota\zeta]$ made it; therefore this nous needs to keep company with thinking and to be always getting an intimate understanding $[\sigma\acute{u}\nu\epsilon\sigma\iota\zeta]$ of itself, that this is this, because the two are one; but if it was only one, it would have sufficed to itself and would not have needed to get understanding. Since also 'Know yourself' is said to those who because of their selves' multiplicity have the business of counting themselves up and learning that they do not know all of the number and kind of things they are, or do not know any one of them, not what their ruling principle is or by what they are themselves. But if the Good is anything, it is so in a greater way than by knowledge $[\gamma\nu\acute{u}\sigma\iota\varsigma]$ and thought $[\nu\acute{v}\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma]$ and self-perception $[\sigma\nu\nu\alpha\acute{\iota}\sigma\theta\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma]$. [VI 7.41.17-27]²⁹

What is clear in this text and what I have tried to show in this chapter is that the thinking [voelv] or $\sigma uvala\theta \eta \sigma uc$ of nous is the key instance, because thought and object are here identical and thus one. Although nous remains a duality below the One and is thus in need of gathering all its parts together in self-knowledge, it is the one reality that always attains this: its thinking is always thinking its object, and its object of thought is itself.

²⁸ Cf. I 4.10.28-33.

²⁹ Translation Armstrong with some alterations.

Therefore, it always has $\sigma v \nu \alpha i \sigma \theta \eta \sigma v \zeta$ of its whole self. The One, as we see from this text, has no need of $\sigma v \nu \alpha i \sigma \theta \eta \sigma v \zeta$, for it has no parts to gather together. In contrast, we need to go through a process of $oi \kappa i \omega \sigma v \zeta$ through which we count up ourselves to determine who and what we are. Our $\sigma v \nu \alpha i \sigma \theta \eta \sigma v \zeta$ is cloudy for our knowledge of ourselves is cloudy. Because we always remain 'divided selves' or 'double objects' $[\tau o \delta v \kappa \lambda o v \tau o v \tau$

Durch dieses Rumpeln verrät sich die eigenste Eigenschaft dieses modernen Menschen: der merkwürdige Gegensatz eines Inneren, dem kein Äußeres, eines Äußeren, dem kein Inneres entspricht, ein Gegensatz, den die alten Völker nicht kennen. Nietzsche

CHAPTER 11

The Relation of the Empirical Self to the True Self

The last chapter examined one part of the explanation of $\kappa\nu\rho i\omega c$ voeiv in terms of $\sigma\nu\nu\alpha i\sigma t_{1}\sigma\iota c$. This was the claim that $\sigma\nu\nu\alpha i\sigma\theta\eta\sigma\iota c$ is thought that consists in the knowledge of the self and all its parts. It concluded with a problem. After showing that nous in its activity of $\kappa\nu\rho i\omega c$ $\nu\sigma\epsilon i\nu$ always knows itself and all its parts, this aspect of $\nu\sigma\epsilon i\nu$ was contrasted with that of psyche's, which has to discover itself through the process of $\sigma i\kappa\epsilon i\omega\sigma\iota c$. This contrast raised the question of how rous helps to hold psyche together, for while still in the process of self-discovery psyche remains a $\tau i \delta i\kappa \lambda \sigma i\nu \tau \tau i \tau i$, a double object or a divided self. It is the aim of this chapter to answer this question by examining the second condition of $\sigma\nu\nu\alpha i\sigma\theta\eta\sigma\iota c$, the claim that thought in the strict sense seeks nothing 'cutside'. This aspect of Plotinus' claim is connected with the celebrated debate that he had with Porphyry that the Platonic Forms must be *inside* of nous, not *outside*, and it has received a fair bit of treatment both historical and philosophical. Given the background provided by these studies, this chapter seeks to provide a more speculative synthesis of some of this material. The focus of this chapter will thus be on two points of tension within Plotinus' philosophy. On the one hand, there is what we might call the

¹ On the historical side see the studies of Pépin, 'Éléments pour une histoire de la relation entre l'intelligence et l'intelligible chez Platon et dans le néoplatonisme', Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Etranger, 146 (1956), 39-64; for more history and a summary of the debate see Armstrong, 'The Background of the Doctrine "That the Intelligibles are not Outside the Intellect"', Sources, 393-413; for a survey of the use of συναίσθησις in Plotinus as well as its connection to other issues see Schroeder, 'Synousia, Synaisthêsis and Synesis: Presence and Dependence in the Plotinian Philosophy of Consciousness', ANRW 36.1 (1987), 677-699; on the philosophical side see Wallis, 'Skepticism and Neoplatonism', ANRW 36.2 (1987), 911-54, and Emilsson, 'Plotinus On the Objects of Thought', Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie (forthcoming).

relation upward. The issue here is how the empirical self relates to the true self. The cardinal difficulty to explain is that of perception. On the other hand, there is what we might call the relation downward. The issue here is he ver the true self relates to the animal body $[\tau \delta \ \zeta \phi \sigma v]$. The cardinal difficulty to explain is the problem of error. The solution to both problems, I argue, is to be found in the Stoic notion of a rational impression $[\lambda \sigma \gamma u \kappa \dot{\gamma}]$ $\phi \alpha \nu \tau \alpha \sigma (\alpha)$. The cardinal difficulty surrounding this problem is the need to keep straight which perspective Plotinus is talking from. It is further compounded by the need to keep straight our own perspective on this issue. This attempt to understand Plotinus' view of error will lead us to the conclusion that for Platinus there are truths which are essentially perspectival.²

Earlier we looked at a text of Aristotle in which he identified the divine element of nous as what is proper $[\tau \hat{o} \ oi\kappa \hat{e} \hat{o} v]$ to each of us,³ and we have seen that Plotinus has given us an argument that shows that what is $\tau \hat{o} \ oi\kappa \hat{e} \hat{o} v$ is for each of us a $v \hat{o} \hat{v} \in \kappa \alpha \sigma \tau o \zeta$, for this is what is 'our own', what is 'proper' to us; this is what we in fact are.⁴ We now see that this conclusion leaves each $v \hat{o} \hat{v} \in \kappa \alpha \sigma \tau o \zeta$ with its own point of view and that such points of view cannot be eliminated.⁵ We now need to note, however, that there are two

² Cf. the discussions of this problem by Lewis and Perry above in chapter 5 and the view of Blackburn discussed below in nn. 8 and 14.

³ See chapter 6, above p. 95.

⁴ In this connection we should not be surprised to see that Plotinus refers to the person as an οἰκεῖον δλον; cf. II 2.2.5. The contrast Plotinus is drawing in this text is between 'the All' [τὸ πᾶν, line 3] and the person [ἄνθρωπος, line 4]. He is worried that if the All (or Universe) is a determinist system, there will be no room left for human agency. It is easy to see how his views of the person as a νοῦς ἔκαστος or an οἰκεῖον ὅλον offer a ready made answer to this difficulty, for the true self as an οἰκεῖον ὅλον stands outside of the Universe. Because of its presence in nous it remains outside the determinist system of the Universe. Its perspective from there gives it an independent pocket of freedom that preserves its notion of agency. As he says: 'We shall give autonomy and authority [τὸ αὐτεξούσιον] to the one who through the activities of nous is free from the affections [παθημάττων] οι the body' (VI 8.3.19-21). For more on Plotinus' discussion of this problem see the chapter on Plotinus in White, Agency and Integrality (Dordrecht: Reidel: 1985) and the commentary on VI 8 by Leroux, Traité sur la liberté et la volonté de l'Un (Paris: J. Vrin, 1990).

⁵ For more on what is meant by having one's 'own point of view' see the discussion of the example and discussion of Pe ry, n. 15 below.

perspectives from which to view this self. On the one hand, there is the person's own perspective of himself and the point that he has reached in his ascent to the One. On the other hand, there is still the perspective offered by Piotinus' theory about the ultimate nature and destiny of persons. From the stand point of theory we can say that each of the νόες is related to the νοῦς χωριστός, the divine nous, as parts to a whole.⁶ But for those of us who, unlike Plotinus, have not had the good fortune to have experienced this link directly, the claim of having a position in the divine world and of being united with god is pure theory. For people in this position a tension will emerge between the position they are now in (i.e., caught up in the body) and the position they are supposed to be in (i.e., drawn up into nous). A similar tension is found with Christianity. The Christian is divided between his experience of this 'valley of sorrows' and the promise of eternal happiness and rest when he is united with God. To bridge this gap the Christian is supposed to cultivate the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. Plotinus' own means of holding the two perspectives together, as will emerge more clearly in what follows, is his own set of 'theological' virtues (which for us seem to emphasize the intellectual side of things rather than the theological): apprehension $[\pi i \sigma \tau \iota \varsigma]$, contemplation $[\theta \epsilon \omega \rho i \alpha]$, and love [ἔρως]. Whether his theological virtues actually succeed in holding the two perspectives

⁶ Cf VI 2.20

Porphyry's list of theological virtues includes: $\pi i\sigma r \iota \varsigma$, $\dot{\alpha}\lambda \dot{\eta}\theta \epsilon \iota \alpha$, $\dot{\epsilon}\rho \omega \varsigma$, and $\dot{\epsilon}\lambda \pi i \varsigma$. See ad Marcellam, ed. O'Brien Wicker (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1987) lines 377-378 (in the edition of A. Nauck (Leipzig: Teubner, 1860) 24, p. 289). It is a moot point whether Plotinus or Porphyry were influenced in their lists by either St. Paul or the Chaldaean Oracles. For a useful survey of this debate see the discussion by Pierre Hadot in The Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy, ed. H. Lewy (1956; reprint. Paris: 1978), 709-711. The remarks of O'Brien Wicker (p. 23) are too brief to be of any use, although her notes seem to be exhaustive. My own view is that is that all the elements found on Porphyry's list can be gotten out of Plotinus except for $\dot{\epsilon}\lambda\pi i \varsigma$. Otherwise the lists only appear to differ, for as Porphyry makes clear $\dot{\alpha}\lambda\dot{\eta}\theta\epsilon\iota\alpha$ is that which is known in the strict sense of the term and for Plotinus this type of knowledge is to be had only through $\theta\epsilon\omega\rho i\alpha$. As will emerge in the subsequent discussion I think Plotinus' use of these terms to be sufficiently idiosyncratic that it does not make good sense to view him as indebted to either Christianity or the Chaldaean Oracles. Nor was Plotinus the sort of systematic thinker (like Porphyry) who would go around giving lists of elements to his students.

together is something that can only be worked out ambulando.8

The reason he has need of these virtues is that his own account of self-knowledge has presented us with a problem. Recall the argument of chapter 7. For that argument to work, we must know the reality of at least one thing known $\kappa \alpha \tau \hat{\alpha} \nu o \hat{v} \nu$, namely ourselves. If we really do know ourselves in the way the argument suggests, then why do we not know that we are in fact united with god? If we must see that we are a νοῦς ἔκαστος, how can we fail to see our connection with god? If, as Plotinus maintains, the argument is valid and sound, why is our empirical self not simply left behind? The argument of that chapter leaves us with a dilemma. Either Plotinus' talk about 'becoming nous' or knowing ourselves κατὰ νοῦν is something that only takes place in our disincarnate state. Or Plotinus thinks that we can attain self-knowledge in our present state. If the former is true, then the argument of chapter 7 can no longer be valid, and so is of no use to us in our present state. If the latter is true then, it would seem that no tension can arise between our present state and our ultimate condition, for we shall know ourselves to be a voûç ἔκαστος and we shall know and experience ourselves as united with god. How then can anything that happens to the body worry us? Neither alternative looks attractive, and perhaps this way of putting the matter highlights the tension in Plotinus' philosophy that others have labeled as a tension between his metaphysics and his psychology, but which

⁸ In connection with this problem it is interesting to note the remarks of Blackburn, Spreading the Word (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1984): 'Adjusting the relations between these essentially perspectival thoughts, and thoughts conceived of in an objective, context-independent way (timeless truths and falsities), is one of the hardest particular in metaphysics. It is all very well to say that a particular angle on things is required when the subject thinks that he..., or that now it is ..., or that here it is ...; but what is it to apprehend a person as oneself, or a time as the present, or a place as the one which one occupies? (p. 343).' Blackburn himself does not treat these questions. His own discussion concludes immediately after flagging this as the 'one of the hardest problems in metaphysics'. He seems to give up, for as he says, 'There is no theory yet, in the philosophy of these things, which gives us a satisfactory picture of the "cognitive dynamics" of these cases: in other words, which tells us how to classify sameness and difference of thought across times, or across the utterly different mode of presentations under which I can think of myself, and under which you can think of me' (p. 343). In the end we may not be satisfied with Plotinus' answers to these questions, but he at least offered a theory — however bizarre it may seem to us.

we can now see is more accurately described in Plotinus' own language as a tension between our experience *here* and our experience *there*.

A way out of this dilemma lies in making explicit a compromise already present in this investigation. What will cut the knot is an intermediate position that makes the attainment of self-knowledge difficult but not so difficult as to be impossible in this life. In light of our discussion of oineiωσις in chapter 9 it would be a mistake to read the argument presented in chapter 7 as saying that all we need to do is 'turn within' to find the true self. We can now see that this turning within does not signify a simple glance, but a way of life. It begins when we become interested in the question of who we are. This question prompts us to look for what is our own and to reflect upon our own experience of ourselves. Such reflection does not reveal us to be immediately transparent to ourselves. Rather as we have seen, self-knowledge comes at the end of a long process of oineiωσις. We need teaching, training and practice to be able to see ourselves. This vision is attained, if at all, by the sage. What the sage has achieved is the integration of his true with his empirical self: he has made himself into a unity. 9

What the sage partakes in, at least for a while, is the life $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}\ \tau\dot{o}\nu\ \nu\sigma\dot{\nu}\nu$, but he then again 'descends' from this elevated experience back into the immediate needs of the moment that put pressure upon his lower self. In viewing the life of the sage in this way Plotinus is doing two things. Firstly, he is making $\theta\epsilon\omega\rho\dot{\alpha}$ our 'dominant' rather than our 'inclusive' end. Then, secondly, because the sage cannot always be engaged in such activity, Plotinus shows that the sage has two perspectives from which to view himself.

⁹ Cf. III 8.6.37-40 and Rist, *Human Value* (Leider: E. J. Brill, 1982), p. 100.

¹⁰ Cf. IV 8.1.1-11.
11 In referring to the activity of θεωρία as our 'dominant' end I wish to show that Plotinus, too, had a view on how to construe Aristotle's remarks on happiness in EN X 7. I am not claiming that t' is Aristotle's view, but only that Plotinus understood his view in this way and was influenced by it. For a survey of the debate and terminology surrour, ing Aristotle's view see Kenney, Aristotle on the Perfect Life (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 6.

He knows both what it is like to be dragged away from $\theta \epsilon \omega \rho i \alpha$ by the body and what it is like to be engaged in it. Then, because of his experience of both points of view he is able to judge where the truth lies. But his activity of judging is not simply straightforward, for the truth that he has access to is essentially perspectival.

To help us better understand this claim about perspectives let us return to the case of Rudolf Lingens, the amnesiac lost in the Stanford library, who was introduced earlier in chapter 5.¹² Let us now imagine him to have read his complete, updated biography and to be thinking about himself. His thought can be expressed in two different ways.

Lingens thinks that that man is lost in the Stanford Library.

Lingens thinks that he himself is lost in the Stanford Library. 13

Taking Lingens himself as our referent, we can — at least prima facie — assume that both sentences express the same thought. The intuition behind this assumption is that there is some fact of the matter about Lingens that both sentences express, and since both sentences express the same fact, they both must express the same thought. Nevertheless, if both sentences express the same thought, why is it that the sentences seem to convey different information? Since the difference cannot be explained by the referent, then it seems we ought to conclude that it is explained by the mode of access that Lingens himself

13 These formulations and some of my discussion are indebted to Blackburn, pp. 340-345.

¹² See above p. 72.

¹⁴ Blackburn, p. 343, uses a different but related example to make this point. If we consider the thought that today is fine, entertained now, and the thought that yesterday was fine, entertained tomorrow, then 'notice that there is a strong intuitive sense in which there is just one fact — today's fineness — which indifferently makes any of these apparently different thoughts true' (my emphasis). In our own example it is a fact about Lingens that makes the thought true.

has to the thought. 15 In the first case he has the thought and the belief about himself that anyone can have access to. Anyone can think and believe that Lingens is lost in the Library. In Plotinian terms he grasps this thought about himself from the 'outside'. In this way it is just another proposition that can be had by discursive reason. In the second case he grasps the thought from the 'inside'. Though anyone can believe about Lingens that he is lost, it appears that only Lingens can have this thought and this belief in just this way. The earlier discussion suggested that Lingens grasps these types of thought nondiscursively and they were labeled knowledge or belief de se. As the argument from chapter 5 made clear, Plotinus does discuss and propose a solution to a case that was similar to the case of Lingens. What the argument of chapter 7 makes clear is that the activity of voeiv marks the difference between the two cases. Lingens will know that it is he himself who is lost in the Library when he grasps or has insight [κυρίως νοεῖν] that the biography is in fact his own biography. In coming to understand this truth about himself, it appears that he is coming to grasp a truth that is essentially perspectival. Plotinus, it seems, is fully prepared to embrace this conclusion. For the argument considered in chapter 7 shows that the activity of voeiv is linked to a particular nous. Moreover, this nous as a Form is something eternal. It is an ineliminable part of the νοῦς χωριστός that constitutes the divine world of eternity. Is it any wonder, then, that the perspective of this particular nous is an ineliminable part of his philosophy? In grasping the reality that his identity is that of a νοῦς ἔκαστος the sage is grasping the reality of something that differs from all other võeç only in its point of view. From the top down, as it were, this is a notoriously difficult claim to make sense of, for why have a plurality of νόες if they are

As John Perry, "The Problem of the Essential Indexical", Nous 13 (1979), 19, puts it: "Anyone at any time can have access to any proposition. But not in any way. Anyone can believe of John Perry that he is making a mess. And anyone can be in the belief state classified by the sentence "I am making a mess". But only I can have that belief by being in that state."

all engaged in the same activity, namely the contemplation of the Forms. But from the bottom up, as it were, we can see that this is the way Plotinus preserves personal identity, for the first-person perspective that manifests itself in the we on the empirical levels is preserved on the level of nous as the perspective of the $\nu o \hat{v} \in \mathcal{E} \kappa \alpha \sigma \tau o \varsigma$.

Having reached this conclusion we can now understand why Plotinus makes so much use of demonstratives. This is most clearly seen in his use of $\dot{\epsilon}\nu\tau\alpha\bar{\nu}\theta\alpha$ and $\dot{\epsilon}\kappa\epsilon\hat{\iota}$, 'here' and 'there'. Most commonly he uses 'here' to refer to the lower reaches of psyche and 'there' to refer to the intelligible world, the world of nous. This use is not surprising. 'Here' just is where we are at; we are right now tangled up in the material world. From our present vantage point 'there' is off somewhere else; the world of nous seems far removed from us. Nevertheless, there are instances of Plotinus reversing the referent for these demonstratives. In talking from a perspective in the intelligible world he will use 'there' to refer back to the lower reaches of psyche. Demonstratives only make sense when linked to a perspective. They are not lifted off an objective conception of things. The sage thus has access to two points of view. Sometimes he can look from here to there, i.e., upwards towards nous in the activity of contemplation. Sometimes he can look from there to here, i.e., when he contrasts his experience of his true nature with that of his life in an animal body.

The reason this form of dualism poses a problem for Plotinus is his belief that the higher part of the psyche is impassive, i.e., it cannot be moved, disrupted, or disturbed by

¹⁶ Cf. IV 3.6.12; I 7.3.9; IV 3.23.33-34.

¹⁷ This point is nicely illustrated by one of Perry's examples (n. 15 above, p. 5). He says: 'Imagine two lost campers who trust the same guidebook but disagree about where they are. If we were to try to characterize the beliefs of these campers without the use of indexicals, it would seem impossible to bring out this disagreement. If, for example, we characterize their beliefs by the set of "eternal sentences," drawn from the guidebook they would mark "true", there there is no reason to suppose that the sets would differ. They could mark all of the same sentences "true", and still disagree in their locating beliefs. It seems that there has to be some indexical element in the characterization of their beliefs to bring out this disagreement.'

the changes that take place within the animal. Given that perception $[\alpha i\sigma\theta\eta\sigma\iota\zeta]$ seems to be a type of motion or to involve changes in the animal organism, he is faced with a dilemma. On the one hand, if he allows psyche to perceive, then he admits that psyche can undergo change, and, so, it can no longer be considered impassive. On the other hand, if psyche remains impassive, he is left with the problem of explaining how it is able to perceive anything. Given this dilemma, I shall argue that Plotinus had available the Stoic notion of a 'rational impression' [λογική φαντασία] which enables him to bridge the gap between the animal $[\tau \delta \ \zeta \hat{\varphi} o \nu]$ and the inner man $[\delta \ \dot{\epsilon} \nu \tau \delta \varsigma \ \ddot{\alpha} \nu \theta \rho \omega \pi o \varsigma]$ in such a way that he is able to claim that the higher psyche perceives and yet remains impassible. Moreover, I shall also argue that this type of $\phi \alpha \nu \tau \alpha \sigma i \alpha$ has a role to play in his explanation of error. Error is a problem for Plotinus because if, as this investigation has argued, the higher psyche is identical with a particular nous [νοῦς ἔκαστος], then, as we have seen, this nous must know itself and all its parts completely and perfectly. Since the Forms are inside of nous, it cannot fail to know them. Thus, like god, nous seems to be both omniscient and infallible. This is nardly our own condition. There are many things we do not know, and we often make mistakes. We shall examine Plotinus' view that these errors result from the animal organism imposing the wrong $\phi \alpha \nu \tau \alpha \sigma i \alpha$ on the psyche that is divided.

Plotinus believes that the Forms are located in the psyche. ¹⁸ He also believes that perception $[\alpha i\sigma\theta\eta\sigma\iota\zeta]$ involves the 'transference' of a Form from the external world to the internal world. ¹⁹ The Form present in matter is recognized by the psyche which contains the original. Perception takes place when the psyche *in some way* harmonizes the inner and outer Form. How does this happen? A text in one of Plotinus' late treatises, I 1.9,

¹⁸ CF 11 R

¹⁹ See Emilsson, Plotinus on Sense-Perception (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) for details.

will brings us to the heart of the difficulty. In it we find him commenting on our two problems: error and perception.

ό δὲ νοῦς ἢ ἐφήψατο ἢ οὕ, ὥστε ἀναμάρτητος. ἢ οὕτω δὲ λεκτέον, ὡς ἡμεῖς ἢ ἐφηψάμεθα τοῦ ἐν τῷ νῷ νοητοῦ ἢ οὕ. ἢ τοῦ ἐν ἡμεῖς ἢ ἐφηψάμεθα τοῦ ἐν τῷ νῷ νοητοῦ ἢ οὕ. ἢ τοῦ ἐν ἡμεν· δυνατὸν γὰρ καὶ ἔχειν καὶ μὴ πρόχειρον ἔχειν. διείλομεν δὴ τὰ κοινὰ καὶ τὰ ἴδια τῷ τὰ μὲν σωματικὰ καὶ οὐκ ἄνευ σωματος εἶναι, ὅσα δὲ οὐ δεῖται σώματος εἰς ἐνέργειαν, ταῦτα ἴδια ψυχῆς εἶναι, καὶ τὴν διάνοιαν ἐπίκρισιν ποιουμένην τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς αἰσθήσεως τύπων εἴδη ἤδη θεωρεῖν καὶ θεωρεῖν οἷον συναισθήσει, τήν γε κυρίως τῆς ψυχῆς τῆς ἀληθοῦς διάνοιαν· νοήσεων γὰρ ἐνέργεια ἡ διάνοια ἡ ἀληθης καὶ τῶν ἔξω πολλάκις πρὸς τἄνδον ὁμοιότης καὶ κοινωνία. ἀτρεμήσει οὖν οὐδὲν ἡττον ἡ ψυχὴ πρὸς ἐαυτὴν καὶ ἐν ἐαυτῆ.

And nous has either attained [its objects of knowledge] or not, and so [remains] without error. Or, as we ought to say, either we have attained the idea in nous or not, i.e., the idea inside us. For one can have it and yet not have it at hand. We have distinguished (i) what is common and what is proper. The common are corporeal or [activities done] not without the body. Things proper to psyche are those that do not require a body for their activity. And [we have distinguished] (ii) the faculty of reason which in making judgments about sensory impressions already contemplates the Forms, i.e., it contemplates with a quasi-consciousness, and the faculty of reason in the strict sense which belongs to the true psyche. For the true faculty of reason is an activity of thoughts and forms a likeness or partnership with the sensory impressions that have frequently passed from the outside to Nevertheless, therefore, the psyche with the inside.²⁰ respect to itself and in itself will remain still. [I 1.9.12-24]

Armstrong translates this sentence (I 1.9.21-23) as follows: 'for true reasoning is an operation of acts of the intelligence, and there is often a resemblance and community between what is outside and what is within.' This places the wrong emphasis on $\pi o \lambda \lambda \dot{\alpha} \kappa c$. It makes it seem either that the relation is one that obtains most of the time but not always, or that the relation between the inner and outer obtains in more cases than it fails. But the distinction Plotinus wishes to draw is between perceptions that have occurred many times as opposed to those which are new. This use of $\pi o \lambda \lambda \dot{\alpha} \kappa c$ is used by Aristotle in An. Po. II 19, 100^{2} 3-9; elsewhere Plotinus refers to 'young' and 'old' sensory impressions; cf V 3.2.11-13.

It is best to begin with Plotinus' remarks on perception, for once these are sorted out it will be easier to understand his remarks on nous and error. The last sentence of the quotation shows clearly that Plotinus thin!:s that he has solved the dilemma of perception while still maintaining the impassibility of psyche. To see how he has done this we must look at the way he has drawn the contrast between true psyche and what is below.

At first glance the division between what is common and what is proper looks like a distinction between mind and body, for Plotinus uses the language of 'corporeal' to describe the common and this suggests that the adjective 'incorporeal' would cover the attributes proper to true psyche. This, however, is mistaken. What Plotinus is maintaining is a distinction between the higher and lower psyche. Following Plato, he views the psyche as an intermediary, though for him it serves as an intermediary between nous as he understands it and what is below. To fulfill this role he divided psyche into two parts: one part, the higher part, remains indivisible; the other part, which comprises the animal organism is 'scattered around bodies'. Thus, strictly speaking, Plotinus can have no problem of interaction. The relation between higher and lower psyche is one of continuity. It is not the disparate attempt to relate mind and body. Nonetheless, given his view on the impassibility of psyche he does have a problem to solve.

Plotinus' formulation of the problem owes much to Aristotle. One of the issues that haunts the *de Anima* and is never clearly resolved is whether there is any activity of psyche that is clearly separable from the body. Aristotle, too, is interested in determining which activities are common to the compound of psyche and body and which, if any, are proper to the psyche.

²¹ The text Plotinus is following is *Timaeus 35a*; HS² index fontium give 14 references to this text. 22 Cf. I.1.8.10-12 referring to *Timaeus 35a*.

A further difficulty arises as to whether all attributes of the psyche are shared $[\kappa o \iota \nu \dot{\alpha}]$ by that which contains the psyche or whether any of them are peculiar $[\iota \delta \iota o \nu]$ to the psyche itself: a question which it is indispensable, and yet by no means easy, to decide. It would appear that in most cases psyche neither acts nor is acted upon apart from the body: as, e.g., in anger, confidence, desire and sensation in general $[\delta \lambda \omega \zeta \ \alpha \iota \sigma \theta \dot{\alpha} \nu z \sigma \theta \alpha \iota]$. Thought $[\tau \dot{o} \nu o z \bar{\iota} \nu]$, if anything, would seem to be peculiar to the psyche. Yet, if thought is a sort of imagination $[\phi \alpha \nu \tau \alpha \sigma \iota \alpha \tau \iota \zeta]$, or not independent of imagination it will follow that even thought cannot be independent of the body.²³

Elsewhere in the *De Anima* Aristotle recognizes that imputing any of the activities mentioned here to the psyche implies that the psyche is moved.²⁴ To avoid this conclusion he says that one should not say that the psyche is angry, pities, learns or thinks, but that the man $[\dot{o} \ \ddot{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\sigma\varsigma]$ does this with his psyche $[\tau\hat{\eta}\ \psi\nu\chi\hat{\eta}]$.²⁵ Perception $[\alpha\tilde{\iota}\sigma\theta\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma]$ then becomes the key issue because it seems to present the most difficult case. When someone perceives, is it true to say that the psyche remains unaffected? To maintain his view Aristotle then distinguishes (not very clearly) between $\alpha\tilde{\iota}\sigma\theta\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$ and $\dot{\alpha}\nu\dot{\alpha}\mu\nu\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$.²⁶ The former is movement leading up to the psyche. The latter is movement coming from the psyche. The union of these two is supposed to leave the psyche unaffected. Though Aristotle does not say how these two are to be connected, he hints that somehow $\phi\alpha\nu\tau\alpha\sigma\iota\alpha$ will be involved.

Plotinus' abbreviated account of perception given in the text quoted earlier also shows that he also divides perception into two similar tasks which can be labeled 'sensa-

²³ De Anima 403ª3-10; text and translation Hicks, Aristotles, De Anima (1907; reprint. Zürich: Georg Olms, 1990).

²⁴ Cf. De Anima I 4, 408234-408b18.

²⁵ Cf. I 1.13 for Plotinus' interpretation of Aristotle's remark.

²⁶ De Anima [4, 408b16-18.

tion' and 'recollection'.²⁷ The former involves the body, the latter the psyche. It is this division of labour that stands behind his distinction of types of διάνοια. The cae type, διάνοια in the loose sense, is concerned with sensory impressions. The other, διάνοια in the strict $[\kappa\nu\rho i\omega\varsigma]$ sense, is concerned with thoughts $[\nu\rho\eta\sigma\epsilon\iota\varsigma]$. It is these two different faculties that he distinguishes in terms of συναίσθησις. The διάνοια that picks up sensory impressions is picking up the forms that have been transferred to it from the outside This aspect of $\delta i \alpha \nu o i \alpha$ is the work of the animal organism $[\tau \delta \zeta \hat{\varphi} o \nu]$. Its world. apprehension of the Forms through its sensory organs remains dim. Hence, Plotinus refers to this as 'contemplation with a quasi-consciousness' [θεωρεῖν οἶον συναισθήσει]. The implication is that the other aspect of διάνοια, the κυρίως διάνοια, contemplates Forms with κυρίως συναίσθησις. In saying that this type of contemplation belongs to the true psyche, he is saying that it belongs to that part of psyche which is separate from the body. Thus, the activity proper to this higher psyche will be συναίσθησις. What will it consist in? Like nous, this will consist in the psyche knowing itself and seeking nothing outside. It seeks nothing outside, because it has all the Forms within.²⁸ It is an activity that involves self-knowledge, because as psyche begins to 'recollect' and discover what is inside itself, it begins to know what is its own. As we have seen before the συναίσθησις

²⁷ It is worth noting as well (and as far as I know no one has pointed this out) that Plotinus' twofold division of perception [αἴσθησις] owes something to Plan's twofold division in the Republic (523a-524e) which distinguishes between objects sufficiently judged by αἴσθησις and objects which summon thought for investigation [παρακαλοῦντα τὴν νόησιν εἰς ἐπίσκεψιν (523b1)]. For Plotinus all perceptible objects would seem to fall in this last class, for all are made intelligible through the presentation of Forms. The other class, which seems to comprise sensation, or what Plotinus would call διάνοια in the loose sense, is used to explain error. Error occurs when sensation is allowed to produce the φαντασία and this is allowed to go unchecked by the higher διάνοια. I say more about these two senses of διάνοια below. Moreover, in addition to the influence of Plato another text of Aristotle's which influenced Plotinus is the de Sensu. In talking about what is common to both body and psyche Aristotle summarizes sensation in this way: ἡ δ΄ αἴσθησις ὅτι διὰ σώματος γίγνεται τῷ ψυχῷ, δῆλον καὶ διὰ τοῦ λόγου καὶ τοῦ λόγου χωρίς (436b-7). Plotinus seems to have this text in mind when he raises the following question: εἰ ἡ αἴσθησις διὰ σώματος κίνησις οὐσα εἰς ψυχὴν τελευτῷ, πῶς ἡ ψυχὴ οὐκ αἰσ ἡσεται;[I 1.6.10-12; cf. I 1.5.11] This text is not mentioned in the index fontium of HS².

28 Cf. I 1.8.

of psyche differs from that of nous in terms of completeness.²⁹ Thus, I maintain that the συναίσθησις that belongs to the upper psyche is identical with that which belongs to the true self or νοῦς ἕκαστος. In this activity they both know securely and systematically, but only nous knows completely. Psyche knows only as much of itself as it has worked out, or (what amounts to the same) as many of the Forms as it has recollected.

For nous the connections are always made. Psyche needs to work them out. Plotinus uses the image of the unrolling of a scroll to illustrate the recollection of the Forms. 30 When the $\kappa\nu\rho\hat{\iota}\omega\varsigma$ $\delta\iota\hat{\alpha}\nuo\iota\alpha$ 'unrolls' the Forms that are in nous, it is appropriating them and making them its own. But when looked upon this way, the activity of $\sigma\nu\alpha\hat{\iota}\sigma\theta\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$ that belongs to psyche appears to belong only to the upper psyche, i.e., it involves the relation of the upper psyche to nous. That is why he can say (at the end of the quotation) that even though this part of the psyche perceives, it is nevertheless undisturbed and quiet. But if this is so we are still left without an account of the relation between the upper and lower psyche.

The phrase that is meant to explain the relation is obscure.

νοήσεων γὰρ ἐνέργεια ἡ διάνοια ἡ ἀληθὴς καὶ τῶν ἔξω πολλάκις πρὸς τἄνδον ὁμοιότης καὶ κοινωνία.

For the true faculty of reason is an activity of thoughts and forms a likeness or partnership with the sensory impressions that have frequently passed from the outside to the inside.³¹

This translation borders on interpretation, for there is nothing corresponding to 'sensory impressions' in the Greek. Nevertheless, in asking how thoughts can form a 'likeness' or

²⁹ Above, chapters 9 and 10.

³⁰ I 1.8.7-8.

³¹ Cf. n. 20 above.

'partnership' with anything outside is there any better hypothesis than $\phi \alpha \nu \tau \alpha \sigma i \alpha$? Furthermore, Plotinus was sure to have been aware of the Stoic view that there are different sorts of $\phi \alpha \nu \tau \alpha \sigma i \alpha$ and that the ones labeled 'rational' are basically double-sided. The Stoic view of different types of $\phi \alpha \nu \tau \alpha \sigma i \alpha$ is presented by Diogenes Laertius as follows.

προηγείται γὰρ ἡ φαντασία, εἶθ' ἡ διάνοια ἐκλαλητικὴ ὑπάρχουσα, ὅ πάσχει ὑπὸ τῆς φαντασίας, τοῦτο ἐκφέρει λόγφ. ... ἔτι τῶν φαντασιῶν αἰ μέν εἰσι λογικαί, αὶ δὲ ἄλογοι λογικαὶ μὲν αὶ τῶν λογικῶν ζφων, ἄλογοι δὲ αὶ τῶν ἀλόγων. αὶ μὲν οὖν λογικαὶ νοήσεις εἰσίν, αὶ δ' ἄλογοι οὐ τετυχήκασιν ὀνόματος.

For the impression arises first, and then thought, which has the power of utterance, expresses in language what it experiences by the agency of the impression. ... Furthermore, some impressions are rational, and others non-rational. Those of rational animals are rational, while those of non-rational animals are non-rational. Rational impressions are thought processes; irrational ones are nameless. ILS 39A 2, 61

Based on the Stoic idea of rational impressions, it is a probable hypothesis that when Plotinus says that $\kappa\nu\rho\hat{\iota}\omega\zeta$ $\delta\iota\hat{\alpha}\nuo\iota\alpha$ is an activity of thought processes [$\nu\sigma\hat{\eta}\sigma\epsilon\omega\nu$], he understands these thought processes to have arisen from rational impressions.³² But how do these thought processes arise? If the $\phi\alpha\nu\tau\alpha\sigma\hat{\iota}\alpha$ exerts a causal role, then motion will be communicated to the higher psyche and Plotinus is clear that this does not happen.³³ Where then do the thoughts come from?

For a discussion of this problem of interaction in a larger context and from a slightly different point of view see Dillon, 'Plotinus, the First Cartesian?', Hermathena 149 (1990), 19-31.

³² Emilsson, *Plotinus on Scase-Perception*, overlooks this Stoic view of rational impressions and needlessly worries that Plotinus' account of αἴσθησις attributes too much rationality to animals in general; cf. pp. 137-138.

The answer must lie in the puzzling notion of Stoic $\lambda \epsilon \kappa \tau \dot{\alpha}$. Unlike Plotinus, the Stoics were materialists. Yet they left room in their system for $\lambda \epsilon \kappa \tau \dot{\alpha}$, an incorporeal subsistent entity that was connected with rational impressions. According to Sextus Empiricus the Stoic view is as follows.

λεκτὸν δὲ ὑπάρχειν φασὶ τὸ κατὰ λογικὴν φαντασίαν ὑφιστάμενον, λογικὴν δὲ εἶναι φαντασίαν καθ' ἥν τὸ φαντασθὲν ἔστι λόγω παραστῆσαι.

They [the Stoics] say that a 'sayable' is what subsists in accordance with a rational impression, and a rational impression is one in which the content of the impression can be exhibited in language. [LS 33C]

This notion of $\lambda \epsilon \kappa \tau \alpha$ introduces another (incorporeal) dimension to the discussion of $\phi \alpha \nu \tau \alpha \sigma i \alpha$. On the one hand, for the Stoics the $\phi \alpha \nu \tau \alpha \sigma i \alpha$ must remain a physical structure. On the other, given that rational impressions give rise to $\lambda \epsilon \kappa \tau \alpha$ and that these were supposed by the Stoics to be capable of influencing the mind,³⁵ we have the puzzling relation of something incorporeal influencing something corporeal.

How the corporeal $\phi \alpha \nu \tau \alpha \sigma i \alpha \iota$ relate to incorporeal $\lambda \epsilon \kappa \tau \dot{\alpha}$ remains a notorious crux in Stoicism. It is not my aim to speculate on how the Stoics solved this problem. Rather, by looking at one of the few surviving texts that offers an 'explanation' of this relation we shall be in a good position to see how late imperial Stoicism is closely related to Plotinus' Platonism. From this perspective we shall then be able to understand Plotinus' own approach to this problem.

 ³⁴ There is not room here for an adequate discussion of this puzzling notion. For more on λεκτά see
 LS 33.
 35 Cf. LS 27E.

In a well known text Sextus Empiricus presents the Stoic position as follows.

- (1) ὥσπερ γάρ, φασίν, ὁ παιδοτρίβης καὶ ὁπλομάχος ἔσθ' ὅτε μὲν λαβόμενος τῶν χειρῶν τοῦ παιδὸς ῥυθμίζει καὶ διδάσκει τινὰς κινεῖσθαι κινήσεις, ἔσθ' ὅτε δὲ ἄπωθεν ἐστὼς καί πως κινοῦμενος ἐν ῥυθμῷ παρέχει ἐαυτὸν ἐκείνῳ πρὸς μίμησιν, (2) οὕτω καὶ τῶν φανταστῶν ἔνια μὲν οἰονεὶ ψαύοντα καὶ θιγγάνοντα τοῦ ἡγεμονικοῦ ποιεῖται τὴν ἐν τούτῳ τύπωσιν, ὁποῖόν ἐστι τὸ λευκὸν καὶ μελαν καὶ κοινῶς τὸ σῶμα, ἔνια δὲ τοιαύτην ἔχει φύσιν, τοῦ ἡγεμονικοῦ ἐπ' αὐτῶς φαντασιουμένου καὶ οὐχ ὑπ' αὐτῶι, ὁποῖά ἐστι τὰ ἀσώματα λεκτά.
- (1) For they [the Stoics] say, just as the trainer or drill-sergeant sometimes takes hold of the boy's hands to drill him and to teach him to make certain motions, but sometimes stands at a distance and moves to a certain drill, to provide himself as a model for the boy (2) so too some impressors touch, as it were, and make contact with the commanding-faculty to make their printing in it, as do white and black, and body in general: whereas others have a nature like that of the incorporeal sayables (lekta), and the commanding-faculty is impressed in relation to them, not by them.

 [LS 27E]

According to Sextus the distinction the Stoics are trying to draw is between, on the one hand, a causal relation, where the mind or commanding-faculty is causally affected by $[\dot{v}\pi' \ \alpha\dot{v}\tau\hat{\omega}\nu]$ the $\phi\alpha\nu\tau\alpha\sigma\hat{i}\alpha$, and, on the other hand, some other relation, where the commanding-faculty is affected in relation to $[\dot{e}\pi' \ \alpha\dot{v}\tau\hat{o}\hat{i}\varsigma]$ a $\phi\alpha\nu\tau\alpha\sigma\hat{i}\alpha$ that has the nature of an incorporeal $\lambda\epsilon\kappa\tau\hat{o}\nu$. The wording of this passage is puzzling and suggests a distinction that cannot be Stoic, for the Stoics would not distinguish between corporeal and incorporeal $\phi\alpha\nu\tau\alpha\sigma\hat{i}\alpha\iota$. If Sextus means to say that the incorporeal $\phi\alpha\nu\tau\alpha\sigma\hat{i}\alpha\iota$ just are the $\lambda\epsilon\kappa\tau\hat{\alpha}$, then it appears that $\lambda\epsilon\kappa\tau\hat{\alpha}$ and $\phi\alpha\nu\tau\alpha\sigma\hat{i}\alpha\iota$ are detached: there can be no straightforward (physically) causal relation between them. It goes without saying, then, that the nature of this latter relation is obscure, but Sextus's example seems to give the

relation a strongly Platonic flavour. The drill sergeant 'causes' the boy to respond in certain ways by offering himself as a $\pi\alpha\rho\acute{\alpha}\delta\epsilon\iota\gamma\mu\alpha$.

Anthony Long has recently speculated or how the Stoics might explain such a relation.³⁶ His discussion relies heavily on Epictetus' teaching about the correct use of representations.³⁷ In discussing this doctrine he notes that according to Epictetus there is a part of the $\phi \alpha \nu \tau \alpha \sigma i \alpha$ that is up to us. Epictetus demonstrates this by using the example of someone one who does not like solitude or another how does not like the crowd.³⁸ He enjoins such people to re-describe or re-present the situation to themselves, when they find themselves in circumstances they do not like: those who do not like solitude should think in terms of peace and tranquility when they find themselves alone; those who do not like the crowd should think in terms of fun and festival. As Long says:

We should say that the way someone views his situation will depend on the *lekton* he selects as the paradigm appropriate to this belief-set and values. Lekta will 'result in' $[\grave{\epsilon}\pi]$ ' $\alpha\grave{v}ro\hat{\iota}\varsigma$] representations, not because they are the physical source of what we perceive or think but because they are the way we are disposed to interpret that source. Epictetus insists that 'the correct use of representations' is 'in our power'. It is reasonable to suggest that what is in our power is a *lekton* or description, and that this is 'our' individual contribution to our representations.³⁹

What is interesting about Long's discussion is that he has made the Stoics virtually dualists. On his picture the $\lambda \epsilon \kappa \tau \acute{\alpha}$ cannot be some sort of epiphenomena produced by

 $^{^{36}}$ I am indebted to the discussion of $\phi\alpha\nu\tau\alpha\sigma i\alpha$ by A. A. Long, 'Representation and the self in Stoicism', in *Psychology*, Companion to Ancient Thought 2, ed. Everson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 102-120.

³⁷ For more on this doctrine see Long and LS 62K = Diss. 1.1.7.12 with commentary.

³⁸ Discourses IV 4.26, quoted by Long, p. 119.

³⁹ Long, pp. 119-120.

φαντασίαι, as they perhaps are for earlier Stoics. What they seem to be in Epictetus' description and use of them are paradigms. The idea of a paradigm brings us back to the description of the interaction between φαντασίαι and λεκτά that was presented by Sextus, in which the crux of the issue was how the corporeal can relate to the incorporeal. However that relation is to be explained for the Stoics, what Long's picture shows us is that with the detachment of λεκτά from physical, causal force of the φαντασίαι the step from late imperial Stoicism to Platonism was a very small one.

Plotinus was doubtless fascinated by this late Stoic use of $\lambda \epsilon \kappa \tau \dot{\alpha}$ as paradigms. His problem is not to explain how something incorporeal can act upon something corporeal. That is the Stoic formulation of the problem. Rather, he is interested in explaining how impressions mediated through the animal are communicated to the higher psyche without compromising the higher psyche's impassibility. The Stoic notion of a rational impression gives him the means of doing so. In Plotinus' case, however, the rational impression will not give rise to incorporeal $\lambda \epsilon \kappa \tau \dot{\alpha}$, a description or propositional representation of a situation. Rather, what the rational impressions call forth are the Forms present in the psyche and these are what become 'unrolled' in the language of psyche. The Forms present in the sensation of the $\delta \iota \dot{\alpha} \nu \sigma \iota \alpha$ of the animal call forth thoughts in the higher part of the psyche whereby the psyche gains knowledge — $\sigma \nu \nu \alpha \iota \sigma \theta \eta \sigma \iota \alpha$ of the Forms present in itself.

Once we understand how Plotinus divides the task of $\alpha i \sigma \theta \eta \sigma i \varsigma$ between the higher and the lower psyche and how the dim apprehension of Forms in the sensation of the animal can result in thoughts of the Forms in the higher part of the psyche, we can now more easily understand his remarks in the following text.

⁴⁰ For the image of the psyche unrolling the Forms like a scroll cf. I 1.8.7-8.

τὴν δὲ τῆς ψυχῆς τοῦ αἰσθάνεσθαι δύναμιν οὐ τῶν αἰσθητῶν εἰναι δεῖ, τῶν δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς αἰσθήσεως ἐγγιγνομένων τῷ ζώῳ τύπων ἀντιληπιτικὴν εἶναι μᾶλλον' νοητὰ γὰρ ἤδη ταῦτα' ὡς τὴν αἴσθησιν τὴν ἔξω εἰδωλον εἶναι ταύτης, ἐκείνην δὲ ἀληθεστέραν τῷ οὐσία οὖσαν εἰδῶν μόνων ἀπαθῶς εἶναι θεωρίαν. ἀπὸ δὴ τούτων τῶν εἰδῶν, ἀφ' ὧν ψυχὴ ἤδη παραδέχεται μόνη τὴν τοῦ ζῷου ἡγεμονίαν, διάνοιαι δὴ καὶ δόξαι καὶ νοήσεις' ἔνθα δὴ ἡμεῖς μάλιστα.

And the power of perception which belongs to the [higher] psyche must not be of the sensible objects [themselves]. Rather, it is receptive of the [rational] impressions that arise in the animal from sensation, for these are already intelligible. Thus, external perception is an image of this [i.e., intelligible perception], which because it is truer to reality is a undisturbed contemplation of the Forms alone. And from these Forms from which the psyche alone receives its authority over the animal come reasonings, opinions and thoughts. And this is precisely where we are. [I 1.7.9-17]⁴¹

This account of the perception of the higher psyche brings us to our second problem noted at the beginning of this chapter. If the Forms are present in the higher part of the psyche and psyche remains undisturbed $[\dot{\alpha}\pi\alpha\theta\hat{\omega}\varsigma]$ in its contemplation, how is it then that we make mistakes? This question brings us back to the question of how is it exactly that we relate to nous.

It has been the argument of this investigation that our true self, our true identity consists in being a $vo\hat{v}\zeta$ $\ddot{\varepsilon}\kappa\alpha\sigma\tau o\zeta$. This is a hard claim to grasp, not simply because Plotinus has just said in the above text that we are bound up with 'reasonings, opinions, and thoughts', but because if this claim is true, then we ought to be omniscient and infallible.⁴² But we are not. Our own limitations suggest another way to look at nous.

42 Cf. VI 7.41.19-20 quoted above, p. 169 and V 3.4.21-26. The discussion of truth is more explicit in V 5.1.1-2; V 5.2.18-24, et passim.

⁴¹ The translation is adapted in part from Armstrong; cf. also I 1.8.18-19 where αἴοθησις [sensation] in the animal is called the πρῶτον εἴδωλον of psyche.

Nous is infallible. In arguing that the Forms are inside of nous Plotinus wants to insure that it cannot fall victim to certain skeptical arguments that would render it fallible.43 But is this enough? While this eliminates one problem, that of the cognitive gap between knower and known object, another problem remains. Think of nous as Plato's aviary.44 By claiming that nous 'seeks nothing outside' Plotinus is claiming that the aviary is full of pieces of knowledge. This on its own, however, will not make nous infallible, for nous may still fail to grasp the bird it wants. It is the identity between nous and its objects which shows that nous always has its objects of knowledge in hand. Not so with us. Returning to the text quoted in the opening of this chapter,⁴⁵ Plotinus says 'nous has either attained [its objects of knowledge] or not, and so [remains] without error', but he immediately realizes that this is a misleading way of talking, for nous properly understood will always be 'without error'. It cannot fail to attain its objects. He then turns to talk about us. When we reach into the aviary of nous either we grasp the idea (and so have knowledge) or we miss it (and remain in ignorance).46 In drawing a distinction between ourselves and nous, Plotinus is making plain the difference between our empirical and our true self. In our present circumstance we are neither omniscient nor 'without error'. Nevertheless, nous remains our aviary. We have all knowledge. Our problem is that we do not have it to hand.

Furthermore, the Parmenidean identity that makes nous one with its objects of knowledge insures that nous can never be looked upon as akratic, it can never be a divided

43 See Wallis, n. 1 above, pp. 916-917.

⁴⁴ Cf. Theaetetus 197c-200c which Plotinus seems to be alluding to in the text quoted above in his reference to grasping after bits of knowledge.

45 Above, p. 180.

⁴⁶ A third possibility, discussed below, is that we grasp the Form, but fail to recognize it as the one we want. Note, too, that earlier in chapter 6 we saw this same contrast between nous and ourselves. Plotinus claimed that 'we are not nous', but that nous is 'ours'; cf. V 3.3, especially lines 32-32, and above, p. 92.

Plotinus offers an explanation along the following lines.

η πράττεται μὲν τὰ κακὰ ἡττωμένων ἡμῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ χείρονος — πολλὰ γὰρ ἡμεῖς — ἢ ἐπιθυμίας ἢ θυμοῦ ἢ εἰδώλου κακοῦ· ἡ δὲ τῶν ψευδῶν λεγομένη διάνοια φαντασία οὖσα οὐκ ἀνέμεινε τὴν τοῦ διανοητικοῦ κρίσιν, ἀλλὶ ἐπράξαμεν τοῖς χείροσι πεισθέντες, ὥσπερ ἐπὶ τῆς αἰσθήσεως πρὶν τῷ διανοητικῷ ἐπικρῖναι ψευδη ὀρᾶν συμβαίνει τῆ κοινῆ αἰσθήσει.

Evil deeds are done when we are diminished by the worse—for we are a many—either desire, anger, or a wrong representation.⁴⁹ The so-called reasoning about falsities is a mind-picture that has not waited for the judgment of the reasoning faculty—We acted in obedience to our worse parts, just as happens in perception when the animal sees falsely before the judgment of reasoning faculty.⁵⁰ [I 1.9.6-12]

49 'Wrong representation' is my translation of εἰδώλου κακοῦ, which has puzzled some scholars and is discussed in detail below. For the connection of εἰδωλον with sensory impressions cf. VI 7.7.29-31; V 5.1.18: and I 4.10.18

⁴⁷ Cf. III 8.6.18-19, discussed above, p. 142.

⁴⁸ Cf. III 8.6.39-40.

^{5.1.18;} and I 4.10.18.

50 I follow Emilsson, Armstrong, and Harder against Bréhier and Blumenthal in taking τη κοινή αἰσθήσει as referring to the animal, the composite of psyche and body; cf. Emilsson, Plotinus on Sense-Perception, p. 166, n. 37. It should also be noted here that the idea of explaining error in terms of hasty judgement, the theme of προπέτεια οτ πρόπτωσις, is Stoic; cf. LS 41D, G.

Some of this text needs explication, but what is immediately clear is that Plotinus puts the blame for our mistakes on two facets of ourselves: we are a many and we do not 'wait for the judgment of the reason faculty'. Such an explanation certainly squares with our human condition. We all know from the *inside* what it is like to be a divided self, to have a certain good in mind but to fail to live up to it. Someone on a diet is led astray by a tasty morsel of food. An athlete in an important match loses his temper at a bad call and is expelled. Though we may not wish to go as far as Plotinus and posit two selves — a higher and a lower — we are well aware of the experience he is trying to describe. The akratic experience makes us well aware that we have an ideal self that we do not live up to. Plotinus here looks upon our true self as diminished by three factors. What are they?

It is plausible to interpret these three factors as relating to Plato's three-fold division of the psyche. This is obvious with the first two $-\dot{\epsilon}\pi\iota\theta\nu\mu\dot{\iota}\alpha$ and $\theta\nu\mu\dot{\iota}\varsigma$ — but where we expect the third, $\tau\dot{\iota}$ $\lambda o\gamma\iota\sigma\tau\iota\kappa\dot{\iota}\nu$, what we find is the puzzling $\epsilon\dot{\iota}\delta\dot{\omega}\lambda\sigma\nu$ $\kappa\alpha\kappa\sigma\dot{\iota}$? How is this to be understood? HBT despairs at this point and emends the text on the grounds that it makes no sense. But in the light of our discussion thus far, an explanation is immediately forthcoming. The rational faculty of the psyche, $\tau\dot{\iota}$ $\lambda o\gamma\iota\sigma\tau\iota\kappa\dot{\iota}\nu$, cannot show up on Plotinus' list of what causes error because on its own it remains infallible. Where error comes in is when the other parts of the animal subvert reason and in its place substitute the an $\epsilon\dot{\iota}\delta\omega\lambda\sigma\nu$ $\kappa\alpha\kappa\dot{\iota}\nu$, a 'wrong representation' of the way the world is and works. The key to understanding this phrase is found a few lines later in $\phi\alpha\nu\tau\alpha\sigma\dot{\iota}\alpha$ (lines 8-9) which Armstrong translates insightfully as 'mind-picture'. From our earlier discussion of

⁵¹ Cf. HBT ad loc. They say: 'εἰδώλου κακοῦ wie überliefert gibt keinen Sinn.' They emend to εἰδώλου καὶ νοῦ. Two lines of reasoning count heavily against their emendation. Firstly, Plotinus is here putting the emphasis on the we which shortly before he has identified with διάνοιαι, δόξαι, and νοήσεις. This means he is emphasizing the empirical self and when he does this he draws a distinction between the empirical self and nous; cf. I 1.9.12-14 (quoted above, p. 180) and V 3.3.21-32. Secondly, he wants to claim that our multiplicity causes us to err, but nous, as I have argued, is infallible, and is thus out of place on this list. Furthermore, as I go on to show, the text as transmitted makes perfectly good sense.

An example might serve to fix the point Plotinus is trying to make. Consider Socrates' claim that it is indeed much worse to do wrong than to suffer wrong.⁵² Socrates is well aware that not many people hold his view, but he is convinced that it is the correct one. Let us assume that Plotinus agrees with Socrates and that Socrates' view does indeed capture a correct view of justice. Given this view Plotinus might claim that someone like Callicles is mistaken due to an εἴδωλον κακόν. He has the wrong view of the way justice works because issues of honour and desire $-\theta \nu \mu \delta \varsigma$ and $\dot{\epsilon} \pi \iota \theta \nu \mu \dot{\iota} \alpha$ — have seduced his reasoning faculty. His lesser self has thus imposed an εἴδωλον κακόν on him. As a consequence he cannot recognize justice either when he meets with an example of it in real life or when Socrates tries to explain it to him in conversation. It is not easy to convince Callicles of what justice is because it is not simply a matter of getting him to change his mind. What is a stake is his whole way of life. Because he is used to living by the φαντασία that his animal διάνοια has imposed on him he has become dissociated from his inner self, his true psyche that has access to the Form of justice. Consequently, he is not in a position to contrast the inner truth about justice with what his outer self takes it to be. He cannot easily become aware of his mistake. Socrates, on the other hand, is someone whose reason is in authority over the animal organism. He has not only harmonized the different aspects of himself, but he is also able to recognize justice not only in himself, but

⁵² Cf. Gorgias 469ac, 489a, 508de, and 522c.

also in situations he confronts. He has done this by reaching into the aviary of nous and pulling out the Form of justice and many times looking at the way in which this Form relates to the circumstances of life.

This explanation of error helps to further explain two other things that Plotinus says in this chapter. Firstly, the following line gave us pause earlier.

> νοήσεων γὰρ ἐνέργεια ἡ διάνοια ἡ ἀληθης καὶ τῶν ἔξω πολλάκις πρὸς τἄνδον ομοιότης καὶ κοινωνία.

> For the true faculty of reason is an activity of thoughts and forms a likeness or partnership with the sensory impressions that have frequently passed from the outside to the inside.⁵³

We can now see that someone like Socrates has formed the right sort of partnership with his animal organism [τὸ ζῷον], his lower psyche. Moreover, he is someone whose true διάνοια has often been engaged in testing φαντασίαι. He is thus the one to consult when it comes to discerning whether a particular action is just or only seems to be just. Then, secondly, given this explanation of error we can now understand more fully the point of Plotinus' analogy with sense perception. What the animal sees is an oar that looks bent in the water, or the sun that is the size of a plate. But the person who has studied and tested these appearances knows that this is not the way things are. What the analogy shows is that the εἴδωλον κακόν is like a perceptual mistake, but only deeper.

This chapter has examined the relation between the true and the empirical self by focusing on two points of difficulty in Plotinus' philosophy. On the one hand, it looked at

⁵³ Cf. n. 20 above.

⁵⁴ The idea of testing parragias is from Epictetus; cf. the discussion of this doctrine in Long, n. 36 above.

how we relate to nous. The problematic issue in this relation was $\alpha i \sigma \theta \eta \sigma i \varsigma$, but it was argued that Plotinus made use of the Stoic idea of a rational impression [λογική $\phi \alpha \nu \tau \alpha \sigma i \alpha$] that enabled the upper psyche to perceive without being affected by the lower psyche, the animal. Moreover, it was argued that in the correct use or testing of φαντασία, the upper psyche uses the Form as a standard by which to judge what is presented to it through $\alpha i\sigma\theta\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$. Socrates uses the Form justice in order to judge whether a particular action is just or not. He has brought this Form to hand by his long inquiry after virtue, though it was present in his psyche all along. On the other hand, it looked at how we relate to the lower psyche. The problematic issue was how to explain error. It explained Plotinus' remark that error is owing to the fact that we are a many. This was done by showing how the lower psyche can come to live in accordance with an εἴδωλον κακόν that enters when the parts of the psyche are not in harmony. In this way the whole self is lessened by the disorganized state of the parts. In looking at these aspects of Plotinus' theory, this chapter has rocused more on the issues that create problems for the unity of the self. It will be for the next and final chapter to offer a positive account of how Plotinus thinks we overcome our multiplicity and attain an inner state of unity.

J'ai toujours eu l'impression de vivre en haute mer, menacé, au coeur d'un bonheur royal.
Albert Camus

CHAPTER 12

A Life for the Sage

The aim of this chapter is to provide a sketch of Plotinus' conception of the good life. The previous chapter considered Plotinus' account of error. It showed how error is owing to the disrupted unity of the psyche. Psyche falls into error when its parts are not properly organized into a unified whole. If this is the problem — that we are a many, that we experience ourselves as divided against ourselves — then the solution will consist in looking to heal this division. Since it is the sage who has the most success in attaining unity, this chapter will present a sketch of how he does so. Such a sketch will provide a fitting conclusion to our study of nous for not only will it pull together the threads of the previous discussion, but it will also provide us with a point of comparison that will enable us to see how Plotinus' rather abstruse discussion of nous fits squarely within the tradition of ancient philosophy. Such a sketch may also help us to reveal some of the philosophical assumptions that regulate our thinking.

The aim of our study up to this point has been mainly descriptive. It has been to understand and to offer an interpretation of how Plotinus thinks nous functions in bringing about self-knowledge in the strict sense. If divisions within philosophy are useful, we can say that in focusing on nous as what is $\tau \delta$ oikelov for us we have looked on it solely from the standpoint of metaphysics or natural philosophy. This focus is misleading, however, for it ignores the normative or ethical dimension that Plotinus finds in nous. Plotinus' doctrine (like the Stoic doctrine) of oikelwoic is an attempt to provide a 'naturalistic' basis for ethics. Unlike the Stoics, however, Plotinus maintains that nous is immaterial or spiritual. Thus, if the perfection of our rational nature consists in an activity that is the

exclusive property of nous, then the life according to our nature will be a spiritual life. It is not the aim of this final chapter to present an complete account of Plotinus' ethics. That would require another study as long, if not longer than this one. Nor does it aim to present a complete account of how Plotinus conceives of a life in accordance with nous. Rather, the purpose of this sketch is to complete our discussion of nous by showing that no account of nous in Plotinus can be complete that fails to take into account its normative function. If it also points ahead to a further, promising areas of study, then so much the better.

Our previous discussion has sought to follow Plotinus' dialectical strategy. After introducing his notion of nous, we began by looking at his claim that we are ignorant of our true nature. In Socratic fashion he argued that we cannot begin to learn about ourselves until we realize that we are in a state of ignorance. We then examined Plotinus' Cartesian style argument that demonstrated that our true self is nous. To understand properly this argument we had to examine his concepts of knowing something κατὰ νοῦν and of $\pi i \sigma \tau i \varsigma$. Furthermore, we saw that his argument is best understood when it is seen as a tool or an aid in the process of οἰκείωσις. This was seen to be the process whereby animals - and our focus was strictly on rational animals - discover, appropriate, and perfect the nature that they have. It was argued that Plotinus was influenced by the Stoic doctrine of the same name, but that he adapted this to fit his own view which maintains that there are three different natures $[\phi i\sigma \epsilon \iota \varsigma]$ or realities. We then saw that the perfection of our rational nature consisted in the activity of κυρίως νοεῖν which is the exclusive This activity was seen to consist in perfect self-knowledge, or activity of nous. συναίσθησις. We then examined Plotinus' explication of this term under two aspects: firstly as thought that consists in the self knowing itself and all its parts, and, secondly, as thought that in looking to avoid error seeks nothing 'outside'. It was these last two investigations which gave us our most detailed view of how Plotinus characterized nous. We shall now see how he uses these metaphysical ideas to ground his ethical programme. For the life in accordance with nous which consists in the activity of $\kappa\nu\rho\hat{\iota}\omega\varsigma$ $\nu\circ\hat{\epsilon}\hat{\iota}\nu$ he claims is the good life.

To see that Plotinus' account of nous has a normative, ethical dimension we need to consider Plotinus' description of nous as $\kappa\alpha\lambda\delta\nu$. Before asking what this term means or how it is best translated we need to note its Platonic background. We do not need to rely on Porphyry's explicit claim that Plotinus taught a manner of ascent according to Plato's Symposium, for we have Plotinus' own treatment of $\tau\delta$ $\kappa\alpha\lambda\delta\nu$ in I 6 and a detailed discussion of the ascent in V 9.2. It is fair, then, to say that Plotinus' use of the term is infused with its Platonic background.

How are we to understand this term? LSJ (III 2) define the term $\tau \delta \kappa \alpha \lambda \delta \nu$ as 'moral beauty' and they cite the *Symposium* in support. But this definition is not much help. To begin with, philosophers no longer seem sure about what the term 'moral' means.⁴ Fur-

¹ This aspect of nous has been much neglected. The one notable exception is the work of John Rist; see Plotinus: The Road to Reality (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967) chapter 6, 'Beauty, the Beautiful, and the Good', and 'Back to the Mysticism of Plotinus: Some More Specifics', Journal of the History of Philosophy 27 (1989), 183-197. His earlier treatment (which is partly corrected in the later piece) suffers from neglecting to discuss treatise V 8, which Porphyry entitled 'On the noetic Beauty'. Also, my remarks here show that I disagree with his general interpretation. Rist (1967) says, 'Plotinus recognized that the vision of the Symposium was not the culmination of the philosopher's quest. Hence he did not treat $\tau \delta$ kalog' (p. 65). I follow Hadot, 'L'Union de l'âme avec l'intellect divin dans l'expérience mystique plotinienne' in Proclus et son influence, Actes du Colloque de Neuchâtel (Zürich: Editions du Grand Midi, 1987), pp. 3-27, in thinking that our life according to nous is our $\tau \epsilon \lambda o \varsigma$ and that it is in the fulfillment of our end that we attain mystical union with the One.

² VP 23.

³ We should recall the description of the τέλος in Symposium 210e as τι θαυμαστὸν τὴν φύσιν καλὸν. Nor should we think Plotinus confined himself to this dialogue. He often quotes the Phaedrus (cf. HS² index fontium) and has in mind Plato's description of the form of the good as ἀμήχανον κάλλος (Republic 509a) and of the demiurge as ἀγαθός and making what is καλόν (Timaeus 29a, 29e, and 30a).

⁴ See the discussion of morality by Bernard Williams, Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy, chapter 1, 'Socrates' Question, and chapter 10, 'Morality, the Peculiar Institution'. More recently, in challenging the 'progressivist' view, the view that sees us as having progressed in morality far beyond the Greeks, he remarks: 'There is a word for what it is that they [the Greeks] supposedly did not have, the word "morality", and it is a sure sign that we are in the world of the progressivists when we are told that the Greeks, all or some of them, lacked a moral notion of responsibility, approval, or whatever it may be. This word is supposed, it seems, to deliver in itself the crucial assumptions that we enjoy and the Greeks lacked. It is perhaps an indication of some justified anxiety on the part of these writers, whether this word could deliver this (or indeed, by itself, deliver anything), that they find it necessary so often to fortify its saving power by putting it in italics.' Shame and Necessity, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 6.

thermore, for us the term 'beauty' has been drained of any moral or ethical significance. When we call an object 'beautiful' we are not making a claim about the moral status of the object. Nor when we say that something is 'morally good' do we make a claim about its beauty.⁵ Indeed, it is likely, given the Puritan and Kantian backgrounds that some of us have, that we have a reflex to divorce the notion of beauty with its component element of delight from the realm of morals. What is delightful cannot possibly be morally good for us. Not so the Greeks. While not giving a definition of the term, Gilbert Murray at least helps us to better understand it when he links it to an 'intense feeling of the value' or to 'a power appreciating, like a sensitive instrument, the various degrees of attraction and repulsion' offered to us by objects in this life.⁶ If we take Murray to be saying that what we notice first in an object that is $\kappa\alpha\lambda\delta\nu$ is the way it affects us, we shall not be far from either Plato or Plotinus. For as Plotinus himself remarks:

ταῦτα γὰρ δεῖ τὸ πάθη γενέσθαι περὶ τὸ ὅ ἂν ἢ καλόν, θάμβος καὶ ἔκπληξιν ἡδεῖαν καὶ πόθον καὶ ἔρωτα καὶ πτόησιν μεθ' ἡδονῆς.

These experiences must occur whenever there is contact with any sort of beautiful thing, wonder and a shock of delight and longing and passion and a happy excitement. [I 6.4.15-17 trans. Armstrong]

Plotinus is not defining the term $\kappa\alpha\lambda\delta\nu$, but he is calling our attention to how it affects us. His description makes clear that we can hardly remain oblivious to its impact upon us. He

⁵ I am indebted for some of my ideas here to Joseph Owens, 'The Καλόν in the Aristotelian Ethics', in Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy, vol. 9, ed. Dominic J. O'Meara (Washington: Catholic University Press of America, 1981), 261-277.

⁶ The Rise of Greek Epic, 4th edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934), pp. 24-25. He further remarks: 'The enjoyment and appreciation of life is too deeply writ on all Greek poetry to need any illustration, though one might refer to the curious power and importance in Greek life of two works, κάλλος and σοφία, Beauty and Wisdom (p. 25).'

is not worried that different people will use the term in different ways or apply it to different objects. What is more important for him is that we begin to reflect upon the experience that $\tau \delta \kappa \alpha \lambda \delta \nu$ produces in us. Armstrong's rendering of $\kappa \alpha \lambda \delta \nu$ as 'beautiful' does not really go deep enough, for we do not readily think of beauty as imposing itself on us and making demands. What the term 'beauty' fails to convey are the associations of $\kappa \alpha \lambda \delta \nu$ with erotic beauty. What is $\kappa \alpha \lambda \delta \nu$ catches our attention and awakens in us the desire $[\tilde{\epsilon}\rho\omega\varsigma]$ to possess it. It is these association of $\tau \delta \kappa \alpha \lambda \delta \nu$ that Plotinus wants to bring into the service of philosophy.

What is it that attracts the gaze of those who look at something, and turns and draws them to it and makes them enjoy the sight? If we find this perhaps we can use it as a stepping-stone and get sight of the rest. [I 6.1.17-20 trans. Armstrong]

It is clear from the context that Plotinus thinks that what 'catches our gaze' is $\kappa\alpha\lambda\delta\nu$. Like Plato, he is suggesting that if we pay attention to our own experience of the beautiful things around us, we can use it to 'get sight of the rest', by which he means the beauty of the intelligible world, or more specifically of nous. We begin to make our ascent by reflecting on our own experience of beauty.

If we begin in this way, then the notion of $\tau \delta \kappa \alpha \lambda \delta \nu$ is going to look highly subjective. As we approach it through our own experience, beauty is very much in the eye of the beholder. What one person is delighted by and drawn to, is not the same as what draws and delights another. Nevertheless, when Plotinus invites us to reflect upon our

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⁷ For more on this association see Robinson and Fluck, *Greek Love-Names* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1937) and Carson, *Eros The Bittersweet* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986).

experience, his request only makes sense because he affirms that there is an objective side to this notion as well. He does this by bringing out its link with goodness.

> άναβατέον οὖν πάλιν ἐπὶ τὸ ἀγαθόν, οὖ ὀρέγεται πᾶσα ψυχή. εἴ τις οὖν εἶδεν αὐτό, οἶδεν ολέγω, ὅπως καλόν.

> Then, let us return again to the good which every psyche desires. If then someone has seen it, he knows that I mean, how beautiful [καλόν] it is. [I 6.7.1-3]

These lines show that Plotinus embraces the Socratic thesis that everyone desires the good.⁸ And like Socrates Plotinus sees the claim as dialectical. Its aim is to motivate philosophical discussion and investigation. For to begin with the thesis on its own has little or no content. It is a tautology. All it tells us is that if someone desires something, then that thing (whatever it is) for that person must fall under the description of a 'good'. All that 'good' can mean here is that the person thinks that the attainment of that object or the performance of the action will be 'good for me', i.e., he thinks that he will derive some benefit from the 'good' object or action.9 Now at this point philosophical discussion can begin, for all (apart from the most extreme moral skeptics) acknowledge that there is a substantial difference between thinking that something is good (i.e., good for me) and its actually being so or not.

So it is for Plotinus. He wants to engage in debate with anyone who thinks that anything less than nous can draw or delight us, for he takes it that nous alone is truly

Often in Plato's discussions 'good' [τὸ ἀγαθόν] is interchanged with 'benefit' [ὡφελιμον]; cf.

Protagoras 333d9, Gorgias 475a and Meno 87e.

⁸ The thesis is most clearly in the Meno 77b-78b, but cf. also the discussions about what is good in the Gorgias 467c-468e and Euthydemus 281de and Gregory Vlastos, Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher, (Itnaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991. See especially chapter 8, 'Happiness and virtue in Socrates' moral theory', pp. 200-232.

καλόν. ¹⁰ Of course he is well aware that many people seem to make do with far less. But his explanation of this is going to lead us back to his claims about our ignorance. We are content with less and we live with less because we have forgotten who we are. We fail to realize that our identity is found in nous and that it alone can satisfy us. We are thus back at his theme of self-knowledge, but now we can begin to see why for him the question of identity is not merely a metaphysical problem, or the issue of self-knowledge purely epistemological as contemporary philosophy might classify these issues. For Plotinus, thinking about these issue actually makes us better people. In his own terms, having undertaken this investigation we are now more 'beautiful' than when we began.

όταν καὶ αὐτοὶ καλοί, τῷ αὐτῶν εἶναι, αἰσχροὶ δὲ ἐπ' ἄλλην μεταβαίνοντες φύσιν καὶ γινώσκοντες μὲν ἐαυτοὺς καλοί, αἰσχροὶ δὲ ἀγνοοῦντες. ἐκεῖ κὰκεῖθεν τὸ καλόν.

Whenever we ourselves are beautiful, it is by belonging to ourselves, but we are ugly when we cross over into another nature. Knowing ourselves we are beautiful, but ugly while we remains in a state of ignorance. Beauty is there and from there. [V 8.13.19-22]

Two elements in this text point to the beauty of nous. Firstly, as we have seen, 11 the demonstrative adverb 'there' [ixxi] is used often to refer to nous. Then, secondly, the idea of 'belonging to ourselves' contains an oblique reference to nous, for as we have seen 12 the phrase is used by Plotinus to mean being what we are, and it has been the point of this study to argue that we are nous. But how the notions of nous and beauty work

¹⁰ In V 9.2.9-10 he claims that only when we reach what is $\pi \alpha \rho$ αὐτοῦ καλόν will we cease from pain [ἀδῦνος]. I take this to mean that nothing less than nous can satisfy us, for as he makes clear later on (lines 22-23) nous is that which is $\pi \alpha \rho$ αὐτοῦ καλόν.

¹¹ Cf. above, pp. 110 and 178.

¹² Cf. above, pp. 6 and 10.

together is best seen in the following text. Once we understand this connection, we shall understand why Plotinus thinks that the study of philosophy makes us 'beautiful'.

ή δὲ δύναμις ή ἐκεῖ μόνον τὸ εἶναι ἔχει καὶ μόνον τὸ καλὸν εἶναι. ποῦ γὰρ ἂν εἴη τὸ καλὸν ἀποστερηθὲν τοῦ εἶναι; ποῦ δ΄ ἂν ή οὐσία τοῦ καλὸν εἶναι ἐστερημένη; ἐν τῷ γὰρ ἀπολειφθῆναι τοῦ καλοῦ ἐλλείπει καὶ τῆ οὐσία. διὸ καὶ τὸ εἶναι ποθεινόν ἐστιν, ὅτι ταὐτὸν τῷ καλῷ, καὶ τὸ καλὸν ἐράσμιον, ὅτι τὸ εἶναι.

Only the power which is there has being, and only it has beauty. For where would beauty be, if deprived of being? And where would reality be, if deprived of being beautiful? For in the lack of beauty it fails also in reality. That is why even being is desirable, because it is the same as beauty, and beauty is lovable, because [it is the same as] being. [V 8.9.36-41]

Our previous argument has shown us that nous is the first $o\dot{v}o\dot{i}\alpha$. Plotinus now equates $o\dot{v}o\dot{i}\alpha$ with $\tau\dot{o}$ $\kappa\alpha\lambda\dot{o}\nu$. What his equation means can perhaps now be seen by drawing together the threads of our argument. Plotinus claims that when we 'belong to ourselves' we are $\kappa\alpha\lambda\dot{o}\nu$. This phrase, 'belonging to ourselves' means being what we in fact are. If we are nous, then we are $o\dot{v}o\dot{i}\alpha$. We saw that Plotinus interprets $o\dot{v}o\dot{i}\alpha$ along Parmenidean and Aristotelian lines. Following the Parmenidean interpretation we can take the phrase 'belong to ourselves' to mean entering into a state where our $o\dot{v}o\dot{i}\alpha$ becomes the same as our $voo\dot{v}$. Following the Aristotelian interpretation we know that such a state of $o\dot{v}o\dot{i}\alpha$ has a characteristic $\dot{v}v\dot{v}\rho\gamma voa$ and that for nous its $\dot{v}v\dot{v}\rho\gamma voa$ is $v\dot{v}\rho\sigma voa$. The completion of its characteristic activity constitutes the life $[\dot{\eta} \ \zeta \omega\dot{\eta}]$ of nous. 13

¹³ For more on the life of nous see Hadot, 'Etre, Vie, Pensée chez Plotin et avant Plotin', in Les Sources de Plotin (Geneva: Foundation Hardt, 1960), pp. 107-141; and for the connection with Sophist 148e-149a see de Vogel, 'On the Neoplatonic character of Platonism and the Platonic character of Neoplatonism', Mind 62 (1953), pp. 43-64, and 'A propos de quelques aspects dits néoplatonisants du platonisme de Plato', Le Neoplatonisme (Paris: Colloque de Royaumont, 1971), pp. 7-16.

Two things follow from Plotinus' characterization of nous. Firstly, we have seen that this is a state of perfect self-knowledge. And, secondly, this is a state of purity, i.e., in such a state we have not 'crossed over into another nature'. Plotinus is clear that any additions to such a state must come from non-being, because nous, which is being, is everywhere one and the same. ¹⁴ Equating $o\dot{v}o\dot{t}\alpha$ and $\tau\dot{o}$ $\kappa\alpha\lambda\dot{o}\nu$ is Plotinus' way of grounding our good in the nature of what we are. Given that we are nous, our good will consist in living the life of nous. This will be the activity of $\kappa\nu\rho\dot{t}\omega\varsigma$ $\nu osi\nu$ which is $\theta\varepsilon\omega\rho\dot{t}\alpha$ in its highest form.

We can now understand what Plotinus means when he says that in 'knowing ourselves we are beautiful'. As we have seen this knowledge is to be had by 'becoming nous' and in thinking in accordance with it $[\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}\ \nu\sigma\hat{\nu}\nu]$. We do this by simplifying ourselves, by letting go of all our 'additions', i.e., what is not part of our original nature. We let go of all that is external and turn within. This process of purification brings us back to Plato's image of the sea god Glaucus with which we began. The god's nature — like our own — is not immediately apparent because it has been encrusted with the foreign materials it has picked up from the sea. When we know ourselves, we shall have removed all that is foreign to us and be restored to our original nature. $\theta\epsilon\omega\rho\dot{\alpha}$ is thus the activity whereby we perfect our nature. When we know ourselves fully we shall know ourselves to be nous and to be living the life of nous. When we attain to such a state we are $\kappa\alpha\lambda\dot{\delta}\nu$.

Earlier we noted that for Plotinus the desire for the good was the same as a desire for what is our own $[\tau \hat{o} \ o \hat{\iota} \kappa \hat{e} \hat{l} o v]$. We are now in a position to see that of the choice of lives offered by Aristotle, the life of pleasure $[\hat{o} \ \hat{\alpha} \pi o \lambda \alpha \nu \sigma \tau \iota \kappa \hat{o} \varsigma]$, the life of politics $[\hat{o} \ \hat{o} \tau o \lambda \alpha \nu \sigma \tau \iota \kappa \hat{o} \varsigma]$, the life of politics $[\hat{o} \ \hat{o} \tau o \lambda \alpha \nu \sigma \tau \iota \kappa \hat{o} \varsigma]$

¹⁴ That τὸ εἶναι is everywhere one and the same is the conclusion defended at length in treatises VI 4 and VI 5. It follows from this argument that any 'additions' [προσθήσεις] come from non-being; cf. VI 5.12.21-22.

¹⁵ Cf. introduction, p. 8 above, and Republic 611d.

¹⁶ Cf. chapter 1 part (ii) above.

πολιτικός], and the life of contemplation [\dot{o} θεωρητικός], Plotinus maintains that it is only the life of contemplation, the life κατὰ νοῦν, that will enable us to simplify and to unify ourselves.¹⁷

γίνεται οὖν ἡ ψυχὴ καθαρθεῖσα εἶδος καὶ λόγος καὶ πάντη ἀσώματος καὶ νοερὰ καὶ ὅλη τοῦ θείου, ὅθεν ἡ πηγὴ τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ τὰ συγγενῆ πάντα τοιαῦτα. ψυχὴ οὖν ἀναχθεῖσα πρὸς νοῦν ἐπὶ τὸ μᾶλλόν ἐστι καλόν. νοῦς δὲ καὶ τὸ παρὰ νοῦ τὸ κάλλος αὐτῆ οἰκεῖον καὶ οὐκ ἀλλότριον, ὅτι τότε ἐστὶν ὄντως μόνον ψυχή.

So the psyche when it is purified becomes form and formative power, altogether bodiless and intellectual and entirely belonging to the divine, whence beauty springs and all that is akin to it. Psyche, then when it is raised to the level of nous increases in beauty. Nous and the things of nous are its beauty, its own beauty and not another's, since only then [when it is perfectly conformed to nous] is it truly psyche. II 1.6.13-18118

This text brings together implicitly the relation of three ideas that we have been tracing throughout this study: psyche, the self, and nous. Plotinus maintains that the psyche is most truly psyche when it adapts itself to the beauty of nous. We have understood this adaptation as psyche living the life of nous in the activity of $\theta \epsilon \omega \rho i \alpha$. This activity takes place when the higher part of the psyche draws itself up into nous $-\nu \rho \hat{\nu} \hat{\nu} \epsilon \kappa \alpha \sigma \tau \phi c$ which is the true self. For in this activity psyche is most truly united to its objects of knowledge. Moreover, what prepares the psyche for this activity (as the lines prior to this text make clear) is the acquisition of the virtues which effect a 'purification' of the psyche, i.e., a simplification or unification of the psyche with itself. It is only after the

¹⁷ Cf. chapter 9 above.

¹⁸ Translation Armstrong with some modifications.

¹⁹ Cf. I 6.6.1-12.

psyche has gathered together all its parts and put them into an ordered arrangement through the practice of a virtuous life that contemplation can proceed. The virtuous life prepares us for our end, but is not a part of our end. Our end is the life according to our real nature.

Once we find out that our real nature is nous, it would be strange and unnatural if we did not think of it as good, desire it, and want to preserve it. Self-preservation seems built into the conception of a nature. As we saw with the Stoics, Plotinus thinks that nature has appropriated us to look after ourselves.²⁰ How strange it would be if we did not wish to live our own [$\tau \hat{o}$ $oix\hat{e}iov$] life.²¹ As Plotinus remarks:

It is strange to ask when something is good why it is good for itself, as if one with respect to himself had to stand outside of his nature and not to love it as good. [VI 7.27.19-22]²²

Conceiving of our chief end or good as consisting in living the life of a god is not such an easy thing to grasp. Even if we were convinced that Plotinus' metaphysics was basically correct, that we are in fact nous as he characterizes it, would we really love it as our own? Is not there something slightly horrifying (to us) in a view that posits such a radical gulf between what we are in our empirical selves and what we are in our real self?

21 Cf. Aristotle EN 1177b26-1178a9, quoted above p. 95.

²⁰ Cf. chapter 9 above.

²² It is this (Stoic) idea of loving and appropriating one's nature that explains the subtle difference between *Phaedrus* 252d and I 6.9.13-15. Plotinus applies Plato's image of the sculptor not to the beloved, but to himself. When we are enjoined to 'work on our own statues' we should understand this as another way of saying that we should love and appropriate our own nature. As far as I know, no one has seen this connection before; cf. HBT note ad loc. I 6.9.8 ff.; Theiler, 'Plotin Zwischen Plato und Stoa', in *Les Sources de Plotin*, p. 70; Armstrong, 'Platonic *Eros* and Christian *Agape'*, *The Downside Review* 79 (1961), p. 112; Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 183.

Have we really any hope of holding these two notions together? Can a philosophy that presents such a great divorce really offer us the good life?

The attempt to answer this last set of questions is liable to end up telling us more about ourselves than Plotinus. To evaluate properly his conception of the good life we would need to go on to examine how his conception compares with those offered by Plato, Aristotle, and philosophers of the Hellenistic era. We would also do well to compare Plotinus' claims to Augustine's subsequent conception of the *vita beata*. Such a study would enable us to assess Plotinus' own arguments and conceptions from the tradition within which he worked. But it would also reveal some of our own assumptions about ethics and its place within philosophy. Contrast Nagel's view, for example, when he says:

Most of us care a great deal about forms of individual success that we can see from an impersonal standpoint to be much less significant than we cannot help taking them to be from inside our lives. Our constitutional self-absorption together with our capacity to recognize its excessiveness make us irreducibly absurd even if we achieve a measure of subjective-objective integration by bringing the two standpoints closer together. The gap is too wide to be closed entirely, for anyone who is fully human. So the absurd is part of human life.²³

We might think of Plotinus and Nagel as standing at opposite poles. Both agree that the absurd is part of the human predicament, that it is difficult to achieve a full measure of subjective-objective integration. Both agree that we are confronted with a personal not a theoretical problem. But both disagree profoundly about what it is to be 'fully human'.

²³ Thomas Nagel, The View From Nowhere (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 223.

Nagel thinks that we remain fully human by embracing the absurdity: we must try to hang on to both aspects of ourselves. His remarks reveal, however, that he is speaking from the perspective of the here and now. Plotinus, however, thinks that we become fully human by moving beyond the here and now to live the life of nous on high [\(\mu\)ere\(\omega\)op\(\varepi\)e\(\varepi\)]. His remarks reveal him to be speaking from another vantage point. He seeks to remove the absurdity. Each maintains one vantage point at the expense of the other. Do we have a way of deciding between them?

The juxtaposition of Nagel and Plotinus is meant to force the question of how we are to understand ourselves. Whichever perspective we adopt we shall have to go on living, but shall we be living well? This question leads us back to the question that ancient philosophers understood to be the most important: How ought we to live our lives?²⁵ It has been the aim of this final chapter to argue that we shall fail to understand the role of nous in Plotinus if we fail to see the answer it provides to this question. We may dismiss Plotinus' answer, but what does our dismissal tell us about our own understanding of the human condition? As we look at ourselves, Plotinus might well wish to ask us, are we sure of what we see?

²⁴ Cf. Phaedrus 246c and IV 8.2.20-22.

²⁵ Cf. Republic 352d6.

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