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BEAUTY AS UNITY IN MULTIPLICITY IN PLOTINUS
KRÁSA JAKO UNITAS MULTIPLEX U PLÓTÍNA

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The thesis investigates Plotinus' concept of beauty. Chapter 1 focuses on two methodological issues: development in Plotinus' thought and topics of the concerned *Enneads*. Since Plotinus wrote two *Enneads* directly devoted to this topic which were numbered and named by Porphyry I.6 *On beauty* and V.8 *On intellectual beauty*, these two treatises are addressed first in the context of other relevant *Enneads* (chapters 2 and 3). The outcome of these chapters is that beauty is primarily to be found in Intellect and that it is closely linked with unity in multiplicity, so this topic is further investigated in more detail. Five mutually interconnected perspectives Plotinus assumes to describe the unity in multiplicity specific to the Intellect, are outlined. Two of them that are related to the nature of intellection and intelligible objects are discussed in chapters 2 and 3. The one related to Intellect's genesis is analysed throughout the thesis. Therefore, most of chapter 4 focuses on the remaining two perspectives which are connected with Intellect's hierarchical (*Ennead* VI.2) and structural (*Ennead* VI.6) unity in multiplicity. In chapter 5, *Ennead* VI.7 is analysed in order to deepen the concept of beauty and refine its relation to the Good, life and other predicates. The last chapter presents a systematic summary of the use of the predicate beauty on various ontological levels.

Beauty on the level of sensible things

The cause of beauty in the sensible world is intelligible beauty, which beautiful things participate in. Beautiful bodies receive forms as *logoi* that come from Intellect and which are images of forms beautiful in themselves. These formative principles unite and order the underlying matter and make bodies what they are. Formative principles are relatively *one* and hold the parts of the formed body together, i.e. they are at the same time the being of such bodies and their beauty. If a *logos* is to dominate in matter, it must distribute its *one* to the parts of the united body and thus also distribute being and beauty to them. According to Plotinus, it is possible to say both that bodies get their beauty from Intellect and from soul. These claims can be reconciled since Plotinus ultimately thinks that all bodies are created by a soul (particular soul or the world soul). Both types of soul create bodies with

the help of forms in analogy with the demiurge of Plato's *Timaeus* who thinks the intelligible archetypes and shapes the world according to them. Therefore, soul mediates *logoi* to bodies but they nevertheless come from Intellect. The upper part of the world soul contemplates Intellect but as *logoi* in soul and by projecting itself into its product, i.e. into nature, it creates. The lower part of soul, nature, silently contemplating these *logoi*, creates matter and then turns to it again in order to form it. In this way it gives a share of itself to matter and eternally gives rise to the sensible world. In the case of individual souls Plotinus discusses *technē* as the human form of participation in Intellect. A *technitēs* is able to form matter, i.e. to invest it with a *logos*, through his productive knowledge, his participation in *technē*, by which he makes himself similar to the productive self-contemplation of Intellect. Such a beautiful artefact is nonetheless beautiful only to the extent to which the matter of such mixture, body, submits to what is being created, i.e. to which it participates in the invested form.

Plotinus most frequently explains the participation of bodies in forms with the metaphor of emanation where he emphasizes two points. That which illuminates abides like an archetype in itself, and the illuminated which is an image of the archetype is held separate from it by illumination. However, the emanation simile should not be interpreted as implying that everything is everywhere since different powers of the whole of the forms become active in different bodies. Moreover, not all matters are equally disposed to receive all forms depending on what forms they already received. Bodies are mixtures of forms and matter, and this mixture is many-layered because matter is first shaped by the forms of the elements, which are then organized into higher wholes, i.e. into objects. Even matter in the strict sense of the furthest emanation from the Good, is primarily adapted for the primary kinds of bodily forms. This also explains what it means for a *logos* to dominate in matter since not every form is compatible with all the others in a body. This is why Plotinus repeatedly contrasts his notion of beauty with that of ugliness, understood as a deficiency in participation or a deficiency in domination of a form in matter. However, other possibilities might be suggested like that of missing life which is normally present in a body with other forms but not in a corpse anymore. A further

possibility would be the opposite excess of a form like in the case of polydactyly or other deformities.

Plotinus identifies the ugliness of matter with the *apeiron* and *aoriston* itself, or with that which runs through a mass as the movement of contraction of the great to the small, and expansion of the small to the great. Therefore, from a different perspective the presence of a formative principle in matter makes it only a sort of decorated corpse because it does not overcome the undefined “nature”. Rather a *logos* makes matter more manifest as what it is, the undefined itself, or precisely a dead corpse. In this sense what is beautiful in bodies is *logos* itself, i.e. the intelligible, and bodies as far as they are matter cannot be beautiful, or only to the extent to which they are a *decorated* corpse. From this perspective, the distribution of one, being and beauty takes place only on the level of the decorating *logoi*, i.e. on the level of their coherence and appropriate fullness: no *logos* must be missing or be excessively present. Plotinus however, from the perspective of his polemic with the Gnostics, simultaneously promotes the concept of a beautiful bodily world which one has to gently accept as an image imitating its paradigm as far as it can.

In order to see the sensible as a beautiful image, one has to understand it in relation to its archetype. This is not something everyone is capable of, although the desire for beauty and through it for the Good is the common denominator of all kinds of erotic desires. Plotinus says about musicians, lovers and philosophers that they are disposed to ascend to Intellect, with a certain guidance to grasp its beauty and to correctly understand the beauty of the sensible world. Beauty of the sensible plays a double role in such an ascent. Plotinus warns the readers of *Enneads* I.6 and V.8 about the fate of Narcissus who mistook his image for himself. Beauty may thus not only motivate the ascent to a higher beauty but it also in a sense binds us to itself because it is so impressive. The error the soul makes in confusing an image with its original may have fatal consequences. The concept of bodily beauty as a beautiful image of intelligible forms is thus comprised of a double warning: 1) We should always bear in mind that it is but an image of a higher beauty and in this sense use it to ascend to its paradigm. 2) We should praise it as a necessary manifestation of this higher beauty in a weaker form and not despise it. In *Ennead*

III.5 Plotinus even claims that beauty of bodies is the completion of their paradigm, and as far as lovers who understand their beauty as a mere image remain temperate and do not engage in unnatural sexual intercourse, there is nothing wrong with desiring it.

Beauty on the level of soul

In the case of the soul it is also possible to say that it becomes beautiful by partaking in Intellect which unifies it. Part of both individual souls and of the world soul, the soul in Intellect, in fact never leaves Intellect. This core of each soul is consequently always beautiful. The rest of the world soul also eternally remains in the state of best possible contemplation below Intellect, and is therefore as beautiful as a soul can be. In case of individual souls, their loss of the global perspective causes their individual perspective and opens the door to forgetting their true nature. Such souls must restore proper partaking in Intellect and through it they may become beautiful again. As opposed to the partaking of bodies however, individual souls become beautiful by purification, conversion and likening to god, which restore them to their original virtuous and beautiful state. This purification implies a change in the attitude of the soul towards bodily nature, a focus on the intelligible, and ultimately leads to receiving an imprint from Intellect which unifies such soul and dominates it. The archetype of this likening may be found in the very life of Intellect, i.e. in its itself-thinking that it itself is. The outcome of the purification is the merging of the soul with Intellect, i.e. the soul becomes aware of itself as a part of Intellect. At the same time, however, it becomes a *logos* which imprints itself in the parts of the soul that are not united with Intellect. These become virtuous and get a share in the beauty that the highest part has always been. Such an explanation of the outcome of purification is led by an effort to explain how Plotinus can at the same time suggest that there remains a certain distance between a virtuous soul and Intellect (because, properly speaking, there is virtue only in soul), and simultaneously claim that after purification the soul becomes truly beautiful, i.e. a form (in Intellect).

In order to specify the change a soul undergoes when becoming virtuous, one has to start with the case of heavenly bodies, which eternally perform circular movements in an attempt to imitate the stability and purity of Intellect, and direct themselves at it. Heavenly bodies and heavens as such are directed by the world soul and individual souls of heavenly bodies respectively which have never lost their original orderly form, as opposed to individual souls here below. In this sense they always remains equally beautiful and their beauty is manifest in heavens. Furthermore, if individual souls below the level of celestial bodies lose their original orderly state because of their involvement with particular bodies or due to the loss of the world soul's global perspective, it seems to follow that the *logos* which an individual virtuous soul receives, restores the circular movement of the soul. The circulatory movement of such an individual soul however still differs from that of the world soul, because being virtuous still means being an individual whose role differs from that of the gods. More likely, the circulatory movement of such an individual soul is the underlying mechanism of the transformation of the attitude towards bodies, which Plotinus describes in virtuous souls.

As opposed to the beauty of world soul and individual souls of heavenly bodies, beauty of an individual soul below the level of celestial bodies may vary according to its denigration or purification. However, Plotinus describes the process of purification also as immersing in one's innermost self, i.e. as a form of knowledge, and he even expresses it relatively on a scale of increasing beauty. Its culmination is unification with Intellect, where there is identity of the knower and the known or beauty itself. This also means that, as in the case of bodies, beauty of souls equals their being and unity. Soul as such possesses the *one* more than bodies do, and is consequently more beautiful. As opposed to Intellect where everything is everything else, a soul has many different powers which make it only a *hen kai polla*. Moreover, it is also many, being the contemplative activity towards itself, which cannot be simple.

However from a different perspective, individual souls below the level of celestial bodies may exceed the world soul and those of the celestial bodies because the former have the ability to ascend even above Intellect. Nevertheless, this path

always leads through Intellect, since part of it (drunk Intellect or Intellect in love) eternally ascends to the Good. The ascent of individual souls is enabled by the fact that *erōs* (the son of heavenly Aphrodite who corresponds to the soul in Intellect) is the desire for Intellect's beauty and through it for the Good. In individual souls, *erōs* causes powerful *pathē*, which either bind such souls to the bodily beauty they see, or which enables them to ascend to the paradigm of the beauty which really turned them on. These different reactions of individual souls are based on their correct or incorrect understanding of bodily beauty as a mere image of intelligible beauty, and also on their desire to procreate eternally. In ascending above, the soul follows the light which shines on what is below from what is above, i.e. in the end from the Good on Intellect. In this final ascent towards the Good, *erōs* never really vanishes because the Good, transcending both form and formlessness, cannot be reached. In this sense the love for the Good is unlimited.

Beauty on the level of Intellect

Divine Intellect is repeatedly identified as the primary seat of beauty. Plotinus gives two reasons for this. There is nothing that would not be beautiful in Intellect since every part of it is the whole and all the other parts, so that beauty is in this sense everywhere in beauty. Even the intelligible matter, as simple, always formed and living a defined and intelligible life, can be said to be beautiful, and does not hinder beauty to be everywhere in beauty. The second reason lies in the middle position of Intellect between what can be called deficiently beautiful, soul and bodies, and that which is more than beautiful, the Good. However, Plotinus specifies this middle position as being at the same time differentiated and tied in a more firm fashion as compared to soul. The middle position of Intellect lies therefore in its being a specific unity in multiplicity, of such sort that all its parts are all the other parts and the whole. In this sense such unique *unitas multiplex* of Intellect explains both the reasons for making it the primary seat of beauty, the fact that beauty *there* is everywhere in beauty, and its middle position between the Good and soul.

In *Ennead* VI.6, Plotinus identifies beauty with being a measure, i.e. something limited, or a number, and with something that is not limited externally but by its

very being itself. This is precisely the case of number which refers to the actuality of each form. Number therefore is a further suitable notion to capture both the required aspects of beauty, the fact that it is limited, and that this limit is not external. Anything externally limited is in fact for Plotinus but a decorated corpse. As number, Intellect is multiple, but limited by its own agency.

Plotinus describes the unity in multiplicity of Intellect (which is identified with beauty) from five mutually interconnected perspectives. The first one is related to the nature of intelligible objects which all contain each other and the whole of Intellect. The second one concerns the hierarchy within the intelligibles including the unifying and multiplying role of the highest kinds. The third one is connected with the nature of the act of intellection proper to Intellect. The fourth one relates to the inner “arithmetic” structure of Intellect. And the last one focuses on how Intellect acquired its unity and multiplicity in its genesis. All these perspectives aim to show that Intellect thinks everything at once, but differentiated.

If anything is to be called beautiful, it has to be unified, which was in the highest possible degree true for everything in Intellect and for the whole of it. Therefore, it would seem that the more a thing is multiple, the less beautiful it is, but it does not seem to be the case, at least in Intellect. On the contrary, its limited entirety makes it more beautiful as compared to a theoretical state of Intellect where it would be unwound. Only when it has become everything and wanders through everything in itself, it achieves its true majesty and beauty. After all, not only its unity, but also the multiplicity which came to be in Intellect is derived from the Good and Intellect is perhaps surprisingly *agathoeidēs* also as multiple.

However, beauty of Intellect is not only derived from the Good in the same sense as everything else in Intellect, but it is in fact its manifestation. The Good shines on Intellect and its light is what allows Intellect to be seen as truly beautiful, and it shines on all the intelligibles and on the whole of Intellect and allows everything in it to be seen in its own beauty. This illumination is however something extra on top of Intellect's own characteristics, even on top of its unity and multiplicity. *Ennead* VI.7.22 can be interpreted as distinguishing between two hypothetical types of beauty, depending on whether Intellect is illuminated or not. In the latter case, its

beauty is said to be inactive and it does not arouse the soul's interest. In the former case, Plotinus rather talks about warmth from the Good or its grace which wakes the soul, and it naturally rises both to Intellect and to the Good. Although Plotinus does not directly say in VI.7.22 that the state of Intellect in which it is illuminated may be identified with beauty, it is a wise choice between two extremes. If we simply supplement these passages with beauty, we might lose an important distinction between two types of beauty. On the other hand, if we refuse to call illuminated Intellect beautiful, we will face various difficulties. In fact, even *Ennead* VI.7 calls the Good beautiful and other *Enneads* also attribute to beauty the ability to arouse erotic desire and also to make the soul ascend to the Good. Also, Plotinus might have a good reason to avoid the notion of beauty in VI.7.22, because he wants to stress the added value of illumination and to explain how the Good is manifest in Intellect. The true and primary beauty in Intellect is consequently unity in multiplicity *illuminated* by the Good. Only when the Good shines on it, beauty becomes the object of desire, which is in fact always a desire for the Good through beauty. This deepened concept of beauty does not reject the identification of beauty with unity in multiplicity, but places it into a broader perspective. This better depicts the referential character of beauty to the Good and again stresses the enriching role of multiplicity in Intellect, since Intellect is genetically primarily *agathoeidēs* as life.

So far however, it is not clear whether we are to posit a form of beauty in Intellect, as Plato does, or whether beauty characterizes Intellect as such. There are several passages in the *Enneads* that seem to suggest that there is in fact a form of beauty. On the other hand, in all these cases Plotinus discusses other topics than beauty and the context of these claims might suggest their dialectic purpose, which is to make a point in an independent argument. Taken together with the fact that Plotinus clearly evades talking about the existence of the form of beauty in both *Ennead* I.6 and V.8 and connects beauty just with the presence of *a* form, it seems to follow that he does not in fact advocate it. Furthermore, the identification of beauty with being on the one hand, and considering it as a candidate for one of the highest kinds on the other, might be read as suggesting that beauty is somehow special, that even if it were a form, it would not be simply one form among others.

Similarly, the identification of beauty with (illuminated) unity in multiplicity of Intellect implies that it is not just a form, because unity in multiplicity characterizes each form and Intellect as a whole. Rather, it seems to be a predicate that primarily characterizes Intellect as such because Intellect is always one and many or one-many, even as unified number. Also, it can be said to be one and many from various perspectives. Therefore, its unity and multiplicity is rather distributed from Intellect as a whole to its "parts", i.e. to individual forms, and its beauty with it. Consequently, Intellect is primarily beautiful as a whole and the beauty of each individual form in it is derived from it. This however, to a certain extent changes the participation model discussed previously. It is not directly by participating in a form that a thing becomes beautiful, but by participating through this form in the unity and multiplicity of the whole Intellect, which is reflected in the participated form.

This indeed makes beauty a special characteristic of Intellect, although not the only one of such a sort. There are several other predicates that could be considered to be primarily applied to Intellect as a whole and only secondarily to its parts: life, the highest kinds, the one in Intellect, multiplicity, number, intellection, active actuality, eternity, knowledge, wisdom, and the virtues.

When one reflects on the notion of life in the *Enneads*, one encounters various uses of it. I propose to understand this being alive as referring to a fully constituted activity (i.e. to be the complete living being or encompassing number). As such however, this activity is always productive and begets what is ontologically lower. Therefore, life seems to refer primarily to the effluent activity of the Good which becomes Intellect. But this activity also continues within Intellect as the movement of its inner differentiation, making it the complete living being. And being complete, it is further the productive component of its contemplation, i.e. its outpouring resulting in the constitution of its lower image. In this sense, life is not simply a content of Intellect, a form in it, but rather depicts Intellect genetically, i.e. both in its birth and in its birth giving. Precisely on the boundary between these two poles, is Intellect as life the fully constituted complete living being, and life denotes here Intellect as a whole. Life in this sense is close to beauty which depicts the same fully constituted activity, but as referring to its source and in this sense in an ascent,

whereas life presents it in its outpouring, and thus in its descent. Therefore, beauty was rather focused on *unity* of a multiplicity, whereas life on its *multiplicity* and *multiplying* character. But the main focus in both cases is vertical in the sense of relating two ontological grades. Nevertheless, the close connection of life and beauty makes it possible for Plotinus to say that there is no beauty in a corpse, or even that where there is life, there is beauty, because beauty and life presuppose a constituted activity of contemplation, which is both produced and itself productive.

The highest kinds (Being, Movement, Rest, the Same and the Other) are said to be both genera and principles out of which Intellect is composed and the whole of it derived. These kinds mutually condition each other and are all-pervading in the sense that all other forms necessarily partake in them, and are as if composed out of them. The highest kinds however, are also numbers because they are one and many, and number is even said to be the very being of Being. In the beginning of the genesis of Intellect Being was unified number and in the end it became encompassing number. The highest kinds also seem to primarily refer to Intellect as a whole because 1) they are the *highest* kinds, i.e. kinds that unite the whole of Intellect, because 2) they are principles or constitutive components of Intellect, and because 3) they are numbers. Intellect as such is the primary Being, is Movement itself and Rest itself and is what is both the Same and Other. Individual forms on the other hand are such only derivatively, i.e. by partaking in the highest kinds or by being composed out of these as it were. In this way again, where there is being as the representative of all the highest kinds, there is always unity in multiplicity and therefore beauty at least in the narrower sense of non-illuminated *unitas multiplex*. Therefore, Plotinus identifies being and beauty. Then again, beauty does differ from being and all the other kinds. It would not be identical with being even if it were the sixth highest kind, but it is not even one of them as Plotinus makes quite clear. The highest kinds are mostly used by Plotinus to explain structural relations within Intellect, and in this sense are a part of a horizontally oriented view of Intellect, whereas life and beauty (in the broader sense of the word as illuminated *unitas multiplex*) belonged rather to a vertically oriented description. The vertical description where Intellect becomes illuminated, which arouses erotic desire and brings about epistrophic movement, does in this sense indeed presuppose the

horizontal one, which was in fact the point of Plotinus' argument against beauty being one of the highest kinds, if one understands it as that which shines upon the forms as it were. It seems in the end that from the horizontal perspective, Intellect can only be beautiful in the narrow sense of the word, i.e. as non-illuminated, because this illumination already implies verticality. But such beauty is either painful and shocking, or perhaps in the end boring. On the contrary, the fact that beauty is the manifestation of the Good and that the Good is the final cause of the ascent on *scala amoris*, is something that establishes a close connection between the Good and beauty. But their closeness in fact disrupts the identification of beauty and being at least above the level of Intellect, because whereas it is in a sense possible to say that the Good is beautiful, Plotinus rather avoids saying that the Good exists and always highlights that it is beyond being. Therefore, as opposed to the highest kinds, beauty is not a kind, not even a principle, and belongs to the group of predicates that do not focus on the horizontal description of Intellect, but rather to a vertical (ascending) one, which approximates it to the Good. Nevertheless, such predicate does presuppose what the horizontal perspective shows, i.e. that Intellect is a specific unity in multiplicity. Beauty in the broader sense of the word therefore comprises unity and multiplicity, and can be connected with the notion of number which it shares with the highest kinds. But one should in the end conclude that even numbers are beautiful in the broader sense of the word as derived from the Good through the monad, i.e. as illuminated.

The monad is probably not to be called beautiful because it is not number, is not many (except for allowing prior and posterior) and is not a genus for many reasons. Two reasons for this which were probably most important for Plotinus were the fact that the one in Intellect would as one of the highest kinds not be one primarily, and that the one cannot be differentiated in itself, but a genus needs to be because it creates species. Therefore, the one in Intellect is only a principle. However, if it does not allow multiplicity, it cannot be beautiful because we have identified beauty with (illuminated) unity in multiplicity. Moreover, it would probably not be correct to simply call Intellect as a whole the monad, which is together with the dyad rather the generative principle of Intellect. However, as far as the one is present in Intellect with being and as far as this being is one, it would

be possible to say that Intellect is such one: the one-that-is. However, as far as one distinguishes this one-that-is from the monad, it is in fact not different from being itself, so that the same differences from and similarities with beauty could be found. Moreover, such one-that-is is not simply one anymore, but becomes multiple, i.e. it becomes number.

Similarly, one could raise doubts whether multiplicity is to be counted among the characteristics of Intellect as a whole. It would be strange to call Intellect simply multiple without any qualification. It seems that multiplicity might be considered to be such a predicate in two possible senses. The first one would be that of the dyad, but similarly as the monad could not qualify for a holistic attribute of Intellect, the dyad as such should be rejected. Moreover, Plotinus does not consider it as a potential candidate for one of the highest kinds, so that we do not find a clear statement about the dyad being a principle in Intellect in the same sense as the monad is. Its role is moreover obscured by its enigmatic relation to the notion of life, but also to otherness. Nevertheless, it is different from beauty in any of these possible senses. If it is a principle, it cannot be beautiful because it is not one. If it is life or otherness, then its relation to beauty is the one already described. The second possible qualification of multiplicity might be the most unified multiplicity. But in that case, such multiplicity is again number.

Number is that which is born from the interaction of the monad and the dyad. As such, it is said to be the limit of being and its very actuality, and can be interpreted as denoting the specific unified multiplicity of Intellect from a structural perspective. In this sense the notion of number and of substantial number as well, describe Intellect horizontally in the sense of focusing on its inner structure, which relates them to beauty and differentiates them simultaneously from it in the same way as it was the case with the highest kinds. The four qualified uses of number (unified, unfolded, moving in itself and inclusive) all work as a shortcut for the different perspectives from which Plotinus describes the utmost unified multiplicity of Intellect. In this sense they could be understood as expanding this horizontal description but still within the Intellect itself. The designations of Intellect as unified and unfolded number focus on the generation of Intellect in the sense of its inner

structuring, number moving in itself on its intelligible activity, and encompassing number on its interconnected entirety. Nevertheless, none of these designations captures the ascending verticality implied by the notion of beauty as illuminated unity in multiplicity.

The last bundle of predicates, intellection, active actuality and eternity, knowledge and wisdom, and virtues, focus neither on the inner structure of Intellect like the highest kinds or the notion of number, nor on the relation of Intellect to what is above or below as beauty and life. Rather, they try to capture *how* Intellect is what it is. It is what it is by being *nūs*, i.e. intellectual self-relation, and as such it becomes structured and all the differentiated contents emerge in it as individual intellects. However, this inner constitution of Intellect is in fact no process but eternal active actuality of everything, so that Intellect as a whole is *energeia* and *aiōn* and each of its contents is secondarily such. In this sense, it does not need to get to know its contents but always already knows them, and each of its contents knows itself. Therefore, Intellect and individual intellects in it are *epistēmē*. However, it is not even a conglomerate of discrete self-related knowing intellects, but each part contains all the other parts and the whole, so that Intellect can be called *sofia*, because wisdom was identified with the immediate ordered givenness of everything in everything. The focus of all these predicates on the *how* of Intellect is perhaps most obvious in the case of *aretai*, which Plotinus describes in *Ennead* I.2.7. Therefore, neither of these holistic attributes of Intellect comprises the reference above as beauty does. They share with beauty at most the field of unified multiplicity where they describe how it exists. Their focus is in this sense simply different.

Beauty and the Good

With respect to the beauty of the Good, one may find contradicting expressions in the *Enneads*. Plotinus says in some cases that it is the Good that is the primary beautiful, in another that it is Intellect, and sometimes he remains ambiguous. The basic strategy in dealing with these contradictory statements should be to contextualize them and try to fit them in the general outline of Plotinus' philosophy,

where the Good is beyond predication but at the same time all the predicates can be applied to it because it is the source of all. One reason for these ambiguous expressions is a context dependent need to distinguish the Good from Intellect. If we do distinguish them, then the primary seat of beauty is identified in Intellect. If we do not, it is possible, loosely speaking, to interchange the beautiful and the Good. We know however that in the end it is necessary to distinguish them since Intellect is not absolutely simple.

The most striking theses about the beauty of the Good may be found in *Ennead* VI.7.32-33. Even there however, Plotinus distinguishes between *archē* (the Good) which is both *aneideon* and *amorphon*, between the beauty of Intellect, which is called *amorphon eidos*, and finally between all the forms which are simply *eidē* and *morphai*. The notion of *amorphon eidos* is very apt for describing beauty, because it captures its intermediary character, and points to the fact that beauty leads to the Good because it is its intelligible manifestation. In this sense, beauty of Intellect is indeed differentiated from the Good. On the other hand, Plotinus does claim in these passages that the Good possesses beauty of another kind, that it is beauty above beauty, beauty that makes beauty, its principle and term, and he calls it the all-beautiful or super-beautiful. He even escalates these expressions when he says that the Good creates beauty as shapeless as it itself is, but in shape in another way, so that the first nature of the beautiful is to be understood as formless. Nevertheless, these and other predications about the Good in VI.7 are first of all means to present the Good as a superlative all-powerful source and principle of everything which is beyond everything, i.e. different from it and independent of it.

This however, cannot be the complete explanation, because it is one thing to say that the Good both is and is not all predicates, and another to repeatedly connect it with one predicate, like that of beauty, and moreover to present beauty as the very manifestation of the Good. There are some characteristics of beauty that make it suitable to be used in the ascent to the Good, that in fact reflect it in some way, and that make the notion of beauty so close to that of the Good that they may easily be confused. One of them is the referential character of beauty to what is above and its ability to arouse *erōs*, i.e. the desire to become one with the beloved which in

the end is the Good. Moreover, since beauty is the manifestation of the Good, it is the Good in another. The Good becomes in this sense diminished, but beauty preserves the energy required for the ascent back, and by referring to its source it shows us the direction of this ascent. Along with these characteristics, beauty preserves the Good's oneness as far as it can, i.e. as unity in multiplicity. A further reason is an exegetical one: to combine Plato's claims from various dialogues.

Such closeness of beauty and the Good is probably also the reason why beauty belongs rather to the group of predicates about the Good which share asymmetrical appropriateness as compared to their opposites. An example of such predicate is the designation "Good" or "One", whose opposites cannot be predicated about the Good in any sense. Similarly, it would be extremely odd to call the Good ugly, or perhaps only in the sense of not being intelligible beauty, which would however still be very inappropriate because this could be better expressed by attributing to the Good all the names that Plotinus does in VI.7.32-33. Beauty as a suitable predicate for the ascent to the Good can indeed often be found there, where Plotinus tries to make use of all the different means of language to express the inexpressible nature of the Good, and it is also often connected with an attempt to express the infinite love we feel for it. However, in some of these passages Plotinus also clearly distinguishes them like in V.5.12 where he differentiates between the gentleness, kindness and grace of the Good, and the shocking and wondrous nature of the beautiful that brings pleasure mingled with pain. This distinction is similar to the difference between the beautiful and the sublime from the history of aesthetics, because there is beauty and something more, which is *mega*, and both have a different impact on soul: one is gentle and the other shocking. As opposed to the tradition however, the impacts of both are mismatched to their causes in Plotinus. More importantly, there are more reasons given in *Ennead* V.5 for distinguishing beauty and the Good. The beautiful needs the Good but the Good does not need beauty. Nothing can exist without the Good and everyone longs for it by a divine instinct as it were, so that it is present even to those who are asleep, and when one becomes aware of it, it is recognized as something always already present. On the contrary, beauty has to be seen first to arouse longing and again, as something unfamiliar it is shocking and causes pain. Beauty makes us remember what is above,

whereas the Good does not because as always already present it cannot be forgotten and consequently also remembered, and because there is nothing above it to refer to. Furthermore, the Good is good for others and not for itself whereas beauty is beautiful only for itself. And finally, none is satisfied with having the Good only in seeming, whereas this suffices for many in the case of beauty.

Therefore, the relation of beauty and the Good is ambiguous. On the one hand, the Good is not beautiful as absolutely transcendent, and as opposed to beauty not multiple (but one), not referring above (but being the ultimate referential point), and not illuminated (but being that which illuminates all). On the other hand, it is the source of beauty and is manifest in it and beauty preserves several of its characteristics as far as it can. Through beauty, the Good reaches to the very border of that which is and attracts all back to itself. Beauty is this manifest promise which allows us to glimpse what we are looking for, but immediately retreats to its purer form which is above and which is in the end the Good. From a systematic viewpoint, it would be more apt to reserve a special term for the beauty of the Good in this sense, like that of the *beauteous* (*kallonē*), which Plotinus seems to use only about the beauty of the Good, but he does not stick to this terminological nuance.

Beauty as such

Since beauty is the manifestation of the Good which preserves several of its characteristics, it is consequently a feature of beauty itself to be ambiguous in the sense of referring to its cause and binding its admirer to itself. Therefore, it is specifically predisposed to be confused with the Good and to bind its admirer to itself. Another characteristic of beauty is the fact that it pervades the whole ontological system of Plotinus. It can in a sense be predicated of the Good as its source, it characterizes Intellect, soul is originally beautiful and should strive for attaining beauty again, and as for bodies, Plotinus devotes the whole *Ennead* II.9 to stress their beauty. This implies that one of the specific features of beauty as compared to other predicates (e.g. freedom) is that it can address human beings even on the basic level of the senses. When we combine this basic accessibility with the referential character, we may better understand why Plotinus says that beauty

can be used as a stepping-stone to get a sight of the rest, and perhaps even why he devoted the very first *Ennead* to this topic. The only truly non-beautiful in the whole system is matter (*hylē*), which is repeatedly called ugly as something completely lacking form or unity, i.e. as pure diversity. On the other hand, as such it also lacks being and in this sense beauty indeed pervades Plotinus' whole *ontological* system. A further important feature however, connected to both the previous ones, is the identification of non-illuminated beauty and being and moreover with being one. This identity however, is not absolute since being, the one and beauty are also different in Intellect. If at the same time Intellect is identified as the primary seat of beauty and being, and is the greatest possible unity in multiplicity, such that it allows beauty to be everywhere in beauty, it follows that beauty is precisely unity in multiplicity. It was the unique *unitas multiplex* of Intellect that both makes beauty be itself by itself in Intellect, and that explains the middle position of Intellect between Uranus and Zeus since different levels of reality differ in the degree to which they have or are one. Moreover, if Plotinus puts unified multiplicity, beauty, and being on the same level, it means that the two components of *unitas multiplex* each have a different weight. Although multiplicity is a condition for meaningfully calling something beautiful, it is only a necessary condition. Not everything multiple is beautiful: multiplicity itself, matter, is ugly. Multiplicity is, however, a condition for us to be able to consider attributing the predicate of beauty. Unity, which has to control this multiplicity, is then a sufficient condition, that is to say, everything that is unified multiplicity is beautiful in the narrow sense of the word as non-illuminated. Multiplicity as such rather qualifies a thing as ugly, in other words, we have to understand it as a condition of the possibility of the predication of both beauty and ugliness. However, in order for everything to be truly beautiful, it has to be illuminated by what is above on top of being a unified multiplicity. Since however, in Plotinus each thing has its unity from what is above, understanding a thing as unified multiplicity in fact always implies seeing it as illuminated. Only a puzzled and erroneous soul may not understand this and think that what it admires has its unity somehow from itself. The conception of beauty as illuminated unity in multiplicity is in this sense no substantial shift from the non-illuminated one, but rather the same theory thought out thoroughly.

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