

CHAPTER ONE



THE ONE

AN OUTLINE 21
THE ONE: EXPOSITION 23
THE ONE: SYMBOLIZATION 46

An Outline

THE ONE . . . ABSOLUTELY WITHOUT ANY OTHER. THE VIEWING ITSELF,
TRANSCENDENT AND BEYOND . . . ALONE.

The proficient's glimpse re-organizes the structure and meaning of our understanding accordingly . . . and is the offering of Wisdom-Knowledge by the sage to humanity. This again is refracted into diverging streams of philosophy.

Our guide P[lotinus] stands pre-eminently poised and expertly skilled in the art of transmitting this precious primeval—the touch of the untouchable—to us.

He speaks of the One—the supreme reality—as without any aspects . . . totally homogeneous, indivisible and partless—inviolable—the utmost that words can express are used to impress upon our mind the existence of one thing our philosopher is surest of, and then something of its nature is provoked in our innermost being. To describe or reveal anything about this (universal) being, the arrangement or combination of these Transcendent unities that 'constitute' it, regardless of the internal schema—the unfathomable depths—and abyss of power which characterize it and suggest its completeness, the distinctionless mode of their relationship— All this faultlessly conceived and executed by sounds, transforms our exegesis of what this nature of the One might be into a hymn of adoration. At any rate, with an impeccable scrutiny of the range of human reason, he formulates within these series of quotes a paradigm for our mind of the causeless cause, the Nirguna Brahman of the Hindus (their undifferentenced knowledge), the idea of Metaphysical infinity or the Absolute of certain Westerners. There is no hierarchy within, that we can point to, but/and it will be the model for the two later hypostases as the 'aspects' of the One. That

▼ EDITORS: The differences between Anthony's handwritten outline (*opposite*) and this typeset version reflect revisions made or approved by him, with these exceptions: We have introduced material in square brackets [], made minor corrections, and added a few helpful commas. Ellipses here (. . .) indicate Anthony's deliberate pauses, *not* omitted material.

is, the I.P. [Intellectual-Principle] will be teleology for the One and Soul its life, but this differentiation will be to accommodate the mind's mode of ascension . . . in its silent journey to paradise garden. Once there, who can distinguish the what from the who except the godly . . . once here again, only verbally.

He includes within this 'pure awakening without an awakener' a prefiguration of the Intellectual-Principle—a transcendental version of the second hypostasis, which suggests that the latter cannot exhaust the potentiality there. There is divine number which correlates the Ideas with Beings and the order of their procession; all of this is implicit until our illustration by use of the cosmic mandala renders it more visible and concrete. A dazzling application and vindication of Plato's 8 Hypotheses—not by a reborn Plato or Hellenized copy . . . but pure knowledge manifesting through a veritable sage. Of the heavenly identity only less than human could doubt . . .

Briefly tabulated:

We have the One—Absolutely Transcendent—without qualities, the Vedantist would say . . .

but unity may be so complex even in its undifferentiated simplicity or as pure intelligence (*turiya*) as to suggest immense mysteries . . . tracings in the dark—of which Plotinus delineates—so then we have first this very specific statement that the One or unity is absolutely transcendent, utterly itself.

then power, intrinsic and non-different, characterizes it, is its matter = dyad—preontological henads discern [*sic*] as partless parts of its being regardless of their arrangement and/or combination (i.e., internal schema) no heterogeneity arises but all is self-identical—

included is the prefiguration of the Intellectual-Principle; divine number and the unities that includes [*sic*] One-many. Here too the many essential numbers are derived from divine number.

The One: Exposition

THE SPECIFIC SEQUENCE OF QUOTES recited in the course of this discussion is meant to accomplish a dual purpose. On the one hand, it should reveal something about the mysterious and infinite complexity of the One. ▽ Simultaneously, it should organize and order for our understanding the formless grades within the unshaped, the unfigured, which we will refer to as its indivisible aspects. The inquiry aims to reveal both the meta-ontological source of Plotinus' revelations—the Soul which is rooted in the One—and the reasoning that is based on and flows from the Soul as an authentic existent in the Intellectual-Principle. This is inspired Truth.

The first priority is to arrive at some understanding of the complete perfection of the One itself. Secondly and concomitantly will be the discovery of a paradigmatic thought-model that will indicate how any “one”—whether Idea, God, Number, or Being—is necessarily constituted. This developing insight may then become a key that will unlock some of the mysteries in Plotinus' teachings and disclose for the spiritual aspirant the inner significance of the theory of participation.

It is important to bear in mind continually that our thought must always keep the One intact while we develop our understanding of it as a paradigm for other referents or principles. Thus, though we necessarily employ an incorrect mode of thinking in the effort to glimpse realities that are beyond thought, we will never fragment the unity of the One. When we speak, for example, of the “partless aspects” of the indivisible Unity, we cannot help but recognize and try to account for the fact that we are employing and addressing an intellect that operates in dualities. We cannot do otherwise. But this very problem, strangely enough, precisely indicates that we are not to abolish the plurality of frameworks available to us and applicable to the universal relativity that is both suspended from the

▽ ANTHONY DAMIANI, *NOTES AND PAPERS*, p. 681: In our discussion of Unity, the One, we must create for ourselves a way of seeing, a thinking organized. . . . By recruiting from the Master-Architect Plotinus the sequence of reasoned revelations, it may be possible for us to reconstruct conceptually his vision, and that would be tantamount to a penetrating into the secret adytum of his thought through which his revelations from the One become available to us.

One and included within it. We must explain how universal relativity is included within the One in a special way. ▽ This interpretation will attempt to portray and to account for that possibility and will permit us to expound the two views of truth: the ultimate truth that is the substratum of the appearance, and the truths within the appearance—truths that are not reduced to or resolved into that Ultimate.

▽ PLOTINUS, v.3.15: All that is not One is conserved by virtue of the One, and from the One derives its characteristic nature: if it had not attained such unity as is consistent with being made up of multiplicity we could not affirm its existence: if we are able to affirm the nature of single things, this is in virtue of the unity, the identity even, which each of them possesses. But the all-transcendent, utterly void of multiplicity, has no mere unity of participation but is unity's self, independent of all else, as being that from which, by whatever means, all the rest take their degree of unity in their standing, near or far, towards it.

⊕ PLOTINUS, III.8.6: The Sage, then, has gone through a process of reasoning when he expounds his act to others; but in relation to himself he is Vision . . .

THE ONLY PERFECTION

The philosopher-sage enunciates the Logos (the Word), and the knowledge he communicates is primarily Wisdom. ⊕ He is required to be precise within the given structures, the cultural mores, and the needs of his era, yet his stance is also outside of and beyond these forms. Hence it is only natural that first in the order of importance should be statements about the existence of God, the One-Only—for, following upon this certitude that is the very core of all that he will say, he also transmits for our benefit a wisdom-knowledge or *prima philosophia* consonant with the foundations of our world and our being.

The One is absolute positivity: pure universal existence inbound with the totality of possibilities and infinity of power. Perhaps it might be more meaningful and provocative to say that it is intelligence—or, better still, pure intelligence. Sufficient and complete in itself, *the only Perfection* is without peer and is beyond any limitation, dependence, need, or multiplicity of any kind. This affirmation of its transcendence does not imply that the One is a blank homogeneity or a zero, but, rather, that it is unlimited fullness. To aim the understanding “beyond being” does not mean that it must at some point fall into an abyss of nothingness. ⊕ ▲ [6D, p. 304] On the contrary, whatever aseity characterizes any principle or idea is removed by this method, and the infinity of the transcendent is then conceptually available.

In several tractates of the *Enneads*, Plotinus describes the essential characteristics of the One-Only. Our ensuing statements will try to explicate them in detail, yet we must follow his example and take great care in discussing these characteristics; for it is misleading

and incorrect to speak of such “attributes” except in a most precise way, albeit a somewhat strange and mysterious way. We hope to be able to unfold the peculiar way in which the transcendent One is *inclusive* of all and is the cause of all and everything that is, explaining as we proceed *how* and why it is properly described as a nondual fullness rather than as a nothingness (or monism). ♦

In tractate v.4.2, Plotinus refers to that which is above the Intellectual-Principle as “self-distinguishing throughout . . . that self-intellection which, stemming from an inner consciousness, takes place . . . in a mode other than that of the Intellectual-Principle.” In v1.8.16 (Deck translation), he calls it an eternal “wakefulness” (or a consciousness) that cannot be separated from the totality of its indeterminate contents—contents that are not other than or different from the container.

On page 32 of *Nature, Contemplation, and the One*, John Deck asserts that “the One is called an eternal super-knowledge.” He is referring to his translation of tractate v1.8.16, 31–36:

If, now, its [the One’s] act does not become but is always, and is a kind of wakefulness which is not other than the one who is awake, being a wakefulness and an eternal super-knowledge, it will *be* in the way it is awake. The wakefulness is beyond being and Nous and intelligent life; the wakefulness is itself. [Anthony emphasized the phrase “is a kind of wakefulness.” —eds.]

Deck asks, is this “a wakefulness which is a *super*-knowledge, or a wakefulness which is *above* knowledge?” Bearing in mind that there are other interpretations, Mr. Deck, a sincere and discriminating devotee of the sage, tends to identify the One’s wakefulness with its super-knowledge. He says:

Plotinus goes on to say that the One is “not, so to speak, imperceptive, but everything of it is in it and with it [i.e., it is entirely self-contained]; it is entirely self-discerning; life is in it and all things are in it; and its self-knowledge is itself, a self-knowledge by a kind of synesthesia being in eternal stasis and in a knowledge otherwise than knowledge according to the Nous.” (John Deck, p. 33, quoting v.4.2, 16–20)

✦ EDITORS: For Plotinus, the One or the ultimate principle has a positive reality even more profound than that of Being; it is in no way an abstraction. Being is a lower order of infinity, a contraction or determination of the absolute infinity of the One.

▲ PLOTINUS, v.4.1: . . . it must be authentically a unity, not merely something elaborated into unity and so in reality no more than unity’s counterfeit; it will debar all telling and knowing except that it may be described as transcending Being . . .

✦ PLOTINUS, v.2.1: ‘The One is all things and no one of them’; the source of all things is not all things; and yet it is all things in a transcendental sense—all things, so to speak, having run back to it . . .