

# Plotinus



204-270

The neo-Platonic philosopher Plotinus, curiously enough, challenges Plato's theory that art imitates nature and is thus twice removed from the ideas, or reality. Plotinus gives art a higher position in his system. He does not disparage art because of its relation to the visible world, which is an emanation from the ultimately unknowable "One." The One expresses itself in a triad, the Good, the Intellect and its knowledge, and the All-Soul. Everything emanates from the One and strives to return to it. Beauty, as Plotinus laboriously defines it, is central to his system, since the more beautiful a thing is, the closer it is to the One. Sheer symmetry is not necessarily, as in earlier Greek aesthetics, a sign of beauty.

Although Plotinus never discusses literary art, his general remarks in *On the Intellectual Beauty*, the Eighth Tractate of the Fifth Ennead, can be brought to bear on literary matters. The beauty of the artist's creation lies not in any physical object that it copies or matter that it shapes, but in what the artist imposes on his materials. In the imposition, the artist turns his materials into something other than what they were, makes them into a new form; this attainment comes from within the artist, who is capable of adding where nature is lacking. Plotinus implies that there is a struggle between the artist and his materials, and that in the successful work of art the materials are partly subdued. When this occurs, the form in the artist's mind, which is derived from intellect and ultimately from the One, is given some visible expression. "Phidias wrought the *Zeus* upon no model among things of sense but by apprehending what form *Zeus* must take if he chose to become manifest to sight."

In contrast to Plato, Plotinus considers the artist a creator of vehicles of valuable, though imperfect, spiritual insight. Plotinus' artist does not work by rational principles; he does not, as Plato would have had him, lead us to the ideas through the use of reason. Rather, he tries to express in an artistic medium some insight into the One. The Platonism of expressivist critics of the Romantic movement was strongly influenced by Plotinean attitudes. The theories of Shelley and Keats, for example, recall Plotinus' remark that "the artist himself goes back, after all, to that wisdom in nature which is embodied in himself; and this is not a wisdom built up of theorems but one totality, not a wisdom consisting of manifold detail coordinated into a unity but rather a unity working out into detail." This emphasis on the mind and the activity of the author and the distinction between true artistic wisdom and discursive knowledge is a distant precursor of Romantic theories of the imagination developed by Coleridge and his contemporaries.

A standard translation is that by Stephen MacKenna, *The Enneads*, revised by B. S. Page (1956). For commentary see W. R. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus* (1918); P. V. Pistorius, *Plotinus and Neoplatonism* (1952); Eugénie de Keyser, *La signification*

*de l'art dans les Ennéades de Plotin* (1955); Emile Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus* (1958); John Bussanich, *The One and Its Relation to Intellect in Plotinus* (1967); and Gerard O'Daly, *Plotinus' Philosophy of the Self* (1973).

## On the Intellectual Beauty

It is a principle with us that one who has attained to the vision of the intellectual cosmos and grasped the beauty of the authentic intellect will be able also to come to understand the father and transcendent of that divine being. It concerns us, then, to try to see and say, for ourselves and as far as such matters may be told, how the beauty of the divine intellect and of the intellectual cosmos may be revealed to contemplation.

Let us go to the realm of magnitudes—suppose two blocks of stone lying side by side: one is unpatterned, quite untouched by art; the other has been minutely wrought by the craftsman's hands into some statue of god or man, a Grace or a Muse, or if a human being, not a portrait but a creation in which the sculptor's art has concentrated all loveliness.

Now it must be seen that the stone thus brought under the artist's hand to the beauty of form is beautiful not as stone—for so the crude block would be as pleasant—but in virtue of the form or idea introduced by the art. This form is not in the material; it is in the designer before ever it enters the stone; and the artificer holds it not by his equipment of eyes and hands but by his participation in his art. The beauty, therefore, exists in a far higher state in the art; for it does not come over integrally into the work; that original beauty is not transferred; what comes over is a derivative and a minor: and even that shows itself upon the statue not integrally and with entire realization of intention but only in so far as it has subdued the resistance of the material.

Art, then, creating in the image of its own nature and content, and working by the idea or reason-principle of the beautiful object it is to produce, must itself be beautiful in a far higher and purer degree since it is the seat and source of

that beauty, indwelling in the art, which must naturally be more complete than any comeliness of the external. In the degree in which the beauty is diffused by entering into matter, it is so much the weaker than that concentrated in unity; everything that reaches outwards is the less for it, strength less strong, heat less hot, every power less potent, and so beauty less beautiful.

Then again every prime cause must be, within itself, more powerful than its effect can be: the musical does not derive from an unmusical source but from music; and so the art exhibited in the material work derives from an art yet higher.<sup>1</sup>

Still the arts are not to be slighted on the ground that they create by imitation of natural objects; for, to begin with, these natural objects are themselves imitations; then, we must recognize that they give no bare reproduction of the thing seen but go back to the reason-principles from which nature itself derives, and, furthermore, that much of their work is all their own; they are holders of beauty and add where nature is lacking.<sup>2</sup> Thus Phidias wrought the *Zeus* upon no model among things of sense but by apprehending what form *Zeus* must take if he chose to become manifest to sight.<sup>3</sup>

2. But let us leave the arts and consider those works produced by nature and admitted to be naturally beautiful which the creations of art are charged with imitating, all reasoning life and unreasoning things alike, but especially the consummate among them, where the molder and maker has subdued the material and given the form he desired. Now what is the beauty here? It has nothing to do with the blood or the menstrual process: either there is also a color and form apart from all this or there is nothing unless sheer ugliness or (at best) a bare recipient, as it were the mere matter of beauty.

Whence shone forth the beauty of Helen, battle-sought; or of all those women like in loveliness to Aphrodite; or of Aphrodite herself; or of any human being that has been perfect in beauty; or of any of these gods manifest to sight, or unseen but carrying what would be beauty if we saw?

In all these is it but communicated to just as in works of art arts to their creations' while the made thing ter are beautiful, yet t with the creator—th unity—is not beauty.

If material extends then the creating prin not be beautiful: but b magnitude since, whet idea equally moves power. A further indic mains outside us we entry; but only as an ic are not of scope to tak simultaneously posses we take in not as mas sented form.

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3. Thus there is i archetype of the beauty

ON THE INTELLECTUAL BEAUTY. Plotinus wrote *The Enneads*, of which this selection is a part, in about 260. They were edited and published between 300 and 305 by Porphyry, Greek scholar, philosopher, and student of religions. The text is from Stephen MacKenna, tr., *The Enneads*, revised by B. S. Page (London: Faber & Faber, 1956), and is reprinted by permission of Faber & Faber Ltd.

<sup>1</sup>As "beauty" moves out from the One through the artist to the materials he shapes, it becomes weaker.

<sup>2</sup>Here Plotinus seems to answer Plato directly.

<sup>3</sup>The statue called the *Olympian Zeus*, known only from descriptions by ancient writers, was among the most famous works of Phidias, Greek sculptor of the fifth century B.C.

<sup>4</sup>Not temporally but spiritually  
<sup>5</sup>"Inner" refers to that which  
to that which is beyond man.

In all these is it not the idea, something of that realm but communicated to the produced from within the producer, just as in works of art, we held, it is communicated from the arts to their creations? Now we can surely not believe that, while the made thing and the idea thus impressed upon matter are beautiful, yet the idea not so alloyed but resting still with the creator—the idea primal, immaterial, firmly a unity—is not beauty.

If material extension were in itself the ground of beauty, then the creating principle, being without extension, could not be beautiful: but beauty cannot be made to depend upon magnitude since, whether in a large object or a small, the one idea equally moves and forms the mind by its inherent power. A further indication is that as long as the object remains outside us we know nothing of it; it affects us by entry; but only as an idea can it enter through the eyes which are not of scope to take an extended mass: we are, no doubt, simultaneously possessed of the magnitude which, however, we take in not as mass but by an elaboration upon the presented form.

Then again the principle producing the beauty must be, itself, ugly, neutral, or beautiful: ugly, it could not produce the opposite; neutral, why should its product be the one rather than the other? The nature, then, which creates things so lovely must be itself of a far earlier<sup>4</sup> beauty; we, undisciplined in discernment of the inward, knowing nothing of it, run after the outer, never understanding that it is the inner which stirs us,<sup>5</sup> we are in the case of one who sees his own reflection but not realizing whence it comes goes in pursuit of it.

But that the thing we are pursuing is something different and that the beauty is not in the concrete object is manifest from the beauty there is in matters of study, in conduct and custom; briefly, in soul or mind. And it is precisely here that the greater beauty lies, perceived whenever you look to the wisdom in a man and delight in it, not wasting attention on the face, which may be hideous, but passing all appearance by catching only at the inner comeliness, the truly personal; if you are still unmoved and cannot acknowledge beauty under such conditions, then looking to your own inner being you will find no beauty to delight you and it will be futile in that state to seek the greater vision, for you will be questing it through the ugly and impure.

This is why such matters are not spoken of to everyone; you, if you are conscious of beauty within, remember.

3. Thus there is in the nature-principle itself an ideal archetype of the beauty that is found in material forms and,

of that archetype again, the still more beautiful archetype in soul, source of that in nature. In the proficient soul this is brighter and of more advanced loveliness: adorning the soul and bringing to it a light from that greater light which is beauty primarily, its immediate presence sets the soul reflecting upon the quality of this prior, the archetype which has no such entries, and is present nowhere but remains in itself alone, and thus is not even to be called a reason-principle but is the creative source of the very first reason-principle which is the beauty to which soul serves as matter.<sup>6</sup>

This prior, then, is the intellectual-principle,<sup>7</sup> the veritable, abiding and not fluctuant since not taking intellectual quality from outside itself. By what image, thus, can we represent it? We have nowhere to go but to what is less. Only from itself can we take an image of it; that is, there can be no representation of it, except in the sense that we represent gold by some portion of gold—purified, either actually or mentally, if it be impure—insisting at the same time that this is not the total thing gold, but merely the particular gold of a particular parcel. In the same way we learn in this matter from the purified intellect in ourselves or, if you like, from the gods and the glory of the intellect in them.

For assuredly all the gods are august and beautiful in a beauty beyond our speech. And what makes them so? Intellect; and especially intellect operating within them (the divine sun and stars) to visibility. It is not through the loveliness of their corporeal forms: even those that have body are not gods by that beauty; it is in virtue of intellect that they, too, are gods, and as gods beautiful. They do not veer between wisdom and folly: in the immunity of intellect unmoving and pure, they are wise always, all-knowing, taking cognizance not of the human but of their own being and of all that lies within the contemplation of intellect. Those of them whose dwelling is in the heavens are ever in this meditation—what task prevents them?—and from afar they look, too, into that further heaven by a lifting of the head. The gods belonging to that higher heaven itself, they whose station is upon it and in it, see and know in virtue of their omnipresence to it. For all There<sup>8</sup> is heaven; earth is heaven, and sea heaven; and animal and plant and man; all is the heavenly content of that heaven: and the gods in it, despising neither men nor anything else that is there where all is of the heavenly order, traverse all that country and all space in peace.

<sup>6</sup>The movement from soul to nature-principle to matter is an outward movement away from the One toward greater diversity but less "reality." For Plotinus the artist's struggle with matter is an effort to restore it to greater unity with the One by investing it with form.

<sup>7</sup>One of the triad composing the One.

<sup>8</sup>See Yeats's poem *There*, where Yeats adopts something similar to Plotinus' conception.

<sup>4</sup>Not temporally but spiritually prior or closer to the One.

<sup>5</sup>"Inner" refers to that which is closer to the One and is "in" man; "outer," to that which is beyond man, in matter.

Plotinus  
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4. To "live at ease" is There; and to these divine beings verity is mother and nurse, existence and sustenance; all that is not of process but of authentic being they see, and themselves in all: for all is transparent, nothing dark, nothing resistant; every being is lucid to every other, in breadth and depth; light runs through light. And each of them contains all within itself, and at the same time sees all in every other, so that everywhere there is all, and all is all and each all, and infinite the glory. Each of them is great; the small is great; the sun, There, is all the stars; and every star, again, is all the stars and sun. While some one manner of being is dominant in each, all are mirrored in every other.

Movement There is pure (as self-caused), for the moving principle is not a separate thing to complicate it as it speeds.

So, too, repose is not troubled, for there is no admixture of the unstable; and the beauty is all beauty since it is not resident in what is not beautiful. Each There walks upon no alien soil; its place is its essential self; and, as each moves, so to speak, towards what is above, it is attended by the very ground from which it starts: there is no distinguishing between the being and the place; all is intellect, the principle and the ground on which it stands, alike. Thus we might think that our visible sky (the ground or place of the stars), lit as it is, produces the light which reaches us from it, though of course this is really produced by the stars (as it were, by the principles of light alone, not also by the ground as the analogy would require).

In our realm<sup>9</sup> all is part rising from part and nothing can be more than partial; but There each being is an eternal product of a whole and is at once a whole and an individual manifesting as part but, to the keen vision There, known for the whole it is.

The myth of Lynceus seeing into the very deeps of the earth tells us of those eyes in the divine. No weariness overtakes this vision which yet brings no such satiety as would call for its ending; for there never was a void to be filled so that, with the fullness and the attainment of purpose, the sense of sufficiency be induced: nor is there any such incongruity within the divine that one being There could be repulsive to another: and of course all There are unchangeable. This absence of satisfaction means only a satisfaction leading to no distaste for that which produces it; to see is to look the more, since for them to continue in the contemplation of an infinite self and of infinite objects is but to acquiesce in the bidding of their nature.

Life, pure, is never a burden; how then could there be weariness There where the living is most noble? That very

life is wisdom, not a wisdom built up by reasonings but complete from the beginning, suffering no lack which could set it inquiring, a wisdom primal, unborrowed, not something added to the being, but its very essence. No wisdom, thus, is greater; this is the authentic knowing, assessor to the divine intellect as projected into manifestation simultaneously with it; thus, in the symbolic saying, justice is assessor to Zeus.

(Perfect wisdom:) for all the principles of this order, dwelling There, are as it were visible images projected from themselves, so that all becomes an object of contemplation to contemplators immeasurably blessed. The greatness and power of the wisdom There we may know from this, that it embraces all the real beings, and has made all and all follow it, and yet that it is itself those beings, which sprang into being with it, so that all is one and the essence There is wisdom. If we have failed to understand, it is that we have thought of knowledge as a mass of theorems and an accumulation of propositions, though that is false even for our sciences of the sense-realm. But in case this should be questioned, we may leave our own sciences for the present, and deal with the knowing in the supreme at which Plato glances where he speaks of "that knowledge which is not a stranger in something strange to it"—though in what sense, he leaves us to examine and declare, if we boast ourselves worthy of the discussion. This is probably our best starting point.

5. All that comes to be, work of nature or of craft, some wisdom has made: everywhere a wisdom presides at a making.

No doubt the wisdom of the artist may be the guide of the work; it is sufficient explanation of the wisdom exhibited in the arts; but the artist himself goes back, after all, to that wisdom in nature which is embodied in himself; and this is not a wisdom built up of theorems but one totality, not a wisdom consisting of manifold detail coordinated into a unity but rather a unity working out into detail.

Now, if we could think of this as the primal wisdom, we need look no further, since, at that, we have discovered a principle, which is neither a derivative nor a "stranger in something strange to it." But if we are told that, while this reason-principle is in nature, yet nature itself is its source, we ask how nature came to possess it; and, if nature derived it from some other source, we ask what that other source may be; if, on the contrary, the principle is self-sprung, we need look no further: but if (as we assume) we are referred to the intellectual-principle we must make clear whether the intellectual-principle engendered the wisdom: if we learn that it did, we ask whence: if from itself, then inevitably it is itself wisdom.

The true wisdom, then (found to be identical with the intellectual-principle), is real being; and real being is wisdom; it is wisdom that gives value to real being; and being

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<sup>9</sup>The realm of matter and of sense perception.

<sup>10</sup>See Wheelwright's distinction of iconic signification in *The*

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is real in virtue of its origin in wisdom. It follows that all forms of existence not possessing wisdom are, indeed, beings in right of the wisdom which went to their forming, but, as not in themselves possessing it, are not real beings.

We cannot, therefore, think that the divine beings of that sphere, or the other supremely blessed There, need look to our apparatus of science: all of that realm (the very beings themselves), all is noble image, such images as we may conceive to lie within the soul of the wise—but There not as inscription but as authentic existence. The ancients had this in mind when they declared the ideas (forms) to be beings, essentials.

6. Similarly, as it seems to me, the wise of Egypt—whether in precise knowledge or by a prompting of nature—indicated the truth where, in their effort towards philosophical statement, they left aside the writing forms that take in the detail of words and sentences—those characters that represent sounds and convey the propositions of reasoning—and drew pictures instead, engraving in the temple-inscriptions a separate image for every separate item: thus they exhibited the absence of discursiveness in the intellectual realm.

For each manifestation of knowledge and wisdom is a distinct image, an object in itself, an immediate unity, not an aggregate of discursive reasoning and detailed willing. Later from this wisdom in unity there appears, in another form of being, an image, already less compact, which announces the original in terms of discourse and unravels the causes by which things are such that the wonder rises how a generated world can be so excellent.<sup>10</sup>

For, one who knows must declare his wonder that this wisdom, while not itself containing the causes by which being exists and takes such excellence, yet imparts them to the entities produced according to its canons. This excellence, whose necessity is scarcely or not at all manifest to search, exists, if we could but find it out, before all searching and reasoning.

What I say may be considered in one chief thing, and thence applied to all the particular entities:

7. Consider the universe: we are agreed that its existence and its nature come to it from beyond itself; are we, now, to imagine that its maker first thought it out in detail—the earth, and its necessary situation in the middle; water and, again, its position as lying upon the earth; all the other elements and objects up to the sky in due place and order; living beings with their appropriate forms as we know them, their inner organs and their outer limbs—and that having

thus appointed every item beforehand, he then set about the execution?

Such designing was not even possible; how could the plan for a universe come to one that had never looked outward? Nor could he work on material gathered from elsewhere as our craftsmen do, using hands and tools; feet and hands are of the later order.

One way, only, remains: all things must exist in something else; of that prior—since there is no obstacle, all being continuous within the realm of reality—there has suddenly appeared a sign, an image, whether given forth directly or through the ministry of soul or of some phase of soul matters nothing for the moment: thus the entire aggregate of existence springs from the divine world, in greater beauty There because There unmingled but mingled here.

From the beginning to end all is gripped by the forms of the intellectual realm: matter itself is held by the ideas of the elements and to these ideas are added other ideas and others again, so that it is hard to work down to crude matter beneath all that sheathing of idea. Indeed since matter itself is, in its degree, an idea—the lowest—all this universe is idea and there is nothing that is not idea as the archetype was. And all is made silently, since nothing had part in the making but being and idea—a further reason why creation went without toil. The exemplar was the idea of an all and so an all must come into being.

Thus nothing stood in the way of the idea, and even now it dominates, despite all the clash of things: the creation is not hindered on its way even now; it stands firm in virtue of being all. To me, moreover, it seems that if we ourselves were archetypes, ideas, veritable being, and the idea with which we construct here were our veritable essence, then our creative power, too, would toillessly effect its purpose: as man now stands, he does not produce in his work a true image of himself: become man, he has ceased to be the all; ceasing to be man—we read—"he soars aloft and administers the cosmos entire"; restored to the all he is maker of the all.

But—to our immediate purpose—it is possible to give a reason why the earth is set in the midst and why it is round and why the ecliptic runs precisely as it does, but, looking to the creating principle, we cannot say that because this was the way therefore things were so planned: we can say only that because the exemplar is what it is, therefore the things of this world are good; the causing principle, we might put it, reached the conclusion before all formal reasoning and not from any premises, not by sequence or plan but before either, since all of that order is later, all reason, demonstration, persuasion.

Since there is a source, all the created must spring from it and in accordance with it; and we are rightly told not to go

<sup>10</sup>See Wheelwright's distinction between modes of discourse and his concept of iconic signification in *The Logical and the Translogical*, pp. 1022–31.

seeking the causes impelling a source to produce, especially when this is the perfect sufficient source and identical with the term: a source which is source and term must be the all-unity, complete in itself.

8. This then is beauty primally: it is entire and omnipresent as an entirety; and therefore in none of its parts or members lacking in beauty; beautiful thus beyond denial. Certainly it cannot be anything (be, for example, beauty) without being wholly that thing; it can be nothing which it is to possess partially or in which it utterly fails (and therefore it must entirely be beauty entire).

If this principle were not beautiful, what other could be? Its prior does not deign to be beautiful; that which is the first to manifest itself—form and object of vision to the intellect—cannot but be lovely to see. It is to indicate this that Plato, drawing on something well within our observation, represents the Creator as approving the work he has achieved: the intention is to make us feel the lovable beauty of the archetype and of the divine idea; for to admire a representation is to admire the original upon which it was made.

It is not surprising if we fail to recognize what is passing within us: lovers, and those in general that admire beauty here, do not stay to reflect that it is to be traced, as of course it must be, to the beauty There. That the admiration of the Demiurge<sup>11</sup> is to be referred to the ideal exemplar is deliberately made evident by the rest of the passage: "He admired; and determined to bring the work into still closer likeness with the exemplar": he makes us feel the magnificent beauty of the exemplar by telling us that the beauty sprung from this world is, itself, a copy of that.

And indeed if the divine did not exist, the transcendently beautiful, in a beauty beyond all thought, what could be lovelier than the things we see? Certainly no reproach can rightly be brought against this world save only that it is not that.

9. Let us, then, make a mental picture of our universe: each member shall remain what it is, distinctly apart; yet all is to form, as far as possible, a complete unity so that whatever comes into view, say the outer orb of the heavens, shall bring immediately with it the vision, on the one plane, of the sun and of all the stars with earth and sea and all living things as if exhibited upon a transparent globe.

Bring this vision actually before your sight, so that there shall be in your mind the gleaming representation of a sphere, a picture holding all the things of the universe moving or in repose or (as in reality) some at rest, some in motion. Keep this sphere before you, and from it imagine another, a sphere stripped of magnitude and of spatial

differences; cast out your inborn sense of matter, taking care not merely to attenuate it: call on God, maker of the sphere whose image you now hold, and pray him to enter. And may he come bringing his own universe with all the gods that dwell in it—he who is the one God and all the gods, where each is all, blending into a unity, distinct in powers but all one god in virtue of that one divine power of many facets.

More truly, this is the one God who is all the gods; for, in the coming to be of all those, this, the one, has suffered no diminishing. He and all have one existence, while each again is distinct. It is distinction by state without interval: there is no outward form to set one here and another there and to prevent any from being an entire identity; yet there is no sharing of parts from one to another. Nor is each of those divine wholes a power in fragment, a power totaling to the sum of the measurable segments: the divine is one all-power, reaching out to infinity, powerful to infinity: and so great is God that his very members are infinites. What place can be named to which he does not reach?

Great, too, is this firmament of ours and all the powers constellated within it, but it would be greater still, unspeakably, but that there is inbound in it something of the petty power of body; no doubt the powers of fire and other bodily substances might themselves be thought very great, but in fact, it is through their failure in the true power that we see them burning, destroying, wearing things away, and slaving towards the production of life; they destroy because they are themselves in process of destruction, and they produce because they belong to the realm of the produced.

The power in that other world has merely being and beauty of being. Beauty without being could not be, nor being voided of beauty: abandoned of beauty, being loses something of its essence. Being is desirable because it is identical with beauty; and beauty is loved because it is being. How then can we debate which is the cause of the other, where the nature is one? The very figment of being needs some imposed image of beauty to make it passable,<sup>12</sup> and even to ensure its existence; it exists to the degree in which it has taken some share in the beauty of idea; and the more deeply it has drawn on this, the less imperfect it is, precisely because the nature which is essentially the beautiful has entered into it the more intimately.

10. This is why Zeus, although the oldest of the gods and their sovereign, advances first (in the Phaedrus myth) towards that vision, followed by gods and demigods and such souls as are of strength to see. That being appears before them from some unseen place and rising loftily over them pours its light upon all things, so that all gleams in its

radiance; it upholds some dazed and turn away, unable falling the more heavenly.

Of those looking unable to see, all take soon always: intently gazing, justice, another is filled original of that quality a men, copied by them in which, covering all the eternal realm is seen, last a known already many spl.

The gods see, each souls; they see all There i of that universe and their to end and having their e which belongs inherently are There entire, those separation.

This vision Zeus tal share his love and approach the final object of all things; for all There she have found their way thoughtful; thus it will often where the soil has taken pear so, borrowing color The color flowering on beauty; or rather all The through, for the beauty is

To those that do no sion is alone taken into a wine, filled with the need beauty, cannot remain me tator outside gazing on a hold the vision within the they have no idea that it something beyond them caught by a direction of t

All that one sees as a bring the vision within a separation but as we know a god—possessed by Apollo no longer look outside for but finding the strength to

11. Similarly anyor sessed by that god, has but his consciousness and at himself lifted to a better image, lovely though it is tity, no such separation re

<sup>11</sup>Creator.

<sup>12</sup>Acceptable.

of matter, taking care  
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h the oldest of the gods  
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 gods and demigods and  
 That being appears be-  
 and rising loftily over  
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radiance; it upholds some beings, and they see; the lower are  
 dazzled and turn away, unfit to gaze upon that sun, the trou-  
 ble falling the more heavily on those most remote.

Of those looking upon that being and its content, and  
 able to see, all take something but not all the same vision  
 always: intently gazing, one sees the fount and principle of  
 justice, another is filled with the sight of moral wisdom, the  
 original of that quality as found, sometimes at least, among  
 men, copied by them in their degree from the divine virtue  
 which, covering all the expanse, so to speak, of the intellec-  
 tual realm is seen, last attainment of all, by those who have  
 known already many splendid visions.

The gods see, each singly and all as one. So, too, the  
 souls; they see all There in right of being sprung, themselves,  
 of that universe and therefore including all from beginning  
 to end and having their existence There if only by that phase  
 which belongs inherently to the divine, though often too they  
 are There entire, those of them that have not incurred  
 separation.

This vision Zeus takes and it is for such of us, also, as  
 share his love and appropriate our part in the beauty There,  
 the final object of all seeing, the entire beauty upon all  
 things; for all There sheds radiance, and floods those that  
 have found their way thither so that they too become beau-  
 tiful; thus it will often happen that men climbing heights  
 where the soil has taken a yellow glow will themselves ap-  
 pear so, borrowing color from the place on which they move.  
 The color flowering on that other height we speak of is  
 beauty; or rather all There is light and beauty, through and  
 through, for the beauty is no mere bloom upon the surface.

To those that do not see entire, the immediate impres-  
 sion is alone taken into account; but those drunken with this  
 wine, filled with the nectar, all their soul penetrated by this  
 beauty, cannot remain mere gazers: no longer is there a spec-  
 tator outside gazing on an outside spectacle; the clear-eyed  
 hold the vision within themselves, though, for the most part,  
 they have no idea that it is within but look towards it as to  
 something beyond them and see it as an object of vision  
 caught by a direction of the will.

All that one sees as a spectacle is still external; one must  
 bring the vision within and see no longer in that mode of  
 separation but as we know ourselves; thus a man filled with  
 a god—possessed by Apollo or by one of the Muses—need  
 no longer look outside for his vision of the divine being; it is  
 but finding the strength to see divinity within.

11. Similarly anyone, unable to see himself, but pos-  
 sessed by that god, has but to bring that divine-within before  
 his consciousness and at once he sees an image of himself,  
 himself lifted to a better beauty: now let him ignore that  
 image, lovely though it is, and sink into a perfect self-iden-  
 tity, no such separation remaining; at once he forms a multi-

ple unity with the god silently present; in the degree of his  
 power and will, the two become one; should he turn back to  
 the former duality, still he is pure and remains very near to  
 the god; he has but to look again and the same presence is  
 there.

This conversion brings gain: at the first stage, that of  
 separation, a man is aware of self; but retreating inwards, he  
 becomes possessor of all; he puts sense away behind him in  
 dread of the separated life and becomes one in the divine; if  
 he plans to see in separation, he sets himself outside.

The novice must hold himself constantly under some  
 image of the divine being and seek in the light of a clear  
 conception; knowing thus, in a deep conviction, whither he  
 is going—into what a sublimity he penetrates—he must give  
 himself forthwith to the inner and, radiant with the divine  
 intellections (with which he is now one), be no longer the  
 seer, but, as that place has made him, the seen.

Still, we will be told, one cannot be in beauty and yet  
 fail to see it. The very contrary: to see the divine as some-  
 thing external is to be outside of it; to become it is to be most  
 truly in beauty: since sight deals with the external, there can  
 here be no vision unless in the sense of identification with  
 the object.

And this identification amounts to a self-knowing, a  
 self-consciousness, guarded by the fear of losing the self in  
 the desire of a too wide awareness.

It must be remembered that sensations of the ugly and  
 evil impress us more violently than those of what is agree-  
 able and yet leave less knowledge as the residue of the  
 shock: sickness makes the rougher mark, but health, tran-  
 quilly present, explains itself better; it takes the first place, it  
 is the natural thing, it belongs to our being; illness is alien,  
 unnatural, and thus makes itself felt by its very incongruity,  
 while the other conditions are native and we take no notice.  
 Such being our nature, we are most completely aware of our-  
 selves when we are most completely identified with the ob-  
 ject of our knowledge.

This is why in that other sphere, when we are deepest  
 in that knowledge by intellection, we are aware of none; we  
 are expecting some impression on sense, which has nothing  
 to report since it has seen nothing and never could in that  
 order see anything. The unbelieving element is sense; it is  
 the other, the intellectual-principle, that sees; and if this too  
 doubted, it could not even credit its own existence, for it can  
 never stand away and with bodily eyes apprehend itself as a  
 visible object.

12. We have told how this vision is to be procured,  
 whether by the mode of separation or in identity: now, seen  
 either way, what does it give to report?

The vision has been of God in travail of a beautiful off-  
 spring, God engendering a universe within himself in a pain-

less labor and—rejoiced in what he has brought into being, proud of his children—keeping all closely by him, for the pleasure he has in his radiance and in theirs.

Of this offspring—all beautiful, but most beautiful those that have remained within—only one has become manifest without; from him (Zeus, sovereign over the visible universe), the youngest born, we may gather, as from some image, the greatness of the Father and of the brothers that remain within the Father's house.

Still the manifested God cannot think that he has come forth in vain from the Father; for through him another universe has arisen, beautiful as the image of beauty, and it could not be lawful that beauty and being should fail of a beautiful image.

This second cosmos at every point copies the archetype: it has life and being in copy, and has beauty as springing from that diviner world. In its character of image it holds, too, that divine perpetuity without which it would only at times be truly representative and sometimes fail like a construction of art; for every image whose existence lies in the nature of things must stand during the entire existence of the archetype.

Hence it is false to put an end to the visible sphere as long as the intellectual endures, or to found it upon a decision taken by its maker at some given moment.

That teaching shirks the penetration of such a making as is here involved: it fails to see that as long as the supreme is radiant there can be no failing of its sequel but, that existing, all exists. And—since the necessity of conveying our meaning compels such terms—the supreme has existed forever and forever will exist.

13. The god fettered (as in the Kronos myth<sup>13</sup>) to an unchanging identity leaves the ordering of this universe to

his son (to Zeus), for it could not be in his character to neglect his rule within the divine sphere, and, as though sated with the authentic-beauty, seek a lordship too recent and too poor for his might. Ignoring this lower world, Kronos (intellectual-principle) claims for himself his own father (Ouranos, the absolute, or one) with all the upward-tending between them: and he counts all that tends to the inferior, beginning from his son (Zeus, the all-soul), as ranking beneath him. Thus he holds a mid-position determined on the one side by the differentiation implied in the severance from the very highest and, on the other, by that which keeps him apart from the link between himself and the lower: he stands between a greater father and an inferior son. But since that father is too lofty to be thought of under the name of beauty, the second god remains the primally beautiful.

Soul also has beauty, but is less beautiful than intellect as being its image and therefore, though beautiful in nature, taking increase of beauty by looking to that original. Since then the all-soul—to use the more familiar term—since Aphrodite herself is so beautiful, what name can we give to that other? If soul is so lovely in its own right, of what quality must that prior be? And since its being is derived, what must that power be from which the soul takes the double beauty, the borrowed and the inherent?

We ourselves possess beauty when we are true to our own being; our ugliness is in going over to another order; our self-knowledge, that is to say, is our beauty; in self-ignorance we are ugly.

Thus beauty is of the divine and comes thence only.

Do these considerations suffice to a clear understanding of the intellectual sphere or must we make yet another attempt by another road?

<sup>13</sup>Kronos was the Titan who ruled before he was unseated by Zeus.

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