NEITHER THE MORNING, NOR THE EVENING STAR IS SO FAIR

VIRTUE AND THE SOUL OF THE WORLD
IN PLOTINUS, TREATISE 19 (I, 2) AND TREATISE 20 (I, 3)

by

Elizabeth Ruth Curry

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

at

Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
August 2013

© Copyright by Elizabeth Ruth Curry, 2013
li raggi de le quattro luci sante
fregiavano si la sua faccia di lume,
ch'i' l vedea come 'l sol fosse davante.

Purgatorio i. 37-39
Abstract .......................................................................................................................................................... v

List of Abbreviations Used .................................................................................................................................... vi

Acknowledgements ................................................................................................................................................ viii

Chapter 1 – Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 1

1.1 Virtue in the Symposium .................................................................................................................................. 1

1.2 Plotinus and the Symposium in Treatise 20 (I, 3) ...................................................................................... 2

1.3 Virtue in Treatise 19 (I, 2) and Treatise 20 (I, 3) ..................................................................................... 3

1.3.1 Why Treatise 19 (I, 2) and 20 (I, 3) Should be Read Together ................................................................. 6

Chapter 2 - ὁμοίωσις θεώ in Treatise 19 (I, 2) 1: The Cosmological Picture .................................................. 12

2.1 Treatise 19, Chapter One: We Begin with World Soul .................................................................................. 13

2.1.1 The Virtues of the Theaetetus: δικαιοσύνη καὶ ὀσία μετὰ φρονήσεις.................................................. 14

2.2 The Contemplative Virtue of World Soul: Testimony from Other Treatises ........................................... 18

2.2.1 Treatises 27 – 29 and the Alcibiades Major: Socrates and World Soul ................................................. 19

2.2.2 Treatise 33 (II, 9): Against the ‘Gnostic’ Conception of World Soul .................................................. 36

2.3 The Cosmological Picture: Conclusion ..................................................................................................... 38

Chapter 3 – Civic Virtue in Treatises 19 (I, 2) and 20 (I, 3) ........................................................................ 41

3.1 Civic Virtue Finds its Place Relative to World Soul and Intellect: 1.1-20................................................. 42

3.2 Two Kinds of Virtue: 1.21-3.10 .................................................................................................................... 44

3.2.1 The Godlike Political Men of Tradition: 1.21-26 .................................................................................. 44

3.2.2 The “Greater Virtues”: 1.21-24 ............................................................................................................. 45

3.2.3 Two Kinds of Likeness: 2.4-26 ............................................................................................................ 50
3.2.4 Civic Virtue as Purificatory: 3.1-10 ....................................................................... 52

3.2.5 Two Kinds of Virtue: Conclusion ....................................................................... 55

3.3 Civic Virtue in Plato and Treatise 19 (I, 2) ........................................................................... 55

3.3.1 The Adjective πολιτική in the Republic and the Phaedo ............................................... 56

3.3.2 Plato’s Laws .............................................................................................................. 58

3.3.3 The Anagogy of σωφροσύνη in the Phaedrus ................................................................. 60

3.4 Civic Virtue: Conclusion ....................................................................................................... 62

Chapter 4 – Purificatory Virtue in Treatise 19 (I, 2) and Treatise 20 (I, 3) ......................... 64

4.1 Purificatory Virtue in Treatise 19 (I, 2) ................................................................................. 64

4.1.1 The Order of Enumeration in Republic IV ....................................................................... 64

4.2 Treatise 19 (I, 2) 3 and Treatise 20 (I, 3) 4-6 ........................................................................... 66

4.2.1 The Change in Order in Treatise 19 (I, 2) 3 .................................................................. 67

4.2.2 From Abstract Nouns to Present Infinitives in Treatise 19 (I, 2) 3 ............................ 68

4.2.3 From ΚΕϱΑ΋Η΍Ζ to ΑΓΉϧΑ ΘΉ Ύ΅Ϡ ΚΕΓΑΉϧΑ in Treatises 19 and 20 ..................... 70

4.3 Purificatory Virtue: Conclusion ........................................................................................... 85

Chapter 5 – Purified Virtue in Treatises 19 (I, 2) and 20 (I, 3) ........................................... 87

5.1 Purificatory….Purified?:

The Place of the Third Enumeration: 19 (I, 2) 4-6 ..................................................... 87

5.1.1 The Return to World Soul: A Theurgical Moment ....................................................... 89

5.1.2 σοφία καὶ φρόνησις ........................................................................................................... 94

5.1.3 The Redefinition of Justice ........................................................................................... 96

Chapter 6 – Conclusion ............................................................................................................... 97

Bibliography .............................................................................................................................. 99
ABSTRACT

In Treatises 19 (I, 2) and 20 (I, 3), Plotinus unfolds several ‘grades’ of virtue by interpreting the Platonic dialogues. Beginning with the goal of Theaetetus, “likeness to god”, Plotinus frames his discussion with a glance to the virtue exhibited by World Soul, giving a cosmic significance to the Delphic command, “know thyself”. Within this cosmic framework, the limited sphere of human, “political” virtues is subordinated to higher forms of purification. Purificatory virtue is revealed as the missing step between the political virtues and their archetypes. This step is mediatory and dynamic; as a lower form of purification, civic virtue is dignified as the necessary condition for the soul’s divinisation. World Soul is the exemplary possessor of perfect virtue, and as such operates as the mediatrix for human souls. This particular mediation illustrates the foundation of virtue for Plotinus: the non-anthropocentric, providential activity of the most contemplative of all souls.
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

AJP  American Journal of Philology

Alcibiades  Plato, Alcibiades Maior


Brisson-Pradeau  Plotinus, Traités 7-21. Translated (French) under the direction of Luc Brisson and Jean-François Pradeau. Paris: GF Flammarion, 2003

DA  Aristotle, De Anima

Dam. In Phaed.  Damascius, Commentary on the Phaedo of Plato


DL  Diogenes Laertius, Lives of Eminent Philosophers


EN  Aristotle, Ethica Nicomachea

Olymp. In Phaed.  Olympiodorus, Commentary on the Phaedo of Plato
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prolegomena</th>
<th>Anonymous, <em>Prolegomena to the Philosophy of Plato</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>SVF</em></td>
<td><em>Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>VP</em></td>
<td>Porphyry, <em>Vita Plotini</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Wayne J. Hankey, from whom I have learned so much in the past two years of study. It is no exaggeration to say that my thinking has been entirely transformed under his fine teaching. I would also like to thank the Classics Department of Dalhousie University, especially my readers Dr. Eli Diamond and Dr. Michael Fournier for their comments and corrections, and Mrs. Donna Edwards for her listening ear and solid advice.

Thanks also to my friends, particularly the residents of the Killam and Classics libraries, Daniel Watson, Bryan Heystee, and Nathan McAllister, and Shannon Parker of the enclosed garden of Watt Street Manor. I am also indebted to Dean Nicholas Hatt and the Don Team of the University of King’s College, the King’s College Chapel community, and the Parish of St George’s (Round) Church for the purgations.

I owe a huge debt of thanks to my grandmothers, parents, brother and sister for many years of love and support. Finally, I wish to thank Evan King, in whose company I look forward to spending the rest of my thinking days.
Chapter 1
Introduction

It belongs to the one who has given birth to true virtue and nourished it to become beloved of god, and if anyone among men could become immortal, would it not be he? (Plato, *Symposium* 212a5-7)

[One must show] the lover that…there is beauty in arts and sciences and virtues. Then one must make them one, and teach where they come from. But from virtues he can at once ascend to intellect, to being; and There one must go the higher way. (Plotinus, *Treatise 20* (I, 3) 2.1, 10-13)

1.1 Virtue in the Symposium

Virtue plays a crucial role in Diotima’s speech in the *Symposium*. First, it is initially the capacity for virtue in the young man’s soul that draws the lover to him and necessitates the lover’s contemplation of the beauty of ways of life (ἔπιτηθέσματα), laws (νόμοι) and sciences (ἐπιστήμαι): the lover contemplates all these in order “to give birth to such ideas as will make young men better.” Second, as the beauty of soul, invisible to the senses, virtue is itself one of the highest objects of contemplation in the lover’s ascent to the vision of Beauty Itself; though it is not named explicitly in the contemplative ascent described first at 210b6-e1 and again at 211b6-d1, it may be counted among the “fine things to be learned” (τὰ καλὰ μαθήματα) in the “great sea of beauty” (τὸ πολὺ πέλαγος τοῦ καλοῦ). Virtue is thus what the lover seeks, and also among the things he contemplates. Finally, virtue is the very fruit of what is necessarily a productive contemplation: the lover yearns to give birth (τίκτειν) to virtue in the beloved, and it is through this yearning and the ascent which it initiates, as we have just seen, which

---

1 Plato, *Symposium* 212a-b: τεκόντι δὲ ἀρετὴν ἀληθῆ καὶ θρεψαμένω ὑπάρχει θεοφιλεί γενέσθαι, καὶ εἰπέρ τω ἄλλω ἄνθρωπῳ ἀθανάτῳ καὶ ἔκεινας;
3 Plato, *Symposium* 210b6-d1.
culminates in the birth of virtue within himself through the vision of Beauty. It is this birth, the birth of true virtue (ἀρετή ἀληθής), as well as its nourishment, that determines the lover’s apotheosis and his belovedness in the eyes of the gods, as Diotima’s final words to Socrates indicate.1 Virtue is thus absolutely crucial to the argument of the Symposium in many ways, to the ascent of the soul, the culmination of her vision, and to her giving birth and consequent immortalisation. Like Eros in Diotima’s speech, therefore, virtue too may be said to be born out of the union of Poros and Penia, the union of plenty and poverty. Virtue, it seems, is what draws the soul upward toward her principle, and yet it is also the element within the soul which can define her in contrast to the Beauty which she may be brought to behold.

1.2 Plotinus and the Symposium in Treatise 20 (I, 3)

In his description of the mode of the lover in Treatise 20 (Ennead I, 3),2 the second quotation in the epigraph above (20 (I, 3) 2.10-13), Plotinus draws out rather more explicitly the role of virtue in the Symposium’s ladder of ascent. If virtue in the Symposium existed only at the level of “fine ways of life and fine laws” (ἐπιτηθευματα καλα και νομους καλονς), then Plotinus’ description of the lover’s education in Treatise 20 (I, 3) would represent a reversal of terms, for the virtues are the step “immediately” (η̄ο̅ν) below Intellect and Being in Treatise 20 (I, 3) 2. But virtue in the Symposium—as well as in other Platonic dialogues such as the Phaedrus, the Republic and the Phaedo—in fact reveals a certain pervasiveness and polyvalence, and a sustained and careful treatment of this polyvalence is manifest throughout Plotinus’ corpus. To put Diotima’s account in the Symposium in Plotinian terms, virtue is vital both to procession and conversion, living and present not only as one rung on the ladder of beauty but at all

---

1 Symposium 212a5-7, quoted in the epigraph above.
2 All references to the Plotinian corpus are given first by treatise number in chronological order, with the Porphyrian ordering given in parentheses. The text used, unless otherwise indicated, is the three-volume Oxford Classical Text: Plotini Opera, Paul Henry and Hans-Rudolf Schwyzer, eds. 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964-1982; henceforth H-S).
levels, according to the mode of being proper to that level. We “incline to virtue”, and virtue is the very substance of the incline itself: it marks the interiority of the ascent, for unlike the beauty of bodies, the beauty of soul is invisible, present either indirectly—and providentially—in the beauty of virtuous action, or immediately, to those who can recognize, however faintly, the reflection of their own soul’s essence in the glimpse of another’s inner order.

1.3 Virtue in Treatise 19 (I, 2) and Treatise 20 (I, 3)

Nowhere is the polyvalence of virtue in Plato and its importance as a key term in procession and conversion more thoroughly treated by Plotinus than in Treatise 20 (I, 3), “On Dialectic”, and its chronological and Enneadic partner, Treatise 19 (I, 2), “On the Virtues”. The treatment of the ‘grades’ of virtue laid out in these two Treatises is in fact crucial for Plotinus’ later considerations of πρᾶξις and ποιήσις (i.e. Treatise 30 (III, 8)) as well as of liberty and what is truly “up to us” (i.e. Treatise 39 (VI, 8)). Plotinus rebukes the Gnostics in Treatise 33 (II, 9) for not having any treatises devoted to virtue: this underlines the importance of Treatises 19 and 20 to his corpus. As a crucial rung on the ladder, virtue’s importance to the ascent of the soul and to the uncovering of her true nature must be articulated, but its polyvalence must also be carefully untangled, for without this untangling soul remains in danger of either losing herself in her own virtuous deeds, or of believing herself above them altogether.

We propose here, therefore, to consider how virtue is unfolded in Treatises 19 and 20. First, in Chapter Two of this thesis, we shall see how Plotinus frames the discussion of likeness to god (ὁμοίωσις θεώς) in Treatise 19 (I, 2) by a glance toward the cosmos: the soul finds her desire reoriented to the intelligible by a brief but important consideration of the desire of World Soul for the same. It is in light of this reorientation that the civic virtues reveal themselves as insufficient for the human soul’s divinisation, and fully purified virtue reveals itself as the virtue proper to World Soul, as well as the object of the human soul’s pursuit (σπουδή), achieved in part through her participation in an
intellectual theurgy that likens her to World Soul. *Treatise 19* (I, 2) implicitly assumes the cosmological application of the Delphic command, \( \gamma νοθι οαντυ \).

In Chapter Three, we shall consider further how civic virtue receives its subordinate place relative to the virtue of World Soul looking to Intellect. In his treatment of political virtue and its place relative to the “greater virtues” – the paradigms—Plotinus makes use of the distinction in *Treatise 20* (I, 3) of three kinds of soul, the musician, the lover, and the philosopher (a distinction inherited from the *Republic* and the *Phaedrus*). The introduction of civic virtue relative to World Soul and Intellect, and the analogies which follow from this introduction, proceed by a kind of force (\( \Lambda \kappa \) ) are addressed to the musician, who must be indoctrinated with respect to the kind of likeness he must pursue. The second treatment of civic virtue, which follows upon the introduction, proceeds by way of persuasion (\( \piελθω \)) and addresses itself to the lover, who, after the manner of the ascent in the *Symposium* outlined above, must be taught to see the beauty in virtues, after ways of life and laws, before he can go “the higher way”. Ultimately, we see in Chapter Three that *Treatise 19* is concerned with redefining civic virtue as a lower form of purification, rather than the whole of virtue in itself, or a category entirely separate from the higher kind of purificatory virtue with which the *Phaedo*, for instance, is concerned. Plotinus carefully ‘unfolds’ the purificatory nature of virtue out of the initial distinction between civic virtue and the “greater” virtues set out in *Treatise 19*’s introduction.

In Chapter Four we consider the nature of purificatory virtue introduced in chapter three of *Treatise 19* (I, 2) and also as it is treated in chapters four through six of *Treatise 20* (I, 3). Plotinus’ manner of enumerating and describing these virtues in *Treatise 19* is carefully crafted to reflect the change in the scriptural background from the *Republic* to the *Phaedo*: purificatory virtue belongs to the account of the *Phaedo* and its emphasis on the bipartition of body and soul rather than the tripartition within the soul emphasized by the *Republic*. The virtues consequently take on a different character to reflect this shift,
and the mode of discourse also changes once again as the philosopher becomes the addressee, rather than the lover.

In Chapter Five we consider this second shift in mode further. With this second shift, as the purificatory virtues and their relation to conversion, completion and perfection are discussed in chapters four to six of Treatise 19 (I, 2) we witness an increasing emphasis on the virtue of wisdom. As courage may be said to be the virtue definitive of virtue in its middling purificatory mode, when the soul learns to turn away from the passions, and to count what happens to her body as of no account, so wisdom may be said to be the virtue definitive of purified virtue: the soul as fully purified is fully turned to Intellect and filled by that vision. The advent of σοφία thus marks the perfection of the soul as soul, as our “sister” World Soul would tell us if we were to consider her providential contemplation. This lesson in Treatise 19 (I, 2) is in fact taken up in Treatise 20 (I, 3) as well, in the last chapter of that treatise. I propose that the distinction there between “natural” and “perfected” virtues, which has long been a perplexing problem for commentators, be read as in fact informed by the argument of Treatise 19 (I, 2).

By way of conclusion, in Chapter Five we also return to the purified virtue whose character we found in Chapter Two was essentially that of World Soul, perpetually turned to Intellect and yet caring for all that is soulless at the same time, possessing, in other words, both σοφία and φρόνησις. The increasing emphasis on σοφία which began in the activities of νοεῖν τε καὶ φρονεῖν in the description of purificatory virtue culminates in the last few chapters of Treatise 19 (I, 2) and the enumeration of ‘purified’ virtue in chapter six of the Treatise. Together with σοφία there we find an increased emphasis on δικαιοσύνη, justice, as well. This is because the insertion of justice into the picture of the soul’s higher perfection presents a particular difficulty for Plotinus, as its lowest definition, the ensuring that each part does its own business and is limited to its own sphere, seems to depend fundamentally upon a multiplicity that requires ordering. Yet the introduction of the problem of justice also effects the introduction of the paradigms in chapter six and seven. Wisdom and justice were the virtues with which we
began Treatise 19 (I, 2), and at the end of the Treatise we find these two virtues are the cause of a kind of intertwining of the virtues of the purified soul and the paradigms themselves. Justice (whose proper name in fact seems to be ὀίκειοπραγία – the only virtue not to keep its lower appellation in its paradigm) and wisdom together are the virtues definitive of the purified virtue and providential activity of World Soul.

While it is certainly the case that chapter seven of Treatise 19 (I, 2) insists that the one who possesses the civic virtues and has ascended even to the attainment of the purificatory virtues (i.e. the philosopher of Treatise 20 (I, 3)) will “leave behind the life of the good man, and choose the life of the gods,” –that is, continue until their purification is complete—Plotinus is nonetheless careful to delineate for the political virtues their limited sphere, and provides through his reading of the Phaedo an account of purificatory virtue as the missing step between the political virtues and their archetypes in Nova. This missing step is an essentially mediatory one; understood as lower forms of purification, the civic virtues receive a certain undeniable dignity and worth as the condition for the possibility of the human’s divinisation. On the other side of purification, World Soul is in fact the exemplary possessor of perfect, pure virtue, and as such may be understood as a kind of mediatrix for human souls.

1.3.1 Why Treatise 19 (I, 2) and 20 (I, 3) Should be Read Together

That Treatise 19 (I, 2) and Treatise 20 (I, 3) belong together is clear for reasons both internal and external to the logic of the Treatises. On external grounds, in Porphyry’s chronology, Treatise 20 follows on the heels of Treatise 19, and both belong to the early period of Plotinus’ career, shortly before Porphyry joined him in Rome around 263 CE.1

---

Porphyry himself saw fit to keep the two Treatises together in his re-ordering, placing them both in the First Ennead among the “ethical treatises” (τὰ ηθικῶτερα). Narbonne and Achard suggest that these two treatises belong together in a further sub-division of the first phase of Plotinus’ career, to the time following the definitive series Treatises 9-11 (VI, 9; V, 1; V, 2) when, having established the main structural lines of his system, Plotinus “could content himself with supporting the edifice, adding complementary touches in places, but without a definite plan,” responding to the problems of the moment. Further internal evidence may be found in the continuity between where Treatise 19 (I, 2) ends and where Treatise 20 (I, 3) begins. Treatise 19 (I, 2) exhorts the soul to flee evil and seek likeness to god through the acquisition of virtue, and persuades the soul through various modes of discourse to seek a likeness beyond that which civic virtue provides. In other words, Treatise 19 (I, 2) begins with the necessity of flight, and gives a kind of outline of the itinerary. The four cardinal virtues, ἕρωτια, ἀνδριανή, σωφροσύνη and δικαιοσύνη, enumerated no less than four times in four different ways, provide a kind of essential structure to the itinerary, highlighting its major elements. Following this, Treatise 20 (I, 3) begins with the question, “What art, or method, or practice is there, which will lead us up?” The Treatise thus assumes the necessity of the flight, and seeks to fill out the details of the anagogical movement to which Treatise 19 (I, 2) initially exhorts us. The two Treatises in fact might easily be combined under the title, “Concerning the Way Up”.

Catapano suggests that Treatise 19 was not written before 257 CE.

1 Porphyry, VP 24.17, 36-37.
2 Ferroni-Achard-Narbonne, xlix. Cf. VP 5.60-61. It should be noted that this is how Porphyry characterizes the middle period of Plotinus’ career (c. 263-268), encompassing Treatises 22-45.
1.3.1.1 The role of Porphyry

Despite the significant internal and external indications that the two Treatises should be read together, this has rarely been done.¹ This is for two reasons, both concerning Plotinus’ student and biographer, Porphyry.

1.3.1.1.1 The legacy of the fourfold enumeration

First, there is the question of the legacy of the unfolding of virtue’s polyvalence in Treatise 19 (I, 2). The fourfold enumeration of the fourfold cardinal virtues in Treatise 19 enjoys a remarkable future in Neoplatonic thought; Iamblichus, Proclus, Marinus, Olympiodorus, Macrobius and many others all find further folds of virtue to iron out, expanding the “grades” of virtue above and below the enumerations of Treatise 19 (I, 2). The important role of Porphyry in the systematization, transmission and transformation of this aspect of Plotinus’ Treatise 19 (I, 2) is incontestable: Sentence 32 of his Sententiae ad intelligibilia ducentes² is essentially a summary of and commentary on Treatise 19 (I, 2), often repeating it word for word, and even where not word for word holding to the same order of enumeration of the cardinal virtues, which changes with each enumeration, as we shall consider in Chapter Four below. The focus of Porphyry’s summary is in fact the fourfold enumeration of the four virtues, to which he makes

---

¹ Two notable exceptions are Plotino: Sulle virtú: I 2 [19], Giovanni Catapano, intro., testo greco, trans. e comm. (Pisa: Pisa University Press, 2006), 9-15; and Dominic J. O’Meara, “Aristotelian ethics in Plotinus,” in Jon Miller, ed., The Reception of Aristotle’s Ethics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 53-66. Catapano in fact situates his commentary on Treatise 19 (I, 2) within the chronological context of the two treatises immediately before and the two immediately after Treatise 19: Treatise 17 (II, 6), “On Substance, or on Quality”; Treatise 18 (V, 7), “On the Question Whether there are Ideas of Particulars”; Treatise 20 (I, 3), “On Dialectic”; Treatise 21 (IV, 2), “How One Says that the Soul is an Intermediary Between the Indivisible Reality and the Divisible Reality”. From these surrounding treatises Catapano draws the conclusion that Plotinus was primarily concerned in Treatise 19 (I, 2) with the nature of the intelligible, and its relation to our own souls, a concern which Porphyry’s inclusion of Treatise 19 (I, 2) among the “ethical treatises” might tend to obscure.

² Porphyry, Porphyri sententiae ad intelligibilia ducentes, E. Lamberz, ed. (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1975; hereafter Sent.)
further correspondences, explicitly linking each enumeration with a specific ontological level. The civic virtues belong to man, the purificatory to the δαίμων, the contemplative virtues to the θεός, and the paradigmatic virtues to the θεόν πατήρ.¹

Scholarly opinion is divided in its evaluation of Porphyry’s role: for some it amounts to a gross distortion and over-schematisation with disastrous consequences;² for others, Porphyry’s brief summary ensures the treatise’s easy and far-reaching transmission³ and contains some crucial developments regarding the level of civic virtue that provide a more fertile ground than Plotinus for a Neoplatonic political philosophy and for an ethical structure for the human as human.⁴

¹ Sent. 32 (p. 31, lines 4-8 Lamberz)
³ H. van Lieshout, La Théorie Plotinienne de la Vertu: Essai sur la Genèse d’un Article de la Somme Théologique de Saint Thomas (Freiburg, Suisse: Studia Friburgensia, 1926), 93-96.
Porphyry’s focus on the enumerations does allow for the easy and widespread
transmission of the core of *Treatise 19* (I, 2)’s argument as a kind of trope.¹ If we consider
Porphyry’s treatment of *Treatise 19* (I, 2) in light of its original place in Plotinus’ corpus
before *Treatise 20* (I, 3), however, it is clear that Porphyry’s focus on the enumerations of
the virtues does come at the price of the connection between the two treatises,
particularly their psychagogical character. Part of what this thesis will consider,
therefore, is the enumerations of the four virtues as anagogical tools functioning within
the various modes of discourse of *Treatise 19* (I, 2) and 20 (I, 3). Reading *Treatises 19* and
20 together in this way yields a richer understanding of Plotinus’ treatment of virtue
than Porphyry’s summary conveys, as valuable as that nonetheless is in other ways.

1.3.1.1.2 The authenticity of Treatise 20 (I, 3), 6

Second, the value of reading the two treatises together has been called into question by
the suspicion that the final chapter of *Treatise 20* (I, 3) is by another hand, not Plotinus’.
Georges Leroux has argued, further, that this other hand is Porphyry’s, and that his aim
in adding chapter six to *Treatise 20* (I, 3) is precisely to tie the *Treatise* back more tightly
to *Treatise 19* (I, 2).² This argument seems to imply that the connection between the
*Treatises* is more or less of Porphyry’s making. Reading the two treatises together,
however, it is clear even apart from chapter six of *Treatise 20* (I, 3) that the treatises
complement one another. In particular, *Treatise 20* (I, 3) sheds valuable light on the
nature of purificatory virtue as it is described and enumerated in its fourfold form in
chapter three of *Treatise 19* (I, 2). So the bulk of Chapter Four of this thesis treats the
latter half of *Treatise 20* (I, 3) (chapters four and five) in relation to *Treatise 19* (I, 2) and
points toward an interpretation of chapter six of *Treatise 20* (I, 3) that sees its continuity

¹ For instance, Macrobius’ use of Porphyry’s fourfold enumeration of the four virtues
easily and effectively finds its way to the medieval world, particularly to Aquinas and
Bonaventure, with Plotinus’ name attached. See Hankey, “Political, Psychic,
² Georges Leroux, “Logique et Dialectique chez Plotin: Énneade 1.3 (20),” *Phoenix* 28.2
with the rest of the Treatise as well as with Treatise 19 (I, 2) and therefore no necessity in attributing it to the hand of Porphyry.
Chapter 2

\( \text{ὁμοίωσις θεῶ} \) in Treatise 19 (I, 2) 1: The Cosmological Picture

Treatise 19 (Ennead I, 2) begins with the Platonic exhortation to seek \( \text{ὁμοίωσις θεῶ} \) (‘likeness to god’, Theaetetus 176b2). Alcinous’ treatment of this expression in the Didaskalikos, among that of other authors,\(^1\) indicates its prevalence as a Platonic doctrine in the Middle Platonic context in which Plotinus’ thinking was formed.\(^2\) However, in the Plotinian anagogy the dictum receives a distinctively thorough and original treatment.\(^3\) Along with the declaration of Treatise 30 (Ennead III, 8) that “all things come from contemplation and are contemplation,”\(^4\) \( \text{ὁμοίωσις θεῶ} \) is Plotinus’ most profound way of describing at once both the procession of all things from the One, and the conversion of all things back to the First through Intellect and its emanation, Soul. The emphasis in Treatise 19 is clearly on “likeness to god” as an imperative of flight (\( \varphiευκτέων \varεντεύθεν \), 1.3) for us. It concerns, in other words, the individual soul’s achievement of “likeness to god” through her conversion to Intellect by means of World Soul, through her

---


3 Plotinus makes frequent use of Theaetetus 176a-b outside of Treatise 19, providing as it does both the diagnosis of evil and the cure of flight. Plotinus’ most extended treatment of the passage is to be found in Treatise 51 (I, 8) 6.1-4, 9-12, 14-17; 7.1, 8, 11-12, 15. Other passages: on “evils are here”, see 46 (I, 4) 11.15-16, 14.16; on “evils cannot be destroyed”, see 47 (III, 2) 5.29, 15.10-11; on “one must flee from here”, see 15 (III, 4) 2.12; 52 (II, 3) 9.20; on “likeness to God”, see 1 (I, 6) 6.20; 46 (I, 4) 16.10-13; on “following wisdom”, see 33 (II, 9) 6.40, 15.39; on the life of gods compared to that of men, see 9 (VI, 9) 11.48-49; 27 (IV, 7) 14.12-14.

4 Treatise 30 (III, 8) 7.1-2: ...πάντα τὰ τε ὣς ἀληθῶς ὄντα ἐκ θεωρίας καὶ θεωρία...
purification by means of virtue.¹ In Plotinus’ thought, however, because Intellect itself receives all its fecundity in converting towards its Source, conversion and procession as the self-diffusiveness of the Good belong together: “all things when they come to their perfection produce.”² Despite its emphasis on purification and return, then, Treatise 19 cannot, and does not, exclude entirely a treatment of ὑμοίωσις θεώ as procession. In fact, Plotinus’ consideration of ὑμοίωσις θεώ in 19 (I, 2) as both procession and conversion is crucial to the anagogical movement of the treatise and to its influential hierarchy of virtues by which the accounts of virtue in the Republic and the Phaedo find their place within the ascents of the Phaedrus and Symposium.

The explicit role of World Soul, the heavens and the cosmos in Treatise 19 (I, 2) is small, but these lesser divinities are in fact quietly crucial to the individual soul’s acquisition of virtue and self-knowledge. Our consideration in Treatise 19 of what ὑμοίωσις θεώ might mean begins with a fleeting glance to the Soul of the All, and as we shall see with the help of some later treatises, this slightest of glances shapes the entire discussion of virtue in a fundamental way. In fact, Treatise 30’s declaration of the essential productiveness of all contemplation has its tiny seeds here in the “wonderful wisdom” (φρόνησις θαυμαστία) (1.9) and ὑπέξις (1.13) of World Soul with which Treatise 19 (I, 2) opens.

2.1 Treatise 19, Chapter One: We Begin with World Soul
As Plotinus will make explicit in his later work against the Gnostics (Treatise 33 (II, 9)), an account of virtue and a proper understanding of the nature and dignity of the

¹ See Dominic O’Meara, “Aristotelian ethics in Plotinus,” in Jon Miller, ed. The Reception of Aristotle’s Ethics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 62. O’Meara notes that the title of the Treatise (“On the Virtues”), given by Porphyry, does not reflect the particularity of the concern, which is more precisely the relation between ὑμοίωσις θεώ and the virtues as the means to this τέλος.
² Treatise 10 (V, 1) 6.37-38. See also Treatise 11 (V, 2) 1.13-16: “Resembling the One thus, Intellect produces in the same way, pouring forth a multiple power—this is a likeness of it—just as that which was before it poured it forth. This activity springing from the substance of Intellect is Soul....” See Jean Trouillard, La purification plotinienne. 2nd ed. (Paris: Hermann, 2011; reprint of 1955 original), 104; Vladimir Jankélévitch, trans. Plotin. Ennéades I, 3: Sur la dialectique (Paris: Cerf, 1998), 22-26.
cosmos, and of the far greater dignity of its abundant origin, go hand in hand. The close relation of virtue’s purificatory nature and the dignity of the cosmos is clear within the first ten lines of Treatise 19: procession and purification appear together, captured between the two senses of “here” (ἐνταῦθα, lines 1 and 9).

Following the wording of the Theaetetus exactly, Plotinus begins, “evils are here” (τὰ κακὰ ἐνταῦθα, 1.1). Evils are here, necessarily, and the soul wishes (βούλεται, 1.2) to flee them, and with them all contingency. So flight “from here” is urged (φευκτέον ἐντεῦθεν, 1.3). We rehearse the Theaetetus’ series of syllogisms linking this flight to “being made like god” through becoming “just and holy by means of wisdom” (δίκαιοι καὶ ὁσίοι μετὰ φρονήσεως, 1.4-5), and are thus led to virtue as the means of the soul’s purification.

2.1.1 The Virtues of the Theaetetus: δικαιοσύνη καὶ ὁσία μετὰ φρονήσεως

The virtues of the Theaetetus passage used to describe the means of the soul’s purification merit a closer look. As we shall see throughout Treatise 19, the order in which the particular virtues are enumerated is not accidental to Plotinus’ account: each of the four fourfold enumerations of the cardinal virtues is ordered differently. Let us note here, then, that through this reference to the Theaetetus, justice becomes the first virtue named in Treatise 19 (I, 2). This is in keeping with that virtue’s relation to the goal of ὁμοιωσις θεω in other Platonic dialogues as well. In Alcinous’ summary of the various forms of Plato’s presentation of the ὁμοιωσις θεω, for instance, justice shows itself to be a Platonic constant.3

1 The juxtaposition of ἐξ ἀναγκῆς and βούλεται here recalls a later Plotinian account of virtue’s role in freeing the soul from necessity through “intellectualizing” her: Treatise 39 (VI, 8) 6.4-14.
2 See Catapano, Plotino: Sulle virtú, 79-80, n. on lines 1.4-5. I follow Catapano here in translating μετὰ φρονήσεως as “by means of wisdom” rather than “together with wisdom”.
Sometimes [Plato] declares that likeness to God consists in being intelligent, and just, and pious, as in the Theaetetus (176a-b). Elsewhere he asserts that it consists only in being just, as in the last book of the Republic (613a): ‘For, by the gods, that man will never be neglected who is willing and eager to be just, and by the practice of virtue to be likened to God so far as that is possible for man.’ In the Phaedo, further, he declares that likeness to God consists in becoming self-controlled and just [82a-b].

In Aristotle too, we may remember, justice is not only the name of a particular virtue, but in a certain sense “the whole of virtue” (δικαιοσύνη ἀρετή). The common proverbs testify to this, calling justice the “strongest of the virtues” (κρατιστή τῶν ἀρετῶν), that in which “all other virtues are combined” (ἐν δὲ δικαιοσύνῃ συνληθέδην πᾶσι ἀρετῇ ἕνι), and that in comparison to which “neither the evening, nor the morning star is as wonderful” (οὔθ’ ἐσπερος οὔθ’ ἑφος οὔτω θαυμαστός).

The other virtue named here at the beginning of Treatise 19 (I, 2) is φρόνησις, enumerated not merely as another particular instance, but as bound with and accompanying justice: (δικαιοσύνη...μετὰ φρόνισεως, 1.5). It is this virtue in particular which causes us to consider “the soul of the cosmos” (ἡ τοῦ κόσμου ψυχή, 1.8) seeing as we are “here” (ἐνθαῦθα ἄνταξι, 1.10), in the world that proceeds from the “wonderful wisdom” (φρόνησις θαυμαστή) of her “leading part” (τὸ ἡγούμενος, 1.9). World Soul

---

1 Aristotle, Ethica Nicomachea (henceforth EN) V 1130a.
2 EN V 1129b-1130a. See also Treatise 1 (I, 6) 4.10-12 and Treatise 34 (VI, 6) 6.37-42.
3 Plotinus’ use of θανυμαστή to describe World Soul’s φρόνησις at this juncture, now that δικαιοσύνη and φρόνησις have been paired and bound together, recalls Aristotle’s use of a fragment of Euripides’ Melanippe regarding justice, cited among his series of proverbs testifying to the greatness of the virtue: “neither the evening nor the morning star, it is thought, is so wonderful” (θαυμαστός) (EN V 1129b28-30, quoted above). Plotinus refers twice to this Euripidean fragment in the Enneads, once in describing the face (πρόσωπον) of the Phaedran pair δικαιοσύνη καὶ σωφροσύνη (Treatise 1 (I, 6) 4.10-12), and once in describing the πρόσωπον of δικαιοσύνη alone (Treatise 34 (VI, 6) 6.37-42). See V. Cilento, “Mito e poesia nella Enneadi di Plotino,” and subsequent discussion in E.R. Dodds et al., Les Sources de Plotin, 261-262, 301, 314; see also Augustus Nauck, recensuit, Tragicorum
seems most particularly to possess these (μάλλον δοκοῦντι ταῦτα ἐχειν, 1.7), the cardinal virtues of wisdom and justice.

In addition to the virtues of δικαιοσύνη and φρόνησις, however, Plotinus adds a consideration of virtue as a whole (καὶ ὅλως ἐν ἀρετῇ, 1.5) to the line of reasoning he draws from the Theaetetus. This addition is significant and appears to perform two functions. First, it makes explicit what the Theaetetus passage implies: that the means of the soul’s flight from evils is to be found in her acquisition of virtue, which is the state of “justice together with wisdom”. However, the articulation of the general category of virtue also raises more questions. Does being “altogether (ὅλως) in virtue” mean possessing “all the virtues” (πᾶσαι, 1.12)—not only justice and wisdom, but also moderation and courage, the four virtues which in their perfection are understood by Aristotle and especially the Stoics?

The addition of καὶ ὅλως ἐν ἀρετῇ thus appears to lead Plotinus to echo Aristotle, perhaps against Alcinous, in asking how god could possibly possess σωφροσύνη and ἄνδρια, virtues which seem inseparable from the matter they form, as states of soul relative to the things which lie outside her, whether those things are desired or feared (1.12-15). He also echoes Alcinous in implying a distinction between these two “irrational” or “subsidiary” (ἐπόμεναι) virtues and the “predominant” (προηγούμεναι) Graecorum Fragmenta. 2nd ed. (Lispia (Leipzig): B.G. Teubner, 1926): Euripidis frag. 486.; see also Ferroni-Achard-Narbonne, 51-52n8.

1 See Flamand, “Traité 19,” in Brisson-Pradeau, 463n.146.
2 NE X.8 1178b8-18. Cf. Alcinous, Didask. 181.36-182.1 (Dillon, Alcinous, 28.3, p. 38). See A.H. Armstrong’s comments in the discussion of H. Dörrie, “Die Frage Nach Dem Transzendenten Im Mittelplatonismus,” in E.R. Dodds et al., Les Sources de Plotin, 224-225. Armstrong suggests that Plotinus has Alcinous specifically in mind here, using Aristotle against him initially to deny that World Soul (reasonably identifiable with Alcinous’ “god in the heavens” (ἐπουράνιος θεός)) possesses the virtues, at least as they are understood in their political mode. See also Dillon, Alcinous, 173-174; Catapano, Plotino: Sulle virtú, 81-82, n. on 1.6.
virtues of justice and wisdom, deriving their perfection from them. Plotinus uses this consideration of virtue in general and of these subsidiary virtues in particular to an interesting and rather unexpected end. As nothing can come to her from the outside, World Soul is credited with lacking nothing and fearing nothing; the traditional application of κόσμος and ἄρετα cannot apply to her. Yet Plotinus suggests that World Soul does indeed desire, and the object of her desire is the same as that of our souls: the intelligible (εἰ δὲ καὶ αὐτός ἐν ὀρέξει ἐστὶ τῶν νοητῶν ὄν καὶ αἱ ἡμέτεραι, 1.13-14).²

There is no mistaking the word for desire here: ὀρέξεις. World Soul’s movement is due to her aspiration, and the movement of the sphere of the All reflects this aspiration.³ It is World Soul’s divine desire for the intelligibles that allows us to locate the derivation of both the cosmos and our virtues in Nous: “it is clear that for us both the cosmos and the virtues are from there.”⁴ To put it another way, in Treatise 19 (I, 2) it is the consideration of the lower virtues of moderation and courage, those pertaining typically to the appetitive and thumetic parts of soul, those which one would typically not associate with divinity, which launch us beyond World Soul to her principle and ours. Here is our

---

¹ Didask. 183.38-184.10 (Dillon, Alcinous, 30.3, p. 40-41); cf. Apuleius, De Platone 2.9.234. Apuleius does not make the distinction of “predominant” and “subsidiary” but does distinguish between the “perfect” virtues of wisdom and prudence (sapientia et prudentia) and the “semi-perfect” virtues of courage and self-control. The criterion of perfection is that the higher virtues are teachable, as sciences (disciplinae) while the lower virtues are acquired through “use and experience” (usu et experiendo), though they are also “not totally alien from the sciences”. For Apuleius, further, justice has an ambiguous status relative to this distinction, being in Plato at one time a science and at another a disposition acquired through habit. See Dillon, Alcinous, 185-186.


³ Treatise 28 (IV, 4) 16.23-31; 35.32ff.

⁴ Treatise 19 (I, 2) 1.15: ὅπλον ὅτι καὶ ἡμῖν ἐκείθεν ὁ κόσμος καὶ αἱ ἀρεται. Cf. Plotinus Ennead I, A.H. Armstrong, trans. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966): “it is clear that our good order and our virtues also come from the intelligible.” Armstrong’s translation captures the application of ἡμῖν to both κόσμος and αἱ ἀρεται, but the larger significance of κόσμος, the good order of the All, of which our good order is an image, should not be left behind here.
first indication that both δμοιοσεις and ἀρετή—the latter considered both in general and in its fourfold cardinal specificity—may require several different and carefully considered reinterpretations, corresponding to several different levels of divinity. Plotinus will consider the question of the unity and the mutual implication of the virtues within this larger investigation of how different levels of being might possess different kinds of virtue.

Let us sum up what these first ten lines or so indicate about the Treatise and its orientation. First, the Theaetetus sets the context for the investigation of virtue, defining its τέλος as the soul’s freedom from the evils associated with embodiment. Our first port of call in the search for the god to whom likeness is possible through the acquisition of virtue leads us to World Soul, who is presented to us as a kind of model of productive wisdom and justice. Virtue, then, is first considered as something which is to be found in soul as soul.

2.2 The Contemplative Virtue of World Soul: Testimony from Other Treatises

Let us return, however, to the question of World Soul’s virtue. With the consideration of the soul as fully purified and converted in chapters six and seven of Treatise 19 we return to World Soul, but apart from the opening chapter of the treatise the cosmological picture receives no sustained or explicit consideration. Evidence from other treatises, however, particularly the closely related Treatises 27 and 28 (IV, 3-4) “On Difficulties about the Soul” and Treatise 33 (II, 9) “Against the Gnostics”, speak where Treatise 19 is silent. They reveal that the Soul of the All possesses the purified virtues of the soul as they are enumerated in Treatise 19: σοφία καὶ φρόνησις as contemplation of what Intellect possesses (ἐν θεωρίᾳ ἀν νοῦς ἔχει); δικαιοσύνη as activity toward the same (τὸ πρὸς νοῦν ἐνεργεῖν); σωφρονεῖν as the inward turn (ἡ εἰσὶ πρὸς νοῦν στροφῆ); ἀνδρία as complete ἀπάθεια (19 I, 2) 6.12-13, 23-26). In imitating this free living of the All toward its source the human too, as like to the All as possible, finds his freedom.
2.1.1 Treatises 27 and 28 and the Alcibiades Major: Socrates and World Soul

In Treatises 27 through 28, kept together by Porphyry along with Treatise 29 as Enneads IV, 3-5, Plotinus concerns himself with the nature of Soul as hypostasis, as demiurgic producer of the cosmos, as the rational principle of both the cosmos and the human individual, and as the centre of sense-perception, nutrition and growth in the animal. Following the structure of Alexander of Aphrodisias’ De Anima closely, he begins Treatise 27 (IV, 3) with the thought that to consider the nature of soul is to obey the Delphic oracle’s command to “know thyself” (γνῶθι σεαυτόν). Unlike Alexander, however, whose treatise is concerned explicitly with soul as it “belongs to a body subject to generation and corruption,” Plotinus is interested in both “the things of which the soul is the principle and those from which it is (ὁν τε ἄρχη ἐστι καὶ ἀφ’ ὅν ἐστι).” Self-knowledge as soul-knowledge for Plotinus is thus not only living ‘in accordance with nature’ (κατὰ φύσιν), but also a necessary step in the ascent toward a higher form of reflexivity belonging to another, higher, self.

Plotinus is not opposing Alexander here. Rather, he is interested in setting Alexander’s (and Aristotle’s) account of soul within the larger Platonic picture. Both Alexander and Plotinus are setting themselves against a Stoic account of an all-encompassing fate that

---

2 The variety of this enumeration alone demonstrates that Plotinus’ consideration owes much both to Plato (especially the Timaeus) and Aristotle (De Anima).
4 Treatise 27 (IV, 3) 1.8-10.
5 Alexandre d’Aphrodise, De l’âme 1.1-2 (Bergeron-Dufour, 66-67).
6 Treatise 27 (IV, 3) 1.7-8.
7 Alexandre d’Aphrodise, De l’âme 2.2-4 (Bergeron-Dufour, 66-67).
8 This same interest is evident in Plotinus’ treatment of the problem of self-knowledge against the Skeptics in the later Treatise 49 (V, 3). See Bertrand Ham, Plotin. Traité 49 (V, 3) (Paris: Cerf, 1998), 18.
extends to the lives of individuals. Because of his Platonism Plotinus is able to give a fuller account of what Alexander’s κατὰ φύσιν presupposes without being able to name. Though the introduction is clearly influenced by Alexander’s work, the difference in Plotinus’ use of the Delphic command betrays another influence, that of the radical reinterpretation and extensive meditation on that same command as it is found in Plato’s Alcibiades Major. In that dialogue the human’s self-understanding as soul and her knowledge of god are discovered together and the difference between the human and the divine is thereby reduced with the additional reflecting mediation of another good and wise soul. The Alcibiades Major in fact undergirds not only the introduction but also the whole of the three treatises “Concerning Aporiai of the Soul” (Treatises 27 through 29), with the best and wisest soul, that Soul of the All—the Zeus of the Phaedrus—taking up Socrates’ mediating and exemplary role throughout.

2.2.1.1 The Alcibiades Major: Tracing its Influence on Treatises 27 and 28

The profound influence of the Alcibiades Major on later Neoplatonism has been well documented. Under Iamblichus’ systematic program, in which the Platonic dialogues are catalogued and ordered in an anagogical curriculum, the Alcibiades is the first dialogue to be read, and commentaries on the dialogue exist from the hand of Proclus.

---


2 See esp. Alcibiades 130e8-9; 132c7-10.


4 Wayne J. Hankey, “‘Behold thy mother,’ Sermon for the Requiem of Petronella Neish, St George’s Round Church, December 6, 2011 at 10 a.m.”: 4. In Aristotle EN IX this friendship importantly becomes an internal one: the good man is a friend to himself. See also Ham, Plotin. Traité 49 (V, 3), 18-19.

5 Jean Pépin, Idées grecques sur l’homme et sur Dieu, 95-101; Hankey, “Knowing as We are
and Olympiodorus.¹ Though explicit references to the *Alcibiades* are rare in Plotinus, nonetheless the *Enneads*, characteristically Hellenistic in their interest and orientation, are deeply imbued with the dialogue’s exhortatory spirit, its concern with salvation and “care of the self” (ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ), its important distinction between “us” (ἡμεῖς) and “what belongs to us” (τὰ ἡμετέρα), and its emphasis on vision and reflection—coming to see oneself as seeing through the seeing eye of another—as an expression of ascent and assimilation to god. This is especially true of the later *Treatises 49* (V, 3) and 53 (I, 1) which in Porphyry’s re-ordering come close to framing the Plotinian corpus: both treatises take on the *Alcibiades’* exhortation to look to “who we are”, problematize it, and seek the essence of ἡμεῖς through and beyond soul’s partitions and discursivity, in the very movement itself beyond the historical, embodied self to a kind of noetic self that outlasts all cycles of reincarnation and transmigration, beyond διάνοια to νοησία.²

*Treatises 27 and 28* (*Enneads* IV, 3-4) play out a similar passage through soul’s powers and activities on a cosmic scale, the background against which the operations and essence of the individual soul must be understood.

### 2.2.1.2 Soul and What Belongs to Her

As we have already said, *Treatise 27* begins with the Delphic oracle, the obedience to which is articulated as the discovery of the mediating activities of soul in relation to what is above and below her. Knowledge of her activities gives “knowledge in both directions” (ἐπὶ ἀμφῶ τὴν γνώσιν δίδωσιν, 1.7-8);³ further, the search for the nature—the

---


³ See also *Treatise 28* (IV, 4) 3.1-12.
“what”—of the seeker (τὸ ᾠτοῦν τί ποτ’ ἐστὶ τὸντο) is in fact a movement toward the perfection of that seeker’s intellectual activities in the “lovely vision of Intellect” (τὸ γε ἐραστὸν...θέαμα τοῦ νοῦ, 1.6-12). In these first few lines of Treatise 27, therefore, we have in highly concentrated form the ‘double conversion’, so to speak, of the Alcibiades: first the ‘negative’ objective distinction of the external things which we possess and should govern, such as our goods, our bodies, our characteristics (τὰ ἡμετέρα = ὁν τε ἄρχη [ἡ ψυχή]) from what we are properly (ἡμεῖς = ἀφ’ ὄν ἐστὶ [ἡ ψυχή]); then the positive, deeper form of self-knowledge that follows from the ἐπιμέλεσθαι ἐαντοῦ, the reflexive activities of knowing and thinking (τὸ εἰδέναι τε καὶ φρονεῖν = τὸ γε ἐραστὸν λαβεῖν θέαμα τοῦ νοῦ) by which the soul becomes conformed to Intellect.3

2.2.1.3 Why Individual Souls Do Not Come from the Soul of the All

In their consideration of the provenance of individual rational souls, chapters two through ten of Treatise 27 (IV, 3) enact a gradual unfolding of the τὰ ἡμετέρα-ἡμεῖς distinction of the Alcibiades with an eye not only to the individual soul but also to the entire ordered whole. Plotinus implicitly seeks a reconciliation of cosmological accounts of World Soul’s ontological primacy and greater dignity over individuals and her providential care “for all that is soulless”4 with the Alcibiades’ identification of the imperatives γνῶθι σαντόν and ἐπιμέλεσθαι ἐαντοῦ, which both direct the individual soul to her essence, rather than to what belongs to her.5 In other words, what is at stake in these aporiai about the soul is the right interpretation of Plato. Proceeding by means of a kind of sic et non structure, Plotinus first addresses three objections drawn from

---

1 Alcibiades 124a8-10.
2 Alcibiades 133c1-2.
3 Thanks to Evan King for these insights on the Alcibiades Major, delivered in Dr Wayne Hankey’s Neoplatonism seminar on “Self and Mysticism,” September 28, 2011, Dalhousie University.
4 Treatise 27 (IV, 3) 1.33-34: ψυχή δὲ πᾶσα παντὸς ἐπιμέλειται τοῦ ἀψυχοῦ. See Phaedrus 246b6.
5 Alcibiades 127e9ff, 130eff.
Platonic cosmological considerations—*Philebus*,
*Timaeus* and *Phaedrus*—which appear to argue for the derivation of individual souls from the Soul of the All as parts from the whole, lending strength to a Stoic interpretation of Plato. The reply to these objections takes the form of a lengthy consideration of the various part-to-whole relations that could inhere between World Soul and individual souls (chapters 2-6), given that World Soul and individual souls share the same form (ὦμοιωθητικά, 2.2, 34, 59; 6.1). It becomes clear that Soul remains something that both World Soul and individual souls participate in, herself remaining separated from all body, “herself by herself” (αὐτή ἀπ’ ἑαυτῆς, 2.57; τὸ ἐν ἑυ’ ἑαυτῷ μὴ πίπτον εἰς σῶμα, 4.14-15), the cause of both World Soul and individual souls’ being many-from-one, of their “living together with each other” (συνούσας ἀλήθαίς, 4.17) as theorems of one science (2.55-57; 5.14-18).

It also becomes clear that because of her rational principle, her trace of Intellect, Soul’s unity underlies even the diversity of her functions. Further, it is because of this rationality’s derivation from the Intelligible that all the individual manifestations of Soul which share in this rationality must be whole manifestations, each individual soul being fundamentally a unity unto herself, rather than a part of Soul. The diversity of functions—nutritive, motive, and aesthetic—by which each individual soul and the Soul of the All ”take care” of their respective bodies, marks “what belongs to us” (τὰ ἕμετέρα), while participation in “pure Intellect” through the dianoetic activity by

1 *Philebus* 30a5-6.
2 *Timaeus* 90c8-d1. See also ibid., 30b-d.
3 *Phaedrus* 246b6.
5 See also *Treatise 6* (IV, 8) 3.10-13: “there had to be many souls and one soul, and the many different souls springing from the one, like the species of one genus, some better and others worse, some more intelligent and some whose intelligence is less actualized.”
6 Taking Harder’s addition of ἀλήθαις.
7 See also *Treatise 49* (V, 3) 2.
8 See also *Treatise 49* (V, 3) 3.40-41: “But sensation seems always to be ours (ημετέρον), it
which our souls are ὀμοεἰδὲς with the undescended Soul, is what defines “us” (ἡμεῖς) (4.30-31). This distinction of activities marks the distinction between two different conceptions of soul, one which cannot admit of the possibility of self-knowledge, and one that can:

And if souls were like sense-perceptions, it would not be possible for each one of us to think himself (αὐτὸν νοεῖν), but [only the Soul of the All would do so]; but if thinking were proper to the soul (εἰ οἶκεία ἦν ἦ νοησίς), each soul would be independent (ἐφ’ ἐαυτῆς ἐκάστη).

This passage indicates that, in addition to the body allotted us by our “sister soul” (ψυχή ἀδελφή, 6.13), “what belongs to us” includes “another form of soul” (ἄλλο πνεῦμα οἴκος), the soul responsible for the lower capacities such as perception. It is this soul’s character, sensations and passions which are determined by “following the circuit of the All” (τὸ δὲ συνέπεσθαι τῇ τοῦ παντὸς περιφορᾷ, 7.20); through her inextricable connection to the body this soul maybe said to be a part of the whole. The soul to whom the possibility of self-knowledge belongs, however, is the soul who is a whole unto herself.

2.2.1.3.1 Philebus 30a: Soul, World Soul and Souls

Having replied therefore in general to the Stoic objections, showing that individual souls and World Soul share a common provenance in the Soul separate from all body, Plotinus goes on to address the three Platonic passages in detail. The first of the three Platonic passages in Treatise 27 (IV, 3) that pose difficulties for Plotinus is from the

is agreed—for we always perceive…"

1 Treatise 40 (V, 3) 3.15-21.
2 Treatise 27 4.30-31; Treatise 52 (II, 3) 9.14-39; 49 (V, 3) 3.35-45.
3 Treatise 27 (IV, 3) 3.27-28.
4 See also 33 (II, 9) 18.16; Wypkje Helleman-Elgersma, Soul-Sisters: A Commentary on Enneads IV 3 (27), 1-8 of Plotinus (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1980), 57.
Philebus. It appears to indicate that individual rational souls come from World Soul, as their bodies come from her body:¹

Where did [our body] get a soul, unless the body of the All were ensouled, since that body has the same things [as ours], and indeed, finer things in every way?

The Philebus passage itself is easily dealt with by a more careful contextual reading. Plato’s real point, Plotinus shows, is simply that, as there are individual souls within the All, so also the All itself must be alive and ensouled. There is, in other words, such a thing as a Soul of the All.² The Demiurge’s mixing-bowl from the Timaeus (41d7) accounts for the difference in dignity between the body of the Soul of the All and the bodies of individual intellective souls to which the Philebus passage points. Placed in its context and paired with the Timaeus, the Philebus passage thus does not necessitate understanding World Soul as equivalent to the ‘hypostasis’ Soul.³ Properly interpreted, the Philebus passage preserves the sense in which World Soul and individual souls may be understood as possessing the same form (ὁμοειδής, 2.2, 34, 59). Both look to the same thing, Intellect, to receive their form. As the most perfect beholder and therefore the most powerful maker,⁴ the leading part of the Soul of the All may become a model of virtue for the individual soul.

¹ Philebus 30a.
² Treatise 53 (I, 1) 7.1-7.
2.2.1.3.2 Timaeus: συμπαθεία

Our “sister soul” provides for us both our body and “another form of soul” which follows the circuit of the All and receives its character and passions from it (27 (IV, 3) 7.20). This is Plotinus’ interpretation of the following passage from the *Timaeus*:¹

> the motions that have an affinity to the divine part within us (συγγενείς εἰσιν κινήσεις) are the thoughts and revolutions of the universe (αἱ τοῦ παντὸς διανοήσεις καὶ περιφοραί). These motions each must follow (συνεπόμενον) in his mind, motions which were distorted around the time of his birth.

Plotinus interprets this passage from the *Timaeus* as showing that we “follow round the circuit of the All” (συνέπεσθαι τῇ τοῦ παντὸς περιφορᾷ), have our characters ordered by it (ἡθῆ ἐκείθεν κομίζεσθαι), and are affected by it (πᾶσχειν παρ’ αὐτοῖν) (27 (IV, 3) 7.20-21), a situation which may be characterized as the “sympathy” (συμπαθεία) which the lower soul that comes from the All shares with the All (8.1-2). But as we see in the *Timaeus* passage above, the imperative for the soul’s restoration to her original condition, the imperative to return to the ἡμεῖς, also involves a conscious recognition and use of this sympathy between the cosmos and the individual. The συμπαθεία inhering between the body of the All and individual bodies and between the lower soul of the All and individual nutritive and appetitive souls is a reflection and consequence of the kinship (συγγενεία) World Soul shares with rational souls. It belongs to World Soul to possess “unity, sameness, and likeness” (ἐν τῇ τοῦ παντὸς ψυχῇ τὸ ἐν καὶ ταύτων καὶ ὁμοίως, 28 (IV, 4) 17.36-37), and in this, the motion of the Same within her, both she and the individual soul who imitates her find their kinship in contemplation.²

---

¹ *Timaeus* 90c8-d1.
² See *Timaeus* 36d-37c. See also Republic VI 500c-d: “[The philosopher] as he looks at and studies things that are well-ordered and always the same…imitates them and tries to become like them (ἀφομοιοῦσθαι) as much as he can….Then the philosopher, by consorting with what is divine and ordered…himself becomes as divine and ordered as a human can be.” See Carlos Fraenkel, *Philosophical Religions from Plato to Spinoza: Reason, Religion and Autonomy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 52.
The Soul of the All is thus, through her virtuous example, a kind of mediator for any individual rational soul. These passages from the *Philebus* and the *Timaeus* uncover the implicit parallel between the introductions of Treatises 19 and 27. The noble ὅρεξις of World Soul for the intelligibles\(^1\)—her unceasing activity toward them—launches us as individual human souls away from τὰ ἡμετέρα, away from soul as principle to the principle of soul itself, Intellect and, ultimately, to the Good.\(^2\)

2.2.1.3.3 *Phaedrus* 246aff.

*Phaedrus* 246b6, “all soul cares for all that is soulless”, presents a more direct challenge than the *Philebus* to the imperative of the *Alcibiades* to “care for oneself”. In showing that this statement refers not only to World Soul’s activity, but to the activity of every perfect soul (27 (IV, 3) 7.18-19), Plotinus deepens this challenge. The solution in fact lies in the nature of the purified virtues, which belong to the “ancient state of the soul” (ἀρεταῖ μὲν δίᾳ τὸ ἀρχαῖον τῆς ψυχῆς).\(^3\)

Now the ethical imperative to “care for oneself” manifests itself throughout the *Alcibiades* as the cultivation of specific virtues. All four ‘cardinal’ virtues—δικαιοσύνη, ἀνδρεία, σωφροσύνη, and φρόνησις—receive mention in the dialogue. δικαιοσύνη is the first to be discussed (109b5ff). ἀνδρεία arises embedded in Socrates’ proof that the just is also always the advantageous (114d4-116a11). Then all four appear in the story of the boy raised in the Persian court (121e6-122a1). σωφροσύνη arises much later on, equated with self-knowledge in the discussion of the distinction between τὰ ἡμετέρα and ἡμεῖς and that distinction’s relation to the Delphic injunction (131b4-8). σοφία/φρόνησις arises last, in the analogy of the eye seeing itself as a seeing eye in the reflecting pupil of another eye (133b10-c6). σωφροσύνη is raised immediately after this, again in its identity with self-knowledge and the distinction between what belongs to us and who we are (133c18-19). The discussion turns to virtue in general (134b7-9), then to δικαιοσύνη καὶ

---

\(^1\) *Treatise* 19 (I, 2) 1.13-14.

\(^2\) *Treatise* 50 (III, 5) 3.36-38.

\(^3\) *Treatise* 52 (II, 3) 8.13-14.
σωφροσύνη (134c10-11), and finally again to δικαιοσύνη in Alcibiades’ promise to cultivate justice in himself (135e4-5).

σωφροσύνη clearly plays an important role in this interchange of the virtues throughout the Alcibiades. It is identified directly with the γνώθι σαυτόν at two crucial moments, and the second identification relates it directly to self-knowledge as the activity of the soul’s highest part in knowing and thinking (τὸ εἰδέναι τε καὶ φρονεῖν, 133c1-2). The virtue is thus central both to the dialogue’s initial negative moment, in which the soul is stripped of what belongs to her, and also to its secondary, positive moment of the soul’s conformation to Intellect.

As in the Charmides, σωφροσύνη is stripped of its aristocratic connotations of gentlemanly conduct1 to reveal a fundamental reflexive, inwardly oriented stance. This corresponds to that virtue’s purified character as described in Treatise 19 (I, 2) (ἡ εἰσώ πρὸς νοῦν στροφῆ)2 and as possessed by World Soul in Treatise 28 (IV, 4), where she is always self-directed (τὸ πρὸς αὐτό).3 The coincidence of the πρὸς νοῦν and the πρὸς αὐτό is crucial to the harmonizing act of σωφροσύνη as the achieved state of inward conversion. Hence Chapter 4 of Treatise 19 (I, 2), where Plotinus discusses the difference between the process of purification (ἡ κάθαρσις) and the achieved state of “having-been-purified” (τὸ κεκαθάρθαι), hangs on the virtue of σωφροσύνη understood as soul’s inward aspiration toward the Good.4 The movement from soul’s many “impressions” (τύποι) to the things themselves which are also within her is fundamentally a work of

---

1 Alcibiades 131b4-5; Charmides 159b3. Cf. Statesman 307a7-b7; Matthias Vorwerk, “Plato on Virtue: Definitions of ΣΩΦΡΟΣΥΝΗ in Plato’s Charmides and in Plotinus Enneads I.2 (19),” AJP 122.1 (2001): 36-37, 43.
2 Treatise 19 (I, 2) 6.23-26; 7.6-7.
3 Treatise 28 (IV, 4) 8.57-60.
“harmonisation”.¹ The harmonisation of the parts of soul that belongs to ἡ σωφροσύνη ἡ πολιτική² is but an image of this greater self-identification by which the soul comes to know intellect as “not another” (οὐκ ἄλλότριος).³

The inward turn (στροφή) of σωφροσύνη that effects the coincidence of νοῦς and self in the Alcibiades and in Treatise 19 (I,2) is crucially an activity, and a single one. The nature of virtue as a single activity is expressed in both the Platonic dialogue and the Plotinian treatise by δικαιοσύνη. When Alcibiades promises to “cultivate justice within” (ἐντεῦθεν τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἐπιμέλεσθαι, 135e4-5), he is replacing the “self” (ἐαυτόν) with the virtue which has come to be known, through the mediation of σωφροσύνη, as knowing and thinking (τὸ εἰδέναι τε καὶ φρονεῖν, 133c1-2). In Treatise 19, fully purified δικαιοσύνη is the soul’s “activity towards intellect” (τὸ πρὸς νοῦν ἐνεργεῖν, 6.23-34).⁴

The justice of the political man, by which each of the several parts of the soul attends to its own respective business, is a mere image of the purified soul’s single activity towards intellect, whose activity is also one (6.20-22). Similarly, the Soul of the All in Treatise 28 (IV, 4) has one work: “for it does not sometimes look there and sometimes not; for if it left off looking it would be perplexed; for there is one soul and one work.”⁵

The heavenly bodies manifest this singleness of purpose, moving along concerned only with their own affairs (τὰ αὐτῶν πρᾶττοντα),⁶ and not in order to cover distance. Their business (τὸ ἔργον αὐτῶις) is not the sights they pass; their mind is on other things.⁷ This is their justice. In this equivalence of the δικαιοσύνη and self in act, therefore, we find the reconciliation of the cosmological and the individual significance of ἐπιμέλεσθαι in the Phaedrus and the Alcibiades.

¹ Treatise 19 (I, 2) 4.24-25.
² Treatise 19 (I, 2) 1.18.
³ Treatise 19 (I, 2) 4.26-27.
⁴ Note also the frequency of ἐνεργεῖν in chapter 4 of Treatise 19 (I, 2).
⁵ Treatise 28 (IV, 4) 10.14-16.
⁶ Cf. Phaedrus 247a4-7.
⁷ Treatise 28 (IV, 4) 8.34-41.
Though “soul cares for all that is soulless,”¹ governing the body, nonetheless World Soul is not in any way affected by the body she rules.² World Soul is present to her universe and masters it, but does not belong to it and is not herself mastered by it (ἐμψυχὸς τῷ τοιοῦτῳ τρόπῳ, ἐχὼν ψυχὴν οὐχ αὐτοῦ, ἀλλ’ αὐτῷ, κρατοῦμενος οὐ κρατῶν, καὶ ἐχὸμενος ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐχὼν, 9.34-37).³ The unaffected activity of the soul oriented to her principle operates as mastery on the things below her.

Purified courage in Treatise 19 (I, 2) takes the form of complete ἀπάθεια (6.25-26), of which heroic deeds which fear not death but only shame are imperfect instances.⁴ The noetic paradigm goes still further, making ἀπάθεια an image of “immateriality and abiding pure by itself” (τὸ δὲ οἶνον ἢ ἀνυλότης καὶ τὸ ἐφ’ αὐτοῦ μένειν καθαρόν, 7.6-7). This reflexive “abiding” (μένειν) which is central to the notion of courage in Treatise 19 (I, 2) is also linked in Treatise 27 (IV, 3) to the fecundity that results from inward conversion. The Soul of the All, “abiding in herself (μένονα οὖν ἐν αὐτῇ), makes, and the things which she makes come to her, but the particular souls themselves go to the things” (27 (IV, 3) 6.24-25). The degree to which the individual soul imitates, holds to, and achieves the ἀπάθεια of the Soul of the All is none other than the degree to which she is free from the cycle of reincarnation and the punishment exacted by the “inescapable divine law” (ἀναπόδραστος θείος νόμος, 24.10-11), from the “justice in the nature of things” (παρὰ τῆς ἐν τοῖς οὖσι δίκης, 24.8-9).⁵

Courage as World Soul’s unaffected “abiding” firmly in her vision of Intellect has also to do with the focus in Treatises 27 and 28 (IV, 3-4) on soul’s proper relation to the faculty of memory. In mythological terms, the shade of the human in Hades is bound precisely by its memories of “everything which the man had done or experienced” (πάντα, ὅσα ἐπηράξεν ἠ ἐπιθεῖν ὁ ἀνθρώπος, 27 (IV, 3) 27.16-17). All these attachments to the body

¹ Phaedrus 246b6; Treatise 27 (IV, 3) 1.34-35; 7.13.
² Treatise 27 (IV, 3) 4.22-38; 6.11-15; 7.11-18; 12.8-12; 17.28-31; 28 (IV, 4) 23-26.
³ Cf. Treatise 6 (IV, 8) 2.15ff.
⁴ See Alcibiades 115b1-116a11; 122a7-8. Cf. Treatise 19 (I, 2) 5.12-16.
⁵ Cf. Treatise 28 (IV, 4) 45.28-29.
and to the memory that relies on the body’s perception of the passage of time amount
rather to a turn away from and ignorance of soul’s ancient nature and signature,
separated intellectual activity. This is Plotinus’ interpretation of the “river of Lethe” (ὁ
tῆς Ληθῆς ποτάμος, 26.55-56) in the Myth of Er of the Republic: the body’s instability, its
flux and flow, is itself the river that causes forgetfulness. A greater freedom lies in the
memories pertaining to the multiple lives lived previous to the one most recently
discarded (27.17-20), as this involves the soul’s outlasting of the body. Ultimately,
however, “l’âme bonne est oublireuse” (32.18)\textsuperscript{1}, forgetful not only of “human concerns”
(ἄνθρωπεια σπουδάσματα, 32.16), but of the concerns of each of the bodies she has
inhabited: her recollection tends toward the perspective of the whole through the
multiplicity of her lives. Through the recognition of the multiplicity of her powers, soul
is led to the unity that underlies them and abides their coming to be and passing away
(32.10-24).

The character of purified courage leads us at the end of Treatise 27 (IV, 3) to σοφία, in the
articulation of the crucial difference between shade and soul, between the political man
and the contemplative sage:\textsuperscript{2}

That Heracles [i.e. the shade Heracles of Odyssey 11] might talk of his
heroic deeds (ἄνδραγαθίας ἕαυτον), but the one who holds these to be
unimportant and has been transposed to a holier place (εἰς ἄγιώτερον
tότον) and has come to be in the intelligible and has been stronger than
Heracles in those contests in which the wise compete (ἰσχύσας τοῖς
ἄλθοις, οία ἄθελώναι σοφοὶ)...it is consistent to say that this soul will
contemplate those things and act among those things (ἐκεῖνα θεωρεῖν καὶ
περὶ ἐκεῖνα ἐνεργεῖν).

Porphyry’s mid-sentence division of the last section of Treatise 27 from the first section of
Treatise 28 (marked here by the ellipsis) recognizes not only a shift from τὰ ἠμέτερα to
ἡμεῖς, but also from ἀπάθεια to ὀρασίς, from soul’s powers and mastery to her

\textsuperscript{1} Trouillard trans., La purification plotinienne, 143.
\textsuperscript{2} Treatises 27 (IV, 3) 32.24 –28 (IV, 4) 1.1-4.
fundamental, defining activity in act. The soul’s purified σοφία καὶ φρόνησις in Treatise 19 (I, 2) is similarly equated with her sight toward Intellect (πρὸς νοῦν ἡ ὀρασίς, 19 (I, 2) 7.7-8). This ὀρασίς is considered in Treatise 28 precisely as the sight of World Soul (Zeus) and the heavenly bodies in their perpetual circular motion: they always see god (28, (IV, 4) 7.1-2).¹

The reconciliation of the cosmological to the ethical account of “care” thus amounts to none other than the articulation of the relation of Necessity to the soul’s finding her freedom in the choice and exercise of virtue. This requires an account of the kind of virtue the Soul of the All possesses, for understanding World Soul’s activity as perfectly virtuous is central to seeing fate as ordered to providence, the lower causes as ordered to the higher. “Virtue belongs to the free man” (ἐλευθεροπρεπὴς δὲ ἡ ἀρετή, 135c6), and yet, as Socrates insists, Alcibiades’ “escape” from the slavery of vice depends on God (ἐάν θεὸς ἐθέλη, 135d6). As World Soul and individual souls share the same form, an individual soul’s catching sight of World Soul’s self-ordering to Intellect corresponds to the Alcibiades’ analogy of the seer coming to see himself as seeing in the seeing eye of another; the knower comes to know himself as knower in the knowing of another. To understand fate as ordered to providence, and World Soul’s virtue as the cause of this order, is itself a providential insight that points to the means of Alcibiades’—and our—escape: the acquisition and free exercise of the purifying, intellectualizing virtues which we share with “leading” (ἡγούμενον), more divine (θειότερον) part of the Soul of the All.³

¹ Cf. Treatise 28 (IV, 4) 25.3-4.
² See Treatise 39 (VI, 8) 5.34-37: “If then virtue is a kind of other intellect (οἶον νοῦς τις ἄλλος ἑστὶν ἡ ἀρετή), a state which in a way intellectualizes the soul (ἐξίς οἶον νοωθήναι τὴν ψυχὴν ποιοῦσα), again, being in our power does not belong to the realm of action but in intellect at rest from actions.”
³ Cf. Treatise 52 (II, 3) 9.1-47.
Let us consider this notion of the World Soul as the higher ‘other’ in *Treatises* 27 and 28 a little further in relation to the *Alcibiades*. The radical reversal of the traditional interpretation of the Delphic command effected in the *Alcibiades*, by which the human is assimilated to god through his self-identification with the highest part of soul, requires the presence and providential care of another, specifically the good and wise friend or lover. Socrates, the only one who has ever truly loved Alcibiades—not his body or his other possessions, but Alcibiades himself—is the only one who can awaken Alcibiades to himself as a thinking, knowing (τὸ εἰδέναι τε καὶ φρονεῖν, 133e) soul through his own exercise of those very activities in the presence of Alcibiades (131b-132a). In Aristotle this friendship between the higher and the lower is first of all internal; the well-reared, virtuous young man is a friend to himself through his obedience to the authoritative element within him.¹ His friendship with another is in fact an extension of this self-relation, by which the love of the good in each may be increased and their contemplation extended.² Plotinus’ treatment of World Soul in *Treatises* 27 and 28 in fact makes use of both the external and internal διὰ γὰρ of the “other”. First, it is in looking to the powers and activities of the Soul of the All and to the motions of the heavenly bodies that we come both to the recognition of what is “our own”—what is given to us from the All—and also through their contemplation to the contemplative activity that is in fact “ourselves”. Second, the relation of higher and lower within the All itself, whereby the unchanging stability of its intelligence produces and orders the variety and divided intelligence of the universal living being’s many parts,³ alerts us to the similar relation that inheres within ourselves:⁴

---

¹ *EN* IX 1168b-1169a.
² *EN* IX 1170a-b; 11721b-1172a.
³ *Treatise* 28 (IV, 4) 11.6-28; 17.34-39.
⁴ *Treatise* 27 (IV, 3) 32.7-10. Cf. 28 (IV, 4) 11.12-14; 12.39-49.
it is proper for both the inferior (χειρόνα) and the better (μάλιστα) [soul] to aspire to the activities of the memory of the better, whenever the latter is itself of good quality (ἀστεία): for someone can be rather good (ἀμείνων) from the beginning and can also become so as a result of education by the more excellent [soul].

So the transition from Heracles boasting of his heroic deeds to the sage’s contemplation that bridges the end of Treatise 27 and the beginning of Treatise 28 is in fact fundamentally an internal one.

2.2.1.3.4 Alcibiades as the Praktikos

Plotinus rarely cites the Alcibiades directly. Chapter 44 of Treatise 28 (IV, 4) is thus a rare moment:¹

everything which is directed to something else is enchanted by something else; for that to which it is directed enchants and draws it; but only that which is self-directed (τὸ πρός αὐτό) is free from enchantment. For this reason every action (πρᾶξις) is under enchantment, and the whole life of the practical man (πᾶς ὁ τῶν πρακτικῶν βίος): for he is moved to that which charms him. This is the reason for saying, “The citizen body of great-hearted Erectheus’ is fair of face.” … Contemplation alone remains incapable of enchantment because no one who is self-directed (πρὸς αὐτόν) is subject to enchantment, for he is one (εἰς γὰρ ἔστι), and that which he contemplates is himself (τὸ θεωροῦμενον αὐτός ἔστι), and his reason is not deluded, but he makes what he ought and makes his own life and work (καὶ τὸ ἄλλ’ ὅ δεῖ ποιεῖ, καὶ τὴν αὐτὸν ἑωήν καὶ τὸ ἔργον ποιεῖ).

Socrates cites this same Homeric passage in his conversation with Alcibiades, using it to warn Alcibiades against the being drawn into the political life of Athens for love of the citizens without proper training (γύμνασαι).² Plotinus takes this Platonic allegorization of Homer one step further, turning it into a diagnosis of the plight of every practical

---

¹ Treatise 28 (IV, 4) 43.16-21, 44.1-4.
² Alcibiades 132a5. Cf. Iliad 2.547.
man. On the other side of desire and passion, World Soul’s self-directed inward stance beckons the individual human away from the “magic of nature” (ἡ τῆς φύσεως γνηστεία, 44.30) to the freedom of contemplation. It lies beyond the transmigrations of bodies which express the soul’s operating according to its many lower faculties. “The soul which neither chooses what is better here below, nor has any share in what is worse, changes to another place, a pure one, and has the position which it chose.” (45.45-48) Treatise 28 (IV, 4) thus ends with the freedom of the Soul of the All as an image for the freedom possible for the human who chooses well.

2.2.1.4 Treatises 27 and 28: Conclusion

Carrying the Delphic command in its Alcibidean interpretation through to the end of Treatises 27 and 28 reveals the extent to which Plotinus’ account of World Soul corresponds to the role of the other, wiser soul which Socrates plays in the Alcibiades. In these collections of aporiai concerning the soul the diverse powers possessed by individual souls—nutrition, perception, appetite, spirit, imagination, memory, calculation and intellection—are considered against how World Soul, the heavenly bodies, and even the Earth possess (or do not possess) them. The cosmological perspective of Platonic dialogues such as the Philebus, the Timaeus, and especially the Phaedrus, is brought to bear on the exhortation to the individual soul, γνῶθι σαυτόν. In having us immediately consider the virtue of the Soul of the All and the wonderful wisdom of its “leading part”, Treatise 19 (I, 2) implicitly assumes the cosmological application of the γνῶθι σαυτόν; in light of this perspective the limitations of the “political virtue” of practical men are evident. The gaze and activity of World Soul and the heavenly bodies toward Intellect propels Treatise 19 past a civic understanding of virtue toward something more inward and intellectual that nonetheless does not despise the logic of procession and the world that has come forth from it. In the opening paragraph of Treatise 19, therefore, we can detect the seeds of Plotinian poetic contemplation which Treatises 27-29 fill out in their consideration of World Soul and

---

1 Treatise 28 (IV, 4) 22.4ff.
souls. It will be the work of the masterful Treatise 30 (III, 8) to develop the relation between ποίησις and θεωρία still more fully.¹

2.2.2 Treatise 33 (II, 9): Against the ‘Gnostic’ Conception of World Soul

Treatises 27 and 28 point to and describe World Soul’s virtue in such a way as makes its imitation desirable, bringing the individual rational soul to recognize her inner dignity. Soul came to know herself as her intellectual activity through seeing that activity in exemplary form in the heavens and the All. Treatise 33 (II, 9), on the other hand, exhorts this imitation explicitly for almost the opposite reason, against those who would exalt themselves, in the arrogance of their particularity, beyond their proper sphere and without due measure (9.27ff), thereby confusing the logic of procession and return through purification (8.34-39; 13.1-6).²

As in Treatises 27 and 28, what is at stake in part in Treatise 33 (II, 9) is the right interpretation of Plato, particularly of the Phaedrus (246c) and Timaeus (39e) (33 (II, 9) 6.14ff). Contrary to the views of certain Platonizing Gnostics within Plotinus’ company,³ the soul that “has shed its wings” (πτερωρνήσασαν τὴν ψυχήν, 4.1)⁴ is not to be understood as the “hypostatic” separated Soul, nor as the Soul of the All, but only as individual, particular souls. Individual, particular souls are bound to their bodies in a way that the Soul of the All is not (7.11-18). Using Gnostic terminology against itself,⁵

---

¹ On the development in Plotinus’ thought from Treatise 6 (IV, 8) to Treatise 30 (III, 8) of the non-reflection (i.e. discursivity) of Nous/Soul into an “effective-productive-contemplation” see Jean Marc Narbonne, Plotinus in Dialogue with the Gnostics (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 122-125. Narbonne here notes the absence of this productive contemplation in Treatise 19 (I, 2); however, as I have endeavoured to show here, the development in the later treatises of the activities of World Soul and nature which culminates in Treatise 30 (III, 8) has its tiny seeds in the “wonderful wisdom”(φρόνησις θανυμαστή) of World Soul with which Treatise 19 (I, 2) begins.

² For an overview of the attitude of some Gnostic texts toward the cosmos, see Narbonne, Plotinus in Dialogue with the Gnostics, 108-11.

³ See ibid., 68-69; 119-120.

⁴ Cf. Phaedrus 246c; Treatise 27 (IV, 3) 7.18-19.

⁵ By the evidence of Treatise 33 itself, νευσίς appears to be a Gnostic term to describe the
Plotinus turns the Soul of the All’s demiurgic making and governing into the diffusive overflow of her erotic “inclination” towards the intelligible world (οὐ μᾶλλον νεῦει ἐκεί, 4.11-12); through her governance she “manifests the greatness of the intelligible nature” (ἐνδεικνυμένην τῆς νοητῆς φύσεως τὸ μέγεθος, 8.10-11) and an “extraordinary wisdom” (σοφίαν ἀμήχανον, 8.15).1

In Treatises 27 and 28, the powers and operations of the individual human soul find their dignity in relation to the Soul of the All’s universal and timeless paradigmatic operations (in the case of memory, for example). Likewise, in Treatise 33 (II, 9), human virtue finds itself defined within the context of the virtue of the All and of the highest souls within it, the heavenly bodies (8.31-39). The criticism against the Gnostics that “they have made no study concerning virtue” (τὸ μηδένα λόγον περὶ ἀρετῆς πεποιήθαι, 15.27-28) is thus a thorough-going one, revealing the degree to which this group has failed to make any study of the soul, of its parts or diverse operations or affections, for even the study of her lower attributes would contribute to an understanding of her essence and most excellent activities.2 A study of the soul such as that in Treatises 27 through 29 (IV, 3-5) is, as we have seen, itself a study in virtue, one that propels the soul through and past the measured control of her partitions to her underlying unity and purity in self-directed intellectual activity. Without any study of the soul, no purifying self-knowledge is possible, and knowledge itself becomes reduced to a murky memory of an utterance (μεμνημένον ὄνοματος, 15.36-37) rather than an active and internally perceived presence: “without true virtue the ‘god’ that is spoken is merely a name” (ἄνευ δὲ ἀρετῆς ἀληθινῆς θεὸς λεγόμενος ὄνομα ἐστιν, 15.40).


1 Treatise 33 (II, 9) 2.10-20; 3.8-12; 4.15-17. Cf. ἀμήχανον τὸ ἀγαθὸν, Republic VI. 509a6; ἀμήχανον τὸ ἐκεί κάλλος, Symposium 21e2; Treatise 33 (II, 9) 17.36.

2 Aristotle, De Anima I.1 402b21-23.

3 Cf. Phaedo 82a.
In its emphasis on the piety and praise due to the heavens Treatise 33 (II, 9) recalls the beginning of Treatise 19 (I, 2), where, following the Theaetetus, becoming godlike means becoming “just and holy according to wisdom” (δίκαιοι καὶ ὁσιοὶ μετὰ φρονήσεως, 19 (I, 2) 1.4-5). As we have seen, in Treatise 19 (I, 2) the fact that ‘evils are here’ (τὰ κακὰ ἐνταῦθα, 1.1) does not amount to a contempt for this world. The ἐνταῦθα is reiterated within the first ten lines with a much more positive connotation, as our finding ourselves ‘here’ becomes sufficient reason to consider the Soul of the All’s ἡγούμενον as the first candidate for the goal of assimilation (καὶ γὰρ εὐλογον ἐνταῦθα ὅτας ἡγουμένων ὁμοιώσθαι, 1.9-10). The logic of self-diffusive goodness must ultimately govern the flight if it is to be a pious one.

In Treatise 33 (II, 9) the contrast between this attitude of Plotinus and that of the ‘Platonizing Gnostics’ toward this flight could not be more deliberately drawn:¹

Not honouring (οὐ τιμῶντες) this handiwork (ταύτην τὴν δημιουργίαν) or this earth, [the Platonizing Gnostics] say that a new earth has come to be for them, for which they will depart from here (ἐντεῦθεν ἀπελεύσονται): and that this is the principle (λόγον) of this world. And yet why do they need to come to be there (ἐκεῖ) in the paradigm of the world, which they hate?

2.3 The Cosmological Picture: Conclusion

In Treatises 27 and 28, World Soul is the higher ‘other’ of the Alcibiades, in whom individual souls may come to know themselves as knowing. As such, she is the crucial agent in the human soul’s coming to understand fate as ordered to providence. In Treatise 33 (II, 9) the observer who does not despise the heavens in their eternal motions is freed to come to this providential insight. To recognize προοιμία in the enduring presence of the intelligible, manifested visibly by the life of the All, is the essence of

¹ Treatise 33 (II, 9) 5.24-28.
piety (ἐὐσέβεια). The ordered whole “has not been abandoned and will not be abandoned” (ἀλλ’ ὁ γε κόσμος ἐκείθεν ἔχει καὶ οὐκ ἀπολέλειπται). Once again, the logic of self-diffusive goodness, this time understood as enduring presence or remaining, governs the mind’s ascent from lower to higher forms of thinking and being. Coming to recognize the god’s enduring presence to his world is the beginning of an actual participation in the work of προνοία itself, within oneself, as well as for another. In mythological terms, “it is not lawful for there to be envy among the gods” (μὴ θέμις φθόνον ἐν τοῖς θεοῖς εἶναι, 17.17); becoming a god for us also must mean imparting the self-diffusive goodness acquired only through contemplation’s productive activity.

Treatise 19 (I, 2) thus begins with a glance to the providential activity of World Soul in order to get us past merely human virtue. Plotinus’ view, then, is decidedly not anthropocentric; the perspective of the human is necessarily partial and therefore fate-bound, while the perspective of soul, coincident in its purest form with the Soul of the All, is the perspective of providence. Clement of Alexandria’s emphatic anthropocentrism provides a striking point of contrast to Plotinus’ account of World Soul as the human’s guide to the providential viewpoint:

Certainly [God] heals the soul through herself (καθ’αὐτῆν)...we receive through His good ordering (παρὰ τῆς εὐταξίας) the best and firmest order (τάξιν). First this good ordering occupied itself with casting the sun’s rotations around the world and the heaven, and the courses of the rest of the stars, for the sake of man (διὰ τὸν ἀνθρώπον). Then it concerned itself with man himself, for whom it had undertaken all its labours (περὶ ὅν ἦ πᾶσα σπουδὴ καταγίνεται). Considering him its most

1 Treatise 33 (II, 9) 16.15-17.
2 Cf. Phaedrus 247a7; see also Timaeus 29d7-30c1; Aristotle, Metaphysics I.2 982b32-983a4.
important work, it guides his soul in the direction of wisdom (φρόνησις) and temperance (σωφροσύνη), and equips his body with beauty and harmony. Finally, into the actions of mankind it breathes in (ἐνέπνευσεν) uprightness (κατορθούν) and its own good order (τὸ εὐτακτὸν...τὸ αὐτῆς).

For Plotinus, the human is not the most important work. Civic virtue and purificatory virtue are lower forms of World Soul’s purely contemplative virtue, and it is the task of Treatise 19 (I, 2) to locate their place relative to her activity.
Chapter 3
Civic Virtue in Treatises 19 (I, 2) and 20 (I, 3)

The scale of virtues outlined in Treatise 19 (I, 2) points ever toward an increase in integration in a way that pushes the soul beyond the realm of the political and the human; ultimately it must be said that Plotinus leaves the political behind in all its necessarily dappled variety. The sage “will not live the life of the good man which civic virtue requires. He will leave that behind, and choose another, the life of the gods: for it is to them, not to good men, that we are to be made like” (19 (I, 2) 7.24-27). While it is certainly true that this push beyond the political will be redressed in later Neoplatonic thinkers such as Porphyry, Macrobius, Iamblichus, Proclus, Olympiodorus and Damascius, so that the value of human community and particularly the role of the ruler within that community is significantly elevated,¹ nonetheless the question of the role and value of “political virtue” in Plotinus’ thought and its implications for the sage’s ethical action and care for others remains the subject of some debate.²


I wish here to consider, first, how civic virtue is introduced, characterized and
superseded, in light of World Soul’s small but important role in the beginning of the
Treatise, outlined in the previous chapter; second, the degree to which Plotinus’ account
of civic virtue in particular and the grades of virtue in general depends not only on the
Republic and Phaedo, but also on other Platonic dialogues, especially the Phaedrus,
Symposium and Laws; and, third, the treatment of civic virtue in other Plotinian treatises,
especially Treatise 20 (I, 3), with which Treatise 19 (I, 2) should be read.

Plotinus’ aim in Treatise 19 (I, 2) concerning ἡ ἀρετή ἡ πολιτική is to give a clear
articulation of that virtue’s important but subordinate place in the hierarchy of being.
This means considering several Platonic accounts of virtue in light of one another, in
varying degrees of explicitness. The net result of these considerations is that civic virtue
is revealed to stand near the beginning of the soul’s spiritual ascent, important by reason
of the measured stability that it imparts to the soul, through the government of φρόνησις
that its definition requires, but nonetheless a lower species of purificatory virtue, and
not the virtue constitutive of likeness to god, except derivatively. Its categorization,
however, as a lower species of purificatory virtue, rather than a separate category from
purification, is important to understanding its worth in Plotinus’ thought.

3.1 Civic Virtue Finds its Place Relative to World Soul and Intellect: 1.1-20

As we saw in Chapter One, though civic virtue is the lowest ‘grade’ of virtue in the
Plotinian system, it is not the kind of virtue with which Plotinus begins Treatise 19 (I, 2).
The question of what δομιωσίς θεώ might mean, given its context in the Theaetetus
passage with which the treatise begins, drew us to a consideration well beyond the
theatre of human political life, to the cosmic picture, to World Soul, the virtues proper to
it, and its desire (δρέξις) for the intelligibles as the principle of both the visible world’s
order and ours. Guided by the traces of World Soul’s φρόνησις, evident in the world in
which we find ourselves, the individual soul in her desiring ‘part’ finds herself

Schniewind, L’éthique du sage chez Plotin” (Review), Bryn Mawr Classical Review
2004.05.02 (2004).
reoriented to her proper objects, the possession of which amounts to none other than the exercise of her own highest activity. Only these noetic objects, actively possessed, can provide her with an enduring satisfaction.¹

Having established that for Soul both virtue and the direction of her desire lie properly in her principle, Intellect, Plotinus asks whether Nous itself (ἐκεῖνο) has the virtues (I, 2) 1.15-16). The answer here in chapter one of Treatise 19 is as yet incomplete. What is certain is that the virtues “called political”, at least these (τὰς ἐπὶ πολιτικὰς λεγομένας ἀρετὰς), do not belong to Intellect. This qualified answer produces the first explicit, complete enumeration and definition of the four ‘cardinal’ virtues familiar from the Republic, φρόνησις, ἀνδρία, σωφροσύνη, and δικαιοσύνη,² as they relate to the tripartite structure of both city and soul and the overarching right order of ruler to ruled within each. As it was debatable (ἀμφισβήτησιμον, 1.11) whether World Soul possessed the virtues according to this same tripartite structure, given that it is the All and nothing can come to it from outside that it might either desire or fear, still less likely (οὐκ εὐλογον, 1.16) is it that tripartition and the virtues which pertain to a logic of internal agreement and harmony would adequately describe the excellence of Intellect’s partless unity. So the first description of each virtue’s character in its political mode requires its immediate exclusion from the dignity of Intellect.

This initial, qualified denial of virtue in Nous completes the movement by which the negation of desire and fear relative to exterior objects in World Soul led us to consider her as turned inward, desiring what is within and above her in her principle. What Émile Bréhier has pointed out about the aim of the treatise as a whole is evident here in these first twenty lines: the definition of virtue as a) an acquired (ἐπακτόν) state of soul and b) what belongs to the composite (συναμφότερον) of soul and body requires its

¹ Cf. Treatise 46 (I, 4) 6.17-18.
² Republic IV 427e10-11.
exclusion from the very higher modes of being to which the *Theaetetus* exhorts us.\(^1\) Virtue, then, is the means to a likeness within which it itself has no place.

### 3.2 Two Kinds of Virtue: 1.21-3.10

At this point in the treatise, two kinds of virtue present themselves: the civic ones and “the greater virtues which have the same name” (τὰς μείζους τῷ αὐτῷ ὁνόματι χρωμένας, 19 (I, 2) 1.22-23). Plotinus’ discussion at this juncture in chapter one requires some unpacking, as he is up to several things at once, and there are some difficulties in the text. Three problems may be distinguished here, the considerations of which are in fact sustained to the end of the treatise. First, given the negative context in which political virtue has been introduced, a certain effort to “save the appearances” is required, as tradition (ἡ φήμη) calls men who possess political virtue ‘godlike’ (θείους, 1.23-26), even if this is not properly, in Plotinus’ eyes, the Platonic position (3.9-10). Second, the nature of these “greater” virtues must be articulated: just what are they? Third, how can civic virtue produce likeness to god without in fact being possessed by god himself?

#### 3.2.1 The Godlike Political Men of Tradition: 1.21-26

The tradition of calling statesmen, kings and law-makers “godlike” by reason of their various actions to and for the city is long and well established on the authority of the likes of Homer and Hesiod. In fact, Plotinus’ consideration of the πολιτικός/πρακτικός in general throughout the *Enneads* is consistently shaped by Homer, who is almost always mediated through Plato. Homer is called upon to give the clearest testimony of the πρακτικός’ godlike nature: because of his law-making King Minos is said in the *Odyssey* to be “the familiar friend of Zeus” (Μίνως δαρμοτής τοῦ Διώς, 9 (VI, 9) 7.23-24).\(^2\) Yet, as we saw in Chapter One, following the lead of the Alcibiades, Plotinus also engages Homer, allegorically interpreted, to warn of the dangerous charms of the

---

1 Émile Bréhier, “ΑΠΕΤΑΙ ΚΑΘΑΡΣΕΙΩ,” 238-239.
practical life: “The citizen body of great-hearted Erectheus is fair-faced” (τὸ εὐπρόσωπος γὰρ ὁ τοῦ μεγαλήτορος Ἑρεχθέως δήμος, 28 (IV, 4) 43.19-22). In other places, the danger and the derivative glory of πραξίς are brought together in Homer’s Heracles, the archetypal practical man whose shade stalks Hades while the hero himself resides among the gods.

Among these various employments of Homer by Plotinus to describe the “divine” quality of political men, the use here in chapter one is brief, merely evoking, rather than citing, the examples of Heracles and Minos. However, it should alert us to the tone and mode of the treatise at this point. Plotinus’ style here is highly discursive, proceeding by question and answer in a manner reminiscent of a conversation between him and an interlocutor, perhaps a student.

3.2.2 The “Greater Virtues”: 1.21-2.4

Just what are these virtues which are said to be “greater” than the civic ones? Given the division Plotinus makes in chapter three between civic and “purificatory” virtues, it is not unreasonable to think that he anticipates that division here. This is how Armstrong, for instance, appears to understand the flow of the argument, so that lines 26-27 (ἀλλ’ ἐκατέρως γε συμβαίνει ἁρετάς ἔχειν καὶ εἰ μὴ τοιαύτας) require no addition of a subject and thus may be translated as something like “it is possible to have virtues on

---

1 Iliad 2.547; cf. Alcibiades I 132a5.
3 There may also be a hint of a reference here to the end of the Meno.
both levels, even if not the same kind of virtues."¹ The Henry-Schwyzer edition, however, reads the subject of this sentence as the ἐκείνο of line 15—Intellect, that is—so that the sense of the sentence is “But whatever the case [concerning whether or not any likeness may come through the possession of civic virtue], it happens that god possesses the virtues, even if not the same ones [as political men].”² On this latter interpretation, the “better virtues” are those tentatively ascribed to Intellect: not the purificatory virtues which will be described in chapter three on Platonic authority, but rather, as will become apparent by the beginning of chapter two, the intelligible archetypes themselves.

This reading makes far better sense of the series of analogies (heat to what is heated, fire to what it heats, and intelligible house to perceptible house, 1.31-45) which follow this series of questionings. These analogies discursively³ give way to each other as an appropriate model for the soul’s divinisation through her participation in the civic virtue which Intellect does not possess is gradually approximated.⁴ The first analogy, suggesting that the relation is like that between what is heated and the presence of heat, which itself does not need to be heated, does not work because while heat may be acquired (ἐπακτὸν) by the thing that is heated, it is also a natural quality (σύμφωνον) inherent in the source (i.e. fire); civic virtue, however, has already been denied of Intellect. The second analogy, that fire makes something other than itself hot, but does not itself need fire to be hot, would elevate virtue to the level of god, which is also not desirable.⁵ What is necessary is to demonstrate that what civic virtue gives to soul—her

¹ MacKenna shares this interpretation: “on both levels there is virtue for us, though not the same virtue.” Stephen MacKenna, trans. Plotinus: The Enneads, John Dillon, ed. (London: Penguin, 1991), 16.
² Flamand’s French translation follows H-S here: see Brisson-Pradeau, 432 and 448n30; so does John Dillon’s English translation, “Plotinus, Philo and Origen,” 95.
⁴ See Dillon, “Plotinus, Philo and Origen,” 95. Dillon reads the καί at line 33 intensively: “and, more precisely...”
⁵ Though John Dillon rightly points out that Plotinus could push this particular analogy further by distinguishing between ‘hot’ as an acquired quality and as a causative one,
measure and order and harmony—is itself essentially predicable of that virtue, but not of the principle whence virtue comes. This is where the analogy of the perceptible to the intelligible house comes in.

The arrangement, order, and proportion (τάξις, κόσμος, συμμετρία, 1.45-46; cf. ὀμολογία, συμφωνία, 1.18-19) characteristic of the perceptible house do not exist in the Intelligible archetype. Plotinus is in fact quite emphatic on this point, enumerating the trio of τάξις, κόσμος and συμμετρία/ὀμολογία no less than three times, each time in a different order (1.45, 46-47, 47-48). The transition from συμμετρία to ὀμολογία—from the language of “proportion” to that of “agreement”—marks the addition of a further degree of precision to the analogy, a movement from the visible participation of the house to the invisible participation of the soul. Plotinus has already in an earlier treatise rejected the Stoic attribution of the beauty of virtue to a kind of “mechanistic and extrinsic” symmetry in the soul—a theory which verges too closely on a corporeal conception of virtue and of soul. ὀμολογία, on the other hand, is a word that more closely approximates the beauty proper to what is simple and one, and therefore more appropriately describes the unifying power of civic virtue in the soul governed by reason, as another early treatise attests: “the soul has virtue when it is unified into one thing and one agreement” (καὶ ἀρετὴ δὲ ψυχῆς, ὅταν εἰς ἕν καὶ εἰς μίαν ὀμολογίαν ἐνωθη). The analogy of the perceptible to the intelligible house, discursively unveiled,
and the small change in the wording by which the analogy’s application to virtue and
the soul is made more appropriate, thus makes virtue’s unifying power in the soul more
evident than the initial articulation of the four virtues’ roles given at 1.17-21.

Let us take this movement through analogy seriously, as a carefully articulated line of
questioning designed to draw the interlocutor away from a unitary Stoic understanding
of virtue that would make it the same for both god and man.1 Chapter one of Treatise 19
(I, 2) is thus a dialectical prologue that is also a preparation for the spiritual ascent which
comprises the rest of the treatise, as well as its attendant, Treatise 20 (I, 3). Through
World Soul as intermediary, we have been led as far as to admit that the god to whom
we may hope to be likened is not simply the “good men” whom tradition has taught us
to call “divine”, but Intellect, from whom the good men of the city also derive their
virtue.2 A brief glance toward the beginning of Treatise 20 (I, 3) further reveals the
anagogical method at work here in Treatise 19 (I, 2).

3.2.2.1 The Musician of Treatise 20 (I, 3) and Treatise 19 (I, 2) 1

In Treatise 20 (I, 3), on the authority of the Phaedrus (248d1-4), Plotinus sets out three
kinds of souls who have all, before their descent into the body of a human child, “seen
all or most things” in the intelligible world and are therefore capable of returning there:
the musician, the lover, and the philosopher (20 (I, 3) 1.6-10). The musician, who does
not naturally “go the upward way”, is the man who, though not “quite able to be moved
through [beauty in] himself” (ἀδυνατώσερον δὲ παρ’ αὐτοῦ), nonetheless is “ready to be
moved by what occurs in a way as its impressions” (ἔτοιμον δὲ ἐκ τῶν τυχόντων οἶον

---

1 See, for example, Plutarch, On Common Conceptions 1076a (SVF 3.246).
2 This in fact constitutes a constant refrain throughout the treatise. See 6.3, “Our concern,
though, is not to be out of sin, but to be god”; 7.24-28, “he will not live the life of the
good man which civic virtue requires. He will leave that behind, and choose another, the
life of the gods: for it is to them, not to good men, that we are to be made like.”
Through the well-formed quality of his “interior disposition”, therefore, the musician naturally inclines to what is harmonious and unified, “rhythmical and shapely” among exterior, perceptible things. Drawn and distracted as he is by one beautiful sensation after another, he is unable to discern the common term of beauty among them; he is governed by sensation rather than by thought. He must therefore “have the doctrines of philosophy implanted in him”; a force that leads to faith in the knowledge he already possesses without knowing it is the mode of education proper to him. This mode involves his being led through the proportions and analogies which he loves so much without knowing why to their ordering rational principles, and from there to the separated archetypes of both: from to to to (1.29-34).

Now this is precisely the mode of discourse with which Treatise 19 (I, 2) begins: the question of the likeness to god which civic virtue might produce is sought through a series of analogies which, as they grow in their precision, first unveil virtue’s relation to the physical symmetry which initially captures the musician’s attention (though through a different organ of sense, sight rather than sound); then draw him to his deeper love, harmony, to which he is already attuned; force him beyond harmony to virtue as the that causes harmony in the soul; and finally force him still further, beyond virtue as the of harmony to the principle, separate Intellect, which does not possess virtue in this way, though it causes it in the soul. Treatise 20 (I, 3) thus makes clear how the method of proceeding by analogy in Treatise 19 (I, 2) relates to the question of virtue and what the state of the soul who is to receive spiritual education in virtue must be. Plotinus’ final words of chapter one point to the degree to which the preparatory nature of Treatise 19’s introduction corresponds to the mode of the musician, and indicates that the rest of the treatise must now address itself to the lover: “it is necessary to induce

---

1 Cf. Vladimir Jankélévitch, Plotin, Énneades I, 3: Sur la dialectique, 34.
2 A similar movement, though expanded, may be observed in Treatise 1 (I, 6) 1-6.
persuasion by argument, not remaining content with force” (δε η δε πειθω επαγειν τω λόγω μη μένοντας ἐπί της βίας, 1.53-54).

3.2.3 Two Kinds of Likeness: 2.4-26

We have concluded above that the two kinds of virtue enumerated in chapter one are “civic” and the archetype of the virtues existing in the Intelligible, which the civic virtues participate. What follows in chapter two of Treatise 19 (I, 2) is a corresponding consideration, carried out in a different mode, of “two kinds of likeness”, which enables a more robust description of the effect the civic virtues have on the soul.

Let us first address the change in mode from chapter one to chapter two with another glance at Treatise 20 (I, 3). First, in Treatise 20 Plotinus is clear that the three kinds of souls are not rigidly defined; the musician may turn (μετάπεσοι) into a lover and may even from there proceed to become a philosopher (20 (I, 3) 2.1-2). The catalyst of this change is simply the effect of dialectic upon the soul at whatever level she inhabits. Towards the end of Treatise 20 (I, 3) this becomes clear as Plotinus pairs the presence of dialectic and wisdom (σοφία) so that both together form the criterion for the distinction between lower and higher virtues. The shift in the mode of discourse between chapter one and chapter two of Treatise 19 (I, 2) reflects this understanding of the parallel motions of dialectic and the growth of virtue. In fact, the move from βία to πειθώ signalled at the end of chapter one enacts the movement in the soul from musician to lover. Reading Treatise 19 (I, 2) together with Treatise 20 (I, 3) gives a clearer sense of Treatise 19’s anagogical character, its reflection of the framework of Platonic reading, commentary and discussion, which Hadot has collectively described as a spiritual exercise.2


2 See Pierre Hadot, Philosophy as a Way of Life, Arnold I. Davidson, ed, Michael Chase, trans. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1995), 86, 115n53, 104-106, 109. For Hadot, the act of reading itself may be considered a spiritual exercise, when the reader seeks to “meditate calmly, ruminate, and let the texts speak” to him.
Chapter two of Treatise 19 also gives us a more detailed description of the nature of civic virtue. Where chapter one gave us the scriptural passage, taken almost directly from the Republic, in chapter two’s description we see civic virtue as if from the inside, having moved past the language of analogy and even considering how the civic virtues in forming soulish matter (ἐν ὅλη τῇ ψυχῇ) bring it into a greater likeness to the formless Good.

As with the “two kinds of virtue” of chapter one, Plotinus’ thought in chapter two needs a bit of unpacking. The first kind of likeness is the kind that is reciprocal, between two things that share a common principle. This, as the last lines of the treatise characterise it, is the likeness two images (εἰκόνες) of the same subject share in regard to each other (7.29-30). This kind of likeness pertains to civic virtue’s operation in at least two ways. First, on the level of civic life, the man who is seeking perfection in this kind of virtue may look to his betters in the polis for a standard by which to measure himself. To look to them is to look as if in a (perhaps distorted) mirror; any difference between reality and reflection is one of degree, not of kind. To the extent that two good men are both equally virtuous, their actions will be mirror images of one another. Second, on the level of the soul, the civic virtues which “set us in order” (κατακοσμοῦσι), and “make us better by limiting and measuring desires and altogether measuring the passions and taking away false opinions” (ἀμείνουσιν ποιοῦσιν ὁρίζουσι καὶ μετροῦσιν τὰς ἐπιθυμίας καὶ ὀλος τὰ πάθη μετροῦσι καὶ ψευδέεις δόξας ἀφαιροῦσι), which make exterior to us what is “unmeasured and unbounded” (τῶν ἀμέτρων καὶ ἀορίστων ἔξω εἶναι), are themselves limited (αὐτά ὀρισθεῖσα). They impart to the soul what they themselves also possess (19 (I, 2) 2.14-18), a characteristic which marks them as realities that belong properly to the natural excellence of the human soul.

The second kind of likeness is non-reciprocal (οὐκ ἀντιστρέφον), that of an image to its model (πρὸς παράδειγμα, 7.30). The image may be said to be like the model, but the model cannot be said to be like the image; the image participates the model. Once again, this kind of likeness applies to civic virtue in at least two ways. First, on the level of the
individual soul, in the measuring effect it has in soul’s matter (ἐν ὠλη τῇ ψυχῇ), civic virtue imitates and participates the measuring activity of Intellect. Civic virtue’s higher participation in Intellect possesses the character of being not only what is measured (formed matter, i.e. body), but also measure for another. The importance of virtue’s being both caused and causing is better conveyed by Henry-Schwyzer’s punctuation at line 18 (not followed by Armstrong), whereby καὶ αὐταὶ ὅρισθείσαι begins a new sentence as a concessive aorist rendering lines 18-20 as follows: “And while they are themselves limited, by which fact they are measures in matter for the soul, they are made like to that measure There and have a trace (ὑχνος) of the Best There.”

Second, on the level of the city, the civically virtuous man, in so far as he is both measured himself and also a measure for others partakes of the second kind of likeness to the archetype. This is where the danger for the political man, and for the individual soul as well, comes in. This higher degree of participation in the limiting activity of Intellect can deceive the soul into imagining that because she provides the measure for body, she is herself “god, even the whole of god” (ὡστε καὶ ἔξαπατὰν θεός φαντασθείσα, μὴ τὸ πάν θεόν τούτο ἢ, 2.25-26). The error comes through forgetting that virtue’s character as both measured and measuring are likenesses of the second kind, dependent on a higher principle without being identifiable with that principle.

3.2.4. Civic Virtue as Purificatory: 3.1-10

The articulation of the second form of likeness, the likeness of imitation to paradigm, launches us into another perspective on virtue in chapter three, or rather a deeper consideration of Plato’s exhortation at Theaetetus 176b-c, one which, Plotinus tells us, will clarify the nature of civic virtue as well (3.2-5). At this point, it is interesting—and rather surprising—to note that the adjective μιᾶς, “better”, reappears in the treatise here (3.1-2). At first glance this is surprising because it seemed at the beginning of chapter two that this “better” kind of virtue had turned out not to be virtue at all, but rather the

---

paradigm of virtue in Intellect. However, what was stated at the beginning of chapter two still needs further investigation before the word ‘virtue’ can be persuasively dropped from the paradigm in Intellect. The aim of the next step of the argument is thus twofold: to show that there is in fact another kind of virtue other than civic virtue, which is proper to the soul, by the articulation of which the real nature of the paradigm, which does not belong to soul, will be better established (3.5-6).

It is here that the purificatory virtues are introduced, on the authority of the Phaedo. Their relation to the civic virtues is not altogether clear, however:1 Plato, when he speaks of “likeness” as a “flight to God” from existence here below, and does not give the virtues in citizenship only the name virtue, but adds “political”, and when he elsewhere calls them all together (ἀπάσας) “purifications”, is clear, positing that there are two [kinds of virtue], and that likeness [to god] is not according to civic virtue.

What is of note is the small but important word, “all together” (ἀπάσας) of line 9. This word seems to make “purifications” a word which encompasses all the virtues, including the civic ones.2 If this is the case, then the virtues proper to the city are being included as a sub-group of a larger category, the whole of virtue, and under this larger denomination, the civic virtues are more properly understood as “purifications”. This was in fact already hinted at in the more detailed description of the civic virtues which we received in chapter two: as well as being the soul’s acquisition of measure and order, the civic virtues also abolish false opinions (ψευδείς δόξας ἀφαιρέσθαι, 2.15-16). This aphaeretic quality which civic virtue possesses in relation to the purification of opinion anticipates the independent activity of purificatory νοεῖν τε καὶ φρονεῖν, which drives out all opinion held in common with the body (εἰ μὴ τε συνδοξάζοι, ἀλλὰ μόη ἐνεργοῖ, 3.14-15). So while there are indeed “two kinds of virtues” on the Platonic reading, there

---

1 Treatise 19 (I, 2) 3.5-10.
2 See also 19 (I, 2) 7.8-10.
is considerable evidence here that they are not to be understood as mutually exclusive categories; rather, Plotinus is arguing that the civic kind of virtue is a species of purificatory virtue. This does not prevent the civic virtues from being understood as purificatory in a lower sense than other virtues within the genus, and this is in fact what Plotinus means by saying that “likeness [to god] is not according to the civic kind.” (3.9-10)

One of the most important aspects of Plotinus’ *Treatise 19* (I, 2), as well as of the entire first Ennead in Porphyry’s rearrangement is the guide it provides for the correct reading of Plato’s political and ethical thought by later Neoplatonists.¹ This reading of civic virtue as a lower kind of purificatory virtue, as itself a purification, is in fact taken up more explicitly by Plotinus’ inheritors. Marinus’ description of the political virtues in the *Vita Procli*, for example, as those that “govern and moderate anger, desire, all the affections, they scatter false opinions” closely resemble Plotinus’ in chapter one of *Treatise 19* (I, 2), and Marinus adds that these political virtues too are “certain purifications” (καὶ αἱ πολιτικαὶ καθάρσεις τινὲς εἰσὶν).² Further, in their subdivisions of their extended ladder of virtue, both Olympiodorus and Marinus place political virtue and purificatory virtue together on the same intermediate level of “the involutive process”, as both being concerned with the “integration of the inferior powers”.³ This indicates further the extent to which civic virtue belongs with the purificatory virtues and may be considered a lesser species of purification. Olympiodorus also makes even the virtues lower than the civic correspond to a certain kind of purification. The ethical virtues are defined as the virtues of well-raised children and domestic animals. Both these virtues and the civic ones which surpass them belong to public rites of purification (πάντωσι καθάρσεις). The higher, ‘purificatory’ virtues, on the other hand, belong to the secret rites of initiation (ἀπορρητώτεραι).⁴ On our reading of chapters one through

---

¹ O’Meara, *Platonopolis*, 68.
² Marinus, *Vita Procli* 18; see Trouillard, *La purification plotinienne*, 190.
³ Trouillard, *La purification plotinienne*, 192.
three of *Treatise 19* (I, 2), then, in the mode of his argumentation Plotinus is more in concord with, and perhaps directly the inspiration for, these later more ‘elevated’ views of political virtue as a kind of purification corresponding to the rites and divinities of public religion.

### 3.2.5 Two Kinds of Virtue: Conclusion

Let us sum up what we have discovered so far about the origin and worth of civic virtue. Having swiftly established that our desire to achieve likeness to god through virtue is directed to Intellect, as the direction of the desire of that lesser divinity, World Soul, indicates, Plotinus introduces and describes the four civic virtues of the *Republic* by first denying them of Intellect (1.16-21). He then proceeds to “save the phenomena”, separating what is true in the common δόξην that politically virtuous men are ‘godlike’ from what is illusory and deceptive, a move which may be divided into two modes of discourse, force (1.21-49) and persuasion (2.1-26), and which therefore addresses itself respectively first to the musician and then to the lover of *Treatise 20* (I, 3). Up to this point the primary distinction at work is that between civic virtue and the paradigms in Intellect, such as they appear, for example, in the *Phaedrus*, and the distance between imitation and paradigm is great. As Plotinus himself indicates, however (3.3), civic virtue’s real nature attains to a greater clarity with the consideration of what is directly above it: through another look to Plato, this time to the *Phaedo*, the nature of purificatory virtue is described, and civic virtue finds itself encompassed as well as subordinated by the advent of this term.

### 3.3 Civic Virtue in Plato and Treatise 19 (I, 2)

Scholars have tended to describe Plotinus’s general approach in *Treatise 19* (I, 2) as an attempt at a reconciliation of two Platonic dialogues: the account of the virtues of the city and soul in the *Republic* seems contrary to the account of the *Phaedo*, in which the virtues appear as ‘purificatory’.¹ On this reading, Plotinus’ “theory of grades of virtue”

---

¹ See, for example, John Dillon, “Plotinus, Philo and Origen,” 92-93.
speaks to the “apparent contradiction” and sets it within the more general problem of whether or not god possesses the virtues by which we are likened to him.¹

There is indeed a good deal of evidence for a Republic-Phaedo dichotomy functioning as a primary structuring principle of Treatise 19 (I, 2). The first enumeration of the four cardinal virtues, called ‘political’ (πολιτικὰς, 1.16-21), is taken almost verbatim from the Republic (IV, 427d3-434d, especially 430c); later in the treatise (chapter three), when the designation of the virtues as “purifications” (καθάρσεις) is said to occur “elsewhere” (ἄλλαξο, 3.8) in Plato, the Phaedo (69b-c, 82b-c) is surely meant. It is nonetheless important not to let the Treatise’s structuring principle limit either the depth of Plato’s own treatment of virtue throughout his corpus, or of Plotinus’ reading of Plato. Plotinus is not merely setting the two accounts side by side, so that the account in the Republic is surpassed by that in the Phaedo. Rather, the discussion in the Republic at the very least hints of an underlying hierarchical understanding of virtue, which is taken up and more thoroughly treated in other dialogues such as Phaedrus and Phaedo. Plotinus’ reading of the Republic, in Treatise 19 (I, 2), as well as in other treatises spanning the entirety of his work (from Treatise 1 (I, 6), 20 (I, 3), 39 (VI, 8), to 53 (I, 1)), is sensitive to these hints in Plato.

3.3.1 The Adjective πολιτική in the Republic and the Phaedo

The danger of too sharp a Republic-Phaedo dichotomy is particularly evident in the comparison of Republic IV 430b-d and Phaedo 82b-c: although virtue receives the adjective πολιτική in both places, the two passages cannot be conflated. In the Republic passage, courage is being qualified in a civic context (Socrates says, “accept it...as my account of civic courage”), as “the power to preserve through everything the correct and law-inculcated belief about what is to be feared and what isn’t.”² The context of the Phaedo passage, on the other hand, is very different. σωφροσύνη and δικαιοσύνη in this passage appear as they are ‘commonly’ understood, possessed “without philosophy and

¹ Dillon, “Plotinus, Philo and Origen,” 93, 96.
² Republic IV 430b1-4.
intelligence”; moderation, for example, is the “simple-minded moderation” (ἐνθηθη) discussed earlier (68e), which was deemed unbecoming of the philosopher. In other words, when conjoined with δημοτική, πολιτική at Phaedo 82b-c functions in a markedly different way from the Republic. In the Phaedo passage σωφροσύνη and δικαιοσύνη have been separated from ἀνδρεία and φρόνησις in a way that does not reflect the reasoned relation of governor to governed definitive of civic virtue in Treatise 19 (I, 2): they are not here meant to be understood as performing the harmonising and unifying roles they possess in the Republic. The use of this same passage from the Phaedo in Treatise 15 (III, 4) shows that in fact Plotinus divides this passage into two separate judgements in the afterlife:

Those, then, who guarded the man in them, become men again….The man who practised community virtue (τὴν πολιτικὴν ἀρετήν) becomes a man again; but one who has a lesser share of political virtue a political creature (πολιτικὸν ζῶον), a bee or some such thing.

The first soul—the man of ‘community virtue’—may be understood to have practiced the complete political virtue of the Republic; the second, the imperfect, incomplete ‘social’ virtue of the Phaedo. The later Neoplatonists follow Plotinus in this interpretation, making the distinction more explicit: the two types of virtue in the Phaedo passage are ethical (αἱ ἔθικαι, the virtues of children and domesticated animals, learned by habit and training but able to exist apart from each other, not having the binding power of φρόνησις), and political (the virtues of practical men, which are rationally chosen and do mutually imply one another). Purificatory virtue is thus being contrasted against two levels of virtue, not one. It is important, therefore, to heed Trouillard’s

---

1 Treatise 15 (III, 4) 2.16-17, 28-30.
warning: one must not confuse the political virtues of the *Republic* with “le conformisme que stigmatisé le *Phédon*, 82b.”\(^1\) “Political virtue” as it is understood in *Treatise 19* (I, 2) has a higher dignity than the picture given at *Phaedo* 82b: when practised perfectly—that is, when definitive of the whole soul—it is the virtue proper to the human. Further, we should keep in mind that the *Republic*, Plotinus’ authority here for the nature and status of civic virtue, seeks, in Carlos Fraenkel’s words, a “cultural revolution”, that is, a kind of city-wide purification akin to the erasing of a slate (*Republic* 501a).\(^2\) Plotinus never fails to remember that the city of the *Republic* exists for the sake of better viewing the soul; on this view the *Republic*’s radical project suddenly reveals itself to be really “on the way” to the *Phaedo*’s emphasis on purification and ἀφαίρεσις, just as civic virtue may be understood as the initial stages of inner purification rather than a wholly separate ethical category. Plotinus’ juxtaposition of the *Republic* and the *Phaedo* in *Treatise 19* (I, 2), when read as a functional anabasis in light of the spiritual modes of *Treatise 20* (I, 3) thus serves in fact to reveal these two dialogues’ deeper agreement on the proper place and dignity of civic virtue.

### 3.3.2 Plato’s Laws

As we have seen so far, *Treatise 19* (I, 2)’s Porphyrian title is misleading: the *Treatise* is not concerned with the nature of virtue in general, but rather more specifically with the relation of virtue to the τέλος of ὀμοιότης θεῶ. The nature of virtue is sought simultaneously with the nature of god, and the presence of both virtue and god are sought in the unfolding of *Treatises 19* and *20* (I, 3). In light of this context, then, we should consider the possibility that civic virtue here may not receive its fullest articulation: its role in the two *Treatises* is limited by the scope of their anagogical movement. A brief glance to Plotinus’ comments on civic virtue in *Treatise 9* (VI, 9) and

---


\(^2\) Carlos Fraenkel, *Philosophical Religions*, 82.
his use of the *Laws* there indicates that he may have more to say about civic virtue and the men who possess it than the context of *Treatises 19* and 20 may permit.

As we have said, the *Republic* seeks to revolutionize the order of the city. The *Laws*, on the other hand, has the rather more realistic project of (once more in Fraenkel’s phrasing) “a philosophical reinterpretation of the *nomoi* established by Minos and Lycurgus to bring out their rational character which alone justifies describing them as divine.”¹ Plato’s reinterpretation involves an allegorization of the Homeric scriptures.² King Minos’ designation as “the familiar friend of Zeus” (Μίνως ὀριστής τοῦ Διός) is grounded in his law-making ability, and the laws which he enacted are rationally grounded in directing the *polis* to what is best.³ This unchanging τέλος underlies the variety of laws which might be legitimately instantiated, depending on contingencies such as times of war.⁴

Plotinus also considers the divine origins of constitutional activity in *Treatise 9* (VI, 9) through the figure of Minos, and, like Plato, seeks the necessary philosophical reinterpretation to account for Minos’ divine status.⁵ This reinterpretation takes up the *Laws*’ philosophical reading of *Odyssey* 19.179, but also goes further. In an extremely surprising analogy, Minos’ ‘converse’ with Zeus⁶ is compared to the mystical union. Minos’ Homeric epithet as “the familiar friend of Zeus” (Μίνως ὀριστής τοῦ Διός) is reinterpreted not as referring to his law-making powers, but rather to that original dwelling in union with the god of which those powers are derivative. It is this union which makes him “familiar friend” (ὁριστής), “the lawgiver from the side of Zeus” (ὁ τῆς παρὰ Διός νομοθέτης, see *Laws* 630c), “divine” (θειας, see *Laws* 630e), rather than the activity of law-making itself. In *Treatise 9* (VI, 9) therefore, we see Plotinus pushing

---

¹ Fraenkel, *Philosophical Religions*, 83.
² *Laws* 624a-b. See *Odyssey* 19.178-179.
³ *Laws* 630a-631e. Cf. *Laws* 738a-e.
⁴ Fraenkel, *Philosophical Religions*, 85-86.
⁵ *Treatise 9* (VI, 9) 7.23-29.
Plato’s point in the *Laws* much further, both in terms of the higher degree of union and
God-likeness that Minos is afforded, and also in terms of the degree to which his law-
making gifts are incidental to his likeness to God. We see this in the alternative reading
Plotinus suggests, by which Minos may be understood as one of those of the *Phaedrus*
who (as in *Treatise 20*) “has seen much” (*Phaedrus* 248d2): “or rather it is because, having
judged political activity unworthy of him he wished to remain always above, and this
would be the state of one who has seen much” (9 (VI, 9) 7.26-28).\(^1\) Along with this radical
use of the character of Minos in *Treatise 9*, however, comes a certain elevation of the
dignity of his political activity, which Plotinus never denies of him, though he does deny
any idea of that activity being ultimately definitive of his divine status. It is important to
keep this moment in mind when evaluating Plotinus’ judgement of political virtue. Read
in light of *Treatise 9* the treatment of civic virtue in *Treatise 19* reveals its cursory nature;
there is no distinction made between different kinds of practical and political activity, no
consideration in *Treatise 19* of the worth of law-making, for instance. *Treatise 19* ought
not to be taken as Plotinus’ definitive word on the subject of political virtue, though as
we have seen, it does provide us with the essential truth about civic virtue’s ultimately
subordinate position in regard to higher forms of purification and union.\(^2\)

\[3.3.3\] The Anagogy of σωφροσύνη in the *Phaedrus*

The influence of the *Phaedrus* on these two early treatises of Plotinus has already been
seen in the articulation of the three kinds of soul in *Treatise 20* (I, 3), which help to trace
the anagogy of *Treatise 19* (I, 2). The role of the *Phaedrus* in providing the anagogical
tenor of the two treatises in fact extends beyond the importance of the musician-lover-

\(^{1}\) See Hadot, *Traité 9*, 99 n. 145. I am with Hadot in applying this clause to Minos.
\(^{2}\) Cf. O’Meara, “Aristotelian ethics in Plotinus,” 62. O’Meara points out that Porphyry’s
title is “too general” for *Treatise 19* (I, 2): the treatise is not simply about virtue but about
virtue’s relation to the goal of assimilatton to God. In the context of this particular
question and the spiritual exercise which its investigation enacts, then, the good of
political virtue is necessarily subordinated.
philosopher triad. Plotinus’ account of civic virtue in *Treatise 19* (I, 2) draws not only from *Republic*, but also particularly from the *Phaedrus* and its account of σωφροσύνη.

In the conversation between Socrates and Phaedrus σωφροσύνη is a matter of constant consideration. First, that virtue is associated by Socrates with the miserliness of the non-lover and contrasted with the divine madness (μανία) of the lover, which is more “ennobling” (καλλιον), as being from a god rather than man (244e). As augury (οινοϊστική) is to the madness (μαντική) of the Delphic prophetess, the priestesses of Dodona and the Sibyl, so σωφροσύνη is to μανία of the lover. Through this analogy and its playful etymologies σωφροσύνη becomes associated with the human, with discursive thought (διάνοια) and inquiry (ιστορία). This association is strengthened to the extent that later in Socrates’ ecstatic palinode it comes to acquire the epithets “human” (άνθρωπίνη, 256b6) and “mortal” (θνητή, 256e5). However, moderation is also named as one of the virtues characterizing the good horse (253e), and, finally, σωφροσύνη receives the great dignity of being among the circuit of “the things that really are”, which the soul beholds outside the heavens. It follows δικαιοσύνη (247d, 250b) and stands beside beauty “on a holy pedestal”.

The association of σωφροσύνη with the “human” and the “mortal” indicates its particular significance to the life of the polis—it is in this sense the “civic virtue” par excellence. However, Socrates’ description of the importance of the mad women of Delphi and Dodona to civic life indicates the extent to which the life of the polis depends upon an excess of irrationality which it can neither contain nor control, but which it must rather recognize and revere:

1 It should be noted that this triad is also fundamental to the *Republic*. See, for example, *Republic* IV 403c6-7.
3 Plotinus uses this image of σωφροσύνη following δικαιοσύνη explicitly in *Treatise 31* (V, 8) 9.
4 Plotinus uses this image of σωφροσύνη explicitly in *Treatise 1* (I, 6) 9.14-15.
5 Scully, *Plato’s Phaedrus*, 244a8-b3.
...the prophetess at Delphi and priestesses at Dodona do many good things for Greece, in private and public matters (δημοσίω), when they are mad (μανέισαι), but when they are of sound mind and self-controlled (σωφρονοῦσαι) they do next to nothing (βραχέα ἃ οὐδέν). It is “divine madness” which draws the soul upward and allows her the glimpses of the virtues in themselves: “civic” self-control must give way to purificatory forms of madness which essentially effect a radical transformation of what virtue is understood to be. Plato articulates several different ‘kinds’ of σωφροσύνη throughout the Phaedrus; tracing its reinterpretation all the way to the top of the intelligible provides a series of footholds for the ascending soul. This, moreover, is precisely how Plotinus uses the enumerations of the four virtues in Treatise 19 (I, 2); the virtues provide a kind of topography of the landscape of each level in the ascent.

As we have already seen in our consideration of Treatise 19 (I, 2) in light of Treatises 27 – 29 and Treatise 33, the Phaedrus also provides the crucial background to the articulation of World Soul’s role in the soul’s itinerary. The Phaedrus is thus crucial in several ways to the anagogical strategy of Treatises 19 and 20, and may provide a particular precedent for the characterization and subordination of civic virtue as a lower, weaker form of purification.

3.4 Civic Virtue: Conclusion

Civic virtue acquires its deceptive character when the soul is turned toward what is exterior to her and when her desire for the good is curtailed such that she treats the acquisition of this virtue as the end rather than a step on the path homeward. The error is easily made, as it stems from conflating what is the good for the body and the lower shadow-soul associated with it with what is the good for the soul.

The whole drive (ἡ σπουδή) of Treatise 19 is against this possibility, not toward “right action for man (κατάρθωσις ἀνθρώπων)”, by which he may keep himself “out of sin”
(ἐξω ἀμαρτίας), but rather toward divinization (19 (I, 2) 6.1-3). In this search for godlikeness, the life that is defined, measured and governed by political virtue is to be practised only until, with the advent of “higher principles and different measures” (μείζων δὲ ἀρχὰς...καὶ ἄλλα μέτρα, 7.21-22), the agent is freed to leave it behind for another, “that of the gods” (ἄλλον δὲ ἐλόμενος τῶν τῶν θεῶν, 7.26-27). This drive is evident in the way civic virtue is introduced and transcended. Plotinus first situates civic virtue relative to World Soul’s virtue, next to which it immediately pales in comparison. Then he subordinates it further by comparing it to “the greater virtues”, understood initially as the paradigms of virtue in Νοῦς. This comparison expresses the very great distance that lies between the human and the divine. Finally, through a consideration of the two kinds of likeness, and an exegetical turn to the Phaedo, Plotinus introduces another kind of virtue, unfolding it from the distinction between paradigm and civic manifestation. This new form of “greater virtue” in fact makes the nature of civic virtue clearer and elevates it, revealing it also as a kind of lower purification, the first step in the journey. Civic virtue thus receives both its proper subordination and its due dignity in light of World Soul and the fully purified example which she sets. It remains now to be seen how this newly unveiled purificatory virtue stands relative to World Soul’s perfect contemplation.
Chapter 4
Purificatory Virtue in *Treatises 19* (I, 2) and 20 (I, 3)

For Plotinus, following Plato, all virtues are purifications (καθάρσεις). The aim of *Treatise 19* (I, 2) is largely to make this manifest, to bring the purificatory nature of virtue to bear on the ὑμιστικής θεώ of *Theaetetus* 176b, so definitive of Middle Platonic ethics. So the central consideration of the *Treatise* begins in its third chapter, and we must consider the re-enumeration of the four cardinal virtues that occurs there as the enumeration and description most definitive of their real character in the soul. It is important, in other words, to recognize that “purificatory virtue” is not simply another “level” of virtue to which the soul may and should aspire; it is in fact the defining feature of virtue as a whole, responsible for unveiling the soul’s true nature, stripped of the accoutrements by which she has projected herself into the world of matter and becoming.

4.1 Purificatory Virtue in *Treatise 19* (I, 2)

Let us first consider the order of enumeration in chapter one of *Treatise 19* (I, 2), before turning to what is different in chapter three. In chapter one, the cardinal virtues were first listed in their order in the *Republic*: prudence (κράτεια), courage (φάρσας), moderation (σωφροσύνη) and justice (δικαιοσύνη).

4.1.1 The Order of Enumeration in *Republic* IV

The order in which the virtues are discovered and enumerated in the *Republic* IV is important to the way the argument proceeds, first in relation to the soul-writ-large, and, second, in relation to the soul herself, the description of which relies on the consideration of the order of the city.

4.1.1.1 Virtue in the City as the Soul-Writ-Large

The first two virtues correspond to the discovery of the classes of the soul-writ-large, enumerated from the top down, and the second two are ordered towards the goal of the inquiry, justice (430c-d)). Thus wisdom (σοφία) is found first, as the virtue proper to the
governing guardian class (429a). Courage is the second discovery and, as the power (δύναμις) to preserve (σώζειν) right belief regarding what has been set down in the laws, is proper to the soldier class (429b-430b). The distinction between σωφροσύνη and δικαιοσύνη proves the most difficult to determine, and the decision to investigate σωφροσύνη first is based on the fact that δικαιοσύνη is the goal of the conversation (430c-d). Rather than assigning σωφροσύνη to the lowest class of money-makers, Socrates and Adeimantus “divine” (ἐμαντενόμεθα) that σωφροσύνη instead does not belong to any one class, but rather “spreads through the whole”, incorporating the third class, along with the other two, into the harmony of good government (431e-432a). This leaves δικαιοσύνη as the remainder and the crown, “through which the city shares still further in virtue” (τὸ δὲ δὴ λοιπὸν εἶδος δι᾽ ὀ ἐν ἑτὶ ἀρετῆς μετέχοι πόλις, 432b), and by which each part of the city does his own work (433b). It belongs to both the beginning and the maturity of the good city, as “the power that makes [the other virtues] to grow in the city, and that preserves them when they’ve grown for as long as it remains there itself” (433b-c).

4.1.1.2 Virtue in the Soul in Republic IV

The enumeration of the four virtues of the city is applied to the description of the rightly ordered soul at Republic 441e-442d, where the rational part (τὸ λογιστικὸς) is said to rule, the spirited part (ἡ θυμοειδής) to obey as the rational part’s ally (ὁ σύμμαχος), and the two together, on the strength of the soul’s musical education, to govern the appetitive part (τὸ ἐπιθυμητικὸς) through their common belief that the rational part should rule (τὸ λογιστικὸν ὁμοδοξῶσι δεῖν ἄρχειν, 442c-d). The order of enumeration is once again important to the way the argument proceeds, as the harmony of the rational and spirited parts is what enables the greater harmony of the soul as a whole that is σωφροσύνη, and justice is the establishment in the soul of a “natural relation of control” (τὸ δικαιοσύνην ἐμποιεῖν τὰ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ κατὰ φύσιν καθισάναι κρατεῖν τε καὶ κρατεῖσθαι ὑπ’ ἀλλήλων, 444d).
Plotinus’ enumeration in chapter one of Treatise 19 (I, 2) represents a contraction of the two considerations of the virtues in Republic IV. The importance of the order of the virtues’ enumeration is clearest in the description of the soul-writ-large, and Plotinus keeps to this order in his treatment, though he ultimately leaves behind the consideration of the city’s parts to focus solely on the order civic virtue produces in the individual soul. The order of the enumeration in chapter one is therefore the order of the virtue of the ruler (φρόνησις), of the auxiliary (ἀνδρία), of the ruled as brought into agreement with the ruler and auxiliary (σωφροσύνη), and finally the overarching relation of control between ruler and ruled (δικαιοσύνη) considered as a whole.

4.2 Treatise 19 (I, 2), 3 and Treatise 20 (I, 3) 4-6

The re-enumeration in chapter three changes the order of chapter one slightly, by reversing the order of the two inner terms so that moderation precedes courage. Further, all the abstract nouns conveying the virtues of the first enumeration are replaced with present infinitives (νοεῖν τε καὶ φρονεῖν; σωφρονεῖν; ἀνδρίζεσθαι, 3.15-18), with the exception of δικαιοσύνη, and all the substantives conveying the parts of the soul are replaced with indicative verbs in the optative mood (μήτε εὐνοὸς ἔξω, ἀλλὰ μόνη ἐνέργοι; μήτε ὁμοπαθῆς εἰς; μήτε φοβοῖτο; ἡγοῖτο...μή ἀντιτείνοι, 3.14-18). Finally, the first term, prudence (φρόνησις), is replaced with the twofold νοεῖν τε καὶ φρονεῖν (3.15), and the last term, δικαιοσύνη, involves the twofold leadership of λόγος καὶ νοῦς (3.17-18). What do these three seemingly small changes signify?

---

1 O’Meara, Platonopolis, 40.
2 Cf. Michael Chase, “What does Porphyry mean by θεῖον πατήρ?” Dionysius 22 (2004): 78 n. 11. In this article on Porphyry’s Sent. 32, Chase notes this same change in the order in which Porphyry’s enumerates the purificatory/theoretical virtues, though he does not draw any conclusions as to why Porphyry might reverse the order. Porphyry is in fact simply observing Plotinus’ orders of enumeration in Treatise 19 (I, 2) throughout Sent. 32, a state of affairs which might suggest to us the deliberate nature of this move not so much in Porphyry as in Plotinus.
4.2.1 The Change in Order in Treatise 19 (I, 2)

The change in the order of enumeration reflects the shift from the *Republic* to the *Phaedo* effected in chapter three, and the carefulness with which this shift is undertaken. The overarching principle of the order of the *Republic* is preserved in that the priority of the governing activity of reason is recognized first, the auxiliary activity of spirit is kept in its subordinate place relative to reason, and the role of justice as the order of ruled and ruling crowns the four. In other words, in this preservation of the first and fourth terms lies the preservation of the logic of the *Republic*. As we argued above, while the shift from the *Republic* to the *Phaedo* in chapter three is a major structuring principle of Treatise 19 (I, 2), nonetheless it is by no means Plotinus’ aim to present a rigid dichotomy between the two dialogues. The order of enumeration of these virtues here in chapter three reflects the continuing importance of the *Republic*’s account.

Meanwhile, however, the reversal of the inner terms of enumeration, whereby the activity of σωφροσύνη precedes that of ἀνδρικεσθαι, presents quite a dramatic change in the orientation of our consideration of virtue, a change that ultimately reflects the perspective of the *Phaedo* and the particular attention to the virtue of courage which is paid in that dialogue.

4.2.1.1 Courage in the Phaedo

Courage receives a privileged consideration in the *Phaedo*. As we saw above, in the *Republic* courage, along with wisdom, belongs to one particular class in the city, while σωφροσύνη and δικαιοσύνη belong to the whole. In the *Phaedo*, however, σωφροσύνη’s role as the agreement and harmony between the spirited and rational part which enables the appetitive part’s incorporation into the harmony of the whole soul is forgotten as the dialogue considers not so much the tripartition within the soul as the bipartition of body and soul. Thus in the *Phaedo* σωφροσύνη is identified more with “treating the passions with disdain and orderliness” (ὀλιγώρως ἔχειν καὶ κοσμίως) and, still further, “disdaining the body” (τοῦ σῶματος ὀλιγωροῦσιν, 68c). On the bipartite model
courage’s role in the Republic of preserving right opinion regarding what is and is not to be feared is in fact magnified and points to the soul’s fundamental unity more than σωφροσύνη does. The dialogue’s manifest emphasis on departure from the body and philosophy as a preparation for death indicates the degree to which the virtue of courage is definitive of the philosopher and lover of truth.

Several of Plotinus’ Neoplatonic inheritors also saw courage as the defining virtue of the Phaedo, as well as of the entire ‘level’ of purificatory virtue. In Iamblichus’ Platonic curriculum, the Phaedo is the dialogue that corresponds to the purificatory level of virtue, to be read after the Gorgias, which concerns civic virtue. In his commentary on the Phaedo, following Proclus (whose own prologue to the Phaedo is lost), Olympiodorus discovers the dialogue’s skopos of purification in its dramatic context and links it specifically to the cultivation of the virtue of courage:

But others liken courage to the purificatory way of life because of its unrelenting attitude towards inferior things; for such is courage, firm towards inferior things; in this way, too, Socrates is not swayed by Xanthippe and his crying child, but remains unmoved by them.

There is thus good evidence for taking courage as the defining virtue of both the Phaedo in particular and of purificatory virtue in general, and the order of enumeration which we find in chapter three of Treatise 19 (I, 2) may very well reflect this more unitary view of courage as a virtue pertaining to the whole good of the soul.

4.2.2 From Abstract Nouns to Present Infinitives in Treatise 19 (I,2) 3

The move from chapter one’s list of the virtues as abstract nouns and substantives (φρόνησις, ἀνδρία, σωφροσύνη, δικαιοσύνη) to chapter three’s list of the virtues as

---

2 Olympiodorus, In Phaed. 8.1.7-11. See Gertz, Death and Immortality in Late Neoplatonism, 24-25.
present infinitives (νοεῖν τε καὶ φρονεῖν, σωφρονεῖν, ἀνδρίζεσθαι) embedded in a rather long future less vivid conditional phrase marks the transition from speaking of the soul’s partition (τὸ λογιζόμενον; τὸ θυμοῦμενον; τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν) to her fundamental noetic activity. Activity characterises purificatory virtue: purificatory νοεῖν καὶ φρονεῖν is nothing other than the soul acting alone (μόνη ἐνεργοί), and its wisdom is an imitation of the purity of the divine and its activity (καθαρόν γάρ καὶ τὸ θεῖον καὶ ἡ ἐνέργεια τοιαύτη, ὡς τὸ μιμοῦμενον ἐχειν φρόνησιν, 3.) The replacement of abstract nouns and substantives with verbs thus reflects purificatory virtue’s closer approximation to the active life of God, and marks the beginning of the transition from “what belongs to us” (τὰ ἡμετέρα) to what is truly us (ἡμεῖς), an inner transition from the self as consciously identified with the composite—the man who knows the extent of his own virtue by means of the measure of the political men around him—to the self as identified with reason—the one who knows the extent of his own virtue by means of the activity of that virtue itself toward its archetypes. Treatise 53 (I, 1) speaks to this transformation of the self which we see coming into effect here in chapter three:1

When the influences from above do not act upon us, they are active in the direction of the upper world. They act upon us when they reach as far as the middle (τὸν μέσον). What then? Are we not also what is before this middle? Yes, but we must become conscious of this fact (ἀλλὰ ἀντιληπτοῦν δεῖ γενέσθαι). For whatever we have, we do not always use. But when we order (τὰξωμεν) the middle part either towards the things above, or in the opposite direction [then we use what we have], or [to put it another way, we use] whatever we bring from potency or habit into actuality (ἡ ὅσα ἀπὸ δυνάμεως ἢ ἔξως εἰς ἐνέργειαν ἀγομέν).

Plotinus uses the enumeration of the purificatory virtues in chapter three of Treatise 19 (I, 2) to bring us to the emphatic conclusion that what divides our activity from God’s

activity is that ours occurs according to our state (τὴν δὲ τοιαύτην διάθεσιν τῆς ψυχῆς καθ’ ἑν νοεῖ, 3.19-20), while Nous does not have states (ἤ οὐδε διάκειται, 3.23). Despite the fact that the purificatory virtues enable the articulation of this distinction, which clarifies the nature of both the purificatory and the civic virtues (the latter being understood, as we saw above, as lower forms of purification) relative to the paradigms, and despite the fact that they are themselves “states”, nonetheless their description in the form of present infinitives points to the conscious identification of the “middle” part with its activity.

4.2.3 From φρόνησις to νοεῖν τε καὶ φρονεῖν in Treatises 19 and 20

The bipartitions of φρόνησις into the activities of νοεῖν τε καὶ φρονεῖν, and of δικαιοσύνη into the leadership of λόγος καὶ νοῦς do not signify the addition of an activity to the soul, but rather indicate the transitional nature of the purificatory state and its relation to civic virtue. Here is further evidence that civic virtue should be understood under the category of purificatory virtue, rather than as a separate classification unto itself. For purificatory virtue still involves φρόνησις, an activity which, as we saw in the description of civic virtue, belongs to the soul’s discursivity (1.17) and ultimately must be understood as an imitation of noetic activity. Plotinus lays this out consistently:¹

and indeed, concerning such a state (διάθεσιν) of the soul, according to which she intelligises (νοεῖ) and is thus unaffected (ἀπαθής), if one were to call this state likeness to god (ὁμοίωσιν...πρὸς θεόν), he would not be missing the mark. For the divine (τὸ θεῖον) also is pure, and the activity is such that the one who imitates it (τὸ μιμούμενον) has practical wisdom (φρόνησις).

From this passage, at the purificatory level φρόνησις is the trace of νοησις in practical action, something that is to be gradually eliminated, it seems, as the soul approaches a fully purified state. There is more to be said about this side of purificatory virtue of

¹ Treatise 19 (I, 2) 3.19-22.

70
wisdom, however. Both in this treatise and elsewhere in Plotinus, ἕρωτας receives a more precise treatment than other virtues, which reveals its greater affinity to νοησις and the mediatory role which, in a way, we also witnessed in chapter one with the consideration of World Soul’s ἕρωτας, with which this entire inquiry found its proper orientation and ground.

4.2.3.1 ἕρωτας in Treatise 20 (I, 3)

The second half of Treatise 20 (I, 3), for example, revisits the role and worth of ἕρωτας, in its relation to σοφία and νοῦς. The affinity of the discussion of dialectic here to the ethical treatise which precedes it has long been recognized, though not a few scholars have deemed the Treatise’s ethical culmination (chapter six) as confused, even incoherent, and have suspected it to be the work of another hand (possibly Porphyry’s), working with the motive of drawing the two treatises into a closer relation. I do not wish here to wade too deeply into that debate, which remains at the level of speculation, based largely on the interpretative difficulties with which the last chapter challenges us. Rather, I propose simply to read the conclusion of Treatise 20 (I, 3) tentatively as one piece, to see what kind of clarification, if any, it might bring to the account of purificatory activities of νοεῖν καὶ ἕρωτεῖν as they are set out in Treatise 19 (I, 2).

---

1 See Vladimir Jankélévitch, Plotin. Ennéades I, 3: Sur la dialectique, 82-83.
2 Heinemann thinks it was added after the rest of Treatise 20 (I, 3) was composed. Harder thinks this was not by the hand of Plotinus at all, and that the account of dialectic’s relation to ethics is incoherent. Georges Leroux, “Logique et Dialectique chez Plotin: Énneade 1.3 (20),” Phoenix 28.2 (1974): 181, 182 and n.5, 183, 188 suggests that the sixth chapter may have come from the hand of Porphyry, precisely to draw Treatise 19 and 20 together by bringing the discussion of dialectic directly to bear on ethics, renouncing the Stoic position on dialectic in the process. On somewhat the other side, seeing continuity between chapter six and the rest of the treatise and thus little necessity for attributing chapter six to Porphyry see Alexandrine Schniewind, “Quelles conditions pour une éthique plotinnienne?” in Michel Fattal, ed. Études sur Plotin (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2000); Charrue, “Traité 20 (I, 3): Sur la dialectique,” in Brisson-Pradeau, 473.
Having set out the distinctions and relations between the three kinds of soul (musician, lover, philosopher) in the first half of *Treatise 20* (I, 3) (chapters one through three), in chapters four through six Plotinus turns to consider the nature of dialectic, which “must be given” not only to the philosopher, but also to the other two kinds of soul (ἡ δεῖ καὶ τοῖς προτέροις παραδίδοναι, 4.1-2). In the course of a long sentence (4.6-23) that forms the bulk of chapter four, ἡ διαλεκτική is shown to govern the whole ascent of the soul, first guiding her flight from the sensible to the intelligible (4.6-10); then feeding her among the intelligible realities in the “plain of truth” (4.10-16); and finally pointing toward her hyper-scientific further unification (4.16-19). Dialectic takes on a highly active and even personified role, if you will, in this ascent, speaking (εἴπειν), discussing (διαλέγεται), studying (τὴν πραγματείαν ἔχει), feeding the soul (τὴν ψυχὴν τρέφονσα) and so on. Its ascent is characterised particularly by a move from an occupation with its “business” (ἡ πραγματεία, 4.11) in Intellect to the point where it “busies itself no more” (οὐδὲν ἔτι πολυπραγμονοῦσα, 4.18), leaving “logical activity” (τὴν λεγομένην λογικῆν πραγματείαν) to another art (ἄλλη τέχνη) (4.19-20). This is all for the purpose of preparing us for chapter five, for the gradual distinction of Plotinus’ understanding of Platonic dialectic from the post-Aristotelian and Stoic “logic”, the latter being seen as a tool (ὅργανον) rather than a way and a reality.  

Chapter five of *Treatise 20* (I, 3) is structured around the question, “where does dialectic derive its principles (τὰς ἀρχὰς)?” (5.1) The answer is that Νοῦς gives the capable soul her principles, so that through “combining, interweaving and distinguishing” these the soul arrives at “perfect intelligence” (εἰς τέλεον νοῦν, 5.4). Here Plotinus states, quoting Plato, that “dialectic is the purest part of intelligence and practical wisdom” (ἔστι γάρ,...
As in Treatise 19 (I, 2), so in Treatise 20 (I, 3): νοûς and φρόνησις are paired. But Plotinus continues to sharpen what he means by φρόνησις here as he does not in Treatise 19. As “our most valuable state” (τιμωτάτην ὀνέαν ἔξιν τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν)—in other words, as the purest part of φρόνησις, the virtue proper to soul—dialectic is said to be concerned with being (περὶ τὸ ὄν) as the purest part of νοûς—one might say as οὐφία—dialectic is concerned with what is beyond being (περὶ τὸ ἐπέκεινα τοῦ ὄντος). Dialectic works as the highest part of each ontological level—whether soul or Intellect—to draw it up into its principle.

The identification of dialectic with φρόνησις rather than with soul is consistent with Plotinus’ later treatment of the spiritual anagogy in Treatise 38 (VI, 7), where virtue as the form for soul becomes a kind of “intermediate ontological degree between soul and Νοûς.”

Further, Plotinus insists that dialectic is “not to be thought a tool which the philosopher uses” (οὐ γὰρ δὴ οἰητέον ὄργανον τούτο εἶναι τοῦ φιλοσοφοῦ, 5.9-10), but rather a state which “has beings as a kind of matter” (οἷον ἐλθη ἔχει τὰ ὄντα), for which we were prepared in chapter four by the degree of agency assigned to the science (ἐπιστήμη). We have already seen, just a few lines previous, that it is dialectic in its mode as the purest part of φρόνησις that has to do with being; so these τὰ ὄντα which are a kind of matter waiting to be in-formed are in fact the proper possession of φρόνησις as much as of dialectic. This recalls the relation between civic virtue and soul’s “matter” which we saw in Treatise 19 (I, 2). But if the mode is higher here, which it seems to be, what is the difference between this φρόνησις and its lower imitation? In Treatise 19, civic φρόνησις

---

1 See Plato, Philebus 58d6-7.
2 Dialectic is also called a ἔξις at 4.3.
3 That dialectic is concerned with reality itself (τὸ πράγμα αὐτὸ) and being (τὸ ὄν) comes from Sophist 218c, 254a.
5 Treatise 38 (VI, 7) 25.25-33.
6 Pierre Hadot, Traité 38, 301.
7 Treatise 19 (I, 2) 2.18-19.
was understood to be measure of the matter of soul that was itself measured and clearly bounded. Can this purificatory \( \phi \rho \omicron \nu \nu \sigma \iota \zeta \), identified as it is with dialectic’s ascending motions toward \( \Nu \omicron \zeta \), and possessing as it does real beings for its content, be said to be a measure for these real beings in the same way that civic \( \phi \rho \omicron \nu \nu \sigma \iota \zeta \) is measure for the body? And what is the status of purificatory \( \phi \rho \omicron \nu \nu \sigma \iota \zeta \) itself relative to measuredness?

It is certain that purificatory virtue’s status relative to measuredness and measure is quite different from that of civic virtue. To the extent that purificatory virtue is a process that still involves the activity of \( \phi \rho \omicron \nu \epsilon \iota \nu \), it can be said to be a measure.

### 4.2.3.1.2.1 Two Analogies

Here we may look back to chapter three of *Treatise 19*. Speaking of the difference between soul’s intellectual activity (\( \nu \omicron \epsilon \iota \nu \) \( \nu \omicron \epsilon \iota \nu \)) and that of \( \Nu \omicron \zeta \) itself, Plotinus makes the following analogy:\(^1\)

\[
\text{as the spoken word (} \delta \ \epsilon \nu \ \phi \omicron \nu \eta \ \lambda \omicron \omicron \zeta \text{) is an imitation (} \mu \imath \mu \eta \mu \alpha \text{) of that in the soul, so the word in the soul is an imitation (} \mu \imath \mu \eta \mu \alpha \text{) of that in another: as the uttered word, then, is broken up into parts (} \mu \epsilon \mu \epsilon \rho \iota \mu \iota \sigma \mu \epsilon \mu \omicron \nu \zeta \text{) compared with that in the soul, so is that in the soul as compared with that before it, which it interprets (} \epsilon \rho \mu \eta \nu \epsilon \iota \nu \zeta \text{).}
\]

Plotinus repeats the analogy twice here. The first time, at 3.27-29, the common term is \( \mu \imath \mu \eta \mu \alpha \), imitation. This alerts us to the fact that the kind of likeness being discussed here is the second, non-reciprocal type that we considered in chapter two. Though civic virtue at this point is not mentioned explicitly, it in fact exists in the analogy as the “spoken word”, and is treated now as an imitation not of the paradigm in Intellect directly, but rather of the \( \lambda \omicron \omicron \omicron \zeta \) in the soul, the principles as they are actively possessed and known by soul. Here, we see a continuation of the fulfilment of Plotinus’ promise at the beginning of the chapter that in the investigation of the two kinds of likeness and the

\(^1\) *Treatise 19* (I, 2) 3.27-31.
discovery thereby of the nature of purificatory virtue “the real nature of civic virtue will also become clearer” (καὶ σαφέστερον ἔσται μᾶλλον καὶ τῆς πολιτικῆς ή ὁυσία, 3.2-3). Purificatory virtue thus appears as if another level of imitation had just been unfolded from the interior of the original imitation that characterized civic virtue’s relation to the paradigms earlier in the treatise. For purificatory virtue, understood primarily in its aspect as the activity of νοείν, has revealed itself as the primary imitation of the paradigm, and civic virtue as the secondary imitation, as a lower form of purification.

The difference between this newly discovered primary imitation and its noetic paradigm lies in the fact that the noetic activity in soul is an acquired state (διάθεσις), while Intellect’s νοήσις is its very life; Νῦς “does not have states” while acquired states are in fact definitive of soul (οὐδὲ διάκειται, ψυχῆς δὲ ἡ διάθεσις, 3.23-24). The introduction of διάθεσις at line 19 and its subsequent use throughout chapter three (3.23 (x2), 24) is emphatic and significant: this is in fact the first time that either ἐξις or διάθεσις, words so characteristic of and central to both Aristotelian and Stoic ethics, and in general to Middle Platonic inheritances of the same,¹ has occurred explicitly in Treatise 19, and it will occur again only once outside of chapter three.² What makes the difference between imitation and reality is that the one’s noetic activity comes to it as “from another”, while the other possesses that activity as it very self. Beyond Νῦς, the One does not think at all.

The second reiteration of the analogy at 3.29-31 reveals a different emphasis. We move from an emphasis on μίμημα as the common term of the analogy to a rather more complicated common term: as the spoken word is “broken into parts” (μεμερισμένος) compared to its principle in the soul, so also the principle in the soul is “broken up” compared to its principle in Intellect. The division of what is united in Νῦς requires that soul act as an interpreter (ἐρμηνεύεις) of that prior unity.

² ἐξις appears only once in the whole Treatise, in the concluding chapter seven (7.20). It occurs several times in Treatise 20 (I, 3), however, describing both virtue and dialectic, where διαθέσις does not appear at all: 4.3, 5.6, 6.6, 6.7 (x2).
There is a similarity between this analogy in *Treatise 19* (I, 2) and that with which chapter five of *Treatise 20* (I, 3) concludes:

So [dialectic] does not know about propositions (προτάσεως)—they are just letters (γράμματα)—but in knowing the truth it knows what they call propositions, and in general (καθόλου) it knows the movements of the soul, what she affirms and what she denies, and whether she affirms the same thing as she denies or another, and if things are different from each other or the same; whatever is submitted to it it perceives by casting forth, as sense-perception also does (προσφερομένων ὁπερ καὶ ἡ αἴσθησις ἐπιβάλλονσα), but it hands over petty precisions of speech to another [discipline] which delights in them (ἀκριβολογεῖσθαι δὲ ἐτέρα δίδωσι τούτο ἀγαπῶση).

As logic is to dialectic here, so is civic virtue to purificatory virtue in the analogy in *Treatise 19* (I, 2). Dialectic in this passage, like purificatory virtue, still belongs properly to soul and possesses as realities what logic, like civic virtue, possesses in imitation.

Two further things are striking about this passage: first, that dialectic knows “in general” (καθόλου) the movements and activities of soul; second, that whatever comes to it it perceives by casting forth (ἐπιβάλλονσα). In this general knowledge and this “intuition” (as Armstrong translates) we may discern the two movements or modes of dialectic outlined above, as they apply to dialect in relation respectively first to φρόνησις and second to νοῦς. As we have also seen, these are the two activities which characterize purificatory virtue in *Treatise 19: νοεῖν τε καὶ φρονεῖν*. To consider φρονεῖν first, we need to read a little further into chapter six of *Treatise 20* (I, 3).

4.2.3.1.3 *Treatise 20* (I, 3) 6: φρονεῖν

In chapter six, the last section of *Treatise 20*, of disputed authorship, Plotinus considers dialectic’s relation to the sphere of ethics, passing briefly through physics on the way. It

---

1 *Treatise 20* (I, 3) 5.17-24.
is precisely this consideration of dialectic vis-à-vis physics and ethics that Leroux finds objectionable; in chapter five, as well as throughout the Treatise to this point, the argument has been building to a contrast and an eventual subordination of logic to dialectic. Logic and dialectic are the main “parts” of philosophy to which Plotinus is referring earlier in the treatise, of which dialect is the “most honourable part” (φιλοσοφίας μέρος τὸ τίμιον, 5.9; cf. 6.1). The consideration of physics and ethics in chapter six represents a shift to a different way of partitioning philosophy, a Stoic one, in the return to which Leroux sees a collapse into the very confusion between logic and dialectic which Plotinus is at pains in the earlier part of the Treatise to correct. Let us leave aside the question of authenticity for the time being, however, and attribute this new way of partitioning philosophy merely to a shift in emphasis or perspective on Plotinus’ part. Let us propose tentatively that chapters four and five are concerned to show logic’s subordination to dialectic, and that the difficult last chapter broadens the consideration of dialectic to include its relation to other typical branches of philosophy, regardless of which philosophical system the branches enumerated happen to suggest. After the degree to which the discussion in chapter five involved and suggested ethical implications, indeed, it is not surprising here to find ethics prioritized, even leaving aside Treatise 20’s apparently close chronological relation to Treatise 19 (I, 2).

So, in chapter six, “theorizing concerning ethics” (περὶ ἡθῶν...θεωροῦσα) is said to be “from there” (ἐκεῖθεν)—that is, derived from dialectic as it directs the soul to Being. The “[virtuous] dispositions and the disciplines from which the dispositions come” are added to this theoretical inheritance (προσταθεῖσα δὲ τὰς ἔξεις καὶ τὰς ἀσκήσεις, ἐξ ὧν προίασιν αἱ ἔξεις, 6.6-7). The role of the disciplines (ἀσκήσεις) here may alert us to the level of virtue Plotinus intends here: he means what the later Neoplatonists will call the

---

1 Leroux, “Logique et dialectique chez Plotin,” 188.
2 See Treatise 20 (I, 3) 4.18-20: “dialectic leaves what is called logical activity, about propositions and syllogisms, to another art, as it might leave knowing how to write.” Cf. 20 (I, 3) 5.17-24, quoted above.
“ethical” virtues, which are produced by the habituating, measuring work of the ἀσκησεῖς and are added to what belongs to the soul through the gift of her principle. Plotinus moves from these ethical virtues to the “logical states” (αἱ λογικαὶ ἔξεις), which have “as if they were already their own the things from there” (ὡς ἰδιὰ ἤδη τὰ ἐκεῖθεν, 6.7-8).

Now it is a question at this point how one should understand these λογικαὶ ἔξεις.

Charrue takes them to be the fully purified virtue of Treatise 19 (I, 2), which Porphyry in Sentence 32 renames, as a separate grade, “contemplative virtue” (τέλειος θεωρητικός), “the virtues of the one who is a perfect contemplator and beholder (ἀλλαὶ αἱ τῶν ἢδη τελείοι θεωρητικοῦ καὶ ἢδη θεατοῦ).” The adjective λογικαί, however, cannot really

---

1 See Chapter Two, p. 56 above, for this category of virtue, which belongs to Iamblichus’ inheritance of Plotinus and characterizes the virtue possessed by children and domestic animals.

2 Treatise 53 (I, 1) 10.13: “But the virtues which result not from thought but from habit and training belong to the joint entity (αἱ δ’ἀρεται αἱ μὴ φρονῆσαι, έθεσι δὲ ἐγγυνόμεναι καὶ ἀσκήσει, τοῦ κοινοῦ).” Cf. Treatise 38 (VI, 8) 6.25.

3 This ἢδη is hard to translate and I am somewhat partial to the alternative reading of ἐιδή, found only in manuscript B, which would render the sentence “the logical states have as if they were their own the forms that are from there.” This makes more sense of the neuter plural. But then the majority of the manuscripts read ἢδη and εἰδῆ renders the phrase rather redundant.

4 This sentence is quite difficult and Armstrong and Charrue differ quite drastically here. First, the verb ἰσχύοναι can be taken either transitively as “possess” with the accusative objects τὰ ἐκεῖθεν, and later τὰ πλεῖστα (Armstrong, following Bréhier, Cilento, and Schwytzer), or intransitively as a form of “to be” with the (nominative) predicates τὰ ἐκεῖθεν and later τὰ πλεῖστα (Charrue, “Traité 20 (I,3),” in Brisson-Pradeau). Charrue’s translation thus runs (my translation of the French): “The intellectual dispositions come from dialectic as if it possessed them properly; effectively, even if they are with matter, the majority come from there.” I follow Armstrong (et al.) here, though I have modified his translation. See Dominic O’Meara, “Aristotelian ethics in Plotinus,” in Jon Miller, ed., The Reception of Aristotle’s Ethics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 55-56, esp. notes 8 and 9. O’Meara makes some tantalizing references to the translation (French) and commentary of Jean-Baptiste Gourinat, Plotin. Traité 20 (I, 3) (forthcoming) in regard to this passage. I look forward to reading Gourinat’s interpretation.

5 Charrue, “Traité 20 (I, 3),” in Brisson-Pradeau, 489 n.81.

6 See Porphyry’s fourfold enumeration, Sent. 32 (p. 22, line 14 – p. 23, line 3 Lamberz). Cf.
bear this theoretical significance very well, especially given the contrast drawn between ἡ λογικὴ and ἡ διαλεκτικὴ which seems to have been the thrust of chapters four and five. Discursivity and syllogistic, propositional thinking do not describe well the virtue whose perfected state may be described as “sight and the impression of what is seen, implanted and working in it” (θέα καὶ τύπος τοῦ ὀφθαλμὸς ἐντεθείς καὶ ἐνεργῶν, 19 (I, 2) 4.) I would suggest rather that these λογικαὶ ἔξεις belong to a lower level than the “purified”; they are characterized by reasoning rather than by vision.

It is possible that the designation of these virtues as ἔξεις rather than ἁρεταὶ indicates that they are a larger category of virtue which includes the four cardinal virtues (in their civic mode) as described in Treatise 19 (I, 2) along with other virtues pertaining to learning, reasoning and deliberation. This does seem to reflect the relation of virtue to learning evident in the philosopher-soul described in chapter three:

[The philosopher] must be given mathematical studies (τὰ μαθήματα) for habituation (πρὸς συνεθεισμὸν) to consideration of and faith in what is immaterial—he will receive them easily, being naturally disposed to learning (φιλομαθῆς); he is by nature virtuous (φύσει ἐναρετῶν) and must be brought to perfect his virtues (πρὸς τελεῖωσιν ἁρετῶν ἀκτέων), and after his mathematical studies instructed in dialectic and made a complete dialectician (δῶς διαλεκτικὸν ποιητέων).

The philosopher is as naturally disposed to learning as he is to virtue, and his learning proceeds, as does his virtue, through a process of habituation. The process of habituation which the philosopher undergoes in his intellectual life is directed towards increasing his capacity for noetic activity, and his faith in the objects of that noetic activity, the


1 See, for example, 4.18-20: “[Dialectic] leaves behind logical activity (τὴν λεγομένην λογικὴν πραγματείαν) about propositions and syllogisms, to another art, as it might leave knowing how to write (ἀλλή τέχνη).”

2 Treatise 20 (I, 3) 3.6-10.
immaterial. At first glance, this passage might seem to parallel the opening of Alcinous’ Didaskalikos (The Handbook of Platonism), where the Middle Platonist lays out the necessary characteristics of the would-be philosopher:1

The first necessity [for the philosopher] is that he be naturally apt at those branches of learning which have the capacity to fit him for, and lead him towards, the knowledge of intelligible being, which is not subject to error or change…. Furthermore, he must also be endowed with a temperate nature, and in relation to the passionate part of the soul, he must be naturally restrained…. The prospective philosopher must also be endowed with liberality of mind, for nothing is so inimical as small-mindedness to a soul which is proposing to contemplate things divine and human. He must also possess natural affinity for justice, just as he must towards truth and liberality and temperance…. These natural qualities, if they are combined with correct education and suitable nurturing, render one perfect in respect to virtue…. These Plato was accustomed to name homonymously with the virtues, temperance and justice.

However, the two passages are very different, and in fact may be understood as operating on different levels. A brief comparison will make this clear and reveal what Plotinus is doing with his description. Where Alcinous names the means of the philosophically-minded man’s perfection in virtue—“correct education and suitable nurturing”—Plotinus is silent, stating only that “he must be led to the completion of his virtues” (πρὸς τελείωσιν ἀρετῶν ἀκτέον). Alcinous’ list of imperatives forms a collection of character-based criteria for detecting the would-be philosopher, while Plotinus’ list of imperatives outlines the way forward for the philosopher who is already well on his way. This man must be “shown” (δεικτέον) how to continue his already upward-tending journey, and “set free” (λυτέον); he must be “taught” (δοτέον), “led” (ἀκτέον), “taught” some more (δοτέον), and finally he must be “made” (ποιητέον) into a

1 Didask. 152.6-25 (Dillon, Alcinous, 1.2-4, p.3).
complete dialectician. The tone of the passage draws its inspiration from the *Phaedo* and the *Phaedrus*, and as such it points us toward an understanding of the completion of virtue in its purificatory mode. There is further evidence for this in Plotinus’ use of ἐνάρετον, which is of Stoic, not Platonic, provenance. Chrysippus: “The virtuous man (ἐνάρετον) effectively possesses the theory and the practice of the actions he must accomplish.”¹

Further, for Plotinus the perfection of the philosopher’s virtue, as we will see at the end of *Treatise*, requires the presence and activity of σοφία within him, which comes with the completion of his dialectical instruction. In what is a rather strange use of the term, but not an impossible one, the philosopher’s “natural virtue” should be understood as his possession not only of the so-called “ethical virtue” which results “from habit and training”, but also of civic virtue, which involves the possession and use of φρόνησις. It is by this that “he has begun to move to the higher world” (3.3). So the civic virtues may be understood as λογικαὶ ἐξεῖς to the extent that they involve the government of the rational part of the soul (τὸ λογιζομένον)². What follows the description of the λογικαὶ ἐξεῖς in chapter six confirms this. The “other virtues” described in lines 9-11 in fact use “reasonings” (τοὺς λογισμούς) towards “particular passions and actions” (ἐν τοῖς πάθεσι τοῖς ἱδίως καὶ ταῖς πράξεσιν). Rather than see these as a return to the τὰς ἔξεις καὶ τὰς ἀσκήσεις of line 7, which do not require rational thinking, I would like to suggest that these “other virtues” are one sub-category, so to speak, of the λογικαὶ ἐξεῖς of line 8: they apply reasoning to the particular actions and passions with which they are concerned. And this sub-category includes three of the four cardinal virtues in their civic mode: σωφροσύνη, ἀνδρία, and δικαιοσύνη. Other λογικαὶ ἐξεῖς might include, along with φρόνησις, other forms of ratiocinative activity, and indeed, perhaps even the other three virtues in their purificatory mode.³ Among the four cardinal virtues, then, as well

---

² See *Treatise* 19 (I, 2) 1.17.
³ See Dominic O’Meara, “Aristotelian ethics in Plotinus,” 55-56 (esp. n.9), 61. His
as among the soul’s other rational capacities, ἕρωтив is singled out, considered as a “superior form of reasoning” (ἐπιλογισμὸς τις) by virtue of three things: first, its greater concern with the universal (τὸ καθόλου μᾶλλον); second, its interest in whether there is mutual implication among the virtues (εἰ ἀντακολουθοῦσι); and third, its concern with whether and when and how to act (εἰ δὲ νῦν ἐπισκεῖν ἢ εἰσαύθῳ ἢ ὄλῳ ἄλλο βέλτιον).

This first element, the greater concern of ἕρωтив for the universal, ties it particularly to the description of dialectic set out at the end of chapter five (also quoted above):¹ in knowing the truth it knows what they call propositions, and in general (καθόλου) [dialectic] knows the movements of the soul, what she affirms and what she denies, and whether she affirms the same thing as she denies or another, and if things are different from each other or the same...

This greater concern with the universal by which ἕρωтив reveals its kinship with νοησίς, διαλεκτικὴ and σοφία is what distinguishes that virtue among the other cardinal virtues in their civic mode, drawing them up toward their purificatory manifestations and further enabling the soul’s ascent toward the completion of her purification.

4.2.3.1.4 Treatise 20 (I, 3) 6: νοεῖν

The close relation of ἕρωтив to νοησίς is further emphasized in chapter six of Treatise 20 (I, 3). While ἕρωтив is distinguished from the other virtues by its greater concern for the whole (καθόλου μᾶλλον), it is in fact dialectic and wisdom (ὥ δὲ διαλεκτικὴ καὶ ἡ σοφία) which in fact “provide the whole for the use of ἕρωтив, in a universal and immaterial form” (ἐτι καθόλου καὶ αὐλῶς πάντα εἰς χρήσιν προφέρει τῇ φρονήσει, 6.13-15). Here we see the work of the noetic activity which is paired with φρονεῖν in reading, however, would see the “other virtues” of lines 9-11 as a separate group from the λογικαὶ ἔξεις, rather than a sub-group which use τοὺς λογισμοὺς in regard to specific παράξεις and πάθη.

¹ Treatise 20 (I, 3) 5. See above, page 74.
Treatise 19 (I, 2). If we recall the “naturally virtuous” philosopher of chapter three, who already possesses civic virtue, including φρόνησις, among other λογικαί ἔξεις, we remember that the task set for him was an increase in faith (πίστις) in the existence of the immaterial. So the philosopher’s task is one of progress in purification; he stands in the order of purificatory virtue and this will not reach its completion until in the ascent of dialectic φρόνησις is absorbed wholly into σοφία, until Being is transparent to what is beyond It.

And here in chapter six we find a return to the question of the “natural virtues” (φυσικαὶ ἀρεται, 6.18), or “the ones below” (τὰ κάτω, 6.15). As we have seen by looking back to the description of the philosopher, and through our reading of the ascent of dialectic described in ethical terms in the beginning of chapter six, we ought to be careful here not to read these “natural virtues” as exactly synonymous either with the “natural virtues” of Aristotle,¹ the Stoics, and the Middle Platonists,² or as this category is inherited by the later Neoplatonists,³ which are the lowest form of virtue, “intimately mixed with temperaments, most often opposed one to another,”⁴ belonging innately to living things, even to infants and wild animals—it is by this category, for example, that the lion may be thought courageous, or the lamb gentle.⁵ The virtues called “natural” here ought

---

¹ EN VI 13, 1144b 1-9, 30-37. ή φυσικὴ ἀρετὴ is contrasted with “virtue properly so-called” (ἡ κυρία ἀρετή). The difference between natural virtue and the proper virtues in Aristotle is that the natural virtues are innate dispositions or tendencies of character and can exist apart from one another; the proper virtues those which are acquired together with φρόνησις.

² Didask. 152.1-28, 183.17-184.35 (Dillon, Alcinoïs, 1.1-4, 30.1-6, p. 3, 40-41); Apuleius, De Platone 6.

³ See Saffrey-Segonds, lxxiii-lxxxv.


⁵ See Dillon, Alcinoïs, 182-183; idem, “Plotinus, Philo and Origen on the Grades of Virtue,” 92; O’Meara, “Aristotelian ethics in Plotinus,” 63-64. Both Dillon and O’Meara read the “natural virtues” here as synonymous with those belonging to the lower levels of the later Neoplatonists’ systems of gradations. O’Meara (63n25) does note that the difference between the Aristotelian φρόνησις (EN 1144b17) and the Plotinian σοφία (6, 19) as the sine qua non of perfection calls the direct inspiration of the Aristotelian model
rather to be identified with the *civic* or “human”<sup>1</sup> virtues, those proper to man as a rational and political animal, the composite of soul and body. The more φρόνησις is paired with and turned to its principle σοφία, the more these incomplete (ἀτελές, 6.24) “natural virtues” grow to their perfection and maturity by virtue of their illumination from above.

If by “natural virtue” here Plotinus does indeed include civic virtue as it exists in the morally upright, political man who lives unaware of his deeper and more original character,<sup>2</sup> then it could be said that by the end of chapter six not only have we been led beyond the Middle Platonic interpretation of the ὄμοιωσις θεῶ of *Theaetetus* 176b advocated by the likes of Alcinous and Apuleius, but we have been led beyond that interpretation by a kind of transformation of their own terminology. Chapter six seems to effect a transformation of the Middle Platonic distinction between φυσικά ἁρεταί and τέλεια ἁρεταί even while it makes use of it.<sup>3</sup> It is a move not unsimilar to the introduction of the purificatory virtues as the primary form of imitation of the paradigms in *Treatise* 19 (I, 2), chapter three which we considered above: there, Plotinus unfolded the purificatory virtues out of the initial distinction between civic virtue and the “greater” virtues, understood in chapter one of *Treatise* 19 (I, 2) as the paradigms.

---

<sup>1</sup> See *EN* I 1102a: “Clearly it is human virtue (ἁρετή ἀνθρωπίνη) that we must consider…. By human virtue, we mean that of the soul, not that of the body… The politician, then, must consider the soul, and consider it with a view to understanding virtue, just to the extent that is required by the inquiry…”

<sup>2</sup> See Trouillard, *La purification plotinienne*, 143. Trouillard appears to understand the incomplete and defective virtue of chapter 6 as the civic virtues insofar as they are incapable of freeing us from the passions against which they defend us. Perfect, fully purified virtue is, on the other hand, in Trouillard’s term, “la vertu d’oubli”, the virtue of the soul who is no longer mindful of the contingencies against which political virtue guarded her. The end of the purified soul’s virtue is a higher liberty that implies no resistance (*La purification plotinienne*, 64, 148). See below, chapter 5.

Here, he subtly unfolds the civic virtues out of the distinction between natural virtue and perfected virtue. The effect in both cases is an upward motion of the soul; one by which the newly subordinated virtues are swept upward too and in a way given a new dignity by virtue of the greater light that illuminates them. So, while Treatise 19 (I, 2) teaches the practical, political man that his civic virtue is of a lower order than he might have believed it to be, nonetheless his virtue also receives a kind of dignity in being recognized, through the character of the higher, purificatory form of virtue that stands above it, as itself a kind of purification. The same is true here in Plotinus’ use of “natural virtue”: if the civic virtues can be understood as “natural”, their perfection through the advent of οὐφία also draws the other forms of unreflective excellence which we share with the animals into a relation with what is above.

Chapter six of Treatise 20 (I, 3) remains an extremely difficult part of the text, fraught with interpretative problems due to the confluence of Stoic, Aristotelian and Platonic ethical terms (at least these) with Plotinus’ own work in Treatise 19 (I, 2). The reading of the last three chapters of Treatise 20 (I, 3) given above by no means presumes to eliminate these interpretative problems, but I hope it does at least give us a better sense of why φρονεῖν is paired with νοεῖν at the purificatory level in Treatise 19 (I, 2), and perhaps also suggests some avenues towards seeing the continuity between chapter six and the rest of Treatise 20.

4.3 Purificatory Virtue: Conclusion

The enumeration of the four cardinal virtues in their purificatory mode in chapter three of Treatise 19 (I, 2) reveals three things through its transformations of the enumeration of the civic mode in chapter one. First, there is in chapter three’s enumeration a reversal of the order of terms such that σωφρονεῖν precedes ἀνδρίζεσθαι, reflecting the perspective of the Phaedo and its emphasis on courage as a virtue of the whole soul rather than of only the spirited part. Second, the shift from abstract nouns (φρόνησις, ἀνδρία, σωφροσύνη, δικαιοσύνη) to present infinitives (νοεῖν τε καὶ φρονεῖν, σωφρονεῖν, ἀνδρίζεσθαι) reflects the purificatory virtues’ closer approximation of the activity of
God, even as the difference between soul and Νοῦς is further defined along the lines of disposition.¹ Third, the partition of φρονησις into νοεῖν τε καὶ φρονεῖν simultaneous with the redefinition of these activities as the soul’s “acting alone” (μονῆ ἐνεργοί) reflects the redirection toward and increasing coincidence of the soul’s moral thinking with the universal principles received from ἡ διαλεκτικὴ καὶ σοφία. As Plotinus puts it in Treatise 1 (I, 6), “soul, when she is raised to Νοῦς increases in beauty. Νοῦς and the things of Νοῦς are her beauty, her own beauty and not another’s, since only then is she truly soul.”² Purificatory virtue is thus not merely another level of virtue, but is the virtue proper to the soul as soul. It remains to be seen what sort of perfection of this purification Treatise 19 (I, 2) is leading us to.

¹ Cf. Aristotle’s line of reasoning in Eudemian Ethics 2.1, 1219a30ff.: “Since an activity is a better thing than a disposition, and the best activity than the best state, and since virtue is the best state, the activity of virtue is the soul’s greatest good” (ἐπεὶ βέλτιον ἢ ἐνέργεια τῆς διαθέσεως καὶ τῆς βελτίστης ἐξεως ἢ βελτίστη ἐνέργεια ἢ δ’ ἄρετη βελτίστη ἐξεως, τῆς ἄρετῆς ἐνέργειαν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀριστον εἶναι).
² Treatise 1 (I, 6) 6.16-18.
Chapter 5
Purified Virtue in Treatises 19 (I, 2) and 20 (I, 3)

5.1 Purificatory…Purified? The Place of the Third Enumeration: 19 (I, 2) 4-6

In chapter four of Treatise 19 (I, 2) a new course of questioning is launched, in which the proper relation between virtue and purification is sought. This line of questioning continues until roughly the sixth and penultimate chapter of the Treatise, which concludes with what seems to be a second enumeration of the purificatory virtues:¹

So the higher justice (δικαιοσύνη ή μείζων) in the soul is her activity towards intellect (τὸ πρός νοῦν ἐνεργεῖν), her moderation is her inward turning to intellect (σωφροσύνη εἰς ἐν πρός νοῦν στροφῆ), her courage is her freedom from affections (ἡ δὲ ἀνδρία ἀπάθεια)...

Wisdom is left out of this enumeration; it receives its second description earlier in chapter six: “wisdom, theoretical and practical, consists in the contemplation of that which intellect contains” (σοφία μὲν καὶ φρόνησις ἐν θεωρίᾳ ὁν νοῦς ἔχει, 6.12-13).

Why wisdom is separated from the other virtues at this point, we will discuss below.² For the moment, it is reasonable to consider the order of re-enumeration here as σοφία καὶ φρόνησις, δικαιοσύνη, σωφροσύνη and ἀνδρία, and to see it as in some fashion a conclusion of the discussion of chapters four to six. But what kind of conclusion? Is it a simple restatement of the purificatory virtues from a different perspective, now seen as oriented to their paradigms, rather than as distinguished from the civic virtues, as Dillon sees it?³ Or is Porphyry on the right track in making this a third, “contemplative” level of virtue, that of the soul “looking inward to Intellect and already filled by it” (αἱ δὲ ψυχῆς πρὸς νοῦν ἐνορώσης ἡδῆ καὶ πληρομένης ἀπ’ ἀυτοῦ)?⁴ In order for us to

¹ Treatise 19 (I, 2) 6.23-27.
³ Dillon, “Plotinus, Philo and Origen,” 100.
⁴ Porphyry, Sent. 32 (p. 29, lines 10-11 Lamberz).
determine the function of this enumeration within the argument as well as within the soul’s *itinerarium*, we must consider first the line of reasoning that leads us from chapter three to chapter six.

In chapter four of *Treatise 19* (I, 2), it becomes necessary to establish the proper relation of three terms in regard to ἀρετή: purification (κάθαρσις), perfection (τέλος) and conversion (ἐπιστροφή). The ritual undertone of the terms in this chapter is striking, and reflects the fact that Plotinus is continuing to draw from the *Phaedo* here, especially 69a-d.¹ There Socrates interprets the riddles of “those who established the mystic rites for us” (οἱ τὰς τελετὰς ἐκμύθεν οὐτοὶ καταστήσαντες): in the saying “there are many who carry the thyrsus, but the Bacchants are few,”² the Bacchants are the philosophers.

Further, as we saw above, in its concern with the perfection of virtue and the character through the advent of σοφία the final chapter of *Treatise 20* (I, 3) also addressed itself to the philosopher, the one who already possesses “natural”, human, civic virtue, possessed of and governed by φρόνησις as he is. The coincidence of the language of ritual initiation with that of perfection in virtue in this new line of questioning in chapter four of *Treatise 19* (I, 2) thus betrays signs of another transition in mode, from a discourse directed to the lover to one directed to the philosopher, the one who has “begun to move above, and is only at a loss for someone to show him the way.”³

In chapter four of *Treatise 19* (I, 2), then, we make the transition from virtue as the means of likeness to God to the question of that likeness itself which the aphaeretic activity of virtue reveals: conversion and purification occur simultaneously, and neither are the good: “the good will be what is left after purification, not the purification itself” (4.8-9).

This good (ἀγαθῶν) of the purified soul turns out to be not quite hers alone: rather, as her nature tends toward both the evil and the good, her good relies on the beings to

---

¹ Cf. Flamand, “Traité 19 (I, 2),” in Brisson-Pradeau, 455-457, esp. n. 82, 84, 89, 95, 99, 100.
² *Phaedo* 69c8-d1: ναρθηκοφόροι μὲν πολλοί, βάκχοι δὲ τε παιροί.
³ *Treatise 20* (I, 3) 3.3-4.
which she allies herself and is to be found in her “fellowship with that which is akin to her” (τὸ συνεῖναι τῷ συγγενεί, 4.14).

5.1.1 The Return to World Soul: A Theurgical Moment

The pair of συγ- prefixes at 19 (I, 2) 4.14 might remind us of the kinship (συγγενεία) between World Soul and individual souls, which we discovered in Treatises 27 and 28 (IV, 3-4), and the role of that kinship in the correction of the soul’s motions as she learns to “follow the motions of the All” on the authority of the Timaeus (90c8-d1).¹ To despise this kinship is to tend away from the intelligible, as the condemnation of the Gnostics’ disdain for the visible universe in Treatise 33 (II, 9) asserts:²

there are souls in [the heavenly bodies] too, and intelligent and good ones, much more closely in touch with the beings There than are our own (συναφεῖς τοῖς ἐκεῖ πολὺ μᾶλλον ἡ αἱ ἡμῶν)...because [the Gnosticizing Platonists] despise the kindred of those higher beings (τῶν συγγενῶν ἐκεῖνοις) also, they do not know the higher beings either but talk as if they did.

World Soul and the celestial souls are our kindred, and are themselves the kindred of the intelligibles which they contemplate and by which contemplation they move and order the cosmic sphere. The fellowship with what is akin is further described as “a sight and the impression of what is seen, implanted and working in the soul” (θέα καὶ τύπος τοῦ ὀφθαλμοῦ ἐντεθεῖς καὶ ἐνέργος, 4.19-20). Now the connection between this union with the kindred and the active union of sight and impression recalls another, more positive moment in Plotinus’ dialogue with the Gnostics, the centrepiece spiritual exercise described in Treatise 31 (V, 8):³

¹ See above, Chapter Two.
² 33 (II, 9) 16.9-14.
³ Treatise 31 (V, 8) 9.1-16.
Let us then apprehend in our thought (τῇ διανοίᾳ) this cosmos, with each of its parts remaining what it is without confusion, gathering all of them together into one as far as we can, so that when any one part appears first, for instance, the outside heavenly sphere, the imagination of the sun, and, with it, the other heavenly bodies follows immediately, and the earth and sea and all the living creatures are seen, as they could in fact all be seen within a transparent sphere. Let there be, then, in the soul a shining imagination of a sphere, having everything within it...taking away the mass: take away also the places, and the mental picture of matter within yourself, and do not try to apprehend another sphere smaller in mass than the original one, but calling on the god who made that of which you have the mental picture, pray him to come. And may he come, bringing his own universe with him, with all the gods within him...

In *Treatise 19* (I, 2) 1 we were led to consider the Soul of the World as the divinity to whom we should seek likeness because we find ourselves “here” in its universe, the order and beauty of which give cause for wonder. “Wonder” (θαύμα) in Plotinus is the human’s characteristic response to the evident φρονήσις, ουσία and non-discursive τέχνη as well as the providence (προνοία) and power (δυνάμεις) of World Soul. In teaching that the individual soul is moved by wonder not only to seek the paradigm upon which World Soul depends, but also to imitate the demiurge of the *Timaeus* in seeking to make the image more like the paradigm by making it in herself, the spiritual exercise described in *Treatise 31* (V, 8) exhorts the student soul to make “the world as a whole both one’s offering and one’s act of worship.”6 This is thus an immaterial theurgic act, by which the human enters into divine activity, exchanges the human for the divine, and seeks to coincide with the All so that the individual soul’s particular human

---

1 *Treatise 19* (I, 2) 1.13.
2 *Treatise 31* (V, 8) 6.13-16; cf. ουσίαν ἀμηχανον, 33 (II, 9) 8.15.
3 *Treatise 47* (III, 2) 13.16-21.
5 *Treatise 28* (IV, 4) 45.27-30; 33 (II, 9) 2.15; 40 (II, 1) 4.15.
perspective may be corrected, expanded, and thus restored to its original scope and power: “[man] has ceased to be the All now that he has become man; but when he ceases to be man he “walks on high and directs the whole universe;” for when he comes to belong to the whole he makes the whole” (γενόμενος γὰρ τοῦ ὅλου τὸ ὅλον ποιεῖ, 7.33-35).1

This inner theurgy is not the work of a moment’s consideration. Rather, it requires a remarkable capacity to attend to the visible cosmos in all its dappled variety and particularity without the slightest distraction or preference of one imagination over another.2 Anyone continually drawn by the indefinite relativity of the sensible will not be able to attain to such a vision, nor will the one who clings to one body and has not yet come to know the invisible beauty inherent to soul. In other words, this exercise implicitly assumes the acquisition of the civic virtues: this is an exercise for the philosophic soul. Man cannot become more than man without first becoming fully man—and so the exercise assumes the civic virtues in its exhortation to surpass them.

Further, the exercise uncompromisingly demands not merely the many but the All: in so doing it seeks perfection, that is, the inculcation of the purified virtue of World Soul.

This exercise’s relation to purified virtue is clearer when juxtaposed with a similarly worded exercise described in Treatise 10 (V, 1), beloved of Augustine:3

> Let [the individual soul] look at the great soul, being herself another soul which is no small one, who has become worthy to look by being freed from deceit, and the things that have bewitched the other souls, and is established in quietude. Let not only her encompassing body and the body’s raging sea be quiet, but all her environment: the earth quiet, and the sea and air quiet, and the heaven itself at peace. Into this heaven at

---


3 Treatise 10 (V, 1) 2. Cf. Augustine, Confessions IX. 10.
rest let her imagine soul as if flowing in from outside, pouring in and entering it everywhere and illuminating it...

Plotinus is emphatic in his silencing of the visible world here: this inner quietude is decidedly the pre-requisite for further ascent. The individual soul prepares herself for the coming of Soul in a generous flow of intellectual light; she prepares herself not only to receive this coming, but to imagine it. As the consequences of this overflow, all the things which World Soul’s body contains fall out of the scope and concentrated serenity of her contemplation of the Intelligible. The exercise of Treatise 10 (V, 1) becomes a kind of exhortation to the praise of the nature of Soul, addressing itself to the one who sees the beauty of another but has not yet come to know the beauty of the All, or of himself: “...why does one let oneself go and pursue another? But by admiring the soul in another, you admire yourself” (10 (V, 1) 2.49-51). Now it is precisely the serenity of the body of the All, rather than the confusion and conflict of its parts, which the first stage of the exercise in Treatise 31 (V, 8) seeks to imitate (31 (V, 8) 9.1-2). But where the exercise in Treatise 10 (V, 1) leads to the contemplation of Soul, actively imagined, Treatise 31 (V, 8) leads to the Intelligible, actively received: it is the arrival of a whole other cosmos which is awaited, and its arrival cannot be imagined, but only invoked: “may he come.”

The god’s coming is considered still further in Treatise 31 (V, 8), and he is seen first by “the oldest among the gods”, Zeus, with the other gods and souls, the capable ones, following in his train (31 (V, 8) 10.1ff.) The imagery and spirit of the Phaedrus is in clear evidence here,¹ and continues as their vision of the Intelligibles is described: it is the “source and nature” (πηγή και φύσιν, 10.13²) of virtue, of the just (τοῦ δικαίου) and of σωφροσύνη which are particularly beheld, depending on the nature of the beholder. Plotinus in fact makes these two virtues the only two examples of vision, highlighting

---

¹ As it is in Treatise 10 (V, 1) 2. Cf. Phaedrus 245cff.
² Note that in Plato, the vision is of “justice itself and moderation” (αὕτην δικαιοσύνην...σωφροσύνην, 247d6). Plotinus’ insertion of “source and nature” (πηγή και φύσιν) may be picking up on the pair “source and origin” (πηγή και ἀρχή) from earlier in the dialogue (245c9).

92
the centrality of virtue in this spiritual exercise as the guide to the intelligible.1 With World Soul, Zeus, leading, the gods and souls, “anyone who is his fellow-lover” (σύνεραστής, 10.23), arrive finally at the vision of beauty, and find themselves both filled with and transformed by this vision, “likened to that upon which they walked” (όμωιωθέντες τῇ ἐφ’ ἢς ἐβεβήκεσαν, 10.29). The end of this stage of the exercise is a vision of the god within, likened to a kind of possession (10.41-43).

Let us return to Treatise 19 (I, 2) with these cosmically significant spiritual exercises described in Treatise 10 (V, 1) and Treatise 31 (V, 8) in mind, especially their evocation of the central myth of the Phaedrus. Though there are no such theurgical acts explicitly enacted in Treatise 19 (I, 2), nonetheless the interiorization of the mysteries is evoked2 in the consideration of the relation of perfection to conversion, as well as the soul’s union and conjunction with World Soul in the phrase τὸ συνεῖναι τῷ συγγενεῖ (19 (I, 2) 4.14).

This continues in chapter five of the Treatise, which pushes the investigation towards a clearer articulation of the “the extent of the purification” (πόσον κάθαρσις, 5.1). With this push we have now decidedly left the life of human virtue behind; the question of “likeness” thus becomes also a question of “identity”: “in this way it will become clear to which [god] there is likeness, as well as to which god there is identity” (οὗτω γὰρ καὶ ἦ ὀμοίωσις τίνι φανερὰ καὶ ἦ ταυτότης τίνι θεῶ, 5.1-2). This consideration of both likeness and identity leads us to the gradations of divinity which Porphyry will pick up on and systematize further in his summary in Sentence 32: the man who is not yet fully purified, who because of the trace of the involuntary in him is double, may be considered a double kind of god or spirit (θεὸς ἄν εἰ ὁ τοιοῦτος καὶ δαίμον, 6.4-5); the fully purified

---

1 It is also interesting to note that Plotinus leaves out the third example of vision which is in the Platonic passage: ἐπιστήμη. Further, he transfers the discussion of the distinction between the ἐπιστήμη of the world of Becoming and the ἐπιστήμη of the world of Being to the virtue of ἀλφροσύνη, taking this as an opportunity to describe paradigmatic ἀλφροσύνη as “that glory over all, playing upon what we may call the whole extension of that world” (ἡ δὲ ἐπὶ πᾶσι περὶ πάν τὸ οίον μέγεθος αὐτοῦ ἐπιθέουσα τελευταῖα ὑπάτη, 10.16-17).

2 Trouillard, La purification plotinienne, 195.
one is no longer a man, but “simply god, and one of those gods who follow the First” 
(θεός μόνον: θεός δὲ τῶν ἐπομένων τῷ πρῶτῳ, 6.6-7). Here, then, the Platonic 
background reveals itself once more as the Phaedrus, and the exemplary role which
World Soul plays in Treatise 19 (I, 2) is still more in evidence.

From this brief sketch of chapters four through six of Treatise 19 (I, 2), juxtaposed with 
the cosmic theurgies of Treatise 10 (V, 1) and 31 (V, 8) we can trace the following 
trajectory. The two kinds of likeness have been established and purificatory virtue has 
been unfolded out from the initial distinction between civic virtue and the paradigms of 
virtue in Intellect in chapters two and three of Treatise 19 (I, 2). This clarifies civic virtue’s 
place as well as its proper character as a lower form of purification. Chapter four of the 
Treatise begins a new investigation, one that evokes the language of the mysteries and, 
through the scriptural background of the Phaedrus, leads to the reintroduction of World 
Soul into the consideration of virtue, as both our exemplar and our fellow-lover.

5.1.2 σοφία καὶ φρόνησις

Why, in the enumeration of the virtues in Treatise 19 (I, 2) 6, does wisdom not appear 
with the rest? After the carefulness with which we have seen Plotinus enumerate the 
other levels of virtue, and given the assertion of mutual implication which immediately 
follows this enumeration (ἀντακολονθοῦσι τοῖς ἄλλῃλαις καὶ αὐταί αἱ ἀρεταὶ ἐν 
ψυχῆ, 7.1), it is surprising that the four virtues would not appear together.

Plotinus chooses wisdom (σοφία καὶ φρόνησις) as the virtue through which to revisit the 
question of the difference between soul and Intellect:1 “Wisdom, theoretical and 
practical (σοφία καὶ φρόνησις), consists in the contemplation of the things which 
Intellect possesses, but Intellect has these by immediate contact (τὴ ἐπαφῆ).” Further, 
wisdom is the first virtue named in its paradigmatic form, as “the act of self” (ἐνέργεια 
αὐτοῦ). The object of wisdom as a virtue of soul is always what belongs to another, to

---

1 Treatise 19 (I, 2) 6.12-13.
Intellect. In the final chapter of the *Treatise*, wisdom is again the virtue that prompts the distinction between soul and Intellect:

In the soul, sight directed towards intellect is wisdom, theoretical and practical (σοφία καὶ φρόνησις), these are the virtues belonging to the soul, for she is not herself they, as is the case There, and the others follow in the same way.

We saw in *Treatise 20* (I, 3) that φρόνησις was the virtue which was “more concerned with the universal.” Further, with the advent of σοφία the soul reaches her perfection. Wisdom is the virtue definitive of the purified soul, in the same way that moderation defined the politically virtuous soul, and courage the soul just beginning to learn to separate herself from the body in thought.

5.1.3 The Redefinition of Justice

The nature of justice at the higher levels of virtue seems to present a particular problem for Plotinus. Its definition at the civic level as οἰκείωσις required the presence of several parts to be ordered and harmonized under the rule of reason. οἰκείωσις was not used in the purificatory definition of justice, but here at the end of the *Treatise* it reappears. What can it mean in a soul fully turned to Intellect and filled by her vision of the same? All plurality and partition have been stripped away.

Plotinus asks this explicitly (6.20ff.). His answer is that “true absolute justice is the disposition of a unity to itself” (ἤ γον ἀληθῆς αὐτοδικαιοσύνη ἐνὸς πρὸς αὐτῷ, 6.23-24). In this answer, however, we again see how the paradigm has crept into the consideration of purified virtue. Between the description of wisdom in its purified form and the rest of the virtues appear the paradigms of wisdom and justice in Νοῦς.

Through the quotation from the *Theaetetus*, wisdom and justice were the virtues with which we began *Treatise 19* (I, 2); here at the end of the *Treatise* we find these two virtues

---

1 *Treatise 19* (I, 2) 7.6-8.
are the cause of a kind of intertwining of the virtues of the purified soul and the paradigms themselves. They characterize soul in her degree of likeness to Νόοι.
Chapter 6
Conclusion

Nowhere else in Plotinus do we get a more thorough-going account of virtue than in Treatises 19 (I, 2) and 20 (I, 3). In these two early works, which might well be grouped as one under a single title, “Concerning the Upward Way”, the polyvalent nature of Platonic virtue is unfolded in several stages. First, in the consideration of the \( \delta \mu \iota \omega \sigma \varsigma \theta \varepsilon \omega \), World Soul is given a small but important role that fundamentally shapes the rest of the Treatise: the usually glamorous civic virtues pale in comparison to the object of World Soul’s desire and the wonder of her wisdom in her providential care for all that is soulless. This marks the beginning of the musician’s necessary indoctrination.

Second, the mode of discourse changes to address itself to the lover, who must be led to recognize the bodiless beauty especially of the virtues. Here the civic virtues receive a more sustained treatment that culminates in their re-orientation and redefinition as lower forms of purification, marked by measure, limit and moderation. In this redefinition the civic virtues find a dignity that will be significantly intensified by the later Neoplatonists.

Third, marked by an exegetical shift from the context of the Republic to that of the Phaedo, the purificatory virtues are enumerated as a mediating step between the civic virtues and the paradigms. As virtues concerned with the stripping away of all passion and identification with the body, they may be said to be characterized by the virtue of courage. Here the Phaedo’s most memorable themes—the practice of philosophy as the practice of death, and the image of the true Bacchants as the philosophers—are evoked to mark the transition from the lover to the philosopher who, having already acquired the civic virtues and desirous of ascending still further in his purifications, must be led to perfect his virtues through the advent of \( \sigma \omega \phi \alpha \).

Fourth, we are led to reconsider the virtues of World Soul, now understood as the fully purified virtues of the one fully turned to Intellect and filled by its vision. Here wisdom
and justice are interwoven as the virtues most definitive of World Soul’s productive, providential gaze. This interweaving of justice and wisdom takes place simultaneously with an interweaving of the accounts of the virtues of soul and their paradigms in Intellect, reflecting, perhaps, the degree to which Soul may approximate by possession what Intellect is by nature.

In Treatises 19 and 20, therefore, guided by a series of carefully executed and juxtaposed exegeses of several Platonic dialogues, Plotinus lays out an itinerarium for the three kinds of human soul capable of “going the upward way”. It is an itinerarium that dignifies the lower levels even as it subordinates them. This way of ascent owes its preservation, transmission and transformation to Porphyry’s brief summary, which primarily pays attention to the fourfold enumeration of the four cardinal virtues—an anagogical strategy of Plotinus which, as we have seen, has Platonic roots in the Phaedrus’ treatment of οὐρίας. Nonetheless, much of the character of Plotinus’ original arduous and ardent anagogy is lost in this Porphyrian preservation. The richness which the trope of the fourfold enumeration acquires through its long and influential legacy in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages invites us to return to Plotinus’ Treatises 19 and 20 with a keener eye; with these enumerations as familiar markers now to guide us, perhaps we may better run the course which he has set, looking ever to World Soul’s exemplary activity.
Bibliography

Texts and Translations of Plotinus

Critical Editions of the Enneads as a Whole


Translations & Critical Editions of Single Enneads (in chronological order by treatise)


*Other Ancient Sources*


Secondary Scholarship


van Lieshout, H. La théorie plotinienne de la vertu. Freiburg, Switzerland: Studia Friburgia, 1926.


McPherran, Mark L. “Reason’s Ascent: Happiness and the Disunity of Virtue in Plato and Plotinus.” In Rationality and Happiness: From the Ancients to the Early Medievals.


---------. “Aristotle and Plato on God as Nous and as the Good.” The Review of Metaphysics 45.3 (1992): 543-573.


