

# How did Aristotle's Unmoved Mover come to love everything by the end of the ancient pagan tradition?

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It is often remarked that one cannot imagine the Unmoved Mover loving or caring for anything—and, in fact, this is the gist of both Christian and atheist attacks on Aristotle's Unmoved Mover. Richard Dawkins, for instance, reminds us that even if God is the end of the regress of movement, this does not mean we can ascribe to such a principle properties that are normally considered divine, such as omniscience, goodness, creativity in design, answering prayers, forgiving sins, and so on (*The God Delusion*, Boston, 2006, 110). In other words, any adoption of versions of the cosmological or teleological arguments, such as we might find at the beginning of Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*, do not lead to the Christian notion of God as personal, loving and caring; and, of course, on Dawkins' well known view, the Christian loving God is a chimera, anyway, a product of wishful human thinking.

But how unbridgeable is the chasm between the Unmoved Mover, on the one hand, and a moving, benevolent God, on the other? Certainly in the Aristotelian tradition, one could argue, there must be a divide between the two notions: the Unmoved Mover is the final cause of all movement in the universe, not the efficient cause; God moves "as being loved,"<sup>1</sup> according to Aristotle's famous phrase; God does not love; and so to supply some degree of efficient causation to God is not warranted by the evidence. Alexander of Aphrodisias, one of the most famous early commentators on Aristotle (late 2<sup>nd</sup>, early 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE), for example, held the view that divine providence only extends as far as the movements of the heavenly bodies and the maintenance of sublunary species, but not as far as *sublunary individuals*.<sup>2</sup> Even if it were possible to speak about God's final causality as in some sense creative and sustaining, such causality does not reach or touch individual human lives at all. It maintains only the species by its motive energy, not individuals.

On the other hand, the judgment of Thomas Aquinas that

1. *Metaphysics* 12, 7, 1072b3, *κινεῖ δὴ ὡς ἐρώμενον*.

2. In the Arabic *De Providentia*, 1, 1-9, 2, trans. Ruland, in Sharples, 1982, 198-211.

Plato's self-moving "God" and Aristotle's Unmoved Mover are not incompatible, at least from his viewpoint in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, is worth taking into account:

It is to be noted, however, that Plato, who held that every mover is moved, understood the name motion in a wider sense than did Aristotle. For Aristotle understood motion strictly, according as it is the act of what exists in potency inasmuch as it is such. So understood, motion only belongs to divisible bodies, as it is proved in the *Physics*. According to Plato, however, that which moves itself is not a body. Plato understood by motion any given operation, so that to understand and to judge are a kind of motion. Aristotle likewise touches upon this manner of speaking in the *De Anima*. Plato accordingly said that the first mover moves himself because he knows himself and wills or loves himself. In a way, this is not opposed to the reasons of Aristotle. There is no difference between reaching a first being that moves himself, as understood by Plato, and reaching a first being that is absolutely unmoved, as understood by Aristotle. --St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*; Book One, chapter 13, 10.

What I want to do here is, first, to examine Plato and Aristotle, starting with Aristotle's view of the Unmoved Mover, and, second, to propose a likely story of how the Unmoved Mover in the subsequent history of thought, at least up to the 6<sup>th</sup> Century CE, gets transformed from a mover of everything to a lover of everything. I will return to Aquinas' assessment at the end of my story.

I shall first, then, set out Aristotle's notion of the Unmoved Mover (in the *Physics* and *Metaphysics*) and then compare this with what I shall argue is its first recognizable precursor in Plato's *Symposium*.<sup>3</sup> For Aristotle, on H. H. Joachim's account,<sup>4</sup> God is the first originative source of motion, the only cause adequate to account for the unceasing continuity of change in the universe; God is the ultimate object of desire, that is, the ultimate final cause that moves "as being loved;"<sup>5</sup> and God is also the ultimate ideal towards which all things strive to assimilate themselves,

3. See also Chang, 2002, 431-46.

4. Joachim, 1970, 291.

5. *Metaphysics* 12, 7, 1072b3.

because God is the only absolutely real activity (i.e., form without matter) or the only completely self-fulfilled and self-fulfilling activity without potentiality: according to Aristotle, the Unmoved Mover, identified as God, unlike the Good and the Beautiful in Plato, eternally thinks (but this is not self-movement), and God thinks about the best thing, which is his thought (since thinking is the best of activities), so that thought and its object are the same: God's life is a thinking of thinking.<sup>6</sup> Here there is no hint of things that make human life valuable such as feelings, emotions and loves. The Unmoved Mover is impassible, unmixed, separate from everything, on the one hand. Yet, on the other hand, it is the ideal of love and of all striving, in what seems to be a deeply puzzling way.

Another way of expressing this puzzlement might be to ask whether the Unmoved Mover is in any sense an efficient cause—a real mover? Simplicius in late antiquity points out that the unmoved mover fits the definition of an efficient cause—'whence the first source of change or rest' (*Phys.* II. 3, 194b29-30; *Simpl.* 1361. 12ff.), but Aristotle never acknowledges this nor specifies in what sense the unmoved mover might be an efficient cause (a problem of which Simplicius is well aware: 1363. 12-14). Even more puzzling is H. H. Joachim's comment that Aristotle's God is "the real coalescence of formal, final, and efficient causes" (291n1). How can this be so, if notions of efficiency or directing agency are all derived from the natural, technical and anthropomorphic realms? What kind of coalescence might there be in this case? And how could any efficient notion of divine moving or divine craftsmanship escape the anthropomorphic way Plato makes his Demiurge in the *Timaeus*, and *Statesman*, "deliberate" and *do* various things?

Let us look first at one of the most famous passages from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and then compare it with what I shall argue is its model—at least in part—in the *Symposium* and *Republic*. As we have seen above, the Unmoved Mover in *Metaphysics* 12, 7, moves the first heaven unceasingly just as "the object of desire and the object of thought" move without being moved. God as pure act is the prime Mover who moves the Sphere of the fixed stars immediately by non-reciprocal contact (e.g., in the case where a mover moves without itself being moved, just as a person who grieves us 'touches' us, but we do not 'touch' him, Aristotle observes),<sup>7</sup> and imparts to it a uniform, continuous and eternal motion that is closest to the immobility of the Unmoved Mover

6. *Metaphysics* 12, 9, 1074b34-5.

7. *Physics* 3, 2; *De Gen. et Corr.* 2, 6, 323a25.

itself. The other spheres, in their turn, are moved eternally and continually but not uniformly, because of the growing number of intermediary movers between them and the Prime Mover; and this continues down to the sphere of the sublunary world, where the circular movement of the upper spheres gives way to the cyclical transformation of the elements and the generation, destruction, growth, and change of animals, and where individual animals are so far removed from the Prime Movers that they cannot even attain to the continuous eternity of the upper spheres.<sup>8</sup>

So far, the Unmoved Mover is as remote as it would appear nearly 2000 years later in the words of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, who cannot be moved like ordinary mortals: "I am constant as the northern star, Of whose true-fixed and resting quality/There is no fellow in the firmament." Yet Aristotle's Unmoved Mover is plainly *not* like Julius Caesar altogether, because, in *Metaphysics* 12, chapter 7, its capacity to move appears to reach into every desire, every willed action and every thought, for the object of desire and the object of thought, Aristotle argues, move in one and same way: "They move without being moved. And the primary objects of desire and of thought are the same. For the apparent beautiful/good is the object of appetite, and the real beautiful/good is the primary object of rational wish (ἐπιθυμητὸν μὲν γὰρ τὸ φαινόμενον καλόν, βουλευτὸν δὲ πρῶτον τὸ ὄν καλόν)." The movement of pure thought, therefore, reaches dynamically into every desire (ἐπιθυμητὸν) and every willed action (βουλευτὸν)—even, one might say, into desire as *epithymia*, namely, the lowest part or power of the tripartite soul in *Republic* book 4! Aristotle concludes this section by arguing implicitly that "the beautiful," namely, something that in his thought denotes final causality (οὗ δ' ἔνεκα... τὴν τοῦ καλοῦ χάραν),<sup>9</sup> points ultimately to the first or supreme *best*, namely, to "the first [that] is always *best*, or analogous to the *best* (καὶ ἔστιν ἄριστον αἰεὶ ἢ ἀνάλογον τὸ πρῶτον)." Aristotle therefore points to both the immanent good as "first best or analogous to the best" and the transcendent Good, as that to which everything else might be analogous. And as we know at the end of Book 12, the Unmoved Mover, explicitly in chapter 10 "the good and the best," is present to everything both as transcendent, or separate, and as immanent, or as a function of internal order.<sup>10</sup>

8. See Tricot, Vol. II 1986, 672-4n2.

9. See Appendix I.

10. *Metaphysics* 12, 10, 1075a10-15: Επισκεπτέον δὲ καὶ ποτέρως ἔχει ἡ τοῦ ὅλου φύσις τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ ἄριστον, πότερον κειχωρισμένον τι καὶ αὐτὸ καθ'

If this is the character of Aristotle's thought throughout the *Corpus Aristotelicum*, then the Unmoved Mover is not an infinitely remote final cause, but in producing motion "as being loved," it is also an inner dynamic cause and an actual beginning of every impulse and thought—both immanent to, yet separate from, each thing. This is perhaps supported by the following well-known passage:

On such a principle, then, depend the heavens and the world of nature. And it is a life such as the best that we enjoy, and enjoy for but a short time (for it is ever in this state, which we cannot be), since its actuality is also pleasure. (And for this reason waking, perception, and thinking are most pleasant, and hopes and memories are so on account of these.) And thinking in itself deals with what is best in itself, and thinking in the fullest sense with what is best in the fullest sense. And thought thinks itself by participation in the object of thought; for it becomes an object of thought in touching and thinking its object, so that thought and object of thought are the same. For that which can receive the object of thought, i.e. the substance, is intellect, and it is active when it has the object. Therefore, the possession rather than the receptivity is the divine element that thought seems to contain, and contemplation is most pleasant and best. If, then, God is always in that good state in which we sometimes are, this compels our wonder; and if in a better this compels it yet more. And God *is* in a better state. And life also belongs to God; for the actuality of intellect is life, and God is actuality; and God's self-dependent actuality is life most good and eternal. We say therefore that God is a living being, eternal, most good, so that life and duration continuous and eternal belong to God; for this is God (*Metaphysics* 12, 7, 1072b13-30).<sup>11</sup>

What is striking about this passage is that Aristotle weaves into the fabric of God's life the significance not only of human life at its highest but of all experience at whatever level of existence. God's

αὐτό, ἢ τὴν τάξιν. ἢ ἀμφοτέρως ὡσπερ στρατεύμα; καὶ γὰρ ἐν τῇ τάξει τὸ εὖ καὶ ὁ στρατηγός, καὶ μᾶλλον οὗτος· οὐ γὰρ οὗτος διὰ τὴν τάξιν ἀλλ' ἐκείνη διὰ τοῦτόν ἐστιν.

11. See Appendix II for the Greek text.

way or mode of life (διαγωγῆ) is the purest pleasure, something we experience only intermittently. Furthermore, all animal activities throughout the cosmos, rational and non-rational—both intellect and feelings, are not only dependent on God's life; they are in a sense transfixed at the core by that life: "And for this reason waking, perception, and thinking are most pleasant, and hopes and memories are so on account of these." First, the immediacy and pleasure of an activity such as waking up or hoping are *causally and internally* related to the activity of God's life. The pleasure of remembrance, however mysteriously, is a participation in the life of the Unmoved Mover. Second, even the passive side of human thought—namely, its participation in its object and its becoming, touching<sup>12</sup> and having its object—seems somehow to be prefigured in divine thought itself, at least in the above passage. Or, in other words, something of human development and of the achievement of thought appears to be pre-figured in divine thinking. They are not pre-contained as developmental processes, however, but to the degree that they are active and self-complete energies. If God's life is a "thinking of thinking," as Aristotle characterizes it in *Metaphysics* 12, 9, then such thinking must be self-dependent contemplation not in a privative solitary sense, as it might be for us, but rather supremely active and present dynamically to the cosmos. And if love and desire characterize our lives as developing, never fully realized energies, then why should their *telos* and ultimate cause not be the fullest energy of love and desire possible?

This interpretation also casts light upon Aristotle's complex notion of actuality or energy. Just as teaching and learning involve two different subjects, but constitute a single activity (*energeia*) from different perspectives,<sup>13</sup> so also what is an action or an external motive force from one viewpoint is a manifestation of the deepest reality from another viewpoint. The same activity involves two distinct subjects<sup>14</sup> but is nonetheless a single activity seen from two

12. See Ross, vol. 2, 1975, 277 (on 1051b24): "The metaphor of contact in the description of simple apprehension recurs [at] 1072b21. Its implications are (1) the absence of any possibility of error...(2) The apparent...absence of a medium in the case of touch. [It] means an apprehension which is infallible and direct." Cf. Tricot, vol. 2, 1986, 682n1 (on θιγγάνων and κατὰ μετάληψιν). Compare *Symposium* 212a4-5 (ἐφαπτομένων) and *Republic* 7, 534c. For both terms together see Plotinus 6 9 (9) 4, 27; 5 3 (49) 10, 43.

13. Aristotle, *Physics* 8, 255a33-b5; 3, 202a13-21.

14. Aristotle, *Physics* 202b7-8; Cf. Plotinus, 6 8 (39) 6, 19-22; compare the argument of 4 4 (28) 28 culminating in 28, 69-72; for the two-act theory, Rutten, 1956, 100-6, Lloyd, 1990, 98-101.

different points of view. What is divine from one aspect may be quite human from another! At the same time, the Aristotelian scale of nature embodies a hierarchy of different developmental forms, the lower forms always requiring the higher forms for their fuller actualization and explanation. All lower forms, therefore, require the energy of higher-order forms to give them their meaning. God is not therefore an explanation or cause remote from worms, butterflies, hopes and thoughts, but their ultimate and yet proper meaning present to them from the beginning. Their *telos* really is their *arche*.<sup>15</sup>

While from the viewpoint of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, therefore, the contemplative life may seem solitary and scarcely reconcilable with the life of practical, moral action, as many scholars have argued,<sup>16</sup> from the viewpoint of theology, by contrast, a broader and deeper insight seems to emerge. God's life is the fullest and most complete energy, a prefiguring energy "separate" from "the nature of the whole" and yet simultaneously an immanent energy that gives meaning to every detail in cosmic life, especially to the desire and love that all things experience. This is why, Aristotle observes at the end of the above passage, "we say" that God is a *zoon*—a living creature or animal.

As we have seen above in Aristotle, everything desires τὸ καλόν (the apparent or real beautiful/good) as the final cause of its movement, development and completion, but ultimately we desire the *one* Good or "best" as the ultimate object of any active love: "one ruler let there be" (*Metaphysics* 12, 10). This theory should be compared, I suggest, with Plato's *Symposium* and *Republic*, since Aristotle's theory is first intimated in these two dialogues and, because, as I shall argue, there are very good reasons for reading the *Symposium* and *Republic* together.

As any reader of Socrates' speech may see, the final object of love, according to Diotima's lesser mysteries (that is, what the lover is attracted to) is different from the ultimate goal of love (that is, what the lover aims at). The final object of love is the form of the Beautiful, whereas the ultimate end of love is the eternal possession of the good, that is, procreation in the beautiful. We do not love the beautiful for its own sake, Diotima argues, as we love the good, but we love it because of our desire to procreate and beget bodily and psychic children in the beautiful.<sup>17</sup> The Form of

15. Cf. Aristotle, *EN* 6, 1143b10; see also Plotinus, *Ennead* 3 8 (30) 7, 1-15 below.

16. Cf. Joachim, 1970, 241-3 (on the divide between both lives in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Republic*), 293-7; Guthrie, 1981, VI, 390-393.

17. *Symposium*, 204d-207a.

the Beautiful, like Aristotle's Unmoved Mover, is the final cause of desire: it is that "for the sake of which" [*Symp.* 208b5 (ἀθανασίας γὰρ χάριν), 210a1 (ὦν ἔνεκα), 210e6 (οὗ δὴ ἔνεκεν), 211c2-3 (ἀρχόμενον ἀπὸ τῶνδε τῶν καλῶν ἐκείνου ἔνεκα τοῦ καλοῦ ἀεὶ ἐπανιέναι; cf. Aristotle, *Met.* 1072b1-2, τὸ οὗ ἔνεκα; *De Anima* 433a14-15)]; it is the goal, end [*Symp.* 210e4 (τέλος), 211b7], perfect in itself [*Symp.* 204c4, τέλειον] and, strikingly, the object of love [*Symp.* 204c2, τὸ ἐρώμενον; *Met.* 1072b3, κινεῖ δὴ ὡς ἐρώμενον].<sup>18</sup>

Because the Form of the Good does not appear in the *Symposium*, it has been suggested that either the beautiful and the good are coincident classes (Dover 1980, 136; Rowe 1998, 179) or the lover aims only at "the particular good of a particular being," not the Good itself (Neumann 1965, 37-38). However, neither of these alternatives is plausible, the first because Diotima expressly distinguishes the beautiful and the good in the lesser mysteries and the second because it would render the "higher mysteries" or ladder of ascent fundamentally irrelevant as a completion of the lesser mysteries. Indeed, part of the purposive result of the ascent is *not* to generate only the particular *good* of a particular being, but "to give birth to *logoi* that will make the young *better*,"<sup>19</sup> i.e., goodness more broadly or universally conceived (210c1-2), and to generate "not images of virtue" but "*true excellence*," i.e., goodness or "bestness" more completely realized (212a3-6).

The "good" is consequently a bigger good than simply my or your particular good and it must, therefore, be more intrinsically involved in the design of the *Symposium*. And yet since the primary emphasis of the *Symposium* is upon the Beautiful, is the occurrence of the "good" anything more than a coincidence in the early part of the dialogue and simply a casual result of the ascent to the Beautiful in the latter part of Socrates-Diotima's speech? Could the Good be a final, motive cause, as we also find in Aristotle?

Certainly, the "good" plays a tantalizing and incidental role throughout the *Symposium*. It occurs in the first form of the proverb "of their own accord do the good go to the tables of the good" (172b) that Socrates immediately erases or "destroys."<sup>20</sup> It occurs in the pun of Agathon's own name, Agathon, that is, the person who is

18. Cf. Chang, 2002, 440.

19. *Symposium* 210c1-2: ἐξαρκεῖν αὐτῶ και ἐρᾶν και κήδεσθαι και τίκειν λόγους τοιούτους και ζητεῖν, οἵτινες ποιήσουσι βελτίους τοὺς νέους...; 212a3-6: τίκειν οὐκ εἰδῶλα ἀρετῆς, ἅτε οὐκ εἰδώλου ἐφαπτομένῳ, ἀλλὰ ἀληθῆ, ἅτε τοῦ ἀληθοῦς ἐφαπτομένῳ· τεκόντι δὲ ἀρετῆν ἀληθῆ και θρεψαμένῳ...

20. *Symposium*, 174b3: διαφθείρωμεν.



the host or prime mover of the get-together! And when Agathon acknowledges in the elenchus or cross-examination by Socrates that in presenting his own vision of Love as all-perfect and all-good “he did not know what he was talking about” (201b11-12), Socrates replies: “Never mind, you spoke *beautifully*; but tell me one little thing more: do you think that good things are not also beautiful things?” It is evident already therefore that the good and the beautiful cannot simply be identical or coextensive classes. And the early parts of Diotima’s speech only re-emphasize this. Love is not exactly longing for the beautiful itself but for the conception and generation that the beautiful brings about—a longing for the good to belong to one eternally, namely, the different species of immortality in body and soul (205e-207a) that will be given a vertical application in relation to the highest Beautiful at the end of Diotima’s speech. It would therefore appear that neither happiness nor the beautiful are the ultimate goals of all human longing. In other words, a distinction between the good and the beautiful is implicit but fundamental to all the early parts of the *Symposium* as well as to Socrates-Diotima’s speech, and this distinction is subtly thematized by the presence of the gigantic pun of Agathon himself at the center of the dialogue and yet characterized, one might also say, on the other hand, by the absence of the Form of the Good that is so centrally present in the *Republic*.

The Good itself, however, plays one further pivotal role in the *Symposium* that, as far as I know, has not been noticed by modern scholars—and this occurs in the final stages of the ascent to the Beautiful. The ascent itself characterizes the nature of loving rather than that of the ultimate beloved: “What you thought love to be is not surprising. You supposed, if I take what you said as evidence, that the beloved and not the loving was love. That is why, I think, eros seemed completely beautiful to you. In fact, it is the beloved that is really beautiful...and blessed; but loving has this other character” (204b8-c6). Love is, therefore, characterized by need, progressive dialogical education and the transformability of that need by desire for the truly beautiful, just as the study of the Good in the *Republic* characterizes the development of the synoptic eye of the dialectician.<sup>21</sup> What is disclosed at each level “strengthens and increases” (cf. ὤσθητις καὶ ἀύξηθητις) the apprentice in a movement through beauties of bodies, souls, moral ways of life, sciences and studies, in each case from many to one, up to the supreme beauty

21. Cf. *Republic* 7, 537c.

which is ultimately the knowledge of the beauty yet untold (210d6-8); and at the top of the ladder, we read the following famous words:

What then do we think it would be like if it were possible for somebody to see the beautiful itself unalloyed, pure, unmixed ...? Do you think, she said, that his would be an inferior life contemplating the beautiful by that by which it is necessary to contemplate it and being with it? Or do you not think, she said, that being only here, seeing the beautiful *by that which makes it visible*, that he will give birth not to images of virtue, since he does not touch upon an image, but true things, since he touches upon the true, and having brought forth true virtue and reared it, he shall be beloved of god, and if ever it is given to any human being to be immortal, it will be given to him (211d-212a).<sup>22</sup>

Dover in his commentary notes some striking parallels with the *Republic*: “contemplating it by that by which it is necessary,” namely, by “the eye of the soul” in *Rep.* 533d; and *Symp.* 212a3—ὡ ὄρατόν as compared to *Rep.* 490b: “to touch upon the nature of each thing by that element of the soul by which it is appropriate.” But we should ask the most important question of all. What is ὡ ὄρατόν τὸ καλόν? What is *that by which the beautiful is visible*? There is only one answer in Plato’s works: the beautiful is evidently visible by the ultimate source of light, namely, the Good itself, likened by Socrates in the *Republic* to the “sun” of the intelligible realm, final cause of all intelligible visibility<sup>23</sup> and also in the *Symposium* the implicit but indispensable cause of the Beautiful being seen. And if this so, as surely it must be, then the *Symposium* requires the *Republic* for its contextual interpretation of the ladder of ascent, since what makes the Beautiful visible has to be the Good.

This is precisely the way Plotinus will interpret the

22. Τί δῆτα, ἔφη, οἰόμεθα, εἴ τῷ γένοιτο αὐτὸ τὸ καλὸν ἰδεῖν εἰλικρινές, καθαρὸν, ἄμεικτον, ἀλλὰ μὴ ἀνάπλεων σαρκῶν τε ἀνθρωπίνων καὶ χρωμάτων καὶ ἄλλης πολλῆς φλυαρίας θνητῆς, ἀλλ’ αὐτὸ τὸ θεῖον καλὸν δύναιτο μονοειδές κατιδεῖν; ἀρ’ οἶει, ἔφη, φαῦλον βίον γίγνεσθαι ἐκεῖσε βλέποντος ἀνθρώπου καὶ ἐκεῖνο ὧ δεῖ θεωμένου καὶ συνόντος αὐτῷ; ἢ οὐκ ἐνθυμῆ, ἔφη, ὅτι ἐνταῦθα αὐτῷ μοναχοῦ γενήσεται, ὁρῶντι ὧ ὄρατόν τὸ καλόν, τίκτειν οὐκ εἰδῶλα ἀρετῆς, ἅτε οὐκ εἰδῶλου ἐφαπτομένῳ, ἀλλὰ ἀληθῆ, ἅτε τοῦ ἀληθοῦς ἐφαπτομένῳ· τεκόντι δὲ ἀρετῆν ἀληθῆ καὶ θρηψαμένῳ ὑπάρχει θεοφιλεῖ γενέσθαι, καὶ εἰπέρω τῷ ἄλλῳ ἀνθρώπων ἀθανάτω καὶ ἐκείνῳ;

23. *Republic* 6, 507d-509c; 7, 517a-c.

*Symposium* and *Republic* together in later antiquity:

The knowledge or touching of the Good is the greatest thing, and he (Plato) says it is the greatest study (cf. *Republic* 505a2)... up to here one has been led along (παιδαγωγῶθητις) and settled in beauty and up to this point, one thinks that in which one is, but is carried out of it by the surge of the wave of intellect itself and lifted on high by a kind of swell (ἐξενεχθεῖς δὲ τῷ αὐτοῦ τοῦ νοῦ οἶον κύματι καὶ ὑψοῦ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ οἶον οἰδήσαντος ἄρθεῖς) one sees suddenly (εἰσεῖδεν ἐξαίφνης), not seeing how, but the vision fills his eyes with light and does not make him see something else by it, but the light itself is what he sees.<sup>24</sup>

In other words, Plotinus sees that the Beautiful leads in the *Symposium* to the Good—and he is surely correct. I suggest that this is also the way Aristotle interpreted the theory of love and motion in both dialogues and applied it to his own view of motion, extending it, unlike Plato, to the universe as a whole. One of Aristotle's major criticisms of the Platonic Forms is that they cannot do anything and they are not attainable: "Nothing is gained even if one supposes eternal substances unless there is to be in them some principle which can cause movement" (*Metaphysics* 1071b14-16; cf. 991a8-11, b3-9, 992a29-32, 1033b26-1034a5; *Nicomachean Ethics* 1 6, 1096a11-1097a14). Here in the *Symposium* and the *Republic*, we find a principle of motion actually *in individual things and species* that causes all their ordinary movements, prompts their longing to attain what is at first unattainable and even develops a scientific method for this attainment. Just as in Aristotle, so also in Plato, the language of final causality, namely, the "beautiful," fine or noble, finds its ultimate end in the sphere of the "good" and the "best." In fact, this is much more pronounced in *Metaphysics* 12, 7-10 than in the *Symposium*: the language of the beautiful, τὸ καλόν (1072a28, b34, 11; 1074b24), in chapter 7 gives way to the language of the good and the best in chapters 7-10 (7, 1072a35-1072b1, 12, 15, 24, 28, 29, 32; 9, 1074b20, 33; 1075a8-9; 10, 1075a12, 14, 36-8; 1075b, 2, 8, 11; 1076a4).

And just as in Aristotle through the causal role of the Unmoved Mover, as both external good and the principle of internal good in the universe, the ordered and teleological change of nature is

24. *Ennead* VI 7 [38] 36, 3-25. See Appendix III.

maintained in a specific way through the medium of desire,<sup>25</sup> so too in the *Symposium* and *Republic* the Beautiful and the Good may be only dimly glimpsed at first, yet they are the goal of all striving, and, in the *Republic*, Socrates represents the Good, not simply as the theoretical ground of everything but as *the* most practical and useful good of all: without it, nothing is truly beneficial.<sup>26</sup> It is, according to him, the regulative ground of all our judgments, dimly glimpsed or “divined” in all our experience (from perplexity<sup>27</sup> to sex—the latter, at least, according to Aristophanes in the *Symposium*);<sup>28</sup> and it is also what provides both the power and means of seeing, feeling or thinking anything.<sup>29</sup> In short, the Good is that by which the *best state* or capacity of anything is felt, seen, imagined or thought reflexively.<sup>30</sup> There is a strong affinity, therefore, between Aristotle’s theory of the Unmoved Mover, on the one hand, and Diotima’s presentation of desire in relation to all forms of the Beautiful (and hidden Good) in the *Symposium*, on the other hand, an affinity intensified if we add the presentation of, and ascent to, the Good in the *Republic*.<sup>31</sup>

I want, therefore, to make two suggestions:

First, I suggest that the Unmoved Mover as the final cause of motion is a kind of Aristotelian adaptation of Diotima’s lesser mysteries, whereas the Unmoved Mover as the ultimate cause of the hierarchy of compounds, enmattered and matterless forms—transfixed by desire, will and thought,<sup>32</sup> is a complementary Aristotelian development of Diotima’s greater mysteries that range from the beauty or finality in bodies and souls, through ways of life,

25. C.f. Chang 2002, 442.

26. *Republic* 6, 504e-505b.

27. *Republic* 6, 505d11e2; 506a6.

28. *Symposium*, 192c-d.

29. *Republic* 6, 508e-509b.

30. By “reflexively” I mean that the Good is the principle by which we are able to conceive the best state of anything, a principle disclosed in the acts of seeing or thinking themselves, just as in seeing we see the light of the sun, according to Socrates’ analogy in *Republic* books 6–7, and in thinking objects of thought we think of them as “good—form” (*Republic* 6, 508d—509b). For the conception of Forms as ideals or “what should be” and for understanding the Form of the Good as overcoming the modern dichotomy between being and value, see Ferber 1989. *Platos Idee des Guten*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 30-33; and compare Gonzalez 1998, *Dialectic and Dialogue. Plato’s Practice of Philosophical Inquiry*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern, 209-244.

31. *Republic* 7, 521c-537d.

32. For a translation and comparison see Appendix IV.

and sciences, to the Beautiful itself and ultimately to the Unmoved Good (“beyond being and thought”<sup>33</sup>). In both the *Symposium* and in Aristotle’s theology, this is an *embodied* ascent (“if ever it is given to a *human being*...”)—even if it leads in both to the grasp or touch of immaterial forms or the ultimate immaterial object of thought. In the lesser mysteries and Aristotle’s *Physics*, the motive force results in the eternal propagation of the species and the movement of the heavens; in the higher mysteries and Aristotle’s theology, the motive force is transformative of one’s whole being and of all of the activities that make life worth living. In other words, it makes no sense to separate Aristotle rigidly from a “pristine” Plato since his physics and theology are developed consciously from the inspiration, and shadow, of the *Symposium* and *Republic*. The “Light Metaphysics” of the *Republic* may be missing from Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* 12, but it plays a tantalizing role in the *De Anima*, where the active intellect is a “disposition, like light,” that is, it actively and instantaneously illuminates;<sup>34</sup> and this illuminating power of active intellect will become a major feature in Alexander of Aphrodisias<sup>35</sup> (and later still in Pseudo-Alexander). The outpouring of light which makes the beautiful visible is also the lure of love and desire that leads back to the final cause itself; and this will be true in different ways of both Peripatetic thought and Neoplatonism.

Second, there is obviously no possibility of a loving, caring Unmoved Mover in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* partly because it is precisely the anthropomorphic and external character of causality

33. *Republic* 6 509b.

34. On Alexander’s identification of the intellect of *Metaphysics* 12 with that of *De Anima* 3, see CHLGMP, ed. Armstrong, 1976 117.

35. For Alexander on Intellect see Schroeder and Todd, 1990. See especially Alexander, *De Anima* 88, 26-89, 15 (Bruns): ἐν πᾶσιν γὰρ τὸ μάλιστα καὶ κυρίως τι ὄν καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις αἴτιον τοῦ εἶναι τοιοῦτοις. τὸ τε γὰρ μάλιστα ὁρατόν, τοιοῦτον δὲ τὸ φῶς, καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις τοῖς ὁρατοῖς αἴτιον τοῦ εἶναι ὁρατοῖς, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ μάλιστα καὶ πρῶτως ἀγαθὸν καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἀγαθοῖς αἴτιον τοῦ εἶναι τοιοῦτοις· τὰ γὰρ ἄλλα ἀγαθὰ τῆ πρὸς τοῦτο συντελεῖα κρίνεται. καὶ τὸ μάλιστα δὴ καὶ τῆ αὐτοῦ φύσει νοητὸν εὐλόγως αἴτιον καὶ τῆς τῶν ἄλλων νοήσεως. τοιοῦτον δὲ ὄν εἴη ἂν ὁ ποιητικὸς νοῦς. εἰ γὰρ μὴ ἦν τι νοητὸν φύσει, οὐδ’ ἂν τῶν ἄλλων τι νοητὸν ἐγένετο, ὡς προσείρηται. ἐν γὰρ πᾶσιν ἐν οἷς τὸ μὲν κυρίως τί ἐστιν, τὸ δὲ δευτέρως, τὸ δευτέρως παρὰ τοῦ κυρίως τὸ εἶναι ἔχει. ἔτι, εἰ ὁ τοιοῦτος νοῦς τὸ πρῶτον αἴτιον, ὁ αἰτία καὶ ἀρχὴ τοῦ εἶναι πᾶσι τοῖς ἄλλοις, εἴη ἂν καὶ ταύτη ποιητικὸς, ἢ αὐτὸς αἴτιος τοῦ εἶναι πᾶσι (10) τοῖς νοουμένοις. καὶ ἔστιν ὁ τοιοῦτος νοῦς χωριστός τε καὶ ἀπαθῆς καὶ ἀμιγῆς ἄλλω, ἃ πάντα αὐτῷ διὰ τὸ χωρὶς ὕλης εἶναι ὑπάρχει. χωριστός τε γὰρ καὶ αὐτὸς καθ’ αὐτὸν ὢν διὰ τοῦτο. τῶν γὰρ ἐνύλων εἰδῶν οὐδὲν χωριστὸν ἢ λόγῳ μόνον τῷ φθορᾶν αὐτῶν εἶναι τὸν ἀπὸ τῆς ὕλης χωρισμόν. ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀπαθῆς, ὅτι τὸ πάσχον ἐν πᾶσιν ἢ ὕλη...

in Plato (e.g., the Divine Craftsman of the *Timaeus*) that Aristotle is concerned to combat—and there is also a precise economy in Aristotle's procedure, that is, in so far as he implicitly develops Plato's notions of final causality in the *Symposium* and *Republic* to undermine and erase Plato's anthropomorphic causality in the *Timaeus* and elsewhere. Nonetheless, the context in both Plato and Aristotle, in my view, shows that the notion of care or love is not entirely foreign. In Plato, particularly, there is a care of the higher for the lower not only at every level of ascent<sup>36</sup> (just as in the *Phaedrus* all-soul cares for that which is without soul),<sup>37</sup> but also in so far as immortality and god-belovedness<sup>38</sup> are *gifts* of the Beautiful-Good.<sup>39</sup> Nothing of this appears in Aristotle, but there is something equally significant that should not be overlooked. While a loving Unmoved Mover might be entirely beyond the pale, the question of how the Unmoved Mover is related to itself and how it is related to the world is very much a part of Aristotle's treatment<sup>40</sup> (picking up in a different mode, we might suggest, Aristotle's treatment of friendship in the *Ethics*: that is, the quality of one's relation to oneself is an integral precondition of how one is related to one's friend or of what one gives to another).<sup>41</sup> Is the Unmoved Mover's self-relatedness (its thinking of thinking) a precondition or precontainment, as it were, of the world's relatedness to the Unmoved Mover, relatedness as love, desire and thought? It does not follow that in thinking itself the Unmoved Mover bears no relation to the world or that its thinking is empty or non-creative, for it makes more sense to suppose that in thinking itself it includes the whole world, not, as we experience it, piecemeal and extended in time and space, but rather as indivisibly *whole*: "Intellect does not have the good in this bit or in that bit, but *the best is in a certain whole, being something different*" (*Metaphysics* 12 9, 1075a7-9). In other words, God's self-thinking is richer than the contemplation of the universe because God's life is both himself and all the

36. *Symposium*, 210c1-6; d5-6; 212a3-6.

37. *Phaedrus*, 246b-c.

38. In the Platonic tradition, the question of divine love is decidedly ambiguous. Is it our own love of the divine or is it a divine love for, and in, us? Cf. *Laws* 4, 716c-e. For an interesting clarification in a different, but related context, see Philo, *Life of Moses* II 67 (τοιγαροῦν μετ' ὀλίγωνᾶλλων φιλόθεός τε καὶ θεοφιλῆς ἐγένετο, καταπνευσθεὶς ὑπ' ἔρωτος οὐρανίου καὶ διαφερόντως τιμῆσας τὸν ἡγεμόνα τοῦ παντός καὶ ἄντι τιμηθεὶς ὑπ' αὐτοῦ); cf. 163.

39. *Symposium*, 212a.

40. *Metaphysics*, 12, 9-10.

41. *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8-9; especially 8, 10 and 9, 4, 8-9.

energy of the world but in a divine mode; and if this is so, then God's self-relatedness pre-cludes our best-relatedness to Him.

My thesis then is not that Aristotle implicitly describes the Unmoved Mover as somehow self-loving or as loving the world. He does not. One can fully understand, when one looks at anthropomorphic representations of the Demiurge in Plato's *Timaeus* and *Politicus*, why Aristotle should rigorously avoid such tendencies and not make God either "love" (in the mode of Agathon's speech) or a lover (in the sense of earlier mythological depictions or even of any favoritism attached to the meaning of god-belovedness in the *Symposium*) or a principle that cares for everything (in the role of "all soul" according to the myth of the *Phaedrus*).<sup>42</sup> What Aristotle does instead, on my account, is bequeath a problem to the later tradition, namely, how the self-relatedness of the Unmoved Mover precontains or prefigures the *best* of the world as a whole.<sup>43</sup> This then, I suggest, is a question implicit already in Aristotle's own theory developed as it is out of the center of Plato's thought. So in the story I am going to tell in the second part of this paper about how the "Unmoved Mover" comes to love everything in later antiquity, the first point I want to make, in line perhaps with Thomas Aquinas' thesis cited earlier that Plato and Aristotle are saying more or less the same thing, is that a loving God is a deeply hidden but nonetheless real possibility of the pagan philosophical tradition from its beginning in Plato and Aristotle.

Let us now move forward over five hundred years to Plotinus — an Egyptian living in Rome and writing in Greek (204-270 AD). Plotinus asks the strange-sounding question at the beginning of his treatise, "On Nature, Contemplation and the One," if contemplation, which characterizes the divine life primarily and human life secondarily in Aristotle, is the goal or *telos* of all things and if such contemplation is actually a productive or making force in the universe:

Suppose we said, playing at first before we set out to be serious, that all things desire contemplation, and look to this end (τέλος), not only rational but irrational things, and the power of growth in plants and the earth which generates them, and that all attain to it as far as possible for them according to their nature, but different things contemplate and attain their end in different ways, some

42. *Phaedrus*, 246b-c.

43. This is also a problem for Plato too. See, for example, *Laws* 900d-901b: God must be characterized by self-love, not self-hate.

truly, and some only having an imitation and image of this end—could anyone endure the paradoxical quality of this line of discourse? (trans. Armstrong, adapted).<sup>44</sup>

Plotinus then goes on to take a decisive step forward by arguing in *Ennead* 3 8 (30) that contemplation—the active insight by which Aristotle had characterized divine and human thought at its highest, far from being private or external to the world, as the Gnostics appeared to hold,<sup>45</sup> is *the* fundamental form of all natural making and, indeed, of all life. Everything—even plant life—is either contemplation (so that even nature's life, which Plotinus quaintly represents as a silent contemplation constantly giving rise to bodily forms (3 8 4, 3–10)), is a form of living intelligibility or thought (νόησις), no matter how lowly; and forms of living thought (plant life, making, action, sensation, imagination, and intellectual activity itself) become more unified the more they “hasten” to the intimate unity-in-duality of intellect, where thinking and object of thought are one (cf. 3 8 8, 1–8). So, as Plotinus concludes the first part of his argument in 3 8 (30), everything is either contemplation (in the sense that it contains its intelligibility within itself, as does intellect)<sup>46</sup> or a product or consequence of contemplation (in the sense that if you unpacked the intelligibility in anything whatsoever, it would lead you to everything else in the universe or to a more comprehensive view of reality as a whole) or, finally, a substitute for contemplation (in the sense that action and production are ways of coming to see or understand a reality that is at first too densely compacted for us to grasp it altogether).<sup>47</sup> Contemplation or living insight, therefore, is the primary creative force in both the spiritual and physical worlds.

Plotinus is, of course, aware of the paradoxical, even revolutionary nature of his project, as he attempts to uncover the contemplative reality of everything from plants to the divine. In contrast to the Gnostic elitist relation between a hierophant and favored initiate, Plotinus' method is dialogically more inclusive and radically

44. *Ennead* 3 8 (30) 1ff.: Παιζοντες δὴ τὴν πρώτην πρὶν ἐπιχειρεῖν σπουδάξιν εἰ λέγομεν πάντα θεωρίας ἐφίεσθαι καὶ εἰς τέλος τοῦτο βλέπειν, οὐ μόνον ἔλλογα ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀλογα ζῶα καὶ τὴν ἐν φυτοῖς φύσιν καὶ τὴν ταῦτα γεννώσαν γῆν, καὶ πάντα τυγχάνειν καθ' ὅσον οἶόν τε αὐτοῖς κατὰ φύσιν ἔχοντα, ἀλλὰ δὲ ἄλλως καὶ θεωρεῖν καὶ τυγχάνειν καὶ τὰ μὲν ἀληθῶς, τὰ δὲ μίμησιν καὶ εἰκόνα τούτου λαμβάνοντα—

ἀρ' ἂν τις ἀνάσχοιτο τὸ παράδοξον τοῦ λόγου;

45. Cf. *Ennead* 2 9 (33) 18, 35–6.

46. *Ennead* 3 8 (30) 7, 1 ff.; 8 passim; cf. 6 7 (38) 1–7.

47. *Ennead* 3 8 (30) 7, 1ff.



democratic, starting in fact from the principle of all-inclusive play:<sup>48</sup> “Well, as this arises among ourselves (πρὸς ἡμᾶς) there will be no risk of playing with our own things. Are we now contemplating as we play? Yes, *we and all who play* (ἡμεῖς καὶ πάντες ὅσοι παίζουσι) are doing this or at any rate this is what they desire as they play” (3 8 (30) 1, 8–12). This democratic emphasis also runs through the next two works of the *Grossschrift*, 5 8 (31) and 5 5 (32). In 5 8 1, the central question posed is how can *anyone* contemplate intelligible beauty and its cause from the here and now of historical existence; in other words, the goal of the inquiry is not to privilege names, individuals or groups but to show the Beautiful and the Good to *anyone*, and this is a motif that reaches its culmination in the next treatise 5 5 (32) 12, 34-5: “The Good is gentle and kindly and gracious and present to *anyone* when *anyone* wants.”

At the same time, Plotinus interprets Aristotle’s heritage in a new way. Divine contemplation or thought is the fullest reality that extends to, and moves, everything not simply as a final cause, but as an internal formal cause. It is true that while *sophia* and *nous*, as contemplative in the highest sense, do not literally “make” anything,<sup>49</sup> Aristotle does say a little later in *EN* book 6 that they do make or produce happiness in a different way, not externally but “as health makes health,” that is, not as a physical efficient or motive cause, but rather as an internally efficient formal cause.<sup>50</sup> This is, in fact, integral to Plotinus’ argument from the outset, namely, that desire or final causality operates as a formal cause throughout all of nature internally; and this is why he cites Aristotle at the conclusion of the first part of his argument: “for all other things (apart from the first principle) desire this if the goal for them all is their originative principle.”<sup>51</sup> In other words, he emphasizes Aristotle’s own dictum that *nous* is both *arche* and *telos*.

As A. C. Lloyd has shown, Plotinus adapts Aristotle’s model of physical causation to non-physical causation;<sup>52</sup> but Plotinus here also adapts this model to the internal workings of physical causation in so far as these are activities (and not simply qualities, for instance).<sup>53</sup> Just as teaching and learning involve two different

48. As Socrates advocates in *Republic* 7, 537a-c.

49. *EN* 10, 8, 1178b20-21.

50. On this see Gauthier/Jolif, *L’Éthique à Nicomaque*, 1970, vol. 2, 542-7.

51. 3 8 (30) 7, 1-15. *EN* 6, 1143b10.

52. Lloyd, 1991, 99; also Rutten, 1956, 100-106.

53. On the distinction between activities and qualities, see *Ennead* 2 6 (17), and the relation of intelligibility to *logoi* see 6 2 (43) 21, 32-51.

subjects, as we saw above, but constitute a single activity (*energeia*) from different perspectives,<sup>54</sup> so also what is an action or an external production from one viewpoint is a manifestation of the real, and from one another an *energeia* or piece of living insight. They are not two separated activities from another (though they may become distinct and they can be viewed as such)<sup>55</sup> but a single activity seen from two different points of view. And since the real is not a patchwork of pieces, but a whole expression or participation in the life of God, my making of something can be “mine” from one viewpoint, and a window into reality or divine thought, from another; in moral action, for instance, to the degree that I get something “right,” that action embodies contemplation or insight. Energy or contemplation, therefore, is a formal activity that internally makes my action or production possible.

Plotinus puts this succinctly in treatise 6 8 (39) 6, 19-22: “... in practical actions, self-determination and what depends on us are not referred to practice or outward activity, but to the *inner activity* which is the thought and contemplation proper to its best functioning.”<sup>56</sup> Contemplation, as creation or co-creation, then, is what really *makes* at the heart of all forms of action and production. The inner activity of action is its thought and contemplation. In other words, I think Plotinus is the first to argue that creative contemplation, deeply “unmoved in itself,”<sup>57</sup> can nonetheless be a real motive cause, even if it is not an “efficient” cause in any normal way of speaking. What Plotinus does then is implicitly to show how theology and physics work concretely together. Plotinus, in fact, already provides a vital answer to Simplicius’ puzzled incomprehension about the efficient causality of the Unmoved Mover (before Simplicius even asks the question).

Perhaps paradoxically, since Plotinus emphasizes contemplation not action, this work is also a major thought-foundation for the later prominence of theurgy or god-work in Iamblichus, Proclus and Pseudo-Dionysius. Once everything in the productive and practical sciences becomes saturated by contemplation or living unrestricted insight—or, more precisely, once each statue or individual is

54. Aristotle, *Physics* 8, 255a33-b5; 3, 202a13-21.

55. Aristotle, *Physics*, 202b7-8; Cf. Plotinus, 6 8 (39) 6, 19-22; compare the argument of 4 4 (28) 28 culminating in 28, 69-72; for the two-act theory, Rutten, 1956, 100-6, Lloyd, 1990, 98-101.

56. *Ennead* 6 8 (39) 6, 19-22: τὸ ἐν ταῖς πράξεσιν αὐτεξούσιον καὶ τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν οὐκ εἰς τὸ πράττειν ἀνάγεσθαι οὐδ’ εἰς τὴν ἔξω, ἀλλ’ εἰς τὴν ἐντὸς ἐνέργειαν καὶ νόησιν καὶ θεωρίαν αὐτῆς τῆς ἀρετῆς.

57. See, for example, 3 8 (30) 2, 11-22, 30.

already included or pervaded to the bone by contemplation, we have a clear path to Iamblichus and to a more sympathetic understanding of theurgy. Sacred action or god-work is saturated with divine motive power. But this is incidental to my main object here, which is this: in contrast to someone like Numenius, who can't seem to make up his mind about what divine activity really is (is it deliberation, action, followed by a return to contemplation?—as some of the fragments we possess seem to imply<sup>58</sup>), Plotinus rightly argues, along cogent Aristotelian lines, that contemplation is the *arche* and *telos* of all natures and that it is an active formal cause of all doing and making, for here the unmoved force in nature, soul, intellect, and ultimately the One becomes the creative agency for and in everything. The Unmoved Mover, who looks rather like Plotinus' One in some respects,<sup>59</sup> is intimately present everywhere and to everything. Plotinus is troubled by problems associated with this throughout all his middle works in critical dialogue with the Gnostics, and he goes a long way to arguing for the eternal desire of the Good that characterizes the life even of the Divine Intellect. As life, contemplation is unrestricted; "Contemplation and vision have no limits," Plotinus states at 3 8, 5, 29–30: "And that's why they are everywhere." And in the case of intellect desiring the One, Plotinus applies his theory of creative contemplation to the whole of reality in a striking formulation: intellect "is always desiring and always attaining" (3 8 (30) 11, 22–24: καὶ ἐφιέμενος αἰεὶ καὶ αἰεὶ τυγχάνων). Intellect too therefore cannot be conceived as a static, fixed essence; its real nature is dynamic—to be drawn out of itself incessantly into itself and into the Good.<sup>60</sup> A. H. Armstrong thought that this last statement contradicted the whole of Plotinus' thought,<sup>61</sup> but the truth, I think, is rather that

58. For example, Numenius, fr. 16, 10-12: Ὁ γὰρ δευτερος διττός ὢν αὐτοποιεῖ τὴν τε ἰδέαν ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τὸν κόσμον, δημιουργὸς ὢν, ἔπειτα θεωρητικὸς ὅλως.

59. Plotinus identifies intellect and the One beyond intellect as "unmoved" in different ways—see 4 4 (28) 16, 23-31: if the Good is the center, intellect is "an unmoved circle and soul a moving circle (compare Iamblichus, in Proclus *In Timaeum* 217c, II 250, 21 in Dillon, 1973, 163-4) but moved by desire. For intellect immediately has and grasps the Good and soul desires that which transcends being. But the sphere of the All, since it has soul that desires in that mode, moves by its natural desire. And its natural desire as body is of that which is outside it, that is, it is an enfolding and surrounding it on every side with itself, and so movement in a circle" (trans. Armstrong adapted).

60. This is one source, I suggest, of Gregory of Nyssa's doctrine of *epektasis*, according to which the soul is continually drawn out of herself into God (see Daniélou, 1944, 309-26).

61. Armstrong, 1971, 67-74.

Plotinus sees that desire not only transfixes our own lives but also preeminently *is* the life of the “divine Intellect” itself (as close to the Unmoved Mover as you can get) so that love and desire come to characterize the highest possible experience of God—even to the point that “God” and “mystical subject” coalesce or commingle.

Perhaps the most famous example of this occurs in what is probably Plotinus’ greatest work, *Ennead* 6 7 (38) chapter 35, where soul becomes intellect (not unlike the interweaving of human and divine perspectives in Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 12, 7):

And the soul is so disposed then as even to despise intelligence, which at other times it welcomed, because intelligence is a kind of movement and the soul does not want to move. For it says that he whom soul sees does not move either; yet when soul has become intellect it contemplates, when it has been, so to speak, made intellect ... but when it has come to be in it and moves about it, it possesses the intelligible and thinks, but when it sees that god, it at once lets everything go; it is as if someone went into a house richly decorated and so beautiful, and within it contemplated each and every one of the decorations ... but when he sees the master with delight, who is not of the nature of images but worthy of real contemplation, he dismisses those other things and thereafter looks at him alone, and then, as he looks and does not take his eyes away, by the continuity of his contemplation he no longer sees a sight, but mingles his seeing with what he contemplates, so that what was seen before has now become sight in him ... And [the first power of intellect] is the contemplation of intellect in its right mind, and the other is intellect in love, when it goes out of its mind “drunk with the nectar;” then it falls in love, simplified into happiness by having its fill; and it is better for it to be drunk with a drunkenness like this than to be more respectably sober.<sup>62</sup>

In this passage, the influence of the *Symposium* (and *Phaedrus*) is evident: “not...images...but worthy of real contemplation;” and we can compare the drunkenness of Poros (*Symposium* 203b5) with

62. *Ennead* 6 7 (30) 35, 3-28. For Greek text see Appendix V.

that of intellect “out of its mind;” indeed too, we can see that the Platonic influence is merged seamlessly with Plotinus’ idiosyncratic development of Aristotle’s thought about intellect. What is striking, however, is that Plotinus’ Unmoved Mover not only has now become the Good primarily but has also acquired secondarily the highest characteristic of the soul, namely, the soul that, having become intellect, is now drunk with love. As A. H. Armstrong observes: “Intellect must be eternally out of its mind with drink or love to be the Divine Mind” (Loeb 7 197n3). One might add that love now characterizes not just intellect but the highest experience of the Good, in which the mystical subject—that is, soul/intellect out of its mind with love—is “mingled” with the Good. If we take this “mingling” seriously, then we are forced to the conclusion that the Good or the ultimate Unmoved Mover in Plotinus’ thought is, for the first time, (almost) an experience of loving. Soul’s out-of-its-mind love for the Good is somehow a shared love.

However, this love—whatever its character— is definitely not an experience of loving everything; instead, it appears to be simultaneously a despising of everything else, indeed, a retraction of love from everything else, or rather a restriction of loving to a very singular relationship that has come to be synonymous with Neoplatonism, namely, the “flight of the alone to the alone,” according to the well-known formula employed already by Alexander of Tralles, Numenius and others.<sup>63</sup> I have argued elsewhere that this should not be understood as “solitary mysticism”<sup>64</sup> or as solipsistic narcissism, as Julia Kristeva has interpreted it,<sup>65</sup> but the problem still remains that it is unclear how to bridge the chasm between the intimate love of two for one another, on the one hand, and an intimate love of two for one another that somehow includes everything. This is hardly clear at all—if it is even possible to conceive of such a paradoxical love.

So, although Plotinus will argue that everything is precontained—in a henadic way<sup>66</sup>—in the One and that everything in the sensible

63. That is, according to a traditional *monos pros monon* formula. On this see Peterson 1933, 30-41.

64. Corrigan 1996, 28-42.

65. Kristeva, *Tales of Love* (New York, 1987), pp. 108-9, 117 (*Histoires d’amour* (Paris, 1983)). See Corrigan, 1996, 29, notes 3-4, 32n23, 34 etc.

66. What are “henads” and where do they originate in the history of thought? Henads are pre-intellectual or hyper-intellectual unities, that is, unities so compressed that they function as singularities within the One itself before the emergence of Intellect properly speaking. Dodds gives an informative account in his magnificent edition of Proclus’ *Elements of Theology* (1963, 257-60) and Dillon argues in his

world is implicate or enfolded in the intelligible world (in 6 7 (38) 1-13); and even though he argues for the One as supremely free agent, loving itself, supremely itself (in 6 8 (39)), he never takes the decisive step of having his “Unmoved Mover” actually love Intellect, Soul, the Sensible Cosmos and, indeed, everything. He comes close in many passages—especially with the idea that the light of the Good is a “grace,” a warmth, that prevents the divine intelligible objects from being boring or inert (*argon*)<sup>67</sup> or when he argues that the unformed super-beauty of the Good is there in the highest moment of what will become Intellect’s being.<sup>68</sup> And yes, the One and Intellect, as also in Porphyry, are acknowledged to be “Father” but this is still in tune with Plato’s usage in the *Timaeus* rather than with anything the varied Gnostic or Christian texts may have to say about God. The really decisive step beyond this occurs only in later Neoplatonism, as far as I know, with Iamblichus and Proclus for whom love and care come to characterize divinity in profoundly interesting ways. Here I have space only for two examples before I come to the final moment of the pagan tradition that is also the beginning of a new tradition when the “Unmoved Mover” becomes a God who loves everything.

Iamblichus’ view of love and prayer in relation to an “unmoved God” is useful here for my purposes.<sup>69</sup> Why, Iamblichus asks, should we pray to the gods, if they are, as Porphyry claims, “unbending and unmixed with sensible things?” Iamblichus’ answer is interesting and complex, though it looks somewhat batty at first sight. Prayer is not a form of ordinary address, as of one person addressing another, but a kind of waking up something in us that wants to be united with the divine itself and that produces a response or “hearing” from the gods not insofar as they have organs or ears, but rather for the following reasons:

So then after declaring that pure intellects are *unbending and not mingled* (ἀκλίτους καὶ ἀμιγείς) with the sensible realm, you raise the question as to whether it is proper

ground-breaking work on Iamblichus that henads were the invention of Iamblichus (1973, 412-16). But the truth seems to be that we can find henads much earlier—in Plotinus, for example, in *Enneads* 3 8 (30) 10, 5-10; 6 6 (34) 10, 1-4; 6 7 (38) 35, 30 32, and earlier still in the Valentinian Gnostic work, the *Tripartite Tractate* 1989, 59, 7-60, 26. If this is so, then the doctrine of henads would seem to have originated with the Gnostics, not with Plotinus or Iamblichus.

67. *Ennead* 6 7 (38) 20-23.

68. *Ennead* 6 7 (38) 33.

69. For Iamblichus see Dillon 1987, 863-909.

to pray to them. For my part, I would hold the view that it is not proper to pray to any others. For that element in us which is divine and intellectual and one...is aroused (ἐγείρεται) then clearly in prayer and when aroused, strives (ἐφίεται) primarily towards what is like to itself and joins itself to essential perfection. And if it seems to you incredible that the incorporeal should hear a voice..., you are deliberately forgetting the facility of the primary causes for knowing and comprehending within themselves all that is inferior to them; for they embrace in unity within themselves all beings together. So then, it is neither through faculties nor through organs that the gods receive into themselves our prayers, but rather they embrace within themselves the actualities (ἐνεργείας)<sup>70</sup> of the words of good people and in particular of those [words] which, by virtue of the sacred liturgy, are seated in the gods and united to them; for in that case the divine is literally united with itself.<sup>71</sup>

In other words, Iamblichus' position is something like the following: in the physical world, things get developed through opposition and difference. As Socrates puts this positively in *Republic* 7 524d, things that "fall upon the senses together with their opposites" wake up or rouse (*egertikon*, as in Iamblichus) *dianoia* and *noesis*, discursive thought and understanding. Prayer works on a different principle, according to Iamblichus. It wakes up a unity

70. The verb "embrace" (*periechein*) may well be a reflection of Aristotle's usage at *Metaphysics* 12, 1074b2-3 (περιέχει τὸ θεῖον τὴν ὅλην φύσιν), to the effect that the "divine comprehends/embraces the whole of nature," a rather different view from that of Alexander on providence.

71. *De Mysteriis* I. 15, 46-7. Ἐτι γὰρ μᾶλλον ἀκλίτους καὶ ἀμιγείς αἰσθητοῖς εἰπῶν εἶναι τοὺς καθαροὺς νόας ἀπορεῖς, εἰ δεῖ πρὸς αὐτοὺς εὐχεσθαι. Ἐγὼ δ' οὐδ' ἄλλοις τισὶν ἡγοῦμαι εὐχεσθαι. Τὸ γὰρ θεῖον ἐν ἡμῖν καὶ νοερὸν καὶ ἐν, ἢ εἰ νοητὸν αὐτὸ καλεῖν ἐθέλοις, ἐγείρεται τότε ἐναργῶς ἐν ταῖς εὐχαῖς, ἐγειρόμενον δὲ ἐφίεται τοῦ ὁμοίου διαφερόντως καὶ συνάπτεται πρὸς αὐτοτελειότητα. Εἰ δέ σοι ἄπιστον εἶναι καταφαίνεται, πῶς φωνῆς ἀκούει τὸ ἀσώματον καὶ ὡς αἰσθήσεως προσδεῖσεται καὶ δι' ὧτων τὰ λεγόμενα ὑφ' ἡμῶν ἐν ταῖς εὐχαῖς, ἐκῶν ἐπιλανθάνη τῆς τῶν πρώτων αἰτίων περιουσίας ἐν τε τῷ εἰδέναι καὶ τῷ περιέχειν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς τὰ ὑφ' ἑαυτῶν (30)πάντα· ἐν ἐνὶ γὰρ δήπου συνείληφεν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ὁμοῦ τὰ ὅλα· οὔτε δι' οὖν διὰ δυνάμεων οὔτε δι' ὀργάνων εἰσδέχονται εἰς ἑαυτοὺς οἱ θεοὶ τὰς εὐχάς, ἐν ἑαυτοῖς δὲ περιέχουσι τῶν ἀγαθῶν τὰς ἐνεργείας τῶν λόγων, καὶ μάλιστα ἐκείνων οἵτινες διὰ τῆς ἱερᾶς ἀγιστείας (35) ἐνιδρυμένοι τοῖς θεοῖς καὶ συνηγαμένοι τυγχάνουσιν· ἀτεχνῶς γὰρ τῆνικαῦτα αὐτὸ τὸ θεῖον πρὸς ἑαυτὸ σύνεστι...

that is already always responded to in the active, unitary divine energy that pre-comprehends everything. If we say that the gods “hear” such prayer, we don’t mean that they have ears, but that this divine unity is supremely responsive; and for Iamblichus it is responsive not only to, and through, the actuality of words, but in the actuality of good holy action, namely, theurgy or god-work.

There is a sense here in which Iamblichus’ view goes beyond not only philosophy but also religion in any conventional organized way, since prayer plainly starts to break down any normal separation between two heterogenous beings and seems to suggest what Henry Corbin calls—in relation to the Sufi tradition and Ibn ‘Arabi—a bi-unity, a one being encountering itself, the divine in the human and the human in the divine.<sup>72</sup> Just as “seeing” in the Platonic tradition is a function of the activity of the Good *in my perception*, so more intimately my desire of god is also god’s desire manifested in me. Such yearning unity resonates because it is part of its implicate, unified or enfolded structure, as it were, that becomes unfolded in my individual experience and needs, on the human side, to be developed or woken up.<sup>73</sup>

The awakening of such unities, therefore, for Iamblichus includes three levels of prayer: first, introductory prayer or gathering together; second, conjunctive prayer (*syndetikon*, binding together, as in Plato’s *Symposium* in Diotima-Socrates’ description of *eros-daimon*);<sup>74</sup> and finally, perfective or unificatory prayer. But against Porphyry, and perhaps with Plotinus,<sup>75</sup> Iamblichus insists that *we have to ask*: “No sacred work occurs without the supplications contained in prayers” (*De Mysteriis* V. 26, 238, 11-12). So our urge to ask questions and to ask for things is not silly, even if what we often ask for can be very silly.

From this perspective, Iamblichus’ view of the “extended practice of prayer” (*hē...egchronizousa diatribē*) is also intriguing, though I do not have space here to explore its implications. The only point I can make is that such prayer apparently not only wakes up, but opens up and increases on its own account the capacity of divine unity in the soul to the degree that—in a striking and

72. See H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone: Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabi*, Princeton, 1969, 147. trans. Ralph Manheim from *L’imagination creatrice dans le Soufisme d’Ibn ‘Arabi*, Paris: Flammarion, 1958..

73. Cf. Shakespeare, *Richard III*, Act 1, scene 3, 754-5 (albeit in a somewhat different context): “I’ll not believe but they ascend the sky. And there awake God’s gentle-sleeping peace.”

74. *Symposium* 202e-203a.

75. See *Ennead* V 8 [32] 9, 1ff.



otherwise philosophically perplexing phrase—it “co-increases divine love” (*ton theion erota synauxei*) (*De Mysteriis* V. 26, 239, 6).

With Iamblichus and Proclus, then, we find a new sensibility about divine love: divine love reaches down into all lower things and brings them back into its care. Proclus distinguishes two forms of love: first, an ascending love (*eros epistreptikos*) which urges lower principles to aspire towards their superiors, and, second, a descending or providential love (*eros pronoetikos*) which obligates the superiors to care for their products and to transmit divine grace (*In Alcib.* 54-56). One passage from Proclus will help to illustrate this new sensibility, although I fear it is so far outside of our modern sensibility that it will look somewhat childlike. I cite the first paragraph of a little work *On the Hieratic art* by Proclus in the translation of Brian Copenhaver:<sup>76</sup>

Just as lovers systematically leave behind what is fair to sensation and attain the one true source of all that is fair and intelligible, in the same way priests—observing how all things are in all from the sympathy that all visible things have for one another and for the invisible powers—have also framed their priestly knowledge. For they were amazed to see the lasts in the firsts and the very firsts in the lasts; in heaven they saw earthly things acting causally and in a heavenly manner, in the earth heavenly things in an earthly manner. Why do heliotropes move together with the sun, selenotropes with the moon, moving around to the extent of their ability with the luminaries of the cosmos? All things pray according to their own order and sing hymns, either intellectually or rationally or naturally or sensibly, to heads of entire chains.<sup>77</sup> And since the heliotrope is also moved toward that to which it readily opens, if anyone hears it striking the air as it moves about, he perceives in the sound that it offers to the king the kind of hymn that a plant can sing.<sup>78</sup>

76. “Hermes Trismegistus, Proclus, and a Philosophy of Magic” in *Hermeticism and the Renaissance: Intellectual History and the Occult in Early Modern Europe*, Folger Books, Washington DC, Merkel and Debus eds, 1988, 79-110.

77. See also Proclus, *In Timaeum* I. 213.2-3; Wallis, 1995, 155.

78. *On the Hieratic art*, 1-13. See Appendix VI for Greek text.

Henry Corbin<sup>79</sup> has written of this passage that the community between visible and invisible “is not perceived through argument proceeding from effect to cause; it is the perception of a sympathy... in the visible phenomenon of a flower...Its heliotropism (its “conversion” towards its celestial prince) is...a heliopathy (the passion it experiences...). And this passion...is disclosed in a prayer, which is the *act* of this *passion* through which the invisible angel draws the flower towards him. Accordingly, this prayer is the *pathos* of their *sympatheia*” (106-107). It is this complex sympathy that makes Proclus aware “of the *hierophanic dimension* of the flower’s sympathy whereupon he perceives the movement of the flower as a prayer whose impulse culminates in a transcending which it shows him with a gesture that speaks without the help of language” (107).

Is this crazy? Perhaps it is so from some perspectives. The thought that a heliotrope prays, and that if we could only hear the sound of the air buffeted by its movement, we would be able to hear what is within the power of a plant to sing—this thought makes clear, however weird it might appear, that even plants are their own individual “goods” whose goodness coheres most fully in their hymn to a higher Good, a relatedness it is possible even for us, as it were, to overhear.

Henry Corbin, again, argues of this passage that, however strange, it is deeply in tune with the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabi and with the notion of the sadness of the “pathetic” God, in whose primordial compassionate sadness for undisclosed, undeveloped virtualities in the created world our own compassionate yearning resonates and moves.<sup>80</sup> Such a vision also resonates, I might suggest in passing, with elements in the (very different) thought of Aquinas, especially the idea that only in God’s knowing do hidden potencies and even bare possibilities arise.<sup>81</sup> The created universe is not just the sum of facts

79. Corbin (see note 64), 106-107.

80. See Corbin (note 38 above), 112ff. and 118: “To become a Compassionate One is to become the likeness of the Compassionate God experiencing infinite sadness over undisclosed virtualities; it is to embrace, in a total religious *sympathy*, the theophanies of these divine Names in all faiths. But this sympathy, precisely, does not signify acceptance of their limits; it signifies rather that in opening ourselves to them we open them to the expansion that the primordial divine *sympathesis* demands of them; that we increase their divine light to the maximum; that we “emancipate” them from the virtuality and ignorance which still confine them in their narrow intransigence. By thus taking them in hand, religious *sympathy* enables them to escape from the impasse, that is, the sin of metaphysical idolatry.”

81. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, First Part, Question 14, article 13 (in the overall context of Questions 12-15).

but a vast reservoir of dynamic possibilities that can emerge as real, and uniquely themselves, only in the creative energy of divine love.

With Iamblichus, and Proclus, then, we encounter the unfolding of a remarkable view of divine love that is implicit in earlier Platonism and not simply a reaction, I suggest, to Christian influence, namely, the view that God's love involves a kind of radical divine caring love, that pierces and already includes *the activities* or *real energies* of all created life. However, it is only in Pseudo-Dionysius, in a famous passage from the *Divine Names*, that this new sensibility reaches its conclusion and where the Unmoved God is simultaneously moved to care for everything. Of course, this is no longer Aristotle's Unmoved Mover, but it is the culmination of a long pagan tradition starting with Plato and Aristotle. This tradition runs through the Neoplatonists and culminates in Pseudo-Dionysius, the pupil of Proclus, who brings about the instantaneous conversion of the Pagan tradition into a daring Christian form of thought that remains faithful to its best pagan well-springs. Dionysius thus retains the word *eros*, together with *agape*, despite the former word's potentially dangerous pagan heritage:

When we talk of yearning (*eros*), whether this be in God or an angel, in the mind or in the spirit or in nature, we should think of a unifying and commingling power which moves the superior to provide for the subordinate, peer to be in communion with peer, and subordinate to return to the superior...<sup>82</sup>

As in Proclus, divine providential love is at root a love that recalls everything to itself, an *eros pronōētikos/epistreptikos*,<sup>83</sup> that is also a function of our love for each other. However, Pseudo-Dionysius no longer views this simply as a kind of structural relation between cause and effect or as a ritualistic relation between God and worshipper; it is instead an intimate paradoxical coincidence of opposites—transcendence and immanence—in which the divine longing for created things is manifested:

82. Pseudo-Dionysius, *Divine Names*, 713a-b: Τὸν ἔρωτα, εἴτε θεῖον εἴτε ἀγγελικὸν εἴτε νοερὸν εἴτε ψυχικὸν εἴτε φυσικὸν εἵπομεν, ἐνωτικὴν τινα καὶ συγκρατικὴν ἐννοήσωμεν δύναμιν τὰ μὲν ὑπέρτερα κινουσαν ἐπὶ πρόνοιαν τῶν καταδεεστέρων, τὰ δὲ ὁμόστοιχα πάλιν εἰς κοινωνικὴν ἀλληλουχίαν καὶ ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τὰ ὑφειμένα πρὸς τὴν τῶν κρειττόνων καὶ ὑπερκειμένων ἐπιστροφὴν.

83. Proclus, *In Platonis Primum Alcibiadem*, 54-6.

And we must dare to say even this on behalf of the truth that the very cause of all things, by virtue of the beautiful and good yearning love for everything through superabundance of loving goodness is also carried outside of himself in the loving care he has for everything. He is, as it were, beguiled by goodness, by love, and by yearning love and is led away from his transcendent dwelling place and comes to abide within all things, and he does so by virtue of his supernatural and ecstatic capacity to remain, nevertheless, inseparable from himself.<sup>84</sup>

This is one of the most remarkable passages in the whole of ancient thought. God is, by the end of antiquity, primarily the beloved who remains unmoved *but also simultaneously* the loving one (transcendentally and paradigmatically the unity of all the causes deployed by Aristotle). Against Agathon's conception of love as completely beautiful and as "enchanting the thought of all gods and human beings" (*Symposium* 207e), Diotima-Socrates had pointed out the needy, vulnerable side of love: "What you thought love to be is not surprising. You supposed, if I take what you said as evidence, that the beloved and not the loving was love. That is why, I think, *eros* seemed completely beautiful to you. In fact, it is the beloved that is really beautiful...and blessed; but loving has this other character" (204b8-c6). Dionysius brings both aspects together as integral to the Divine—in God's self-abiding beloved nature there is also vulnerability, even a passivity beyond all passivity: God is "led down" to dwell in all. God does not merely enchant, as Agathon had supposed, but is simultaneously *enchanted* by goodness, love and longing for all by virtue of "his ecstatic, hyper-substantial power that does not stop visiting itself" (ἀνεκφοίτητον ἑαυτοῦ). The term ἀνεκφοίτητον is used by Proclus to signify transcendence, but it should not be stripped of its connotations of visiting and intimate/frequent familiarity, for the sense here, of course, is that the divine Thearchy is able to visit and even fall in love with everything without losing its own self-abiding, unmoving intimacy.

84. Pseudo-Dionysius, *Divine Names*, 712a-b: Τοιμητέον δὲ καὶ τοῦτο ὑπὲρ ἀληθείας εἰπεῖν, ὅτι καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ πάντων αἴτιος τῷ καλῷ καὶ ἀγαθῷ τῶν πάντων ἔρωτι δι' ὑπερβολὴν τῆς ἐρωτικῆς ἀγαθότητος ἔξω ἑαυτοῦ γίνεται ταῖς εἰς τὰ ὄντα πάντα προνοίας καὶ οἷον ἀγαθότητι καὶ ἀγαπήσει καὶ ἔρωτι θέλγεται καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ὑπὲρ πάντα καὶ πάντων ἐξηρημένον πρὸς τὸ ἐν πᾶσι κατάγεται κατ' ἐκστατικὴν ὑπερούσιον δύναμιν ἀνεκφοίτητον ἑαυτοῦ. Compare DN 952a-b.

Does “everything” mean everything—good and bad, superior, inferior, saint and sinner? I think that Dionysius does mean everything. Late in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century already, the most “unmoving,” austere—almost inhuman ascetic, Evagrius of Pontus—at least according to some modern assessments,<sup>85</sup> has this to say about the Holy Spirit: Τὸ ἅγιον Πνεῦμα συμπάσχον τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ ἀσθενείᾳ, καὶ ἀκαθάρτοις οὖσιν ἐπιφοιτᾷ ἡμῖν (*On Prayer* 63); Στήθι ἐπὶ τῆς φυλακῆς σου φυλάττων τὸν νοῦν σου ἀπὸ νοημάτων κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν τῆς προσευχῆς, στήναι ἐπὶ τῇ οικείᾳ ἡρεμίᾳ, ἵνα ὁ συμπάσχων τοῖς ἀγνοοῦσι, καὶ σοὶ ἐπιφοιτήσῃ (*Prayer*, 70).<sup>86</sup> Thus, according to Evagrius, the Holy Spirit visits us even when we are impure, sympathizes with the ignorant, and will visit anyone of us if we only ask. Some hundred years later than Evagrius, Dionysius is the inheritor of both traditions, the biblical and the pagan, and he thus can bring the language of the moved and the unmoved together into his representation of the Trinity as a way of overcoming the negative heritage of Aristotle’s Unmoved Mover whose providence does not seem to extend to individual things in the sublunary world. He therefore points to a Prime Mover beyond both movement and rest<sup>87</sup> whose love extends to everything and whose power is so great that it finds itself in the heart of imperfection and sits with weakness. Over seven hundred years after Dionysius, Aquinas writes his commentary on the *Divine Names* and can, perhaps, conclude with some justification that there is no real difference between reaching a first being that moves itself, as understood by Plato, and reaching a first being that is absolutely unmoved, as understood by Aristotle.<sup>88</sup> Whatever the case, and even if Dionysius in a sense “destroys” the Unmoved Mover, he is the first to articulate the paradox or to show how the ultimate Unmoved Godhead can without departing from its own intimate life fall in love intimately with everything.

85. For contemporary scholarship on this issue see Corrigan and Glazov, “Compassion and Compunction: Two Overlooked Virtues in Evagrius of Pontus,” *JCS*, 2014.

86. “The Holy Spirit, suffering together with our weakness (cf. Rom. 8: 26), visits us even when we are impure.” “Stand on your guard, keeping your mind free of mental conceptions at the time of prayer so that it may stand firm in its own tranquility in order that the one who suffers together with the ignorant may visit even you...” (my translation). Greek Text: *Philokalia* 1. 176-89; *PG* 79, 1165-1200. English translation, *Evagrius of Pontus. The Greek Ascetic Corpus*, R. E Sinkewcz, Oxford, 2000.

87. Cf. Marius Victorinus, *Adversus Arium* 1078c30, of the One or *unalitas* before all things: “swifter than motion itself, steadier than rest itself” (*ipsa motione celebrior, ipso statu stabilior*).

88. SCG I 13, 10.

*Appendices*

*I) De Partibus Animalium 645a23-36:* Every realm of nature is marvellous: and as Heraclitus, when the strangers who came to visit him found him warming himself at the furnace in the kitchen and hesitated to go in, reported to have bidden them not to be afraid to enter, as even in that kitchen divinities were present, so we should venture on the study of every kind of animal without distaste; for each and all will reveal to us something natural and something beautiful. Absence of haphazard and conduciveness of everything to an end are to be found in Nature's works in the highest degree, and the resultant end of her generations and combinations is a form of the beautiful. If any person thinks the examination of the rest of the animal kingdom an unworthy task, he must hold in like disesteem the study of man. For no one can look at the primordia of the human frame-blood, flesh, bones, vessels, and the like-without much repugnance. Moreover, when any one of the parts or structures, be it which it may, is under discussion, it must not be supposed that it is its material composition to which attention is being directed or which is the object of the discussion, but the relation of such part to the total form. Similarly, the true object of architecture is not bricks, mortar, or timber, but the house; and so the principal object of natural philosophy is not the material elements, but their composition, and the totality of the form, independently of which they have no existence. (*Ἐν πᾶσι γὰρ τοῖς φυσικοῖς ἔνεστί τι θαυμαστόν· καὶ καθάπερ Ἡράκλειτος λέγεται πρὸς τοὺς ξένους εἰπεῖν τοὺς βουλομένους ἐντυχεῖν αὐτῷ, οἱ ἐπειδὴ προσιώντες εἶδον αὐτὸν θερμόμενον πρὸς τῷ ἰπνῷ ἔστησαν (ἐκέλευε γὰρ αὐτοὺς εἰσεῖναι θαρροῦντας· εἶναι γὰρ καὶ ἐνταῦθα θεοὺς) οὕτω καὶ πρὸς τὴν ζήτησιν περὶ ἐκάστου τῶν ζῶων προσεῖναι δεῖ μὴ δυσωπούμενον ὡς ἐν ἅπασιν ὄντος τινὸς φυσικοῦ καὶ καλοῦ. Τὸ γὰρ μὴ τυχόντως ἀλλ' ἐνεκὰ τινος ἐν τοῖς τῆς φύσεως ἔργοις ἐστὶ καὶ μάλιστα· οὐ δ' ἐνεκὰ συνέστηκεν ἡ γέγονε τέλους, τὴν τοῦ καλοῦ χώραν εἴληφεν. Εἰ δέ τις τὴν περὶ τῶν ἄλλων ζῶων θεωρίαν ἀτιμὸν εἶναι νενόμικε, τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον οἰεσθαι χρὴ καὶ περὶ αὐτοῦ· οὐκ ἐστὶ γὰρ ἄνευ πολλῆς δυσχερείας ἰδεῖν ἐξ ἧς συνέστηκε τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένος, οἷον αἷμα, σάρκες, ὅσπᾳ, φλέβες καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα μόρια. Ὁμοίως τε δεῖ νομίζειν τὸν περὶ οὐτινοσοῦν τῶν μορίων ἢ τῶν σκευῶν διαλεγόμενον μὴ περὶ τῆς ὕλης ποιεῖσθαι τὴν μνήμην, μὴ δὲ ταύτης χάριν, ἀλλὰ τῆς ὄλης μορφῆς, οἷον καὶ περὶ οἰκίας, ἀλλὰ μὴ πλίνθων καὶ πηλοῦ καὶ ξύλων· καὶ τὸν περὶ φύσεως περὶ τῆς συνθέσεως καὶ τῆς ὄλης οὐσίας, ἀλλὰ μὴ περὶ τούτων ἃ μὴ συμβαίνει χωριζόμενά ποτε τῆς οὐσίας αὐτῶν.*)

*II) Metaphysics 12, 7, 1072b13-30:* ἐκ τοιαύτης ἄρα ἀρχῆς ἤρτηται ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ φύσις. διαγωγὴ δ' ἐστὶν οἷα ἡ ἀρίστη μικρὸν χρόνον ἡμῖν (οὕτω γὰρ αἰεὶ ἐκείνο· ἡμῖν μὲν γὰρ ἀδύνατον), ἐπεὶ καὶ ἡδονὴ ἢ ἐνέργεια τούτου (καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐγογγόρισαι αἰσθησις νόησις ἥδιστον, ἐλπιδες δὲ καὶ μνημαὶ διὰ ταῦτα). ἡ δὲ νόησις ἢ καθ' αὐτὴν τοῦ καθ' αὐτὸ ἀρίστου, καὶ ἡ μάλιστα τοῦ μάλιστα. αὐτὸν δὲ νοεῖ ὁ νοῦς κατὰ μετάληψιν τοῦ νοητοῦ· νοητὸς γὰρ γίνεταί τιγγάνων καὶ νοῶν, ὥστε ταῦτ' ὄντος καὶ νοητόν. τὸ γὰρ δεκτικὸν τοῦ νοητοῦ καὶ τῆς οὐσίας νοῦς, ἐνεργεῖ δὲ ἔχων, ὥστ' ἐκείνου μᾶλλον τοῦτο ὃ δοκεῖ ὁ νοῦς θεῖον ἔχειν, καὶ ἡ θεωρία τὸ ἥδιστον καὶ ἄριστον. εἰ οὖν οὕτως εὐ ἔχει, ὡς ἡμεῖς ποτέ, ὁ θεὸς αἰεὶ, θαυμαστόν· εἰ δὲ μᾶλλον, ἔτι θαυμασιώτερον. ἔχει δὲ ὧδε. καὶ ζωὴ δὲ γε ὑπάρχει· ἢ γὰρ νοῦ ἐνέργεια ζωὴ, ἐκείνος δὲ ἢ ἐνέργεια· ἐνέργεια δὲ ἢ καθ' αὐτὴν ἐκείνου ζωὴ ἀρίστη καὶ αἰδιος. φαμὲν δὴ τὸν θεὸν εἶναι ζῶον αἰδιον ἄριστον, ὥστε ζωὴ καὶ αἰῶν συνεχῆ καὶ αἰδιος ὑπάρχει τῷ θεῷ· τοῦτο γὰρ ὁ θεός. Compare EN 1154b24-28.

III) *Ennead* VI 7 [38] 36, 3-25: "The knowledge or touching of the Good is the greatest thing, and he (Plato) says it is the greatest study (cf. *Republic* 505a2), not calling the looking at it a study, but learning about it beforehand. We are taught about it by analogies, negations, and knowledge of the things that come from it and certain methods of ascent by degrees, but we are put on the way to it by purifications, virtues, adorning and by gaining footholds in the intelligible and settling ourselves firmly there and feasting on its contents. But whoever has become at once contemplator of himself and all the rest and object of his contemplation, and since he has become substance, intellect and the complete living being (*Timaeus* 31b), no longer looks at it from outside-when he has become this, he is near, and That is next and close, shining upon all the intelligible world. It is there that one lets all study go, up to here one has been led along (παιδαγωγῶνθεις) and settled in beauty and up to this point, one thinks that in which one is, but is carried out of it by the surge of the wave of intellect itself and lifted on high by a kind of swell (ἐξενεχθεὶς δὲ τῷ αὐτοῦ τοῦ νοῦ οἶον κύματι καὶ ὑψοῦ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ οἶον οἰδήσαντος ἄρθρῆς) sees suddenly (εἰσεῖδεν ἐξαίφνης), not seeing how, but the vision fills his eyes with light and does not make him see something else by it, but the light itself is what he sees. For there is not in That something seen and its light...but a ray which generates these afterwards and lets them be beside it; but *he* himself is the ray which only generates intellect and does not extinguish itself in the generation, but it itself abides and that comes to be because this exists."

IV) Compare, first, Tricot, 1986, vol. 2, 672-3n2: "Dieu, forme pure et transcendante, Individu supreme, est le sommet et le terme de la série des forms, qui se développent entre les deux poles de l' être, entre la matière et la Pensée pure. L'Univers aristotélicien est constitué par une hiérarchie de réalités, disposés selon une échelle continue...qui sont toutes, à des degrés divers, des composés de matière et de forme, et dont l'une sert de substrat et d' échelon à celle qui suit et qui la surpasse par son acte propre. Chaque forme substantielle trouve, en effet, dans une matière qui lui est extérieure la condition de sa réalisation...La forme supérieure, par la richesse plus grande de ses déterminations est la raison d' être et le principe d' intelligibilité de la forme inférieure. La forme absolument pure, à laquelle on arrive ainsi graduellement, par élimination progressive de l' élément matériel et de la puissance, n'a plus besoin de s'appuyer sur une matière préexistante pour se réaliser. Elle n'a d'autre condition qu'elle-même, elle est la Réalité par excellence, *Ens realissimum*, qui confère à toutes les autres existence et intelligibilité;" and, second, *Symposium* 211b6-d1: ὅταν δὴ τις ἀπὸ τῶνδε διὰ τὸ ὀρθῶς παιδερασθεῖν ἐπανιών ἐκεῖνο τὸ καλὸν ἄρχηται καθορᾶν, σχεδὸν ἂν τι ἄπτοιτο τοῦ τέλους. τοῦτο γὰρ δὴ ἐστὶ τὸ ὀρθῶς ἐπὶ τὰ ἐρωτικά ἵνα ἢ ὑπ' ἄλλου ἄγεσθαι, ἀρχόμενον ἀπὸ τῶνδε τῶν καλῶν ἐκείνου ἔνεκα τοῦ καλοῦ αἰεὶ ἐπανιέναι, ὡσπερ ἐπαναβασμοὶς χρώμενον, ἀπὸ ἐνός ἐπὶ δύο καὶ ἀπόδοσιν ἐπὶ πάντα τὰ καλὰ σώματα, καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν καλῶν σωμάτων ἐπὶ τὰ καλὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα, καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἐπιτηδεύματων ἐπὶ τὰ καλὰ μαθήματα, καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν μαθημάτων ἐπ' ἐκεῖνο τὸ μάθημα τελευτῆσαι, ὃ ἐστὶν οὐκ ἄλλου ἢ αὐτοῦ ἐκείνου τοῦ καλοῦ μάθημα, καὶ γνῶ αὐτὸ τελευτῶν ὃ ἐστὶ καλόν.

V) *Ennead*. 67 (30) 35, 3-28: Οὕτω δὲ διάκειται τότε, ὡς καὶ τοῦ νοεῖν καταφρονεῖν, ὃ τὸν ἄλλον χρόνον ἠσπάζετο, ὅτι τὸ νοεῖν κίνησις τις ἦν, αὕτη δὲ οὐ κινεῖσθαι θέλει. Καὶ γὰρ οὐδ' ἐκεῖνόν φησιν, ὃν ὄρα, καίτοι νοῦς γενομένος αὕτη θεωρεῖ οἶον νοοθεΐσα καὶ ἐν τῷ τόπῳ τῷ νοητῷ γενομένη· ἀλλὰ γενομένη μὲν ἐν αὐτῷ

καὶ περὶ αὐτὸν ἔχουσα τὸ νοητὸν νοεῖ, ἐπὶ δ' ἐκείνον ἴδη τὸν θεόν, πάντα ἤδη ἀφήησιν, οἷον εἴ τις εἰσελθὼν εἰς οἶκον ποικίλον καὶ οὕτω καλὸν θεωροῖ ἔνδον ἕκαστα τῶν ποικιλιμάτων καὶ θαυμάζοι, πρὶν ἰδεῖν τὸν τοῦ οἴκου δεσπότην, ἰδὼν δ' ἐκείνον καὶ ἀγασθεὶς οὐ κατὰ τὴν τῶν (10) ἀγαλμάτων φύσιν ὄντα, ἀλλ' ἄξιον τῆς ὄντως θεάς, ἀφείς ἐκείνα τοῦτον μόνον τοῦ λοιποῦ βλέπει, εἴτα βλέπων καὶ μὴ ἀφαιρῶν τὸ ὄμμα μηκέτι ὄραμα βλέπει τῷ συνεχεῖ τῆς θεάς, ἀλλὰ τὴν ὄψιν αὐτοῦ συγκεράσασαι τῷ θεάματι, ὥστε ἐν αὐτῷ ἤδη τὸ ὁρατὸν πρότερον ὄψιν γεγονέναι, τῶν δ' (15) ἄλλων πάντων ἐπιλάθοιτο θεαμάτων. Καὶ τάχα ἂν σφῶσι τὸ ἀνάλογον ἢ εἰκῶν, εἰ μὴ ἄνθρωπος εἴη ὁ ἐπιστάς τῷ τὰ τοῦ οἴκου θεωμένῳ, ἀλλὰ τις θεός, καὶ οὗτος οὐ κατ' ὄψιν τοῦ οἴκου θεωμένῳ, ἀλλὰ τις θεός, καὶ οὗτος οὐ κατ' ὄψιν φανείς, ἀλλὰ τὴν ψυχὴν ἐμπλήσας τοῦ θεωμένου. Καὶ τὸν νοῦν τοίνυν τὴν μὲν ἔχειν δύναμιν εἰς τὸ νοεῖν, ἢ τὰ (20) ἐν αὐτῷ βλέπει, τὴν δέ, ἢ τὰ ἐπέκεινα αὐτοῦ ἐπιβολῇ τινι καὶ παραδοχῇ, καθ' ἣν καὶ πρότερον ἑώρα μόνον καὶ ὄρων ὑστερον καὶ νοῦν ἔσχε καὶ ἐν ἔστι. Καὶ ἔστιν ἐκείνη μὲν ἡ θεὰ νοῦ ἔμφρονος, αὕτη δὲ νοῦς ἐρῶν, ὅταν ἀφρων γένηται μεθυσθεὶς τοῦ νέκταρος· τότε ἐρῶν γίνεται (25) ἀπλωθεὶς εἰς εὐπάθειαν τῷ κόρῳ· καὶ ἔστιν αὐτῷ μεθύειν βέλτιον ἢ σεμνοτέρῳ εἶναι τοιαύτης μέθης.

*VI) On the Hieratic art, 1-13:* Ὅσπερ οἱ ἐρωτικοὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἐν αἰσθήσει καλῶν ὀδῶν προϋόντες ἐπ' αὐτὴν καταντῶσι τὴν μίαν τῶν καλῶν πάντων καὶ νοητῶν ἀρχὴν, οὕτως καὶ οἱ ἱερατικοὶ ἀπὸ τῆς ἐν τοῖς φαινομένοις ἅπασι συμπαθείας πρὸς τε ἄλληλα καὶ πρὸς τὰς ἀφανεῖς δυνάμεις, πάντα ἐν πάσι κατανοήσαντες, τὴν ἐπιστήμην τὴν ἱερατικὴν συνεστήσαντο, θαυμάσαντες τῷ βλέπειν ἐν τε τοῖς πρῶτοις τὰ ἔσχατα καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἐσχάτοις τὰ πρῶτιστα, ἐν οὐρανῷ μὲν τὰ χθόνια κατ' αἰτίαν καὶ οὐρανίως, ἐν τε γῆ τὰ οὐράνια γηϊνῶς. Ἡ πόθεν ἡλιοτρόπια μὲν ἡλίῳ, σεληνοτρόπια δὲ σελήνῃ συγκινεῖται συμπεριπολοῦντα ἐς δύναμιν τοῖς τοῦ κόσμου φωστήρισιν; Εὐχεται γὰρ πάντα κατὰ τὴν οἰκειάν τάξιν καὶ ὑμνεῖ τοὺς ἡγεμόνας τῶν σειρῶν ὅλων ἢ νοερῶς ἢ λογικῶς ἢ φυσικῶς ἢ αἰσθητῶς· ἐπεὶ καὶ τὸ ἡλιοτρόπιον ᾧ ἔστιν εὐλυτον, τούτῳ κινεῖται καί, εἰ δὴ τις αὐτοῦ κατὰ τὴν περιστροφὴν ἀκούειν τὸν ἀέρα πλήσσοντος οἴος τε ἦν, ὑμνον ἂν τινα διὰ τοῦ ἤχου τούτου συνήσθετο τῷ Βασιλεῖ προσάγοντος, ὃν δύναται φυτὸν ὑμνεῖν.



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