

Aristotelian *Katharsis* as Ethical Conversion in Plotinian Aesthetics

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Thus sang the famous singer; but Odysseus
Melted, tears dropped from under his eyes and wetted his cheeks.
As a woman laments falling upon her beloved husband
Who has fallen in defense of his city and his people,
To keep off the day of pitiless doom for his city and his children.

Odyssey VIII 521–25

The description of Odysseus' emotional reaction upon hearing Demodocus sing of the Achaeans' wooden-horse stratagem during the sack of Troy is one that can best be described as a tragic pleasure. Not only does Odysseus desire to hear the song, he reacts with "most piteous grief" (ἐλεεινοτάτῳ ἄχεϊ v. 530). In an elaborate simile, Homer compares the quality of Odysseus' *pathos* to the lament of a woman who throws herself on the body of her dead husband, at the same time struggling against the enemy who is pulling her away to "lead her off to slavery, to toil and groaning" (vv. 523–29). During the experience of tragic pleasure, not only does the soul "feel a feeling of its own," as Gorgias states in *Helen* 9 (ἰδίον τι πάθημα διὰ τῶν λόγων ἔπαθεν ἢ ψυχῆ); Homer reminds us that the body too is afflicted.¹ The verb φθινύθω, used in the phrase describing the woman's tears, τῆς δ' ἐλεεινοτάτῳ ἄχεϊ φθινύθουσι παρελαί (v. 530), and most often translated as "melt" ("her cheeks melt with most pitiful grief"), is a word that metaphorically describes the "wasting" away of life and livelihood, or the "withering" of the body in other Homeric passages (*Od.* 1.250; 10.485; 18.204; 12.131, and *Il.* 6.237; 21.466). In the Hippocratic corpus (c. 5th–4th centuries BC) the term is a technical one, describing the effects of consumption (*Aph.* 4.8; *Epid.* 1.2). Odysseus' fear and pity must be great indeed, affecting his emotions and body to the extent that his identity, or

1. As Colin MacLeod points out with great sensitivity in his introduction, "The *Iliad* as a Tragic Poem," in *Homer Iliad* XXIV (Cambridge University Press, 1982) 4–7, the poetics of tragic pleasure are well documented in diverse sources in antiquity: Gorgias, Sophocles, Aristotle, Herodotus, Thucydides, and Plato.

'posture' as the stranger at the banquet is vulnerable to further scrutiny. If Odysseus' tragic *pathos*, a unified emotional and physical expression of grief, is the pleasure which is proper to tragic *pathemata*, in what way is this *pathos* related to the tragic *katharsis* described in Aristotle's *Poetics* 1449b24–28?

Although the medical, ethical, and intellectual models of cathartic clarity have been thoroughly explored,² what bears closer scrutiny is Aristotle's use of the term pleasure, ἡδονή, in the context of experiencing the *pathemata* of fear and pity. In what ways are the above models of *kathartic* clarity integral to the pleasure 'proper' to the mimesis of the *pathemata* of fear and pity (*Poet.* 1453b8–14)?³ Arguments in favour of the intellectual model posit that pleasure can only be found in a cognitive enlightenment concerning the mimesis of painful *pathemata*.

Now since pity and fear are painful experiences, the representation of these qualities that takes place in tragedy can be pleasant only insofar as the mimetic process provides intellectual insight into them. Thus the essential pleasure of tragedy must consist in a learning experience, a change from ignorance to knowledge, a movement from confusion to understanding.⁴

This 'essential' pleasure is achieved at the cost of a catharsis, which is a 'cleansing' of pity and fear of their 'felt' pain.⁵ This cognitive and largely Platonic model of *katharsis* is essentially a two-stage process, one which begins as a purging of the kinetic and sensory quality of the tragic *pathemata* so as to

2. Surveys of the critical thought, ancient to modern, can be found in the following: Elizabeth Bellifore, *Tragic Pleasures* (Princeton University Press, 1992); Leon Golden, "Catharsis," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 93 (1962): 51–60; *idem*, "Mimesis and Katharsis," *Classical Philology* 64 (1969): 145–53; *idem*, "The Purgation Theory of Catharsis," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 31 (1973): 473–79; *idem*, "Plato's Concept of Mimesis," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 15 (1975): 118–31; *idem*, "The Clarification Theory of Katharsis," *Hermes* 104 (1976): 1.437–52; *idem*, "Epic, Tragedy, and Catharsis," *Classical Philology* 71 (1976): 2.77–85; Stephen Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986) esp. 184–201; John Kirby, "Aristotle's *Poetics*: The Rhetorical Principle," *Arethusa* 24 (1991): 197–217; Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 1986) esp. 388–91.

3. For references to the pleasure proper to tragedy, see also: *Poet.* 1452b33 re. the mimesis of fearful and piteous *pragmata* proper to tragedy; 51b23 re. pleasure created by the tragic plot; 53a36 re. pleasure proper to tragedy versus comedy; 59a21 re. pleasure created by organic unity of plot; 62a16 and 62b13 re. tragic and epic pleasure.

4. Golden, "Epic, Tragedy, and Catharsis" 85.

5. An observation made by D.W. Lucas in *Aristotle: Poetics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968) 278. Lucas is severely rebutted by Golden, "Epic, Tragedy, and Catharsis" 81, primarily because he is seen as favoring a humoral context for Aristotelian *katharsis*. For an analysis of the Platonic bifurcation of the αἰσθησεις which are apprehended and the παθήματα which are 'felt,' see F. Solmsen, "αἰσθησις In Aristotelian and Epicurean Thought," *Mededelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afd. Letterkunde* 24 (1961): 8.241–62.

eliminate the obstructions of emotive irrationality.⁶ The second stage can then take place, the clarity of recognition (*ἀναγνώρισις*) and reflective thought, which is the ubiquitous telos of rational man.⁷ The intellectual and moral models, derived from a Platonic reading of Aristotelian *katharsis*, emphasize an educative aesthetic response which relies on a ‘distancing’ of the *pathemata*, a theory developed fully by Corneille in the 17th century, who propagated the notion of aesthetic distance as an Aristotelian one.⁸ Modern support for the theory of aesthetic ‘distancing’ of tragic *pathemata* can be seen in translations of the *pathemata* of pity and fear in *Poet.* 1449b28 as the fearful and piteous “acts” representing the occasions for a reflective response to the imitated emotions of fear and pity. This “radically different contention” first put forth by Gerald Else in *Aristotle’s Poetics: The Argument* (Cambridge, MA, 1957),⁹ collapses the bi-vocal meaning of *pathos* in the *Poet.* 1425b10–13 and 1449b28, to a univocal one.¹⁰

The models of intellectual, moral, and plot-focused catharsis, which posit varying resolutions of aesthetic, noetic and moral judgements, are essentially aligned with the physiological or humoral model of catharsis, which posits the sentient subject’s emetic purging of ‘disturbing’ *pathemata*. The Humean model of tragic catharsis as a conversion of painful passions to “one uniform and strong enjoyment”¹¹ develops most fully the necessity of an aesthetic ‘distance’ in order to experience the beneficial (i.e., ‘pleasurable’) effect of

6. The Platonic language which equates *pathemata* with irrationality permeates the literature on Aristotelian *katharsis* and *aisthesis*: see Solmsen, “αἴσθησις in Aristotelian and Epicurean Thought”; and Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*.

7. See especially Golden, “*Mimesis and Katharsis*” 152; and “The Clarification Theory of *Katharsis*” 450–52, citing the work of Laín Entralgo which develops the connection between ἀναγνώρισις and κάθαρσις in Aristotle’s *Poetics*; also Halliwell, *Aristotle’s Poetics* 200–01.

8. See Lucas, *Aristotle: Poetics* 276–78. Amélie Rorty, “Aristotle on the Status of *Pathē*,” *Rev. of Metaphysics* 37 (1984): 521–46, argues that the reformulation of the Aristotelian *pathemata* as irrational *passiones* begins with the Stoics, and follows a trajectory through Augustinian theology, naturalistic philosophy, and German Romanticism.

9. See John Kirby, “Aristotle’s *Poetics*” 203–05. Also see Elizabeth Belfiore’s comment in *Tragic Pleasures* (268–29), regarding vying translations of *pathemata* in the *Poet.* 1449b24–28: “Most scholars take these *pathemata* to be emotions, and this is the most natural reading of the Greek. The ‘pity and fear’ (ἐλέου καὶ φόβου) mentioned at the beginning of the statement about catharsis are most naturally taken to be *pathē*, ‘emotions,’ not “events.” We expect, then that *pathemata* in the same statement will have this meaning also.” Also 170, note 103 re. *pathē* as actions at *Poet.* 1453b11–22.

10. Leo Golden follows Gerald Else’s translation of *pathemata* as “pitiable and fearful incidents” or “events represented” in “The Clarification Theory” 445; “Epic, Tragedy, and Catharsis” 82; and “Catharsis” 55, a translation which is a pivotal point of departure for those interpreting catharsis as a cognitive clarification.

11. “Of Tragedy,” *Essays* I (262); cited by Ralph Cohen, “The Transformation of Passion: A Study of Hume’s Theories of Tragedy,” *Philological Quarterly* 41 (1962): 450–64.

tragic *pathemata*. Hume's theories of the imagination's successful transformation of passions resulting from a 'disinterested' attentiveness to works of art established the groundwork for Kantian formulations of an aesthetic judgment. What all of these models share is a rationalistic bias which objectifies the experience of tragic pleasure as a kinetic *pathos* (i.e., as a localized 'feel-good' or 'feel-bad' sensation) brought about either by the 'relief' or 'distancing' of painful *pathemata*. This bias effectively results in a reification of pleasure as a particular state or affect thereby obfuscating the Aristotelian definition of ἡδονή as found in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, as the "unimpeded actualisation of a natural disposition (ἀνεμπόδιστος ἐνέργεια τῆς κατὰ φύσιν ἡξέως)" (EN 1153a14–15).¹² When this definition of pleasure is used in the context of the pleasure proper to tragedy, the telos of a 'feel-good' affect, or of a 'satisfying' cognition, becomes irrelevant. Rather, the telos of a cathartic pleasure is to be realized in the ethical disposition of the sentient subject. The Aristotelian connection between actualized perception (αἰσθησις) and the ethos of the sentient subject is one that incorporates and values the practical contingencies of human affectivity and character.

Martha Nussbaum in her 1986 work *The Fragility of Goodness* provides a thoroughly Aristotelian analysis of tragic *katharsis* in the context of human *ethos*, demonstrating the extent to which Aristotle assigns an ethical value to the emotions as functional perceptions (αἰσθησις).

We know, however, that for Aristotle appropriate responses are intrinsically valuable parts of good character and can, like good intellectual responses, help to constitute the refined 'perception' which is the best sort of human judgment. We could say, then, that the pity and fear are not just tools of a clarification that is in and of the intellect alone; to respond in these ways is itself valuable, and a piece of clarification concerning who we are. It is a recognition of practical values, and therefore of ourselves, that is no less important than the recognitions and perceptions of intellect. Pity and fear are themselves elements in an appropriate practical perception of our situation. Aristotle differs with Plato not only about the mechanisms of clarification, but also about what, in the good person, clarification is. (390–91)¹³

In this formulation there remains an intrinsic paradox in the juxtaposition of the experiences of painful *pathemata* and pleasure associated with tragic *katharsis*. An amplification of this paradox necessitates a radical understand-

12. Amélie Rorty, "The Place of Pleasure in Aristotle's Ethics," *Mind* 83 (1974): 481–97, performs a thorough analysis of the purpose of pleasure in Aristotelian ethics in light of the *kinesis-energeia* distinction. See also G.E.L. Owen, "Aristotelian Pleasures," in *Articles on Aristotle*, eds. J. Barnes, M. Schofield, R. Sorabji (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1977). Owen carefully elucidates Aristotle's definition of pleasure as "the proper functioning of the 'established nature'" by comparing seemingly contradictory arguments in EN VII 11–14 and X 1–5.

13. *Op. cit.* n. 2.

ing of the ‘pathology’ of pleasure and pain in the context of Aristotelian psychology and ethics which posits the emotions (*pathemata*) as a type of perception (αἴσθησις).

The idiomatic language of *katharsis* as *pharmakon* serves in Aristotle’s theoretical description of tragic pleasure to metaphorically describe a cathartic affect brought about in the fluid (i.e., passive) medium of the *pathemata*. Tragic mimesis brings about a *katharsis* of the *pathemata* of pity and fear (*Poet.* 1449b24–28), such pity and fear also being the basis of the mimetic pleasure integral to tragic plot structure (*Poet.* 1453b8–14).¹⁴ What is the interrelationship between pleasure and the painful *pathemata* of pity and fear, and the *katharsis* of those same *pathemata*? The exogenous cause of tragic pleasure is poetic *technē*, which is the occasion for the percipient subject’s *katharsis* of fear and pity. This pleasure is actualized by the *energeia* of the sentient subject’s sympathetic, or ‘predisposed’ disposition (διάθεσις). The pre-dispositional ‘habits,’ or individual virtues, have a direct bearing on the experience of pleasure or pain and the ability of the subject to modify the intensity of the affects.¹⁵ The crucial aesthetic (i.e., sentient) moments which determine the impeded or unimpeded *energeia* of the disposition, create the conditions for an actualization (ἐνέργεια) of the subject’s active disposition (ἦξις), and in effect, become the ‘teachable moments’ in an ascesis of ethical conversion.¹⁶ Aristotle’s teachings concerning what constitutes human affectivity and ethical disposition provide a context in which the *pathemata* that constitute tragic pleasure can be a means of experiencing and redirecting ἦξις; the *katharsis* of such *pathemata* is a virtue in itself, i.e., an actualisation (*energeia*) of ethical conversion. In the context of an aesthetic response of tragic pleasure, the Aristotelian *energeia* of pleasure is the *kathartic* clarification which provides the fluidity of movement necessary to a dispositional, or ethical change.

In the *Politics* Aristotle makes a direct correlation between the aesthetic *katharsis* brought about by musical melody and rhythm, and the capacity for such *katharsis* to bring about ethical change in the sentient subject. Aristotle

14. Cf. Halliwell, *Aristotle’s Poetics* 210, n. 45: “*Poet.* 53b12 favours a strong connection between *katharsis* and the proper pleasure of tragedy.” He cites the scholarship of W. Schadewaldt and R. Janko to support this view; for objections he cites A. Rostagni and D.W. Lucas.

15. See Martha C. Nussbaum, “Aristotle on Emotions and Ethical Health,” chapter 3, *The Therapy of Desire* (Princeton University Press, 1994) 82–96, for a comprehensive and enlightening treatment of the interrelationship of intentionality and emotion, and particularly her analysis of pity and fear in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*.

16. I am indebted here to Amélie O. Rorty’s fine distinctions of the shifting degrees of emphasis in Aristotle’s discussions of *pathe*, and the distinction between ἦξις as “active disposition” and διάθεσις as “disposition”: in “Aristotle on the Status of *Pathe*,” *Rev. of Metaphysics* 37 (1984): 521–46.

states that sounds and rhythm affect the soul¹⁷ in distinctive ways that can alter “the character of the soul” (*Pol.* 1340a.6ff.; 1340b.10–13: φανερόν ὅτι δύναται ποίον τι τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ἦθος ἢ μουσικὴ παρασκευάζειν). Whatever the form of the representation (μίμησις), we, as the receptive audience of observers or listeners are “thrown into a corresponding state of feeling (συμπαθεῖς),” and “we change [μεταβάλλειν] in our soul” (*Pol.* 1340a13ff.; 30ff.). The forms, perceived as colors, shapes, words, music, dance movements, are the affective signs (σημεῖα) of an *ethos* (1340a33–35) which are sympathetically experienced in such a way that the signs of the soul’s *ethos* conform to the ethical signs of the representations. The listener’s ability to change his/her ethical disposition in accordance to what is aesthetically, or sensibly received, is an indication to Aristotle of the paideutic importance of aesthetic habituation (ἐθισμός) to noble and beautiful characters and actions (τὸ χαίρειν τοῖς ἐπικείσιν ἦθεσι καὶ ταῖς καλαῖς πράξεσιν) (*Pol.* 1340a18ff.; 1340b10ff.).

What is Aristotle describing when he states that it is “clear that music has the power of producing a certain effect on the moral character of the soul” (*Pol.* 1340b10–12)? What connections are being made between the sensible phenomenon of sound and the sentient subject’s ethical disposition? According to Aristotle, psychical activity is not movement in the spatial sense of bodily activity, i.e., blood circulation, walking, etc. In the *Politics* 1340a7–13, musical rhythms, especially the enthusiastic melodies of Olympus, are said to be a type of *pathos* not of soul, but of the soul’s *ethos*: “Ὁ δ’ ἐνθουσιασμός τοῦ περὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἦθους πάθος ἐστίν.” This ‘affect’ of the soul’s *ethos* can be defined as type of change, or κίνησις. But in Aristotelian terms the κίνησις which affects psychical activity is qualified as a type of movement that “does not take place in the soul [i.e., spatially], but sometimes penetrates to it, and sometimes starts from it (τοῦτο δὲ μὴ ὡς ἐν ἐκείνῃ [ψυχῇ] τῆς κινήσεως οὔσης, ἀλλ’ ὅτε μὲν μέχρι ἐκείνης, ὅτε δ’ ἀπ’ ἐκείνης οἶον ἢ μὲν αἰσθησις ἀπὸ τῶνδ’.)” (*De An* 408b15–18).¹⁸ What *is* directly affected by the melody is the human psyche’s αἰσθητικόν, which is a type of “formula and potentiality of the organ [of

17. In this paper the term “soul” is used as an equivalent term to ψυχὴ as found in Aristotle’s writings.

18. For full explication of Aristotle’s arguments concerning soul as cause but not activity of movement, see commentary on *De An* III–IV.405b31–409a30 by R.D. Hicks, *Aristotle De Anima* (Cambridge University Press, 1907). Concerning Aristotle’s argument that psychical processes (pain, anger, fear) are motions of a particular sort which belong to the αἰσθητικόν, which do not prove that *psyche* itself is moved, see R.D. Hicks’ note to *De An* 408b9–16: “Both psychical activity and corporeal change belong as attributes to the composite substance [the subject, man as ἔμφυχον ζῶον, and the former, like the latter, is often, in default of a better term, designated κίνησις.”

sense] (λόγος τις καὶ δύναμις τοῦ αἰσθητηρίου)” (*De An* 424a27).¹⁹ This faculty of aesthetic receptivity is consequently also the faculty of ethical change for the human psyche.

To make a case for the desirability of a ‘pleasure’ which can, in effect, be the unimpeded disposition of and towards un-pleasurable affects, Aristotle adapts the language of medical dialectic.²⁰ By contextualizing this pleasure within the semantic range of the medical, beneficent necessity of *katharsis*, the painful *pathemata* associated with tragic mimesis can be viewed as desirable. Aristotle’s explanation of affects as agents of ethical conversion contextualises catharsis so as to emphasize the value and presence of *pathemata*, not their emetic absence. The ‘clarity’ of catharsis is the unimpeded *energeia* of the painful *pathemata*; thus tragic pleasure is not by definition the result of ‘emptiness’ or the ‘absence’ of pain. When the *pathemata* are in effect the subject of *katharsis*, there is a more precise description of the subject’s experience of the affects, which is not the soul itself ‘pathologized’, but the evidence of the individual soul’s ethos. The *pathemata* which constitute tragic pleasure, because they are experienced manifestly and ‘clearly’ (τὸ ἐναργῆς in *Poet.* 1462a16–17) become the occasion for the sentient subject to ‘feel’ (i.e., actualise) the *pathemata* which are distinctive to the individual’s own disposition. If one remains in the semantic context of what constitutes Aristotelian pleasure, one can surmise that the *katharsis* of *pathemata* as described in the *Politics* 1341a21–24; 1341b39–42a16 and in the *Poetics* 1449b24–28 is not a process that eliminates ‘undesirable’ affects; rather, the *katharsis* is an *energeia* (activity) which occurs naturally to the sentient subject in the presence of musical affects, or fearful and pathetic acts (i.e., tragic drama). The affective nature of cathartic activity is evident by the subject’s physiological and emotional response of *frisson*, piteous weeping, or cataleptic trance. Odysseus’ “inward sorrow” (ὀδύρεαι ἔνδοθι θυμοῦ, *Od.* 8.577) is manifested during his *katharsis*, brought about by the *ethos* of tragic song and story which is in *sympatheia* with the subject’s predisposed grief. Unlike the Phaeacians who have fled martial confrontation and have chosen an isolated life of enchanted tranquillity (*Od.* VI.1–10),²¹ Odysseus is predisposed to the fearful and pitiable *ethos* of the bard’s song because of his personal experience in the Trojan war. The signs of his grief are the *kathartic pathemata* which constitute tragic pleasure.

19. R.D. Hicks, *op. cit.*, commentary to *De An* 408b16: “οἶον ἢ μὲν αἰσθησις ἀπὸ τῶνδ᾽, int. κίνησις ἔστιν.... Compare for sensation as κίνησις or ἀλλοίωσις 415b24sq., 416b33sq., 417a14sqq.”

20. See M. Nussbaum, “Medical Dialectic,” in *The Therapy of Desire* 48–77, for a theoretical treatment of this dialectic in Aristotle’s writings.

21. For a thorough presentation of the peaceful, anti-martial disposition of Phaeacians see Matthew Dickie, “Phaeacian Athletes,” *Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar* 4 (1984): 237–76.

Although Aristotle presents a fully developed psychology of the integration of affect and *aisthesis* (primarily in the *De Anima* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*), an understanding of catharsis as a condition of ethical change is given a fuller context in the aesthetic theories of Plotinus. A reading of Aristotelian and Plotinian catharsis which incorporates an affirmation of the ethical value of *pathemata*²² can reorient modern theories of aesthetics towards a greater appreciation of what constitutes aesthetic pleasure. To affirm the desirability of aesthetic pleasure is to go against the stream of modern theory which claims to have dispensed with the metaphysics of what has been viewed as a 'negative' pleasure, embracing instead the difficulties of an "aesthetic ethos based on the devaluation of pleasure."²³

Plotinus treats the value of aesthetic pleasure not as a strict Platonist, but as a synthesizer of old and new ideas. He syncretically combines Platonic teachings concerning the Good and the Beautiful with Aristotelian models of soul, matter and immanent form in order to describe a psychology of complex subjectivity. The human sentient subject, whose sensibilities are engaged in a constant interaction with all of creation, must constantly realign his/her orientation to the Good according to the disposition of a central faculty of *aisthesis* (πρῶτον αἰσθητήριον). The phenomenon of *aisthesis* is treated as the unique ability of the human organism to be subtly and materially transformed by the sensible perceptions (*aisthemata*). The training of the aesthetic faculty to attain a unification, or clarity of sensibility, involves a *kathartic* conversion which is inseparable from the 'felt' (i.e., sensed) *pathemata* of pleasure and pain. In this way Plotinus teaches a practice of aesthetic *katharsis* which ethically reorients the sentient subject to a pleasure which is not dependent on the satiation of a passive, insatiable desire; the sentient subject learns to exercise the pleasure which is constitutive of the virtue, or *energeia*, of unimpeded, ethical conversion.

THE DISCRIMINATION OF APHRODITES

"In the pleasure of the beautiful, feeling is enough, absolutely enough."

Jean-François Lyotard, "*Sensus Communis*"²⁴

The philosophical tenets which posit the feelings of pleasure and pain as the constituent arbiters of the Beautiful and the Good in Kantean aesthet-

22. See Kirby, "Aristotle's *Poetics*" 203, for the positive value of *pathemata* in the Aristotelian system; Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness (passim)*; and Amélie Rorty, "The Place of Pleasure" (*passim*).

23. Lionel Trilling, "The Fate of Pleasure: Wordsworth to Dostoevsky," *Partisan Review* 30 (1963): 186.

24. In *Who Comes After the Subject?*, eds. E. Cadava, P. Connor, Jean-Luc Nancy (New York & London: Routledge, 1991) 217–35.

ics²⁵ derive from a historical development beginning in pre-Socratic philosophy, and given a full exposition in Plato's work the *Philebus*. The worldly and heavenly Aphrodites as represented in Platonic philosophy are related to different aspects of pleasure, and clearly delineate two different orientations to what constitutes the ethical nature of all desire, circumscribed as the "Good." The pleasure bestowed by the heavenly Aphrodite is associated by Socrates with the good which is the "life of the mind" (βλος τοῦ νοῦ *Phil.* 21D); the worldly Aphrodite represents the goods of enjoyment, sensible pleasures and gaiety (*Phil.* 11B). Socrates begins his dichotomization of the special status afforded the feelings of pleasure and pain, by stating that the pathos of the mixture of somatic pleasure and pain is the greatest of the *pathemata*, primarily because it is the most observable (or most felt, i.e., conscious, at *Phil.* 33d–e; 43b; 66c; cf. *Tim.* 64b5–e4). He then further categorizes the mixture of pleasure and pain as potentially three different types of awareness: to be felt by body alone, by soul alone, or by a mixture of body and soul.

The dialogue then attempts to identify the proper conditions which constitute the pleasure derived from perceiving figures of beauty. Socrates states that this is a pure or 'unmixed' pleasure, primarily because it is 'felt' or 'sensed' without attendant pain or the cessation thereof; and this pleasure is 'pure' because the pleasure is proper to the experience of an absolute versus relative beauty (*Phil.* 51a–d). The final mixture which constitutes the essence of the true Good is a special blend made up of only the truest, i.e., 'unmixed' distillations of pleasure and wisdom, heavily flavoured with the good associated with the life of the mind (true reason, right opinion, memory). This final potion of the Good, a libation of wine, is metaphorically mixed with the honey of pleasure and the austere, health-giving water of wisdom. True pleasures are aligned most closely with the noetic temperament, health and *sophronia*, and all attendant virtues (*Phil.* 63c–64a). True pleasure is thus identified with the true Good, which is the goal of the life devoted to *nous* (mind). But in the five-fold hierarchy delineated in 65a–67b even true (i.e., painless) pleasure is tainted with 'unseemliness' because of its association with the senses (66c), and is given the lowest value of fifth place, separated from the Good by *episteme* and *techne* (fourth place), *nous* and *phronesis* (third place), beauty and sufficiency (second place), measure and fitness/*kairion* (first place). Because of the dualistic ontology inherent in Plato's definition of the psycho-physiological *pathemata* of pleasure and pain, the impasse between the heavenly (pure) and earthly (mixed) Aphrodites only

25. The topic which begins the "First Moment" of Kant's "First Book" of the *Critique of Aesthetical Judgment*, is the subject's feeling (Gefühl) of pleasure and pain, which is "affected by the representation."

becomes compounded in the subsequent transmission of theories of what constitutes the pleasure of *aisthesis*.

Because Plotinus was transmitted until the 18th century primarily through the Latin, Neoplatonic commentaries of Ficino, the unique and a-Platonic nature of his solutions are easily overlooked. But Plotinus provides an alternative to the Platonic impasse by framing the *theoria* concerning the purity of aesthetic pleasure within a greater necessity of the percipient subject's ethical conversion. In his discourse on the relationship between Beauty and Good expounded in the treatise entitled "The Forms and the Good" *Enn.* VI.7 (38), Plotinus locates the paradox of pleasure in the history of ideas up to that point in time. He states that the 'pure and unmixed' (καθαρόν καὶ ἐίλικρινές)²⁶ activity of a life lived in a disposition of "luminous clarity" (ἡ ζῶν ἔν διαθέσει φαιδρᾶ), as opposed to the life "hindered" (ἐμποδίζον) from going on its "natural" way, is defined by the philosophers to be a "state of intellect ... most pleasing and acceptable, [and they] say that it is mixed with pleasure because they cannot find an appropriate way of speaking about it ..." (*Enn.* VI.7.30, 18ff.) Because the term "pleasure" cannot escape its semantic identification with sensation (i.e., *aisthesis*), a Platonic "pure pleasure" can only be a metaphor or a linguistic idiom for a state which cannot be adequately described. The 'painless' pure pleasures of soul are demoted to a fifth position of value in the Platonic mixture because the experience of pleasure is vulnerable to a somatic "element of the ridiculous or of extreme ugliness" (*Phil.* 66a) which embarrasses the viewer, i.e., a somatic response is evident in the one experiencing even pure pleasure (as described in *Phil.* 51a-d; 52c-53c). Ultimately "the philosophers" (and Plato in particular) are unable to escape the paradoxical semantics of "purity" if the *aisthesis* of beauty necessitates the senses at some level, whether it be the 'anesthetic' painlessness which Plato says accompanies the absence of Beauty (*Phil.* 51b), or the 'pure' pleasure of the senses, unmixed with pain, felt in Beauty's presence.

Plotinus recognizes the problem, and says that the mixture which describes the constitutional elements of the Platonic "Good" is an adequate one, and "[s]o we should be according to this and have our parts in it" (*Enn.* VI.7.30, 35-36). But he then goes on to state that there is something more primary than the mind-body contingencies inherent to any analysis of what constitutes the relationship between measure, beauty, wisdom, knowledge, pleasure, and the Good. He suggests that there is something prior to the luminous clarity or purity of the noetic Good described by Plato, a Good which is the cause of the metaphoric "true delight" in the noetic realm.

26. *Enn.* VI.7.30, 23: see Armstrong's (*infra.* n. 27) notes and references to the *Philebus* as the source of this phrase, and other Plotinian allusions to Platonic texts.

So we should be according to this and have our parts in it; but in another way what is really worth aspiring to for us is our selves, bringing themselves back for themselves to the best of themselves; this is the well-proportioned and beautiful and the form which is not part of the composite and the clear, intelligent, beautiful life (εἶδος ἀσύνθετον καὶ ζῶην ἐναργῆ καὶ νοερὰν καὶ καλήν). (*Enn.* VI.7.30, 35–39)²⁷

Plotinus replaces Plato's primary elements of a proportioned, measured beauty with the formlessness of a brilliant beauty which is the primary nature of the Good and source of the "strangely powerful longings" experienced by all who love in this earthly life (*Enn.* VI.7.33–34, 1–5).²⁸ Without a full understanding of what Plotinus refers to as an anagogic "bringing of our selves back to the best of themselves," his response remains a paradox. The process he alludes to can generally be described as a conversion, or realignment of man's manifold dispositions, represented metaphorically by the lower and higher Aphrodites. But this can be explicated only in the full context of Plotinus' soteriological practice of *theoria*, or contemplation, which involves an ongoing conversion of the sensibilities by means of a *kathartic* clarity of the primary, aesthetic faculty of the sentient self, or "we" (ἡμεῖς).

Plotinus denies that the cause of true beauty is the measured symmetry which informs Platonic beauty. He affirms, against Plato's idealist position, that the pleasures associated with beauty need not and cannot be separated from sensible experience, either semantically or essentially.²⁹ In addition, the

27. Unless indicated otherwise, translations of the *Enneads* are from A.H. Armstrong, *Plotinus Enneads*, 7 vols. (Loeb Classical Library, 1978–1988).

28. Plotinus explains that to assure that only essential qualities of pleasure are subsumed under the Good, Plato must add truth (ἀλήθεια) to his final libation to the god of "mixing" (*Phil.* 64b–65a), and "puts what measures it [truth] before it, and says that from there the good proportion and beauty in the mixture come to the beautiful" (*Enn.* VI.7, 30, 33–35). Plotinus cannot agree with the priority of τὸ μετρήσιον and its identification with beauty and virtue (*Phil.* 64e), and replaces it with the One. This is one of the effects of Plotinus' "monumental change" in Hellenistic philosophy which was the positing of "an absolute genus in which all particulars could be comprehended ... the infinite One, and defin[ing] this infinite One as 'simplicity.'" Quoted from F. Farrell, "Introduction," *Saint Photios, The Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1987) 20. See J. Anton, "Plotinus' Refutation of Beauty as Symmetry," *Jrnl. of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 23 (1964): 233–37, for a concise outline of Plotinus' arguments against Platonic symmetry; however Anton does not believe Plotinus wins the argument.

29. The treatise "The Forms and The Good" opens with a discussion of what perception might mean in the intelligible realm: there is in the intelligible order a "power of sense perception" (τὸ αἰσθητικόν) which apprehends more clearly than bodily sense organs the "melody of sense" (VI.7.6, 1–5). See also VI.7.7, 24ff. where the ἀντίληψις of the intelligible perception is more brilliant (ἐναργεῖς) because what is perceived is greater. The analogy of the bodily organs of *aisthesis* to the noetic 'organs' of *aisthesis* (cf. V.5.12.1–6) are in the context of the powers of perception which are awakened and exercised by the sensible perceptions of beauty.

pathos of pleasure associated with beauty is necessarily ‘contaminated’ with the emotion of pain. Plotinus essentially inverts Plato’s formula which states that the pleasure associated with beauty is pure (i.e., true), because (a) beauty’s absence is ‘unfelt,’ i.e., painless, and (b) beauty’s presence is sensed as only pleasant, unmixed with pain (*Phil.* 51b). According to Plotinus, pain is as essential as pleasure in the perception of beauty, for it is this feeling which reorients and educates the soul to the presence of the Good; pleasure alone has the potential of misleading the perceiver to seek satisfaction in beauty without wondering about its source.

The grasp (*ἀντιληψις*) of the beautiful and the wonder and the waking of love for it come to those who, in a way, already know it and are awake to it ... But the passionate love of beauty, when it comes, causes pain, because one must have seen it to desire it. Beauty is shown to be secondary because this passionate love for it is secondary and is felt by those who are already conscious (*ἤδη συνιέντων*). But the more ancient, unperceived desire of the Good proclaims that the Good itself is more ancient and prior to beauty The Good is gentle and kindly and gracious, and present to anyone when he wishes. Beauty brings wonder and shock and pleasure mingled with pain. It even draws those who do not know what is happening away from the Good, as the beloved draws a child away from its father; for Beauty is younger. (*Enn.* V.5.12, 10–38)

Beauty is shown to be in second place to the Good, but at the same time Beauty is a force greater than practical wisdom because it can affect man’s composite nature, evoking the emotions of shock, pleasure, pain, and an awareness or longing for what is absent. Plotinus purposefully describes the aesthetic experience of beauty as one of intense *pathemata*, “wonder and shock and pleasure mingled with pain.” The “passionate love of beauty ... causes pain,” that is, the pain associated with the awareness of alienation, loss, the poverty of existential awareness. This pain is experienced as the necessity of awakening the percipient subject to the presence of and desire for beauty; a pain so great, that it can be described as the very absence of soul. Plotinus defines pain as an affect brought about by the ‘leading away’ of the body from the pleasure which is proper to soul’s presence. The absence of this pleasure is described as the body “which is being deprived of the image of soul (*ἀπαγωγῆς σώματος ἰνδάλματος ψυχῆς στερισκομένου*)” (*Enn.* IV.4.19, 1–3 and 4.18).³⁰ In the *Enneads*, the pleasure associated with beauty, which guides the sentient subject to the Good, is a mixture of hu-

30. As if to emphasize the inadequacy of materialistic and dualistic models of psyche, Plotinus in this passage adapts and undermines the Platonic atomistic motif of pleasure and pain as a dislocation and return of bodily particles in the *Timaeus* 64ef, effectively undermining the same motif as it applies to disembodied pleasure in *Philebus* 34b–36c; 45b; 47c–d; 51b–52b: see Solmsen, “*αἴσθησις*” (4–6).

man pain, desire, and acceptance of soul's presence.³¹

For an ethical transformation to take place, desire for what is painfully absent must fill the ἡμεῖς, or inner sense. Plotinus describes this ongoing conversion process as a cathartic one, each purification prefiguring a "pure place" where the soul abides in the presence of the One (*Enn.* IV.4.45, 47). Plotinus explicitly associates *katharsis* with a state of transformative *energeia*, a condition of liminality which is most directly associated with the numinous creative energies of Aphrodite, or *psyche*.³² It is this presence of soul or *anima* which Jean-François Lyotard alludes to in his description of the aesthetic pleasure which comes before any desire, which "does not come to fill up a lack nor to fulfill any desire at all On the occasion of a form, which itself is only an occasion for feeling, the soul is seized by a small happiness, unlooked-for, unprepared, slightly dynamizing. It is an animation or an *anima* there on the spot, which is not moving toward anything This is why the feeling of the beautiful has nothing to do with perfection, with this completion that *Vollkommenheit* connotes."³³ It is the animating *energeia* of pleasure which has the potential to withstand the onslaught of reductive idioms, and restore the primary aesthetic faculty to its cathartic work of ethical conversion.

THE FLUIDITY OF SOUL AND THE PRACTICE OF AESTHETIC *KATHARSIS*

That there is a pleasure for each sense is obvious, for we speak of sights and sounds as being pleasant. It is also obvious that the pleasure is greatest when the sense perception is keenest and is exercised upon the best object. As long as this is the condition of the perceived object and the perceiving subject the pleasure will last on, since there is something to act and something to be acted upon. (Aristotle, *EN* 1174b26–31³⁴)

The semantic field of *katharsis* expands exponentially in Plotinus' descriptions of how the soul's dispositions can be ethically trained to return to

31. The presence of soul as an image, whether the term ἰνδαλμα, εἶδωλον, or μίμημα is used, denotes a preservation of what is real to the extent that it is possible for the real to exist in different senses simultaneously. The image is contained by, and related to the archetype, not 'cut off' from it. Lower soul as ἰνδαλμα acts as a specific form of the genus soul, and so its activity is double: "that which is directed above is intellect, that which is directed below is the other powers in proportion and order; the last of them is already grasping and shaping matter. And its underpart does not prevent all the rest from being above. Or rather, what we call its underpart is an image (ἰνδαλμα) of it, but not cut off, but like images in mirrors, [which last] while the archetype is present ..." (*Enn.* VI.2.22, 27ff.).

32. See Paul Friedrich, *The Meaning of Aphrodite* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978) esp. chapter 6, "The Religious Meaning of Aphrodite," for a discussion of the liminality which defines this goddess.

33. Jean-François Lyotard, "Sensus Communis" 220.

34. Translation by Martin Ostwald, *Aristotle Nicomachean Ethics* (Indianapolis: Liberal Arts Press, 1962) 281.

an origin of form and beauty. *Katharsis* as a means of the soul's *ascesis* and subsequent conversion(s) encompasses the range of meaning inherent in expressions of movement: liberation, turning to and away, going inside versus outside, going up, the "shedding" or "putting away" (ἀφίημι) of disposition. But the elaboration of this semantic range is further extended with terms that describe the nature of a more fluid *katharsis*, and includes such terms as awakening, becoming "more cathartic," i.e., more clear/transparent, more brilliant, lucid, less heavy, less obscure, less turbid, more beautiful, more unified, less dispersed, full, at rest. For Plotinus *katharsis* can work metaphorically at two levels: as soteriological principle it acts as a return to essences and primary substances, and is related to rites of initiation into higher thresholds of numinous experience. As an aesthetic principle *katharsis* is a process affecting the inner sense and its capacity to discriminate the way in which sensations are integrated with dispositions; highly discriminated sensations and dispositions are described by terms such as, "uncoloured," "formless," "clear," and are closely aligned with the term ἐναργεῖς," or intensity of presence. (See Appendix A.)

The process of the soul's ἕνωσις, or unification in Plotinus is described throughout the *Enneads* as a *katharsis*. The unification of soul is represented as a progressive perspicuity, and represents a unification of quality and substance (VI.2.21, 13–14; V.9.10, 15–16), an identification possible only when soul's association with body is unperturbed and at rest.³⁵ The soul's *katharsis* must first be a clarity of all faculties of lower soul: emotive, nutritive, imaginative. With clarity comes discrimination, i.e., the faculty of distinguishing the *aistheta* and *noeta*, the particular (*idia*) and universal (*koina*). This clarity, or transparency (III.8.8, 17 ἐναργεστέρα) is a type of purity, ἀμυγής, because of the cultivated faculty of the αἰθητήριον to discriminate causes and ends (αἰτίαι and τελέται). After the *conversio*, or epistrophic process of *katharsis* comes a reversal of all sensible expectations—a formlessness (V.5.11). "For the sense world is in one place—but the intelligible world is everywhere" (V.9.13, 13–16). It is this quality of beautiful translucence to which the sentient subject becomes habituated by a practice of *kathartic* asceticism.

The blueprint of contemplative practices provided throughout the *Enneads* is present as a constant reminder that Plotinus was primarily a teacher of a philosophical asceticism. The anagogic process of reorienting the complexities of human sensibility is described in sometimes ritualistic, sometimes ecstatic, as well as mundane terms. Plotinus perhaps simplifies too much in his written treatises a process that required many years of practice and direction. The apprehension of imagery, an essential component of his method, be-

35. Kevin Corrigan, "The Internal Dimensions of the Sensible Object in the Thought of Plotinus and Aristotle," *Dionysius* V (1981): 98–126, esp. 110.

comes a means of describing different stages in the development of the faculty of discrimination. Plotinus' methods of 'one-pointedness' require the ability to allow the noetic imprints in dianoetic awareness to surface, i.e., to become more vivid. This requires a practice of both thought and body in order to make what is impassively present immediately apprehensible. Although the soul is present to body, according to Plotinus it is said to be always moved to *noesis* (IV.3.30, 12–13; IV.3.20 and 24; IV.4.10; IV.4.2; IV.4.25), thus creating a type of tension in our existential awareness. This tension is an awareness of the presence of soul, but can also be described as a relational field of changing potentialities experienced as dispositions (διάθεσις belongs to soul at I.2.3, 23–24).

The practice of discriminating and permanently changing the dispositions demands a diligent refocusing of attention on immediate sensible apprehensions. To gain clarity of focus, Plotinus teaches contemplative methods which involve meditative imagery, a process which leads to an awareness of soul's presence to body. In meditative states, images arise spontaneously, which redirect the senses and reorganize degrees and capacities of awareness. By focusing on objects in space or on *phantasmata* (images held in the imaging faculty), the antileptic capacity is strengthened by the process of *metathesis*: carrying an image from meditative awareness back to antileptic awareness, and conversely, allowing a 'reflected' or antileptic image to lead the perceiver to its noetic or eidetic counterpart (*Enn.* V.3.3, 7–13; V.6.5, 15ff. IV.4.3–4). This type of movement in and out of reflective (antileptic) awareness trains the inner sense (ἡμεῖς) to redirect its perceptions in order to more easily access a deepened or extended experience of imagery.³⁶ The dynamic of soul's epistrophic movement to and from a state of eidetic consciousness, a movement which carries the εἶδος of the Good (the ἀγαθοειδής in V.3.3, 7–13), hinges on the intensity of the sentient subject's desire for ethical conversion, an intensity which is directly proportional to the desire for and awareness of beauty.

The phenomenon of permanent ethical change (improvement and/or deterioration) in an individual is a signifier that provides visible evidence, a 'symptom,' of psyche. Such changes are not necessarily accompanied by affective, somatic alterations, although sometimes the body experiences dras-

36. The antileptic capacity is dependent on eidetic consciousness. When soul itself is said to be received by the inner sense as a *logos*, a formula which translates an intellectual act "into the image-making power (φανταστικόν)" (IV.3.30, 6ff.), it is then that apprehension (ἀντίληψις) is possible. Armstrong translates *logos* as "verbal expression" in this passage, which would require that speech be a type of image in the image-making capacity. This seems inconsistent with the previous use of *logos* as formula at IV.3.2, 51; also the form, εἶδος, which is equivalent to *logos*, is described as a theorem at V.9.8, 4–10, and a melody at III.6.4, 30–32.

tic alterations as well. But permanent changes in character are evidence of a body which is alive with capacities greater than the organic (*Enn.* III.6.3; VI.8.5,3).

So here below also beauty is what illuminates good proportions rather than the good proportions themselves, and this is what is lovable. For why is there more light of beauty on a living face, but only a trace of it on a dead one, even if its flesh and its proportions are not yet wasted away And is not an uglier living man more beautiful than the beautiful man in a statue? Yes, because the living is more desirable; and this is because it has soul; and this is because it has more the form of good; and this means that it is somehow coloured by the light of the Good, and being so coloured wakes and rises up and lifts up that which belongs to it, and as far as it can makes it good and wakes it. (*Enn.* VI.7.22, 25ff.)

Only as καθαρά ψυχή (III.3.5, 18) is the soul able to act as its primary essential nature is inclined, towards the unobstructed contemplation of the One (V.5.10, 8–9; VI.9.3, 23ff.); that which is ‘before Intellect’ is also the essence of soul’s impassive presence to body.³⁷ Because the soul belongs to the noetic cosmos (IV.7.10, 1–2; V.1.10, 11–13) while at the same time sharing a “common boundary with the perceptible nature,” it can “know” the practical history (ἱστορία) of what it is like to be both “here” and “there,” and so learns “in a way more clearly [σαφέστερον] the better things. For the experience of evil is a clearer knowledge [ἐναργεστέρα γνῶσις] of the Good for those whose power is too weak to know evil with clear intellectual certainty [ἐπιστήμη] before experiencing it” (IV.8.7, 10–18). The “clearer knowledge” which belongs to the whole soul is a state of experiencing the fluidity of the hypostases: “the limitless” (VI.9.7, 1–2; III.7.11). The beginning of awakening for the lower soul or ἡμέις is to be “in touch” with the intelligible by discerning the correspondences between the external and the internal forms: “for true reasoning [διάνοια] is an operation of acts of the intelligence [ἐνέργεια νοησέων], and there is often a resemblance and community between what is outside and what is within” (I.1.9, 13ff.).

This type of cathartic or ‘clearer’ knowledge is possible only when the percipient subject is actively, aesthetically and therefore ethically engaged in the physical universe. Sense knowledge and noetic knowledge coincide in the dianoetic recognition of a ‘solution,’ or the *logos* of what is perceived (*aisthemata*). Because apprehension is multifaceted, it is difficult to discern these different types of knowledge, and even more difficult to describe the percipience which leads to such a discernment. Plotinus describes apprehension, ἀντίληψις, as a result of the “sharing” of the soul’s discrete “active powers” [ἐνεργούν ἔκαστον] with the soul’s “perceiving power” [τὸ

37. “For one must not call presence or putting on a shape ‘being affected’ (τὸ παθεῖν)” (*Enn.* III.6.9, 15–16).

αἰσθανομένου] (V.1.12, 8–13), which results in “knowing” [τὸ γνωρίζειν]. In order to perceive the qualities as well as forms of material objects, apprehension relies on the presence of the whole body as a “sense-organ to the soul” (IV.3.23, 8–9; IV.4.23, 1–4). But this faculty of apprehension can also be practiced by the soul when it is “alone and by itself For when it is by itself it apprehends what is in itself, and is *noesis* alone.”³⁸ It is this adaptable faculty of *antilepsis* which must be kept “pure and ready (καθάρων καὶ ἔτοιμον) to hear the voices from on high” while letting the perceptible sounds go: τὰς μὲν αἰσθητὰς ἀκούσεις ἀφέντα (V.1.12, 18–21; also IV.4.25, 6–8).

The capacity of *antilepsis* is the power of soul to concentrate on the *pathemata* of sensible *aisthesis*; this same capacity makes possible a non-distracted contemplation of non-sensible objects (IV.4.25, 1ff). But a *conversio* or cathartic *antilepsis* does not take place simply because the objects and medium of perception are present; the soul must be inclined to direct its attention toward either sense objects or toward the intelligibles, or both.³⁹ To apprehend more intensely, less dimly, is the goal of aesthetic *katharsis* and unification, which is described by Plotinus as a type of “becoming” or epistrophic conversion (VI.7.36; V.3.11). The ἐναργὲς θεωρεῖν is an emptying, an offering of oneself towards the object.⁴⁰ Those who seek beauty must not pose it as an external, distant object of vision, but merge their being with it.⁴¹ This unification is practiced as a type of translucent, or noetic knowing (IV.4.45, 45–48) whereby the soul becomes the intelligibles “more clearly out of the dimness by a type of awakening, and passes from potenti-

38. *Enn.* IV.4.23, 5–7: I translate the phrase καὶ μόνον νόησις as “*noesis* alone,” versus Armstrong’s “and is pure thought.”

39. Porphyry describes Plotinus’ powers of dual-concentration in the *vit. Plot.* 8: “He was wholly concerned with thought (τοῦ νοῦ ἐχόμενος); and, which surprised us all, he went on in this way right up to the end. He worked out his train of thought from beginning to end in his own mind, and then, when he wrote it down ... he wrote as continuously as if he was copying from a book. Even if was talking to someone, engaged in continuous conversation, he kept to this train of thought. He could take his necessary part in the conversation to the full, and at the same time keep his mind fixed without a break on what he was considering. When the person he had been talking to was gone he did not go over what he had written, because his sight ... did not suffice for revision. He went straight on with what came next, keeping the connection, just as if there had been no interval of conversation between. In this way he was present at once to himself and to others, and he never relaxed his self-turned attention except in sleep: even sleep he reduced by taking very little food, often not even a piece of bread, and by his continuous turning (ἐπιστροφῆ) in contemplation to his intellect.”

40. *Enn.* IV.4.2, 5; V.8.10, 35–44. See G. O’Daly, *Plotinus’ Philosophy of the Self* (NY: Harper & Row, 1973) 64.

41. *Enn.* V.8.11, 20–24: see F. Schroeder, *Form and Transformation* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992) 22–23.

ality to actuality” (ἐγειρέσθαι ἐναργεστέρα καὶ ἐκ δυνάμεως εἰς ἐνέργειαν ἵνα at IV.6.3, 15ff.). At the same time that the disposition of soul is changed by this cathartic experience, it changes its affinity for what is sensibly apprehended.

In the same way [the soul] makes the objects of sense which are...connected with it, shine out ... by its own power, and brings them before its eyes, since its power [of sense-perception] is ready for them and, in a way, in travail towards. When therefore, the soul is strongly moved to anything that appears to it, it is for a long time in a state as if the object was present to it, and the more strongly it is moved, the more lasting the presence. (*Enn.* IV.6.3, 16ff.)⁴²

When *aisthesis* is practiced in the context of a pleasure which makes possible a disposition towards and discrimination of the Beautiful and therefore of the Good, sensible perception becomes a more intense consciousness. As the discriminations become more astute and less diffuse, in every instance there is a sense of return, or affirmation of both the *qualia* and essence of a sensible experience.

The direction of soul's inclinations is determined by disposition and desire. The soul is defined by its ability to become all things, i.e., all forms. But this is not what Plotinus means by the anagogic process of “our selves, bringing themselves back for themselves to the best of best of themselves” (*Enn.* VI.7.30, 35–39). The efficacy of a cathartic, epistropic movement of the soul depends on the focused work of directing an otherwise undirected “disposition.” Plotinus thereby affirms the ontological status of the inner sense which must do the work of conversion. As the bodily sense organs will be appropriate to their work (ἔργου), so are the functions of the inner sense appropriate to the task of differentiating and clarifying all *aisthemata*: “different apprehensions (ἀντιλήψεις)⁴³ occur—though all [apprehensions] are of forms, since the soul can take the shape of all forms (the fact that all perceived forms must go to one centre also makes this clear)” (IV.3.3, 18–21; see also IV.7.4).

Plotinus argues strongly against the materialist teachings of the Stoics and Epicureans by positing a living, or *psychic* principle, which integrates the *aisthesis* of sense-objects and the *noesis* of objects of thought (IV.7.8).⁴⁴

42. This exercise of making present the αἰσθητά in this “clear” fashion is a strengthening of the presence of soul at IV.6.3, 29ff.

43. I substitute “apprehensions” for Armstrong’s “perceptions” when translating ἀντιλήψεις in this passage.

44. Acts of intelligence cannot be “impressions” as the Stoics liked to argue (V.9.5, 17ff.); nor can they be of objects which are external, for sense perception is designated as the faculty capable of perceiving “what is external.” The perceptions received by the soul are not received as impressions on a material surface (IV.7.8, 40ff.; I.1.1, 4; 1.3, 105).

The transformative capacity of a man's disposition, whether it is inclined towards virtue or vice, resides in the passive, somatic nature of the spirited and desiring faculties of the inner sense which are directly related to the organs of the heart and liver respectively (τὸ θυμοειδές, τὸ ἐπιθυμοῦν at III.6.2, 27–29; IV.4.28). Each of these faculties has a capacity to “listen to νοῦς; when this occurs, “each part is in a state of virtue ... active according to its real substantial being, by which each part listens to reason” (III.6.2, 29ff.). Man's political skills, as well as the artistic crafts which express ingenuity and creativity, are likewise constituted by the soul's aesthetic and ethical disposition (VI.3.16, 26 ff.). The ethical and aesthetic dispositions are inseparable in this construct of the percipient subject. The capacity to attend to soul's presence is a state of “actuality” versus a “state of alteration”; to not be receptive is to be in a state of alteration from the human's innate inclination to virtue. For the percipient subject to perceive and be perceived as beautiful or good, what is required is true “change” versus “cosmetic change” (III.6.11, 19ff.). Change or ‘actualization’ in the direction of virtue requires a stillness of the disturbances which bring about turbidity; the clarity which is *katharsis* makes it possible to be affected by the forms which are in *sympatheia* with one's own disposition. *Katharsis* is an occasion for true ethical change versus transitory change.

Both Plotinus and Aristotle base their descriptions of *katharsis* on an understanding of the individual as a living being undergoing continual aesthetic experiences and thus ethical conversions. In this context, the experience of melodious song, tragic *pathemata*, colorful statuary, or persuasive oratory, are all agents of a cathartic affect (or pleasure) which is an actualisation of an emergent potentiality. In his analogy of the soul's convalescence or return to its natural, ‘pure’ state (a ‘place’ which is καθαρόν at IV.4.45, 47), Plotinus describes the health of the All (τὸ ὑγιεινὸν τοῦ παντός) as coming about when “one part is modified, and another extracted from the place where it is diseased and placed where it will not be diseased” (IV.4.45, 47–52). The soul's return to health brought about by medical treatments is the same analogy found in Aristotle's distinction between localized pleasure and the *energeia* of pleasure in the *Nicomachean Ethics* VII.12 and 14 (1152b32–1153a7; 1154b16–21): the pleasurable experience of being restored to health is an operation not of the properties of medical treatments alone, but derives from the operation of “that part of the system which has remained sound” (EN 1154b17–18). This corresponds to Aristotle's more general definition of pleasure at EN 1153a13–15 as the non-localized “unimpeded activity of our natural state” (οὐ καλῶς ἔχει τὸ αἰσθητὴν γένεσιν φάναι εἶναι τὴν ἡδονήν, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον λεκτέον ἐνέργειαν τῆς κατὰ φύσιν ἕξεως, ἀντι δὲ τοῦ αἰσθητὴν ἀνεμπόδιστον).

A *kathartic* 'remedy' can restore an individual only to the extent that healthy operations of soul and/or body are still present and able to bring about healing. The goal of the catharsis is that "every part [be] disposed where it should be" (*Enn.* IV.4.4549–50). The analogy of body to soul remains intact in the dialectic of the pleasure proper to tragic catharsis, which makes possible the unimpeded activity⁴⁵ of a disposition characterized by the painful *pathemata* of pity and fear. Whether the individual is thereby able to experience the restorative conversion to the Beautiful depends on the relative health of the natural or inherent predisposition toward the Good. The cathartic *energeia* of all *pathemata* whether musical, imagistic, poetic, rhetorical, or pharmaceutical, is ignored by a society and the individual only at great risk to wholeness and health, and often with catastrophic results.

45. *EM* 153a14–15: pleasure is the "unimpeded activity of the natural state."

APPENDIX A: SEMANTIC FIELD SURROUNDING *KATHARSIS* IN THE *ENNEADS**Becoming One* (ένωθηαι)

III.8.6, 13ff: For the soul keeps quiet then, and seeks nothing because it is filled, and the contemplation which is there in a state like this rests within because it is confident of possession. And, in proportion as the confidence is clearer, the contemplation is quieter in that it unifies more ... and what knows ... comes into unity with what is known (έναργεστέρα ή πίστις, ήσυχαιτέρα και ή θεωρία ... μάλλον εις έν άγει ... εις έν τώ γνωσθέντι έρχεται).

III.8.6, 20–21: Logos must be one (ένωθηαι) with soul.

III.8.8, 1–11: In *nous* subject and object are one: both are really one. “This is living contemplation.”

III.8.10, 32–35: Coming to rest (άναπαυσόμενος) in the One.

IV.3.32, 20; V.1.3, 9–13; V.3.7–8: Non-Dispersion. V.3.13: Involution.

I.2.5; III.3.7, 10ff; IV.3.6, 27–33; 3.8, 14; 3.10, 36ff; 3.31; IV.4.2; 4.15, 11–15: Soul “gathers together.”

V.1.5, 1–5: Soul one with *nous*.

V.5.4–6: The pure One (καθάρως έν) is beyond the dyad: the number -0-

V.5.7, 33–5.8: What appears to the “veiled” *nous* is a pure, alone light: μόνος φώς καθάρως. “It was within, and yet it was not within.”

V.5.8: Final stage of awakening: awaiting the rising of the sun—experience of the One. In ‘Nowhere’ έν ουδένι.

V.5.10: Purity of concentration needed to grasp what is pure, unmixed ... from the One comes rest (στάσις).

V.7.19, 15: Purity = Primacy.

V.8.11: Contemplator dismisses beautiful image of self—comes to unity with self—is one and all together with that god silently present. Remains καθάρως while near the One: must keep this impression when returning to two ... form distinct ideas ... discern what region he is entering into, and give himself up to become the object of contemplation. We gain more understanding (σύνεσις) of ourselves from the quietness of health, and become conscious (συνετοί) by making our self-knowledge “one” (έν) with ourselves. This is a sort of “intimate understanding and perception of a self which is careful not to depart from itself” (οίον σύνεσις και συναίσθησις αύτου) V.8.11,23–25 (IV.4.2).

VI.5.10; VI.9.3; VI.8.9–10; 8.14: What is essential vs. what is predicated of something else: becoming ‘by chance.’ What is essential soul. The One is άμιγές τύχαις.

VI.8.15: The One is love and is beautiful.

Soul’s Power of Awakening (έγειρομαι)

I.6.8, 25; I.6.9, 1–2: Awake soul must be trained to see beauty.

II.3.18, 7–9: Waking up ethical sense.

II.5.3, 27: *Nous* is sleepless.

III.6.2,40–44; III.6.5, 25; III.6.6, 68–70: Activity of sense-perception is that of the soul asleep;

III.8.4, 24; III.8.8, 32: Drunken sleep in separation from the One.

IV.3.10, 18ff: Awakening into myself.

IV.4.5, 1–10: Awakening faculty which sees in the noetic sphere: έγειρεται γάρ τούτο οίς έγειρεται.

IV.4.36, 13–14: Soul of All is All Awake.

IV.6.3, 15: More Clear—More Awake.

V.1.2, 22; 1.12, 17; V.5.11, 19–25: Disbelieving what one sees when awake, one goes back to sleep and believes in the dream, thinking that that alone is obviously real which they see only

with the flesh (V.5.1, 13; V.8.11, 35).

V.5.12, 10ff.: The Good, is present even to those asleep—people do not see it, because it is present to them in their sleep (unperceived—cp. I.4.9). The grasp of the beautiful and the waking of love for it come to those who are awake to it. This passionate love of beauty causes pain, because one must have seen it to desire (experience of loss—cp. I.6.7 the shock of “seeing” the Good); this is felt by those who are already conscious (συνιέντων).

VI.3.22, 13 and 23.1–3: Movement is awakening power of soul (VI.7.13, 11; VI.8.16, 29ff; 8.18, 53–54; 8.19, 1–4; 8.21, 28ff).

VI.8.16, 30: The One Awake.

VI.9.3, 23ff.: Soul Awake to receive: καθαρώτατον καθαρῷ τῷ νῷ θεᾶσθαι. Things in *nous* are pure and have shape, but those before it are purer and simpler and shapeless (ἄμορφος): καθαρώτερα καὶ ἀπλούστερα.

VI. 9.4, 12–16: Departing from all objects, even beautiful objects, of sight, one must depart from ἐπιστήμη, “wakening (ἀεγείροντες) from reasonings” to the vision of the One. VI.9.11,47: “When one falls from the vision [of the One], he wakes (ἐγείρας) again the virtue in himself, and considering himself set in order and beautiful (κεκοσμημένον) by these virtues he will again be lightened and come through virtue to Intellect and wisdom through wisdom to that Good ... This is ... escape of the alone to the alone.”

Becoming Brilliant (ἐναργής)

II.4.10, 27–28: ἐναργῆς νοήσις.

II.9.8, 10–25: Meditation on images outside temple: abiding in quiet see ἄγαλμα ἐναργῆς.

III.8.8, 17ff: First life and first intellect in one: this life is clearer (ἐναργεστέρα); vs. other, dimmer lives (αμυδροτέρα).

IV.4.1, 11; 4.2, 5 and 24: ἐναργῶς and καθαρῶς in *nous*: ἐναργῆς θεώρειν is an offering.

V.1.6, 45ff.: Logos of soul more ‘obscure’ (ἀμυδρός) than *nous*.

V.3.16, 29: What is beyond the One has a clear (ἐναργῆς) and perfect life.

V.3.8,8-29; 37-46: *Nous* is clear (ἐναργῆς), primary and true...is first light ... apprehends itself more clearly (σαφέστερον ἀντιλαμβανέσθαι αὐτοῦ) (V.5.11,18). Noetic life more brilliant (ἐναργεστητή) compared to ‘dim’ sketch (IV.6.3, 15ff.; VI.3.7).

V.5.2, 14–21; 5.11, 18: *Nous* knows clearly (ἐναργῆς); νοῦς ἐναργῆς.

V.5.7, 6–33: Eye cannot see ἐναργῆς compared to purity of noetic sight: confused seeing at VI.7.35, 34ff. Dimly seeing compared to seeing (καθαρῶς) in the most brilliant life (ἐναργεστάτη) in the One at VI.6.18.

V.8.10, 17: Noetic ἐναργῆ θεάματα.

VI.7.5, 10: Soul of *logoi* ἐναργέστερα.

VI.7.30, 39: The life which is ἐναργῆ καὶ νοερὰν καὶ καλὴν is the “best of ourselves.”

VI.9.9, 57ff.: There one can see both [God] and oneself as it is right to see: the self glorified, full of intelligible light—but rather itself pure light—weightless, floating free, having become—but rather, being—a god; set on fire then, but the fire seems to go out if one is weighed down again (ἠγλαϊσμένον, φωτὸς πλήρη νοητοῦ, μάλλον δὲ φῶς αὐτὸ καθαρὸν, ἀβαρῆ,κοῦφον, θεὸν γενόμενον, μάλλον δὲ ὄντα, ἀναφθέντα μὲν τότε, εἰ δὲ πάλιν βαρύνοντο, ὥσπερ μαραινόμενον).

Pure Soul (καθαρὰ ψυχή)

I.2.3–7: Soul acting alone: unmixed—stripping away of *pathemata* = conversion. Virtues—καθάρσις. I.2.4, 15ff.: After the *katharsis* the soul is already converted (ἐπέστραπται).

I.4.10, 28ff.: Reflexive awareness (παρακολουθήσεις) make ἐνεργεῖαι more obscure (ἀμυδροτέρας). When ἐνεργεῖαι are alone they are more καθαρὰς and more living and

acting: in such a *pathos*, life is increased and gathered together in one in itself.

I.6.6, 13ff: καθαρή ψυχή becoming *logos* and *eidos*.

I.6.9, 16ff: You are καθαρός and a true light as you become one.

I.8.4, 26–27: καθαρά ψυχή is τελεία, bending towards *nous*—defined by *nous*—it remains always (μένει) pure (καθαρά).

III.3.5, 18: Pure soul in intellect.

III.5.2, 15–22; 5.6, 28: Divine Soul = Heavenly Aphrodite is “pure from the pure.”

IV.3.26, 25–42: Pure part of soul = soul alone. Soul present in body has a standing ground/does not flow away/has a special quality/is receptive.

IV.4.45, 47: Soul changes to a pure place (τόπον καθαρόν).

IV.7.10, 8–14: Soul purified (καθηραμένη) of somatic ills/afflictions.

V.8.4: Everything is clear, φάνερος εἰς τὸ εἶσω. Rest is not disturbed. Movement is καθαρά.

VI.7.35: καθαρή ψυχή becoming *nous*.

I.8.15, 19; II.1.4, 7ff; 3.9, 35; IV.3.18, 20: Pure Bodies of Stars.

Noetic Purity/Satiety

I.1.12, 30ff: Heracles has pure *nous* and διανοητική (I.1.9).

I.2.7, 7: *noesis* dwells pure (καθαρόν) by itself.

III.6.9, 15–16: Noetic essence.

III.8.11, 33ff: The One produced a son, *nous*, “a beautiful boy filled full from himself: the One is before *nous* and fullness.

V.1.7, 27; V.8.12: Kronos filled with multiplicity of forms = Noetic “satiety” which is καθαρώτατος νοῦς.

V.3.6, 39–40: No desire for what is absent in καθαρῶ νοῦ.

V.8.3, 12ff: *Nous* as purified gold; also IV.7.10, 47–52.

VI.7.30: Pure pleasure in *nous*.

VI.8.5; VI.9.3, 34ff.: Prior purity in the One.

Beauty

I.6.3, 28ff.: “The melodies in sounds ... the imperceptible ones ... make the soul conscious (σύνεσις) of beauty.”

I.6.5, 53–54: Soul is beautiful when alone.

I.6.6, 14: καθαρά ψυχή καλή.

I.6.7: The one is alone, simple, pure (καθαρός); this is absolute beauty which exists pure by itself. “A man has not failed if he fails to win beauty of colours or bodies ... but if he fails to win this and only this.”

III.8.11, 26ff: *Nous* is the most beautiful of all; its place is in pure light (ἐν φωτὶ καθαρῶ καὶ ἀύγῃ).

V.1.12, 20: Keeping Perception pure.

V.8.1, 22: Pure Beauty of τεχνή which abides closer to the One.

V.8.2, 43–45: Seeing Beauty in purified state.

V.8.13, 11ff.: *Nous* remains primarily beautiful, more beautiful than soul.

V.8.13, 20–21, 23: When we ourselves are beautiful, it is by belonging to ourselves ... when we know ourselves we are beautiful.

V.9.2: *Nous* is true Beauty.

VI.6.18, 12ff.: Re. the living being in the noetic realm—which is beautiful, “the first and clearest (ἐναργεστάτη) life. “There all are living beings, living as wholes and pure ... the real beings stand still in eternity.”

VI.7.3, 10ff.: A thing is beautiful because it is everything—for this is what form is

VI.7.23, 5: Soul falls upon Beauty and rests beside it.

VI.9.11: Beyond images is Beyond Beauty.

Becoming Translucent vs. Being Coloured

I.6.5, 9ff.: Seeing inward beauty: “Not shape or colour or any size, but soul, without colour itself and possessing a *sophrosune* without color and possessing all the other light (φέγγος) of the virtues.”

I.6.3; V.8.10: In noetic realm, colour which “blooms” on the surface (εἴπανθοῦσα) = Beauty.

I.6.5, 56 ff.: Soul Becoming “less heavy” (ἀβαρῆ); VI.9.9, 58–59.

I.6.7, 34–35; IV.4.23, 19; VI.7.21, 10: “Colour” in bodies.

IV.5.2; V.9.12, 9–11: Differences of colour in bodies originate in formative λόγος, or in the ὕλη or τόπος. The presence of qualities/colours affect and change only composites which have opposites while matter itself remains unaffected at III.6.9; IV.5.7, 34ff.

I.6.3, 24; III.6.5.24; V.1.2, 46; VI.9.9, 59–60: Becoming like fire.

IV.4.29, 24: Color is like sweetness.

IV.5.2, 10ff: Light is ensouled: seeing compared to touching.

IV.7.10, 1–5: Soul by itself “no colour.”

V.1.2, 49: Soul’s burning principle (τὸ καῖον).

V.3.8, 20ff.; V.8.7, 18: Beauty “not mixed.”

V.3.8, 8–29: Seeing colours vs. seeing light.

V.6.6, 15ff.: Soul as essence.

VI.7.7, 27: ἀντληψις clear.

VI.8.16, 14: Pure radiance of source of all.

Putting Away/Casting Off (ἀφές)

I.2.4, 6–7: Being completely purified is a stripping of everything alien (τὸ κεκαθάρθαι ἀφαίρεισις ἀλλοτρίου παντός).

See I.6.7, 3–9: for metaphor of stripping off (ἀποδυομένοι) of the clothes ‘put on’ during the descent. Other references to ἀφές at: I.4.16, 20–29; I.6.8, 25–26; 6.9, 7–16; III.6.5, 17; IV.3.32, 21; IV.7.10 and 14; V.3.9, 3; 3.17, 25; VI.8.15, 24; 8.21, 26; VI.9.7, 18.

VI.8.21, 26: ἀφελῶν πάντα: Put away all things..do not try to find what you can add.

The poetic term for “encasement” or “wrapping around” (V.1.10, 20ff.) becomes the complementary term for the “cutting away” (VI.9.9, 50ff.) of all encrustations of the lower soul (I.1.12, 12–18; I.6.9, 9–12; IV.7.14; V.3.9 also in these passages having to do with ascesis ethical conversion).

VI.9.9, 50ff: We must put away (ἀποθέσθαι) other things ... and become this alone, cutting away (περικύβαντα) all the other things in which we are encased (περικείμεθα).

Rest (μένειν, στάσις) vs. Obstruction/Activity

I.1.9, 23–27: The soul will be at peace, turned to itself and resting in itself. The changes and the clamour in us come ... from what is attached to us and from the affections of the joint entity, whatever precisely that is.

I.2.5, 7ff.: The soul only has *aisthesis* of pleasures when necessary, using them as remedies and relief to prevent its activity being impeded (ἐνοχλοῦτο); I.2.5, 24–25; 6, 11: Free of disturbance as a virtue.

I.4.10, 13: State of soul in quiet.

I.4.10, 30–31: Reflexive consciousness makes dimmer (ἀμυδροτέρας) the ἐνεργείας: “only when they are alone are they pure (μόνας καθαρὰς) and more genuinely active and living.”

- I.6.5–7, 22: Beauty which is *καθαρός* vs. ugliness which is disturbed.
 I.6.9, 18ff: No impediment (*εμπόδιον*) to becoming one.
 I.8.4: Bodies, in their disorderly motion hinder soul ... evade reality in their continual flow. The τὸ λογιζόμενον when damaged, is hindered in its seeing by the passions.
 II.9.18, 31–35: Untroubled State vs. troubled state at VI.9.9, 53–55.
 III.6.4, 20: Phastasm as disturbance.
 III.6.5, 10ff: *κάθαρσις καὶ χωρισμός*: “is being like a light which is not in turbid [*θόλερος*].” Purification of the the soul is like awakening from images in the dream.
 III.7.1, 1–21: Returning to disposition (*diathesis*) which rests in the One; unquiet part of soul is that which wants to transfer *metapherein*, unfold from its quiet seed: “world of sense moves in soul ... in the time of soul.” *Metapherein* also at V.5.11, 12; 8.10, 41.
 III.7.11, 20: ἡσυχός.
 III.8.4; V.1.4, 22; V.1.6, 12: Contemplator remains ἡσυχός.
 III.8.6, 33–40: The truly good and wise man is turned to what is one, and to the quiet.
 IV.3.9, 24–25: Soul’s rest (*στάσις*) is confirmed in absolute rest.
 IV.3.26, 53ff.: The body’s nature, moving and flowing, is cause of forgetfulness, not of memory; body as hindrance to soul’s activity of memory, a stable condition.
 IV.4.10: Unimpeded path = non-perplexity.
 VI.7.23; 9.5, 14–16; 9.7: *Nous* is a quite (*ἡσυχός*) and undisturbed movement.
 VI.9.11, 5–35: Soul at Rest.
 III.8.9, 24–32: [J]ust as if there was a voice filling an empty space, or with the empty space men too, and by setting yourself to listen at any point in the empty space, you will receive the whole voice, and yet not the whole the *nous* must return ... backwards, and give itself up ... to what lies behind it (for it faces in both directions). And VI.9.9, 16: Stasis = Receptivity.
 IV.8.6, 20: Contemplation is quietness (*ἡσυχός*) of *nous* vs. action.
 V.1.2, 14–17: Quieting the “waves” of body. Prescriptions for Silence.
 V.1.6.12–29: Being rid of obstacles in meditation, the contemplator remains ἡσυχός. The One does not move (IV.4.10; V.8.6, 25).
 V.3.7, 13ff.: Peace and quiet of *nous* is an activity taking its rest from all other activities.
 V.6.6, 14–18: Resting in the essence, what abides, vs. what flows in sense perception (IV.3.22; 3.26, 45 and 53–57).
 V.8.11, 28ff.: Illness strikes harder, but the quiet companionship of health gives us a better understanding (*σύνεσις*) of itself—for it is with us, belongs to us, and is united to us (*ἐνοῦται*).
 VI.7.31, 24: Soul is *θόλερος*—turbid because of presence to body. Purification involves “shedding” *ἀφέξ* *λύρας* (I.2.4; I.4.16, 20–29).
 VI.9.9, 18–20: In quiet contact when united with One; the soul conceives/swells (*κύει*), filled with God: beauty, justice, virtue.

