

# Plotinus' use of the third hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides* in *Enneads*: VI.6.13

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## INTRODUCTION

**I**n VI.6.13 Plotinus responds to a particular view concerning the origin of our concept of the one, which he regards as unreasonable. He summarises this view by stating that

the thought of the One originated from what underlies it, which is a man or some other living thing, or even a stone, in the realm of sense.<sup>1</sup>

It is hardly surprising that Plotinus, based upon his known interpretation of Plato's *Parmenides*, is opposed to this view, indeed we expect him to hold what amounts to an opposite view whereby it is 'the one' (in some as yet unspecified sense) that is responsible for the oneness of the single entities and is also the source of our own appreciation of oneness, whereby we recognise the unity of the manifest objects. It has long been accepted by many commentators that Plotinus draws upon Plato's *Parmenides* and bases his concept of the one upon that dialogue. Such reliance has been established by textual references such as those captured by Dodds<sup>2</sup> and augmented since.<sup>3</sup> The chapter which begins with the viewpoint expressed above is not a short chapter and, not unexpectedly, invokes the *Parmenides* for the falsification of the above viewpoint. However I wish to present a particular case as to how exactly Plotinus makes use of Plato's dialogue in his response to that view, a view to which he is clearly opposed.

I wish to argue here that Plotinus is of course opposed to the above viewpoint and that such opposition is based upon his interpretation of the *Parmenides*, but I also wish to analyse the

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1. VI.6.13, 1-3: Armstrong translation and capitalisation of One, Loeb edition: τὸ δὴ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὑποκειμένου γενέσθαι τὴν νόησιν τοῦ ἑνός, τοῦ ὑποκειμένου καὶ τοῦ ἐν αἰσθήσει ἀνθρώπου ὄντος ἢ ἄλλου ὅτουσὺν ζώου ἢ καὶ λίθου.

2. Dodds, E. R. "The *Parmenides* of Plato and the origin of the neo-Platonic 'One'." 1928.

3. See for instance Jackson, B. D., "Plotinus and the *Parmenides*," 1967.

nature of the arguments he advances in making the case for its falsity. I wish to maintain that Plotinus' arguments themselves draw directly upon the very arguments employed by Plato in the *Parmenides*, as interpreted by Plotinus, and that his own arguments in VI.6.13 reflect the very structure, content and purport of Plato's arguments especially in the third hypothesis. It is this emphasis upon Plotinus' use of the actual arguments of the *Parmenides* of the third hypothesis, rather than mere textual references, which constitutes the primary contention of this paper. Accordingly I shall maintain that he makes use, not merely of textual references and doctrinal borrowings from Plato's dialogue, but of a considerable portion of its argumentative edifice, especially from the third hypothesis.

### THE POSSIBLE BACKGROUND

In VI.6.12, the chapter previous to the one we wish to consider, Plotinus is concerned with the assertion that:

the one and the unit have no real existence but the one is a way the soul is affected in regard to each of the things that are<sup>4</sup>

Armstrong speculates that this assertion, which Plotinus does not accept, is from a Stoic source and he refers to SVF II, 864 and 866 for support. These Stoic fragments do indeed contain a theory of visual perception which involves the soul being affected by the sense objects. Caston, referencing these two fragments, summarises the theory as follows:

According to the Stoic theory of vision, the *pneuma* literally stretches towards the object, becoming taut throughout its length; and by jabbing and piercing through the pupil it transmits this tension to the intervening air, shaping it into a cone with the object at its base. It is in virtue of this focussed tensing of the air that information about the object can be transmitted back to the eye and so to the governing faculty.<sup>5</sup>

The fragments in question present the operation of visual sense perception in very physical terms; an impression is made upon

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4. VI.6.12: Armstrong translation adapted; ἀλλ' εἰ καὶ τὸ ἓν καὶ τὴν μονάδα μὴ ὑπόστασιν λέγοι ἔχειν—οὐδὲν γὰρ ἓν, ὁ μὴ τί ἓν—πάθημα δέ τι τῆς ψυχῆς πρὸς ἕκαστον τῶν ὄντων.

5. Caston, V. "Connecting Traditions; Augustine and the Greeks on Intentionality." 2001.

the soul as though it were being prodded with a stick. Plotinus uses one quite unusual word, *νύσσω*, (Att. *νύττω*; to stab, prick, sting), in VI.6.12 to describe the way the soul is affected by sense objects. This word is actually used in these two Stoic fragments to describe the reciprocal process to that described above by Caston. In this reciprocal process the *pneuma* originating at the principal faculty (*to hegemonikon*) stabs at the surrounding air. This verb which features in Stoic theories of sense perception is used only three times in Plotinus' entire corpus; twice in this chapter and once in 4.5.1. This word usage lends further credence to the claim that the assertions that Plotinus is responding to in VI.6.12 and 13 are Stoic in origin. If this is indeed the case he is presenting a challenge to the Stoic theory, whereby it is asked to account not only for our perception of the physical objects themselves but also for our knowledge of 'the one' or unity. He seems to presume that the Stoics will hold to their physical model of sense impressions, deny that the one has any reality (*μη̄ ὑπόστασιν ... ἔχειν*) and assert that it is merely a way in which the soul is affected.

### PLATO'S *PARMENIDES*

Plato's *Parmenides* is often regarded as consisting of two parts. The first part crystallises a series of aporiai in relation to forms, which are sufficiently cogent to create doubt as to the very existence of forms themselves. In response to these aporiai Parmenides presents a series of eight complex arguments in relation to 'the one' and it is these arguments, often called 'hypotheses', which constitute the second part of the dialogue. In Chapter 13 of VI.6, in response to the 'unreasonable' view referred to above, Plotinus conducts an inquiry into the origin of our thought of the one, which he develops into an elucidation of the nature of the one. I shall first step through his analysis, section by section, clarify relevant aspects of the development of the argument and its conclusions, and note the significant moves. I shall then explore the extent to which Plotinus' argument depends upon the arguments of the *Parmenides*, and constitute an exegesis thereof, with particular emphasis upon what most modern commentators designate as the third hypothesis: in this hypothesis Parmenides explores the relationship between the one and anything which, by its own nature, is not one.

Dodds captures an aspect of Plotinus' reading of the *Parmenides*

in the following extract, where he explains Plotinus' concept of the two types of one:

Think of a principle of unity which so completely transcends all plurality that it refuses every predicate, even that of existence; which is neither in motion nor at rest, neither in time nor in space; of which we can say nothing, not even that it is identical with itself or different from other things: and side by side with this, a second principle of unity, containing the seeds of all the contraries — a principle which, if we once grant it existence, proceeds to pluralize itself indefinitely in a universe of existent unities.<sup>6</sup>

The principle of unity that 'transcends all plurality' is the concept of the one that derives from the first hypothesis (H1) of the *Parmenides* and we shall thus refer to it as 'the one of H1'. The one that 'pluralises itself indefinitely' is the concept of the one presented in the second hypothesis so we shall refer to this as 'the one of H2'. Accordingly we will find that he speaks of 'two ones': the one of H1 which does not partake of being and is entirely non-multiple, which he refers to, elsewhere, as 'more properly called one'<sup>7</sup>; and the one of H2 which partakes of being and is therefore a whole with two parts; one and being. Much scholarly attention has been paid to Plotinus' reliance upon these two ones from the *Parmenides* so we shall do no more than draw attention to the fact that they make their way into his language and constitute a foundation of his metaphysics.

By contrast to the attention paid by scholars to Plotinus' use of the first two hypotheses of the *Parmenides*, there has been little if anything published on his use of the third hypothesis. Furthermore Henry and Schwyzer's index to the Oxford edition of Plotinus<sup>8</sup> contains no reference to any specific use of the text of H3.<sup>9</sup> This

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6. Dodds 1928, 132.

7. Armstrong's translation of the phrase from V.1.8. The Greek phrase is ὁ κυριώτερον ἓν.

8. P. Henry & H.R. Schwyzer, "Index Fontium."

9. Apart from the absence of any references to the third hypothesis (157b-159b) in the Henry & H.R. Schwyzer index we may also note that Svetla Slaveva-Griffin. *Plotinus on Number*, includes no references to the *Parmenides* later than 145a2; the treatment of number in the early part of the second hypothesis. She also includes no references to 6.VI.12 or 13. Gerson's *Plotinus*, contains no reference to the *Parmenides* later than 155d3; the end of the second hypothesis. He too includes no references to VI.6.12 or 13. Dodds (1928) confines himself, of course, to the first two hypotheses.

We should note that for many scholars of Neo-Platonism the third hypothesis is 155e-157b. In this article I refer to the third hypothesis as 157b-159b, not regarding 155e-157b as an hypothesis in its own right; see Meinwald (1991) pp. 117-124 for

lends further support to my contention that Plotinus' use of H3 only becomes evident when we unpack the arguments he uses instead of looking for citations of the Platonic text as the compilers of the Henry and Schwyzer index might have done. This hypothesis is concerned with the effect of the one upon things that are not, by their own nature, one (i.e. multiplicities or indeterminate 'bulks'). One key aspect of H3 for Plotinus' argument here is that, in H3, the one is associated with the presence of determinacy and limit in that which is not, by nature, limited and determinate. Accordingly, limit and determinacy do not belong to any multiplicity in virtue of its own nature, rather it is communion with the one that is responsible for these characteristics in the multiplicities which, by their own nature, do not possess determinacy. I shall make the case that Plotinus relies upon the core arguments of this hypothesis as he sets about refuting the proposition with which this chapter opens. I shall elaborate further upon the contents and arguments of the third hypothesis later in this article.

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a discussion.

Janine Bertier, Luc Brisson, Annick Charles, Jean Pépin, H.-D. Saffrey, A.-Ph. Seconds, *Plotin, Traité sur les nombres (Ennéades VI.6 [34])*: This work is entirely dedicated to VI.6. But in the case of chapter 13, the authors discuss at length the role of the first and the second hypotheses, but there are no later references.

J.-M. Charrue, *Plotin, lecteur de Platon*: This work is dedicated to the platonic sources of Plotinus. The whole of chapter one is dedicated to the exegesis of the *Parmenides*. The exegesis of the 3rd hypothesis is the fourth part of this chapter, pp. 104-115 but for Charrue the third hypothesis is 155e-157b; based upon counting the total number of hypotheses as nine. The third hypothesis, of eight, is not referred to at all by Charrue whose section about Plotinus' exegesis of the *Parmenides* stops at 157b; the end of what he refers to as the third hypothesis. Based upon this numbering system the hypothesis (157b-159b) considered in this article would, of course be the fourth, and it is not referred to.

J. Pépin, "Platonisme et anti-platonisme dans le traité de Plotin Sur les nombres (VI.6 [34])": on p. 200 of this article Pépin deals with VI.6.13, but focuses on references to the *Sophist* in VI.6.13, not to the *Parmenides*. Although section IV is dedicated to VI.6.13, only hypotheses 1 and 2 are mentioned. On p. 204, he writes that the main reference is to the second hypothesis.

Plotin, *Traité 30-37*, Traduction sous la direction de Luc Brisson et Jean-François Pradeau, GF: This is the volume containing VI.6 in the series edited by Brisson and Pradeau, but it contains references only to the first two hypotheses of the *Parmenides* with no mention of 157b-159b.

I am grateful to Ms Pauline Sabrier for her assistance in compiling the references to the French literature on this topic.

### Plotinus' Initial Response

The VI.6.13 passage which we wish to consider begins as follows:

How could it be reasonable that the thought of the One originated from what underlies it, which is a man or some other living thing, or even a stone, in the realm of sense, since what appears is one thing—the man — and the One is another and not the same?<sup>10</sup>

In order to analyse the assertion to which Plotinus is objecting we should first reconstruct it. The offending proposition should probably read:

The thought of the one originates in single sensible particulars such as a man, an animal or a stone.

The formulation above involves a differentiation between an unchanging characteristic, being one, and changing substrate; man, animal, stone. Plotinus refers to the substrate as 'what underlies it' – 'it' is, of course, the characteristic, namely 'being one'. Plotinus asks how the formulation can be *'eulogon'*, a word which Armstrong, quite defensibly, translates as 'reasonable' but which more literally means well-formulated or well-worded. The proposition, as worded in our reconstruction, implies that the underlying man or other object is the source of our thought of the one, but Plotinus indicates that such a formulation is not precise and is probably not exactly what the proposer actually meant to say in the first place. For the proposition to make sense the man must be 'a man', one man, man with the characteristic of being one man, and it is the one, not the underlying man itself which, by this proposition, is where the thought of the one originates. Unless this is what the proposition really means, it could never accommodate the fact that the characteristic could ever become universal. Hence Plotinus' next statement:

Otherwise the mind would not predicate "one" in the case of a thing which is not man.<sup>11</sup>

The proposition that the thought of the one originates in single

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10. VI.6.13.1-5: Armstrong capitalisation, translation adjusted: τὸ δὴ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὑποκειμένου γενέσθαι τὴν νόησιν τοῦ ἑνός, τοῦ ὑποκειμένου καὶ τοῦ ἐν αἰσθήσει ἀνθρώπου ὄντος ἢ ἄλλου ὅτουσιν ζῶου ἢ καὶ λίθου, πῶς ἂν εἴη εὐλογον, ἄλλου μὲν ὄντος τοῦ φανέντος—τοῦ ἀνθρώπου—ἄλλου δὲ καὶ οὐ ταῦτο ὄντος τοῦ ἑν;

11. VI.6.13.5-6: Armstrong translation adapted; οὐ γὰρ ἂν καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ μὴ ἀνθρώπου τὸ ἐν ἢ διάνοια κατηγοροῖ.

sensible particulars such as a man, an animal or a stone is not well thought out (*eulogon*), for it is not in the actual sense objects themselves that the thought originates, but in the fact that each object is one object. Each of the objects must be one object and it is from the one, which the objects underlie, that the thought of the one originates; this is the actual claim in the proposition.

### THE NATURE OF THE NOT-ONE

The analysis continues as follows:

And then, just as in the case of “right” and the like the mind was not changed without any cause, but because it saw a different position it said “here”, so in this case it is because it sees something that it says “one”; for it is not reporting an empty way of being affected and saying “one” about nothing.<sup>12</sup>

One issue we are left with from the previous extract must concern the nature of the sense particulars themselves. Is man really one man, or is the one imposed by the mind upon something that is not one unless mind predicates it as such? Plotinus first argues that the process of change of location is not purely mind-based, for mind is affected by something that is not taking place in mind, namely a change in physical location. Similarly in the case of the one, the mind is being affected by the man and is saying ‘one’. It is not saying one about something that is not there at all. The sense objects are therefore involved in the process whereby the mind says ‘one’. There is indeed some characteristic of the sense object that affects the mind in a particular way and there is some capacity of the mind whereby it can be so affected. What is that characteristic and what is this capacity of the mind?

### WHAT THE ONE DOES

Plotinus now unpacks what it means for the mind to say ‘one’ and indeed what it does not mean.

For it is certainly not saying that the thing is alone and there is no other thing; for in the “no other thing” it is saying another “one”.

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12. VI.6.13.6-9: Armstrong translation adapted: ἐπειτα, ὥσπερ ἐπὶ τοῦ δεξιῶ καὶ πῶν τοιούτων οὐ μάτην κινουμένη, ἀλλ’ ὄρωσα θέσιν διάφορον ἔλεγε τὸ ὧδί, οὕτωςι τι ἐνταῦθα ὄρωσα λέγει ἐν· οὐ γὰρ διη κενὸν πάθημα καὶ ἐπὶ μηδενὶ τὸ ἐν λέγει.

And then the “other” and the “different” come later; for if the mind does not rest on the one it will not say “other” or “different”, and when it says “alone” it says “one alone”; so that it says the “one” before the “alone”.<sup>13</sup>

The question throughout is the origin of our thought of the one and the first possibility is that it could just mean ‘solitary’ or ‘alone’. This is ruled out in the extract above because solitary or alone means ‘no other’ and no other means ‘no other one’. Even by saying ‘no other thing’ we are saying that there is not another *one* different from or other than this particular *one*. So ‘one’ does not refer to the relation or lack of relation of something to other things, rather it is the basis and pre-requisite for any such relations. Therefore, he argues, ‘other’ or ‘different’ follow or come ‘later’ than the one because without recognition (‘mind resting on’) of the one there cannot be predication of ‘other’ or ‘different’. And so we arrive at a statement of which we should take note, that “ if the mind does not rest on the one it will not say ‘other’ or ‘different’ ”. So we find that with predication of other there is also predication of one, but there can be predication of one without predication of other. Therefore there is a priority of predication here, whereby the one has predicational priority over the predication of other and also, by implication, over any predication of any kind. Plotinus can therefore argue that the mind depends upon the one in order to refer to anything because these things must first be said to be one before anything else can be said of them, such as ‘other’ or ‘different’ or ‘alone’. Such priority is, however, not ontological priority in the sense described by Aristotle and attributed by him to Plato:

Some things, then, are called prior and posterior in this [latter] sense; but others in virtue of their nature and essence, namely all things which can exist apart from other things, whereas other things cannot exist without them. This distinction was used by Plato.<sup>14</sup>

Aristotle is here describing ontological priority; can Plotinus at this stage in this argument claim such priority for the one? He has

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13. VI.6.13.9-14: Armstrong translation adapted: οὐ γὰρ δὴ ὅτι μόνον καὶ οὐκ ἄλλο· καὶ γὰρ ἐν τῷ «καὶ οὐκ ἄλλο» ἄλλο ἐν λέγει. Ἐπειτα τὸ ἄλλο καὶ τὸ ἕτερον ὕστερον· μὴ γὰρ ἐρείσασα πρὸς ἐν οὔτε ἄλλο ἐρεῖ ἡ διάνοια οὔτε ἕτερον, τό τε «μόνον» ὅταν λέγη, ἐν μόνον λέγει· ὥστε τὸ ἐν λέγει πρὸ τοῦ «μόνον».

14. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1019a, 1-4; τὰ μὲν δὴ οὕτω λέγεται πρότερα καὶ ὕστερα, τὰ δὲ κατὰ φύσιν καὶ οὐσίαν, ὅσα ἐνδέχεται εἶναι ἄνευ ἄλλων, ἐκεῖνα δὲ ἄνευ ἐκείνων μὴ· ἡ δὲ διαίρεσις ἐχρήσατο Πλάτων. Quoted in this context by O’Meara in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, 68-72.



now, at very least, made a case for predicational priority of the one over all other predications on the basis that determinacy must be a prerequisite for any other predication whatsoever. For in order for predication to operate we must find a determinate, identifiable target for that predication and it is the predication of the one that brings this about in so far as we must designate the predicand as a single entity by saying that it is one, before we can predicate anything else of it. I shall argue that the notion of determinacy and its relation to the one is central to the overall argument of Plotinus in this chapter. The object must already be determinate in some way before it can become a target for any predication, even predication of the one. Must it therefore already be one before we can predicate the one of it? In the statement, "if the mind does not rest on the one it will not say 'other' or 'different,'" what do we mean by resting on the one? If the resting on the one refers to resting on the thought of the one, how then do we identify one determinate target for the predication process – surely the target has to be one and determinate already? If resting on the one means resting upon one determinate manifest entity, is mind therefore merely recognising one manifest entity and predicating it as such? If so, what accounts for the ability of the mind to recognise the one?

The latter question will be considered later. We now need to decide whether Plotinus has a basis for making a transition from conclusions about predication and its priority to conclusions that are epistemological and ontological. Indeed if our analysis of his claim "if the mind does not rest on the one it will not say 'other' or 'different'" is correct the mind must rest upon what is already one and determinate before it can predicate anything thereof. The objects must actually be one already and not merely predicated as such, or else no process of predication can ever get started because the one is the source of the determinacy which is a prerequisite for any predication. Of course determinacy here cannot merely be another predicate since predication requires a determinate object. So, if determinacy is, itself, merely predicated then predication can never find an object, for the object must be a determinate object already. Accordingly he now has an ontological basis for all predication, namely determinacy, and being determinate and being one amount to the same thing. Whatever is one is determinate and whatever is determinate is one. Hence we have a basis for arguing not just for the predicational priority of the one but also for the ontological priority of the one. It is crucial to Plotinus' argument

here, I maintain, that to be one and to be determinate are identical in their purport. Whatever is one is determinate and whatever is determinate is one. We shall see later that this key insight comes from the third hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides*.

### THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF THE ONE AND ITS PRIORITY

Plotinus now develops the argument further to argue for the prevalence of the one in all processes where the mind refers to anything, and his language seems to assume the conclusion we reached at the end of the previous chapter: that the one is ontologically prior:

And then what speaks is one before it says "one" of something else, and that about which it speaks, before anyone speaks or thinks about it, is one, for it is either one or more than one and many; and if many, one must exist before it. For also when it says "multitude" it says "more than one"<sup>15</sup>

This elaborates and consolidates some of the points from the previous extract. Whatever carries out the process of predication is itself one in so far as it constitutes a single agent. And the predicand is already one before it is ever said to be one – this repeats the point of the previous extract. But that which predicates cannot be one merely by being predicated as such for it is the very source of the activity of predication. Hence mind must be one independently of any predication so that there may be a single agent of that predication. But what if the predicand is predicated as multiple? Plotinus responds that its multiplicity makes no difference to the claim that it must be one, for the 'one must exist before it' (the many). In the light of our earlier analysis we can see that the predicand must be one, determinate predicand before it can ever be designated as multiple. The extract is introducing the one into its consideration of the nature of the agent of predication and the nature of the predicand. Both must be one and they cannot be merely predicated as one, for predication itself is not possible unless these two are determinate, and being determinate means being one.

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15. VI.6.13.14-18: ἐπειτα τὸ λέγον, πρὶν εἰπεῖν περὶ ἄλλου «ἓν», ἐστὶν ἓν, καὶ περὶ οὗ λέγει, πρὶν εἰπεῖν ἢ νοῆσαι τίνα περὶ αὐτοῦ, ἐστὶν ἓν· ἢ γὰρ ἓν ἢ πλείω ἓνός καὶ πολλά· καὶ εἰ πολλά, ἀνάγκη προὔπαρχεῖν ἓν. ἐπεὶ καὶ ὅταν πλῆθος λέγη πλείω ἓνός λέγει·

### THE ONE MEETS MULTIPLICITIES

The understanding of what it means to be multiple and the role of the one therein is developed further in the next extract:

It discerns an army as many men armed and brought together into one order, and does not allow what is a multitude to be a multitude; the mind which gives the “one” which the multitude does not have makes it clear [that it is not only a multitude], or, by keenly observing the “one” which results from its order, gathers the nature of the many into one; for the one is not falsely predicated here any more than it is of a house which is one from many stones; though the “one” of the house is more one. If then it is more one in the continuous and [still] more one in the indivisible, it is clearly because the one is a particular nature which has existence.<sup>16</sup>

Mind can only observe what is actually there, so the fact that an object is one (the fact of its oneness) is not a ‘false predication’, or, as Meijer<sup>17</sup> puts it: “This unity is not an optical illusion.” Plotinus does allow for the fact that the mind may impose a unity upon a multiplicity and so he says that it is possible that “the mind which gives the “one” which the multitude does not have makes it clear [that it is not only a multitude].” But in order to do so it must discern, amidst the multiplicity, something that the multiplicity does not, of itself, possess: the one. This is not false predication, it is not an optical illusion, not a mere mental imposition; the one must somehow be present. If the mind could not “keenly observe the ‘one’ that results from its order,” the multiplicity would be entirely indeterminate. So there would be nothing the mind could discern unless the one were actually present in order to ensure determinacy. The notion that multiplicities are by nature entirely indeterminate and only achieve any determinacy through communion with the one, is a conclusion of H3 of the *Parmenides*. So here again there is, I maintain, a reliance upon H3 which I shall elaborate upon later. Meijer too draws attention to Plotinus’ basic contention in VI.6.13.18ff, but without mentioning any reliance

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16. VI.6.13.18-27: Armstrong translation adapted: ἐπει καὶ ὅταν πλήθος λέγει πλείω ἑνὸς λέγει καὶ στρατὸν πολλοὺς ὠπλισμένους καὶ εἰς ἓν συντεταγμένους νοεῖ, καὶ πλήθος ὃν οὐκ ἔᾶ πλήθος εἶναι· ἡ διάνοια δηλὸν πού καὶ ἐνταῦθα ποιεῖ ἢ διδοῦσα τὸ ἓν, ὃ μὴ ἔχει τὸ πλήθος, ἢ ὀξέως τὸ ἓν τὸ ἐκ τῆς τάξεως ἰδοῦσα τὴν τοῦ πολλοῦ φύσιν συνήγαγεν εἰς ἓν· οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδ’ ἐνταῦθα τὸ ἓν ψεύδεται, ὥσπερ καὶ ἐπὶ οἰκίας τὸ ἐκ πολλῶν λίθων ἓν· μᾶλλον μέντοι τὸ ἓν ἐπ’ οἰκίας. Εἰ οὖν μᾶλλον ἐπὶ τοῦ συνεχοῦς καὶ μᾶλλον ἐπὶ τοῦ μὴ μεριστοῦ, δηλὸν ὅτι ὄντος τινὸς φύσεως τοῦ ἑνὸς καὶ ὑφεστάωσης.

17. Meijer 1992, 91. Translating this very phrase.

upon the argument upon H3:

Here Plotinus wishes to establish the pre-existence of the one or unity in an entity before one says 'one' or even 'many' of it, in which case the one must be pre-existent as well.<sup>18</sup>

In the absence of an elaboration of H3 and his reliance thereon, Plotinus' conclusions at the end of this last extract may seem somewhat sudden and may sound like a fallacious move from how the one is perceived, to a conclusion about the actual nature of the one. But the reference to "the "one" which the multitude does not have" is reflective of a H3 statement about multiplicities which states that "by themselves their [the multiplicities'] own nature is unlimited."<sup>19</sup> Predication is only possible because determinacy is already present in the indeterminate multiplicities, and it is present because of the one. This determinacy is not brought about solely by predicating the one, for even the predication of the one would not be possible without determinacy which, in turn, depends, ontologically, upon the one. The one is now associated with determinacy, and multiplicity is now associated with indeterminacy. Whatever is one is determinate, and whatever is determinate is one. Whatever is entirely multiple and devoid of the one is entirely indeterminate, and complete indeterminacy is a feature of multiplicity devoid of the one. In the light of these considerations about determinacy, which have their basis in H3 of the *Parmenides*, the argument acquires an added coherence. Without the reliance upon H3 it might appear that Plotinus is making a fallacious move here by presuming, without any supporting argument, that unitary physical things cannot be unitary in and of themselves. It is not obvious to me that Plotinus employs any other argument in VI.6.13, apart from this H3 argument, in support of his apparent presumption that manifest objects are not one and determinate, in and of themselves.

### THE PREVALENCE OF THE ONE

The notion of the pre-existence of the one may now be affirmed and then further developed on the basis of the notion of degrees of being one, which he has invoked in the extract above. Repeating the last quoted sentence, the next extract reads:

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18. Meijer 1992, 91.

19. *Parm.*, 158d6; ἡ δ' ἑαυτῶν φύσις καθ' ἑαυτὰ ἀπειρίαν.

If then it is more one in the continuous and [still] more one in the indivisible, it is clearly because the one is a particular nature which has existence. For it is not possible for there to be a “more” in non-existents, but just as when we predicate substance of each individual sense-object, and also predicate it of the intelligibles, we predicate it more appropriately of the intelligibles, putting the “more” and the “more appropriately” in the realm of real beings, and say that there is more being in the category of substance, even sensible substance, than in the other genera, in the same way also we see that the one, which differs in respect of more [and less] also in the sense-objects, is also more and more appropriately in the intelligibles — and in all these ways it must be affirmed that there is a reference to one.<sup>20</sup>

This extract summarises the nature of the relationship of sensibles and intelligibles to the one; they are all, to a certain extent, one. And so they all have a relationship to the one, which is not therefore non-existent as there cannot be degrees of that which does not exist. Again we should note that the argument is not that: there is predication of degrees of oneness; therefore the one exists. Rather the extract develops the conclusion we highlighted at the end of the previous section whereby, because the entity is determinate, it is already one before it is predicated as such; the entity can be more one or less one, but the predication of such degrees of oneness is only possible because the entity is already one.

Once we effectively equate being one with being determinate this argument becomes more plausible. It may be hard to formulate what precisely is meant by degrees of being one, but the notion of degrees of determinacy is more familiar. An army may be present but could be taken to be a mere multiplicity of men as it lacks the degree of determinacy of, say, the individual men. So the men are more determinate than the army and therefore, by our argument equating determinacy with being one, the men are more one than the army. The concept of army which we hold in mind is by contrast even more determinate and therefore more one than the physical army.

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20. VI.6.13.27-36: εἰ οὖν μᾶλλον ἐπὶ τοῦ συνεχοῦς καὶ μᾶλλον ἐπὶ τοῦ μη μεριστοῦ, δηλονότι ὄντος τινός φύσεως τοῦ ἑνὸς καὶ ὑφεστῶσης. Οὐ γὰρ οἶόν τε ἐν τοῖς μὴ οὐσί το μᾶλλον εἶναι, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ τὴν οὐσίαν κατηγοροῦντες καθ' ἑκάστου τῶν αἰσθητῶν, κατηγοροῦντες δὲ καὶ κατὰ τῶν νοητῶν κυριώτερον κατὰ τῶν νοητῶν τὴν κατηγορίαν ποιούμεθα ἐν τοῖς οὐσί το μᾶλλον καὶ κυριώτερον τιθέντες, καὶ τὸ ἑν μᾶλλον ἐν οὐσίᾳ καὶ αἰσθητῇ ἢ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις γένεσιν, οὕτω καὶ τὸ ἑν μᾶλλον καὶ κυριώτερον ἐν τε τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς αὐτοῖς διάφορον κατὰ τὸ μᾶλλον καὶ ἐν τοῖς νοητοῖς ὁρῶντες εἶναι—κατὰ πάντας τοὺς τρόπους εἰς ἀναφορὰν μέντοι ἑνὸς εἶναι φατέον.

### PERCEIVING THE ONE

We noted in considering the opening sentence of VI.6.13 that Plotinus concludes, at an early stage of his analysis, that if our thought of the one originates in the perception of single sense objects then there is some characteristic of a sense object that affects the mind in a particular way, and there is some capacity of the mind whereby it can be so affected. He therefore needs to consider what that characteristic of the sense object is and what this capacity of the mind is. The origin of the capacity of the mind to discern oneness has not received much attention in the argument so far. This is considered now:

But just as substance and being is intelligible and not perceptible, even if the perceptible participates in it, in this way also the one might be seen in the perceptible by participation, but the mind grasps it as intelligible and does so intellectually; so that it discerns one thing, which it does not see, from another; so it knew it before. But if it knew it before as being this particular thing, it is the same as being. And when it says 'something', it says as well that there is one; just as when it says "some" in the dual, it says that there are two; and when in the plural, that there are many.<sup>21</sup>

The notion that "the one might be seen in the perceptibles by participation" is a formulation of the concept of determinacy at the level of sense perception. Yet the mind apprehends a one that is not amenable to sense perception. Mind must therefore have known one prior to the perception of one; otherwise it could not have grasped the sensible entity as one and therefore determinate. To do so it needed prior apprehension of the one because, as we have seen, the claim that something is determinate and the claim that it is one amount to the same thing. Therefore recognising sensibles as determinate is equivalent to a recognition of the one which, by the preceding argument, is responsible for the determinacy. It thus becomes increasingly difficult for a (perhaps Stoic) source, to argue that our understanding of the one can be derived from sense perception. Sense perception requires determinate objects of perception and this determinacy equates to the objects each being one. If sense perception cannot get under way unless the

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21. VI.6.13.36-43: ὅσπερ δὲ ἡ οὐσία καὶ τὸ εἶναι νοητὸν καὶ οὐκ αἰσθητὸν ἐστὶ, κὰν μετέχη τὸ αἰσθητὸν αὐτῶν, οὕτω καὶ τὸ ἐν περὶ αἰσθητὸν μὲν ἂν κατὰ μετοχὴν θεωροῖτο, νοητὸν μέντοι καὶ νοητῶς ἢ διάνοια αὐτὸ λαμβάνει· ὥστε ἀπ' ἄλλου ἄλλο νοεῖ, ὃ οὐχ ὁρᾷ· προηῖδει ἄρα· εἰ δὲ προηῖδει ὃν τότε τι, ταῦτόν τῳ ὄν. Καὶ ὅταν τι, ἐν αὐτῷ λέγει· ὥσπερ ὅταν τινέ, δύο· καὶ ὅταν τινάς, πολλούς.

objects are recognised as one, then the mind must already possess the notion of unity before it encounters the objects. Therefore this notion cannot originate in the perception of the unitary objects; the unitary objects can only be perceived as such because the one is known prior to the act of perception.

The sentence "But if it knew it before as being this particular thing, it is the same as being" bears further scrutiny. The 'it' is presumably the one, and we have accepted that "we knew it before" because it is the basis of determinacy and we do indeed recognise determinate objects, which is tantamount to recognising the one; therefore we do recognise the one so, as argued above, mind must have known the one before encountering the objects. But in what sense is it "the same as being"? Plotinus has argued that the one is what gives determinacy and determinacy in turn is not, itself, predicated but is ontologically prior to any predication. Therefore in order for predication to operate there must be something there to act as an object for the predication process: there must be an object; the object must be, or must exist. Whatever is responsible for the fact that the object is determinate is also responsible for the fact that there is a (determinate) object present at all: that it exists. So whatever is responsible for the determinacy of the object is responsible for the existence of the object, and that which is responsible for the fact that anything exists may be called 'being'. So in this sense Plotinus can argue that the one is the same as being. Whatever is, is determinate and whatever is determinate is. But he has already argued that whatever is one is determinate and whatever is determinate is one. So he may now conclude that whatever is one is, and whatever is, is one. Hence the last sentence: when we say 'something (determinate)' we also say one.

### THE ONE IN SPEECH AND THOUGHT

Plotinus now proceeds to argue, on the basis of these conclusions, that we must also admit something else about the nature of the one:

If, then, it is not possible to think anything without the one or the two or some other number, how is it possible for that not to exist without which it is not possible to think or speak? For it is impossible to say that something does not exist of which, since it does not exist, you cannot think or say anything at all. But that which is needed everywhere for the coming into existence of every thought and statement must exist before statement and thinking: for this is how

it can be brought to contribute to their coming into existence.<sup>22</sup>

Here we have an argument whereby our earlier conclusions in relation to the one are made the basis of a further conclusion which makes a connection between the existence of the one and the operation of speech and thought. We note that, in contrast to the terseness of some of the earlier arguments and conclusions, this point is made more elaborately and at greater length. The nub of the argument might however be summarised quite succinctly as stating that, since the one is a prerequisite for speech and thought, and since speech and thought exist, the existence of the one is undeniable. It may appear that the essential point of this argument has been made already in the previous parts of this chapter, although the language here is indeed more elaborate. However the structure of this argument is highly reminiscent of a claim presented in part one of the *Parmenides* (135b-c) as a summary of the consequences of the multiple aporiai in relation to forms. There the connection is made between the existence of forms and the possibility of speech and thought. Here the existence of the one is connected to the possibility of speech and thought. I shall make the case later that the argument in the *Parmenides* is left without a formal conclusion being drawn, and that Plotinus may well regard his own argument here as bringing a conclusion to that argument from the *Parmenides*.

### A FOCUS UPON PRIORITY

But if it is needed for the existence of each and every substance—for there is nothing which is [which is] not one—it would also exist before substance and as generating substance.<sup>23</sup>

The argument here continues the claim of ontological priority and extends it to all substances. The statement that “there is nothing which is not one,” amplifies the conclusion we derived from the

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22. VI.6.13.43-49: Armstrong translation adapted: εἰ τοῖνυν μηδέ τι νοῆσαι ἔστιν ἄνευ τοῦ ἓν ἢ τοῦ δύο ἢ τινος ἀριθμοῦ, πῶς οἶόν τε ἄνευ οὐ οὐχ οἶόν τέ τι νοῆσαι ἢ εἰπεῖν μὴ εἶναι; Οὐδ' γὰρ μὴ ὄντος μὴδ' ὀτιοῦν δυνατὸν νοῆσαι ἢ εἰπεῖν, λέγειν μὴ εἶναι ἀδύνατον. Ἀλλ' οὐ χρεῖα πανταχοῦ πρὸς παντός νοήματος ἢ λόγου γένεσιν, προὔπαρχειν δεῖ καὶ λόγου καὶ νοήσεως· οὕτω γὰρ ἂν πρὸς τὴν τοῦτων γένεσιν παραλαμβάνοιτο.

23. VI.6.13.50-51: Armstrong translation: εἰ δὲ καὶ εἰς οὐσίας ἐκάστης ὑπόστασιν—οὐδὲν γὰρ ὄν, ὃ μὴ ἓν—καὶ πρὸ οὐσίας ἂν εἴη καὶ γεννῶν τὴν οὐσίαν.



earlier argument where it was said that the one is the same as being. We concluded then that whatever is, is one, and whatever is one, is. Here this conclusion turns into a stronger claim that the one generates, or is productive of substance, in so far as nothing could be what it is (i.e. be a substance) unless it were one, and it cannot be one without communion with the one. There would be no determinate substances without the one, which is therefore itself ontologically prior to the being or existence of every substance, and so the one is, in that sense, productive of (generating) each and every substance.

### WHICH ONE?

Plotinus now considers the precise nature of the one that he has been discussing throughout this argument. It is hardly surprising that he will do this in terms of the two ones described in the first and second hypotheses of the *Parmenides*. His analysis is as follows:

For this reason also it is one-being, but not first being and then one; for in that which was being and also one there would be many; but being is not present in the one except in the sense that it might make it by inclining to its generation.<sup>24</sup>

The one that Plotinus has been considering in the argument so far is now described as, what Armstrong translates as, 'one-being'; the exact words used to refer to the one of the second hypothesis in Plato's *Parmenides*.<sup>25</sup> We could conclude, therefore, that the one that is prior to and productive of each distinct substance is the one as described in the second hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides* – a whole with two parts; one and being. However, describing it as 'one being' affords the basis for considering its ontological status. Is it 'the one' or is it 'being' or is it both together, or are these two actually the same thing? Aristotle gave consideration to the relationship between one and being in the following passage:

Now if Being and Unity are the same, *i.e.* a single nature, in the sense that they are associated as principle and cause are and not as being denoted by the same definition.<sup>26</sup>

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24. VI.6.13, 51-54; διὸ καὶ ἓν ὄν, ἀλλ' οὐκ ὄν, εἴτα ἓν· ἐν μὲν γὰρ τῷ ὄν καὶ ἐν πολλὰ ἄν εἴη, ἐν δὲ τῷ ἓν οὐκ ἐνὶ τὸ ὄν, εἰ μὴ καὶ ποιήσειεν αὐτὸ προσοεῦσαν αὐτοῦ τῇ γενέσει.

25. *Parm.*, 143a5

26. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. IV.2.1003b.22-33: H. Tredennick translation: εἰ δὴ τὸ ὄν καὶ τὸ ἓν ταῦτόν καὶ μία φύσις τῷ ἀκολουθεῖν ἀλλήλοις ὡσπερ ἀρχὴ καὶ

Although the full passage is complex, we may extract one conclusion from this brief extract: Aristotle regards being and one as coextensive. Whatever is, is one and whatever is one, is. He does not wish to argue that they are the same in their definition, although it does not damage his overall argument if they are. We may wonder at this stage, in reading this chapter, where Plotinus stands on this issue. He has apparently described the one and being as coextensive, just as Aristotle does, but we do not yet know whether or not he regards them as identical in their definition. But when he says “For this reason also it is one-being, but not first being and then one” we are faced with the issue of the relative ontological priority of the one and being and here he argues that the one must be prior. Being is a substance and it is determinate since it can be distinguished from, say, rest and motion. Being can only be determinate because of the one. Therefore if we say that being is there first, and we have already argued that the one must also be there to ensure the determinacy, then we are saying that the one and being are always coextensive and there is no relative priority. If there is relative priority the one must be first, and being must not be present in it, if we are to escape from coextension. Other substances are determinate and therefore exist because of the one that is the same as (i.e. coextensive with) being. Being, on the other hand, is, itself, determinate because of a one, the one of H1, in which there is no being and which, in turn, is responsible for the fact that anything at all is and is one.

### RECAPITULATION

Plotinus then concludes the chapter as follows:

And the “this” is not an empty word; for it is used to speak of a real existence which is pointed out instead of its name, and of a presence, a substance or some other of the things which really are; so that the “this” would indicate something which is not empty, and it is not a way in which thought is affected about nothing existent, but a thing underlying the thought, just as if it said the proper name of a thing itself.<sup>27</sup>

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αἴτιον, ἀλλ’ οὐχ ὡς ἐνὶ λόγῳ δηλούμενα

27. VI.6.13:54-59: καὶ τὸ «τοῦτο» δὲ οὐ κενόν· ὑπόστασιν γὰρ δεκνυμένην λέγει ἀντὶ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ καὶ παρουσίαν τινά, οὐσίαν ἢ ἄλλο τι τῶν ὄντων· ὥστε τὸ «τοῦτο» σημαίνει ἂν οὐ κενόν τι οὐδ’ ἔστι πάθημα τῆς διανοίας ἐπὶ μηδενὶ ὄντι, ἀλλ’ ἔστι πρᾶγμα ὑποκείμενον, ὥστερ εἰ καὶ τὸ ἴδιον αὐτοῦ τινος ὄνομα λέγοι.

The consideration of the word 'this' takes us back to predication and determinacy once more; the very place we began. By now Plotinus has argued that predication, when fully analysed, points ultimately to an ontological arrangement wherein predication requires determinacy, which is the same as being one through participation in the one. The one, being the basis of determinacy, also enables whatever is determinate to be, for being and determinacy are coextensive; so the one is the same as being. Therefore he may conclude that the thought of the one does not originate in single sensible particulars such as a man, an animal or a stone, but in a "real existence" (ὑπόστασις) that underlies anything we refer to as 'this'. This word, ὑπόστασις, which Armstrong translates as "real existence", represents the very feature that was denied to the one at the beginning of the previous chapter (VI.6.12), where Plotinus introduces the, arguably, Stoic view of the one which concerns him in chapters 12 and 13.

We are of course aware, from V.1, that it is the one of the first hypothesis that constitutes, for Plotinus, the primary ὑπόστασις. Yet in VI.6.12 and 13 the ὑπόστασις in question is the one-being; the one of the second hypothesis; the one that accounts for the determinacy of indeterminate multiplicities. With the recurrence of the word ὑπόστασις here, Plotinus has completed the exploration which he commenced in the opening lines of VI.6.12. The designation of this ὑπόστασις as, included among "things that are", makes it clear that the one of H1 is not the ὑπόστασις in question here, since the one of H1 does not partake of being at all and is, in turn, responsible for the determinacy even of being. The notion that the one of H2 is what accounts for the determinacy of indeterminate multiplicities is the central argument of the third hypothesis of the *Parmenides*; we should consider the contents of this hypothesis now.

### THE THIRD HYPOTHESIS

We have made frequent reference throughout our exegesis of Plotinus to his reliance upon the arguments of the third hypothesis of the *Parmenides*. I shall now revisit the ten sections into which we have divided VI.6.13 and show how, in my view, they rely upon the arguments of H3. We have said that H3 discusses the consequences for 'things other than one' if there is a one. This has also been a theme of Plotinus' VI.6.13 passage throughout because, from the

very outset, the question of how a ‘man’ or anything else comes to be one ‘man’ or one ‘anything else’ has been under scrutiny. In considering what the one does to things other than one and how they would fare without it, the exploration in H3 overlaps with that of VI.6.13 and I shall now argue that Plotinus capitalises upon that argumentative overlap. H3 begins as follows:

“Must we not examine what the others would undergo, if one is?”

“We must.”

“Are we to say, then, what properties things other than the one must have, if one is?”

“Let’s do.”<sup>28</sup>

We shall now reconsider each of the ten Plotinus extracts in turn and make the case that certain arguments from the *Parmenides*, mainly from H3, are involved in Plotinus’ own argument here. The relevant *Parmenides* extracts will be quoted and elaborated as we proceed. We shall precede each section of analysis with a summary of the extract from Plotinus that is under discussion.

### NON-IDENTITY (EXTRACT 1)

Summary (1): The attribute, ‘one’, is not the same as the object to which it is attributed. Because the attribute ‘one’ is other than the objects that are one, the thought of the one cannot originate in the objects alone.

The concept of non-identity has become something of a Platonic commonplace. It has been defined of late as: “Non-Identity (‘NI’): If something participates in the Form of F, it is not identical with that Form.”<sup>29</sup> Plotinus’ own argument in extract 1 is very terse, but, given the Platonic background of his overall argument, it is not surprising that he takes certain principles such as NI as already established in the works of Plato. We may note a short extract from H2 of the *Parmenides* as an indication of the arguments used by Plato in support of his assertion of the non-identity of whatever partakes with whatever is partaken of:

“So let’s begin again. If one is, could it possibly be and not partake of being?”

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28. *Parm.*, 157b5-8: Gill and Ryan translation, *Plato’s Parmenides*: τί δὲ τοῖς ἄλλοις προσήκοι ἂν πάσχειν, ἐν εἰ ἔστιν, ἀρα οὐ σκεπτέον; λέγωμεν δὴ, ἐν εἰ ἔστι, τὰλλα τοῦ ἑνὸς τί χρεὶ πεπονθένα;

29. Pelletier, F.J. & Zalta, E.N., “How to Say Goodbye to the Third Man.”

"It could not."

"In that case there would also be the being of the one, which is not the same as the one, or else it could not be the being of the one, nor could it, the one, partake of that."<sup>30</sup>

This extract encapsulates the non-identity principle whereby, in this example, since the one is said to be, and 'to be' is equated with partaking of being, the one must be non-identical with being. Being is not the same as the one and must therefore be non-identical with the one, otherwise participation, which depends upon NI, would be impossible. A particular application of this principle is captured in Plotinus' assertion above that "what appears is one thing—the man—and the one is another and not the same." We have also seen, in extract 9, that Plotinus has recourse to non-identity of the one with being, in order to establish the ontological priority of the one over being. Plotinus initially expresses the NI principle in terms of predication, and the readiness with which Plotinus' exposition moves between conclusions based upon predication and conclusions based upon participation may give rise to some concern. Pelletier and Zalta, more recently, raise a similar issue in relation to such a move in their treatment of two modes of predication which they discern in part one of the *Parmenides*:

If there are two modes of predication, then a Platonist could plausibly argue that there are two corresponding kinds of participation, since modes of predication are, in some sense, the linguistic mirror of participation.<sup>31</sup>

The idea that predication is the 'linguistic mirror' of participation is a view which appears to be shared by Plotinus, although he has certainly not argued for it at this stage. Allen<sup>32</sup> draws attention to another argument for NI, also in H2, at 146d, which emphasises that whatever partakes of the one is not the one. These two applications of the NI principle to the one will prove significant as our analysis continues; the one is not identical with being and whatever partakes of the one must be other than the one. This latter formulation sets up a basic division in the *Parmenides* between the one and whatever is other than the one, and this distinction

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30. *Parm.*, 142b5-c1: ὅρα δὴ ἐξ ἀρχῆς. ἐν εἰ ἔστιν, ἀρα οἷόν τε αὐτὸ εἶναι μέν, οὐσίας δὲ μὴ μετέχειν; // οὐχ οἷόν τε. // οὐκοῦν καὶ ἡ οὐσία τοῦ ἑνὸς εἶη ἂν οὐ ταῦτόν οὔσα τῷ ἑνί; οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἐκείνη ἦν ἐκείνου οὐσία, οὐδ' ἂν ἐκείνο, τὸ ἔν, ἐκείνης μετεῖχεν.

31. Pelletier, F.J. & Zalta, E.N., 2000, 171

32. Allen, R.E., *Plato's Parmenides*, 313

becomes, in turn, the foundation of the H3 argument.

### THE NATURE OF THE NOT-ONE (EXTRACT 2)

Summary (2): The sense objects do in fact possess some common characteristic that affects the mind and enables it to predicate 'one' of those objects.

The opening words of the third hypothesis, as quoted above, indicate that the others are affected by the one; the fact that there is a one has consequences for the others. Plotinus says that when mind reports that something is one, it does so because it is affected in a particular way. There is some feature of whatever is other than one which enables the mind to predicate it as one. This again is an aspect of H3; the others, although non-identical with the one, are not devoid of the one:

And yet the others are not absolutely deprived of the one, but somehow partake of it.<sup>33</sup>

This is reflected in Plotinus' assertion that mind is not saying one about nothing; the other is somehow one, by sharing in (partaking of) the one. But the other is not the one, for it must be other than the one by the NI principle. So it is one by participation in the one, but it is not the one.

### WHAT THE ONE DOES (EXTRACT 3)

Summary (3): One has priority of predication over all other predicates. But being one equates with determinacy and determinacy is the basis of all predication as there must be a determinate predicand or no predication can ever begin. So for any predication to be possible the predicand must first actually be one and therefore determinate and not merely predicated as such.

Plotinus' claim that "if mind does not rest on the one, it will not say 'other' or 'different'" has been analysed above. It leads to the conclusion that whatever is one is determinate and whatever is determinate is one. Consequently the one is the basis of determinacy, which is, in turn, the basis of all predication, since predication requires a determinate predicand. The notion

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33. *Parm.*,157c1-2; οὐδὲ μὴν στέρηται γε παντάπασι τοῦ ἑνός τᾶλλα, ἀλλὰ μετέχει πη.

that the one is the source of determinacy and that there is total indeterminacy in the absence of the one is a core argument of H3. We have explained that H3 discusses the consequences for ‘things other than one’ if there is a one. This is formulated as follows:

Shall we state what the effect is on things other than one, if one is?<sup>34</sup>

We can see that this hypothesis proposes to consider the effect of the one on ‘things other than one’ but what precisely are we to understand by this concept of ‘things other than one’? H3 effectively defines these as follows:

But whatever is other than the one would presumably be many, for if things other than one were neither one nor more than one, they would be nothing.<sup>35</sup>

It follows from this formulation in H3 that anything other than one is, by nature, a multiplicity, and so when the third hypothesis is considering the consequences of the existence (or non-existence) of the one for things other than one, it is actually considering the consequences for multiplicities, because ‘other than one’ means ‘multiple’. The H3 argument explores this issue by considering what it would be like if the one were absent from a multiplicity.<sup>36</sup> Accordingly, we are asked to consider (*per impossible*, as Allen<sup>37</sup> describes the process) a multiplicity which is devoid of the one. In considering this ‘one-less’ multiplicity Parmenides asks:

“What of this? If we tried, in the mind, to take away as little as we could from such multiplicities, mustn’t that which is taken away be a multiplicity and not one; if in fact it does not share in the one?”

“It must.”<sup>38</sup>

This is saying that without the one there would only be multiplicity and nothing would be one for, as we have seen, it is only by sharing in the one that the others (the multiplicities) are one. This is elaborated as the argument continues:

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34. *Parm.*,157b7-8; λέγωμεν δή, ἐν εἰ ἔστι, τὰλλα τοῦ ἑνὸς τί χορῆ πεπονθέναι;  
35. *Parm.*,158b1-2; τὰ δ’ ἕτερα τοῦ ἑνὸς πολλά που ἂν εἴη· εἰ γὰρ μήτε ἐν μήτε ἑνὸς πλείω εἴη τὰλλα τοῦ ἑνός, οὐδὲν ἂν εἴη.

36. Meijer notes a similar argument in the first section of VI.6.9 but he does not make the connection to the reasoning of the third hypothesis. Meijer 1992, 69.

37. Allen 1997, 315.

38. *Parm.*,158c2-4; εἰ ἐθέλομεν τῆ διανοίᾳ τῶν τοιούτων ἀφελεῖν ὡς οἰοί τέ ἐσμεν ὅτι ὀλίγιστον, οὐκ ἀνάγκη καὶ τὸ ἀφαιρεθὲν ἐκείνο, εἴπερ τοῦ ἑνός μὴ μετέχοι, πλήθος εἶναι καὶ οὐχ ἕν// ἀνάγκη.

"Won't this nature just by itself, distinct from the form, always be unlimited in multiplicity, as far as we can see, when considered in this way?"

"Entirely so."

"However, once each part becomes one part, they forthwith acquire limit with respect to one another and relative to the whole, and so does the whole towards the parts."

"Just so."<sup>39</sup>

So these things other than one are multiple and, by their own nature, they never escape an ever recurring multiplicity no matter how small a part we take. No part can ever be one part, nor can the whole, in the absence of the one, be one whole, and so the basic relationship of whole to part is impossible. Accordingly the result of removing the one from things other than the one is complete indeterminacy. As Allen comments:

It is unlimited but its unlimitedness is of no ordinary kind: for it cannot be infinite either as continuous or successive, since both kinds of infinity imply unity and wholeness.<sup>40</sup>

On the other hand, the result of the communion of the one with things other than one is the introduction of limit and determinacy, where these had previously been absent. This is expressed in the dialogue as follows:

Now, as things other than one are seemingly a communion of themselves and the one, it follows that something different arises among themselves that furnishes a limit relative to one another. However, by themselves their own nature is un-limitedness.<sup>41</sup>

The above H3 extract may therefore be summarised as stating that; if a multiplicity does not share in the one, then no portion thereof will share in the one; therefore any portion taken therefrom will be another multiplicity and not one, no matter how little we take. So in the absence of the one neither the multiplicity as a whole nor any of the parts thereof can be distinguished one from another as they lack determinacy. The argument of H3 is ontological:

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39. *Parm.* 158c5-d3; οὐκοῦν οὕτως αἰεὶ σκοποῦντες αὐτὴν καθ' αὐτὴν τὴν ἐτέραν φύσιν τοῦ εἶδους ὅσον ἂν αὐτῆς αἰεὶ ὁρῶμεν ἀπειρον εἶσθαι πλήθει; παντάπασιν μὲν οὖν. καὶ μὴν ἐπειδὴν γε ἐν ἕκαστον μόνιον μόνιον γένηται, πέρασ ἤδη ἔχει πρὸς ἄλληλα καὶ πρὸς τὸ ὅλον, καὶ τὸ ὅλον πρὸς τὰ μόνια. κομιδῆ μὲν οὖν.

40. Allen 1997, 315.

41. *Parm.*, 158d3-6; τοῖς ἄλλοις δὴ τοῦ ἐνὸς συμβαίνει ἐκ μὲν τοῦ ἐνὸς καὶ ἐξ ἑαυτῶν κοινωνησάντων, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἕτερόν τι γίγνεσθαι ἐν ἑαυτοῖς, ὃ δὴ πέρασ παρέσχε πρὸς ἄλληλα: ἡ δ' ἑαυτῶν φύσις καθ' ἑαυτὰ ἀπειρίαν.



because of the one, each part is one part and the whole is one whole. In its absence neither the whole nor any part can possess any other quality For characteristic, since there is no determinate entity that can be the bearer of that quality or characteristic. As Gill puts it: “the others depend upon oneness to... have determinate relations with one another.”<sup>42</sup> We can see therefore that Plotinus’ assertion that the one is the source of determinacy can readily be traced to H3 of the *Parmenides*, which accordingly sets out the ontological basis for any predication whatsoever.

We may now revisit Pelletier and Zalta’s connection between predication and participation:

If there are two modes of predication, then a Platonist could plausibly argue that there are two corresponding kinds of participation, since modes of predication are, in some sense, the linguistic mirror of participation.<sup>43</sup>

The general notion that predication is the linguistic mirror of participation would need much detailed consideration if we were to consider it in its complete generality. However, when we consider this concept in terms of participation in the one and predication of the one, the mirroring relationship is more plausible. There cannot be any predication at all unless something is designated as, or predicated to be, a single entity. But Plotinus argues that the predicand must be one already before anything, even oneness, can be predicated thereof, otherwise it is “false predication.” Per H3 the predicand can only be one and determinate through participation in the one, and when deprived of the one it will lack all determinacy. So determinacy, as required for predication at the level of language, is also required for any relations to operate at the ontological level. At both levels determinacy is equivalent to communion with the one; the two levels mirror one another. “If mind does not rest on the one it will not say other or different” is Plotinus’ formulation of the ontological dependence of predication upon determinacy and therefore upon the one which, by H3, is the source of that determinacy.

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42. Gill and Ryan 1996, 86.

43. Pelletier, F.J. & Zalta, E.N. 2000.

**THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF THE ONE AND ITS PRIORITY (EXTRACT 4)**

Summary (4): For predication both the predicand and the mind which predicates must actually be one, and not merely predicated as such. Even the actual predication of multiplicity requires a determinate predicand, so even in this case the predicand must be one.

Here we have two elements of the H3 argument amplified and restated. We should note Plotinus' strong assertion here that a particular ontological arrangement is required before anything can be spoken or thought: "that about which it speaks, before anyone speaks or thinks about it, is one" Before either process can operate there must be one; a single something. This reflects H3, in which the one is responsible for the determinacy whereby there can be particular determinate predicands for the operation of speech, and determinate objects of thought too. H3 says that what is other than one is multiple, and Plotinus here says that; "when it says multiple it says more than one". The understanding of multiplicity in H3 and in Plotinus thus mirror each other. So for Plotinus even the predication of multiplicity requires a determinate predicand, and multiplicities require the one in order to avoid the complete indeterminacy which is derived from their own nature in the absence of the one. Multiplicities are not, by their own nature, one and determinate.

**THE ONE MEETS MULTIPLICITIES (EXTRACT 5)**

Summary (5): There are degrees of being one, and the mind discerns these and predicates the one of multiplicities that are already one. But the one in the multiplicities is not an optical illusion or a false predication. Therefore the one exists and is responsible for the determinacy of multiplicities which are, by their own nature, indeterminate.

Multiplicities are not, by their own nature, one and determinate, they are made so by communion with the one. A multiplicity that has been made determinate by communion with the one, is a whole. The whole is one, and any part thereof is also one because of its communion with the one. These are all conclusions of H3. The earlier part of the H3 argument, prior to the section we quoted in relation to extract 3, deals with wholes and parts.

Although this section of the H3 argument is described by Gill<sup>44</sup> as “compressed and problematic” and she finds it partly fallacious, Allen<sup>45</sup> nevertheless, denies that it involves any fallacy. The reader is referred to these two commentators and their associated translations for a more detailed discussion of the early argument of H3.

The essence of the argument stands in any case: there cannot be parts of multiplicities, as multiplicities are entirely indeterminate, as they do not participate in the one; yet there can be parts of wholes because these partake of the one. H3 begins with the claim that whatever is other than one is multiple. Whatever is multiple is composed of parts, for if it did not have parts it would just be the one and not other than one. But if there are to be parts, and there cannot be parts of multiplicities, the multiplicities must become wholes, each of which is one whole, and each part of which is one part, due to communion with the one. The extract from H3 which we quoted in extract 3 in relation to indeterminacy argues that the parts too are indeterminate unless they share in the one. Whole and part and their associated inter-relation is entirely dependent upon the one.

Plotinus’ reference to “the one which the multitude does not have” shows his awareness of the notion in H3 that multiplicities, by their own nature, are devoid of the one. Accordingly, by their own nature, they are indeterminate. So when Plotinus refers to armies and houses in extract 5, this is surely the context in which he does so. The army is a whole, a one of which the soldiers can be parts; each soldier being one part. Mind predicates the one but it is not false predication because, by H3, whatever is predicated as one (or indeed predicated as anything else) must already constitute a determinate predicand. This, in turn, is only possible because the predicand is one predicand and it is only one predicand because of the one.

The references to “the one which the multitude does not have” and to “gathers the nature of the many into one” are a clear reflection of the H3 formulation whereby:

by themselves their [the multiplicities] own nature is unlimitedness.<sup>46</sup>

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44. Gill and Ryan 1996, 88. Rickless (2009) also finds the argument partly fallacious, *ibid.*, 200.

45. Allen 1997, 313.

46. *Parm.*, 158d6; ἡ δὲ ἑαυτῶν φύσις καθ’ ἑαυτὰ ἀπειρίαν.

It is the one that is responsible for the fact that the army is one army and not a mere multiplicity of persons which, by its own nature, is all that it is. Allen, commenting on H3, sums this up as follows:

Put briefly, things that participate in Unity must also participate in Plurality and if we consider them apart from Unity only bare plurality is left.<sup>47</sup>

This quote nicely summarises the way in which H3 encapsulates Plotinus' hierarchy, featuring 'the one' at one extreme and 'bare plurality' at the other. The notion of the degrees of unity intervening between these two extremes, which Plotinus introduces here, is not formally included in the argument of H3. Allen<sup>48</sup> draws attention to part of the H2 argument where such a concept does indeed feature and Plotinus may well be drawing upon that. However it is simplest to confine our discussion here to H3 alone.

#### **THE PREVALENCE OF THE ONE (EXTRACT 6)**

Summary (6): There is a kind of hierarchy of oneness and determinacy, in which indeterminate multiplicities devoid of the one are at the lowest extreme. Next in the extent to which they are one, and therefore determinate, are discontinuous sense objects, then continuous sense objects, and then intelligibles. Plotinus implies that, at the topmost extreme of this hierarchy, there is the one, just by itself.

Plotinus here continues to elaborate the implicit ontological hierarchy of H3 as discussed in the previous extract. The prevalence of the one throughout all levels of the hierarchy except when we reach 'bare plurality' is, by now, an obvious conclusion of H3. Plotinus aligns degrees of being one with degrees of determinacy.

#### **PERCEIVING THE ONE (EXTRACT 7)**

Summary (7): mind discerns the one in perceptibles, but the underlying objects are other than the one, and the one is not seen. So mind must have known one before encountering the

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<sup>47</sup>. Allen 1997, 315. Allen consistently translates 'the one' as 'Unity', thus capitalised.

<sup>48</sup>. Allen 1997, 313. The H2 reference is to *Parm.*,151b-e.

objects, otherwise it could not have discerned 'one'. But mind can only know what is determinate, and it is being one that makes something determinate, and if the object is not one and determinate there is no object: the object is not. Saying that the object is one is equivalent to saying that it is determinate and that in turn is equivalent to saying that it is, or that it exists. Being and being one are coextensive; whatever is, is one, and whatever is one is.

There are three issues in this extract, only one of which is likely to be primarily reliant upon H3. Firstly, the distinction between the intelligible and the perceptible may be derived from the discussion of the *koina* in the *Theaetetus* or the *megista gene* in the *Sophist*. Secondly the notion that the one was 'known before' is actually a conclusion which follows in the argument once we allow that the one is not amenable to sense perception. The so-called equality proof in the *Phaedo* is a familiar source for such a conclusion in Plato, but Plotinus does not directly refer to recollection in this extract from VI.6.13. Although his argument here reflects the *Phaedo* argument in some ways, it is by no means a mere invocation of a Platonic doctrine. Thirdly the conclusion that the one is coextensive with being is certainly contained in the nature of the one that is presented in H2; a whole with two parts, namely one and being. Indeed what else could a whole composed of two parts, namely one and being, be if it were not to represent 'being'? As Aristotle says:

since "one man" and "man" and "existent man" and "man" are the same thing, i.e. the duplication in the statement "he is a man and an existent man" gives no fresh meaning.<sup>49</sup>

I have argued that the claim that the one is coextensive with being is central to Plotinus' arguments in VI.6.13. We have seen how Parmenides argues for this in H2, but that is not the way Plotinus' argument proceeds in this extract, for it is the prior knowledge of the one that leads here to the conclusion that the one is the same as being. Why does the prior knowledge imply that it is the same as being? Allen, in a passage worth quoting in full, explains how H3 leads to the conclusion that whatever is one, is, and whatever is, is one:

Everything other than Unity, and therefore every part of everything other than Unity, has a share of Unity. For if it did not have a share

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49. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1003b, 26-27: ταὐτὸ γὰρ εἰς ἀνθρώπου καὶ ἀνθρώπου, καὶ ὦν ἀνθρώπου καὶ ἀνθρώπου, καὶ οὐχ ἕτερόν τι δηλοῖ κατὰ τὴν λέξιν ἐπαναδιπλούμενον τὸ εἰς ἀνθρώπου καὶ εἰς ὦν ἀνθρώπου

of Unity, it would, as one, be Unity, and nothing but Unity itself can be Unity. In short, to be is to be one; to be one is either to be what it is to be one — that is, Unity — or it is to have what it is to be one — that is, to partake of Unity. If a plurality of things have a character, they cannot be that character. Since Unity, as an Idea, excludes its own opposite, it cannot be many. If things other than Unity are one, they must also be many, since if they were not, they would be just one, and there could then be no difference between them and what it is to be one. It follows that the others have parts, and those parts must be one no less than the wholes of which they are parts: for to be and to be one are equivalent. In short, things other than Unity are one, in whole and in part. Thus the others, both as wholes and part by part, have a share of Unity.<sup>50</sup>

Allen, as I do, later refers to “Unity, as a principle of determination”<sup>51</sup> and it is on this basis that we can see how Plotinus can equate it with being. Plotinus’ argument, as quoted earlier, is as follows:

so that it discerns one thing, which it does not see, from another; so it knew it before. But if it knew it before as being this particular thing, it is the same as being.

To be is to be determinate, to be determinate is to be one and, as Allen says, “to be and to be one are equivalent”. Whatever is one is determinate and whatever is determinate is one. Mind can discern determinacy which, per H3 and Plotinus’ earlier argument, does not belong by nature to what is other than one and therefore multiple. Therefore it can discern the one, in which the others participate so that they may be determinate. If mind can discern the one, which is not perceptible, then it knew the one before it encountered the perceptibles. Otherwise it could never recognise determinacy. This is Plotinus’ argument for our prior knowledge of the one. It mirrors aspects of the *Phaedo* argument but relies heavily upon the inter-relation of determinacy, the one, and being, as presented in H3. For Plotinus, the mind can only recognise that anything exists because it knew the one before it encountered that existent object. By H3 “to be and to be one are equivalent”; therefore Plotinus argues that the fact that the mind recognises being means that it had prior knowledge of the one.

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50. Allen 1997, 314. As usual he renders ‘the one’ as ‘Unity’, thus capitalised.

51. Allen 1997, 315.

**THE ONE IN SPEECH AND THOUGHT (EXTRACT 8)**

Summary (8): since the one is coextensive with the determinacy and being that makes speech and thought possible, the prior existence of the one is undeniable. The one is ontologically prior to speech and thought.

In this extract Plotinus seems to add little to what has already been concluded. The language, however, is quite elaborate and the wording stands in contrast to the terseness of some of the earlier arguments. The wording is, moreover, highly reminiscent of one of the conclusions to the first part of the *Parmenides*, after Socrates has been taken through a number of aporetic arguments in relation to forms. Parmenides views the aporiai with such seriousness that he declares:

but if someone, in view of all we have just said and other such objections, actually refuses to admit that there are forms of things that are, and will not delineate some single form of each, he will have nothing to which his mind can turn, as he does not admit that a characteristic of each of the things that are is always the same, and in this way he utterly destroys the capacity to engage in discourse.<sup>52</sup>

We could summarise this *Parmenides* extract as asserting that if someone does not admit that there are forms he will be deprived of the ability to direct the mind or engage in discourse. The contrapositive of such an argument is that if we *can*, in fact, direct the mind (i.e. think) and we *can* actually engage in discourse (dialectic), we may accordingly conclude that forms may be presumed to exist. The structure of Plotinus' argument mirrors this Parmenidean argument insofar as it connects the existence of the one to the possibility of speech and thought. The dialogue, on the other hand, connects the existence of forms with the possibility of speech and thought. The striking parallel between the wording of these two passages, and the extent to which the arguments parallel one another, surely constitutes further evidence for Plotinus' reliance here upon arguments from the *Parmenides* in developing the overall argument in this chapter.

The key issue in both passages is the question of determinacy. In the Plotinus passage "that which is needed everywhere for

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52. *Parm.*, 135b5-c2: ἀλλὰ μέντοι, εἶπεν ὁ Παρμενίδης, εἴ γέ τις δὴ, ὃ Σώκρατες, αὐτὸ μὴ εἰσείη εἶδη τῶν ὄντων εἶναι, εἰς πάντα τὰ νυνδὴ καὶ ἄλλα τοιαῦτα ἀποβλέψας, μὴδέ τι ὀριεῖται εἶδος ἑνὸς ἐκάστου, οὐδὲ ὅποι τρέψει τὴν διάνοιαν ἔξει, μὴ ἔων ιδεῖαν τῶν ὄντων ἐκάστου τὴν αὐτὴν αἰεὶ εἶναι, καὶ οὕτως τὴν τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι δύναμιν παντάπασιν διαφθερεῖ.

the coming into existence of every thought and statement” is of course, in this context, the one which is, in turn, responsible for determinacy. The issue of determinacy is also captured in the *Parmenides* (135b-c) extract by the phrase, “delineate some single form of each” Again it is the determinacy associated with forms which, in the argument quoted above, makes them instrumental in the operation of structured speech and thought. We could summarise the *Parmenides* extract as asserting that if someone does not admit that there are forms he will be deprived of the ability to direct the mind or engage in discourse. This is the dilemma reached in the dialogue at that early stage. If we invoke the contrapositive of this argument we might thus conclude that forms must exist, but Parmenides does not take such a step at this point in the dialogue, and we are left to wonder how this dilemma finally gets resolved in the dialogue. The second part of the dialogue is, apparently, intended to help resolve the *aporiai* of part one, but it is not entirely obvious how exactly, if at all, this particular dilemma is resolved in part two either, and modern commentators are far removed from universal agreement on such issues.

Could Plotinus be reading H3 as offering the resolution of the 135b-c dilemma; an *aporia* that is left without any explicit resolution in the *Parmenides*? If this is the case, then we might summarise Plotinus’ argument in a different way as follows: since determinacy is a prerequisite for speech and thought, and since the one is responsible for the determinacy of things other than one, and they cannot be determinate without the one, the one is therefore the basis of all speech and thought, and so the one must exist before there can be speech and thought. This is all captured by the sentence in the quoted extract:

But that which is needed everywhere for the coming into existence of every thought and statement must exist before statement and thinking: for this is how it can be brought to contribute to their coming into existence.<sup>53</sup>

If we do not allow for the incorporation of the ontological argument from H3 into the overall argument here, we might be quite suspicious of Plotinus’ general approach. Is he merely claiming that, since the one is a pre-requisite for speech and thought, and speech and thought do indeed exist, the one must

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53. VI.6.13.47-49: Armstrong translation adapted: ἀλλ’ οὐ χρεῖα πανταχοῦ πρὸς παντός νοήματος ἢ λόγου γένεσιν, προὔπαρχειν δεῖ καὶ λόγου καὶ νοήσεως· οὕτω γὰρ ἂν πρὸς τὴν τούτων γένεσιν παραλαμβάνοιτο.



therefore exist prior to speech and thought? Such an approach to the issue would seem to move from a semantic argument based upon the predicational priority of the one in speech and therefore in thought, to a conclusion about the ontological priority of the one. I would argue at this stage that Plotinus has a more coherent argument, as outlined above, which derives ultimately from H3 of the *Parmenides*.

If we allow that he is indeed relying upon the H3 conclusions, whereby the one is responsible for limit and determinacy, then we may be able to regard his argument here as somewhat stronger and more cogent. The crucial issue for the operation of predication is the determinacy of the predicand and, by H3, limit and determinacy are derived from communion with the one. If there is no determinate predicand there can be no predication, and without communion with the one, none of the multiple entities of the manifest world could have any determinacy. Hence discussion of predication seems, for Plotinus, to be inseparable from discussion of the nature of the predicand - semantics and ontology are inextricably linked. Language and ontology therefore mirror one another in this sense, as per the formulation quoted earlier from Pelletier and Zalta. So the overall argument in extract 8 becomes more plausible once we read it as reliant upon the treatment of determinacy in H3. This, I claim, is because H3 provides an ontological basis for the reliance of thought and speech upon the one.

#### **THE PRIORITY OF THE ONE OVER BEING (EXTRACTS 9 AND 10)**

Summary (9): The one is ontologically prior to and therefore productive of all substance.

Summary (10): The one that accounts for the determinacy of anything else that is determinate is 'one being'. It is ontologically prior to all else. The one in which there is no being is ontologically prior to being and it renders being determinate.

We have seen that the final two extracts draw upon the earlier conclusions that the one is the same as being: to be is to be one; to be one is to be. This conclusion is actually arrived at by Plotinus through use of an argument from H3. However, the one that is the same as being is the one of H2 of Plato's *Parmenides* and as such it is a whole with two parts; one and being. Plotinus then argues for the ontological priority of the one (devoid of being) over being, because it is only on account of the one (devoid of being) that

being can have any determinacy. The one (devoid of being) is of course the one of H1.

### CONCLUSION

We began by reconstructing the proposition to which Plotinus is opposed by wording it as follows:

The thought of the one originates in single sensible particulars such as a man, an animal or a stone.

We have now traced Plotinus' refutation of this proposition and showed how it is heavily reliant upon the third hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides*. The key argument from the *Parmenides* that Plotinus makes use of is: that the one is responsible for all determinacy, and that whatever is other than one is, by its own nature, entirely indeterminate. The opponent does not enquire into the source of determinacy and may well presume that the sensible particulars are, of themselves, determinate. We have broken Plotinus argument into ten subsections and we have provided short summaries of each. If we were, somewhat ambitiously, to provide a succinct summary we might say that:

Because the one is other than the objects that are one, the thought of the one cannot originate in the objects alone. Yet the objects do possess a characteristic whereby the mind is affected and, thus affected, predicates oneness of them. So the predicand must be one and determinate, or else mind could not engage with it. Therefore to be one is to be determinate and to be determinate is to be one. Mind too must be one and determinate and neither mind nor the object can merely be predicated as one and determinate; they must actually be so. Indeed even the predication of multiplicity requires a determinate predicand, and so the one is the basis of any predication whatsoever. In view of the range of possible objects of predication we conclude that there is a hierarchy of oneness and determinacy, starting from total indeterminacy and ending with the one. But the determinacy could not be cognised unless mind knew the one before it encountered the objects and thus recognised the objects as determinate. But being determinate is equivalent to being, therefore to be is to be one, to be one is to be. Since speech and thought are impossible without determinate objects, they are both impossible without the determinacy that arises from communion with the one. The one that is ontologically prior to and productive of all substance is the one of H2; it is one-being. The one itself, devoid of being is ontologically prior to being; it is the one of H1. The word 'this' as applied to a single object points to an underlying reality; the one. This reality and not the object itself is the origin of our thought of the one.

Plotinus thus shows that the proposition whereby the thought of the one originates in the single objects is badly formulated, because such a notion does not explain how the objects are one in the first place or how the mind recognises them as such. Consideration of these two issues leads him to consider the nature of the one as, the source of determinacy and of being, and, indeed, of the ability of the mind to discern or express anything whatsoever. The proposition to which he objects, as formulated, could constitute the basis for what we might term a realist viewpoint. On such a view there would be no place for an ontology such as that presented in H3, or any assertion that there is a one, or that there is being, amenable to discussion apart from single manifest objects.

Accordingly I have now made the case that, in VI.6.13, Plotinus considers the proposition that the thought of the one originates in single sensible particulars such as a man, an animal or a stone. He does this by analysing the nature of the one and the concepts of determinacy and being. I have argued that in his analysis of the inter-relationship of the one, determinacy and being, he is heavily reliant upon H3 of Plato's *Parmenides*.

### ABSTRACT

In this article I propose to analyse Plotinus VI.6. [34] 13 and make the case that it relies heavily upon the arguments of the third hypothesis<sup>54</sup> (157b-159b) of Plato's *Parmenides*. In doing so I intend to show how, in my view, Plotinus proceeds from an understanding of determinacy, to an account of the role of the one in the production of determinacy and of existence. I shall argue that he relies upon the third hypothesis of the *Parmenides* in so doing. I shall do this by elaborating upon the arguments in VI.6.13 and demonstrating, on the basis of this elaboration, that there is a considerable overlap between the crucial elements of Plotinus' argument in VI.6.13 and Plato's argument in the third hypothesis of the *Parmenides*. I do not believe that Plotinus' reliance upon the third hypothesis has received any significant emphasis in scholarly literature to date.

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54. I base the numbering of the hypotheses of the *Parmenides* upon the modern convention whereby the third hypothesis (of eight) runs from 157b to 159b. For some ancient commentators, and many Neo-Platonist scholars, 157b-159b is regarded as the fourth hypothesis (of nine) because they regard 155e4-157b5 as a third hypothesis. Plotinus, of course, never refers to the hypotheses by number. See Meinwald, C.C. 1991, pp 117-124 for a discussion of the status of 155e4-157b5 and her reasons for not counting it as a third hypothesis.

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