

# Sufficient Reason, Identities and Discernibles in Plotinus

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According to Leibniz, the Principle of Sufficient Reason means that if there is no sufficient reason for two things being different, they must be the very same thing, while if there is a sufficient reason for them to be different, they must be different things. In other words, the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles (*principium identitatis indiscernibilium*) and, inversely, the Principle of the Non-Identity of Discernibles are both evident consequences of the Principle of Sufficient Reason. As Leibniz observed<sup>1</sup> and as I will demonstrate now in Plotinus, these logical principles have quite surprising, far-reaching consequences.

Strictly, the direct English translation is not adequate, since the Latin *indiscernibilium* means what is objectively “non-distinguishable” rather than what is just subjectively indiscernible for one person or another (cf. *Theaetetus*

1. The observation appears in *Principia logico-metaphysica* (or *Primae veritates*), in G.W. Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe. Sechste Reihe. Vierter Band B* (Berlin, 1999) 1643–49, p. 1645: “Because they are too easy, these issues have not been satisfactorily considered, though from them follow many things of great importance [...] (*Ex his propter nimiam facilitatem suam non satis consideratis multa consequuntur magni momenti [...]*).” The Principle of Sufficient Reason is also presented in, e.g., *La Monadologie*, in G.W. Leibniz, *Die Philosophischen Schriften* I–VII, ed. C.J. Gerhardt, vol. VI (Berlin, 1885) 607–23, § 32, while the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles is found, e.g., *ibid.*, §§ 9–10. Leibniz, *Principia*, *ibid.*, similarly develops the Principle of the Non-Identity of Discernibles from the Principle of Sufficient Reason (*principium sufficientis rationis*). He simply writes: “It follows also that there cannot be two singular things in nature, which are different only numerically (*Sequitur etiam hinc non dari posse in natura duas res singulares solo numero differentes*).” For previous treatments of Plotinus as one of the sources of Leibniz’ philosophy, cf. G. Rodier, “Sur une des origines de la philosophie de Leibniz,” *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 10 (1902): 552–64; H.F. Müller, “Das Problem der Theodicee bei Leibniz und Plotinos,” *Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum* 43 (1919): 199–229; P. Merlan, *Monopsychism, Mysticism, Metaconsciousness: Problems of the Soul in the Neoplatonist and Neoplatonic Tradition* (The Hague, 1963) 57–59; R. Meyer, “Leibniz und Plotin,” *Studia Leibnitiana Supplementa* 5 (Wiesbaden, 1971) 31–54; A. Ousager, *Bevægelse, tid og rum samt personlig identitet ifølge Plotin, Leibniz og Kant*, Magister artium thesis (Aarhus University, 1995) 60–76; A. Ousager, *Plotinus on Selfhood, Freedom and Politics*, PhD thesis (King’s College, London, 2001–02) *passim* and C. Mercer, *Leibniz’s Metaphysics: Its Origins and Development* (Cambridge, 2001) 174–80, 188–89, 203–04, 213, 223, 316 n. 37.

209a).<sup>2</sup> This circumstance has often caused some confusion in understanding. For convenience, I will use the traditional translation in the following, while insisting that the etymology and original Latin semantics be kept in mind. As is certainly assumed in Plotinus, the principles presuppose an exhaustive point of departure in order to avoid epistemic puzzles presented by conceptions such as the notion of a manifold of identical items, e.g., atoms, in an absolute space.

The Principles of the Identity of Indiscernibles and the Non-Identity of Discernibles are not only each an independent logical consequence of the Principle of Sufficient Reason. They also imply each other mutually. In fact, each of these inversely related principles consists of internal biconditionals including the inverse relationship between antecedent and consequent, as shown in this paraphrased arrangement:

The Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles:  
 All things that are (logically) indistinguishable are (really) identical.  
 <->  
 All things that are identical are indistinguishably identical.  
 <->  
 The Principle of the Non-Identity of Discernibles:  
 All things that are distinguishable are non-identical.  
 <->  
 All things that are non-identical are distinguishable.

These four laws are all acknowledged in Leibniz' writings, although in the course of the history of philosophy only the second—that all identical things have identical properties—has been assigned the special title, *Leibniz' law*. While it was Leibniz who effectively coined the designations of these principles, he was definitely not the first to employ them. Let us look briefly at the

2. This has in effect been acknowledged by G.F.L. Frege, "Über Sinn und Bedeutung," *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik* 100 (1892): 25–50, pp. 27, 35, 37–38, 50. He points out the invalidity of what has been called Leibniz' law for purely intentional objects like the Morning and the Evening Star which have an identical reference (the planet Venus) but different significations. Discovering this ambiguity between meaning and reference, however, does not invalidate Leibniz' law, since neither Leibniz nor his forerunner, Plotinus, ever say that reference and meaning are the same. The very designation *principium identitatis indiscernibilium* presupposes a plurality of indiscernibilia, the significations of which consequently must be mutually different and distinct from their referred single identity. Observe that Frege's example is taken over from the Platonic *Epinomis* 987b and *Epigram* 2 (Edmonds), cf. also Plato *Laws* 821c, Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1129b28 (quoting Euripides *Melanippe* fr. 486 Nauck), *On the Universe* 392a27–28, Plotinus VI.6.6.39–40 and III.5.8.22–23. On the latter passage, cf. further below under the heading *Cosmology*.

beginnings among the Presocratics and Plato in order to follow some important significations of these principles fully at work in Plotinus' argumentation mainly against Aristotle and Aristotelianism.

### I. ANAXIMANDER, XENOPHANES AND PARMENIDES

The Principle of Sufficient Reason is apparently the basis for Anaximander's argument that the earth does not move, for he finds no sufficient reason why it should move anywhere (DK 12A26).

In Xenophanes, this implied argument is applied to the existence of God (DK 21B25), while Parmenides is far more explicit in the same negative use of the Principle of Sufficient Reason when pointedly arguing the case that all Being is, for instance, immobile and indivisible, ungenerated and imperishable. According to Parmenides, there is no sufficient reason why Being should have been generated sooner or later and no sufficient reason why it should have been generated at all. Consequently, it is ungenerated and, correspondingly, imperishable (DK 28B8.3, 8.12–13, 8.19, 8.21, 8.27).<sup>3</sup> Parmenides implies the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles. For all Being is considered Being all alike (ὁμοῦ πᾶν 8.5, ὁμοῖον 8.2, ὁμόν 8.47, ὁμῶς 8.49) and there could be no reason why it should be divided (8.22–25), as division presumably would be a kind of motion, which is generally excluded in Parmenides' argument (8.26, 8.38, Cornford's fragment). Therefore, Being is one (8.6) and not trembling or changing in any way (1.29, 8.4, 8.41, 8.48). Being is by necessity (cf. 2.3, 8.16, 8.30) and is by necessity self-identical (8.29), as it is indistinguishably itself. Parmenides has implicitly deduced the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles from the Principle of Sufficient Reason.

### II. PLATO

Today, it is acknowledged that much of Plato's philosophy was a reaction to the philosophy of Parmenides.<sup>4</sup> In his dialogue *Parmenides*, for instance, Plato disentangled Unity from Parmenides' Being by what is presented as sufficient reasons. This is accomplished in hypothesis II of the *Parmenides*

3. Cf. R.D. McKirahan, Jr., *Philosophy Before Socrates: An Introduction with Texts and Commentary* (Indianapolis, 1994) 40, 167 concerning Anaximander and Parmenides. McKirahan (p. 308) also identifies the Principle of Sufficient Reason in the Atomists (DK 68A38) and (p. 314) among these as being quite explicit in Democritus (DK 68B156). The οὐ μᾶλλον argument encountered here and elsewhere (e.g., Leucippus DK 67A8, Protagoras according to Plutarch *Against Colotes* 1108f–1109a, DK 68A114, DK 80A15, Gorgias DK 82B3) is the Principle of Sufficient Reason in its negative expression, just as, e.g., in the first sense of the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles listed above.

4. Cf. J.A. Palmer, *Plato's Reception of Parmenides* (Oxford, 1999) 3.

(143b) according to the general Principle of the Non-Identity of Discernibles established explicitly, together with the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles a little later in the same hypothesis (146b): “[...] for everything is either the same as or different from anything else.”<sup>5</sup> As is explained in the same manner in the *Sophist* (244b–245b), Unity and Being cannot then be identical.

### III. MODALITY ACCORDING TO PLOTINUS’ NEOPLATONISM

Elsewhere in the writings of Plato, a Neoplatonist like Plotinus could easily find further sufficient reasons for this distinction. He simply interprets what is said in the *Phaedo* (101b–102a), *Republic* (423d–e, 510b, 511b), *Philebus* (20b–21a, 52d, 60b–c) and *Second Letter* (312e–313a) on the quest for ultimate self-sufficiency and identifies that highest modal necessity with pure Unity or the One (τὸ ἓν) from hypothesis I of the *Parmenides* (137c–142a).

Using the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles, Plotinus equates the transcendence of that One in relation to Being with the transcendence of the Good in relation to Being according to the simile of the sun in the *Republic* (509b). Since they have the very same relation to Being, and only one could be beyond Being, the One and the Good must be identical, or, as Plotinus says, there can only be one single One, “for if there were another of this kind, both would be one” (V.4.1.16–17).<sup>6</sup>

In the *Philebus* (20d, cf. 20e–21a, 60b–c) a common standard was suggested to Plotinus referring to the Good as sufficient to itself:

Socrates: What then? Is the Good sufficient (ἰκανὸν)?

Protarchus: How wouldn't it be? And in this it certainly differs from all beings (πάντων [...]) τῶν ὄντων).

This deepens his understanding of the Good as presented in the simile of the sun, since now the difference between Being and the Good is explicitly expressed as a matter of degree as to modal necessity (cf. III.3.3.17–18). Plotinus concludes that the Good is the One (cf. *Philebus* 15a), since both are assigned the absolute modal necessity (V.3.10.17, V.3.13.32, VI.7.25.15, cf. *Philebus* 63b), and a higher modal necessity than that assigned to Substance

5. Translations of Plato in this article are borrowed or freely emended from F.M. Cornford, *Plato and Parmenides: Parmenides' Way of Truth and Plato's Parmenides translated with an Introduction and a running Commentary* (London, 1939) and from Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. J.M. Cooper & D.S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis, 1997).

6. Translations of Plotinus in this article are borrowed or freely emended from *Plotinus I–VII*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge, MA, 1966–89).

and Being (οὐσία, τό εἶναι, τό ὄν) or to Substances and Beings (οὐσίαι, τὰ ὄντα). The Good is of a higher modal necessity than that of the Forms.

Even among these or in relation to sensible things, there could be differences of modal necessity as explained by the Eleatic stranger in the *Sophist* (255c, cf. *Philebus* 53d, *Republic* 438a–b):

But I suppose you admit that, among things that exist, some are always spoken of as being what they are just in themselves, others as being what they are with reference to other things.

According to Plotinus' reading of the *Parmenides*, the differences as to modal necessity are wholly dependent upon participation in Unity and the relations to the One of hypothesis I.

#### IV. A SUFFICIENT REASON BEHIND CAUSES

The highly significant Principle of Sufficient Reason is in use throughout Plotinus' philosophy implicitly as well as explicitly. Explicitly, it is expressed with forms of either of the two words ἰκανός (i.e., "sufficient") or ἀυτάρκης (i.e., "independent"). He says he is on a quest for sufficient arguments to show the order of things (III.2.1.1–5, III.5.7.9–12, III.6.3.27, III.7.1.7–13, IV.3.1.18–21, IV.4.21.14–18, IV.5.8.15–17, IV.7.8<sup>3</sup>.23–25, VI.1.1.4–14, VI.1.28.23–26). The exact sufficiency of these arguments turns out to correspond closely to the sufficiency or independence of things (V.8.6.15–18, cf. III.3.3.17–18, II.9.14.36–44), for the objective, logical order and the henological order are the same. The One, for instance, is not only what is most independent and sufficient of everything (V.3.13.16–21, V.4.1.10–13, VI.9.6.15–18); it is, simply and exclusively, absolutely independent and sufficient to itself (I.1.2.22–23, I.8.2.4–5, I.8.3.14–15, II.9.1.8–9, IV.4.18.21–22, V.2.1.1–9, V.3.10.51, V.3.12.28–42, V.3.13.16–21, V.3.16.30–31, V.3.17.10–14, V.5.4.6–7, V.5.5.1–7, V.5.9.23, V.6.2.15–16, V.6.3, V.6.4.20–22, VI.1.26.36–37, VI.4.10.22–24, VI.7.23.7–8, VI.7.37.29–31, VI.7.38.22–24, VI.8.7.42–46, VI.8.8.12–27, VI.8.15.26–28, VI.9.6.24–26 & 45). This is so because Unity and, consequently, simplicity (I.1.2.22–23, VI.7.13.1–3, V.3.11.2–3 & 27–28, V.3.16.7–8) are the measure of sufficiency and independence (VI.9.6.16–17, cf. V.3.15.10–18), for (IV.4.18.21–22): "[...] when something is one, it is as it were (οἶον) independent to itself." The One with ultimate independence is the self-sufficient reason for the preservation of everything else (cf. III.2.2.6–7), while everything else, including Intellect (V.3.17.1–14, V.9.5.45–48, V.9.14.1–4, cf., e.g., III.5.9.19) and its Being (VI.6.18.52–53), will only have relative independence, i.e., independence compared to something that is causally posterior. For instance, this is true of Soul (V.3.8.8–12) and the universe

(III.2.3.19–22, cf. *Timaeus* 30d–31b, 41a–d) together with all its animals (VI.7.9–10). Although, or more precisely because we will be able to distinguish and discriminate the generic and specific cause of every particular thing (II.3.13.1–3), consequently any causal relation ultimately has its background in a sufficient logical relation to the One (III.2.1.1–5, cf. VI.8.8.12–14, V.5.9.36–37).

#### V. REASON AND CAUSE IN PLATO AND PLOTINUS

To indicate the difference and yet close connection between cause and logical reason, Plotinus exploits the appearance of the two words αἴτιον and αἰτία in Plato. In English they have traditionally both been translated indiscriminately as “cause.” Etymologically, αἰτία as well as αἴτιον have forensic overtones, referring to conscious or (self-)aware “responsibility,” “guilt.” “intent” or “reason,” in contrast to, for instance, the word ἀρχή, which simply means “origin,” “beginning,” “principle” or “cause” without any necessary reference to anything being conscious or aware.

An αἴτιον in Plato, however, is less intentional than is an αἰτία, since here the feminine personalisation of the neuter αἴτιον into the word αἰτία is reserved for the most deliberate matters (cf. *Timaeus* 29d, 33a, 38d, 40b, 44c, 47b).<sup>7</sup> Thus, in the *Philebus* (30c), when Plato in passing calls Intellect αἰτία and not just αἴτιον or ἀρχή, it is unlikely to be coincidence, for Intellect is first and foremost conscious and thinking. While ἀρχή, αἴτιον and αἰτία can all be translated approximately as “cause,” since all of them eventually will have impact as causes, it is therefore appropriate in Plato, and in Platonism and Neoplatonism alike, always to translate αἰτία as “reason.”

Behind all causes and effects appearing, there is a sufficient reason to be found according to Plotinus, or as he asks in passing in one context (III.5.6.43–44): “What, then, is the reason (ἡ αἰτία)?” The doctrine has a clear background in Plato. In the *Philebus* (26e), for instance, we find Socrates’ statement: “It is necessary that everything has become what it is because of some reason (διὰ τινος αἰτίας).” Everything considered a creative reason (αἰτία) would also be a cause (αἴτιον), and in this way a cause is always subordinated to a reason (26e):

7. Cf. G.M. Ledbetter, “Reasons and Causes in Plato: The Distinction between αἰτία and αἴτιον,” *Ancient Philosophy* 19 (1999): 255–65, pp. 255–56: “Where Plato gives these terms different meanings, I shall argue that he distinguishes not between propositional and non-propositional items, as Frede proposes, but between reasons and causes.” Ledbetter is referring to M. Frede, “The Original Notion of Cause,” in *Doubt and Dogmatism. Studies in Hellenistic Epistemology*, eds. M. Schofield, M. Burnyeat & J. Barnes (Oxford, 1980) 217–49. A precursor to Frede’s quasi-linguistic turn is G. Vlastos, “Reasons and Causes in the *Phaedo*,” *Philosophical Review* 69 (1969): 291–325, especially pp. 306–07.

Socrates: And is it not the case that there is no difference between the nature of what makes and the reason (τῆς αἰτίας), except in name, so that the maker and the cause (τὸ αἴτιον) would rightly be called one (έν)?

Protarchus: Right.

Inversely, however, to declare something to be a cause (αἴτιον) is *not* the same as saying it is itself a reason (αἴτια), and even less so the self-sufficient reason itself. Between superordinate and subordinate there is no mutual implication, but only a “vertical” relation, which was made a clear-cut principle in Plotinus’ Neoplatonism.<sup>8</sup> For, as it is said in the *Philebus* (27a): “Now, it is something other and not the same to be the reason (αἴτια) and what is subservient to the reason (αἴτιον) for Becoming.”

On the one hand, the Good is a cause of everything, since, according to the *Republic* (509b), Being and Substance are “thrown in (προσεῖναι)” solely because of the Good (ὑπ’ ἐκείνου). On the other hand, in a narrow sense of reason, the Good (379b) and, similarly, the Form of the Good (517b–c) can only be a reason (αἴτια) for what is good but not for what is bad. This is why we have responsibility (αἴτια) for our wrong choices, while God, considered as the Good, could not be responsible (ἀνάτιος, 617e), cf. *Timaeus* (42e).<sup>9</sup>

A wider sense of αἴτια as “reason,” however, is remarkably clear in the passage in the *Timaeus* (48a), where we find the dimmest version of reason, “the Form of the reason lead astray (τὸ τῆς πλανωμένης εἶδος αἰτίας).” This passage notably presents the modal necessity associated precisely with the “dim Form (ἀμυδρὸν εἶδος)” of space (49a, 52a–b). We should infer that this perhaps lowest reason could only be lead astray by a reason of higher range, of higher modal necessity, as the necessity of nature is similarly ruled by the necessity of Intellect (48a, cf. Plot. III.2.2.33–36). As it is here, in the *Philebus*, even when it is itself called a reason (30c), Intellect is also presented as the cause (αἴτιον, 22d) derived from the ultimate cause (30d–e): “[...] Intellect is kindred (γένουσι) with what is called the cause (αἴτιου) of everything.” In the same place, Intellect is called highly sufficient (μάλα

8. The designation of M.F. Wagner, “Vertical Causation in Plotinus,” in *The Structure of Being: A Neoplatonic Approach*, ed. R.B. Harris (Albany, 1982) 51–72.

9. As distinct from A. Graeser, “Tradition ohne Innovation? Kritische Bemerkungen zur Interpretation einiger klassischer Platon-Stellen,” in *Metaphysik und Religion: Zur Signatur des spätantiken Denkens* Akten des Internationalen Kongresses, Würzburg 13.–17. März 2001, eds. T. Kobusch, M. Erler & I. Männlein-Robert (Munich, 2002) 355–86, p. 359, who thinks that the Good in the simile of the sun could only be a cause of what is right and beautiful, i.e., good (cf. *Second Letter* 312e). Insight into his view is provided in the fact that he translates αἴτια as “Ursache.”

ἰκανῶς), i.e., a relatively sufficient reason, when not completely self-sufficient itself (cf. 20b), as is, presumably, the Good.<sup>10</sup>

For Intellect is not only kindred to “the cause” (30e) but (31a) “akin (συγγενῆς)” to “the reason (αἰτία).” If we distinguish between αἰτία and αἴτιον, this would suggest that the absolutely self-sufficient reason is something other than Intellect, although Intellect would be considered the truly divine Intellect and not just a particular, personal intellect (cf. 22c).

Likewise, Plato’s *Phaedo* (99b) alludes to “the cause of Being” (τὸ αἴτιον τῷ ὄντι), which is probably rightly to be reckoned the reason for Being and for any generation and destruction, since it is equated with the Good as (95e, 98a–b) “the reason (τὴν αἰτίαν)” behind all causes, “without which the cause (αἴτιον) would not be a cause.”

In conclusion, there is clearly a suggestive difference in Plato between “reason (αἰτία)” and “cause (αἴτιον).” There would always be a sufficient reason for a cause to be a cause, i.e., to be efficient as a cause, while the inverse relation—“a sufficient cause for a reason to be a reason”—would simply not make sense.<sup>11</sup> The sense of “reason (αἰτία)” is all-important in Plato.

Correspondingly, in Plotinus, the very sense of the One as single, unique or alone (μοναχόν) is pivotal (VI.8.9.9–13), and the One is explicitly called the reason (αἰτία) of Intellect (V.1.11.7) as well as the cause (αἴτιον) of its Forms (VI.7.19.19). For sufficient reasons, which he is quite concerned to develop (e.g., V.1.7.11–13, V.4.2.17–19, V.6.1, VI.7.41, I.4.10.5–7, V.3.10, V.3.13), this ultimate reason is not reflexively self-aware, but only simply aware. Reflexivity is reserved for Intellect instead.

10. A sufficient reason is not at all the same as a “sufficient condition,” since a “condition” would usually be considered a state of affairs in the sensible world. Plotinus as well as Plato denounce these as having no other causal effect than just being *necessary* conditions for sufficient reasons of another order than the sensible to be effected. Necessary conditions would themselves be effects of sufficient reasons, confirming but also adding to D. Sedley, “Platonic Causes,” *Phronesis* 43 (1998): 114–32, p. 121: “[...] Platonic causes are not straightforwardly identifiable with either necessary or sufficient conditions.”

11. While Sedley, “Platonic Causes” 115–17 points to the logical or, in his terms, “quasi-logical” meaning of both the words αἰτία and αἴτιον in Plato, he does not seem to distinguish sufficiently between them. Concerning the Principle of Sufficient Reason, A. Schopenhauer, *Ueber die vierfache Wurzel des Satzes vom zureichenden Grunde: Eine philosophische Abhandlung*, 2d ed. (Frankfurt am Main, 1847) delivered an influential critical presentation by calling Plato’s conception thereof naïve (II, § 6) and by his emphatic stress on an opposition of reasons and causes. This alleged opposition still holds sway indiscriminately in current philosophy as well as in current history of philosophy. I suggest that we should at least attempt to distinguish these two different fields of knowledge.



An indirect reference to the role of the Principle of Sufficient Reason in the historical Parmenides (8.9–10, 8.19–20) is clear, when as a result of the Parmenidean wordings of Plato's *Timaeus* (37e–38b), Plotinus argues that for the Being of Intellect, there would be no sufficient reason for any additional creation sooner rather than later, and so, it must be eternal (III.7.3.31–36, III.7.4.12–24, III.7.4.37–43, III.7.12.12–13). A more direct reference to Parmenides (8.6–10, 8.19–20, 8.26–28) is obvious when, by virtue of a formulation from Plato's *Philebus* (24d), Plotinus (III.7.4.20–22 & 39–40) adds that there could be no sufficient reason why Being could ever change, for that would be to add only what is not, i.e., Non-Being.

In relation to the universe, Soul is called the more sovereign reason (τὴν κυριωτάτην αἰτίαν, II.1.4.7 & 18) as connected to the origin of and reason for the whole order of things (II.3.6.19–II.3.7.3, cf. VI.8.14.29–31). According to Plotinus' paraphrase of the Law of Causation in the *Timaeus* (28a, 28c), everything will have a reason (αἰτία, not just αἴτιον as in the *Timaeus*) for coming to be (III.1.1.1–3 & 13–15). In this way, he overtly subordinates the Law of Causation to the Principle of Sufficient Reason.

The Sufficient Reason, in the absolute singular in Plotinus, is the One. We are now to consider how this connects with the two principles derived from the Principle of Sufficient Reason, the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles and the inverse Principle of the Non-Identity of Discernibles. They are closely connected in Plotinus' argumentation. When he argues for the identity of indiscernibles, he often hypothetically applies the inverse Principle of the Non-Identity of Discernibles to suggest the absurd, discernible consequences, if, *ex hypothesi*, “two things” were not identical. Likewise, when he argues for the non-identity of discernibles, he often hypothetically applies the inverse Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles to suggest the absurd, single, indistinguishable consequence, if two or more things were not distinguished. These are logically interdependent principles. In the following presentation, the conclusion of the argumentation will be decisive for whether I allocate an argument drawing upon both principles as an example of either the one or the other principle at work in Plotinus.

## VI. IDENTITY OF INDISCERNIBLES IN PLOTINUS

### *The One*

According to Plato's apparently sufficient reasons in hypothesis I of the *Parmenides* (139b–d), Plotinus similarly transfers the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles or, rather, absolute indistinguishability, to the One, for it is without distinction (διαφορὰν, VI.9.11.8, VI.2.9.9–11 & 14–16) or discriminations (διακεκριμένα, V.3.15.31). The One is absolutely different from anything else (V.3.10.49–51), because apart from anything else it does

not contain any generic Difference (ἕτερότητα) in itself (VI.9.6.42, VI.9.8.33–35).

It is indiscernibly itself and self-identical, so that even merely the Principle of Identity,  $A = A$ , or, using Plotinus' own terms, “am am” or “I I” (V.3.10.33–37), belongs to another stage of the manifold of either Forms or of linguistic expressions, for “that which explicates itself must be many” (V.3.10.51). Consequently, it is so with the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles and the inverse Principle of the Non-Identity of Discernibles as well, since by definition they already presuppose the manifold, if only for the sake of argument. Intellect is the first stage where the two different Forms of Being and Identity (or active selfhood; e.g., the absolute measure of the “I” in III.7.12.37–39) could be brought together, as in what has become known as the certain, Cartesian “I am” (V.3.13.21–28).

This of course does not preclude the One conforming to both the Principle of Sufficient Reason and the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles, as Plotinus also generally confirms both the Law of Non-Contradiction (e.g., II.3.3.16–18) and the Law of the Excluded Middle (e.g., I.1.9.12–15). For instance, the One is unlimited with regard to power, for if it were limited, it would be limited by itself and be two (V.5.11.3–4), and that would be a contradiction in terms. It cannot be limited according to the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles, since it is indistinguishably itself. The One must be the Good, for what is Good is indiscernibly self-identical (V.5.13.23–24), and this must coincide with the One that creates and unifies everything (V.4.1, VI.7.17.3–6, VI.7.24, VI.7.41.28–31, VI.9.6.39–42 & 55–57, V.6.6.34, V.5.9.36–38, cf. V.5.13.17–38, III.8.10, V.3.15).

There can be no distinction, then, between a subject and an object in the One. A distinction would introduce a duality into the One between subject—its as it were (πῶς) actuality (ἐνέργεια)—and object—its as it were substance (οὐσία, VI.8.12.28–37). There could be no passivity, potentiality (VI.8.4.22–28) or object, but only an activity, power, actuality or subject, the Self, because, as Plotinus states (VI.8.20.24–27), the making principle and Self (αὐτό) are concurrent and therefore one and identical (ἐν ἄμφω, V.3.10.3).

Plotinus' employment of the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles does not depend upon what Aristotle in the *Metaphysics* (1074a32–38) made the criterion of the indistinguishability of the “actualisation (ἐντελέχεια)” of the “in number and definition one, prime unmoveable mover (ἐν ἄρα καὶ λόγῳ καὶ ἀριθμῷ τὸ προτῶν κινουῦν ἀκίνητον ὄν),” namely absence of matter of any kind, including intelligible matter. Rather, the emphasis upon actuality is just a case of the applied Principle of Sufficient Rea-

son.<sup>12</sup> In contrast to Aristotle's conclusion, Plotinus argues from Aristotle's own general premises in the *Metaphysics* (1071b12–21), that in so far as one considers the prime principle an actuality, it must be a pure actuality prior to, and neither co-instantaneous with nor posterior to, Substance (οὐσία, VI.8.20.8–19). In thought, we can distinguish it from Being (VI.2.9.32–34). This actuality, activity, subject or Self is the pure One as referred to in hypothesis I of Plato's *Parmenides*.

### *Intellect*

Within Intellect, on the other hand, there will not only be a subject but also objects of intellection. The indistinguishable identity is here only metaphorical (VI.7.39.9, VI.7.41.12–13), for Intellect needs Difference in order to think anything (cf. V.3.10.24–28, V.6.1.11–13). Therefore, it differs from the pure Unity of the One (VI.7.39.4–10). In a qualified sense, relative to Soul's stepwise reasoning, however, the perfect self-Intellection of Intellect renders subject and object almost indistinguishable, as is expressed by Plotinus' frequent use of the Parmenidean phrases (DK 28B3) "for Thinking and Being are the same" (V.1.4.26–28, V.1.8.17–18, V.9.5.29–30, III.8.8.8, I.4.10.6, cf. III.5.7.51–54, V.6.6.21–23, VI.7.41.18) and (DK 28B8.5), "all alike" (V.3.15.20–21, cf. I.1.8.8, III.6.6.23, III.6.18.25, III.8.9.53, IV.2[4].2.44, IV.4.2.11, IV.4.11.27, V.3.17.10, V.8.10.18, V.8.11.5, V.9.6.3 & 8–9, V.9.7.11–12, V.9.10.10, VI.4.14.4–6, VI.5.5.3–4, VI.5.6.3, VI.6.7.4, VI.7.2.38, VI.7.33.8–10).<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, he seems occasionally (e.g., V.9.5.11–13, V.3.5.26–33 & 43–44, VI.5.7.1–11) to confirm Aristotle in *On the Soul* (430a2–5, 431a1, 431b17–21) that actual thought is identical with its objects.<sup>14</sup> This is mainly because Intellect is the stage of pure Being, and, according to Plotinus' Platonic interpretation of Parmenides along the lines of the *Sophist*, the genus of Being in itself is indistinguishably self-identical (III.7.6, VI.2.7.16). In

12. As distinct from L.P. Gerson, "Plotinus and the Rejection of Aristotelian Metaphysics," in *Aristotle in Late Antiquity*, ed. L.P. Schrenk (Washington, DC, 1994) 3–21, p. 16.

13. Cf. my preliminary study, A. Ousager, "Plotinus on Motion and Personal Identity through Time and Space," *Classica et Mediaevalia* 46–47 (1995): 113–44 & (1996): 109–49, especially pp. 116–17 and 119–29 of the latter part.

14. Plotinus' doctrine is only taken as a qualified confirmation of Aristotle by H. Seidl, "L'Union mystique dans l'explication philosophique de Plotin," *Revue Thomiste* 85 (1985): 253–64, pp. 259–60, who points out that, unlike Plotinus, Aristotle regards the identity between subject and object as merely epistemic. This identity is, however, taken at face value as unqualified confirmation of Aristotle by, e.g., G.R. Carone, "Mysticism and Individuality: A Plotinian Paradox," in *The Perennial Tradition of Neoplatonism*, ed. J.J. Cleary (Leuven, 1997) 177–87, p. 181.

this sense, it is something of an understatement when Plotinus says that the One in Being from hypothesis II of the *Parmenides* “in a way coincides (ὄσον συνεκπίπτου)” with Being (VI.2.9.39–40), for apart from the fact that Unity and Being are distinguished, the One in Being and Being are quite indistinguishable.

The participation in pure Being is the Platonic background for Plotinus’ declaration that the Forms are, using the Aristotelian phrase, all indistinguishably “actual” (II.9.1.23–25). In this relative sense, the Forms make up an indivisible unity (V.7.1.26–27), for, as he generally states (VI.7.10.17), “what is common is not differentiated.”

### *The One and Souls*

This non-differentiation of what is common is more or less true of souls in love, for instance. The loving unity is only complete in the One, however. The One is always present, while we are only present to it when we are without a trace of generic Difference (VI.9.8.33–35, VI.7.34.13–16), cf. hypothesis I of the *Parmenides* (139b–c). There is only a separation of the One and the particular soul as a result of that very Difference (V.1.6.50–53, IV.3.5.4–8, VI.9.9.26–27), cf. *Euthydemus* (301a). It is stated quite explicitly that if Difference and Sameness were the major elements of thought, the One would be present to the soul at a stage when its thought no longer contains Difference. Then they would be exactly the same, one, just as when other things contain no general Otherness (V.3.15.38–39) or Difference, they will lack plurality and become a unity (VI.9.8.24–35, VI.2.6.13–20, cf. V.1.4.38–39, V.8.11.4–22, IV.4.2.8–10, IV.4.4.11–14, V.3.10.24–25), cf. *Parmenides* (143b, 146a–b, 146d). Or, rather, as the one relation, the One becoming the same as the soul, is strictly not possible, cf. *Parmenides* (139d–e), the soul would be the same as the One, cf. *Parmenides* (156b), for, as Plotinus says, “the differentia is Difference (καὶ ἡ διαφορὰ ἑτερότητος, V.1.4.41).” A distinction would then be impossible to make (VI.7.34.13–14, cf. V.5.8.21), or, as he tells us (III.8.9.51–53):

But as for the First being each one separately (καθ’ ἕκαστον), any one of all of them will be the same as any other; then all will be confounded together (ὁμοῦ πάντα) and there will be no distinction (οὐδὲν διακρινεῖ).

This obviously works logically due to the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles. So if one captures the One in its entirety (ὁμοῦ πάντα), as Plotinus says (V.5.10.5–7), while indirectly referring to Parmenides’ One Being (8.5–6), oneself can be distinct from it no longer. In the state of absolute union (VI.9.11.41–42), the Self and the One are then indistinguishably identical as both “beyond Substance,” cf. *Republic* (509b). One does not

distinguish the two (VI.9.10.14) when becoming one with the One itself (VI.9.10.20–21).<sup>15</sup>

### *Cosmology*

Reflecting the *reductio ad absurdum* argument in Plato's *Timaeus* (31a–b), and with the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles to hand, Plotinus argues that there can only be one universe (II.9.8.26–29). Likewise, as the Platonic *Epinomis* (987b) and *Epigram 2* (Edmonds) equate the Morning and the Evening Star, Plotinus (III.5.8.22–23) echoes Aristotle's *On the Universe* (392a27–28), announcing that the stars of Aphrodite (Venus) and Hera are really indistinguishably the same.

### *Matter*

In contrast to the Formless One with its absolute power and actuality, at the other end of the spectrum there is the last and presumably almost equally Formless but, in any case, completely powerless principle of Matter. In contrast to what appears as the clear sun of the One according to Plotinus' understanding of the simile of the sun, the last Forms or actualities that have originated from the sun or the One are altogether dim (cf. I.4.3.18–22) and, in fact, absolutely non-sensible (cf. *Timaeus* 49a). Therefore, they are altogether indiscernible (καὶ αἱ μὲν ἀσθενεῖς καὶ ἀμυδραί, αἱ δὲ καὶ λαυθάνουσαι, IV.5.7.20–21). If this corresponds to indistinguishability, then they must run together into one single, identical principle, i.e., into Matter. Referring to the notorious Atomist view, Plotinus declares this further indistinguishable or indivisible Form (εἶδος ἄτομον, VI.7.14.18, cf.

15. In Armstrong's note to his quite appropriate 1988 translation of VI.7.34.13–14: "for there is nothing between, nor are there still two but both are one (οὐδὲν οὐδ' ἔτι δύο, ἀλλ' ἓν ἄμφω)," he at the same time suggests a dualistic or theistic reading. He explains that "ἓν ἄμφω is always used by Plotinus of a perfect union in which the two united retain their distinct natures," and refers to what he believes to be similar use in IV.4.2.29 and V.8.7.13, cf. also Seidl, "L'Union mystique" 258–59, 264. However, in VI.7.34.13–14 (as in, for instance, V.3.10.3 as well) ἓν ἄμφω is used in a connection in which distinction is excluded, cf. J. Maréchal, *Studies in the Psychology of the Mystics*, trans. A. Thorold (London, 1927) 298. The only thing common to all three texts mentioned by Armstrong as including the expression ἓν ἄμφω is that nothing is in between two things, be it between Intellect and Soul (IV.4.2.29), between Intellect and the sensible universe (V.8.7.13—the expression ἓν ἄμφω does not appear here, however), or between the human self and the One (VI.7.34.13–14). Likewise, P. Hadot, "Histoire de la pensée hellénistique et romaine," *Annuaire du Collège de France* 91 (1990–91): 481–91, p. 489 seems to beg the question in favour of a theistic interpretation: "Quand Plotin dit en parlant du Bien et de l'âme: 'Les deux sont un,' il ne dit pas: 'Les deux sont l'Un' car précisément, ils sont deux." L.P. Gerson, *Plotinus* (London, 1994) 223, 293 n. 50 makes basically the same theistic interpretation of the expression ἓν ἄμφω as do Seidl, Armstrong and Hadot.

VI.7.17.22) the lowest in the order originating from the both Formless and absolutely partless (τὸ ἀμερῆς πάντα) One.

## VII. NON-IDENTITY OF DISCERNIBLES IN PLOTINUS

### *Distinction between the One and Intellect*

In the origin of everything, the One, nothing is yet distinguished. Rather, distinction happens in its first “expression (τῷ λόγῳ),” i.e., with the appearance of Intellect (V.3.15.31–32). Intellect keeps itself in Being by clinging to the One. In this way they together make up a kind of whole (V.5.8.21–22) but, in fact, they are not identical, and so, they must be distinguished. The main reason is that proto-Intellect separates itself from the One by contemplating it, and contemplation of the One is only possible by treating the One as a manifold, which makes Intellect a manifold in turn, distinct from the One (III.8.8.30–32), cf. *Parmenides* (156b). Being a manifold, Intellect is obviously not completely one and simple on its own; for if it were, it would—according to the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles—coalesce with the One itself (V.4.2.9, VI.7.8.17–21, cf. III.8.9.51–53), and this would be absurd. Also, the One, which is the Good, would then be identical with the thought of the Good, and that would mean, absurdly, that the Good and what is less than Good would be identical (VI.7.40.32–36). By Difference (V.8.13.7–9) they must be distinguished and are therefore non-identical, as all things within Intellect are distinguished by generic Difference (VI.2.8.31–36) and all things in general must be different (III.2.12.4–7, III.3.3.18–24). The One itself is thus absolutely distinct from both Intellect and Soul (VI.7.35.42–44, cf. V.3.10.51–52).

Plotinus explores the Principle of the Non-Identity of Discernibles most rigidly when he holds against Aristotle that there could be no logical difference without a real difference as well, as, correspondingly, there could be no real difference without a logical difference (VI.2.10.40–42). If the differences were held to be only in our subjective afterthought (ἐπινοίᾳ), it would absurdly mean that in fact everything—for instance, all the hypotheses—would be identical, which, of course, they are not (II.9.1.40–41, VI.2.7.7–8).

Plotinus’ argument supports Plato’s view of Unity and Being as distinct in the *Parmenides* (142b) and is formed as a veritable attack upon Aristotle’s view in the *Metaphysics* (1003b22–34, 1059b27–31) that Being and Unity mutually imply each other and hold identical logical positions without being identical after all. In contrast to Aristotle’s view, in Plotinus there could be no logical distinction without a real difference or vice-versa. For Plotinus, opposed logical principles like the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles and the Principle of the Non-Identity of Discernibles, mutually imply each

other without being identical. This is precisely because they have inverse logical positions with regard to the manifold, either as multiplying or as unifying.

Plotinus continues this fundamental investigation in some of his latest treatises. He says that the relation of everything to anything else must be one of relative contrariety, though contrariety is strongest between the absolute contraries of the originating One and dispersive Matter, i.e., Good and Evil (I.8[51].6.20–59, cf. *Theaetetus* 176a, *Republic* 381b–c, *Philebus* 13d). For without opposites and, among them, particular beings opposed to each other, there would be no universal order (II.3.16.45–46). So against Aristotle's doctrine in the *Categories* (3b24–31), it must be concluded that different substances are all, in fact, sorts of contraries due to the Principle of the Non-Identity of Discernibles. In various ways, they participate in the genus of Difference (ἐτερότης, cf. VI.9.8.31–35) or general Otherness (τὸ ἄλλο, cf. VI.7.41.13–14), cf. *Parmenides* (143b). The apparent contraries and opposites, however, remain a unity on a deeper level as all originated from the same pure Unity, the One (III.3[48].1.9–12).

#### *Distinction Between Intellect and Self-Intellection*

One of the most delicate ways in which Plotinus employs the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles and the Principle of the Non-Identity of Discernibles at the same time appears in VI.7.10.7–11:

And certainly, if Intellect is composed of many, it must on the other hand be one; now it is not possible for it to be composed of many and all of them the same: if it were, it would be an independent (αὐτάρκετος) one (ἓν). It must then be composed of things again and again differing in Form, like every composite being, and each particular must be preserved, as their shapes and forming principles are.

If things were all the same, i.e., identical, they could numerically only be one and the same, i.e., the absolutely independent One, of which there can be one only. Therefore, all things differing from the One must be less independent, as they are all dependent upon the One, and all of them must differ mutually by necessity.

So, whereas pure Being is a common denominator for all Forms, they must differentiate themselves from this and from each other according to the Principle of the Non-Identity of Discernibles (VI.7.10). According to Plotinus, the main explanation of how this discernment takes place is by Intellect's self-Intellection of the pure Being of proto-Intellect (e.g., V.3.11.11–16, II.9.6.14–24, cf. *Timaeus* 30c–d, 39e). Among other specific Forms, discernment brings forward the peculiarity (ἰδιον) of two-footedness (VI.3.5.24–29, VI.7.16.4–5, cf. VI.1.1.12–13). Plotinus considers (I.3.4.9–

18, III.5.9.24–29, VI.2.9.9–11) the workings of the Principle of the Non-Identity of Discernibles as corresponding to the dialectic and διαίρεσις employed by the philosopher to distinguish the Forms and analyse things unto their ultimate cause, as mentioned in Plato's *Republic* (531d), *Phaedrus* (266b–c) and *Sophist* (253c–e). Against Aristotle's general premises, Plotinus argues that since Forms are all incorporeal, sensible matter cannot be what distinguishes them from each other. Instead, other distinctions are needed to make them a manifold in contrast to the One (V.1.9.26–27).

When in a certain context, explaining the generation of Intellect (VI.7.40.15–18), he says that what is thought and what thinks are not different except in definition (ἀλλ' ἢ λόγῳ) but are nevertheless a plurality and not a simple unity (as the One would be) he is not conceding anything to Aristotle. He refers to the peculiar role of Intellect and its self-Intellection. Intellect is numerically the same though created by a thought (VI.7.40.6–11), itself thinking—and furthermore thinking itself—as distinguished aspects regarding the very same single Intellect (V.3.5.19–21). If Intellect really were completely one, different aspects or thoughts would not constitute a plurality as Plotinus explicitly claims they do. This appears from Plotinus' more detailed treatment of the Parmenidean fr. 3 in VI.7.41.12–19: that which thinks (νοῦς), thinking (νόησις) and what is thought (νοητόν)—or Intellect, intellection and the intelligible—make up a sort of unity (cf. V.3.5.43–44) but are not identical, for if they were, they could not be distinguished as they really are (cf. III.9.1.10–25, V.3.8.21–23, V.9.6.3). As distinguished into a plurality and therefore Other (ἄλλα) than the One, they cannot be the One (VI.7.41.13–14). The One, so to speak, discerns itself by way of Intellect. In this way, the One and Intellect are both intelligibles but in two very different ways (V.4.2.9–19). We can understand this difference through Plotinus' reading of Plato's simile of the sun, according to which the One is a dazzling object for Intellect, while in contrast, Intellect is a transparent object for itself.

#### *Numerical or Logical Distinction of Units and Numbers?*

A more esoteric version of the story of how the differentiation of Intellect takes place refers to the discernment of proto-Intellect by virtue of “the power of number” (VI.6.9.26), for, according to Plotinus, Ideal Numbers are presupposed as soon as there is more than one ordinary Form (cf. *Republic* 529d). He falters a bit as to whether the Form of Being already presupposes the unit or Monad or whether they appear co-instantaneously (VI.6.4.1–11, VI.6.9–10, VI.2.3.7–17, VI.2.10.14–15, III.8.9.4–5). At least, as it appears in Plato's *Parmenides* (142b–144a), Number and Being are both to be found in hypothesis II immediately consequent to the One or pure Unity of



hypothesis I, for “Number is not primary,” because the One “is the maker of Number” (V.1.5.5–6, cf. V.1.4.41–42).

We can leave further inquiries into this interesting problem for now (cf. VI.2.3.7–17),<sup>16</sup> but Plotinus himself raises (V.5.4, VI.6.11) another highly interesting problem that is relevant in this context. Numbers are of course distinguished from each other and not identical (V.1.4.40–43), as the different things they measure are not identical (VI.6.4, cf. *Timaeus* 39b–c, 47a). Numbers are not identical with what they might measure either (cf. III.7.9). Apparently, however, Numbers are all made up of identical units. How can there be more identical units to make up Numbers, if, according to the strict Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles, there apparently could be only one single unit, i.e., the Monad? Or, as Plotinus asks himself (V.5.4.20–29), how could the two units of the Dyad differ from each other (cf. *Parmenides* 143d)?

If they do not, we must infer that numerical difference does not always imply real difference in Plotinus. This would seem to be an insoluble contradiction of both of his principles of identity and discernibility. Plato, Plotinus’ model, did not take this issue to its logical conclusions himself. On the one hand, hypothesis VII of the *Parmenides* (165a, 165c–d) acknowledges that all things, even corpuscular atoms, which appear to be equal really are not and cannot be identical. On the other hand, according to the *Philebus* (56d–57a), philosophic arithmetic supposes a strict identity of the units inherent in all Numbers.

A Platonic solution is perhaps to be found if the whole of the Ideal Number were allowed to be more than its components, i.e., more than the units, in a way that makes the units not numerically different but instead *logically* different in each single Number. This is Plotinus’ strategy. Neither of the units of the Dyad is identical with the Monad then, for each of them participates differently in the first Monad (V.5.4.29–38, VI.2.10.16–17, cf. *Philebus* 16d–e). We must consequently infer that they are also logically different from each other, occupying relatively different logical positions. The first unit in the Dyad or in any other Ideal Number, for instance, would presumably be more decisive than the second unit, according to Plotinus’ general principle that everything depends upon the One, each thing in its own different and particular way (V.5.9.36–37).

16. Cf. further in, e.g., *Plotin. Traité Sur les Nombres (Ennéade VI 6 [34]). Introduction, texte grec, traduction, commentaire et index grec*, eds. J. Bertier & al. (Paris, 1980).

Logical difference is something more than just numerical difference, and the general rule of no logical difference without real difference and vice-versa is thus, with some strain, preserved after all.<sup>17</sup>

*Distinction Between Intellect and Soul(s)*

Soul is distinguished from Intellect by its reasoning (IV.8.3.21–23, cf. *Timaeus* 36e–37b). Soul divides further what is already divided in Intellect, and this radical, dispersive movement is called time (IV.4.1.25–28, cf. III.7.11). Different segments of the movement are consequently distinguished from each other as distinct time slices (V.2.2.26–29).

Through its reasoning (λόγῳ), the Soul distinguishes different Forms out of Intellect (VI.7.33.5–6), just as the particular soul by virtue of its own power also distinguishes branches of knowledge as well as its bodily sensations (VI.3.17.18–32, IV.6.2.1–4, cf. *Meno* 81c–d, 85d–e). There must be a logical, and consequently a real difference between rational Soul and Intellect, because otherwise, they would be identical, and that would be absurd. The fact that true self-Intellection can only be accomplished within Intellect, while Soul has a stepwise reasoning, constitutes a distinctive criterion (V.3.2.20–22). The reason is that Intellect is concerned with the sphere of Being, while Soul is concerned with the sphere of Becoming (VI.2.1.13–28, cf. *Timaeus* 27d).

Men, however, belong to both Intellect and Soul at once. Peculiar differences (ἰδικαίς διαφοραίς, V.7.1.21) are logical differences (διαφορᾶ [...] λογικῆ, V.7.3.8–9), and between men within Intellect these are a logical necessity. The logical difference of intellects within Intellect and separated from that Intellect (V.3.2.16–20) necessitates a distinguished Form of each particular man with peculiarities (ἰδικαίς) prior to embodiment (V.7.1.18–23),<sup>18</sup> even if we ourselves should be unable to perceive and discern their

17. As distinct from, e.g., the interpretation of V.4.1.15–16 (cf. section III, “Modality According to Plotinus’ Neoplatonism” above) by Gerson, *Plotinus* 5: “Presumably, this means ‘specifically one,’ since it would be nonsense to claim that there cannot be numerically two things because then they would be numerically one. But what is wrong with saying that two things are specifically one, differing *solo numero*? We must not suppose a sort of Leibnizian reply from Plotinus based on the principle of the identity of indiscernibles for the obvious reason that Plotinus is talking about the uniqueness of the absolutely simple first principle of all, not the uniqueness or identity of any individual, which of course may be complex.” Gerson makes the mistake of considering important logical principles nonsense or irrelevant to Plotinus.

18. K.S. Guthrie, “Index,” in his translation of Plotinus, *Enneads* (Alpine, NJ, 1918) asserts “Indiscernibles, Leibnitz’ principle of” in Plotinus V.7.1, but it is here rather the inverse Principle of the Non-Identity of Discernibles that is in operation. The same inversion appears in M. Heinze, *Die Lehre vom Logos in der griechischen Philosophie* (Oldenburg, 1872) 121 n. 1, 309 n. 3.

exact difference of Form (V.7.3.1–13), as, for instance (IV.7.5.42–43), the difference between “identical” twins. For example, though most bodies really appear to be different (IV.4.34.16–17), we are perhaps not able to distinguish the different characters of breath of so-called identical twins (cf. IV.7.4.8–15), because there will hardly be any. However, the Forms of “identical” twins, for example, cannot be identical but must be different (V.7.2.20–V.7.3.7, cf. *SVF* II.395, Seneca *Moral Letter* 113.16).

Aristotle made a remark in the *Metaphysics* (1031a15–28, 1043b2–4) against Plato’s theory of Forms, arguing from the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles that if every man were the essence of man, everyone would be the same man (cf. VI.8.14.1–9). This problem presents a background to Plotinus’ theory of Forms of persons. His Platonic reply is that there must be a Form of each particular man in order to distinguish men within Intellect from each other. For these Forms are, each one of them, a particular intellect distinguished from Intellect as a whole (IV.3.5.1–8, cf. *Parmenides* 132b–c).<sup>19</sup>

#### *Distinction Among Souls*

Soul, then, is a Form in its origin (cf. I.1.2.5–7, 1.1.4.18, cf. IV.3.5.8–14). The particular soul must be expected to have been established analogously by the particular Form, for “the particular soul has the same Form (ὁμοειδέες) as the whole Soul” (IV.3.2.34–35, cf. IV.3.2.2).<sup>20</sup>

In this connection Plotinus raises the question of what would distinguish gods from spirits (cf. *Apology of Socrates* 27d). As a quite subtle reply, he says that the guardian spirit connects the soul with its Form, the latter of which is a god within Intellect (III.5.6.7–24). The paradigm spirit is Love (cf. *Sym-*

19. As distinct from D.J. O’Meara, “Forms of Individuals in Plotinus: A Preface to the Question,” in *Traditions of Platonism. Essays in Honour of John Dillon*, ed. J.J. Cleary (Aldershot, 1999) 263–69, p. 268, who suggests that the Form of the particular in Plotinus explains the distinctions between sensible particulars, since there are logical and formal differences between particulars either prior to or co-instantaneous with any embodiment in the sensible world. The problem is that this theory consequently would force Plotinus to assert Forms not only of particular men or intellects but of all particulars; i.e., it would lead to a general monadology. That possibility is, however, excluded, since O’Meara, *ibid.*, refers to matter as in fact differentiating particular fires in VI.5.8.39–46, cf. above under the heading *Distinction Between Intellect and Self-Intellection*.

20. H.J. Blumenthal, “Soul, World-Soul and Individual Soul in Plotinus,” in *Le Néoplatonisme. Colloques internationaux du CNRS, Royaumont 9–13 juin 1969* (Paris, 1971) 55–63, pp. 56, 59, 63 does not seriously consider the possible genus-species relationship between Soul as such and particular souls. A partial reason is that he did not himself think that Plotinus believed in Forms of particular souls, cf. H.J. Blumenthal, “Did Plotinus believe in Ideas of Individuals?” *Phronesis* 11 (1966): 61–80.

*posium* 202d–203a), which must be distinguished from the relatively independent but, in principle, mortal universe (cf. *Timaeus* 38b, 41a–b), exactly because of its constant but unstable striving towards the immortal (III.5.5.6–10). Love in general and the guardian spirits in particular direct the lives of particular souls.

Particular souls must all be different, though they belong to the same order, Soul (VI.7.6.30–31). Plotinus compares the relation of the particular soul to the whole Soul to the way a theorem is a part of the science of Forms within Intellect. Each theorem potentially contains the whole science (e.g., IV.3.2.23–24 & 50–59, III.9.2.1–4) but is distinct nevertheless. The World Soul itself must be a particular soul distinguished from that whole Soul, as every other particular soul also must be distinguished from the World Soul (II.9.7.7–11, IV.8.4.10–13). Though they cannot be isolated as all parts of the same single Soul (VI.4.14.3–5), particular souls are distinguished from each other mutually as well by Otherness (IV.4.17.35–37) and more exactly by Difference and differentiae (IV.3.5.1–8, VI.4.4.25–27, V.1.6.50–53, cf. *Theaetetus* 209a).

Consequently, particular souls must have particular destinies (II.9.13.22–23), transferred to them from different parts of Intellect’s manifesting itself (III.2.12.4–12, III.2.18.1–3). Plotinus (II.3.15.1–12) refers to souls choosing different lives and guardian spirits according to their lots in a lottery, as presented in Plato’s *Republic* (617d–620e). These souls, however, must be distinguished from each other beforehand in order to be any plurality at all (cf., e.g., V.7.3.8–13, III.2.17.74–83). Plotinus obviously—due to the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles—considers the lottery mentioned in the *Republic* an empty reduplication. It invites an infinite regress concerning what would then distinguish souls participating in a lottery, which are yet not distinguished at all by any assignments of choices in a pure lottery or by any content of their choices.

A distinction prior to personal choices in the chain of the soul’s migrations and reincarnations could only be made due to an at least quasi-deterministic principle of Providence. This must involve different, predetermined original dispositions or preferences (διαθέσεις, προαίρεσεις) of all particular souls (III.4.5.2–4, cf., e.g., IV.3.24.6–8, IV.7.5.1–7), cf. *Phaedo* (107d). For if the souls were not given different guardian spirits and dispositions already, they could probably not choose different lives either.<sup>21</sup> They are put

21. Cf. G.H. Clark, “Plotinus’ Theory of Empirical Responsibility,” *New Scholasticism* 17 (1943): 16–31, p. 22: “There never was an original choice [...],” also alluded to by H.F. Müller, “Plotinus über Notwendigkeit und Freiheit,” *Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum* 33 (1914): 462–88, pp. 468, 473–74, 488.

into different places, act differently and acquire different merits accordingly (III.2.17.56–61 & 74–83, III.3.1.24–27, IV.6.3.63–67).

#### *Distinction Between the One and Souls*

Both the soul and the further choices of the soul are founded upon its provided original sort of judgement or distinction (κρίσις, VI.4.6.13–16), which transmits the discrete Parmenidean association (7.5, 8.15, 8.55) that the soul is only distinguished from the single unity (8.6) by this original preference and initially unconscious (pre-) judgement.<sup>22</sup> As Plotinus laconically announces about the relation of the human self and the One (VI.9.10.17–18): “Here also they are one when they come together, though two when separated.”

#### *Distinction by Motion*

Difference and differentiation (e.g., separation) generally mean that the original Unity is dissolved (VI.2.9.14–22, cf. V.1.6.51–53). Any Difference, including judgement or distinction, is brought along by Motion or movement (κίνησις).

If Motion were not bringing about Difference, Motion would be indistinguishable from non-actuality (VI.7.13.11–15). Now, Plotinus generally argues—obviously against the view of Aristotle in, e.g., the *Physics* (201b31–202a3) and *On the Soul* (417a15–17)—that Platonic Motion is something more, or definitely not something less, than Aristotelian actuality (ἐνέργεια). Actualities will be deficient movements (κινήσεις) rather than the other way around. Plotinus argues *ad hominem* (VI.1.19.1–8) against Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1174a19–1174b6), where the latter posits that in contrast to actualities, movements are all temporal. He comments that some actualities, as, for instance, a man’s life, or the actuality of a man’s body according to Aristotle’s own *On the Soul* (412a20–22) and *Nicomachean Ethics* (1101a11–13), clearly involve temporal events (cf. *On the Soul* 415b22–23) in order to be complete (*Physics* 201b27–33, *Metaphysics* 1066a8–22, 1048b18–35). In this respect they would be indistinguishable from what Aristotle erroneously takes to be a deficiency of movements.

To conclude, Motion must involve Difference (VI.3.22.35–44). Also, every Difference or general Otherness in relation to the One is due to Motion (e.g., II.4.5.28–31, VI.3.22.1–2, cf. V.1.6.1–27, VI.4.4.24–26, IV.8.6.1–6, V.2.1.1–9). The peculiarities of each soul’s movements around, downward or upward in the henological hierarchy, are in fact what distinguishes them (IV.7.5.1–7, VI.2.6.13–20, III.6.3.22–26). Their differentiating move-

22. On other Parmenidean traits in Plotinus, cf. Ousager, “Plotinus on Motion.”