Mystical Self-Reversion in Platonizing Sethian Gnosticism and Plotinus
Zeke Mazur
Doctoral Candidate, University of Chicago
email: ajmazur@uchicago.edu
web page: home.uchicago.edu/~ajmazur

0.1. This paper derives from ongoing research for my dissertation—still in progress—on the relationship between Plotinus’ mysticism and contemporaneous Gnosticism.¹ The essential point of the dissertation will be to suggest that a crucial aspect of Plotinus’ conception of the final stages of ascent towards union with the One has a noncoincidental homology with the Platonizing Sethian ascent treatises from Nag Hammadi, and further, that Plotinus in fact developed his own mystical thought in extremely close dialogue with Gnostics, both those on the periphery of his immediate circle in Rome and also others in his more general intellectual milieu: others whom he may have encountered earlier in the formation of his thought, perhaps even during the course of his education in Alexandria. In this paper, however, I will concentrate primarily on a few particular features of Plotinus’ mystical ascent that have close parallels in the Platonizing Sethian ascent treatises Allogenes and Zostrianos.

0.2. The specific points I would like to make here are the following. First, in both Plotinus and the Sethian treatises, (1) the “ascent” towards the supreme principle entails an initial contemplative reversion towards an extraordinary, hypernoetic faculty within the mystical aspirant’s own self. Second, in both cases, (2) this transcendental faculty of the self— that which permits apprehension of, or union with, the transcendent principle—has somehow derived from the very first eternal moment of ontogenesis, in which the indefinite or unbounded efflux of the transcendent first principle (the One or the Invisible spirit) reverts upon its own source—its former self—to engender the first duality of subject and object, which then acquires definition and subsistence to emerge—either immediately, or, in certain cases, through a more complex triadic process—as the second, fully independent, noetic, principle (Nous or Barbelo). The transcendental faculty within the human subject is sometimes described as itself the first manifestation, thought, or eikôn of the transcendent principle, while at other times it is described in terms of a residue or imprint of the first unbounded efflux prior to its delimitation. Finally, in both Plotinus and the Sethian treatises, (3) the aspirant’s mystical act of self-reversion deliberately reiterates—or is virtually identical with—the supreme principle’s own primordial, ontogenetic, act of self-reflection: an analogy which establishes a very close connection between soteriological or mystical praxis and the metaphysical scheme of ontogenesis. The conceptual parallels between Plotinus and the Platonizing Sethian treatises with respect this extremely subtle doctrine are both too unique and too robust to be coincidental; the evidence, therefore, points to a substantial interdependence between them.

1.1. I would like to begin with a brief outline of the structure of Plotinus’ ascent towards mystical union with the One. Now it is commonly observed that Plotinus’ “ascent” is simultaneously a cathartic “interiorization,” a reflexive process in which the aspirant sloughs off corporeal and psychic accretions so as to come to identity with successively deeper aspects of the self, that is, the microcosmic correlates of the hypostatic Soul and Intellect within ourselves. Then, at the final stage, as he repeatedly emphasizes, one must reject even intellecction in order to attain the One, which cannot,

¹I am greatly indebted to my advisors, Kevin Corrigan and John Turner, both intellectually, for their seminal work on Sethian Gnosticism and Platonism, and also personally, for their friendship, kind encouragement, and extremely patient support for my project.
properly speaking, be an object of knowledge. Yet it also seems that Plotinus envisioned the process as a convergence of a relatively fluid locus of consciousness—a pure mystical subject not entirely identified with either soul or intellect—upon some extraordinary faculty abiding at one’s “center-point” (to use Plotinus’ own geometrical analogy), which is, in effect, an image of the One “within” us, or perhaps our “truest” self. Through this indwelling principle, according to Plotinus, one is somehow able to transcend the limitation of Being and Intellect so as to apprehend and unite with the utterly hypernoetic and hyperontic One. Whatever its precise nature, this enigmatic and potentially transcendental aspect of the self is therefore an essential waypoint through which one must pass in order to attain the ultimate goal.

1.2. Yet we may be more precise about the position of this faculty on the trajectory of the ascent. From a careful analysis of Plotinus’ complex mystical texts, it would appear that he envisioned the final stages of ascent to comprise a series of overlapping or mutually-implicated phases. Although different treatises tend to emphasize different aspects of the process, and, moreover, not every mystical passage includes a description of each phase, this tacit structure nevertheless informs many of his accounts, lurking just under the surface of the text, and it remains more or less consistent throughout all chronological periods of his work. Generally speaking, there is first (1) a reversion or epistrophê towards the self. The self-reversion is expressed in either cognitive or spatial terms denoting either reflexivity or contraction; the practical implications are not always clear. Next, at the penultimate (or perhaps more accurately, antepenultimate) phase of ascent, just prior to the ultimate union with the One, (2) the self-reversion culminates in a sudden, striking vision: a vision not directly of the One, but of one’s own, luminous, newly-divinized, self, or, on occasion, of some aspect of the transcendent principle that itself appears suddenly within the core of one’s own self. I call this moment of self-vision an “autophany.” At this point, however, (3) the duality inherent in even self-perception must dissolve so that one comes to an absolute unity with one’s transcendent self, in a phase which interpreters have often too quickly assumed to represent a coalescence with the One itself. Although the transcendental self resembles the One, it is in fact not yet identical to it, nor is the moment of self-unification simply to be equated with the ultimate union. For in several accounts, Plotinus invokes the need for (4) a final phase in which even this autophanous self must be dissolved in an ultimate act of self-annihilation so as to attain either an absolute coalescence or identification with the supreme principle, or a kind of transcendental apperception in which the observing subject has dissolved into, or even become, the effluent light of its former object. [I have provided a running chronological synopsis of these stages in several of Plotinus’ mystical passages in Appendix B].

1.3. For the moment, I will not dwell on the many complexities involved in the various passages describing the ascent. Rather, at present, I would like to identify more precisely the faculty of the self—what I will call the “transcendental self”—that permits apprehension of, or union with, the supreme principle. In other words, who, or what, is the subject (and thus presumably also the object) of the luminous autophany at the penultimate phase of ascent? The first point I would like to make, then, is that the faculty that attains the ultimate union with the One—for in other words, the luminous, transcendental self that one apprehends in the autophany at the penultimate phase of ascent—is in

2 It should be noted that in referring to the subject of various phases of the ascent Plotinus vacillates between soul and intellect, but often uses indeterminate designations including various ambiguous pronouns. The mystical subject therefore appears not to be entirely identified with any of the particular hypostatic domains through which it, so to speak, passes (or if one prefers, in which it participates) prior to the ultimate moment of union.

3 This reiterates the cathartic introversion that previously characterized ordinary philosophical praxis, and more generally reflects the centripetal thrust of the entirety of Plotinus’ metaphysics.

4 I have analyzed this process in greater detail in my dissertation ch. 2 and in a paper presented at the ISNS in Helsinki in 2007.
fact an aspect of the subject that is both hypernoetic and hyperontic, and abides in an enigmatic liminal domain “above” the Intellect but “below” the One.

1.4. Let us consider a remarkable passage describing a luminous autophany in what is ostensibly Plotinus’ very first treatise, I.6[1].9.6-25, [Appendix A1], in which he adopts Plato’s image of working on the “statue” of one’s beloved (from Phaedrus 252d-254b: although in the present case, the “beloved” is the center-point of one’s own self). At the culmination of this autoerotic self-reversion, one eventually unites with oneself, having become pure light (phôs alêthinon) and the faculty of vision itself (opsis).

If you have become this, and see it, and, you, pure, “come together” with yourself, having no impediment to thus coming towards one, nor having with it anything else mixed inside, but wholly yourself, only true light, not measured by magnitude nor circumscribed into diminution by shape nor, conversely, expanded into magnitude by unboundedness, but everywhere unmeasurable because greater than all measure and better than all quantity; if you see yourself having become this, at this point, having become vision, you have confidence with respect to yourself, and in this very moment, having ascended, you have no need of a demonstrator; look intently; for this alone is the eye that sees the great beauty.

Now we may note some intriguing aspects of this description. On the one hand, this transcendental self has not quite attained the ultimate moment of union with the One: it is, at most, the “eye that sees the great beauty.” In other words, it is merely the faculty of transcendent al apperception that is uniquely able to see or to unite with the One, but the passage does not describe the ultimate goal which is, as he has stated earlier in the treatise, at I.6[1].7.13, “to be commingled” (sugkerasthênaí) with the supreme principle. Indeed, at the moment of union— as he repeatedly emphasizes in later treatises— the minimal duality of subject and object inherent in even extraordinary perception must be dissolved. On the other hand, Plotinus intimates that this luminous self has closer kinship with the entirely hypernoetic One than with the hypostatic Intellect, since the latter is typically characterized by measure, limit, and form; here, instead, the description of the transcendental self as “not measured by magnitude (ou megethei memetrêmenon) nor circumscribed into diminution by shape (oude schêmati eis elattôsin); nor, conversely, expanded into magnitude by unboundedness (oud’ au eis megethos dì’apeirias auxësen), but everywhere unmeasurable because greater than all measure and better than all quantity (all’ ametrêton pantachou, hôs an meizon pantos metrou kai pantos kreisson posou)” echoes the apophatic description of the absolute One of the 1st hypothesis of Plato’s Parmenides 139b-140d, which in subsequent treatises, Plotinus adapts to his description of the One. Thus very early on in the Plotinian corpus, we have an intimation that the transcendental self is hypernoetic even prior to its ultimate apprehension of the One.

1.4. This suspicion is further supported by evidence from later treatises. Let us consider the extensive and detailed account of the ascent in his 9th treatise, VI.9[9], which includes Plotinus’ first unambiguous description of the ultimate phase of union. In chapter 9, lines 56 to 60 [Appendix A6], we find a vivid description of the autophany of the divinized self that coincides with a vision of what one may presume is the One:

Here, at this point, one can see both him and oneself as it is righteous to see (horan dé estin entautha kakeinon kai heauton hôs horan themis): the self glorified, full of

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6 E.g. VI.9[9].3.36-45 and VI.7[38].32-34.
intelligible light— but rather itself pure light— weightless, floating, having become—
but rather, being— a god.

Now this is clearly not the ultimate stage, which is precluded by the duality in the vision of both the
self and the unidentified *ekeinon*. After a brief discussion of why one does not permanently remain in
the upper world, some nine lines later Plotinus resumes the account by conflating the moment of
autophany with that of self-unification.

[...] And so seeing himself, then, when he sees, he will see himself as such, or, rather, he
will “be together with” himself in such a manner and will perceive [himself] as such,
having become simple.

And yet still, even now, we are not yet there, for in the next few lines, the self-unification slides into
the ultimate union, which he describes as an abdication of subjectivity and a surrender of self-identity
at the moment of the coalescence of “center-points”:

But perhaps one should not say, “will see,” but “was seen,” if indeed it is even necessary to speak
of two, the seer and the seen, but not both as one (the statement is audacious!). And so, then, the
seer neither sees nor distinguishes nor imagines two, but as if having become another and not
himself nor belonging to himself there, having come to belong to that, he is one, as if having
attached center to center.

But who is this seer? Lest one imagine that the seer— in other words, the divinized subject of the
autophany of the preceding lines— is simply the aspirant having been assimilated to the hypostatic
Intellect, we should consider Plotinus’ recapitulation of the entire ascent at the end of the treatise,
VI.9[9].11.38-45, where again he suggests that the proximate goal of the self-reversion is the
transcendental self [Appendix A8]:

[The soul] will come not into another but into itself, and thus not being in another, it is in
no one but itself; yet while in itself, and not in being (*ouk en òtoi onti*), it is in that, for one
becomes also oneself and not in substance, but ‘beyond substance’ (*epekeina ousias*) by
means of this intercourse.

Thus far, the subject has coalesced with the transcendental self, the self above Being. However, we
may see from the next sentence that this hyperontic condition of the self is not yet entirely equivalent
to the ultimate attainment of the One:

And if one should see oneself having become this, then one has oneself as an image of
that (*homoiôma ekeinou*), and if one goes on from oneself (*aph’ hautou metabainoi*) as an
image to its archetype (*hòs eikòn pros archetupon*), one reaches the end of the journey.

This suggests that Plotinus envisioned a crucial stage of the ascent at which the subject has, on the one
hand, come to complete identity with the transcendental self and abides “above” Being–Intellect, and,
yet, on the other hand, has not yet attained the ultimate union: the “end of the journey.”

1.5. One might similarly compare the vivid description of an autophany in a middle-period treatise,
V.5[32].8.9-13, where the aspirant has already been assimilated to intellect [Appendix A11]:

Intellect will make itself stand towards the contemplation, looking at nothing else but the
Beautiful, completely turning and surrendering himself there, and, as if having been filled
with strength, it sees first of all itself having become more beautiful, and glistening, as he
is close to him (eide men ta próta kalliô genomenon heauton kai epistilbonta hós eggus ontos autou).

In this case the mystical subject, identified with the Intellect, reverts to itself, and yet at the moment of self-apprehension, it sees itself having become even more beautiful than Intellect, which suggests that it has already become hypernoetic at the moment of autophanay. Yet this is not the ultimate phase of the ascent; that it is only the penultimate moment is indicated by the men ta próta qualifying the clause, and by the suggestion that the autophanous self is merely close to (eggus) the transcendent deity, a far weaker qualification than Plotinus allows at the final moment of vision or coalescence. In fact, the ultimate apprehension of the first principle is implied only in the next few lines, and that the subject of this apprehension is no longer Intellect is confirmed in the paradoxical statement, a few lines later, at 8.23: “because it is Intellect, it looks, when it looks, with that of itself which is not Intellect” (tôi heautou mé nói).

1.6. Finally I would like to point out one more enigmatic passage, the famous simile of the adyton of a temple at VI.9[9].11.17-25 [Appendix A7]. In this passage, Plotinus compares the aspirant to a devotee leaving behind the cult-icons standing outside the adyton of a temple to enter into the sanctuary to worship the god within the adyton. The cult-icons apparently represent the forms in the realm of Intellect, while the god within the adyton represents the transcendent One; the act of leaving the cult-icons behind, therefore, represents the surpassing of Intellect. Presumably the adyton itself represents the hypernoetic realm “within which” the One abides, but at this point it is evident that any simple interpretation becomes problematic, since the One cannot really be contained “within” any delimitation. At line 31, Plotinus compares the entire simile to a riddle interpreted by a wise priest, who will understand the adyton itself to represent the “source and principle” (pégên kai archên), and also that “one sees principle by principle” (archêi archên horâi) and “like comes together with like” (sugginetai tôi homoioi to homoion). According to Hadot’s interpretation, the adyton should not be confused with the god within it; the adyton is itself the archê, which represents, in his view, “l’état originel de l’âme, l’état où elle est ramenée à son origine”7: in other words, the likeness of the One in us by which we apprehend the true One. If this interpretation is correct, we have further support for the notion of the origin of the center-point of the self in a liminal domain between One and Intellect, just as the adyton is situated between the god within and the cult-icons outside.

1.7. If I am correct thus far, these passages—and numerous others which I will not discuss here [see Appendix C]—would seem to indicate that the faculty of the human subject that is able to attain mystical union with the One—the transcendental self or the “one in us”—abides in a murky, liminal domain somewhere “above” the “ordinary” hypostatic Intellect but “below” the One:8 a domain about which both Plotinus himself and many modern interpreters are, for different reasons, quite reticent. And yet, despite Plotinus’ frequent dogmatic injunctions against intermediaries between the first and second hypostases,9 he does in fact hint at various richly-articulated—if strictly speaking, unutterable—“interhypostatic” processes linking the first and second principles: processes that cannot be understood according a rigidly bounded and mutually-exclusive separation between One and Intellect. That is to say, in several accounts of ontogenesis, Plotinus tacitly hints that just such an interhypostatic domain is occupied by the unbounded, amorphous, pre-noetic efflux of the One—sometimes

7 Hadot (1994) 211.
8 An exception to this particular spatial metaphor might occur at VI.9[9].11.40-41, where Plotinus says that “in itself alone and not in being it is in that” (en hautêi monêi kai ouk en tôi onti en ekeinôi), which would suggest that the hyperontic self is simultaneously “in the domain of” the One; yet this, of course, is not yet “the end of the journey,” which requires an exit from the self and an apparent abdication of even transcendental self-identity.
identified with intelligible matter or the indefinite dyad—prior to and immediately coincident with its delimitation as Intellect-Being.

1.8. This brings me to my second point, namely, that Plotinus envisioned the transcendental self—the self subsisting at the penultimate phase of the mystical ascent—to have derived from, and even to be consubstantial with, the liminal, prenoetic efflux of the One: the prenoetic efflux in a phase both prior to and coincident with its reflexive vision. Now the so-called “identificationist” thesis—that of the identity of pre- and hypernoetic selves—was originally proposed by Jean Trouillard in the 1950s, and was subsequently adopted and eloquently reformulated by Pierre Hadot and Gerard O’Daly to become a virtual consensus view in Plotinian studies. However, this thesis has since come under attack as well, notably by Anthony Lloyd and, more directly, in a 1988 study by John Bussanich. Most recently, in his book about the Intellect in Plotinus, Eyjólfur Emilsson has presented a somewhat more nuanced position against identificationism (the term itself is in fact his). Although I will not enter into the intricacies of this dispute here, I should say that solely on the basis of Plotinian evidence—thus without regard for the persuasive Gnostic comparanda I will adduce in the second part of this paper—I firmly, but respectfully, disagree with Lloyd and Bussanich.10

1.9. Although I will eventually make a structural case for identificationism, let us first turn to the texts most often adduced in support of it, passages in which Plotinus explicitly connects the hypernoetic faculty of apprehension to the primordial effluence or activity of the One. Thus, for example, at VI.9[9].4.27-28, he says that contact with the One occurs “by means of a power in oneself that is connatural with that which comes from it” (têi en autôi dunaméi suggeinei tói ap’ autou), and then, more enigmatically, “when one keeps oneself as one kept oneself when one came from him (hotan houtós echêi, hôs eichen, hote êlthen ap’ autou), one is immediately able to see.” Elsewhere—at, for example, V.1[10].7.14 and III.8[30].11.2—he describes the pre-noetic efflux—the incipient vision of the Intellect—as a kind of dunamis, and we may begin to suspect this is the product of the One to which we are akin.11 To this one may also compare the description of the mystical frenzy of the “loving intellect” (nous erôn) at VI.7[38].35.24 [Appendix A14]. Plotinus describes the nous erôn as a para-noetic mystical faculty that apprehends the One by means of some kind of erotic “touch” (epibolê) and “reception” (paradochê), and then equates this dual activity simultaneously with both mystical apperception and with the primordial genesis of Intellect: “by this”—he means paradochê and epibolê—“earlier, it saw only, and later, by seeing, also acquired intellect and is one.” That this phrase refers directly to both prenoetic as well as hypernoetic vision is confirmed a few lines later, at 35.32-33, when he says that the intellect sees the One “by means of the power by which he was going to think” (hêi dunamei emelle noein), suggesting a pre-cognitive phase of intellect, or rather, of the prenoetic efflux, “prior to”—in a logical rather than temporal sense—its determination as Intellect proper. These explicit statements alone make a strong case for the identification of pre- and hypernoetic selves, and comprise a substantial burden of proof to those who would deny it.

1.10. There are, however, a number of other less explicit and rarely-noticed but perhaps more revealing passages which point in the same general direction. For example, in VI.9[9].8, Plotinus uses his common geometrical metaphor of the coincidence of the center-points of circles to describe the

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10 I have presented some of my argument in a paper presented last summer at the ISNS in New Orleans and I am currently working on a dissertation chapter (ch. 3, “The Identity of Mystical and Primordial Self-Reversion”) that includes a substantial analysis and refutation of Bussanich’s extremely subtle arguments.

11 One small caveat: desire the fact that Plotinus calls the One dunamis pantôn on several occasions, and suggests that the first product of the one is “power and extraordinary power” (dunamis...kai amêchanos dunamis) at V.3[49].16.2, the masculine pronoun here suggests that whatever comes from the One that is connatural to the power in us is not necessarily itself a dunamis.
relation of the soul and the One, but at lines 13 to 16 adds the qualification that the soul is not like a circle geometrically speaking, but only in the fact that “it has within it and around it the ancient nature (en autêi kai peri autên hé archaia phusis) and because it is from such a thing (apo toisoutou).” He then goes on (at lines 19-20) to say that we attach ourselves at our center to the center of all things. Now the archaia phusis of the soul presumably derives from Plato, Symposium 192e, where, in Aristophanes’ account, it represents the prelapsarian unity of the originally spherical human being. However, in a much later treatise, at I.8[51].7.7-8, Plotinus hints at another sense of archaia phusis, which he defines as the underlying matter prior to its being ordered by Form (tên hulên...tên hupokeimenên oupô kosmêtheisan). We have then an intimation that in our original passage, the archaia phusis “within” and “around” the soul, whence the soul originally came, and by which we return to the One, is in some way akin to the intelligible matter of II.4[12].5.15-39, which, we may recall, is the indefinite substance deriving from the first pre-noetic efflux, here called kinêsis and heterotês, which has emerged from the One. That this allusive series of associations linking the transcendental self and intelligible matter is not too farfetched is made evident from another mystical passage in the preceding chapter of the same treatise, at VI.9[9].7.12-16 [Appendix A5], which similarly compares the soul at the final phase of mystical catharsis to the amorphous nature of matter prior to its definition by form: “just as is said of matter that it needs to be without the qualities of all things if it is going to receive the impressions of all things, so also (and how much more so!) must the soul become formless, (aneideon) if there is not going to be embedded within her an impediment to a filling or impregnation (plêrôsis) and illumination (ellampsin) from the first nature.”

1.11. One may in turn compare this indefinite state of the mystical subject back to the amorphous and immeasurable yet paradoxically luminous transcendent self of I.6[1].9, but the same image of the soul filled or impregnated by sexual contact with the supreme principle occurs in mystical contexts elsewhere, such as, for instance, at VI.9[9].9.20, where Plotinus says that the soul conceives the virtues by being impregnated by God (tauta gar kuei psuchê plêrôtheisa theou)— thus reminiscent of the primordial “filling” of the inchoate efflux by the One— and he then enigmatically concludes “and for her, this” (kai touto autêi)— presumably this act of impregnation— “is the beginning and end” (archê kai telos), and a few words later: “she becomes herself and what she was” (ekê genomenê gignetai autê kai hoper én). The mystical-erotic encounter with the supreme principle is thus inherently connected with the process of subsequent ontological strata. One is reminded of the similarly fertile glance of the nous erôn at VI.7[38].35.30-31: “seeing him it it had offspring” (horôn ekeinon esche gennêmata), which presumably consist of the Forms of Intellect proper. The notion of the archê of the soul also recalls its sense elsewhere in VI.9[9], such as in the simile of the adyton, and earlier in the treatise, at 3.20, to describe both the origin of the soul and the principle of transcendent apprehension; significantly, the word archê also occurs at VI.7[38].16.33-35 to refer to the prenoetic efflux as the source of Intellect as distinct from the One: “the archê of Intellect was that which it was prior to being filled, but another archê, in some way from outside it, was what filled it” (archê de autou ekeino te ho prin plêrôthenai én, hetera de archê hoionei exôthen hé plêrousa én). So again we have a peculiar terminological resonance between the first, interhypostatic efflux and the soul at the penultimate moment of reintegration with the One.

1.12. Yet perhaps the most vivid illustration of the proximity of the transcendental self and the pre-

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12 However, in this passage (I.8[51].7) he says that this matter is the source of evil, which presents some difficulty for its identification with the transcendental self. Yet this may be related to his first discussion of intelligible matter at II.4[12].5, where he describes pre-defined intelligible matter as both “divine” (theia: line 15) and still as “not yet good” (oupô agathon: line 35): thus clearly violating his own axiom of continuous hierarchy, which may furthermore explain his own evident embarrassment at the discussion of intelligible matter at the end of chapter 5.
noetic efflux is the structural parallel between the first eternal moments of ontogenesis and the last moments of mystical ascent. Briefly, in Plotinus’ typical accounts of ontogenesis, in the first moment, the hyperplenitude of the One eternally overflows; then, in a second moment, the primordial effluence, initially identical to its source, reverts to itself and thus having reverted its extroversión ceases in a moment of stasis; finally, at the precise moment that it “sees” what is now its former self, there emerges the first minimal duality of subject and object, and it is “filled” or delimited by its former source to thus acquire definition and subsistence as Intellect and Being. At this point, the parallels with the final stages of mystical ascent will be evident. The mystical self-reversion of the aspirant corresponds to the primordial self-reversion of the prenoetic efflux. The autophány—the crucial liminal moment—corresponds to the self-apprehension of the prenoetic efflux, and both luminous self-visions occur at the immediate boundary between Intellect–Being and the hyperontic and hypernoetic realm. Although in the former case, the mystical subject is in the process of converging upon and eventually coalescing with its object, and in the latter case the primordial unboundedness is at the cusp of the first distinction between subject and object and is moving towards greater separation, at the very moment of self-apprehension, the two processes—according to a kind of commutative principle—are identical. We may discern additional parallels as well: for instance, in certain mystical passages, the moment of autophány is described in terms of being “filled” by the vision, just as the primordial efflux is “filled” by its own source at the moment of reversion. Moreover, in certain accounts of both ascent and ontogenesis, there is a moment of stasis or “standing towards” the self-contemplation just prior to the vision. Finally, the annihilation or dissolution of even transcendental self-identity at the moment of mystical union recapitulates in reverse the initial expansion of the emergent prenoetic efflux, which is, at first, both identical to its source and yet at the same time represents the first incipient otherness. There is, therefore, substantial evidence that Plotinus envisioned a very close correspondence if not complete identity between the subject of both mystical and ontogenetic self-reversion. [Appendix D].

1.13. If I am correct thus far, the logical identity between the pre- and hypernoetic subject would appear to underlie Plotinus’ numerous references in the same breath to both mystical apprehension and the first stages of the genesis of Intellect. More importantly, this interpretation also explains those passages whose subject is ambiguously either pre- or hypernoetic, passages about whose subject there has been considerable disagreement, such as, for example, V.3[49].11.1-4, where the nous ho polus, the “multiple intellect,” tries to think the One and fails. This also would account for the passages describing the ultimate union with the One in which at the very moment where one might expect a static unity, one finds instead a dynamic process or an ineffable oscillation between effusion and self-contraction, and a suggestion that the mystical subject participates in the One’s own transcendental yet generative self-apprehension.¹³

2.0. It therefore appears that Plotinus believed that a mystical ascent to the transcendent principle could be accomplished through a contemplative assimilation of one’s consciousness to the activities of successive metaphysical principles, and that ultimately, in the final phases of the ascent, not only Intellect but even Being itself could be transcended through the visionary reiteration of the very first self-reflexive moment of ontogenesis: a vision made possible precisely by the kinship of the apex or center-point of the human subject with this primordial moment. At this point I would like to suggest

¹³ Examples of this include the “other way of seeing” in the adyton at VI.9[9].11.22-25, described with six terms suggestive of expansion, stasis, and self-reversion (I discussed this at the ISNS conference in New Orleans last summer), and, at VI.7[38].35, the dual activity of the nous erôn, consisting of epibolê—an active touch—and paradochê—a passive reception. Another example is VI.7[38].36.23-26 that describes the union as an assimilation to the effluent ray that generates Intellect.
that this extremely subtle and complex Plotinian doctrine bears a close resemblance to the techniques of ascent described in the Platonizing Sethian treatises Zostrianos and Allogenes that (according to Porphyry’s *Vita Plotini* 16) were carefully read and critiqued at length in Plotinus’ circle. This is not the place for a full elaboration of either the complex metaphysics of the Sethian ascent treatises or all their numerous parallels with the Platonism of Plotinus’ time or with Plotinus himself, but I should briefly mention that they describe, in the mythical terms of apocalyptic literature, the ascent of an eponymous visionary through successive ontological strata so as to apprehend the unknowable, transcendent deity that is, like the Plotinian One, both hypernoetic and hyperontic. There are numerous differences between Plotinus and the Gnostics in terms of both soteriology and the details of their metaphysical systems, but the one significant difference for our immediate purposes would appear to be the following. While Plotinus tends towards reticence about the interhypostatic domain mediating between first and second principles and is therefore rather oblique in his descriptions of both ontogenetic and mystical processes relating the two, the Platonizing Sethians, by contrast, not only provide explicit descriptions of a multitude of intermediary principles, but in certain cases reify them into quasi-hypostases themselves, thus articulating otherwise inexpressable, eternal, dynamic processes in terms of a profusion of mythical-seeming personalities. In *Allogenes* and *Zostrianos*, the mystical reascent occurs through a triadic noetic realm—the Barbelo Aeon, divided into the subaeons Kalyptos, Protophanes, and Autogones—whose relation with the transcendent principle, the Invisible Spirit, is itself mediated by various triadic principles based on one or another permutation of the Noetic Triad of Being-Life-Intellect, a triad hinted at also in Plotinus and formalized in later, post-Plotinian Platonism, but one which had already crystallized in the likely pre-Plotinian Anonymous Commentary on Plato’s *Parmenides*. As John Turner has elaborately demonstrated, in *Allogenes*, a nearly independent triadic hypostasis, sometimes identified as the Triple Powered One, mediates between the unknowable Invisible Spirit and Barbelo, while in *Zostrianos*, a similar triple power seems to abide entirely within the Invisible Spirit. In either case, the mystical aspirant reascends the complex metaphysical scaffolding by which the first noetic principle has ineffably unfurled from the utterly transcendent one.

2.1. Rather than get embroiled in the extensive complexities of these systems, in what follows I will briefly address a few specific aspects of the Sethian texts that relate to the features of Plotinus’ mystical ascent which we have just seen.

2.1.1. First Point. Most generally, one may note that in the Sethian ascent treatises, as in Plotinus, there are numerous suggestions that at crucial phases of the ascent the aspirant undertakes a mystical self-reversion, expressed as either reflexive cognition or in terms of spatial metaphor. There are a number of interesting examples of this in *Allogenes* in which the act of self-reversion is most clearly embedded in the context of ritual ascent. The first such instance occurs at 52.7-12 when Allogenes himself reports (Turner’s translation): “I turned to myself (*aeikott eroei ouaat*) and saw the light that surrounded me and the Good that was in me (*aeinau epiouoein etkôte mn piagathon etnhêt*) and I became divine (*aeinr–r–noute*).” One is immediately reminded of Plotinus’ various accounts of the autophany, not only because of the vision of light from within oneself (*piouei n etkôte*)—to which one may compare Plotinus’ use of the verb *periphôtizein* to describe an autophany at VI.9[9].4.20—but also because of its propaedeutic position in the ascent, whose final stages only occur several pages later, after a series of further revelations Allogenes receives from revealer Youel. Interestingly, this preliminary vision and autodivinization seem to be prerequisite for the final stages of ascent, since over the course of these revelations, Youel mentions twice (at 52.17 and 56.17) that Allogenes has already come to know the Good within himself. The subsequent references to mystical self-reversion occur during the instructions and subsequent account of the eponymous visionary’s final ascent through the triad of powers—Mentality (or Blessedness), Vitality, and Existence—that mediate between the Barbelo Aeon and the Unknowable One; thus at 59.9-60.12, and again at 60.14 to
61.22, the ascent is expressed in terms of a threefold sequence of “withdrawals” or anachôreisis corresponding to each member of the triad. One is, of course, reminded of Plotinus’ use of the same verb, anachôrein, to describe the mystical self-transcendence of the Intellect in an account of mystical union at III.8[30].9.30 [Appendix A9]. At any rate, in Allogenes, the anachôreisis appear to be in fact a series of reflexive withdrawals towards the self, as if the entire triad abides within the mystical subject: thus, at the level of Blessedness, the withdrawal leads to self-knowledge; at the the level of Vitality, Allogenes equates the withdrawal to an act of “turning” to the self (if we follow Turner’s original 1990 reconstruction, or turning rather towards “it,” reading along with the recent BCNH edition). The third and final anachôreisis is made towards the level of Existence, which Allogenes finds rather enigmatically “standing and at rest like an image and likeness of what is bestowed or invested upon me (ouhekôn mnoueine nte pé ettoe hiôôit), which suggests again, a reflexive vision of some transformed aspect of the self; this is confirmed a few lines later, at 61.5-6, when Allogenes declares in the throes of his ultimate vision that he knows “the One who exists within” (etshoop nhêt).

2.1.2. One may also find traces of a similar scheme in Zostrianos, although the condition of the text makes it somewhat more difficult to discern. Nevertheless, in the course of a lengthy discussion of the soteriological possibilities for various classes of human being, at 44.17-22 we may read that for the one who is saved, “If one [wishes], then one again parts from them all (e-shôp efshan-ouôsh palin on eshaf-pôrj n-sabal nnaî têrou) and withdraws into himself [alone] (auô ntnf-r-anachôrin erof mauaaf) for one can become divine by having withdrawn to God (paï gar shafshôpe moute eaf-r-anachôrin epnoute).” To this one may also compare Marsanes 9.21-27, in which knowledge of the deity, in this case the Triple Powered One, would appear to be the result of a self-withdrawal: “We have all withdrawn to ourselves (anan têrn an-r-anachôri nen), we have become silent (ahn-shôpe enkaraeit) and when we came to know him, that is, the Three-Powered, we bowed down (auô ntnr-couônf ete peei pe pa tshamte nqam ahn pahn).” There are also several passages in the Platonizing Sethian tractates in which the subject of the self-reversion is ambiguously either a human aspirant or a subsidiary aspect of the deity itself; similarly, we often find intimations of Barbelo’s emergence or substantiation as a result of her self-knowledge, which is in some sense equivalent to the self-knowledge of the transcendent deity. Finally, one might note that the notion of self-reversion in the course of the mystical ascent is not restricted to Platonizing Sethian literature, but also seems to have a parallel in Valentinian texts as well. One may compare a passage of the Tripartite Tractate in which the mystical ascent to an ineffable, hypernoetic realm of light is accomplished insofar as one is capable of both self-naming and self-knowing.15

2.2. Second Point. As in Plotinus, the Platonizing Sethians envisioned the mystical self-reversion to be structurally parallel to the first moments of ontogenesis. In the Sethian scheme, the second, intellectual principle— and often Being itself— emerges as a result of the hyperontic deity’s own reflexive act of self-apprehension or self-contraction. This is hinted at in numerous passages throughout the Platonizing Sethian treatises, but it is perhaps most evident in Allogenes. In Turner’s reconstruction of the beginning of the tractate, at 45.22-29, the triad of powers of the Invisible Spirit contracts, expands, and, like Plotinus’ prenoetic efflux, crystallizes into an independent hypostasis by knowing both itself and its source. At 48.14-21, the transcendent deity is said to generate Being through self-cognition: “It is not as Being (shôpe), but he gives Being with the hidden one of Existence (t-huparxis), providing

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14 Thus, inter alia, Mars. 8.19-9.20; Zost. 17.15; 45.9-46.2; 76.21-25; 81.1-21; 87.10-23; 97.1-6, etc.
15 Trip. Tract. 123.27-124.25; “The redemption is an ascent to the degrees to which are in the Pleroma and to those who have named themselves and who conceive of themselves according to the power of each of the aeons, and it is an entrance into what is silent, where there is no need for voice nor for knowing nor forming a concept nor for illumination, but where all things are light, while they do not need to be illumined.”
everything for it, since it is this which will come to be when he intelligizes himself.” At 53.10-31 the emergence of the Triple Powered One is described thus: “That One moved motionlessly in that which governs, lest he sink into the boundless by means of another activity of Mentality. And he entered into himself and he appeared (auô åf-bôk ehoun erop ouaaf åf-ouônh ebol).” A similar example of ontogenesis through spatial recursion of the Invisible Spirit occurs at Marsanes 9.29-10.7. Yet ontogenesis through primordial self-apprehension occurs in earlier Sethian literature as well; in the Apocryphon of John, for example, Barbelo emerges as the image of the transcendent deity reflected in his own efflux of aqueous light. Similarly, in Eugnostos and the parallel Sophia of Jesus Christ, the second principle emerges as the self-reflection of the first. And this is a very widespread motif in many Gnostic systems, not only in Sethianism.\footnote{Similar motifs occur in the thought of Simon Magus (Hippolytus, Refutatio omnium haeresium VI.18), Marcus (Hippolytus, Haer. VI.42), and Theodotus (Clement of Alexandria, Excerpta ex Theodoto 7.1); also Tripartite Tractate (NHC I.5) 56.1-6, 56.16-57.3; Gospel of Truth (NHC I.3) 38.6-39.28; and among other Sethian examples, Untitled Text from the Codex Bruce 21.5-21.}

2.3. Third Point. As in Plotinus, the Platonizing Sethians not only envisioned a structural parallel between the first moments of ontogenesis and the last moments of mystical ascent, but also a functional identity between the faculty of transcendental apperception and the primordial self-manifestation of the supreme principle, both of which abide at an interhypostatic level somewhere between the noetic second principle and the hypernoetic first principle. At Allogenes 60.39, during the final phase of the tripartite self-withdrawal, the aspirant apprehends the Unknowable One through what is usually translated as a “primary revelation” (oumnthôrp ouônh ebol). At the SBL in Boston last November, I suggested that this phrase has commonly been misinterpreted to mean a supreme revelation of transcendent information and is very likely instead used to render a Greek antecedent such as prôtê ekphansis, protophaneia, or prôtê epiphaneia, or some such phrase meaning “first manifestation.” I won’t elaborate on my philological argument here; what is important is simply that this is the same Coptic term used in several locations to describe the first manifestation of the supreme principle to itself in the first moment of reflexive ontogenesis.\footnote{N.b., however, that it should not be confused with the middle hypostasis of the Barbelo Aeon, Protophanes, who seems to abide on a considerably lower level than this very first interhypostatic autophany} To this one may also bring to bear a number of other hints of an extraordinary faculty for transcendental apprehension belonging to the human aspirant: a faculty that has an unmistakable resemblance to the primordial self-manifestation of the first principle. Consider, for example, the “first thought” (oushrp nennoia) that allows the aspirant to apprehend the hyperontic deity at Allogenes 48.13, or the “enlightened thought” (ouennoia ece nouoein) that permits a paradoxically ignorant knowledge of the supreme principle at 60.11; or the “eye of revelation that is at rest” (pibal ethrk mmof nte piouônh ebol), “the [eye] that is from the Triple Power of the First Thought of the Invisible Spirit”— apart from which the aspirant is blind— at 64.30-36. In Zostrianos, as well, the aspirant apprehends the transcendent principle by means of “the thought which is now in silence and within the first thought” (nhrâï de hn tiennoa taï etshoop tinoû hn ousgê, nhrâï de hn tishorp n ennoia). In the latter passage we have a resonance not only with the first self-cognition of the supreme deity of the typical Sethian schema, but also with the interhypostatic consort of the transcendent first principle of Irenaeus’ Valentinians, also known as both Silence (Sîgê) and Thought (Ennoia). One may associate this with several other systems which explicitly ascribe a soteriological function to the first consort of the transcendent deity, a consort who is also understood to be an indwelling faculty of salvation within the human subject. Thus the namesake of the Trimorphic Proteennoia announces that she is both eikôn of the Invisible Spirit and the seed indwelling humankind. The implication is that just like Plotinus, the Sethians understood a very close connection or even identity between the first moment of ontogenesis—the transcendent first principle’s own self-apprehension—and the human faculty similarly capable of apprehending that principle.\footnote{16 Similar motifs occur in the thought of Simon Magus (Hippolytus, Refutatio omnium haeresium VI.18), Marcus (Hippolytus, Haer. VI.42), and Theodotus (Clement of Alexandria, Excerpta ex Theodoto 7.1); also Tripartite Tractate (NHC I.5) 56.1-6, 56.16-57.3; Gospel of Truth (NHC I.3) 38.6-39.28; and among other Sethian examples, Untitled Text from the Codex Bruce 21.5-21.}
2.4. Fourth and final point. This indwelling faculty of transcendental apperception is not only structurally and functionally identical to the self-manifestation of the supreme principle, but as in Plotinus, has been in some manner “imprinted” within us at the first eternal moment of ontogenesis. This eikôn or tupos, the “first thought” or “first manifestation” of the transcendent deity, is simultaneously an interhypostatic principle and inheres within the human subject, just as for Plotinus the trace or ichnos of the One abides in us as a residue of ontogenesis. In the final moments prior to the final ascent to the Unknowable One at 59.37-60.2, the Luminaries instruct Allogenes, “in accordance with the impression (tupos) that indwells you, know likewise that it is this way in all such matters, after this very pattern (smot).” At 60.31-36, immediately prior to Allogenes’ ultimate apprehension of the Unknowable One, he withdraws to the Existence (t-huparxis) which he finds “standing and at rest like an image (ouhiê) and likeness (ouêinê) of what is bestowed or invested upon me (ouhiê mnouêine nte pê ettoe hiôôt) by a manifestation of the Indivisible One and the One who is at rest.” Although the precise meaning is ambiguous, this would appear to imply that some aspect of the transcendent principle has been invested or imprinted upon the human aspirant by the initial manifestation (ouônh ebol) of the supreme principle, and that this imprint is in some sense superior to even the highest member of the noetic triad, Existence, which is merely an image and likeness of it (using the language of the creation of Adam in Genesis to suggest the priority of archetype over image).18 Indeed, the language of tupos and eikôn pervades these tractates, and it is interesting that it often refers to an indwelling faculty that permits ascent to superior realms. In Zostrianos as well one finds a series of stages in which the aspirant receives an image or imprint of superior powers that assist in the ascent; at 5.11-17, for example, Zostrianos describes a luminous power within himself and the reception of the image of glories prior to a further ascent. At 11.9-14, there is an enigmatic reference to the appearance of tupoi within ascending souls in terms that foreshadow Plotinus’ autophany: “When souls are enlightened by the light within them and by the tupos which often comes into being within them....” It is eventually the presence of this tupos in the soul that allows further ascent, since in the next page (page 12), there is an elaborate passage describing the ascent of various “copies” or images (antitupoi) towards their truly-existant archetypes, reminiscent of Plotinus’ language of the voyage of eikôn pros archetupon at VI.9[9].11.45.

3. Here I have only made the briefest, most summary argument for this case. Much more work remains to be done. Yet if I am right, where does this leave Plotinus’ mysticism? I would like to conclude with the following observations.

3.1. First, as Jean-Marc suggested very eloquently yesterday, we can no longer treat Plotinus’ mysticism as sui generis, or purely as a result of Plotinus’ unique constitution. We must attempt to recontextualize it within the broader context of the philosophico-religious praxis of the early third century. Indeed, any serious research into Plotinian mysticism in the future must take into account its relationship with Sethian Gnosticism, as distasteful as this may seem to many of those working strictly within the field of ancient philosophy.

3.2. This does not, however, mean that we should dismiss the notion of experience. On the contrary, the evidence from both Porphyry and Plotinus himself suggests that Plotinus did indeed have intense, lived experience of union with the One. Again, I find myself in agreement with Jean-Marc that mystical experience and metaphysics remain in dialectical relation with each other: what Hans Jonas once referred to as a “feedback loop.” Immersion in a metaphysical system made certain exceptional subjective visionary states possible: states which in turn reinforced and transformed that metaphysical

18 There is already an intimation of this in the “three unborn images with an origin better than existence” at Zost. 2.28-30.
3.3. Yet why is there such a tension between aspects of his professed doctrine (such as, for example, that of the absence of interhypostases) on the one hand, and, on the other hand, certain elements of his mysticism? A hypothetical scenario might be the following: let us imagine that Plotinus was well-versed not only in the theory but also—crucially—in the practice of contemplative ascent in some tradition very close to that of the Platonizing Sethians, perhaps even well before his arrival in Rome, during his education in Alexandria. Such immersion in religious praxis would have left deep marks on his consciousness, habits of mind and behavior which would have persisted even once sectarian rivalries and competing strategies of legitimation obliged him to part ways, intellectually speaking, with his Gnostic friends. Thus while his expressed metaphysical doctrines would have diverged from the Gnostics in important ways, these deeper, more intractable patterns of thought and vision may have persisted, and may be discerned lurking within—and indeed vivifying—his mystical passages.
A. Key Plotinian passages describing ascent and / or mystical union with the One

<table>
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<tr>
<th>[A1] I.6[1].7.1-19</th>
<th>And so one must reascend to the Good, for which every soul longs. If someone has seen it, he knows what I am saying, [and] the manner in which it is beautiful. It is desired as good, and the desire is towards this, yet the attainment of it is for those ascending towards the above and is for those who have been converted and who shed what we put on while descending— just as with those going up to the [inner] sanctuaries of the temples, the purifications and taking off of the clothing beforehand, and the going up naked— until, in the ascent leaving everything behind insmashm as it is foreign to god, one should see, by oneself alone, it alone, absolute, simple, pure, from which everything depends and looks to it {and is, and lives, and thinks; for it is cause of life and mind and being}. If someone should see it, what a love he would have, what a longing, wishing to be commingled with it; how it would strike one with pleasure! For the one not yet seeing it, it is to be desired as good, but for the one seeing it, he is to really be delighted in its beauty and to be filled with amazement along with pleasure, and to be stricken harmlessly and to love with true love and a piercing longing, and to mock other loves and to despise what he previously considered beautiful.</th>
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<td>[A2] I.6[1].9.15-25</td>
<td>Go back into yourself and look; and if you still do not see yourself beautiful, just as the maker of a statue which needs to be beautiful cuts some parts away and polishes others and makes some parts smooth and others pure until he has revealed the beautiful face in the statue, so also you cut away whatever is excessive, and straighten whatever is crooked, and remove whatever is dark and make it shiny, and not stop “crafting your statue” until you should see “temperance mounted upon a holy pedestal.” If you have become this, and see it, and, you, pure, “come together” with yourself, having no impediment to thus coming towards one, nor having with it anything else mixed inside, but wholly yourself, only true light, not measured by magnitude nor circumscribed into diminution by shape nor, conversely, expanded into magnitude by unboundedness, but everywhere unmeasurable because greater than all measure and better than all quantity; if you see yourself having become this, at this point, having become vision, you have confidence with respect to yourself, and in this very moment, having ascended, you have no need of a demonstrator; look intently; for this alone is the eye that sees the great beauty.</td>
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[A3] IV.8[6].1.1-11

Frequently—awakening into myself out of my body, and coming to be outside of other things but within myself, seeing an extraordinarily marvelous beauty, and coming to believe then I was of the better part, having actualized the noblest life, and having come to identity with the divine and having been settled within it, coming into that actuality, settling myself above every other intelligible object—after this stasis in the divine, having descended into rationality from Intellect, I am puzzled how ever, even now, I descend, and how for me the soul ever came to be inside of the body, being what it appears to be on its own even while it is in the body.


If someone has not come to the contemplation, and the soul has not had an awareness of, or experienced, the glories there, nor had in itself (as it were) the erotic experience—from the vision—of a (male) lover resting in the (male) beloved, having received the true light and having illuminated around the entire soul through having become closer; but [instead] has ascended while still being burdened from behind, which was an impediment to the contemplation, and not having ascended alone, but having something that separates one from it, or not yet being brought together into one—for that one is certainly not absent from any, and yet is absent from everything, so that being present, it is not present except to those able to receive it and those who are prepared so as to adapt to it and as it were lay hold of it and to touch it by means of likeness; and by means of the power in oneself connate with that which comes from him, when one keeps oneself as one kept oneself when one came from him, one is immediately able to see, as it is natural for that one to be contemplated.
Εἰ δὲ οὐκ ἔστιν τούτων ἑστίν, ἀνοριστεῖς τῇ γνώμῃ, στίγμαν σαυτὸν εἰς ταύτα, καὶ ἀπὸ τούτων θεώ· θεῶ δὲ μὴ ἐξω ἐξίπτων τὴν διάνοιαν. Οὐ γὰρ κεῖται που ἑρμηνεύσαν αὐτοῦ τὰ ἄλλα, ἀλλ’ ἔστι τῷ δυναμένῳ δίγειν ἐκεῖ παρόν, τὸ δὲ ἀδυνατοῦντι οὔ πάρεστιν. Ὁσπέρ δὲ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων οὐκ ἔστι τι νοεῖν ἀλλὸ νοοῦντα καί πρὸς ἄλλῳ ὑπάντο, ἀλλὰ δὲι μηδὲν προσάπτειν τῷ νοοῦμενῳ, ἵν’ ἢ αὐτό τὸ νοοῦμενον, οὔτω δὲι καὶ ἐνταῦθα εἰδεναι, ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλου ἔχοντα ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ τῶν ἐκεῖνον νοῆσαι ἐνεργοῦστος τοῦ τύπου, οὐδ’ αὖ ἄλλοις κατειλημμένης τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ καταχωμένης κυπρωθήναι τῷ τοῦ ἑναντίου τύπῳ, ἀλλ’ ὁσπέρ περὶ τῆς ὑλῆς λέγεται, ὡς ἄρα ἄποιον εἶναι δεὶ πάντων, εἰ μέλλει δέχεσθαι τοὺς πάντων τύπους, οὔτως καὶ πολὺ μᾶλλον ἀνείδεις τῷ ψυχῆς γίνεσθαι, εἰ μέλλει μηδὲν ἐμπόδιον εὐγκάθημενον ἐσεθαὶ πρὸς πλήρωσιν καὶ ἔλλαιμιν αὐτῷ τῆς φύσεως τῆς πρότης. Εἰ δὲ τούτων πάντων ἔξω ἀφέμενα δεὶ ἐπιστραφῆναι πρὸς τὸ ἐσωτέρον, καὶ διαθέσει δὲι ἄνειδεις τὸν ἑπόμενον ἑποίμην εἰς τὰ πάντα καὶ πρὸς τοῦ μὲν τῆς διαθέσει, τότε δὲ καὶ τοῖς εἰδειν, ἀνείδειας δὲι καὶ αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ θεῷ εἰκόνῳ γενέσθαι, κακεῖνως συγγενόμενον καὶ ἑκατόν οἶου ὀρισθαναι ἤκειν ἀγγέλλοντα, εἰ δύνατο, καὶ ἄλλῳ τῷ ἑκατόν συνουσίαν σιὰν ὦν καὶ Μίνως ποιούμενον ἀριστής τοῦ Δίως ἑρμηνεύθη εἴναι, ἤς μειμνημένος εἰδικά αὐτῆς τοὺς νόμους ἐπερί τῇ τοῦ θείου ἑπαρφή εἰς νόμων πληρούμενος Δέσιν.

But if because it is none of these, you are indeterminate in thought, stand yourself in these these things and contemplate out from them; but contemplate without throwing your thought outward. For it does not lie “somewhere” having left the other things bereft of it, but it is present “there” to the one able to touch, but is not present to the one unable to. But just as with other things, it is not possible to think something while thinking something else and being oriented towards another, but one must attach nothing to the object of thought, in order that it be indeed the object of thought itself; so also, here too, one should know that it is not possible to think that [One] while having the impression of another in one’s soul, while the impression is active, nor, moreover, when the soul is taken over and possessed by other things can she be imprinted with the impression of the opposite, but just as is said of matter that it needs to be without the qualities of all things if it is going to receive the impressions of all things, so also (and how much more so!) must the soul become formless, if there is not going to be embedded within her an impediment to an impregnation and illumination from the first nature. If this is so, withdrawing from all external things, she must turn completely to the within, and not be inclined to any of the external things, but ‘un-knowing’ all things (both as he had at first, in the sensible realm, then also, in that of the forms) and even ‘un-knowing’ himself, come to be in the contemplation of that, and having “come together” and having had sufficient intercourse, so to speak, with that, come announce the communion there, if possible, also to another. Perhaps it is because of doing such a thing that Minos too was said to be the “familiar friend” of Zeus; remembering this [communion] he instituted laws as an image of it, having been filled with legislative status by the divine touch.
“Whoever has seen, knows what I mean”: that then the soul has another life, both while approaching and having already “come forward” and participated in him, so that she is disposed to recognize that the provider of true life is present and she needs nothing further. But on the contrary, it is necessary to put the other things away and stand in this alone, and become that alone, having cut away the remaining things with which were are encompassed, so as to hasten to go out from here, and to be irritated at being bound to the other things, in order that we may embrace with the whole of ourselves, and have no part with which we do not touch god. Here, at this point, one can see both him and oneself as it is right to see: the self glorified, full of intelligible light— but rather itself pure light, weightless, floating, having become—but rather, being—a god; inflamed, then, but if one should be weighed down again, it is as if withering.

[9 lines omitted]

[…] And so seeing himself, then, when he sees, he will see himself as such, or, rather, he will “be together with” himself in such a manner and will perceive [himself] as such, having become simple. But perhaps one should not say, “will see,” but “was seen,” if indeed it is even necessary to speak of two, the seer and the seen, but not both as one (the statement is audacious!). And so, then, the seer neither sees nor distinguishes nor imagine two, but as if having become another and not himself nor belonging to himself there, having come to belong to that [one], he is one, as if having attached center to center. For down here, too, having “come together” they [sc. “lovers”] are one, but two when separate. Thus, now, we also say “another.” Therefore the contemplation is indeed difficult to express: for how could someone report as another, not seeing as another there when he contemplated, but as one in relation to himself?
[A7] VI.9[9].11.4-25

Ἐπεὶ τοῖνυν δυὸ οὐκ ἦν, ἀλλ’ ἐν ἦν αὐτὸς οἶ
dξων πρὸς τὸ ἐγωρμένον, ὡς ἂν μὴ ἐγωρμένον,
ἀλλ’ ἡμωμένον, ὃς ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐκείνῳ ἐμὴντο
εἰ μειμοῦτο, ἔχοι ἃν παρ’ ἐαυτῷ ἐκεῖνου εἰκόνα·
Ἡν δὲ ἐν καὶ αὐτὸς διαφόρων ἐν αὐτῷ οὐδεμιαν
πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἔχων οὔτε κατὰ ἄλλα—οὔ γὰρ τι
ἐκινεῖτο παρ’ αὐτῶ, οὐ θυμός, οὐκ ἐπιθυμία
ἀλλου παρὶν αὐτῷ ἀναβεβηκότι—ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ
λόγου οὔδε τὶς νόεσις οὐδ’ ὄλος αὐτός, εἰ δὲ
καὶ τοῦτο λέγειν. Ἀλλ’ ὡσπερ ἀρπασθεὶς ἢ
ἐνθουσιάσας ἡμυχῆ ἐν ἔρημῳ καὶ καταστάσει
γεγένηται ἀτρεμεῖ, τῇ αὐτοῦ οὐσίᾳ οὐδαμῇ
ἀποκλίνων οὔδε περὶ αὐτῶν στρεφόμενος,
εὐτάρας πάντη καὶ οἷον στάσεις γενόμενοι. Οὐδὲ
τῶν καλῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ καλὸν ἤδη ὑπερθένων,
ὑπερβαίνειτο καὶ τόν τῶν ἀρετῶν χορόν,
ὡσπερ τις εἰς τὸ ἐσώ εἰς αὐτοῦ εἰς ὧδε
τοῦπίσο καταλιπόν τὰ ἐν τῷ νεό ἀγάλματα,
ἀ ἐξελθόντι τοῦ αὐτοῦ πάλιν γίνεται πρότα
μετὰ τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ θέαμα καὶ τῇ ἐκεὶ συνυσιάν
πρὸς οὐκ ἀγάλμα οὔδε εἰκόνα, ἀλλὰ αὐτῷ· ἡ
δὴ γίνεται δεύτερα θέαμα. Ὁ δὲ ἢσος ἢ
οὐ θέαμα, ἀλλὰ ἄλλος τρόπος τοῦ ἱδίων,
ἐκστάσεις καὶ ἀπλωσις καὶ ἐπίδοσις αὐτοῦ καὶ
ἐφεσις πρὸς ἄρθη καὶ στάσις καὶ περινόσις
πρὸς ἑφαρμονιῆν, εἶπε τὶς τὸ ἐν τῷ ἀδύτῳ
θεᾶτον.

Since, then, there were not two, but the seer himself was one in
relation to the seen (for it was not really seen, but unified), if he
remembers who he became when he was mingled with that [one], he
will have an image of that [one] with himself. But he himself, too,
was one, with no distinction in himself either in relation to himself or
in relation to others; for nothing moved with him, and he had no
wish, no desire for another when he had ascended—but there was
not even any reason or thought, nor even a self at all, if one must say
even this; but he was as if snatched away or divinely possessed, in
quiet solitude and stillness, having become motionless, not turning
aside anywhere in his substance, nor turning about himself, having
come to a complete standstill and indeed having become a kind of
stasis. He was not among the beauties, having already ascended
beyond even the chorus of virtues, just like someone enters into the
interior of the adyton having left behind in the naos the cult-statues
which, by his emergence back out of the adyton, become the first
things [encountered] after the object of contemplation inside, and the
intercourse there not with cult-statues or icons, but with the thing
itself; for these [statues] become secondary objects of contemplation.
But the former was perhaps not an object of contemplation, but rather
another way to see: an ecstatic standing outside and a simplifying
expansion and a surrendering growth of oneself and a longing
towards contact and a stasis and a thinking around towards
accomodation, if someone is going to contemplate what is in the
adyton.

[8A] VI.9[9].11.33-45

Οὐ γὰρ δή εἰς τὸ πάντη μὴ ὅν ἤρει ἢ ψυχῆς φύσις,
ἀλλὰ κἀτω μὲν βάσις εἰς κακὸν ἤρει, καὶ οὔτως εἰς
μὴ ὅν, οὐκ εἰς τὸ παντελὲς μὴ ὅν. Τὴν ἐναντίαν δὲ
δραμοῦσα ἤρει οὐκ εἰς ἄλλο, ἀλλ’ εἰς αὐτὴν, καὶ
οὔτως οὐκ ἐν ἄλλῳ οὐσία <οὐκ> ἐν οὐδεῖ ἐστὶν,
ἀλλ’ ἐν αὐτῇ· τὸ δὲ ἐν αὐτῇ μόνῃ καὶ οὐκ ἐν τῷ
ὅτι ἐν ἐκείνῳ γίνεται γάρ καὶ αὐτὸς τὶς οὐσία,
ἀλλ’ ἐπέκεινης οὐσίας ταὐτῇ, ἢ προσομιλεῖ.
Ἐ τὶς οὖν τούτῳ αὐτὸν γενόμενον ἤδη, ἔχει
ὁμοίωμα ἐκείνου αὐτοῦ, καὶ εἰ ἀφ’ αὐτοῦ
μεταβαίνοις ὡς εἰκόν πρὸς ἀρχέτυπον, τέλος ἄν
ἔχοι τῆς πορείας.

For indeed the nature of the soul will not come to complete non-
existence, but going (on the one hand) “down,” it will come into
evil, and thus into non-being (i.e. not to utter non-existence).
Conversely, running the opposite way, it will come not into another
but into itself, and thus not being in another, it is in no one but
itself; yet while in itself, and not in Being, it is in that, for one
becomes also oneself and not in substance, but “beyond substance”
by means of this intercourse. And so if one should see oneself
having become this, one has oneself as a likeness of That, and if
one goes on from oneself as an image to an archetype one reaches
the “end of the journey.”

Καὶ γὰρ αὐτῇ τῇ γνώσει διὰ νῦν τῶν ἄλλων γνωσμένης καὶ τῷ νῦν γνώσκειν δυναμένου ὑπερβηθεῖκος τούτῳ τῇ νῦν φύσιν τῷ ἀν ἀλλικοῖο ἐπιβολῆ ἀθρό: Πρὸς ὃ δὲ σημαίνει, ὅπως ὅπο τε, το ἐν ἡμῖν ὠμοίῳ φήσομεν. ‘Εστὶ γὰρ τι καί παρ’ ἡμῖν οὗτος ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν, ὅπως μὴ ἔστιν, οὐς ἔστιν μετέχειν αὐτοῦ. Τὸ γὰρ πανταχοῦ παρὸν στίχος ὑπουροῦ τὸ δυνάμενον ἐξεῖν ἔχεις ἑκεῖθεν· ὥσπερ εἰ φανεῖς καταχώσῃς ἐρημίαν ἢ καὶ μετὰ τῆς ἐρημίας καὶ ἀνθρώπους ἐν ὑπόκοινῳ τοῦ ἐρημίου στίχος οὗ τῇ φανῇ κοιμεῖ πᾶσαν καὶ αὐτὸν πᾶσαν. Τὶ ὅπως ἔστιν ὁ κοιμοῦμενας νῦν παρατησιμένοι; Η δὲ τοῦ νῦν οἷον εἰς τούτοις ἀναχωρεῖν καὶ οἷον έκαθόριστα τοῖς εἰς ὅποθεν αὐτῶν ἀμφιστομοῦν ὀντα, κακείνα, εἰ ἐθλοῖ έκείνῳ ὀρῶν, μὴ πάντα νῦν εἶναι. ‘Εστὶ μὲν γὰρ αὐτὸς ζωή πρώτης, ἐνέργεια οὐσία ἐν διεξόδῳ τῶν πάντων· διεξόδῳ δὲ οὐ τῇ διεξουσίᾳ, ἀλλὰ τῇ διεξελεύσῃ. Εἶπεν οὖν καὶ ζωή ἐστι καὶ διεξόδῳ ἐστι καὶ πάντα ἀκρίβως καὶ οὐκ ὀλοσχέρως έχει· ἀπελεύνου ἡμᾶς ἃν καὶ ἀδιαρθρώτως ἔχων· ἔξω τινος ἄλλου αὐτοῦ εἶναι, ὃ σκέφτηκεν εἰς διεξόδῳ, ἀλλὰ ἀρχή διεξόδου καὶ ἀρχὴ ζωῆς καὶ ἀρχὴ νοῦ καὶ τῶν πάντων.

For, again, since knowledge of other thing occurs through intellect, and we are able to know intellect by intellect, by what sudden grasping could we seize that which supercedes the nature of intellect?— in response to which one should note how it is possible: for there is something of it with us too; there is not somewhere it is not, for those able to participate in it. For standing anywhere, you have from there that which is able to have that which is present everywhere; just as if there was a voice diffused over a desert, or also in the midst of the desert, people too, and by standing to listen at any place in the desert, you will receive all the voice, and yet not all. What is it, then, which we shall receive when we set our intellect to it? Rather the intellect, being “double-mouthed,” must (so to speak) withdraw backwards, and, as it were, surrender itself to what lies behind it; and there, if it wishes to see that one (n.), it must not be altogether intellect. For it (m.) is itself the first life, being an activity in the going-through-and-out of all things; but going-through-and-out not in its being [now] going-through-and-out, but in that it has [previously] gone-through-and-out. So if, then, it is life, and going-through-and-out, and has all things distinctly and not improperly— for thus it would have them imperfectly and inartically— it is from something else which is not still in the going-through-and-out but is the origin of the going-through-and-out and the origin of life and the origin of intellect and of all things.


Εἰ δὲ τὶς ἡμῶν ἀδυνατῶν ἑαυτῶν ὄρασι, ὑπ’ ἐκείνου τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπὶ καταλήψεις εἰς τὸ ιδεῖν προφερέ τὸ θέαμα, ἑαυτῶν προφερέει καὶ εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ καλλωπισθείσαν βλέπει, ἀφεῖς δὲ τῆς εἰκόνας κατέρευσεν οὐκ εἰς ἐν αὐτῷ ἐλθὼν καὶ μικρέτεροι σχίσας ἐν ὑμῖν πάντα ἐστὶ μετ’ ἐκείνου τοῦ θεοῦ ἀμφοτέροις παρόντως, καὶ ἐστὶ μετ’ αὐτοῦ δυνάτας καὶ θέλεις, εἰ δ’ ἐπιστραφείπερ εἰς δύο, καθάρος μένους ἐφέξεις ἐστίν αὐτῷ· ὡς ἄναπαρείται εἰκόνας πάλιν· δε’ τ’ αὐτῶν στρέφοις, ἐν δὲ τῇ ἐπιστροφῇ κέρδος τούτ’ ἔχει· ἄρχομαινας αἰσθάνεται αὐτοῦ· ἔως ἑτέρας ἐστιν· δραμὼν δὲ τοῦ εἰς ἕχει πάντως, καὶ ἀφεῖς τῆς αἰσθήσεως εἰς τούτων τοῦ ἑτέρου εἰς φόβῳ ἔστιν· ἐλάβοντας δὲ ἐκ τοῦ ἔστιν· ἐκ τοῦ ἐνδιεμένου, ἐξο ἑαυτῶν ποιεῖ. Δε’ δὲ καταμιμήθηκα μέν ἐν τοῖς τούτοις αὐτοῦ μένουν παρὰ τοῦ ἐτέρους γνωσμάτως αὐτοῦ· εἰς οἷον δὲ εἰς ἐούσιον, οὐκ άνθρώποι κατὰ πάντα, ἄφηντο τῆς ἑθικῶν. ἐν ἐτέρῳ δούναται εἰς ἑκεῖθεν· ἐν εἰς ἑκεῖθεν· καὶ ἔμενε ἀντὶ ἐρήμως ἔθη ἑθικάν ἀμφιβολοῦν ὅπως ἐκεῖθεν ἔκει· ἐκεῖθεν ἐν τοῖς νοομίσαι.

If one of us is unable to see himself, then, when he is possessed by that god, if he should bring forth the contemplation into an act of seeing, he presents himself to himself and looks at a beautified image of himself, but dismisses the image though it is beautiful, coming into one with himself, and, being no longer separate, is simultaneously one and all things with that god noiselessly present, and is with him as such as he is able and wishes to be; but if he should return to duality, while remaining pure, he is immediately subjacent to him, so as to be present to him thusly again, if he should again turn towards him. In this reversion he has this advantage: from the beginning he perceives himself, so long as he is different; but running into the within, he has everything, and leaving perception behind in fear of being different, he is one there. And if he should desire to see while being different, he makes himself external. But one must, on the one hand, learn about him, and, other the other hand, maintain some impression of him while seeking to discern into what sort of thing one is entering, thus, learning with certainty that it is into the blessed thing, immediately one must surrender oneself to the within and become, instead of a seer, the object of contemplation of another contemplator, shining out with the kind of thoughts that come from there.
Οὕτω δὴ καὶ νοές αὐτὸν ἀπὸ τῶν ἄλλων καλύμματα καὶ συναγαγόντων εἰς τὸ εἴσω μηδὲν ὄργῳ<br>θεάσεται οὐκ ἄλλο ἐν ἄλλῳ φῶς, ἀλλ’ αὐτῷ καθ’ ἐαυτὸ μονὸν καθαρὸν ἔρι’ αὐτοῦ ἐξαίρθης φανέν, <br>ὥστε ἀπορεῖν οἶθεν ἐφάνη, ἐξωθέν ἢ ἑνδον, καὶ ἀπελθόντος εἰπεῖν «ἐνδον ἀρά ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἑνδον αὐτόν». (8.) Ἡ οὐ δεὶς σητεῖν πόθεν ὡς γὰρ ἐστὶ τὸ πόθεν' οὔτε γὰρ ἔρχεται οὔτε ἀπείρου οὐδαμοῦ, <br>ἀλλὰ φαίνεται τε καὶ οὐ φαίνεται διὸ οὐ χρὴ διώκειν, ἀλλ’ ἦσαν κεῖσι κεῖσιν, ἐώς ἵνα φανῇ, <br>παρασκεύασαν ἑαυτὸν θεατὴν εἶναι, ὡσπερ ὁρθομοσίου ἀνατολάς ἡλίου περιμένει· ὁ δὲ <br>ὑπερφανεῖς τοῦ ὀρίζοντος—ἐξ ὀκεάνου φασίν οἱ ποιηταὶ—ἔβοικεν ἑαυτὸν θέασασθαι τοῖς θύμασιν.<br>Οὕτως δὲ, ὥς ἦν, ὑπεραχίσει πόθεν: Καὶ τὸ ὑπερβαλὸν φανήσεται· Ὁ αὐτὸν <br>ὑπερχών τὸν νοῦν τοῦ θεωόμενον ἐστίθεται μὲν γὰρ ὁ νοῦς πρὸς τὴν θέσιν εἰς οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἢ πρὸς <br>τὸ καλὸν βλέπον, ἐκεῖ ἑαυτὸν πάσας τρέπει καὶ διδόει, στὰς δὲ καὶ οἷον πληροθέες μένους εἰδε μὲν <br>τὰ πρώτα καλλὶς γενομένου ἑαυτὸν καὶ <br>ἐπιστῇβοντα, ὡς ἐγγύς ὅντος αὐτοῦ. Ὁ δεύκ <br>ἡμεῖς, ὡς τις προσεδόκα, ἀλλ’ ἠλθεν ὡς οὐκ ἐλθὼν· <br>ἔρθη γάρ ὡς οὐκ ἐλθὼν, ἀλλὰ πρὸ ἀπάνων <br>παραῖν, πριν καὶ τὸν νοῦν ἐλθείν. Εἰναι δὲ τὸν <br>νοῦν τὸν ἔλθοντα καὶ τοῦτον εἶναι καὶ τὸν <br>ἀπίστωτα, ὃτι μὴ οἶδε ποῦ δεὶ μένει καὶ ποῦ ἐκείνος <br>μένει, ὃτι ἐν οὐδείς. Καὶ εἰ οἶδον τε ἦν καὶ αὐτῷ τῷ νῷ μένειν μὴ βαμβακεῖ—οὐχ ὃτι ἐν τόπῳ· οὐδὲ γὰρ <br>οὐδ’ αὐτός ἐν τόπῳ, ἀλλ’ ὁ λόγος μὴ βαμβακεῖ—ἤν ἄν <br>ἀεὶ ἐκείνον βλέπον καὶ τοῖς ὁμοίως βλέπουν, ἀλλ’ ἐν <br>ἐκείνῳ ὡς καὶ οὐ δυσ. Νῦν δὲ, ὃτι ἐστὶ νοές, οὕτω <br>βλέπει, ὅτε βλέπει, τῷ ἑαυτόυ μὴ νῦ. Thus also Intellect, veiling itself from other things and contracting<br>into its interior, not looking at anything, will see a light, not another<br>one in something else, but itself, alone by itself, pure, appearing<br>suddenly by itself, so as to be puzzled whence it appeared, from<br>without or within, and, once it has departed, to say, “it was within,<br>and yet was not within.” But one need not seek whence, for there is<br>no “whence.” For it does not come nor go anywhere, but appears or<br>does not appear. Therefore, it is not necessary to pursue it, but to<br>remain quiet until it should appear, preparing oneself to be a<br>contemplator, just like the eye awaits the rising of the sun; and its<br>appearance above the horizon (“from Ocean,” the poets say) offers<br>itself to the eyes to be contemplated. But he whom the sun imitates,<br>whence will he arise? And surmounting what will he appear?<br>Indeed, he will surmount the contemplating Intellect itself. For<br>Intellect will make itself stand towards the contemplation, looking<br>at nothing else but the Beautiful, completely turning and<br>surrendering himself there, but having stood, and, as if having been<br>filled with strength, it sees first of all itself having become more<br>beautiful and glistening, as he is close to him. But he did not come<br>as someone expected, but came as not having come; for he was<br>seen not as having come, but as being present before all things,<br>before even Intellect came. There is the Intellect that comes, and<br>there is also the Intellect that goes away, because it does not know<br>where to stay and where that one stays, as it is in nothing. And if it<br>were possible also for Intellect itself to remain nowhere—not<br>because it is in place, for neither is he in place, but rather,<br>absolutely nowhere—it would have been gazing at that one<br>eternally; or rather, not gazing, but being one with that and not two.<br>But now, because it is Intellect, it looks, when it looks, with that of<br>itself which is not Intellect.
And so [Inteleg] was raised up there, and he remained content to be around him; but the soul which was able, having reverted, when she knew and saw, also delighted in the contemplation, and, inasmuch as she was able to see, was smitten. She saw, stricken, as it were, and she was conscious of having something of it in herself, and thus disposed, she came into a state of longing, just like those who are moved by the image of a lovely person to want to see the beloved one itself.

...Then she is carried off there, being marvelous at discovering whatever she loves, and not desisting until she seizes it (unless someone, somewhere, were to steal even this love of hers away). In that very moment, she sees all things are beautiful and true, and she takes on more strength, filled with the life of Being; and having really also become Being herself, and having true consciousness, she perceives she is close to what she has long been seeking.

And we will no longer be amazed if that which provokes the tremendous longing is entirely free from even intelligible shape; since the soul, too, when it acquires an intense love of it, sets aside all shape which she has, and even whatever shape of the intelligible might be in her. For there is neither seeing nor adaptation while holding anything else and being active around it. But it is necessary to have no evil nor even another good at hand, so that she alone may receive it alone. When the soul should attain it and it comes to her (but rather, [already] being present, it appears)—when that soul slips away from the things present and has prepared herself so that she is most beautiful and has come into likeness (the preparation and the adornment are evident, perhaps, to those who are preparing), seeing it appearing suddenly in herself (for there is nothing between nor are there still two, but both are one; nor could you still make a distinction while it is present; an imitation of this is also lovers and beloveds down here, wishing to blended) nor does she still perceive the body, that she is in it, and she does not call herself anything else: not a human being, nor a living thing, nor a being, nor all (for somehow the contemplation of these would be irregular), and she has neither leisure nor wishes with regard to these things, but having sought it, she should encounter that, it being present, and looks at that instead of herself, not even at leisure to see who it is that looks—then, at that very moment, she would not exchange this for anything, not even if someone beheth to her all the heavens, there being nothing still greater nor a greater good; nor could she reach up higher, all other things being on the descent, even if they might be “above.”

[12] VI.7[38].31.5-35

[13] VI.7[38].34.1-25
Oúte dè diákeitai tòte, ὡς καὶ τοῦ νοεῖν καταφρονεῖν, ὧ τὸν ἄλλον χρόνον ἦπαρξετο, ὃτι τὸ νοεῖν κίνησις τῆς ἡ, αὐτῆ ὡς οὐ κινεῖσαι βέλει. Καὶ γὰρ οὔδ’ ἐκείνου φησὶν, ὅτι ὃς καὶ νοεῖν γενόμενον αὐτὴ θεωρεῖ οὖν νοεῖσθαι καὶ ἐν τῷ τόπῳ τῷ νοεῖται γενομένην’ ἄλλα γενομένην μὲν ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ περὶ αὐτῶν ἔχουσα τὸ νοεῖν νοεῖ, ἐπεὶ δ’ ἐκείνου ἤδη τὸν θεόν, πάντα ἤδη ἄφησιν, οἷον εἰ τὰς εἰσελθόντας εἰς οἶκον ποικίλον καὶ οὔτως καλὸν θεωρεῖ ένδον ἐκάστα τῶν ποικιλμάτων καὶ θεματίζει, πρὶν ἰδεῖν τὸν τοῦ οἴκου δειπνότητον, ἰδέω δ’ ἐκείνου καὶ ἁγαθεῖς οὐ κατὰ τὴν τῶν ἁγαθόματων φύσιν ὄντα, ἀλλ’ ἄξιον τῆς ὑπότος θεᾶς, ἀφεῖς ἐκεῖνα τοῦτον μόνον τοῦ λοιποῦ βλέπειν, εἶτα βλέπουν καὶ μή αφαίρεσθαι τὸ οὐκ ἀκατάλληλον ἐκείνον τῶν ὑποκαταστάσεως τῶν θεῶν. Καὶ τάξα ἄν σῳδοῦ τὸν αἴσθητον καὶ εἰκών, εἰ μὴ ἄνθρωπος εἰπῇ ὁ ἐπίστας τῷ τῷ τοῦ οἴκου θεομένω, ἀλλ’ τῆς θεῶν, καὶ αὐτὸς οὐ κατ’ ὑπὸν παλαιάς, ἀλλά τὰς ψυχῶν ἐμπλήσει τοῦ ἓμεραν. Καὶ τὸν νοῦν τοῖς τὴν μὲν ἐκεῖν ἔνδομιν εἰς τὸ νοεῖν, ἢ τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ βλέπει, τὴν δὲ, ἢ τὰ ἐπέκεινα αὐτοῦ ἐπιβολή τινα καὶ παραδοχή, καβ’ ἦν καὶ πρότερον ἔσω ποικὶλόν καὶ ὐπέτερον καὶ νοεῖν ἐσθέντι καὶ ἐστὶν. Καὶ ἐστὶν ἐκεὶν ἕν μὲν τῇ θεᾷ νοεῖν ἐπικρούον, αὐτὴ δὲ νοεῖν ἔρων, ὅταν ἀνάφησιν λειτουργεῖ μεθοδεύεται τοῦ πεπλεύσθ᾿ ἢτο ἐρωτὶ καὶ ἐστὶν αὐτῷ μεθένειν βλέπον καὶ συγκροτεῖ εἰς τοιαύτης ἡ ἀλήθεια. Παρὰ μέρος δὲ ὁ νοεῖν ἕκεινον ἅλλʼ, τὰ δὲ ἅλλοτε ἅλλα ὡς ὧ οὔ ὃ διόγος διδάσκαλοι γίνόμενα ποιεῖ, τὸ δὲ ἐξεῖν καὶ νοεῖν αἰτεῖ, ἐξεῖ καὶ τὸ ὡς μὴ νοεῖν, ἅλλα ἅλλος ἕκεινον βλέπειν. Καὶ γὰρ ὄρος ἕκεινον ἔχειν γενόμενα καὶ συνήθετο καὶ τοῦτων γενόμενοι καὶ ἐνόταν δὲ καὶ τὰ μὲν ὄροι λέγεται νοεῖν, ἐκείνοι δὲ καὶ ἡ δύναμιν ἐμελλεῖ νοεῖν. Ἢ δὲ ψυχήν οἷον συγκύκλωσα παραφάσασα μένουτα τὸν ἐν αὐτῇ νοεῖν, μάλλον δὲ ὃ νοεῖν αὐτῆς ἐφ’ ἐπιταύρος, ἔρχεται δὲ ἡ θεὰ καὶ εἰς αὐτῆς καὶ τὰ δύο ἐν γίνεται. Ἐκεῖθεν δὲ τὸ ἔκαθον ἐπ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ συναρμοσθέν τῇ ἄμφοτέρων συστάσει ἐπιδράμων καὶ ἐνότασα τὰ δύο ἐπέστιν αὐτῶς μακριάν διὸς αἰσθής καὶ θεόν, τοσοοῦτον ἡράς, ὡστε μήτε ἐν τούτῳ εἶναι, μήτε ἐν τῷ ἄλλῳ, ἐν οἷς πέρανκαι ἄλλῳ ἐν ἄλλῳ εἶναι: οὔτ’ γὰρ ἄυτος ποι’ ἡ δὲ νοεῖται ἐπικρούον ἐν ἄυτῳ, ἄυτος δὲ νοεῖν ἐν ἄλλῳ. Δίο οὔτε κινεῖται ἡ ψυχή τότε, ὅτι μήδε ἐκείνο. Οὔτε ψυχήν τοισίν, ὅτι μήδε ἐξεί, ἄλλα ὑπὲρ τῷ ζῆν. Οὔτε νοεῖ, ὅτι μήδε νοεῖ· ὁμοιοῦσθαι γὰρ δει. Νοεῖ δὲ οὔδε’ ἐκείνο, ὅτι οὔτε νοεῖ.
Whoever has become simultaneously the contemplator and himself the object of his contemplation of himself and all other things, and having become substance and intellect and the “all-perfect living being,” should no longer behold it from without, but having become this, is nearby, and that one is next in order, and it is already closed by, gleaming upon all the intelligible. At that moment one dismisses all learning, and thus far one has been led by instruction and settled in the beauty in which one is — up until this point one thinks — but then, being hoisted up out of it by (as it were) the wave of intellect itself, raised to the heights above it as if being engorged, he suddenly beholds, not seeing how, but the vision fills his eyes with light, not having made him see something else by means of it, but the light itself was the thing seen. For in that there was not the object of vision and its light, nor intellect and the object of intellect, but a ray having generated these things later and left them to be beside it; but he is the ray which has only generated Quest, in no way having extinguished itself in the generating, but itself remains, that one having come to be by this one’s being.

If ever we too, ourselves, should see within ourselves some nature of a kind that has nothing of the other things which are attached to us, [i.e. those things] by which we have to experience whatever should occur by chance — for all the other things which are ours are enslaved and exposed to chances, and, as it were, come forth according to chance, but by this alone [we have] the self-poise and autonomy of a light in the form of good, and of good in actuality and [of a good] greater than that according to Intellect, having that above Intellect [within], not imported [from without]; indeed, ascending into this and becoming this alone, but dismissing the other things, what could we call it except more than free, and more than autonomous?

And so, having been impelled upwards towards that from what has been said, one should take hold of that itself, and one will also see himself, not being able to say as much as he would like. But seeing that in himself, taking away all rationality, he will set that by itself, being such that if it had substance, the substance would be his slave and, as it were, issuing from him.
And so is it sufficient to leave off having said these things? No, the soul still has even greater birth-pangs. Perhaps at this point she must give birth, having eagerly glanced towards it and having been filled with birth-pangs. But still we must chant another spell, if somewhere we can find some spell against birth pangs; perhaps it might emerge from what has already been said, if someone were to incant it repeatedly. And so what other spell is as if new? For she has run over all truths, and, simultaneously, flies from the truths in which we participate, if someone wishes to speak and reason [about them], since reason must, if it wishes to express something, take one thing after another (for such is also an exposition); but what “exposition” is there in the entirely simple? But it suffices if one makes contact intelligibly; but having made contact (when one does make contact), one is completely unable (nor has leisure) to speak, but one reasons about it [only] afterwards. Then, one must believe one has seen, when the soul suddenly takes light; for this—this light—is from him, and he is it. And then one must consider him to be present, when, just like another god called by someone into a house, he comes and illuminates; indeed, if he did not come he would not have illuminated. So then too the unenlightened soul is without that god, but once enlightened, it has what it sought, and this is the true goal for the soul, to touch that light and to see it by itself, not through the light of another, but [to see the light] itself, through which it sees. For that by which it has been enlightened is that which must be seen; for neither does one see the sun through another light. And so how should this occur? Take away everything.
## Appendix B. Stages of ascent towards Mystical Union with the One (MUO)

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<tr>
<th>Self-Reversion</th>
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<th>Self-Unification</th>
<th>Union with the One (self-annihilation)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ι.6[1].9.7: Ἄναγε ἐπὶ σαυτόν καὶ ἰδε / Go back into yourself and look…</td>
<td>15-16: Εἰ γέγονας τούτο καὶ εἶδες αὐτό / if you become this, and see it…</td>
<td>16-17: …καὶ σαυτῷ καθαρὸς συνεγένους οὐδὲν ἔχων ἑμπόδιον πρὸς τὸ εἰς οὕτω γενέσθαι… / …and you, pure, ‘come together’ with yourself, having no impediment to thus coming towards one…</td>
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| IV.8[6].1.1-2: ἐγείρομενος εἰς ἐμαυτὸν ἐκ τοῦ σῶματος καὶ γινόμενος τῶν μὲν ἄλλων ἔξω, ἐμαυτοῦ δὲ ἐἰςω… / awaking into myself out of my body and coming to be outside of all other things but within myself… | 3: …θαυμαστῶν ἡλίκιον ὀρῶν κάλλος… / …seeing an extraordinarily marvelous beauty… |  |  |


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| VI.9[9].4      | 16-18: Εἰ δὲ μὴ ἦλθε τίς ἐπὶ τὸ θέαμα, μηδὲ σύνεσιν ἔσχεν ἢ ψυχὴ τῆς ἐκεῖ ἀγλαίας μηδὲ ἔπαθε μηδὲ  
If someone has not come to the contemplation, and the soul has not had an awareness of, or experienced, the glories there, nor...  
20-21: ...δεξάμενος φῶς ἀληθινὸν καὶ πάσαν τὴν ψυχὴν περιφωτίσας διὰ τὸ ἐγγυστέρω γεγονέναι...  
having received the true light and having illuminated around the entire soul through having become closer...  
18-20: ἔσχεν ἐν ἐαυτῷ οἷον ἐρωτικὸν πάθημα ἐκ τοῦ ἰδεῖν ἑραστοῦ ἐν ὑ ἐρά ἀναπαυσαμένου...  
had in itself (as it were) the erotic experience— from the vision— of a (male) lover resting in the (male) beloved...  
22-24: ...καὶ οὐ μόνος ἀναβεβηκὼς, ἀλλ' ἔχων τὸ διείργον ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, ἢ μήπω εἰς ἐν συναχθεῖς...  
...not having ascended alone, but having something that separates one from it, or not yet being brought together into one...  
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| VI.9[9].7.17-18: ...πάντων τῶν ἐξω ἀφεμένην δεῖ ἐπιστραφῆναι πρὸς τὸ εἰσώ πάντη...  
/...withdrawing from all external things, [the soul] must turn completely to the within...  
21-23: ...ἀγνοήσαντα δὲ καὶ αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ θέσι ἐκείνῃ γενέσθαι, κάκεινος συγγενόμενον καὶ ἱκανός οἷον ὁμιλήσαντα ήκειν ἀγγέλλοντα, εἰ δύνατο, καὶ ἄλλῳ τὴν ἐκεῖ συνουσίαν...  
...“un-knowing” himself, come to be in the contemplation of that, and having “come together” and having had sufficient “intercourse,” so to speak, with that, come announce the communion there, if possible, also to another. |
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<td>VI.9[9].9.55-10.16</td>
<td>9.55-58: Όραν δὴ ἔστιν ἐνταῦθα κάκεινον καὶ ἑαυτὸν ὡς ὅραν θείης· ἑαυτὸν μὲν ἡγαλαίσμενον, φωτὸς πλήρη νοιτοῦ, μᾶλλον δὲ φῶς αὐτὸ καθαρόν, ἄβαρί, κούφον, θεὸν γενόμενον, μᾶλλον δὲ ὄντα / Here, at this point, one can see both him and oneself as it is right to see, the self glorified, full of intelligible light—but rather itself pure light…having become, or rather being, a god…</td>
<td>10.9-10: Ἑαυτὸν μὲν οὖν ἰδὼν τότε, ὅτε ὅρα, τοιούτον ὤνεται, …seeing himself, then, when he sees, he will see himself as such, or rather…</td>
<td>10.10: …μᾶλλον δὲ αὐτῷ τοιούτῳ συνέσται… / …he will “be together” with himself…</td>
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<td>10.10-11: …καὶ τοιοούτου αἰσθήσεται ἀπλοῖς γενόμενον. / …and will perceive himself as such, having become simple.</td>
<td>10.10-11: …καὶ τοιοούτου αἰσθήσεται ἀπλοῖς γενόμενον. / …and will perceive himself as such, having become simple.</td>
<td>10.14-16: Τότε μὲν οὖν οὔτε ὅρα οὔδε διακρίνει ὁ ὅρα ὁ οὐδὲ φαντάζεται δύο, ἀλλ’ οἶον ἄλλος γενόμενος καὶ οὔκ ὅρα ὁ δύο φαντάζεται δύο, ἀλλ’ οἶον ἄλλος γενόμενος καὶ οὔκ ὅρα ὁ δύο, οὐδ’ αὐτοῦ συντελεῖ ἐκεῖ, κάκεινου γενόμενος ἐν ἔστιν ὀσπερ κέντρῳ κέντρον συνάψας. And so, then, the seer neither (a) sees nor (b) distinguishes nor (c) imagines two, but as if having become another and not himself nor belonging to himself there, having come to belong to that, he is one, as if having attached center to center.</td>
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<td>Self-</td>
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<td>VI.9[9].11.8-11: Ἦν δὲ ἐν καὶ αὐτὸς διαφοράν ἐν αὐτῷ οὐδεμίαν πρὸς ἐαυτὸν ἔχων οὔτε κατὰ ἄλλα—οὗ γάρ τι ἐκινεῖτο παρ’ αὐτῷ, οὗ θυμός, οὐκ ἐπιθυμία ἄλλου παρῆν αὐτῷ ἀναβεβηκότι—ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ λόγος οὔτε τις νόησις... But he himself, too, was one, with no distinction in himself either in relation to himself or in relation to others; for nothing moved with him, and he had no wish, no desire for another when he had ascended— but there was not even (a) any reason or (b) thought...</td>
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<td>11-25: οὐδ’ ὅλως αὐτός, εἰ δεῖ καὶ τοῦτο λέγειν. Ἀλλ’ ὡσπερ ἀρπασθεῖς ἢ ἐνθυσιάσας ἴσχυσί οὐκ ἐρήμω καὶ καταστάσεις γεγένηται ἀτρέμει, τῇ αὐτοῦ οὐσία οὐδαμῇ ἀποκλίνων οὔτε περὶ αὐτὸν στρεφόμενος, ἐστῶς πάντη καὶ οἴον στάσις γενόμενος. Οὔτε τῶν καλῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ καλὸν ἢ ὑπερθέων, ὑπερβάς ἢ ὑδη καὶ τὸν τῶν ἀρετῶν χορὸν, ὡσπερ τις εἰς τὸ εἰσόω τοῦ ἀδύτου εἰσόω εἰς τοῦτο καταλιπτῶν τὰ ἐν τῷ νεώ ἁγάλματα, ἀ ἐξελθόντι τοῦ ἀδύτου πάλιν γίνεται πρῶτα μετὰ τὸ ἐνδόν θέαμα καὶ τὴν ἐκεὶ συνοισίαν πρὸς οὐκ ἁγάλμα οὔτε εἰκόνα, ἀλλὰ αὐτό: ἃ δὴ γίγνεται δεύτερα θέαμα. Τὸ δὲ ἴσος ἢν οὗ θέαμα, ἀλλὰ ἄλλος τρόπος τοῦ ἰδεῖν, ἐκπολιτισμὸς καὶ ἀπλωσις καὶ ἐπίδοσις αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐφεσία πρὸς ἠφίν καὶ στάσις καὶ περινόσις πρὸς ἐφαρμογήν, ἐπερ τίς τὸ ἐν τῷ ἀδύτῳ θέατεται. ...nor (c) even a self at all, if one must say even this; but he was as if snatched away or divinely possessed, in quiet solitude and stillness, having become motionless, not turning aside anywhere in his substance, nor turning about himself, having come to a complete standstill and indeed having become a kind of stasis. He was not among the beauties, having already ascended beyond even the chorus of virtues, just like someone enters into the interior of the adyton having left behind in the naos the cult-statues which, upon his emergence back out of the adyton, become the first things [encountered] after the object of contemplation inside, and the intercourse there not with cult-statues or icons, but with the thing itself; for these [statues] become secondary objects of contemplation. But the former was perhaps not an object of contemplation, but rather another way to see: an ecstatic standing outside and a simplifying expansion and a surrendering growth of oneself and a longing towards contact and a stasis and a thinking around towards accomodation, if someone is going to contemplate what is in the adyton.</td>
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<td>VI.9[9].11.38-39: Τὴν ἐναντίαν δὲ δραµούσα ἡξει οὐκ ε ὁ ἄλλο, ἀλλ’ εἰς αὐτήν... running the opposite way, it will come not into another but into itself...</td>
<td>39-42: ...καὶ οὔτως οὐκ ἐν ἄλλῳ οὐσία &lt;οὐκ&gt; ἐν οὐδενί ἑστιν, ἀλλ’ ἐν αὐτή: τὸ δὲ ἐν αὐτή μόνη καὶ οὐκ ἐν τῷ ὅτι ἐν έκείνῳ γίνεται γάρ καὶ αὐτὸς τις οὐκ οὐσία, ἀλλ’ ἐπέκεινα οὐσίας ταύτη, ἢ προσομιλεῖ. ...and thus not being in another, it is in no one but itself, yet while in itself, and not in Being, it is in that, for one becomes also oneself and not in substance, but &quot;beyond substance&quot; by means of this intercourse.</td>
<td>44-45: ...καὶ εἰ ἀρ’ αὐτοῦ μεταβαίνῃ ὡς εἰκῶν πρὸς ἄρχετυπον, τέλος ἂν ἔχοι τῆς πορείας. ...and if one goes on from oneself as an image to an archetype one reaches the “end of the journey.”</td>
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<td>43-33: Εἴ τις οὖν τοῦτο αὐτὸν γενόμενον ίδοι, ἡξει ὁμοίωμα ἐκεῖνον αὐτὸν... And so if one should see oneself having become this, one has oneself as a likeness of that...</td>
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<td>III.8[30].9.29-31: Ἡ δεῖ τὸν νοῦν οἶκον εἰς τούτισσα ἀναχώρειν καὶ οἶκον ἑαυτὸν ἀφέντα τοῖς εἰς ὁπισθεν αὐτοῦ.... / The intellect, being double-mouthed, must (so to speak) ‘withdraw backwards’ and, as it were, ‘surrender itself’ to what lies behind it....</td>
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<td>31-33: ...κάκεινα, εἰ ἐθέλοι ἐκεῖνο ὡραν, μὴ πάντα νοῦν εἶναι. Ἐστι μὲν γὰρ αὐτὸς ζωὴ πρώτη... ...and there, if it wishes to see that (n.), it must not be altogether intellect. For it (m.) is the first life...</td>
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<td><strong>V.8[31].11.1-3:</strong> Εἰ δὲ τὴν ἡμῶν ...εἰς τὸ ίδεῖν προφέρῃ τὸ θέαμα, ἑαυτὸν προφέρει ... / ...Still, someone among us...may bring forth the contemplation into an act of seeing; he presents himself to himself...</td>
<td>3: καὶ εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ καλλωπισθεῖσαν βλέπει,.../...and looks at a beautified image of himself...</td>
<td>4-5:... άφεις δὲ τὴν εἰκόνα καίπερ καλὴν οὖσαν εἰς ἐν αὐτῷ ἔλθων καὶ µηκέτι σχίσας εἰς ὁµοῦ πάντα ἐστὶ µετ' ἑκείνου τοῦ θεοῦ ἀνοφητὶ παρόντος / ...but dismisses the image thought it is beautiful, coming into one with himself and making no more division is simultaneously one and all things with that god noiselessly present ....</td>
<td>10-11: ...δραµῶν δὲ εἰς τὸ εἴσω ἔχει πάν.../ ...but running into the within, he has everything ...</td>
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<td>9: ἐν δὲ τῇ ἐπιστροφῇ κέρδος τούτε' ἔχει.../ In this reversion he has this advantage:</td>
<td>10: ...ἀρχόµενος σιωθάνεται αὐτοῦ, ἡως ἔτερος ἐστὶ .../ ...to begin with he perceives himself, so long as he is different...</td>
<td>11-12: ...καὶ άφεις τὴν αἰσθήσιν εἰς τοῦτο οὖσαν ἐν ἐτερὸς εἶναι φόβω εἰς ἐστιν ἑκεῖ/ ...and leaving perception behind in fear of being different, he is one there.</td>
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<td><strong>V.5[32].7.31-32:</strong> Οὐτὸς δὲ καὶ νοῦς αὐτὸν ἀπὸ τῶν ἄλλων καλύφαγας καὶ συναγαγών εἰς τὸ ἔσω... / Thus Intellect, veiling itself from other things and contracting into its interior...</td>
<td>7.33-35: μηδὲν ὅρων θέασεται οὐκ ἄλλο ἐν ἄλλῳ φῶς, ἀλλὰ αὐτὸ καθ ἐαυτὸ μόνον καθαρὸν ἐφ’ αὑτοῦ ἔξαίφνης φανέν, ὡστε ἀπορεῖν ὅθεν ἔφανη, ἔξωθεν ἢ ἐνδόν... / ...will see, not another light in something else, but [one] appearing suddenly by itself, so as to be puzzled whence it came, from without or from within...</td>
<td>8.11-13: ...στὰς δὲ καὶ οἶον πληρωθεὶς μένους εἶδε μὲν τὰ πρῶτα καλλίω γενόμενον ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἐπιστῆβοντα, ὡς ἐγγύς ὄντος αὐτοῦ. ...but having stood, and as if filled with strength, he sees first of all himself having become more beautiful and glistening, as he is near to him.</td>
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<td>8.9-11:... ἔστηξεν μὲν γὰρ ὁ νοῦς πρὸς τὴν θέαν εἰς οὐδέν ἄλλο ἢ πρὸς τὸ καλὸν βλέπων, ἐκεῖ ἑαυτὸν πᾶς τρέπων καὶ διδοὺς,... / For Intellect will make itself stand towards the contemplation, looking at nothing else but the Beautiful, completely turning and surrendering himself there...</td>
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32
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-reversion</th>
<th>Autophany</th>
<th>Self-Unification</th>
<th>Union with the One (self-annihilation)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VI.7[38].31.6-7: ...ἐπιστραφεῖσα δὲ καὶ ψυχὴ ἡ δυνηθείσα, ὡς ἔγνω καὶ εἶδεν, ἣς θὴ τῇ βέβα καὶ ὅσον οἶα τῇ ἱν ἴδειν ἐξεπλάγη. ...the soul which was able, having reverted, when she knew and saw, also delighted in the contemplation, and, inasmuch as she was able to see, was smitten.</td>
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<td>8-9: Εἶδε δὲ όιον πληγεῖσα καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔχουσα τί αὐτοῦ συνήσθετο... She saw, stricken, as it were, and she was conscious of having something of it in herself...</td>
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<td>VI.7[38].34.10-11: ιδοὺσα δὲ ἐν αὐτῇ ἐξαιρήσας φαινόντα... Seeing it suddenly appearing in herself...</td>
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<td>13-16: μεταξὺ γὰρ οὐδὲν οὐδ’ ἕτι δύο, ἀλλ’ ἐν ἀμφῶ ὕ χάρ ἀν διακρίνασι ἔτι, ἕως πάρεστι μίμησις δὲ τούτου καὶ οἱ ἐνταύθα ἔχεσαν καὶ ἐρωμένοι συγκρύναι θέλοντες... for there is nothing between nor are there still two, but both are one; nor could you still make a distinction while it is present; an imitation of this is also lovers and beloveds down here, wishing to blended...</td>
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<td>VI.7[38].35</td>
<td>7-12: ἐπὶ δ’ ἑκείνου ἤδη τοῦ θείου, πάντα ἤδη ἀφίησαν, οἷον εἴ τις εἰσέλθῃ εἰς οἴκον ποικίλου καὶ οὕτως καλὸν θεωροῦν ἑνὸς ἐκαστα τῶν ποικιλιάτων καὶ θαυμάζοι, πρὶν ἰδέω τοῦ τού οἴκου δεσπότην, ἰδέως δ’ ἑκείνου καὶ ἀγαθεῖς οὐ κατὰ τὴν τῶν ἀγαθάτων φύσιν ὑστα, ἀλλ’ ἀξίων τῆς ὑστῶν τῆς, ἀφεῖς ἑκεῖνα τούτων μόνον τοῦ λοιποῦ βλέποι... ...when she sees that one—that is, God—she immediately lets go of everything, just as if someone, coming into an ornate (and thus beautiful) house, were to contemplate each of the decorations within, and were to be amazed [even] before seeing the master of the house, but seeing and admiring that one (as he is not of the nature of cult-statues, but worthy of real contemplation), dismissing those [other] things, were thereafter to (a) look at that one alone...</td>
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<td>16-19: Καὶ τάχα ἂν σωζόῃ τὸ ἀνάλογον ἢ εἰκόνα, ἐπὶ μὴ ἀνθέρασεν εἰς ἐπιστάσας τῷ τοῦ οἴκου θεωρεῖν, ἀλλὰ τῆς θείας, καὶ οὕτως οὐ κατ’ ὄραν φανεῖς, ἀλλὰ τὴν ψυχὴν ἐπιλήψεως τοῦ θεωρεῖν. And perhaps the image would preserve the analogy if it were not a man who encountered the one contemplating the things of the house, but rather some god, and one who did not appear to sight but rather who filled the soul of the contemplator.</td>
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<td>12-16: ἐπὶ βλέπου καὶ μὴ ἀφαιρέτου τὸ ὄμωμα μηκετί δραμα βλέπει τῷ συνεχεί τῆς θείας, ἀλλὰ τὴν ὄρμων αὐτοῦ συγκεραύνης τῷ διαματί, ὡστε ἐν αὐτῷ ὑδη τοῦ ὀρατοῦ πρότερον ὄρων γεγονοῦσιν, τῶν δ’ ἄλλων πάντων ἐπιλάθουσα διάματ. ...then, looking and not averting his eyes in the continuity of contemplation, he were to no longer to look at a sight, but would (b) commingle his vision with the object of contemplation, so that what was previously seen were to become vision in him; he would forget all other objects of contemplation.</td>
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<td>33-45: Ὡ ὡς ψυχῆς ὁσον συχχάοσα καὶ ἀφαίρεσα σέ μονον τὸν ἐν αὐτῇ νοοῦ, μάλλον δὲ ὡς νοοῦ αὐτῆς ὑπάρχει, ἔχει δὲ ἡ θεία καὶ ὡς αὐτήν καὶ τὰ δύο ἐν γίνεται. Ἐκτάθη ός τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἐν’ αὐτοῖς καὶ συναρμοσθεῖ γενὸς ἑμοτέρων συστάτων ἐπιστραμμὸς καὶ ἐνώσῃ ἐν δύο ἐπεστήν αὐτοῖς μακάριον διός αἰσθήσιν καὶ θέαν, τοσοῦτον ἄρας, ὡστε κύριον ἐν τόπῳ εἶναι, μήτε ἐν τῷ ἄλλῳ, ἐν οἷς περίκεφαν ἄλλω ἐν ἄλλῳ εἶναι οὐδὲ γὰρ αὐτός ποῦ ὁ νοητὸς τόπος ἐν αὐτῷ, αὐτὸς δὲ οὐκ ἐν ἄλλῳ. Διὸ οὐδὲ κυρίεσται ἢ μορφή ἄλλη, ὥστε μὴ ἔχει· ὡς ψυχή γεγονοῦσα ἐπάθει, ἀλλὰ ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἔχειν. Οὐδὲ νοοῦ, ὥστε μὴ νοεῖ· ὡς ψυχή γεγονοῦσα ἐπάθει, ἀλλὰ οὐδὲ νοεῖ. ...the soul, as if confusing and annihilating the intellect remaining within her—or rather, her intellect sees first, and the contemplation comes also into her and the two become one. But the Good is extended over them and adapted to the constitution of both of them, running over them and uniting the two, it is upon them, giving them blessed perception and contemplation, having raised them so much as to not be in place, nor in another thing in which something is by nature in another. ...Therefore the soul does not move, then, since that does not either. Nor, therefore, is it soul, because that does not live, but is above life. Nor is it intellect, because it does not think either; for it is necessary to become similar. Nor does it think that, because it does not think.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-reversion</td>
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<td>VI.7[38].36.10-12: Ὅστις γένηται ὢμοῦ θεατῆς τε καὶ θέαμα αὐτὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων...</td>
<td>36.13: ...τὸῦτο δὲ γενόμενος ἐγγύς ἐστὶ... ...having become this, is nearby...</td>
<td>36.17-23: ...ἐξενεχθεὶς δὲ τῶ αὐτοῦ τοῦ νοῦ οἷον κύματι καὶ ύμοῦ ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ οἷον οἰδήσαυτὸς ἀρθεῖς εἰσεῖδεν ἐξαίρησης οὐκ ἰδὼν ὅπως, ἀλλ’ ἡ θέα πλήσασα φωτὸς τὰ ὀμίατα οὐ δι’ αὐτοῦ πεποίηκεν ἄλλο ὄραν, ἀλλ’ αὐτό τὸ φῶς τὸ ὀραμα ἦν. Οὐ γὰρ ἦν ἐν ἑκείνῳ τὸ μὲν ὀρώμενον, τὸ δὲ φῶς αὐτοῦ, οὐδὲ νοῦς καὶ νοοῦμενον, ἀλλ’ αὐγὴ γεννώσα ταῦτα εἰς ὑστερευν καὶ ἀφέεσα εἶναι παρ’ αὐτῷ...</td>
<td>...but being hoisted up out of it [intellection] by (as it were) the wave of intellect itself, raised to the heights above it as if being engorged, he suddenly beholds, not seeing how, but the vision fills his eyes with light, not having made him see something else by means of it, but the light itself was the thing seen. For in that one there was not the object of vision and its light, nor intellect and the object of intellect, but a ray having generated these things later and left them to be beside it.</td>
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<td>Self-reversion</td>
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<td><strong>VI.8[39].15</strong></td>
<td>14-23: εἳ ποτε καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐνιδομέν τινα φύσιν τοιαύτην οὐδὲν ἔχουσαν τῶν ἄλλων, ὡσα συνήρτηται ἡμῖν...τούτῳ δὲ μόνῳ τό κύριον αὐτοῦ καὶ τό αὐτεξούσιον φωτὸς ἀγαθοειδοὺς καὶ ἀγαθοῦ ἐνεργείας καὶ μείζονος ἢ κατὰ νοῦν, οὔκ ἐπακτόν τὸ ὑπὲρ τὸ νοεῖν ἔχουσης: If ever we too, ourselves, should see within ourselves some nature of a kind that has nothing of the other things which are attached to us....[by which we have] the self-mastery and autonomy of a light in the form of good, and of good in actuality and [of a good] greater than that according to Intellect, having that above Intellect [within], not imported [from without].</td>
<td><strong>21-22:</strong> εἰς ὅ δὴ ἀναβάντες καὶ γενόμενοι τούτο μόνου, τὰ δὲ ἄλλα ἀφέντες... Indeed, ascending into this and becoming this alone and letting the other things go...</td>
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<td><strong>VI.8[39].19</strong></td>
<td>2-6: καὶ θεάσεται καὶ αὐτὸς οὐχ ὅσον θέλει εἰπέν δυνάμενος. Ἡδὲν δὲ ἐκείνο ἐν αὐτῷ πάντα λόγον ἀφεῖς θησαυρίζεται παρ’ αὐτοῦ ἐκείνο τούτο ὅν, ὡς, ἐπερ εἴην οὕσιον, δούλην ἀν αὐτοῦ τῆν οὐσίαν εἶναι καὶ οἷον παρ’ αὐτοῦ εἶναι. and one will also see himself, not being able to say as much as he would like. But seeing that in himself, taking away all rationality, he will set that by itself, being such that if it had substance, the substance would be his slave and, as it were, issuing from him.</td>
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Appendix C. Various Plotinian examples of hypernoetic faculty of transcendental apprehension

| I.6[1].9.16-25 | Εἴ γέγονεν τοῦτο καὶ εἶδες αὐτό... Ὁλοκ αὐτός ἦν αὐτόσ, ἀλήθεϊον μόνον, οὐ μεγεθὺς μετρησμένος οὐδὲ σχισματίς εἰς ἑλάττωσιν περιγραφῆς οὐδ' αὐτὸς μέγεθος δι' ἀπερίας αὐξήθη, ἀλλ' ἀμέτρητον πανταχοῦ, ὡς ἂν μείων παντὸς μέτρου καὶ παντὸς κρίσιον ποιοῦ· εἴ τούτῳ γενόμενον σαυτὸν δοθεῖ, δυχίς ἢ δοθεῖ γενόμενος...οὕτος γὰρ μόνον ὁ ὀρθαλός τὸ μέγα κάλλος βλέπει. | If you have become this, and see it...wholly yourself, only true light, not measured by magnitude nor circumscribed into diminution by shape nor, conversely, expanded into magnitude by unboundedness, but everywhere unmeasurable because greater than all measure and better than all quantity; if you see yourself having become this, at this point, having become vision...this alone is the eye that sees the great beauty. |
| VI.9[9].3.20-22 | ἐπὶ τε τῆς ἐν οὐσίᾳ ἀρχῆν ἀναβεβληθέναι καὶ ἐν ἑκάστῃ γενόμενον ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐνὸς ἐνεργείας ἐνεργείας εἰς τούτῳ ἠγάλληκτος ἀεὶ διὰ ἀπειρίας. | ascend to the principle in oneself and become one from many so as to be a spectator of the principle and the One |
| VI.9[9].3.26 | καθαρὸς τῷ νῷ τὸ καθαρώσατον τεθαμάς καὶ τοῦ νοῦ τῷ πρώτῳ | Contemplate the most pure with the pure intellect and with the primary [part] of intellect |
| VI.9[9].4.27-28 | τῇ ἐν αὐτῷ δυνάμει συγγενεῖς τῷ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ. | by means of a power in oneself that is connatural with that which comes from him [the One] |
| VI.9[9].8.14-15, 19-20 | ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ περὶ αὐτὴν ἡ ἀρχαία φύσις (cf. I.8[51].7.6: = τὴν ὅλην...τὴν ὑποκειμένην οὕτω συμμετέχοντας), καὶ ἦν ἀπὸ τοιοῦτου... ...τούτῳ συνάπτομεν κατὰ τὸ ἐναντίον κέντρον τῷ ἑνὸν πάντων κέντρων | [the soul is not like a circle and center-point geometrically but rather in that she has] within her and around her the ‘ancient nature,’ (cf. I.8[51].7.6: = “matter not yet arranged” = intelligible matter?) and [she comes] from such a thing...by means of [the part of the soul not held by the body] we conjoin ourselves at the center of ourselves to the center, as it were, of all things |
| V.1[10].10.5-6 | Οὕτως δὲ ἐν τῇ φύσει τριττὰ ταῦτα ἔστι τὰ εὐρήμενα, οὕτως χρή νομίζειν καὶ παρ’ ἡμῖν ταῦτα εἶναι... ...there must be the intellect that does not reason discursively but eternally has the right within us, and there is also [within us] the principle and cause of intellect |
| V.1[10].11.5-7 | δεὶ τὸν ζῷον πρῶτον ταῦτα ἔστι τὰ εὐρήμενα, εἶναι δὲ καὶ τὴν νοῦ ἀρχηγίαν καὶ αἰτίαν καὶ θεόν | Just as in nature there are these three things mentioned, thus one must admit these things are also with us. |
| V.1[10].11.13-14 | τῷ γὰρ τοιούτῳ τῶν ἐν ἑνῶ καὶ ἡμῖν ἐρατοποιήθη καὶ ἀναπτύχθηκεν | by means of some such thing [sc. the center-point of a circle] among those within ourselves, we too are attached, are together with, and depend upon [the One] |
| III.8[30].9.22 | ὑπερβλεπτικὸς τοῦτο τὴν νοῦ φύσιν τὴν ἀνέλυσιον ἐπιβολή ἄθροις. Πρὸς ἡν δὲ σημεῖα, ὡς ἂν οἷον τε, τῇ ἐν ἑνῶ ὁμοίω φύσιμεν. Ἐστι γὰρ τι καὶ παρ’ ἡμῖν αὐτοῦ... by what sudden grasping could we seize that which surpcedes the nature of intellect?— in response to which one should note how it is possible: we will say, it is by means of the likeness within us. |
| III.8[30].11.22, VI.7[38].33.30 | Ἰχθύς | a “trace” [of the Good in Intellect] |
| VI.7[38].31.8 | ἐν αὐτῇ...τι αὐτοῦ | something of him [the One]...within herself [the soul] |
| VI.7[38].35.19-25 | τὴν δὲ...τα τίτικας αὐτοῦ ἐπιβεβλητέον τινι καὶ παραδοχῇ, καθ ἡμῖν καὶ πρότερον ἑώρα μόνον καὶ ὑποκειμένην καὶ νοοῦ ἐσχῆ καὶ ἐν ἑνί... another [power of apprehension] for what transcends it, by means of some touching and reception by which also, earlier, it saw only, and later, by seeing, also acquired intellect and is one... = the “loving intellect” |
| VI.8[39].15-21 | ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐνδομένη τινι φύσιν τοιαύτην οὐδὲν ἔχουσαν τῶν ἄλλων, διὸ συναντεῖται ήμῖν...τούτῳ δὲ μόνον τὸ κύριον αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ αὐτοεξουσίον φύσεως ἀναβοινοῦ καὶ ἀναβοινοῦ ενεργείας καὶ μείζονος ἢ κατὰ νοοῦν, συν ἐπιτάκτου τῷ ἐπὶ τὸν νοοῦ ἐγχώσης... | “If ever we too, ourselves, should see within ourselves some nature of a kind that has nothing of the other things which are attached to us...by this alone [we have] the self-mastery and autonomy of a light in the form of the Good (ἀγαθοειδοῦς) and of good in actuality and that greater than that according to Intellect, having that above Intellect [within], not imported [from without] |
| V.3[49].14.15 | ὁ ἐνδον νοὸς | the inner intellect |
First, it is necessary for what has come to be, to somehow be that one, and to preserve much of it, and to be a likeness with respect to it just as is light of the sun. But intellect is not that one. And so how does it generate Intellect? Because with its reversion to itself, it sees, and this seeing is itself Intellect.

And this is, as it were, the first birth: for being perfect (as it seeks nothing, has nothing, and needs nothing), it (as it were) overflows, and its overflow has made that. This, having come into being, turns back towards it and is filled and by looking towards it, this becomes Intellect as well. And its rest with respect to that one makes Being, while its looking towards its Intellect. So since it stands towards it so that it should become simultaneously Intellect and Being.

This is said to be primary Being, proceeding, as it were, a little ways from there, did not wish to come forth any more, but having turned towards its interior, stood, and became the substance and hearth of all things.

Did it, when it was looking towards the Good, think that one as many, and he himself being one, think him as many, dividing him in himself by not being able to think being at once? But it was not yet Intellect while it was looking at that, but looked unintellectually. Or we should say that it was not ever looking, but lived turned towards it and depended upon it and turned towards it; indeed its very motion was filled by being moved there, and it filled it around that, and it was not still motion alone, but motion satiated and full; and thereafter it became all things and knew this in its consciousness of itself and was already Intellect, having knowing that it should have what it sees, but looking at these things with the light beside the provider and receiving this. Because of this it is not only said to be the cause of substance but of its being seen.

As the sun, which is cause for sense-objects both of their being seen and their coming into being, is also in some way cause of sight—and therefore is neither sight nor the things which have come to be—in this way also the nature of the Good, which is cause of substance and intellect and light, according to our analogy, to the things seen there and the seer, is neither the real beings nor intellect but cause of these, giving by its own light thinking and being thought to the real beings and to intellect. So then it came to be by being filled, and when it was filled it was, and simultaneously was perfected and saw. Its principle was that which it was before being filled, but another principle, in a way external to it, was the one that filled it, from which it received its character in being filled.

It therefore had life and had no need of a multifarious giver, and its life was some trace of that and not his life. And so looking towards that one, life was unbounded, but having looked there, it was bounded, that one having no limit. For immediately by looking towards some one—life, the one is bounded by it, and has itself boundary and limit and form; and the form was in this that was shaped, but the shaper was not from outside, as if surrounded by magnitude, but it was the boundary of all that life which is manifold and unlimited, as one would be shining out from such a nature. And it was not the life of a particular thing; for it would already be limited to that of an individual; nevertheless, it was defined; it was therefore defined as the life of some “One-Many”—and each of the many was at that point defined—and it was defined on the one hand as “Many” through the multiplicity of the life, yet again, on the other hand, as “One,” through the boundary. So what is “defined as one”? Intellect. For life defined is Intellect.
Appendix E. Synopsis of Plotinus’ ontogenetic passages involving self-reversion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-noetic efflux</th>
<th>Self-Reversion</th>
<th>Stasis</th>
<th>Vision / Filling</th>
<th>Definition as Intellect</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V.1[10].7.2-6: First, it is necessary for what has come to be, to somehow be that one, and to preserve much of it, and to be a likeness with respect to it just as is light of the sun. But intellect is not that one. And so how does it generate Intellect?</td>
<td>Because with its reversion to itself,</td>
<td>it sees,</td>
<td>this seeing is itself Intellect.</td>
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<td>V.2[11].1.7-13: And this is, as it were, the first birth: for being perfect (as it seeks nothing, has nothing, and needs nothing), it (as it were) overflows, and its overflow has made another.</td>
<td>This, having come into being, turns back towards it and its stasis with respect to that one makes Being,</td>
<td>it is Intellect.</td>
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<tr>
<td>V.5[32].5.16-19: This that is said to be primary Being, proceeding, as it were, a little ways from there, did not wish to come forth any more,</td>
<td>but having turned towards its interior,</td>
<td>stood,</td>
<td>and became the substance and hearth of all things.</td>
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<tr>
<td>VI.7[38].16.10-35: it was not yet Intellect while it was looking at that, but looked unintellectually. and was already Intellect, having been filled so that it should have what it sees, but looking at these things with the light beside the provider and receiving this.</td>
<td>Or we should say that it was not ever looking, but lived towards it and depended upon it and turned towards it;</td>
<td>indeed its very motion was filled by being moved there, and it filled it around that, and it was not still motion alone, but motion satiated and full;</td>
<td>and thereafter it became all things and knew this in its consciousness of itself.</td>
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Comparative examples of mystical self-reversion

| V.5[32].8.9-23: | For Intellect will make itself stand towards the contemplation, looking at nothing else but the Beautiful, completely turning and surrendering himself there, | but having stood, | and, as if having been filled with strength, it sees first of all itself having become more beautiful and glistening, as he is close to him. |
| VI.9[9].11.23-25: | another way to see: an ecstatic standing outside and a simplifying expansion and a surrendering growth of oneself | and a longing towards contact | and a stasis | and a thinking around towards accommodation, if someone is going to contemplate what is in the adyton. |
# Appendix F. Comparison of *Allogenes* 60.28ff. and Plotinus V.5[32].9-19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>theme</th>
<th>Allogenes 60.28-61.14</th>
<th>Plotinus V.5[32].9.9-13</th>
<th>Plotinus III.8[30].9.18-32</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[a] Standing</td>
<td>And when I wanted to stand firmly. For Intellect will make itself stand towards the contemplation, looking at nothing else but the Beautiful, by standing to listen at any point in the deserted place, you will receive all the voice, and yet not all. What is it, then, which we shall receive when we set our intellect to it?</td>
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<tr>
<td>[b] Self-reversion / withdrawal</td>
<td>I withdrew to the Existence, which I found standing and at rest like an image and likeness of what is conferred upon me by a revelation of the Indivisible One and the One who is at rest. Completely turning and surrendering himself there, but having stood, and, Rather the intellect, being “double-mouthed,” must (so to speak) withdraw backwards (eis toupsô anachôrein), and, as it were, surrender itself to what lies behind it (heauton aphenta tois opisthen autou)</td>
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<td>[c] Filling with strength</td>
<td>I was filled with revelation by means of a primary revelation of the Unknowable One. [As though] I were ignorant of him, I [knew] him and I received power [by] him. Having been permanently strengthened. As if having been filled with strength</td>
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<tr>
<td>[d] Self-apprehension</td>
<td>I knew the One who exists in me and the Triple Powered One. It sees first of all itself having become more beautiful and glistening, as he is close to him.</td>
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<td>[e] Uncontainableness or unboundedness of the supreme principle</td>
<td>and the revelation of his uncontainableness. But he did not come as someone expected, but came as not having come; for he was seen not as having come, but as being present before all things, before even Intellect came. There is the Intellect that comes, and there is also the Intellect that goes away, because it does not know where to stay and where that one stays, as it is in nothing. And if it were possible also for Intellect itself to remain nowhere—not because it is in place, for neither is he in place, but rather, absolutely nowhere—</td>
<td>And, if it wishes to see that one, it must not be altogether intellect.</td>
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<td>[f] Apprehension of transcendent principle through special non-noetic faculty</td>
<td>[And] by means of a primary revelation of the First One (who is) unknowable to them all the God who is beyond perfection, I saw him and the Triple Powered One that exists in them all. it would have been gazing at that one eternally; or rather, not gazing, but being one with that and not two. But now, because it is Intellect, it looks, when it looks, with that of itself which is not Intellect, and there, if it wishes to see that one, it must not be altogether intellect.</td>
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Appendix G. Mechanism of Transcendental Apprehension in *Allogenēs* and *Zostrianos*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>Allogenēs</em> 48.9-16</th>
<th><em>Allogenēs</em> 59.26-35</th>
<th><em>Allogenēs</em> 60.8-12</th>
<th><em>Allogenēs</em> 60.37-61.4</th>
<th><em>Allogenēs</em> 64.30-36</th>
<th><em>Zostrianos</em> 24.6-17</th>
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<td>Since it is impossible for the [individuals] to comprehend the Universal One [situated in the] place that is higher than perfect, they apprehend by means of a first [thought] (ἐκμανικτίωτε ἐνουμορπίην ημεροτική) — it is not as Being (alone), [but] it is along with the latency of Existence that he confers Being.</td>
<td>And when you receive a revelation of him by means of a first revelation of the Unknowable One (ἐκμανικτίωτε ἐνουμορπίην ημεροτική) — the One whom if you should know him, be ignorant of him — and you become afraid in that place, withdraw to the rear because of the activities.</td>
<td>Do not [know] him, for it is impossible, but if by means of an enlightened thought (οὐνοοία ἐν οὐνοϊκίᾳ) you should know him, be ignorant of him.</td>
<td>I was filled with revelation by means of a primary revelation of the Unknowable One (οὐνοοία ἐν οὐνοϊκίᾳ) — the One whom if you should know him, be ignorant of him.</td>
<td>[The aspirant] was blind apart from the eye of revelation that is at rest (πίπαλε ἐπάκρη ἡμοὶ ἐπὶ οὐνοοίᾳ ἐν οὐνοϊκίᾳ) — the (eye) that is activated, the (eye) from the Triple Power of the First Thought of the Invisible Spirit.</td>
<td>And by means of the thought which now exists in silence and within the First Thought (οὐνοοία ἐν οὐνοϊκίᾳ), the (eye) that is activated, the (eye) from the Triple Powered Invisible Spirit; it is, moreover, an audition and a silent power purified with life-giving Spirit, the perfect, [first] perfect, and all-perfect one.</td>
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