

PLOTINUS Ennead 5.3.4.

But we, too, are king when we are moulded to the Intellectual Principle.

That correspondence may be brought about in two ways: either through laws of conduct engraved upon our souls as tablets or else by our being, as it were, filled full of the Divine Mind, which again may have become to us a thing seen and felt as a presence.

Hence our self-knowing ensues because it is in virtue of this thing present that we know all other things; or because we know the faculty which discerns this principle of knowledge by means of the faculty itself; or because we become actually identical with the principle.

Thus the self-knower is a double person: there is the one that takes cognizance of the principle in virtue of which understanding occurs in the Soul or mind; and there is the higher, knowing himself by the Intellectual-Principle with which he becomes identical: this latter knows the self as no longer man but as a being that has become something other through and through: he has thrown himself as one thing over into the superior order, taking with him only that better part of the Soul which alone is winged for the Intellectual Act and gives the man, once established There, the power to appropriate what he has seen.

We can scarcely suppose this understanding faculty to be unaware that it has understanding; that it takes cognizance of things external; that in its judgements it decides by the rules and standards within itself held directly from the Intellectual-Principle; that there is something higher than itself, something which, moreover, it has no need to seek but fully possesses. Can knowledge of its own essence elude a principle which admittedly knows the place it holds and the work it has to do? It affirms that it springs from Intellectual-Principle whose second and image it is, that it holds all within itself, the universe of things, engraved, so to say, upon it as all is held There by the eternal engraver. Aware so far of itself, can it be supposed to halt at that? Are we to suppose that all we can do is to apply a distinct power of our nature and come thus to awareness of that Intellectual-Principle as aware of itself? Or may we not appropriate that principle--which belongs to us as we to it--and thus attain to awareness, at once, of it and of ourselves? Yes: this is the necessary way if we are to experience the self-knowledge vested in the Intellectual-Principle. And a man becomes Intellectual-Principle when, ignoring all other phases of his being, he sees through that only and sees only that and so knows himself by means of the self--in other words attains the self-knowledge which the Intellectual-Principle possesses.

AS comment on Ennead 5.3.4: From Article: 00 -# all four articles for Massimo

Phase 1: “Hence our self-knowing ensues because it is in virtue of this thing present that we know all other things”

When we experience a tree, we do not usually note that it is not an independent object, tree, but a [known] tree. In every experience there is sentiency, awareness, presupposed. Even the most basic sense experience, memory, phantasy, depends on the knowing principle. The fact of being sentient, of being aware of a world and body, of having experience, means awareness is immediately present. In virtue of this quality of knownness that we can have experience at all: and the fact of being aware at all is the guarantee that we can come to self-awareness. As Jung says in his essay “On the Nature of the Psyche” the difference between “I know” and “I know that I know” is a qualitative shift.

Plotinus: even here it is not exclusively the partible...

Phase 2: “or because we know the faculty which discerns this principle of knowledge by means of the faculty itself”; To become aware of this fact that all contents are known contents, that objects are contents of awareness, is the first step toward self-knowing. A further phase is to put more attention on the awareness of contents than on the contents, inner or outer. You have taken a first step toward disentangling awareness. We become aware of awareness itself, not by reflection from the objects, but by an inner re-orientation. By turning attention back onto itself.

Phase 3: “or we become actually identical with the principle.” 5.3.4

From being aware of knowing, we move to being-knowing, or knowing by being. As Plotinus says a little later on:

“Are we to suppose that all we can do is to apply a distinct power of our nature and come thus to awareness of that Intelligence as aware of itself? Or may we not appropriate that Intelligence--which belongs to us as we to it--and thus attain to awareness, at once, of it and of ourselves?

Yes: this is the necessary way if we are to experience the self-knowledge vested in the Intelligence. And a person becomes Intelligence when, ignoring all other phases of his being, he sees through that only and sees only that and so knows himself by means of the self--in other words attains the self-knowledge which the Intelligence possesses.

5.3.6

In phase 2 we are active, here we have to let go, ignore all contents, outer sensations and inner thoughts and feelings, and relax into the underlying space of awareness. Let go of even the search to know the knower: because you are the knower. Invite the Intelligence principle in us to participate in its knowing by identity.

Plotinus condenses the first two phases into one, giving a view of Self as “double knower”:

Thus the self-knower is a double person: there is the one that takes cognizance of the principle in virtue of which understanding occurs in the Soul or mind; and there is the higher, knowing himself by the Nous with which he becomes identical: 5.3.4

This description of knowing is parallel to the double nature of Soul described above as both divisible and inviolable. In Astronoesis, these two modes of knowing are translated as understanding, by which soul reasons about the universe, and insight which is direct immediate self-cognition. When you do know by identity, you know at once yourself and what is known: you are knowing yourself. It is Nous intrinsic to Soul which allows Soul to be self-knowing, and ultimately to know anything at all. Hence, dia-noesis (reason) presupposes noesis.

Action, thus, is set towards contemplation and an object of contemplation, so that even those whose life is in doing have seeing as their object; what they have not been able to achieve by the direct path, they hope to come at by the circuit. 3.8.6.

As we deepen our contemplation, we come to the identity of knowing and being that characterizes Contemplation.

In the advancing stages of Contemplation rising from that in Nature, to that in the Soul and thence again to that in the Intellectual-Principle itself, the object contemplated becomes progressively a more and more intimate possession of the Contemplating Beings, more and more one thing with them; and in the advanced Soul the objects of knowledge, well on the way towards the Intellectual-Principle, are close to identity with their container. 3.8.8

In a transcript of a class from 1984, Anthony Damiani says:

if you wanted to investigate the nature of consciousness, could you do it by reading books about it? Yes, to some extent, a little bit. So an enquiry into the nature of the self - sure, it starts off with reading, getting acquainted with some ideas, you even think you know what your teacher is telling you, right? But then the next point is a little harder... if you really want to investigate the nature of consciousness, what would you have to do? ... : Be it, right? And then investigate deeper into it. In meditational practices you succeed in isolating what this I-ness is (what) this consciousness is in you. You're identified with this consciousness. You're no longer identified with the psychosomatic, You're no longer dwelling in memories, anticipations, reflections ...that's all gone. You're in this state of consciousness, you are this consciousness. You are this awareness. Now you can start your investigation into consciousness. [14:53-55] + more

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PLOTINUS Ennead 6.5.7.

To Real Being we go back, all that we have and are; to that we return, and to its first offshoot (Soul). Of what is There we have direct knowledge, not images or even impressions; and to know without image is to be; by our part in true knowledge we are those Beings; we do not need to bring them down into ourselves, for we are There among them. Since not only ourselves but all other things also are those Beings, we all are they; we are they while we are also one with all: therefore we and all things are one.

When we look outside of that on which we depend we ignore our unity; looking outward we see many faces; look inward and all is the one head. If a person could but be turned about--by their own motion or by the happy pull of Athene--they would see at once God and themselves and the All. At first no doubt all will not be seen as one whole, but when we find no stop at which to declare a limit to our being we cease to rule ourselves out from the total of reality; we reach to the All as a unity--and this not by any stepping forward, but by the fact of being and abiding there where the All has its being.

5.5.8 No doubt it is wonderful that The First should thus be present without any coming, and that, while it is nowhere, nowhere is it not; but wonderful though this be in itself, the contrary would be more wonderful to those who know. Of course neither this contrary nor the wonder at it can be entertained. But we must explain: