

Plotinus' Centre + Circle

Selections from Plotinus' *Enneads* translated by Stephen MacKenna and B.S. Page. London: Philip Lee Warner, Publisher to the Medici Society, 1917-30. (5 Vols.) Enneads I-V were translated by S. MacKenna; Tractates 1-3 of Ennead VI, by B.S. Page who also revised the remaining tractates. (Full text in our Hellenic and Hellenistic Papers Series) With appended analysis by H.P. Blavatsky



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The Good is the centre; the Intellectual-Principle, an unmoving circle; Soul, a circle in motion.¹

Since the centre is the total of terminals and radii impinging at every point upon it, the terminals are of the same nature as the centre, reveal the centre, and are the development of that undeveloped.

A circle related in its path to a centre must be admitted to owe its scope to that centre: it has something of the nature of that centre in that the radial lines converging on that one central point assimilate their impinging ends to that point of convergence and of departure, the dominant of radii and terminals: the terminals are of one nature with the centre, separate reproductions of it, since the centre is, in a certain sense, the total of terminals and radii impinging at every point upon it; these lines reveal the centre; they are the development of that undeveloped.

In the same way we are to take Intellectual-Principle and Being. This combined power springs from the Supreme, an outflow and as it were development from That and remaining dependent upon that Intellective nature, showing forth That which, in the purity of its oneness, is not Intellectual-Principle since it is no duality. No more than in the circle are the lines or circumference to be identified with that Centre which is the source of both: radii and circle are images given forth by indwelling power and, as products of a certain vigour in it, not cut off from it.

Thus the Intellective power circles in its multiple unity around the Supreme, which stands to it as archetype to image.

Thus the Intellective power circles in its multiple unity around the Supreme which stands to it as archetype to image; the image in its movement round about its prior has produced the multiplicity by which it is constituted Intellectual-Principle: that prior has no movement; it generates Intellectual-Principle by its sheer wealth.²

“Knowing and Being are one thing,” says Parmenides.

Earlier, Parmenides made some approach to the doctrine in identifying Being with Intellectual-Principle while separating Real Being from the realm of sense.³

¹ [“The One” and “The Good” are placed in italics by the Editor throughout Plotinus’ text.]

² *Ennead* VI, viii, “On Free-Will and the Will of the One,” ¶ 18

³ *Ibid.* V, i, “The Three Initial Hypostases,” ¶ 8

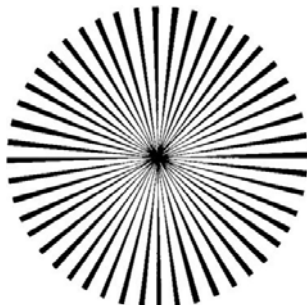


Unity is motionless: to preserve its unchanging identity, Parmenides excludes all bodily movement from it and compares it to a huge sphere in that holds and envelops all existence, and that its intellection is not an outgoing act but internal. He then distinguishes three worlds of being:

**The One
The One-Many
The One-and-Many**

The Beings of the Intellectual are thus a plurality of firsts, seconds, and thirds attached like one sphere to one centre, not separated by interval, but mutually present.

We need not think of separated radii; all may be taken as forming one surface, all beings are centres uniting at one central centre.



“Knowing and Being are one thing” [says Parmenides], and this unity is to him motionless in spite of the intellection he attributes to it: to preserve its unchanging identity he excludes all bodily movement from it; and he compares it to a huge sphere in that it holds and envelops all existence and that its intellection is not an outgoing act but internal. Still, with all his affirmation of unity, his own writings lay him open to the reproach that his unity turns out to be a multiplicity.

The Platonic *Parmenides* is more exact; the distinction is made between the Primal One, a strictly pure Unity, and a secondary One which is a One-Many and a third which is a One-and-many; thus he too is in accordance with our thesis of the Three Kinds.⁴

Now, admitting any sequent to the absolute unity, that sequent must be bound up with the absolute; any third will be about that second and move towards it, linked to it as its offspring. In this way all participants in the Later will have share in the First. The Beings of the Intellectual are thus a plurality of firsts and seconds and thirds attached like one sphere to one centre, not separated by interval but mutually present; where, therefore, the Intellectual tertiaries are present, the secondaries and firsts are present too.⁵

Often for the purpose of exposition — as a help towards stating the nature of the produced multiplicity — we use the example of many lines radiating from one centre; but, while we provide for individualization, we must carefully preserve mutual presence. Even in the case of our circle we need not think of separated radii; all may be taken as forming one surface: where there is no distinction even upon the one surface but all is power and reality undifferentiated, all the beings may be thought of as centres uniting at one central centre: we ignore the radial lines and think of their terminals at that centre, where they are at one. . . .⁶

⁴ *Ennead* V, i, “The Three Initial Hypostases,” ¶ 8

⁵ *Ibid.* VI, v, “On the Integral Omnipresence of the Authentic Existent (2),” ¶ 4

⁶ *Ibid.* ¶ 5



All centres unite in that first centre and yet remain what they were, so that they are as many as are the lines to which they serve as terminals.

. . . Restore the radii; once more we have lines, each touching a generating centre of its own, but that centre remains coincident with the one first centre; the centres all unite in that first centre and yet remain what they were, so that they are as many as are the lines to which they serve as terminals; the centres themselves appear as numerous as the lines starting from gem and yet all those centres constitute a unity.

Thus we may liken the Intellectual Beings in their diversity to many centres coinciding with the one centre and themselves at one in it but appearing multiple on account of the radial lines — lines which do not generate the centres but merely lead to them. The radii, thus, afford a serviceable illustration for the mode of contact by which the Intellectual Unity manifests itself as multiple and multipresent.⁷

The Intellectual Beings, thus, are multiple and One; One identical thing is ever present in multiplicity.

. . . in virtue of their infinite nature their unity is a multiplicity, many in one and one over many, a unit-plurality. They act as entire upon entire; even upon the partial thing they act as entire; but there is the difference that at first the partial accepts this working only partially though the entire enters later. Thus, when Man enters into human form there exists a particular man who, however, is still Man. From the one thing Man — man in the Idea — material man has come to constitute many individual men: the one identical thing is present in multiplicity, in multi-impression, so to speak, from the one seal.

This does not mean that Absoluteness is absorbed by multiplicity; on the contrary, multiplicity is absorbed by Absoluteness, or rather, is bound up with it.

This does not mean that Man Absolute, or any Absolute, or the Universe in the sense of a Whole, is absorbed by multiplicity; on the contrary, the multiplicity is absorbed by the Absolute, or rather is bound up with it. There is a difference between the mode in which a colour may be absorbed by a substance entire and that in which the soul of the individual is identically present in every part of the body: it is in this latter mode that Being is omnipresent.⁸

⁷ *Ennead* VI, v, “On the Integral Omnipresence of the Authentic Existent (2),” ¶ 5

⁸ *Ibid.* ¶ 6



**To Real Being we go back,
all that we have and are;
to that we return, as
from that we came.**

. . . 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 One Head.**

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 man could but be turned about by his own motion or by the happy pull of Athene — he would see at once God and himself 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.⁹

**The Good is the centre of all.
By Its means everything acts.
It needs nothing and pos-
sesses nothing beyond itself.**

Now as our sight requires the world of sense for its satisfaction and realization, so the vision in the Intellectual-Principle demands, for its completion, *The Good*.

It cannot be, itself, *The Good*, since then it would not need to see or to perform any other Act; for *The Good* is the centre of all else, and it is by means of *The Good* that every thing has Act, while *The Good* is in need of nothing and therefore possesses nothing beyond itself.

**Add no further thought to
The Good, for you introduce
a deficiency.**

Once you have uttered "*The Good*," add no further thought: by any addition, and in proportion to that addition, you introduce a deficiency.

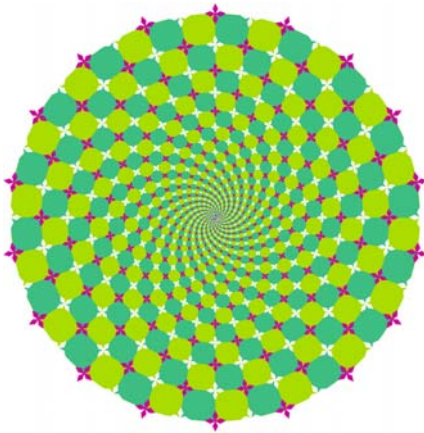
Do not even say that it has Intellection; you would be dividing it; it would become a duality, Intellect and *The Good*. *The Good* has no need of the Intellectual-Principle which, on the contrary, needs it, and, attaining it, is shaped into Goodness and becomes perfect by it: the Form thus received, sprung from *The Good*, brings it to likeness with *The Good*.¹⁰

⁹ *Ennead* VI, v, "On the Integral Omnipresence of the Authentic Existent (2)," ¶ 7

¹⁰ *Ibid.* viii, "Nature Contemplation and the One," ¶ 10



The Soul exists in revolution around God to whom it clings in love, holding itself to the utmost of its power near to Him as the Being on which all depends; and, since it cannot coincide with God, it circles about Him.



Plato attributes to the stars not only universal spherical movement but also individual revolutions around common centres; Linked by Necessity they contemplate upon God and rejoice.

In body, centre is a point of place; in Soul it is a source, the source of some other nature. The word, which without qualification would mean the mid-point of a spheric mass, may serve in the double reference; and, as in a material mass so in the Soul, there must be a centre, that around which the object, Soul or material mass, revolves.

The Soul exists in revolution around God to whom it clings in love, holding itself to the utmost of its power near to Him as the Being on which all depends; and since it cannot coincide with God it circles about Him.

Why then do not all souls [*i.e.*, the lower, also, as those of men and animals] thus circle about the Godhead?

Every Soul does in its own rank and place.

And why not our very bodies, also?

Because the forward path is characteristic of body and because all the body's impulses are to other ends and because what in us is of this circling nature is hampered in its motion by the clay it bears with it, while in the higher realm everything flows on its course, lightly and easily, with nothing to check it, once there is any principle of motion in it at all.

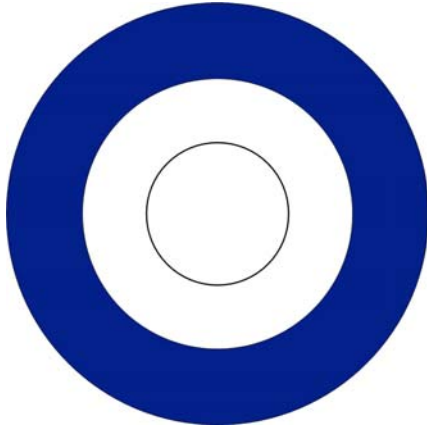
And it may very well be that even in us the Spirit which dwells with the Soul does thus circle about the divinity. For since God is omnipresent the Soul desiring perfect union must take the circular course: God is not stationed.

Similarly Plato attributes to the stars not only the spheric movement belonging to the universe as a whole but also to each a revolution around their common centre; each — not by way of thought but by links of natural necessity — has in its own place taken hold of God and exults.¹¹

¹¹ *Ennead* II, ii "On the Heavenly Circuit," ¶ 2



Similarly, all souls shine upon
the heavens and spend there
the main of themselves
and the best;



The single light of the centre
is equally diffused within and
throughout the solar system.
We can no longer even name
the spot it occupied. It is
present everywhere.

All the souls, then, shine down upon the heavens and spend there the main of themselves and the best; only their lower phases illuminate the lower realms; and those souls which descend deepest show their light furthest down — not themselves the better for the depth to which they have penetrated.

There is, we may put it, something that is centre; about it, a circle of light shed from it; round centre and first circle alike, another circle, light from light; outside that again, not another circle of light but one which, lacking light of its own, must borrow.

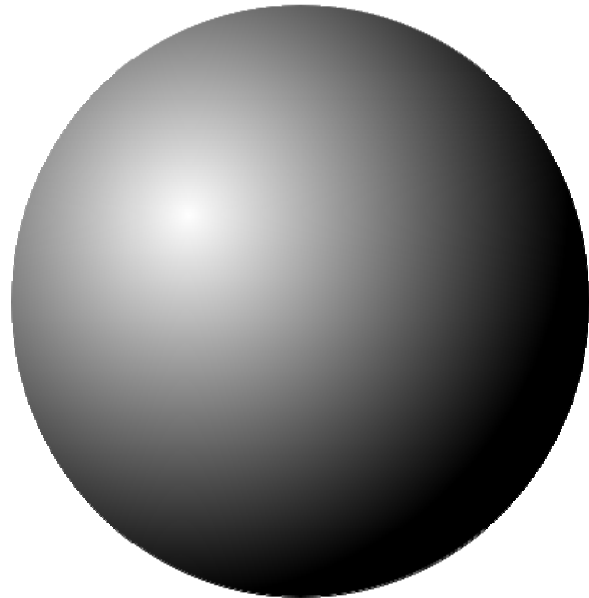
The last we may figure to ourselves as a revolving circle, or rather a sphere, of a nature to receive light from that third realm, its next higher, in proportion to the light which that itself receives. Thus all begins with the great light, shining self-centred; in accordance with the reigning plan [that of emanation] this gives forth its brilliance; the later [divine] existents [souls] add their radiation — some of them remaining above, while there are some that are drawn further downward, attracted by the splendour of the object they illuminate. These last find that their charges need more and more care: the steersman of a storm-tossed ship is so intent on saving it that he forgets his own interest and never thinks that he is recurrently in peril of being dragged down with the vessel; similarly the souls are intent upon contriving for their charges and finally come to be pulled down by them; they are fettered in bonds of sorcery, gripped and held by their concern for the realm of Nature.¹²

. . . imagine a small luminous mass serving as centre to a transparent sphere, so that the light from within shows upon the entire outer surface, otherwise unlit: we surely agree that the inner core of light, intact and immobile, reaches over the entire outer extension; the single light of that small centre illuminates the whole field. The diffused light is not due to any bodily magnitude of that central point which illuminates not as body but as body lit, that is by another kind of power than corporeal quality: let us then abstract the corporeal mass, retaining the light as power: we can no longer speak of the light in any particular spot; it is equally diffused

¹² *Ennead* IV, iii, “Problems of the Soul (1),” ¶ 17



within and throughout the entire sphere. We can no longer even name the spot it occupied so as to say whence it came or how it is present; we can but seek and wonder as the search shows us the light simultaneously present at each and every point in the sphere. So with the sunlight: looking to the corporeal mass you are able to name the source of the light shining through all the air, but what you see is one identical light in integral omnipresence. Consider too the refraction of light by which it is thrown away from the line of incidence; yet, direct or refracted, it is one and the same light. And supposing, as before, that the sun were simply an unembodied illuminant, the light would no longer be fixed to any one definite spot: having no starting point, no centre of origin, it would be an integral unity omnipresent.¹³

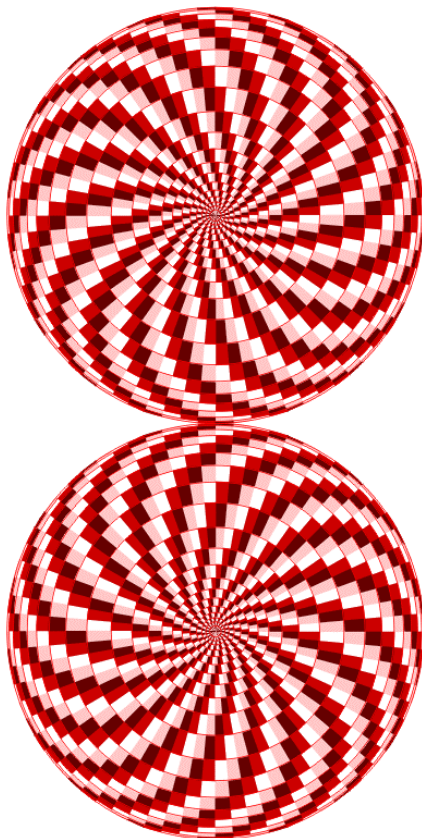


¹³ *Ennead* VI, iv, “On the Integral Omnipresence of the Authentic Existence (1),” ¶ 7



**In Unity there can be no knowing. The One can only know
Itself through Plurality. But in the great illusion of form,
The One stands distinct and apart: it is present without
being inherent.**

Duality is a unity; but how is this unity also a plurality? The Highest began as a unity and, all unknown to itself, grew pregnant, desiring universal possession. It flung itself outward like a Circle which in projection becomes a figure, a surface, a circumference, a centre, a system of radii, upper and lower segments.



The explanation is that in a unity there can be no seeing [a pure unity has no room for vision and an object]; and in its Contemplation *The One* is not acting as a Unity; if it were, the Intellectual-Principle cannot exist. The Highest began as a unity but did not remain as it began; all unknown to itself, it became manifold; it grew, as it were, pregnant: desiring universal possession, it flung itself outward, though it were better had it never known the desire by which a Secondary came into being: it is like a Circle [in the Idea] which in projection becomes a figure, a surface, a circumference, a centre, a system of radii, of upper and lower segments. The Whence is the better; the Whither is less good: the Whence is not the same as the Whence-followed-by-a-Whither; the Whence all alone is greater than with the Whither added to it.

The Intellectual-Principle on the other hand was never merely the Principle of an inviolable unity; it was a universal as well and, being so, was the Intellectual-Principle of all things. Being, thus, all things and the Principle of all, it must essentially include this part of itself [this element-of-plurality] which is universal and is all things: otherwise, it contains a part which is not Intellectual-Principle: it will be a juxtaposition of non-Intellectuals, a huddled heap waiting to be made over from the mass of things into the Intellectual-Principle!

We conclude that this Being is limitless and that, in all the outflow from it, there is no lessening either in its emanation, since this also is the entire universe, nor in itself, the starting point, since it is no assemblage of parts [to be diminished by any outgo].¹⁴

¹⁴ *Ennead* III, viii, "Nature Contemplation and the One," ¶ 8



***The One* is unparted and impartible; interval is foreign to it, it has no need of place and is not situated within any other being: it is poised over all beings at once, which are neither capable nor desirous of existing independently of it.**

Thus the indivisible and permanent becomes the principle of multifarious and temporary worlds which, though outgoing, they remain enduringly in contact with their primal essence.

Only by a leap can we reach *The One*. If we fail, we persist in an illusory duality bereft of Unity. But *The One* still stands distinct and apart: it is present without being inherent.

But to that order is opposed Essence [Real-Being]; this is in no degree susceptible of partition; it is unparted and impartible; interval is foreign to it, cannot enter into our idea of it: it has no need of place and is not, in diffusion or as an entirety, situated within any other being: it is poised over all beings at once, and this is not in the sense of using them as a base but in their being neither capable nor desirous of existing independently of it; it is an essence eternally unvaried: it is common to all that follows upon it: it is like the circle's centre to which all the radii are attached while leaving it unbrokenly in possession of itself, the starting point of their course and of their essential being, the ground in which they all participate: thus the indivisible is the principle of these divided existences and in their very outgoing they remain enduringly in contact with that stationary essence.¹⁵

Only by a leap can we reach to this One which is to be pure of all else, halting sharp in fear of slipping ever so little aside and impinging on the dual: for if we fail of the centre, we are in a duality which does not even include The authentic One but belongs on both sides, to the later order. *The One* does not bear to be numbered in with anything else, with a one or a two or any such quantity; it refuses to take number because it is measure and not the measured; it is no peer of other entities to be found among them; for thus, it and they alike would be included in some container and this would be its prior, the prior it cannot have. Not even essential [ideal or abstract] number can belong to *The One* and certainly not the still later number applying to quantities; for essential number first appears as providing duration to the divine Intellection, while quantitative number is that [still later and lower] which furnishes the Quantity found in conjunction with other things or which provides for Quantity independent of things, if this is to be thought of as number at all. The Principle which in objects having quantitative number looks to the unity from which they spring is a copy [or lower phase] of the Principle which in the earlier order of number [in essential or ideal number] looks to the veritable One; and it attains its existence

¹⁵ *Ennead* IV, ii, "On the Essence of the Soul," ¶ 1



without in the least degree dissipating or shattering that prior unity: the dyad has come into being, but the precedent monad still stands; and this monad is quite distinct within the dyad from either of the two constituent unities, since there is nothing to make it one rather than the other: being neither, but simply that thing apart, it is present without being inherent.¹⁶



Full Circle of Life (mosaic) by Tree Coyle

¹⁶ *Ennead* V, v, “That the Intellectual Beings are not outside the Intellectual-Principle: and on the Nature of the Good,” ¶ 4



All good souls dwell in the far-spread heavens, infusing life into the stars, consciously moving around the One Centre, seeking nothing beyond . . .

Every soul that knows its history is aware, also, that its movement, unthwarted, is not that of an outgoing line; its natural course may be likened to that in which a circle turns not upon some external but on its own centre, the point to which it owes its rise.

Is then this “centre” of our souls the Principle for which we are seeking?

. . . The soul’s movement will be about its source; to this it will hold, poised intent towards that unity to which all souls should move and the divine souls always move, divine in virtue of that movement; for to be a god is to be integral with the Supreme; what stands away is man still multiple, or beast.

We must look yet further: we must admit a Principle in which all these centres coincide: it will be a centre by analogy with the centre of the circle we know. The soul is not a circle in the sense of the geometric figure but in that it at once contains the Primal Nature [as centre] and is contained by it [as circumference], that it owes its origin to such a centre and still more that the soul, uncontaminated, is a self-contained entity.

In our present state — part of our being weighed down by the body, as one might have the feet under water with all the rest untouched — we bear — ourselves aloft by that — intact part and, in that, hold through our own centre to the centre of all the centres, just as the centres of the great circles of a sphere coincide with that of the sphere to which all belong. Thus we are secure.

If these circles were material and not spiritual, the link with the centres would be local; they would lie round it where it lay at some distant point: since the souls are of the Intellectual, and the Supreme still loftier, we understand that contact is otherwise procured, that is by those powers which connect Intellectual agent with Intellectual Object; this all the more, since the Intellect grasps the Intellectual object by the way of similarity, identity, in the sure link of kindred. Material mass cannot blend into other material mass: unbodied beings are not under this bodily limitation; their separation is solely that of otherness, of differentiation; in the absence of otherness, it is similars mutually present.¹⁷

¹⁷ *Ennead* VI, ix, “On the Good, or the One,” ¶ 8



It is not that the Supreme reaches out to us seeking our communion: we reach towards the Supreme.

Thus the Supreme as containing no otherness is ever present with us; we with it when we put otherness away. It is not that the Supreme reaches out to us seeking our communion: we reach towards the Supreme; it is we that become present. We are always before it: but we do not always look: thus a choir, singing in due order about the conductor, may turn away from that centre to which all should attend: let it but face aright and it sings with beauty, present effectively. We are ever before the Supreme — cut off is utter dissolution; we can no longer be — but we do not always attend: when we look, our Term is attained; this is rest; this is the end of singing ill; effectively before Him, we lift a choral song full of God.¹⁸

The centre of a circle is point of rest: if the circumference outside were not in motion, the universe would be no more than one vast centre.

If the Universal Soul halted anywhere, there Kosmos, too, would halt.

Further, the centre of a circle [and therefore of the Kosmos] is distinctively a point of rest: if the circumference outside were not in motion, the universe would be no more than one vast centre. And movement around the centre is all the more to be expected in the case of a living thing whose nature binds it within a body. Such motion alone can constitute its impulse towards its centre: it cannot coincide with the centre, for then there would be no circle; since this may not be, it whirls about it; so only can it indulge its tendency.

If, on the other hand, the Kosmic circuit is due to the Soul, we are not to think of a painful driving [wearing it down at last]; the soul does not use violence or in any way thwart nature, for “Nature” is no other than the custom the All-Soul has established. Omnipresent in its entirety, incapable of division, the Soul of the universe communicates that quality of universal presence to the heavens, too, in their degree, the degree, that is, of pursuing universality and advancing towards it.

If the Soul halted anywhere, there the Kosmos, too, brought so far, would halt: but the Soul encompasses all, and so the Kosmos moves, seeking everything.¹⁹

¹⁸ *Ennead* VI, ix, “On the Good, or the One,” ¶ 8

¹⁹ *Ibid.* II, ii “On the Heavenly Circuit,” ¶ 1



Do not think that the great air, and the ether, and the far-spread heavens remain void of it: all good souls dwell there, infusing life into the stars and into that orderly eternal circuit of the heavens, which in its conscious movement ever about the One Centre, seeking nothing beyond.

Thus a centre is an independent unity; everything within the circle has its term at the centre; and to the centre all radii connect. Such a centre is within our nature by which we grasp, are linked, and held.

And do not think that, while earth is ornate with all its growths and with living things of every race, and while the very sea has answered to the power of Soul, do not think that the great air and the ether and the far-spread heavens remain void of it: there it is that all good Souls dwell, infusing life into the stars and into that orderly eternal circuit of the heavens which in its conscious movement ever about the one Centre, seeking nothing beyond, is a faithful copy of the divine Mind. And all that is within me strives towards *The Good*; and each, to the measure of its faculty, attains. For from that Good all the heavens depend, with all my own Soul and the Gods that dwell in my every part, and all that lives and grows, and even all in me that you may judge inanimate.²⁰

Since there is a Soul which reasons upon the right and good — for reasoning is an enquiry into the rightness and goodness of this rather than that — there must exist some permanent Right, the source and foundation of this reasoning in our soul; how, else, could any such discussion be held? Further, since the soul's attention to these matters is intermittent, there must be within us an Intellectual-Principle acquainted with that Right not by momentary act but in permanent possession. Similarly there must be also the principle of this principle, its cause, God. This Highest cannot be divided and allotted, must remain intangible but not bound to space, it may be present at many points, wheresoever there is anything capable of accepting one of its manifestations; thus a centre is an independent unity; everything within the circle has its term at the centre; and to the centre the radii bring each their own. Within our nature is such a centre by which we grasp and are linked and held; and those of us are firmly in the Supreme whose collective tendency is There.²¹

²⁰ *Ennead* III, iii “On Providence (1),” ¶ 3

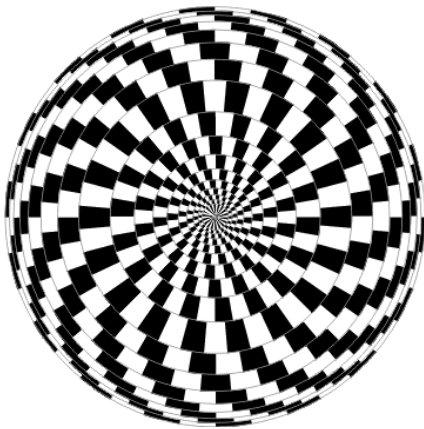
²¹ *Ibid.* V, ii “The Origin and Order of the Beings following on the First,” ¶ 11



And the Soul, outside, circles around the Intellectual-Principle, and by gazing upon it, seeing into the depths of It, through It sees God.²²

But how are Order and this orderer one and the same?

The Good is the centre; the Intellectual-Principle, an unmoving circle; the Soul, a circle in motion.



Yet any offspring of the Intellectual-Principle must be a Reason-Principle; the thought of the Divine Mind must be a substantial existence: such then is that [Soul] which circles about the Divine Mind, its light, its image inseparably attached to it: on the upper level united with it, filled from it, enjoying it, participant in its nature, intellective with it, but on the lower level in contact with the realm beneath itself, or, rather, generating in turn an offspring which must lie beneath; of this lower we will treat later; so far we deal still with the Divine.²³

. . . Because the ordering principle is no conjoint of matter and idea but is soul, pure idea, the power and energy second only to the Intellectual-Principle: and because the succession is a fact of the things themselves, inhibited as they are from this comprehensive unity. The ordering soul remains august, a circle, as we may figure it, in complete adaptation to its centre, widening outward, but fast upon it still, an outspreading without interval.

The total scheme may be summarized in the illustration of *The Good* as a centre, the Intellectual-Principle as an unmoving circle, the Soul as a circle in motion, its moving being its aspiration: the Intellectual-Principle possesses and has ever embraced that which is beyond being; the soul must seek it still: the sphere of the universe, by its possession of the soul thus aspirant, is moved to the aspiration which falls within its own nature; this is no more than such power as body may have, the mode of pursuit possible where the object pursued is debarred from entrance; it is the motion of coiling about, with ceaseless return upon the same path — in other words, it is circuit.²⁴

²² *Ennead* I, viii “On the Nature and Source of Evil,” ¶ 2

²³ *Ibid.* V, i, “The Three Initial Hypostases,” ¶ 7

²⁴ *Ibid.* IV, iv, “Problems of the Soul (2),” ¶ 16



Eternity is stable in Unity. All is bound to The Good, but The Good to none: It is the object of all aspiration.

The Primal touches nothing, but is the centre round which those other Beings lie in repose and in movement. For Movement is aiming, and the Primal aims at nothing.

Plato says Eternity is stable in Unity. Eternity is the Principle, at rest within *The One*, being itself at once the absolute self-identical and the active manifestation of an unchanging Life set towards the Divine, and dwelling within It.

For, again, that only can be named *The Good* to which all is bound and itself to none: for only thus is it veritably the object of all aspiration.

. . . But the First is not to be envisaged as made up from Gods of a transcendent order: no; the Authentic Existents constitute the Intellectual-Principle with Which motion and rest begin. The Primal touches nothing, but is the centre round which those other Beings lie in repose and in movement. For Movement is aiming, and the Primal aims at nothing; what could the Summit aspire to?²⁵

Now the Principle this stated, all good and beauty, and everlasting, is centred in *The One*, sprung from It, and pointed towards It, never straying from It, but ever holding about It and in It and living by Its law; and it is in this reference, as I judge, that Plato — finely, and by no means inadvertently but with profound intention — wrote those words of his, “Eternity stable in Unity”; he wishes to convey that Eternity is not merely something circling on its traces into a final unity but has [instantaneous] Being about *The One* as the unchanging Life of the Authentic Existent. This is certainly what we have been seeking: this Principle, at rest within rest with *The One*, is Eternity; possessing this stable quality, being itself at once the absolute self-identical and none the less the active manifestation of an unchanging Life set towards the Divine and dwelling within It, untrue, therefore, neither on the side of Being nor on the side of Life — this will be Eternity [the Real-Being we have sought].²⁶

. . . It must be unmoved, while all circles around it, as a circumference around a centre from which all the radii proceed. Another example would be the sun, central to the light which streams from it and is yet linked to it, or at least is always about it, irremoveably; try all you will to separate the light from the sun, or the sun from its light, for ever the light is in the sun.²⁷

²⁵ *Ennead* III, ix, “Detached Considerations,” ¶ F

²⁶ *Ibid.* III, vii, “Time and Eternity,” ¶ 6

²⁷ *Ibid.* I, vii “On the Primal Good and Secondary Forms of Good,” ¶ 1



Appendix

H.P. Blavatsky on the Centre and Circle

The Monad, the emanation and reflection of the Point (Logos) in the phenomenal World, becomes the apex of the manifested equilateral triangle, the “Father.”

Philosophy, however, could never have formed its conception of a logical, universal, and absolute Deity if it had no Mathematical Point within the Circle to base its speculations upon. It is only the manifested Point, lost to our senses after its pre-genetic appearance in the infinitude and *incognizability* of the Circle, that made a reconciliation between philosophy and theology possible — on condition that the latter should abandon its crude materialistic dogmas. And it is because it has so unwisely rejected the Pythagorean Monad and geometrical figures, that Christian theology has evolved its self-created human and personal God, the monstrous Head from whence flow in two streams the dogmas of Salvation and Damnation. This is so true that even those clergymen who would be philosophers and who were masons, have, in their arbitrary interpretations, fathered upon the ancient sages the queer idea that “the Monad represented [with them] *the throne* of the Omnipotent Deity, placed in the centre of the Empyrean to indicate T.G.A.O.T.U.”²⁸ — read “the Great Architect of the Universe.” A curious explanation this, more Masonic than strictly Pythagorean.

Nor did the “hierogram within a Circle, or equilateral Triangle,” [613] ever mean “the exemplification of the unity of the divine Essence”; for this was exemplified by the plane of the boundless Circle. What it really meant was the triune co-equal Nature of the first differentiated Substance, or the *consubstantiality* of the (manifested) Spirit, matter and the Universe — their “Son,” who proceeds from the Point (the real, esoteric LOGOS) or the Pythagorean MONAD. For the Greek *Monas* signifies “Unity” in its primary sense. Those unable to seize the difference between the monad — the Universal Unit — and the *Monads* or the manifested Unity, as also between the ever-hidden and the revealed LOGOS or the *Word*, ought never to meddle in philosophy, let alone the Esoteric Sciences. It is needless to remind the educated reader of Kant’s *Thesis* to demonstrate his second *Antinomy*.²⁹ Those who have read and understood it will see clearly the line we draw between the *absolutely Ideal* Universe and the invisible though manifested Kosmos. Our Gods and Monads are not the Elements of *extension* itself, but only those of the invisible reality which is the basis of the manifested Kosmos. Neither esoteric philosophy, nor Kant, nor Leibnitz would ever admit that extension can be composed of simple or unextended parts. But theologian-philosophers will not grasp this. The Circle and the Point, which latter retires into and merges with the former, after having emanated the first three points and connected them with lines, thus forming the first *noumenal* basis of the Second Triangle in the Manifested World, have ever been an insuperable obstacle to theological flights into dogmatic Empyreans. On the authority of this Archaic Symbol, a male, personal god, the *Creator* and *Father* of all, becomes a third-rate emanation, the Sephīrāth

²⁸ Rev. G. Oliver, *The Pythagorean Triangle*, etc., 1875, p. 36

²⁹ See Kant’s *Critique de la Raison pure* (Barni’s transl., Vol. II, p. 54)



standing *fourth* in descent, and on the left hand of Ain-Soph (see the *Kabalistic Tree of Life*). Hence, the Monad is degraded into a Vehicle — a “throne”!

The Monad — only the emanation and reflection of the Point (Logos) in the phenomenal World — becomes, as the *apex* of the manifested equilateral triangle, the “Father.” The left side or line is the *Duad*, the “Mother,” regarded as the evil, counteracting principle;³⁰ the right side represents the Son (“his Mother’s husband” in *every* Cosmogony, as one with the *apex*); at the basic line is the Universal plane of productive Nature, unifying on the phenomenal plane Father-Mother-Son, as these were unified in the *apex*, in the supersensuous World.³¹ By mystic transmutation they became the Quaternary—the triangle became the TETRAKTYS.

This transcendental application of geometry to Cosmic and divine theogony — the Alpha and the Omega of mystical conception — became dwarfed after Pythagoras by Aristotle. By omitting the Point and the Circle, and taking no account of the apex, he reduced the metaphysical value of the idea, and thus limited the doctrine of magnitude to a simple TRIAD — the *line*, the *surface*, and the *body*. His modern heirs, who play at Idealism, have interpreted these three geometrical figures as Space, Force, and Matter — “the potencies of an interacting Unity.”³² Materialistic Science, perceiving but the basic line of the *manifested* “triangle” — the plane of matter — translates it practically as (Father)-MATTER, (Mother)-MATTER, and (Son)-MATTER, and theoretically as Matter, Force, and Correlation.³³

The Monad is divine in its higher condition, human in its lower.

The Monad is a drop out of the shoreless Ocean beyond, or, to be correct, *within* the plane primeval differentiation. It is divine in its higher and *human* in its lower condition — the adjectives “higher” and “lower” being used for lack of better words — and a monad it remains at all times, save in the Nirvānic state, under whatever conditions, or whatever external forms.³⁴

The Ocean of Life does not divide into its potential and constituent drops until the sweep of the life-impulse reaches the evolutionary stage of man-birth.

It would be very misleading to imagine a monad as a separate entity trailing its slow way in a distinct path through the lower kingdoms, and after an incalculable series of transmigrations flowering into a human being; . . . Instead of saying a mineral monad, the correcter phraseology in physical science which differentiates every atom, — would of course have been to call it *The Monad* manifesting in that form of Prakriti called the mineral kingdom. Each atom or molecule of ordinary scientific hypothesis is not a particle of something, animated by a psychic something, destined to blossom

³⁰ Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, lvi-lvii (373-74)

³¹ In the Greek and Latin churches — which regard marriage as one of the sacraments — the officiating priest during the marriage ceremony represents the apex of the *triangle*; the bride its left feminine side and the bridegroom the right one, while the horizontal line is symbolised by the row of witness, the bridesmaids and best-men. But behind the priest there is the altar with its mysterious containments and symbolic meaning, inside of which no one but the consecrated priests ought to enter. In the early days of Christianity the marriage ceremony was a mystery and a true symbol. Now, however, even the churches have lost the true meaning of this symbolism.

³² See Von Hartmann’s and Herbert Spencer’s works.

³³ *Secret Doctrine*, I p. 613-15

³⁴ *Ibid.* II p. 186



as a man after æons. But it is a concrete manifestation of the Universal Energy which itself has not yet become individualized: a sequential manifestation of the one Universal Monas. The Ocean does not divide into its potential and constituent drops until the sweep of the life-impulse reaches the evolutionary stage of man-birth. The tendency towards segregation into individual monads is gradual, and in the higher animals comes almost to the point. The Peripatetics applied the word Monas to the whole Cosmos, in the pantheistic sense; and the Occultists while accepting this thought for convenience's sake, distinguish the progressive stages of the evolution of the Concrete from the Abstract by terms of which the "Mineral Monad" is *one*. The term merely means that the tidal wave of spiritual evolution is passing through that arc of its circuit. The "Monadic essence" begins to imperceptibly differentiate in the vegetable kingdom. As the monads are uncompounded things, as correctly defined by Leibnitz, it is the spiritual essence which vivifies them in their degrees of differentiation which constitutes properly the monad — not the atomic aggregation that is only the *vehicle* and the substance through which thrill the lower and higher degrees of intelligences.³⁵



³⁵ Blavatsky *Collected Writings*, (THE MINERAL MONAD) V pp. 172-73

