

*Plotinus on
the Intelligible Beauty*



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I. Since we must confess that the soul which contemplates the intelligible world, and beholds the beauty of true intellect, may also perceive the father of this divine world, who is superior to intellect: let us now endeavour to the utmost of our ability to behold, and to express to ourselves (as much as such things can be expressed) how we may in the best manner survey the beauty of intellect, and the world which it contains. Suppose then, two stony masses placed near each other, one of which is incomposite, and destitute of artificial form: but the other is fashioned by art into some divine, or human statue. And if divine, let it be the statue of some Grace or a Muse: but if human, not that of any particular man, but rather of someone which art has collected together from all beautiful forms. The stone then which is disposed by art into the beauty of form, will immediately appear beautiful, but not because it is a stone; or the other mass would be similarly beautiful; it is therefore beautiful because it possesses the form which art applies. Matter, therefore, had not this form, but it existed in the thinking artist before it came into the stone. But it was in the artificer, not on account of his possessing eyes and hands, but because he was endowed with art. This beauty, therefore, existed in art in a much more excellent manner. For the form itself which abides in art does not proceed into the stone, but this abides in indivisible union, while an inferior form proceeds from this, which neither remains in itself pure, nor is such as the artist wishes, but such as the subject matter is capable of receiving. But if art operates according to what it is, and to what it possesses, but it fashions beautiful forms, according to the reason by which it acts: hence reason is a much greater and truer beauty, since it contains the beauty of art; and is greater and more excellent than everything which proceeds into external form. For so far as form proceeding into matter is extended, so far it becomes more debile than that which abides in one. Since whatever suffers distance in itself, departs from itself, and the integrity of its nature; whether it is strength diffused into some participant; or heat, or power, or beauty extended to some subject, and divided about the fluctuating receptacle of matter. Again, every efficient according to itself, ought to be more excellent than its effect: for that which is unharmonious does not form a musi-

¹ [Intelligible Beauty is the Light, Truth, and Beauty of Inner Wisdom, a truly wondrous beauty that can be seen and understood only by the Higher Manas-Mind. It has nothing to do with the deceptive physical beauty perceived by the senses. There are two levels of apperception (1+2), and two of perception (3+4):

1. Higher Self is Universal Mind in its Macrocosmic aspect.
2. Higher Manas or Ego is Individualised Mind in its Microcosmic aspect.
3. Lower Manas or Egotism is ray from the Higher Ego and its alter ego.
4. Brain is the vehicle of Lower Manas enthroned in Kama-Rūpa.

Look up “Higher Self and Higher Ego,” in our Confusing Words Series. — ED. PHIL.]

cian, but this is the work of harmony; and that music which is above sense, produces the harmony in sensible sound. But if any one despises the arts, because they operate imitating nature, in the first place, it must be confessed, that natures also imitate other things: and in the next place, that arts do not simply imitate that which is perceived by the eyes, but recur to those reasons from which the energy of nature consists. Besides this, they produce many things from themselves, and add something where anything is wanting to the perfection of the whole; because they contain beauty in themselves. Lastly, Phidias himself fashioned his Jupiter, not by imitating any spectacle proper to the senses; but conceiving the god such as he would appear, if he should be willing to exhibit himself to our eyes.

II. But for the present let us neglect the arts, and consider those beautiful natural effects, which art is said to imitate, *i.e.* all rational and irrational animals; but especially whatever amongst these are more exactly finished: I mean where the Demiurgus ruling over matter, invests it with the form he desires it should participate. What then is beauty in these? For it is not blood and menstua, but colour and figure different from these; or it is nothing; or something destitute of figure; or it is that which, as it were, contains something simple like matter. From whence arose the beauty of Helen, for which so great a contest ensued? From whence shines the beauty of other forms similar to Venus? And from whence did the form of Venus herself arise? Or that of any man entirely beautiful, or of some god, whether they are among the number of things subject to our sight, or among those which are not subject, and yet have in themselves a conspicuous beauty. Is not this everywhere form, descending into that which is produced by the artificer, in the same manner as it was said that the beauty of artificial figures, proceeded from the arts. What then? Are works beautiful indeed, and reason existing in mater? But is reason separate from matter, which exists in the soul of the agent, and which is first in dignity and rank, not beautiful, but is reduced into one with its subject matter? But if bulk is beautiful, so far as bulk, it follows that active reason, because it is not bulk, is not beautiful: though if form, whether contained in small or in a large mass, moves and affects in a similar manner the mind of the beholder, certainly beauty is not to be attributed to the magnitude of bulk. Hence, so long as form is external to soul, we do not perceive, and are not moved by its power: but when it is well conceived in the soul then it affects us with delight. Again, the form of things alone, flows through the eyes, otherwise the most ample figures could not penetrate through such narrow receptacles. But magnitude is contracted, not from its being great in bulk, but rather because great in species or form. Besides it is necessary that the cause itself of a beautiful effect, should be either deformed, or indifferent, or beautiful. If it is deformed, it cannot produce the contrary to deformity. If it is indifferent, why should it rather produce anything beautiful, than deformed. But, indeed, it is necessary that nature the artificer of things so beautiful, should possess a beauty more primary and exalted. But with regard to us, when we behold nothing inward, and are entirely ignorant of internal beauty, we follow what is external, unconscious in the meantime that the cause of motion is profoundly latent in the depths of the soul; just like one, who on perceiving his own image, and being ignorant from whence it came, should follow is shadowy and unreal progression. But that there is something else which allures followers to itself, and that beauty does not consist in magnitude is sufficiently testi-

fied, by the beauty inherent in disciplines, offices, and the soul: where certainly a more true beauty flourishes; which is then manifest, when we contemplate the wisdom in a worthy mind, and are delighted with the contemplation, and in love with its beauty; not then surveying the corporeal face, which perhaps is not beautiful, but neglecting the whole form of the body and pursuing inward beauty to its most sacred and profound retreats. But if such a soul does not yet incite you to denominate it beautiful, neither on surveying yourself inwardly, will you be delighted with yourself as with something beautiful. Hence while so affected, you will vainly investigate true and intimate beauty: for you will seek after the purity of beauty, not with something pure, but with that which is base; and hence too, a discourse on things of this kind is not to be addressed to all men. Because if you behold yourself beautiful, you may obtain a reminiscence of beauty itself.

III. The reason therefore of the beauty contained in nature is the exemplar of the beauty appearing in body: but the exemplar of natural beauty, is a more beautiful reason contained in soul, from which the beauty of nature flows. But this shines brighter in a worthy soul, already advanced in beauty, than in nature herself: since it adorns such a soul, and affords a light, derived from one much greater; and which is no other than the first beauty. Thus abiding in the soul, it leads it to consider, what that superior reason of beauty may be, which is no longer generated nor placed in another, but abides perpetually in itself. Hence it is not reason, but the author of that reason which is first: since indeed the first reason is a certain beauty subsisting in soul as in matter. But its author is intellect, which is always the same, and not sometimes intellect; because intelligence does not happen extrinsical to this true and original intellect. But what image are we able to receive of such an intellect? For whatever is enquired after externally, is doubtless sought for from something worse than intellect. An image therefore of intellect must be obtained from intellect itself: so that we must not speak of it through the medium of an image; but we must receive a certain portion of gold, as a representative of universal gold. And unless this received gold is pure, we must purify it either in reality, or at least in our discourse; demonstrating that this which is received by us, is not universal, but only a particular portion of gold. Thus then let us ascend higher from our intellect now purified, to intellect itself; and let us begin with the gods themselves, contemplating the intellect which they possess. For all the gods are venerable and beautiful, and endued with an inestimable gracefulness. But what is the cause of such beauty? It is intellect, energizing in the most exalted manner, which produces their divinely beautiful appearance. For it is not because their bodies are beautiful that they are gods, but from the possession of intellect, since the participation of body, is not essential to divinity. For they are not at one time wise, and at another time the contrary; but they are perpetually wise, with a tranquil, stable, and pure intellect, understanding all things, and knowing not human concerns properly, but their own, that is such as are divine, and such as intellect itself perceives. But the gods who inhabit this visible heaven, for they abound in divine leisure, assiduously contemplate, as if it were above them, what the primary and intelligible heaven contains. But those who are stationed in this higher world, contemplate its inhabitants possessing the whole of this diviner heaven. For all things there are heaven. There the sea, animals, plants, and men are heaven. Lastly every portion of this heaven is celestial. But the gods who reside

there, do not disdain men, nor any other of its inhabitants, because everything there is divine; and they comprehend the whole of this intelligible region attended with the most perfect repose.



IV. Hence the life of these divinities is easy, and truth is their generator and nurse, their essence and nutriment: hence they perceive all things, not such indeed as are subject to generation, but such as abide in essence: they likewise perceive themselves in others. For all things are there perfectly perspicuous. Nothing there is dark, nothing opposing, but everything is conspicuous to all, intrinsically and universally. For light everywhere meets with light. Each thing contains in itself all, and all things are again beheld in another. So that all things are everywhere, and all is all. There everything is all. There an immense splendour shines. There everything is great, since even what is small is there great. There the sun is all the stars; and every star is a sun, and at the same time all the stars. But one thing excels in each, while in the meantime all things are beheld in each. There motion is perfectly pure: for the proceeding motion is not confounded by a mover foreign from the motion. Station also there is disturbed by no mutation: for it is not mingled with an unstable nature. Besides beauty there is beauty itself, because it does not subsist in beauty. But everything abides there not as if placed in some foreign land; for the being of each is its own stable foundation: nor is its essence different from its seat; for its subject is intellect, and itself is intellect. Just as if anyone should conceive this sensible heaven, which is manifest and lucid to the eyes, germinating into stars by its light. In corporeal natures indeed, one part is not everywhere produced from another, but each part is distinct from the rest. But there each thing is everywhere produced from the whole; and is at the same time particular, and the whole. It appears indeed as a part: but by him who acutely perceives, it will be beheld as a whole: by him I mean, who is endowed with a sight similar to that of the lynx, the rays of whose eyes are reported to penetrate the depths of the earth. For it appears to me that this fable, occultly signifies the perspicuousness of supernal eyes. Besides the vision of these blessed inhabitants is never wearied, and never ceases through a satiety of perceiving. For there is no vacuity in any perceiver, which when afterwards filled up, can bring intuition to an end. Nor can pleasure ever fail through the variety of objects; or through any discord between the perceiver and the thing perceived. Besides everything there is endowed with an untamed and unwearied power. And that which can never be filled, is so called, because its plenitude never spurns at its replenishing object. For by intuition it more assiduously perceives. And beholding itself infinite, and the objects of its perception, it follows its own nature as its guide in unwearied contemplation. Again, no life there is laborious, since it is pure life: for why should that labour, which lives in the best manner? But the life there is wisdom, a wisdom not obtained by arguments like ours, because it is always total, nor is in any part deficient, from which it might require investigation. But it is the first wisdom, not depending on any other; and essence itself is there wisdom; yet not in such a manner that essence is first, and then wisdom succeeds as secondary and an adjunct. Hence, no wisdom is greater than this, but there science itself is the associate of intellect, because they both germinate, and beam with divine splendours together: in the same manner as by a certain imitation they report that justice resides with Jupiter. For everything of this kind exists there like a lucid resemblance perspicuous from itself, so as to become the spectacle of transcendently happy spectators. The magnitude and power therefore of wisdom itself, is sufficiently evident from its containing with itself, and producing beings: for all things which are true pursue wisdom, depend on it for their

being, originate together with it, and have one and the same essence: and lastly essence there is no other than wisdom itself. But we do not yet approach to this exalted knowledge, because we consider sciences, as certain speculations, and rules, and a conflux of propositions, which indeed ought not with propriety to be attributed to the sciences we possess. But if any one doubts concerning our sciences, we must neglect the discussion for the present, at the same time assuming an occasion from hence, let us dispute concerning that science, which Plato beholding in the intelligible world says, that science there is not one thing in another. And this investigation will be proper to us, if we profess ourselves worthy an appellation of this kind.

V. Whatsoever is made by nature or art, is produced by a certain wisdom, and everywhere wisdom is the leader of action. But wheresoever a certain wisdom fabricates, there are indeed arts of this kind. But the artificer himself is again referred into natural wisdom, according to which art produces every work; not by being collected from speculations, but as one certain whole; nor as composed from many into one, but rather as resolving itself from one into many. If anyone therefore places this wisdom as the first in intelligible dignity, it will be sufficient, since it does not originate from another, and does not subsist in any other essence. But if he should say that reason is placed in nature, and that the principle of this is nature, we must enquire from whence nature possesses reason. Because if it is said to possess it from another, we again enquire of that other; and if it possesses it from itself, our investigation is finished. But if they fly to intellect, there again we must enquire, whether intellect generates wisdom. And if they confess it does, we ask from whence? But if it conceives wisdom from itself, it could not accomplish this, unless intellect is wisdom itself. True wisdom therefore is essence, and true essence is wisdom; and the dignity of essence is derived from wisdom. For it appears that true essence originates from wisdom. Hence whatever things are destitute of the wisdom of essence; so far indeed as they are made by a certain wisdom, they are essences; but because they do not contain in themselves any wisdom, they are not true essences. No one therefore ought to think that in the intelligible world, either the gods themselves or any of its transcendently happy inhabitants, contemplate certain rules of propositions; but that each of the objects there contained, offers itself to the beholders, like a beautiful spectacle, such as may be imagined to exist in the soul of a man divinely wise. Not indeed like painted resemblances, but true beings shining with intellectual splendours: on which account the ancients called ideas, beings and essences.

VI. But the wise men of the Egyptians whether from a certain accurate science, or from natural instinct, when they determined to signify to us the mysteries of wisdom, appear to me not to have used figures significant of letters, discourses, and propositions, nor things imitating voices and axioms; but rather by describing and painting the particular images of particular things in their sacred concerns, to have occultly signified the discursive energy of the things itself. For indeed every image is a certain science and wisdom; it is likewise a subject; and is a spectacle collected into one; and is neither cogitation, nor counsel. But afterwards from this image, or wisdom collected into one, an evolved resemblance is produced in something else, speaking in a discursive transition, and finding out the causes why things are thus instituted: while the thing thus beautifully disposed, excites admiration. Hence it is said that he will admire wisdom, who considers how without containing the causes of her es-

sence, she affords to others which are fashioned according to her nature, their particular mode of existence. This beautiful disposition of things then, which is scarcely manifest from enquiry, if any one should discover, he must own it requisite that in the intelligible world, things should subsist previous to all argument and enquiry, as in one great nature which harmonizes the whole.

VII. Can we think that this universe, which we confess to be derived and to exist in this manner, from another, was so composed by its artificer, that he thought within himself concerning the earth; and considered that it ought to rest in the middle? And that afterwards he reasoned concerning the connection of water with earth, and the orderly disposition of things as far as to the heavens? But in the next place concerning all animals, and such, and so many forms of particular vital beings, as they are at present; and the disposition as well of the inward as of the external parts and members? And lastly that he began to produce things in energy, as they were disposed in himself? But such a consideration could not subsist with the artificer of the universe. For how could it take place in him, who had not as yet seen such things in existence? Nor is it possible that he could fabricate, by receiving external assistance, after the manner of human artificers, who operate with hands and instruments: for hands and feet were posterior to his energy. It remains therefore that all things must subsist in their divine cause, and since no medium intervenes, that by the propinquity of being itself, to another, its image and similitude should as it were on a sudden shine forth, whether from itself alone, or through the ministry of soul. For it is of no consequence at present whether or not the world was fabricated properly through a certain soul, if it is but admitted that all things emanated from thence, and subsist there in greater beauty and perfection. For here they are mixt, but there they are pure. But this universe proceeding, from thence, is comprehended by forms from beginning to end. In the first place matter is the receptacle of the elementary forms, and of others in continual succession; so that it is difficult to find matter, thus concealed under a multitude of forms. But since it possesses a certain ultimate form, it easily becomes the subject of every form. Hence since the exemplar of the universe is form, he produced all forms; and this without any difficulty or violence, because the artificer there is a divine universe, and essence, and form. Hence too his fabrication was easy, and without labour: for there was no impediment; and on this account he now rules over his work with absolute dominion. And although some particulars are everywhere in opposition to others, yet they cannot now oppose the universal fabric, for it abides as the whole. Indeed I think if we were the first exemplars of things, and at the same time essences, and forms, and if the form which operates here was our essence, that our fabrication would rule without labour, though man as at present should fabricate a form different from himself. For becoming man he ceases to be the universe: but when he ceases to be man as Plato says, he raises himself on high, and governs the world. *For being made of the whole, he also makes the whole.* But that we may return to our design, you may indeed produce a reason, why the earth is placed in the middle, and why it is round; or why the zodiac is situated in a certain place: but in the intelligible world it was not deliberated so to be, because it was requisite; but rather because it is as it exists, on this account it is constituted as it ought: just as if previous to a syllogistic energy through causes, the conclusion itself should remain indubitably certain, without any propositions. For nothing there de-

pende on consequences, nothing becomes certain from consideration: but it subsists prior to consequence, and all consideration. For all these are posterior, *reason, demonstration, faith*. Since on account of the principle all these exist, and are thus disposed. But it is rightly said that the causes of the principle are not to be sought after; especially of a perfect principle, which is the same with the end: for that which is both principle and end, is at the same time the whole, and perfect in every part.

VIII. Intellect itself, therefore, is the first beauty; it is total, and is everywhere total, without suffering a defect of beauty in any part. What then is the beautiful itself to be called? Certainly, not anything which is not the whole itself, but either possesses a part only, or is entirely destitute of its participation. Indeed unless this is the beautiful itself, what else can merit this appellation? For that which is prior to intellect, does not will itself to be beautiful, but is something ineffably more excellent. Hence that which first presents itself to our view, because it is form, and a spectacle of intellect, is by this means lovely, and pleasant to the sight. On this account Plato wishing to intimate to us this truth, represents the Demiurgus of the universe, approving his own perfect work; willing from hence to exhibit, by something more manifest to our apprehension, the beauty of the exemplar, and of his great idea, as perfectly lovely. For as often as any one admires a work, fabricated according to an exemplar, he must particularly admire the exemplar itself. Nor ought it to seem wonderful if in the meantime such a one, is ignorant of what he suffers: since terrene lovers, and those who admire corporeal beauty, are ignorant that they are thus affected, on account of supernal beauty. But that Plato refers the Demiurgus of the universe loving his work, to the divine exemplar, is evident from hence: for he says, that he was delighted with his work, and wished to render it still more similar to its exemplar: evincing from this the beauty of the exemplar, for says he its work is beautiful, because it is the image of its artificer. For indeed unless that was inestimably beautiful, what would be more beautiful than this universe, which is subject to our corporeal sight? On which account they do not perceive rightly, who detract from the beauty of this sensible world; unless in detracting they perceive that this universe is not the intelligible world.

IX. Let us then receive by cogitation this our sensible world, so disposed that every part may remain indeed what it is, but that one thing may mutually reside in another. Let us suppose that all things are collected as much as possible into one, so that each particular object may first present itself to the eyes; as if a sphere should be the exterior boundary, the spectacle of the sun immediately succeeding, and an image of the other stars, and the earth, the sea and all animals should appear within, as in a diaphanous globe: and lastly let us conceive that it is possible to behold all things in each. Let there be then in the soul a lucid imagination of a sphere, containing all things in its transparent receptacle; whether they are agitated, or at rest; or partly mutable, and partly stable. Now preserving this sphere receive another in your soul, removing from this last the extension into bulk, take away likewise place, and banish far from yourself all imagination of matter: at the same time being careful not to conceive this second sphere, as something less than the first in bulk, for this must be void of all dimension. After this invoke that divinity who is the author of the universe, imaged in your phantasy, and earnestly intreat him to approach. Then will he suddenly come, bearing with him his own divine world, and all the gods it contains.

Then will he come, being at the same time one and all, and bringing with him all things concurring in one. There indeed all the gods, are various amongst themselves in gradations of power, yet by that one abundant power they are all but one, or rather one is all: for the divinity never fails, by which they are all produced. But all the gods abide together, and each is again separate from the other in a certain state unattended with distance, and bearing no form subject to sensible inspection: or one would be situated differently from the other, nor each be in itself all. Nor again does any one of these possess parts different from others, and from itself: nor is every whole there a divided power, and of a magnitude equal to its measured parts; but it is indeed a universe, and a universal power, proceeding to infinity in a power, which is the parent of energy. But this divine world is so truly great, that its parts become infinite. For where can anything be said to exist, with which it is not extended? The sensible world too is great, and all powers are contained in its ample bosom: but it would be much greater, and that in a manner perfectly ineffable, if it was free from the diminutive power of body. And if it should be said that the power of fire and of other bodies is great, it must be remembered that true powers are infinite, and that it is only from an ignorance of these, that corporeal natures appear to have being, and to operate by corrupting, separating, and ministering to the generation of animals. But these indeed corrupt, because they are themselves corrupted, and they generate because they are generated. But the power which flourishes there, possesses being alone, and is alone beautiful, without any external and adventitious qualities, which only derogate from the dignity of essence. For where can there be any thing beautiful, deprived of being? And where again can essence abide, if it wants the presence of beauty? For while beauty is taken away, essence is destroyed. On this account being itself is desirable, because being, and beauty are the same: and the beautiful is lovely; because it is being. But it is not proper to enquire which is the cause of the other, since the nature of each is one and the same. The false essences indeed of bodies, require a certain image of beauty, extrinsically acceding, both that they may appear beautiful, and that they may inherit an obscure portion of being. For they so far partake of essence as they participate of beauty, consisting in form: and by how much the more they receive of this kind of beauty, so much the more of perfection do they inherit: for by this means a beautiful essence, and beauty itself is more peculiar to their nature.

X. On this account Jupiter himself, who is the most ancient of the other gods which he leads, proceeds first to the contemplation of the intelligible world. But afterwards the subordinate gods, dæmons, and souls follow him, who are able to perceive such transcendently lucid objects. And this divine world shines upon them, from a certain occult place, which is no other than the abode of ineffable unity. But it illustrates all the divinities with its light: and excites to itself superior souls who are afterwards converted to its splendid vision, which before they were incapable of perceiving; and which like the sun dazzles the eye unaccustomed to intellectual light. And while some with elevated eyes, easily bear its intuition, others who are more distant from its nature are disturbed with the vision. But since each of these blessed inhabitants, perceives according to his ability, all of them indeed behold this intelligible world, with its various contents, yet they do not all retain the same spectacle, but while they are lost in attentive vision, one beholds the lucid fountain and nature of the just

itself, while another abundantly perceives temperance itself, but not such as that which resides with men, when they enjoy its possession. For this our temperance imitates the supreme: but that diffusing itself in all things, as if about all the magnitude of its nature, is finally perceived by those, who have already beheld many perspicuous spectacles. On this account the gods behold everything separate, and at the same time all things together: they perceive too divine souls there, whose vision is universal; and their nature becomes such from unbounded perception, that they contain all things from the beginning to the end. These divine objects therefore, Jupiter himself and those of us who together with Jupiter love this intelligible world, happily contemplate, together with that universal beauty shining from all, and whatever participates of the beauty, which there abides. For everything there glitters, and illuminates the spectators with its light, so that they become beautiful by its lustre: just as it happens to those who ascend the highest mountains, where the earth is yellow: for they are immediately infected with the colour, and become similar to the earth, to which they ascend. But the colour which flourishes in the divine world is beauty itself; or rather everything there is wholly colour, and profound beauty. For beauty there, is not like that which flourishes in the superficies of bodies: but among those who do not perceive the whole, that alone which is resplendent in the superficies is considered as beauty. But those who are totally filled with the intoxicating nectar of divine contemplation, since beauty diffuses itself through every part of their souls do not become spectators alone. For in this case the spectator is no longer external to the spectacle: but he who acutely perceives, contains the object of his perception in the depth of his own essence; though while possessing, he is often ignorant that he possesses. For he who beholds anything as external, beholds it as something visible, and because he wishes to perceive it attended with distance. But whatever is beheld as perceptible, is beheld externally: but it is requisite we should transfer the divine spectacle into ourselves, and behold it as one, and as the same with our essence: just as if any one hurried away by the vigorous impulse of some god, whether Apollo or one of the Muses, should procure in himself the intuition of the god; since in the secret recesses of his own essence, he will behold the divinity himself.

XI. But if any one of us who is not able to perceive himself entirely comprehended by this divinity, should produce a spectacle into his view, for the purpose of assisting his vision, he should produce himself; and he will then perceive an image of the intelligible world, now become more beautiful and divine. But afterwards neglecting the image although beautiful, and conspiring with himself into one, and no longer separating his essence, he will become one all together with that deity, who silently flows into his soul; and he will be present with him as far as he is able, and as much as he desires. But if he should return from this divine union into two, and is in the meantime pure, he will nevertheless dwell proximate to its essence; so that by conversion, he may again be present and become united with his divinity. But the gain of the soul will consist in this ineffable conversion. Indeed, when it first attempts this union, it perceives itself, as long as it is different from the god: but when it has penetrated into its most intimate recesses, it will then find itself in possession of the intelligible universe; and casting sense behind, fearing lest it should become different, it will be one with this divine world. And if it desires to perceive as something different,

it will place itself external to its object. But it is requisite that the soul which is about to perceive a divinity of this kind, should possess a certain figure of his nature, and assiduously persevere, while it endeavours perspicuously to know him; and thus well understanding the importance of its pursuit, and trusting it is about to enter on the most blessed vision, should profoundly merge itself in contemplation, till instead of a spectator, it may become another specimen of the object of its intuition; such as it came from thence, abundantly shining with intellectual conceptions. But how can anyone reside in the beautiful itself, unless he perceives it? Indeed, if he perceives it as something different, he will not as yet abide in beauty. But becoming beautiful, he will thus especially exist in beauty. If then vision is directed to something external, it is not proper that vision should be there, or if it is it should become one with the object of perception. But a doubt of this kind is like a certain consciousness of someone fearing, lest if he wished to perceive more vehemently, he should depart from himself. For thus disease more vehemently impels and excites our sensation: but health dwelling with us more quietly, exhibits a truer knowledge of itself, since it is present with silence and tranquillity, as something familiar and allied to us; and conspires into one with our composition. On the contrary disease possesses nothing domestic, but is entirely foreign from our nature; and hence its presence is more manifest on account of its diversity: but such things as are peculiarly our own, are present with us, without any manifest sensation. So that when we are in this condition, we are then most of all known to ourselves; since our science in this case is one and the same with our essence. Hence, in the divine world, when we are most knowing according to intellect, we appear to be ignorant, expecting the passion of sense, which says it does not perceive; nor indeed does it see; nor can it ever attain to the intuition of such exalted objects. That which distrusts its vision then is sense: but it is something else which perceives. And if this too should doubt, it is no longer its true self. For neither can this last when it places itself externally, behold that which is intelligible, as if it were sensible, and to be seen with corporeal eyes.

XII. But it has been shown how the soul may be able to accomplish this as different from its object, and how when the same. But what will the perceiver relate whether abiding as different, or the same? He will tell that he saw this god, who is the same with the intelligible world, generating a beautiful son, and producing all things in his essence without any labour and fatigue. For this deity being delighted with his work, and loving his progeny, continues and connects all things with himself, pleased both with himself, and with the splendours his offspring exhibit. But since all these are beautiful, and those which remain within are still more beautiful, Jupiter the son of intellect alone shines forth externally, proceeding from the splendid retreats of his father. From which last son, we may behold as in an image, the greatness of his sire, and of his brethren those divine ideas, who abide in occult union with their father. But this ultimate progeny does not affirm in vain, that he proceeds from his parent intellect: for he is another world, proceeding from this first, and becoming beautiful, like an image of beauty. For it is not lawful that the image of beauty and of essence, should not be beautiful. Hence, he in every respect imitates his exemplar. For he possesses life, and the gift of essence as a certain imitation of stable essence, and life ever vigilant: he possesses also beauty, so far as he proceeds from thence; and perpetual duration, as a moving image of the eternity of intellect abiding in one: for if

this is not admitted, he would at one time exhibit his image and not at another. But he is not an image fabricated by art; and every image formed by nature, lasts as long as its exemplar endures. Hence they do not conceive rightly, who think this world may be destroyed, that which is divine remaining in the full perfection of its essence, and thus imagine the world generated, and that its author on a certain time consulted concerning its production. Such as these indeed neither wish to understand, nor are at all acquainted with the mode of its formation, and are ignorant that so long as the splendours of that divine world endure, so long will this visible universe beam from thence, and will never be destroyed, since the original of each is the same. But the intelligible world always was, and always will be: appellations of this kind being adopted from necessity, for the purpose of conveying the conceptions of our minds.

XIII. Saturn, therefore, who according to poetical fable is feigned bound, because he always perseveres in the same divine energies of his nature: who is also reported to have delivered the government of this universe to his son Jupiter (for it was not proper that he having diminished his government, should follow a nature junior and posterior to himself, since he comprehends in himself the plenitude of all beauty.) Saturn, I say, omitting all subordinate natures established in himself his father Cœlum, and raised himself on high as far as to this ineffable principle. He likewise established succeeding natures originated posterior to him, from his son. And thus he possesses a middle situation between both, through a diversity of section from that which is above him, and from his abstaining from inferior concerns, while he is fabled by a subordinate care to be bound in chains; thus obtaining a middle situation between his greater father, and his inferior son. But since his father Cœlum, is something greater than beauty, hence Saturn or intellect is the first beauty, though soul is likewise beautiful: yet intellect is more beautiful than soul because soul is only its vestige; and is naturally beautiful through this, though it is far more beautiful when it beholds the perfect nature of intellect. If then the soul of the universe (that we may use words more generally known), and Venus herself is beautiful, what must be the beauty of intellect? For if soul and Venus possess this from themselves, how great must be the splendour of intellect? But if from another, from whom does soul possess the beauty as well acceding, as natural to her essence? Indeed, whenever we are beautiful, we become so from the possession of our own nature alone: but we are base, when we are precipitated into an inferior nature. So that we are beautiful when we know, but base when we are ignorant of ourselves. Beauty, therefore, shines in Saturn or intellect, with primary splendours. But are these considerations sufficient to a knowledge of the divine world the intelligible place? Or must we proceed another way in its investigation?



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