

THE CATEGORIES AND PLOTINIAN AESTHETICS

Frederic M. Schroeder

Volume 72, numéro 1-2, janvier-août 2020

Aristotle and the Peripatetic Tradition
Aristote et la tradition péripatéticienne

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1067582ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Collège universitaire dominicain, Ottawa

ISSN

0316-5345 (imprimé)
2562-9905 (numérique)

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Citer cet article

Schroeder, F. M. (2020). THE CATEGORIES AND PLOTINIAN AESTHETICS.
Science et Esprit, 72(1-2), 115-136.

Résumé de l'article

Aristote considère le particulier porteur d'une forme comme la substance première réellement existante. En tant que platonicien, Plotin conçoit la substance intelligible comme réelle, et les particuliers relevant d'un genre comme substances secondes et ontologiquement inférieures. Dans le but d'éviter la régression à l'infini qu'implique la prédication de la Forme à propos du particulier et de la Forme elle-même, Aristote situe la Forme dans le particulier. Pour sa part, Plotin conserve la transcendance de la Forme en remplaçant la prédication aristotélicienne par une synonymie dont le mécanisme de prédication repose sur une équivocité *pros hen*. La Forme devient alors *eidos aneideon*, une « forme sans forme ». Celle-ci ne constitue pas une entité limitée, mais plutôt un océan de possibilités. C'est ainsi qu'elle décline le monde de la science aristotélicienne et ouvre de nouvelles perspectives pour la compréhension de la technique [l'art]. La Forme est envisagée comme un aspect singulier du monde intelligible qui s'exprime dans une [série-P] dont l'extension va du monde intelligible à la réalité sensible.

THE CATEGORIES AND PLOTINIAN AESTHETICS

FREDERIC M. SCHROEDER

Das Kunstwerk nur reflektiert mir, was selbst im Ich schon sich getrennt hat; was also der Philosoph schon im ersten Akt des Bewusstseins sich trennen lässt, wird, sonst für jede Anschauung unzulänglich, durch das Wunder der Kunst aus ihren Produkten zurückgestrahlt.

Wenn die ästhetische Anschauung nur die objektiv gewordene transzendente ist, so versteht sich von selbst, dass die Kunst das einzige wahre und ewige Organon zugleich und Dokument der Philosophie sei.

F. W. J. SCHELLING¹

For many students of Plotinus the centre of his thought and spirituality is to be found in the middle dialogues of Plato. When we turn from the lovely account of beauty in 1.6 with its graceful allusions to the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, to the categorial arguments of 6.1-3 we seem to enter upon a more severe and sterile universe of discourse. It is the purpose of the present paper to demonstrate that Plotinian logic proceeds *pari passu* with his understanding of aesthetics. Indeed the carapace of Plotinian logic is essential to a mature understanding both of his aesthetics and his presentation of the world as an epiphany.

The Categories

Henry Blumenthal describes Plotinus' use of Peripatetic argument as "Aristotelianism in the service of Platonism."² Nothing could better depict the Plotinian reception of Aristotle's categories. Plotinus sets forth his doctrine of categories in his notoriously difficult treatises, *Enneads* 6.1-3. In 6.1, he attacks the Aristotelian categories on the grounds that they cannot apply both to sensible and to intelligible reality. The Stoic categories are criticized on the grounds of the relentless materialism of the Stoics.³

1. SCHELLING 1982, pp. 119, 121.

2. BLUMENTHAL 1972.

3. SCHROEDER 1992, pp. 30-31.

In 6.2 Plotinus establishes his own Platonic genera, borrowed from the *Sophist*: Substance, Motion, Rest, Difference, and Sameness. Plotinus calls the categories of the intelligible world γένη τοῦ ὄντος. I take the following chart from Christos Evangeliou, “The Ontological Basis of Plotinus’ Criticism of Aristotle’s Theory of Categories”⁴:

Realm of Real Being		Realm of Mere Becoming	
1. Οὐσία (ὄν, νοῦς)	Substance	Οὐσίας (λεγομένη)	so-called substance
2. Κίνησις (ζωή, ἐνέργεια)	Motion	Ποιόν (ποιότης)	quality
3. Στάσις (ἀει εἶναι)	Rest	Ποσόν (ποσότης)	quantity
4. Ἐτερον (ἐτερότης)	Difference	Κίνησις (ζωή)	motion
5. Ταυτόν (ταυτότης)	Sameness	Πρός τι (σχέσις)	relation

Some categories of the realm of mere becoming, such as quality and quantity, are present in the intelligible world, but not as primary (πρώτα) (6.2.13-14). That in the intelligible world that corresponds to quantity is an essential completion of substance. Thus motion is an activity of being and inseparable from it since it is life. Quantity in the sensible world is derived from motion, rest, otherness, and sameness, all of them simultaneous with and inseparable from intelligible substance. “Movement goes forward into the indefinite, but rest in holding back what is going forward makes the unit” (6.2.13.24-36). Similarly, what corresponds to quality in the intelligible world is a completion of being and inseparable from it. The Plotinian categories of motion, rest, sameness, and otherness qualify in this sense as qualities (6.3.14).

Aristotle (*Cat.* 1a) distinguishes between synonymous and equivocal (homonymous) predication. Synonymous predication requires a common name and a common account of substance. Thus a Great Dane and a Mexican hairless will share both the name and the essence of “Dog.” “Dog” is predicated synonymously of both creatures. On the other hand “log” could mean either “ship’s record” or “an arboreal artifact.” The distinction is crucial to Aristotelian science, e.g., the *diairesis* of plants and animals into *genera* and *species*. If with Aristotle we regard the enmattered Form or enfleshed soul as real, then the

4. EVANGELIOU 1982; cf. EVANGELIOU 1987 for the reduction of the ten Aristotelian categories describing the sensible world of genesis to five.

predicate “man” would be parasitic upon the particular man (Achilles). If, however, we with Plotinus think that the species or form is real, then “Achilles” will be parasitic on “Man.” “Man” then belongs to the intelligible world, “Achilles” to the sensible world. The problem now is how we may know the intelligible world from our acquaintance with the sensible world. If Achilles and man are truly similar, then we shall have to seek some common ground to express that similarity. Following through with this exploration of a reciprocal relationship will land us in an unacceptable infinite regress. On the other hand, if the two worlds admit only of equivocal predication, the species or Form shall sacrifice its explanatory value.

Aubenque asks whether, as a way out of this conundrum, we may seek *analogia entis* in Plotinus. In fact, Plotinus’ use of the word *analogia* provides little comfort in this quest. The mediaeval triad, negation, analogy, and eminence are doubtless derived from Plotinus 6.7.36.6-7: “We are taught about it [i.e., the One] by analogies and negations and knowledge of the things which come from it.”⁵ It is crucial to observe that Plotinus in this chapter distinguishes these ways of knowing the One, which are external to its object, from those disciplines which truly lead to the intuitive knowledge of the One.⁶ The rather positive use of analogy that appears in this passage is not common in Plotinus who dismisses its usefulness.

The relationship between the categories of the intelligible world and the categories of the sensible world appears to be one of equivocation. The categories of the intelligible world are not synonymous, but only homonymous with the categories of the sensible world. Thus we predicate substance (*ousia*) homonymously of the intelligible and sensible worlds (6.1.1.24-5). The categories may be predicated of intelligible and sensible reality by analogy and homonymy (6.3.1.6-7): δεῖ μέντοι τὸ ταῦτὰ ἀναλογία καὶ ὁμολογία λαμβάνειν). Aubenque insists upon the adversative or concessive force of μέντοι so that analogy would not qualify or attenuate the force of homonymy, but rather strengthen it. Thus analogy is pulled within the ambit of homonymy in the radical sense of sharing only a name in common. If intelligible substance admits the same predicates as intelligible substance, then perhaps (ἴσως) that is only in accordance with analogy and homonymously (κατ’ ἀναλογίαν καὶ ὁμωνύμως) (6.3.5.2-3). The adverb ἴσως again would qualify and downgrade the use of this language.⁷ We must not seek the same categories of the sensible world and the intelligible world, because the sensible world, in its relation to the intelligible world, is not synonymous, but homonymous and an image (οὐ

5. I have substituted “analogies” for Armstrong’s “comparisons” for ἀναλογίαι in order to make the point. For the derivation of the mediaeval approach from this passage, cf. AUBENQUE 1981, p. 71.

6. AUBENQUE 1981, pp. 71-72.

7. AUBENQUE 1981, p. 68.

συνώνυμον, ὁμώνυμον δὲ καὶ εἰκῶν (6.3.1.21). Here Plotinus is invoking the distinction between homonymy and synonymy undertaken by Aristotle in *Categories* 1a. Plotinus denies that intelligible and sensible substance can belong to the same genus, arguing that, if they did, it would be “as if one were to put Socrates and his portrait under one genus.” We would be placing τὰ ὄντα and τὰ μὴ ὄντα under the same genus (6.2.1.24-5).

In Plato’s *Sophist*, the philosopher is a creator of true, the sophist of false, images (235d; 264e; 265b). A major problem of the *Sophist* is how we can say that-which-is-not (λέγειν τὸ μὴ ὄν). The question abides as long as we construe λέγειν as a transitive verb. If we cannot say that-which-is-not, then the sophist can say anything at all and the distinction between falsehood and truth is obliterated. The Stranger specifies that by “non-being” (τὸ μὴ ὄν) we mean “other-than-being” (257b2-3).

It is of value to examine a statement about the mimetic art:

Sophist 240a7-8:

ΘΕΑΙ. Τί δῆτα, ὦ ξένε. Εἶδωλον ἄν
φαίμεν εἶναι πλὴν γε τὸ πρὸς
τάληθινόν ἀφομοιωμένον ἕτερον
τοιούτον;

THEAET. Why, Stranger, what can we
say an image is, except another such
thing fashioned in the likeness of the
true one?

This is followed by a discussion whether the image is, or is not, parasitic upon being. The Stranger asks whether we dare to say “that which altogether does not exist” (τὸ μηδαμῶς μὴ ὄν) (237b7-8). The Stranger discusses non-being with respect to the mingling of the classes of being, sameness, otherness, motion, and rest (259a1-b1).

From these elements, Plotinus fashions his cosmological use of the relationship between the pattern and the copy, the original and the image. In the metaphysical hierarchy, non-being is construed as other-than-being in the sense that it is other than the being of its superior and image of it. In this deployment of intelligible being, the categories of the *Sophist* are used to discuss the interweaving of otherness and sameness in the imaging of the intelligible (1.8.3).

How does Plotinus get to the kinds of being? Not merely on the authority of Plato. In 6.2.4-8, he engages in a kind of phenomenological reduction. He begins with an examination of body, e.g., a stone, analyzing it into substance (substrate), quantity (magnitude), and quality (e.g., colour). That very analysis would show that the stone is not one and simple, but composite. If we extend that same analysis to other bodies, we shall conclude that they are all composite in that way. Now let us think away quantity (e.g. magnitude) and quality (e.g., colour), and sensible substrate and we shall come to soul, which is without these characteristics. We might then think that soul is simple. Yet soul does not have the being of a stone, which is lifeless. Therefore soul has life as

an essential component of its being. But is it being as such? No, because it has being a soul as a stone has being a stone and it has life, it is not life. When we look at a portrait, it lacks the most essential element, life. The life of the sensible world, and of soul, is an appearance of life, as in the portrait. Intellect alone *is* life. Now the kind that contains both the life of soul and the life of Intellect is motion. That motion is already present in the soul's self-contemplation and, of course, is in the noetic movement of Intellect. Yet being is the target of that motion and that in which it comes to rest. Not that the mind ever truly begins somewhere and ends somewhere in Intellect. It is rather that motion and rest are kinds inseparable from its being. Now we distinguish being from motion and rest, and motion from rest, and rest from motion. The very possibility of that distinction presupposes otherness. And when we reduce them to a unity again, we see them as same and that identity is founded in the kind of sameness. So we now have the five kinds: substance, motion, rest, otherness, and sameness.

The categories of the sensible world in Plotinus include the Aristotelian substance, quality, quantity, and relation, but add another Plotinian category, motion. The ten Aristotelian categories are reduced to five. For example, "where" and "when" are reduced to space and time and these in turn to quantity (6.1.1-3).

The Good and the Hierarchy of Life

I have argued in the Maynooth volume on Neoplatonism that Plotinus offers argument against the Aristotelian critique of the Platonic Form of the Good in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.⁸ This material is most relevant to my present discussion. However, I do not wish to repeat the entire argument with all of its philology. I shall be content here to summarize.

We may begin with a consideration of *pros hen* predication. In *Categories* 1a, as we have seen, Aristotle distinguishes between predication by synonymy and predication by equivocation (homonymy). Synonymous predication requires a common name and a common account of substance. In equivocal predication things need only share the name in common. Aristotle does, however, offer a *via media* between these two forms of predication, *pros hen* predication or predication by focal meaning. In this case the things compared cannot share in a common essence, although they do have a focus of meaning. We may think of the word "health" (τὸ ὑγιαίνόν) that may e.g. describe the protection of health, the act of inducing health, or the he symptom of health.⁹ Or we may think of the senses of "medical" (τὸ ἰατρικόν) which may refer to

8. SCHROEDER 1997, pp. 207-221.

9. Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Met.* B1003a33-1003b12.

the art of medicine or its outcome.¹⁰ In this chain of predication we may say there may be a series exhibiting cognitive sequence. Thus we must know the art of medicine before we may understand the physician, we must know what a practitioner is before we know what a medical tool is (e.g., a scalpel; such a sequence is known as a P-series).

In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle advances arguments against the Platonic Idea of the Good. Among these is the contention that a P-series, that exhibits priority and posteriority, cannot admit of univocal predication.¹¹ Thus even the Platonists did not advance a Platonic Idea of numbers which do exhibit such a series. Now “good” is predicable in the categories of substance, quality, and relation. Obviously substance is prior to relation (1.4.1096a11-21). In the ensuing argument (1.4.1096a23-29), Aristotle goes on to show that “good” is predicable in all the categories. Joachim remarks, “How far they [the categories] could be shown to constitute a developing series is doubtful. It is enough for Aristotle’s purpose to show – what is sufficiently obvious – that that whose being consists in its relatedness to something else is derivative or posterior to that whose being is substantial or self-dependent, that which exists in its own right.”¹² The *Eudemian Ethics* 1.8.1218a2-9, on the other hand, in argument against the Platonic Form of the Good, specifically contends that “good” is predicable within a developing series and thus cannot be separate from the series in which “good” is predicated. If it were separable, then the first term in the series would not be first. Thus if multiplicity is predicated of a series of multiples beginning with “double,” then “multiplicity” would be prior to double.

A Plotinian argument against Aristotle on the question of the Good is contained in his treatise *On Well-being* (1.4). Aristotle equates living well (τὸ εὖ ζῆν) with well-being (εὐδαιμονία).¹³ Plotinus agrees with this view, but in 1.4 focuses upon the “live” part of “to live well,” rather than upon the “well” part of the expression. He asks whether, if a plant can be said to have achieved the good of which it is capable, it cannot be said to “live well”? Ultimately, Plotinus agrees with Aristotle that the good life and well-being for humanity consist in the highest activity of the soul, *viz.* intellection (1.4.14). Plotinus borrows from Aristotle the idea that “life” and “soul” are not generic, but an integrated P-series. He amplifies this series by seeing “good” and “life” as being interpredicable in such a series, with the Good, which initiates the series, being articulated at the various stages of Intellect, Soul, and the sensible world in predication. In the course of this discussion, Plotinus distinguishes between generic predication as it is described in the *Categories* and predication πρὸς

10. *EE* 1236a18-22.

11. For P-series see LLOYD 1962.

12. JOACHIM 1951, p. 38.

13. *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.4.1095a18-20; 1.8.1098b20-21; cf. *Eudemian Ethics* 1.10.1219b1-2.

ἐν. The *Categories* distinguishes predication according to co-ordinate species (animal as having feet, winged, or aquatic) (*Categories* 13.14b33: ἀντιδιαρεῖν) (cf. 1.4.317) from predication in a hierarchy exhibiting predication by priority and posteriority (“half” and “double”). Obviously, in this argument Plotinus is invoking predication by focal meaning to overcome the extreme dichotomy between synonymy and equivocation that we discovered in his distinction between the sensible and intelligible worlds.

The effect of the above argument is also to enable Plotinus to refute the “third man” argument in Plato’s *Parmenides* 131ab. According to that argument, we posit the form F to explain the common F-ness in the particulars. Now if F is predicated univocally of both Form and particular, then a further Form F would have to be posited to explain the common the F-ness common both to Forms and particulars. If this argument is pursued further, it will lead to infinite and vicious regress. However, if the F is predicated within a P-series, the predicates are πρὸς ἐν equivocal, i.e., they are predicated by focal meaning and require no generic identity. Therefore no further Form need be posited to explain the predicate common to the terms in the series and infinite regress is avoided. The relationship of *pros hen* equivocity that Plotinus sees between the Good and the P-series dependent upon it is mapped by Plotinus onto the other Forms.¹⁴

I have argued that the “third man” argument (and related arguments) may be avoided by distinguishing between “likeness” and “imitation.” Likeness is a symmetrical relationship that invites the “third man” argument. Imitation, however, while it implies likeness, is an asymmetrical relationship that may avoid the problem of infinite regress. Thus an aquiline nose may be represented by a bent line so that, while the image is like the original in its possession of the line, is yet unlike it in that the imitation has no flesh.¹⁵

Strange objects to Plotinus’ view of self-predication that the terms of “ordinary language” may well describe sensible experience, but not the nature of the Forms. These can be understood only by analogy to sensibles. Thus Plotinus, in speaking of the Forms, generates a specialized vocabulary understood only by the initiate. Strange remarks: “This may be connected with Plotinus’ claims about direct experience of νοῦς or the Forms. If we grant that Plotinus is conscious of this implication of his arguments, we will be better able to understand his constant use of metaphors and analogies in describing the intelligible world.”¹⁶ Indeed Plotinus surprises us in his assertion that his normal consciousness is not our wakeful experience of sensible reality. That

14. STRANGE 1981, p. 77; STRANGE 1987, p. 972. The first scholar to observe that *pros hen* predication may be used in answer to the “third man” argument is CHERNISS 1944, p. 298 n. 197: cf. STRANGE 1987, p. 972 n. 4.

15. SCHROEDER 1978; SCHROEDER 1980.

16. STRANGE 1987, p. 973.

awareness is of the Forms.¹⁷ Plotinus' use of imagery can be expressed as iconic inversion. We might expect that the procession of the lower from the higher soul would be compared with the procession of physical light from its source. Yet in speaking of the procession of physical light from its source, he compares it with the procession of the lower from the higher soul.¹⁸ Beierwaltes argues convincingly that light is in Plotinus not an analogy. It is rather the ontologically correct understanding of the intelligible world. Light is, as in Aristotle, incorporeal. Light is self-manifesting and omnipresent.¹⁹ It is mistaken to think that Plotinian metaphysics functions only on the plane of analogy and metaphor. Of course, some images are less ontologically adequate than others and need to be purged of "ordinary language" if they are to be of use (e.g., the likeness of the force exerted by the hand to the power of the soul).²⁰ As we have observed above, Plotinus looks upon the Aristotelian world from above.

Of course, Aristotle himself teaches that the species is prior, the genus posterior. What is finally real is what is most definite, the *infima species* occurring fully realized in matter. Plotinus, as a Platonist, wishes to preserve the priority of Form. If the Form is construed as a genus ontologically prior to its species, a number of difficulties will ensue. If man is defined as an animal endowed with reason, then "having reason" is the *differentia* of the human species. Now if the genus, animal, is taken apart from the species, human being, then animal would have to be predicated of its differentiae, so that "having reason" would be included in animal as such (*Metaphysics* B.3 998b). Also, where things are respectively prior and posterior, that which is predicable of them cannot exist apart from them. So if "animal" is predicated both of the genus of animal, understood as a Platonic Form, and man (understood as a Platonic Form), then animal could not exist as a separate entity, independent of its deployment as man (*Metaphysics* B.3.999a6-7).

How does Plotinus get out of this? What he does is to abolish the generic character of Form.²¹ Thus the highest kinds are genera and from them are generated the other Forms which are not their species. Each Form, in turn, stands at the head of a P-series among its derivatives in Intellect. The things of the sensible world are in turn thus derived from the Forms in Intellect. In *Categories* 1.5, Aristotle argues: "A *substance* – that which is called a substance most strictly, primarily, and most of all – is that which is neither said of a

17. 4.8.7. This passage is incorrectly taken to describe an "out of body experience." In fact it describes an "into body experience." See SCHROEDER 1992, pp. 5-6.

18. 4.6.7. and SCHROEDER 2015, pp. 153-154; CHIARODONNA 2014, p. 224: Sensible objects "cannot be used as a starting point for our knowledge of intelligible substance. [...] Accordingly, our soul is always acquainted with being, although we are not always primarily conscious of this fact."

19. BEIERWALTES 1961.

20. 4.6.7.32-39.

21. STRANGE 1987.

subject nor in a subject, e.g. the individual man or the individual horse.” The species in which the things primarily called substances are, are called *secondary substances*, as also are “the genera of these species” (trans. Ackrill). Clearly the genus or the species is not for Plotinus secondary substance, nor is the individual primary substance, in Aristotle’s sense.

Plotinus argues specifically that the Good is not a genus, but is predicated by focal meaning of different entities within the hierarchy of being. If it were a genus, it would *per impossibile* to be posterior, because a thing’s being good is posterior to its being and its being something. The good for being is its activity toward the Good which is beyond being and this is its life, movement toward the Good. That movement is one of the Plotinian categories (6.2.17). The One, since nothing may be predicated of it, not soul nor Intellect, nor anything else, is not a genus (οὐ γένος) (6.2.9.5-8).²²

In his treatment of the Aristotelian categories, Plotinus distinguishes between intelligible and sensible substance (οὐσία). He asks aporetically whether intelligible and sensible substance may really admit of “substance” as a common predicate, or whether it is to be used homonymously. If they did admit of a common predicate synonymously, he reasons, then they would both *per impossibile* have to participate in a common genus which would be neither corporeal nor incorporeal, as otherwise they would be confused (6.1.1.24-25; 6.1.2.).²³

Plotinus proceeds to reason that the commonality of predication might belong to that focal meaning to be sought among things where there is a relation of source and product (predication *ab uno* [ἀφ’ ἑνός] as one speaks of the clan of the Herkleidae after their common ancestor, Herakles). Thus

22. WURM 1973, p. 236: “Nun werden die Bestimmungen für das Eine auf das ihm Nachgeordnete VI 2.9-12 gerade dadurch gewonnen, dass der γένος-Charakter des Einen geleugnet wird.”

23. Plotinus at 2.6.1 explores the distinction between specific difference and accidental quality in the sensible world (2.6.1.16-21). Thus “white” is an essential predicate of “chalk,” but an inessential predicate or accident of “swan” (because there are also black swans). “Warm” would then be an essential predicate of “fire.” We may predicate warm of the substance fire. But we also predicate “warm” of the sensible fire. The forms (λόγοι) complete things as essential and whole and the product of this completion are there (in the intelligible world) substance, and here (in the sensible world) as quality (2.6.1.40-42). The same predicates may be quality and not quality. That which is deprived of substance is quality, but that which is with substance is substance and form and act (2.6.3.25-26). Plotinus rejects this distinction in 6.2.14. He had (2.6.1) asserted that the predicates of a particular substance were quality in an equivocal sense. Yet the acts proceeding from intelligible substance were qualities. Yet now we deny that the predicates of a particular substance are appropriate predicates of substance. For there is no addition of substance to man *qua* man, but essence is from above before a specific difference enters the scene, so that man is already “animal” before “rational” is introduced (15-22). Plotinus comes to this conclusion because he sees the determination of quality not as an exercise of the discursive mind that reasons from the aggregate of the sensible world. To understand the question of quality we must reason from the simple nature of essence in the intelligible world (6.2.14.1-14). WURM 1973, p. 255.

intelligible substance would be called substance as source, sensible substance substance as its derivative (6.1.3). This is to say that here Plotinus sees between intelligible and sensible substance a unity of reference as between source and product. Such predication, coupled with Plotinus' use of the P-series, would go a long way toward overcoming the pessimism of Aubenque which we discussed earlier. Plotinus, however, is skeptical because, since all things derive from substance, everything should be included in substance. While we in this way succeed in not confusing intelligible substance with sensible substance, we do not by this means determine the question of what substance *is* (6.1.3).²⁴

For Aristotle, the series which is evident in the *scala naturae* of life is viewed as ascending from the lowest or vegetative phase toward rationality. In Plotinus, the scale of life undergoes a reversal of Aristotelian perspective. The highest phase of life is in the intelligible world and the scale descends from that point to the sensible world. Thus Plotinus argues: "As long as all living things proceed from a simple origin, but have not life to the same degree as it, the origin must be the first and most perfect life" (1.4.3.38-40). Elsewhere he describes the chain of being that descends from the One as a "great and extended life in which each part differs from the other in a series (ἐφεξῆς), while the whole range is continuous, each part different from the other by its own differences, while the prior is not lost in the posterior (οὐκ ἀπολλύμενον ἐν τῷ δευτέρῳ τὸ πρότερον)" (5.2.2.26-31). Blumenthal comments: "These words are interesting. They contrast with Aristotle's view that the lower faculties are always present if the higher ones are and exemplify the different approaches of the two philosophers: Plotinus in discussing any part of this world tends to look down on it from above."²⁵

Let us think about the implications of the Plotinian doctrine that the Platonic Form is not generic. Plato would perhaps argue that since sensible particulars share a common resemblance, that resemblance is to be explained by their participation in a common generic Form. For Plotinus the reasoning would be more like this: if Socrates has certain characteristics, then these are to be explained by his participation in Man. The argument leaves out the horizontal dimension of common resemblance among men and confines itself to the vertical relationship between Socrates and intelligible Man. Stephen Strange argues that then Intellect, which contains all the forms, cannot contain them as a genus contains species. Therefore Intellect is itself no genus, but actually an individual mind.²⁶

Plotinus argues that in Intellect the genera, the species, and the individuals make a common contribution to the universe of the noetic cosmos, thus they are not simply logical categories, but creative forces. Thus they are not

24. CHIARADONNA 2014, p. 22.

25. BLUMENTHAL 1972, p. 26 n. 14.

26. STRANGE 1981, pp. 199-200.

simply genera but cosmic principles (οὐ μόνον γένη ταῦτα εἶναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀρχὰς τοῦ ὄντος ἅμα ὑπάρχειν [6.2.2.10-11]). It is unclear whether there are forms of individuals in Plotinus.²⁷ Yet the very fact that this is debated offers an indirect proof that individuality enjoys a status in the intelligible world. The question of logical subordination is eclipsed by the division of reality into two worlds, the sensible and the noetic (6.2.2).²⁸

Plotinus describes his Platonic categories as γένη τοῦ ὄντος, “kinds (or genera) of being.” Yet these genera, if we are so to call them, are not really classes organized into a vertical taxonomy. The Forms produced by the intermingling of those genera are not themselves either species or genera. Rather, each Form initiates a P-series of which the sensible particular is the last and lowest member. This is to say that in Intellect each Form is a unique entity and the object of an individual mind and subject.

We have seen that Aristotle argues against the Platonic Theory of Forms that the genus would need to contain specific differentiae, a logical impossibility. Yet Plotinus asserts precisely that the Form does contain specific differentiae. How, we may ask, is this possible? To answer this question we must first examine how Plotinus understands the Platonic Form. For Plotinus, that which informs something else need not itself be informed. Indeed he develops the concept of the formless form (εἶδος ἀνείδεον). I shall suggest that we may not avoid the question of incommensurability at levels below the One. In the *Treatise on Virtue*, Plotinus argues that the relationship of imitation is not reciprocal: virtue here (i.e., civic virtue) imitates virtue there, i.e., in the intelligible world, that is not virtue (1.2.2). Specifically, when material reality succeeds in imitating form, it imitates that which is formless (καθ’ ὅσον δὲ μεταλαμβάνει εἶδους, κατὰ τοσοῦτον ὁμοιοῦται ἀνειδέῳ ἐκείνῳ ὄντι, 21-2). Armstrong takes ἐκείνῳ here to refer to the Good, but the context is one of relationship between sensible particular and Form.²⁹ At 1.2.1.15, ἐκείνο refers to the intelligible. Even if the reference is to the Good, however, this text supports my position: as the sensible particular participates in Form, it becomes ever more formless until, in transcendence of Form, it approaches the Good which is itself formless. Here the Plotinian Form is not a stable ontological point of reference, but a self-emptying and cathartic abyss.

The “formless Form” has been amply studied both by D’Ancona Costa and Regen.³⁰ The Form is an ocean of possibilities rather than a fixed paradigm.

27. WURM 1973, pp. 217-218, 237 n. 27; BLUMENTHAL 1966; MAMO 1969, pp. 77-96.

28. WURM 1973, pp. 236-238.

29. Armstrong translates: “that Good, which is formless.” The translation employed throughout this paper shall be ARMSTRONG 1966-1988. The line references throughout this paper shall be, not to Armstrong, but to the *editor minor* of SCHWYZER and HENRY 1964-1982.

30. Cf. 6.9.3.1-10: the One is formless (ἀνείδεον). Our knowledge is founded in Forms, but as the soul advances to the intelligible world, it encounters ever more formlessness and, disturbed by that lack of form, falls back to the sensible world. Cf. COSTA 1992, pp. 69-70. The Form of

Perhaps we may engage in a thought experiment: on an alien planet the Form of Man might inform hominids very different from ourselves, i.e., the possibilities of the Form might be deployed in very different and unexpected ways. Similarly the possibilities in the Form of Animal might be deployed in life forms unfamiliar to our planet. If the various details of the animal kingdom are contained as possibilities within the Form of Animal, then the Form may contain them as such. Yet possibility is expressed in Plotinus by the active sense of *dynamis*. The *logoi*, the intelligible seeds of things in the sensible world, contain these things, not in the sense of passive potentiality, but of active power (6.7.9). The particular is a bundle of qualities and matter (συμφόρησις τις τῶν ποιότητων καὶ ὕλης, 6.3.8.20). As Lloyd comments: “Despite the fact that the particular had somehow to be the logical subject, it could never for a Platonist be a substance.”³¹ At 6.3.8.36-37 Plotinus says of the sensible particular, lacking true substance, “that it is a shadow, and upon what is itself a shadow, a picture and a seeming.”³²

We might turn to the Platonic Forms as a source of stability, as something we may hold on to in the uncertainties and challenges of life. Cicero expresses just such a view of the Platonic theory of Forms:

Has rerum formas appellat ideas ille non intelligendi solum sed etiam dicendi gravissimus auctor et magister Plato, eaque gigni negat et ait semper esse et intelligentia contineri; cetera nasci occidere fluere labi nec diutius esse uno et eodem statu. Quicquid est igitur de quo ratione et via disputetur, id ad ultimam sui generis formam speciemque redigendum.

The most serious authority and master, not only of thought, but also of eloquence, Plato, calls these forms ideas, and denies that they come into being and says that they are contained by the mind; other things come into being, die and flow, and cannot remain in the same state. Whatever therefore is in dispute concerning reason and way of life, this is to be referred to the final form and kind (*Orator ad M. Brutum*, 10).

Yet that is precisely what Plotinus denies us. The Form is itself formless and, at the other end of the scale, the sensible particular is an insubstantial shadow, Aristotle is concerned with the discovery and ordering of knowledge (as the division of the biological kingdom into genera and species). He offers us secure

Beauty is formless (ἄμορφον), while the sensible participant is formed (6.7.32.37-9 and COSTA 1992, p. 98). Geometrical shapes are unfigured figures (ἀσχημάτιστα...σχήματα) (6.6.17.25-6 and COSTA 1992, p. 99). The cause is formless and empty of the determinations of its participants to avoid infinite regress; cf. REGEN 1988.

31. LLOYD 1956, p. 159.

32. Cf. 2.6.1.1-12. Another view that conflicts with this is provided by 2.6.2.20-26 where Plotinus establishes a “hierarchy between constituent and accidental properties within sensible particulars and maintains that constituent features are activities that derive from *logos*, whereas accidents have a different origin (which Plotinus does not specify.” The status of sensible particulars should probably remain open. CHIARADONNA 2014, pp. 324-325.

knowledge. Plotinus has a different purpose: he wishes to give us another “way of seeing.” We shall explore this theme more completely when we come to the links between logic and aesthetic.

To understand how the Form is homonymously named with the particular that instantiates it and how the Form is an abyss of possibility rather than something which is itself defined in some way, we may look to the examination of courage in *Enneads* 1.2, *On Virtue*. Courage in the intelligible world consists in the soul not abandoning its station and falling into the sensible world. That courage is remotely mirrored in the sensible world by the soldier who sticks by his post (1.2.7)!

The category of substance (οὐσία) in Aristotle answers the question, “What is?” The response is a definition: something is defined and limited. Perhaps the most foundational text for Plotinus is the passage in Plato’s *Republic* where the Good is proclaimed to be “beyond being” (ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας, 509b9). The phrase could also be translated as “beyond substance.” Now the Good or One is clearly beyond being or substance. It is commonly thought that negative theology is confined to the One while philosophy is allowed to make more positive and definitive statements at lower levels of the Plotinian hierarchy. However, if the progress or the soul is always towards the formless, negative theology must cut in at all levels of the system. Now the very words I have just used, “hierarchy,” “levels,” and “system” suggest a neat taxonomy of knowledge that Plotinus’ thought will not permit. There is never closure in Plotinian enquiry. Every attempt at knowledge and definition will emerge in further transcendence. The One is the final surplus of meaning. We may draw an important conclusion from this enquiry: the question of substance in Plotinus is to be construed, not as an ontological, but as a hermeneutical enquiry. The question “what is” is always a question, not after certain knowledge, but after further and undisclosed meaning.³³

A. C. Lloyd argues that Plotinus fails properly to distinguish between the abstract and the concrete universal and that this fault vitiates his philosophy: “They [the Neoplatonists] admit the abstract universals of Aristotelian logic, in which case they are faced with the problem how these are related to the concrete universals or οὐσία: a problem of logic, and therefore requiring an answer in terms of logic, not of mysticism, of psychology or of metaphor. Or else they refuse to separate the two kinds of universal, in which case they are left without a foundation for formal logic.” So Plotinus confuses logical dependence with ontological dependence.³⁴ Lloyd features discussion of 6.2.20 (which treats of the relation of the μέγιστα γένη as species of genus Intellect) to demonstrate that Plotinus confuses the Aristotelian potential use of *dynamis*

33. SCHROEDER 2004.

34. LLOYD 1956, p. 150.

(i.e. *dynamei*) with the active sense of *dynamis*. The Intellect as creative force is not only δύναμι ἐκάστων, but δύναμις ἐκάστων. Gurtler demonstrates that Lloyd's interpretation is corrupted by a mistranslation³⁵. Lloyd repeats his interpretation without consideration of Gurtler.³⁶ At 6.2.20.4-5 we read: πᾶσα μὲν οὐδὲν τῶν ἐν μέρει δύναμις πάντων, ἕκαστον δὲ ἐνεργεῖα ἐκεῖνο καὶ δυνάμι δὲ πάντα. This is wrongly understood to mean: "each science is none of its partial content, but the possibility of all of them." This should be understood thus: "Then every [specific knowledge] is in no way a potentiality of all partial species, but each one is actually that [which it is] and potentially all [the species of knowledge]." We should take *pasa* at 20.4 as referring as referring to specific sciences, rather than to the universal. Beutler-Theiler and Armstrong translate the following phrase in the sense: "each science is none of its partial content, but the possibility of all of them." Gurtler observes that it is "easier to construe *ouden* adverbially, as in 20.1, and take the phrase *tôn en merei dynamis pantôn* as one grammatical unit, the predicate of this initial clause." On this construal there is no confusion of the senses *dynamis* that would confuse the Aristotelian sense of the word as potentiality with the Plotinian *dynamis* as active cause.

Thus there is no suggestion that *dynamis* is here being used in the sense of productive force. It is rather used to express potentiality. The passage continues (6-10): "and similarly in the case of knowledge universally: the specific ones are potentially the whole but as grasping the specific, are potentially the whole. For the whole is predicated, not a portion of the whole; indeed it is necessary that it be unmixed by itself."

When we regard the species as not yet existing, they are potentially the genus in the sense of Aristotelian logic. However, when they exist, they are a result of the *energeia* that proceeds from Intellect. In the first case Intellect serves as a genus which they potentially are. In the second case Intellect is, to itself what it is in itself, not a genus. The genus is also a whole of which the species are parts. The species are contained by that wholeness and are that wholeness potentially. The relationship between genus and species is compared to the relationship between knowledge and specific forms of knowledge. As viewed horizontally each specific form of knowledge is potentially all the others as members of a P-series. The genus (Nous) is, on a vertical axis, the *dynamis* that produces the species, but is none of them actually. Thus the genus is not itself a member of a P-series. The genus is logically posterior, but ontologically it is prior.

Another way of understanding this is to look at the relationship between Intellect and its species from the horizon of the species. From this perspective

35. GURTLE 1988.

36. LLOYD 1990, pp. 82-83.

the relationship is logical. From the perspective of Intellect, the relation is one of ontic dependence. The Intellect as genus must be protected from confusion with the species at the peril of invoking the “third man” argument.

I have consistently argued that, in the Platonism of Plotinus, the Form is, apart from its explanatory or causative uses, an intrinsically valuable object of intellectual or spiritual vision. This view agrees with the notion that the Form as cause is not cause in and of itself. It is cause *for* the particulars. There is a sense in which the particular can itself be contemplated from its own horizon as exhibiting an aseity which renders it free of the web of causation and allows it to be an icon the contemplation of which can lead us to the aseity of the Form. That aseity of the particular is of importance to the aesthetic of Plotinus.³⁷

We have seen that Lloyd considers the alternative to logic as mysticism, psychology or metaphor. We shall see that logic is rather an undivided part of an undivided whole in the philosophy of Plotinus well capable of including contemplative, artistic, and theophanic elements.

The Role of Logic in the Plotinian Aesthetic

Let us now look at the Plotinian universe, not from the horizon of intellectual and spiritual ascent, but from the development of the One’s power in the universe. The unfolding of the sensible world from Intellect is a variegated and colourful unfolding of detailed power. That unfolding is, as we shall see, reflected in Plotinian aesthetics.³⁸ Plotinus is thought properly to ground abstract art in metaphysical theory. The artist imitates, not the sensible particular (which might be the immediate vehicle of his vision), but the intelligible Form. His art is but one unfolding of its possibilities. The Plotinian universe is thus not a neat organization of species under *summa genera*. Rather, it is a world characterized by the endless unfolding of uniqueness through the interblending of the Plotinian categories. The word that describes that magnificent progress of refracted lights from the intelligible to the sensible world is *poikilia*.

Because Form is formless, beauty cannot be reduced to any set of generic attributes. Beauty eludes the science of aesthetics. Plotinus, in an expression of aesthetic minimalism,³⁹ refutes the Stoic view that symmetry is the ground of beauty by arguing offering counter examples: colours are beautiful and the

37. SCHROEDER 1992, pp. 16-23; SCHROEDER 2001.

38. Cf. ANTON 1967, p. 100 on the inseparability of aesthetics from other aspects of Plotinian philosophy: “Plotinus’ philosophical imagination is always complex, organic, many-sided and, above all, at once anthropocentric and theocentric; in a word, polycentric.”

39. On minimalism in Plotinian esthetics and its relation to contemporary art see BEIEREWALTES 2013, p. 10.

light of the sun, though simple; lightning or stars seen in the night, and gold are beautiful although simple (we may here think of monochrome modern art). A musical composition may be beautiful note by note and not by its symmetry (1.6.1.30-36) (we may think here of the music of Arvo Pärt or Philip Glass) and that the beauty of a building may arise, not from symmetry of parts, but a single stone (1.6.2.25-7).⁴⁰ The ungeneric character of beauty carries with it an unpredictability: the same face may at times be beautiful, at other times ugly (1.6.1.37-40). The beauty of a countenance is not in its symmetry, but in light that illumines that symmetry (6.7.22,22-9). This view of facial expression may be informed by the individualistic character of Roman portraiture.⁴¹ It is of interest to note that Porphyry uses this material in his *Life of Plotinus* to describe Plotinus himself.⁴²

It should be said that the fault of the Stoics here is in introducing symmetry as functioning alone on the plane of sensible reality: It could be a ground of beauty only when it is grounded in the intelligible world: “Beauty is that which irradiates symmetry rather than asymmetry itself and is that which truly calls out our love.” (6.7.22-24-26)⁴³

Plotinus describes the vision of how we advance from the vision of the Platonic Forms to the vision of the One (6.7.35.7-16):

It is as if one went into a house richly decorated (ποικίλον) and so beautiful, and within in it contemplated each and every one of the decorations and admired them before seeing the master of the house, but when he sees that master with delight, who is not of the nature of the images [in the house], but worthy of genuine contemplation, he dismisses those other things and looks at him alone, and then, as he looks and does not take his eyes away, by the continuity of his contemplation he no longer sees sight, but mingles his seeing with what he contemplates, so that what was seen before has now become sight in him, and he forgets all other objects of contemplation (ὥστε ἐν αὐτῷ ἦδη τὸ ὄρατόν πρότερον ὄψιν γεγονέναι, τῶν δ' ἄλλων πάντων ἐπιλάθοιτο θεαμάτων).

In a previous discussion of this text,⁴⁴ I have argued that the spatial context borrows visual conventions familiar from late antique and medieval art. The space entered by the man in the rich house is properly called aggregate space. When the person enters the room, he is disoriented and his eye fixes on one after another of the details of the room. The room is *poikilos* in its variety of detail. Where in the artificial perspective of Raphael's *School of Athens*, the eye of the beholder is immobilized, here in the natural perspective it has the

40. Cf. SCHROEDER 1992, p. 20 n. 51 for the references to Stoicism.

41. SCHROEDER 1992, pp. 20-21.

42. SCHROEDER 2015, p. 153.

43. See ANTON 1964, p. 234 for the translation and for his discussion of this principle; cf. BEIERWALTES 2013, p. 12.

44. SCHROEDER 2001, esp. pp. 85-86.

mobility that we have by nature. At last it rests upon the master of the house. This figure is the source from which perspective is measured (in a painting this figure would be presented in inverse perspective, i.e. it would be larger than the figures in the foreground.) This is to say that the vanishing point is not in the scene, but behind the back of the spectator (who is thereby not an alien observer, but is rather included in the company of the scene). The mysterious unpredictability that we discussed above is here related to the spectator as his vision moves from one object to another. Plotinus offers us “another way of seeing” (ἄλλος τρόπος τοῦ ἰδεῖν).⁴⁵ We may think of the ways in which cubism or Salvador Dali challenges our notions of perspective. We may understand how Plotinus, with his abundant and intricate imagery, frees himself from the tyranny of logos.⁴⁶ Thus we are full participants in the fractal universe of Plotinian minimalism.

Plotinus, discussing the emergence of time from eternity, argues that this activity arises from the restlessness and distraction (*polypragmosynè*) in the Soul (3.7.11). This distraction is expressed in St. Augustine with the word *curiositas*.⁴⁷ This curiosity competes with a will to embrace the noetic vision in its entirety and proceeds from a will to be on its own. This curiosity competes with integrity. Not being able to grasp the whole of Intellect in which each Form is all the others, it isolates facets of Intellect and introduces “before” and “after.”

As from a quiet seed the formative principle, unfolding itself, advances, as it thinks, to largeness, but does away with the largeness by division and instead of keeping that unity to itself, squanders it outside itself and so goes forward to a weaker extension; in the same way Soul, making the world of sense in imitation of that other world, moving with a motion which is not that which exists There, but like it, and intending to be an image of it, first of all put itself into time, which it made instead of eternity, and then handed over that which came into being as a slave to time, by making the whole of it to exist in time and encompassing all its ways with time (23-34).

We have observed how we find beauty in the part of the aesthetic object, e.g., the single refrain in music, the particular stone in architecture. Our attempt to seize upon a partial aspect in pursuit of Beauty as a whole reflects *polypragmosynè*. Whether in Intellect the concentration upon the part causes us to retreat from the integrity of the whole or, in the sensible world we seize upon the particular aspect which may lead to the experience of the whole in Intellect, the same principle is at work, either in ascent or in descent.

45. 6.9.11.22-3; 1.6.8.25-6: ὅψιν ἄλλην ἀλλάξεσθαι; 6.7.35.15: τὸ ὄρατὸν πρότερον ὄψιν γεγονέναι and SCHROEDER 2001, pp. 85-86; SCHROEDER 2015, p. 147.

46. Cf. SCHROEDER 2012.

47. BEIERWALTES 1995, p. 249 and St. Augustine, *De Musica* VI.39 ff.

The ungeneric and formless character of Form leads Plotinian aesthetics to a concern for the uniqueness of the individual that one might not expect from a Platonism that dwells upon the generic and defined character of Form. Thus in his treatment of the categories, admiring the order of providence, Plotinus declares:

We must conclude that the universal order is forever something of this kind from the evidence of what we see in the All, how this order extends to everything, even to the smallest, and the art is wonderful which appears, not only in the divine beings but also in the things which one might have supposed providence would have despised for their smallness, for example, the workmanship which produces wonders in rich variety (ποικίλη θαυματουργία) and the beauty of appearance which extends to the fruits and even the leaves of plants, and their beauty of flower which comes so effortlessly, and their delicacy and variety (τὸ [...] ποικίλον), and that all this has not been made once and come to an end but is always being made as the powers above move in different ways over this world (3.2.13.18-27).

This artistic unfolding of intelligible reality allows a continuous and infinite refinement in the most minute details of branch and twig and leaf. The lovely word *poikilia* expresses an arabesque, a tangled and glorious asymmetry. The fall of the soul in 3.7.11 is portrayed by the unfolding of a seed. Here this image is portrayed as a benign flourishing of beauty.

We should recall that the Plotinian cosmos is dynamic. We experience sensible beauty, not as a fixed entity but as continually surprising us. It is not an integrity because its divided being proceeds from the intelligible world which is whole. Our human curiosity continually divides the integrity of Beauty itself. This curiosity is expressed, on the other hand, as a willful act of Soul in seeking to grasp the whole by appropriating its contents *seriatim*. The same sense of variety and detail is expressed in the following passage:

The All is full of the richest variety (ποικιλώτατον γὰρ τὸ πᾶν): all rational formative principles are present in it, and an unbounded store of varied powers (δυνάμεις ἄπειροι καὶ ποικίλαι). It is like what they say about man, that each of the bones has its own distinctive powers, the bones of the hand one power and the toe-bone another, and there is no part which has not a power, and one different from every other – but we know nothing about it, unless one of us has studied this sort of subject. The All is like this, but even more so: Or rather the parts of our bodies with their powers are only traces of the parts and powers of the universe. In the All there is an indescribably wonderful variety of powers (ἀδιήγητον δὲ καὶ θαυμαστήν εἶναι δυνάμεων) (4.4.36.1-9).⁴⁸

Plotinus argues that it is precisely the lack of variety (ποικιλία) in the One, its character as a no thing, that grounds the being of other things in which this quality is exhibited:

48. At 6.2.2.2-3 Plotinus argues that being (τὸ ὄν) is not one, but is a variegated one (τὸ ποικίλον) holding all things unto unity (τὰ πολλὰ εἰς ἓν ἔχον).

The One is all things and not a single one of them: it is the principle of all things, not all things, but all things have that other kind of transcendent existence; for in a way they do occur in the One; or rather they are not there yet, but they will be. How then do all things come from the One, which is simple and has in it no diverse variety (οὐδεμίας ποικιλίας), or any sort of doubleness? It is because there is nothing in it that things come from it: in order that being may exist, the One is not being, but the generator of being (5.2.1.1-7).

The principle of variety (*poikilia*) is iconoclastic in its endless reduction and division of formless form to its searching and endlessly refined details. It is anagogical in so far as those same details, themselves a defiance of representation, paradoxically lead the eye into the infinity of the intelligible world. The infinite extension of divine beauty to the details of the creation, the principle of *poikilia*, leads to something rather like the “inscaping” of Gerard Manley Hopkins. We may think of the words of his poem, *Pied Beauty*:

Glory be to God for dappled things—
 For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow:
 For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim
 Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches’ wings;
 Landscape plotted and pierced.⁴⁹

Conclusion

Plotinus’ engagement with the Aristotelian categories is central to the understanding of his position as a whole. Plotinus’ use of the categories in establishing the ontological priority of Form in a P-series extending from intelligible to sensible reality is crucial to his refutation of Aristotelian arguments against the Platonic Theory of Forms. What is most remarkable is that he co-opts Aristotle’s own argument in defense of Plato against Aristotle. His Aristotelianism is integrated into a world profoundly different from that inhabited by Aristotle, one in which, not the embodied form, but the transcendent Form is real. Not only does Plotinus’ Aristotelianism affect his ontology and logic. Plotinus is a philosopher whose work embraces a profound aesthetic vision and an epiphany. The sense of the sensible world as an arabesque, a fractal geometry, kaleidoscopically reflecting and anagogically leading us back to the formlessness and infinite possibility of the intelligible world has profound Aristotelian roots, however different such a vision might be from that of Aristotle himself.

Queen’s University
Kingston ON, Canada

49. HOPKINS 1990, p. 44. This paper was originally presented at the meeting of the International Society for Aristotelian Studies, Dowling College, Long Island NY, September 15-17, 2000. I wish to thank Graeme Nicholson for reading this paper in MS.

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SUMMARY

Aristotle regards the informed particular as primary substance and real. Plotinus as a Platonist sees intelligible substance as real and the particulars that belong to a genus as secondary substance and ontically deficient. To avoid the infinite regress involved in predicating the Form both of the particular and the Form Aristotle locates the Form in the particular. Plotinus preserves the transcendence of Form by replacing the Aristotelian predication by synonymy with a system of predication built on *pros hen* equivocity. The Form then becomes *eidos aneideon*, "formless form." This formless form is, not a restricted entity, but rather as an ocean of possibility. As such it dismisses the world of Aristotelian science and opens up new possibilities for understanding art. The Form is regarded as an individual aspect of the intelligible world which is expressed in a P-series which extends from the intelligible world to sensible reality.

SOMMAIRE

Aristote considère le particulier porteur d'une forme comme la substance première réellement existante. En tant que platonicien, Plotin conçoit la substance intelligible comme réelle, et les particuliers relevant d'un genre comme substances secondes et ontologiquement inférieures. Dans le but d'éviter la régression à l'infini qu'implique la prédication de la Forme à propos du particulier et de la Forme elle-même, Aristote situe la Forme dans le particulier. Pour sa part, Plotin conserve la transcendance de la Forme en remplaçant la prédication aristotélicienne par une synonymie dont le mécanisme de prédication repose sur une équivocité *pros hen*. La Forme devient alors *eidos aneideon*, une "forme sans forme". Celle-ci ne constitue pas une entité limitée, mais plutôt un océan de possibilités. C'est ainsi qu'elle décline le monde de la science aristotélicienne et ouvre de nouvelles perspectives pour la compréhension de la technique [l'art]. La Forme est envisagée comme un aspect singulier du monde intelligible qui s'exprime dans une [série-P] dont l'extension va du monde intelligible à la réalité sensible.