Many times it has happened: Lifted out of the body into myself; becoming external to all other things and self-centered; beholding a marvelous beauty; then, more than ever, assured of community with the loftiest order; enacting the noblest life, acquiring identity with the divine; stationing within It by having attained that activity; poised above whatsoever within the Intellectual is less than the Supreme: yet, there comes the moment of descent from intellec­tion to reasoning, and after that sojourn in the divine, I ask myself how it happens that I can now be descending, and how did the soul ever enter into my body, the soul which, even within the body, is the high thing it has shown itself to be (IV.8.1).

... we are left wondering whence it came, from within or without; and when it has gone, we say, “It was here. Yet no; it was beyond!” But we ought not to question whence; there is no whence, no coming or going in place; now it is seen and now not seen. We must not run after it, but fit ourselves for the vision and then wait tranquilly for its appearance, as the eye waits on the rising of the sun, which in its own time appears above the horizon – out of the ocean, as the poets say – and gives itself to our sight (V.5.8).

Suppose the soul to have attained: the highest has come to her, or rather has revealed its presence; she has turned away from all about her and made herself apt, beautiful to the utmost, brought into likeness with the divine by those pre­parings and adorning which come unbidden to those growing ready for the vision – she has seen that presence suddenly manifesting within her, for there is nothing between: here is no longer a duality but a two in one; for, so long as the presence holds, all distinction fades: it is as lover and beloved here, in a copy of that union, long to blend; the soul has now no further awareness of being in body and will give herself no foreign name, not “man,” not “living being,” not “being,” not “all”; any observation of such things falls away; the soul has neither time nor taste for them; This she sought and This she has found and on This she looks and not upon herself; and who she is that looks she has not leisure to know. Once There she will barter for This nothing the universe holds; not though one would make over the heavens entire to her; than This there is nothing higher, nothing of more good; above This there is no passing; all the rest, however lofty, lies on the down going path: she is of perfect judgment and knows that This was her quest, that nothing higher is. Here can be no deceit; where could she come upon truer than the truth? and the truth she affirms, that she is, herself; but all the affirmation is later and is silent. In this happiness she knows beyond delusion that she is happy; for this is no affirmation of an excited body but of a soul become again what she was in the time of her early joy. All that she had welcomed of old-office, power, wealth, beauty, knowledge of all she tells her scorn as she never could had she not found their better; linked to This she can fear no disaster nor even know it; let all about her fall to pieces, so she would have it that she may be wholly with This, so huge the happiness she has won to (VI.7.34).

The One, the Good and Beauty:

That One, therefore, since it has no otherness is always present and we are present to it when we have no otherness; and the One does not desire us, so as to be around us, but we desire it, so that we are around it. And we are always around it but do not always look to it; it is like a choral dance: in the order of its singing the choir keeps round its conductor but may sometimes turn away, so that he is out of their sight, but when it turns back to him it sings beautifully and is truly with him; so we too are always around him – and if we were not, we should be totally dissolved and no longer exist – but not always turned to him; but when we do look to him, then we are at our goal and at rest and do not sing out of tune as we truly dance our god-inspired dance around him (VI.9.8; Armstrong).

Knowledge of The Good or contact with it, is the all-important: this – we read – is the grand learning, the learning we are to understand, not of looking towards it but attaining, first, some knowledge of it. We come to this learning by analogies, by abstractions, by our understanding of its subsequents, of all that is derived from The Good, by the upward steps towards it. Purification has The Good for goal; so the virtues, all right ordering, ascent within the Intellectual, settlement therein, banqueting upon the divine – by these methods one becomes, to self and to all else, at once seen and seer; identical with Being and Intellectual-Principle and the entire living all, we no longer see the Supreme as an external; we are near now, the next is That and it is close at hand, radiant above the Intellectual.

Here, we put aside all the learning; disciplined to this pitch, established in beauty, the quester holds knowledge still of the ground he rests on but, suddenly, swept beyond it all by the very crest of the wave of Intellect surging beneath, he is lifted and seers, never knowing how; the vision floods the eyes with light, but it is not a light showing some other object, the light is itself the vision. No longer is there thing seen and light to show it, no longer Intellect and object of Intellec­tion; this is the very radiance that brought both Intellect and Intellectual object into being for the later use and allowed them to occupy the quester’s mind. With This he himself becomes identical, with that radiance whose Act is to engender Intellectual-Principle, not losing in that engendering but for ever unchanged, the engendered coming to be simply because that Supreme exists. If there were no such principle above change, no derivative could rise (VI.7.36).

The perception of Beauty and the awe and the stirring of passion towards it are for those already in some degree knowing and awakened: but the Good, as possessed long since and setting up a natural tendency, is inherently present to even those asleep and brings them no wonder when some day they see it, since it is no occasional reminiscence but is always with them though in their drowse they are not aware of it: the love of Beauty on the contrary sets up pain when it appears, for those that have seen it must pursue. This love of Beauty then is later than the love of Good and comes with a more sophisticated understanding; hence we know that Beauty
is a secondary: the more primal appetite, not patent to sense, our movement towards our good, gives witness that The Good is the earlier, the prior.

Again; all that have possessed themselves of The Good feel it sufficient: they have attained the end: but Beauty not all have known and those that have judge it to exist for itself and not for them, as in the charm of this world the beauty belongs only to its possessor.

Then, too, it is thought enough to appear loveable whether one is so or not: but no one wants his Good in semblance only. All are seeking The First as something ranking before aught else, but they struggle venomously for beauty as something secondary like themselves: thus some minor personage may perhaps challenge equal honor with the King’s right-hand man on pretext of similar dependence, forgetting that, while both owe their standing to the monarch, the other holds the higher rank.

The source of the error is that while both The Good and The Beautiful participate in the common source, The One precedes both; and that, in the Supreme also, The Good has no need of The Beautiful, while the Beautiful does need The Good.

The Good is gentle and friendly and tender, and we have it present when we but will. Beauty is all violence and stupefaction; its pleasure is spoiled with pain, and it even draws the thoughtless away from The Good as some attraction will lure the child from the father’s side: these things tell of youth. The Good is the older – not in time but by degree of reality – and it has the higher and earlier power, all power in fact, for the sequent holds only a power subordinate and delegated of which the prior remains sovereign (V.5.12).

Rarity:

… you must close the eyes and call instead upon another vision which is to be waked within you, a vision, the birth-right of all, which few turn to use (I.6.8).

Ineffability:

… [The One] will debar all telling and knowing except that it may be described as transcending Being – for if there were nothing outside all alliance and compromise, nothing authentically one, there would be no Source. Untouched by multiplicity, it will be wholly self-sufficing, an absolute First … (V.4.1).

Recollection and the Forms:

At any time when we have not been in direct vision of that sphere, memory is the source of its activity within us; when we have possessed that vision, its presence is due to the principle by which we enjoyed it: this principle awakens where it wakens; and it alone has vision in that order; for this is no matter to be brought to us by way of analogy, or by the syllogistic reasoning whose grounds lie elsewhere; the power which, even here, we possess of discoursing upon the Intellectual Beings is vested, as we show, in that principle which alone is capable of their contemplation. That, we must awaken, so to speak, and thus attain the vision of the Supreme, as one, standing on some lofty height and lifting his eyes, sees what to those that have not mounted with him is invisible (IV.4.5).

Every soul, authentically a soul, has some form of rightness and moral wisdom; in the souls within ourselves there is true knowing: and these attributes are no images or copies from the Supreme, as in the sense-world, but actually are those very originals in a mode peculiar to this sphere. For those Beings are not set apart in some defined place; wherever there is a soul that has risen from body, there too these are: the world of sense is one – where, the Intellectual Cosmos is everywhere. Whatever the freed soul attains to here, that it is There.

Thus, if by the content of the sense-world we mean simply the visible objects, then the Supreme contains not only what is in the realm of sense but more: if in the content of the cosmos we mean to include Soul and the Soul-things, then all is here that is There (V.9.13).

Philosophy and Dialectic:

What, then, is Philosophy?
Philosophy is the supremely precious.

Is Dialectic, then, the same as Philosophy?
It is the precious part of Philosophy. We must not think of it as the mere tool of the metaphysician: Dialectic does not consist of bare theories and rules: it deals with verities; Existences are, as it were, Matter to it, or at least it proceeds methodically towards Existences, and possesses itself, at the one step, of the notions and of the realities.

Untruth and sophism it knows, not directly, not of its own nature, but merely as something produced outside itself, something which it recognizes to be foreign to the verities laid up in itself; in the falsity presented to it, it perceives a clash with its own canon of truth. Dialectic, that is to say, has no knowledge of propositions – collections of words – but it knows the truth, and, in that knowledge, knows what the schools call their propositions: it knows above all, the operation of the soul, and, by virtue of this knowing, it knows, too, what is affirmed and what is denied, whether the denial is of what was asserted or of something

---

1 These brackets and contents are mine, added for clarity, and replace “it.”
else, and whether propositions agree or differ; all that is submitted to it, it attacks with the directness of sense-perception and it leaves petty precisions of process to what other science may care for such exercises (I.3.5).

**Nous:**

The Platonic *Parmenides* is more exact; the distinction is made between the Primal One, a strictly pure Unity, and a secondary One which is a One-Many and a third which is a One-and-many; thus he too is in accordance with our thesis of the Three Kinds (V.1.8).

**World Soul and Individual Souls:**

… there must be something prior to Soul because Soul is in the world and there must be something outside a world in which, all being corporeal and material, nothing has enduring reality: failing such a prior, neither man nor the Ideas would be eternal or have true identity.

These and many other considerations establish the necessary existence of an Intellectual-Principle prior to Soul (V.9.4).

… besides this purest Soul, there must be also a Soul of the All: at once there is another Love – the eye with which this second Soul looks upwards – like the supernal *Eros* engendered by force of desire. This Aphrodite, the secondary Soul, is of this Universe – not Soul unmingled alone, not Soul, the Absolute, giving birth, therefore, to the Love concerned with the universal life; no, this is the Love presiding over marriages; but it, also, has its touch of the upward desire; and, in the degree of that striving, it stirs and leads upwards the Souls of the young and every Soul with which it is incorporated in so far as there is a natural tendency to remembrance of the divine. For every Soul is striving towards The Good, even the mingling Soul and that of particular beings, for each holds directly from the divine Soul, and is its offspring (III.5.3).

**On Matter:**

Matter is … no limit or bound, for it is mere indetermination; it is not a power, for what does it produce? … it is no more than the image and phantasm of Mass, a bare aspiration towards substantial existence; it is stationary but not in the sense of having position, it is in itself invisible, eluding all effort to observe it, present where no one can look, unseen for all our gazing, ceaselessly presenting contraries in the things based upon it, it is large and small, more and less, deficient and excessive; a phantasm unabiding and yet unable to withdraw .... (Plotinus, *Enneads* III.6.7)

**On Ethics:**

If a man has been immersed in filth or daubed with mud his native comeliness disappears and all that is seen is the foul stuff besmearing him: his ugly condition is due to alien matter that has encrusted him, and if he is to win back his grace it must be his business to scour and purify himself and make himself what he was (I.6.5).

Therefore we must ascend again towards the Good, the desired of every Soul. Anyone that has seen This, knows what I intend when I say that it is beautiful. Even the desire of it is to be desired as a Good. To attain it is for those that will take the upward path, who will set all their forces towards it, who will divest themselves of all that we have put on in our descent: – so, to those that approach the Holy Celebrations of the Mysteries, there are appointed purifications and the laying aside of the garments worn before, and the entry in nakedness – until, passing, on the upward way, all that is other than the God, each in the solitude of himself shall behold that solitary-dwelling Existence, the Apart, the Unmingled, the Pure, that from Which all things depend, for Which all look and live and act and know, the Source of Life and of Intellection and of Being (I.6.7).

He that has the strength, let him arise and withdraw into himself, foregoing all that is known by the eyes, turning away for ever from the material beauty that once made his joy. When he perceives those shapes of grace that show in body, let him not pursue: he must know them for copies, vestiges, shadows, and hasten away towards That they tell of. For if anyone follow what is like a beautiful shape playing over water – is there not a myth telling in symbol of such a dupe, how he sank into the depths of the current and was swept away to nothingness? So too, one that is held by material beauty and will not break free shall be precipitated, not in body but in Soul, down to the dark depths loathed of the Intellective-Being, where, blind even in the Lower-World, he shall have commerce only with shadows, there as here (I.6.8).

Newly awakened it is all too feeble to bear the ultimate splendor. Therefore the Soul must be trained – to the habit of remarking, first, all noble pursuits, then the works of beauty produced not by the labor of the arts but by the virtue of men known for their goodness: lastly, you must search the souls of those that have shaped these beautiful forms.

But how are you to see into a virtuous soul and know its loveliness?

Withdraw into yourself and look. And if you do not find yourself beautiful yet, act as does the creator of a statue that is to be made beautiful: he cuts away here, he smooths there, he makes this line lighter, this other purer, until a lovely face has grown upon his work. So do you also: cut away all that is excessive, straighten all that is crooked, bring light to all that is overcast, labor
to make all one glow of beauty and never cease chiseling your statue, until there shall shine out on you from it the godlike splendor of virtue, until you shall see the perfect goodness surely established in the stainless shrine.

When you know that you have become this perfect work, when you are self-gathered in the purity of your being, nothing now remaining that can shatter that inner unity, nothing from without clinging to the authentic man, when you find yourself wholly true to your essential nature, wholly that only veritable Light which is not measured by space, not narrowed to any circumscribed form nor again diffused as a thing void of term, but ever unmeasurable as something greater than all measure and more than all quantity – when you perceive that you have grown to this, you are now become very vision: now call up all your confidence, strike forward yet a step – you need a guide no longer – strain, and see (1.6.9).