

Considerations on the Concept of Audacity (*tólma*) in Plotinus

Fernando Martin De Blassi

ABSTRACT: Within the Plotinian corpus the topic of *audacity* provides a key for explaining the hypostatic constitution of what proceeds from the One and advances towards the formation of the sensitive world. This essay will try to settle some questions about the role of *audacity* within the corpus of Plotinus. Doing so will allow us to argue for the following position. Even if the generation of a being separate and distinct from the One includes the notion of otherness and therefore of multiplicity, this action—a product of the Intellect’s daring—does not imply dispersion but only the constitution of a living being able to develop by its own strength the richness already contained in its germinal potency.

THE GREEK WORD τόλμα—audacity, daring, temerity, hardihood—generally suggests the initiative with which something undertakes an action. It is a term that has a favorable connotation, for it can even suggest the courage, gallantry, and boldness needed to carry out a certain enterprise. But it can also connote an aspect of censure if these actions manifest brazenness or insolence.¹ In Plotinus’s philosophy the basic concept of *tólma* is peculiarly linked to the procession of beings and the descent of souls from the absolute principle.² It is a crucial element in the explanation of the system of hypostases, for it accounts for the successive levels of otherness that stretch from the One to the physical universe. Between these endpoints Intelligence is the first to emerge. It proceeds from an action of *audacity* or *boldness* that consists in drawing away from the original unity so as to establish something with its own autonomy.³ Thus, it represents a kind of defection from the One as well as the generation of a subsisting reality on its own.

This duality is inherent to Intelligence since it involves a living and universal contemplation of all beings. It is intellection and original life at its highest degree, but its nature is already multiple in a certain way since it contemplates the One

¹Cf. Pierre Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque: Histoire des mots* (Paris: Klincksieck, 2009, nouvelle éd.), s.v. τόλμη, p. 1084: “‘action de prendre sur soi, d’oser’, d’où en bonne part ‘courage, hardiesse’, en mauvaise part ‘audace, excès’; se distingue de θάρσος ‘confiance en soi’ et de θράσος ‘témerité’, mais τόλμα et θρασύνη sont associés Pl. *Lach.* 197 b.” By the same token, cf. Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford UK: Clarendon Press, 1996), s.v. τόλμα, p. 1803.

²Cf. John H. Sleeman and Gilbert Pollet, *Lexicon Plotinianum* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), p. 1026, 32 ss. To get a synoptic view of the Enneadic passages where *τόλμα* and its related terms appear, cf. Roberto Radice, *Lexicon: Il Plotinus* (Milano: Biblia, 2004), p. 392.

³The fragment of VI.9 (5, 28–29) says that the Intelligence comes after the One, as second hypostasis, because Intelligence dared to deviate from it. Moreover, we read in V.1 (1, 1–5) that the audacity is the cause why the daring souls have forgotten their origin. Both passages will be cited below in n31 and n30, respectively.

as it comes to be pluralized in diverse forms.⁴ This contemplative action not only implies the inferiority of the potency for knowledge that has emanated from the One but also urges Intelligence to return to communion with the principle of unity that animated its original contemplation. In virtue of this principle, the separate being of Intelligence can overcome the state of estrangement and oblivion that came about by that primordial defection.⁵

From this brief consideration of the presence of *τόλμα* and its meaning in Plotinus, we may say that the action described by this term implies something immensely problematic on account of its ambivalence within the *Enneads*. We might consider the nature of the problem. Does it concern an essential point in the Plotinian system or just a trifling detail? Can a solution be found? A careful examination of the various elements in these questions as well as a careful exegesis of the text will be crucial for resolving the problem.⁶

In the first place we must keep in mind that the derivation of Mind from the One involves a need for its effusion. Since the One is essentially good and because goodness must communicate itself, the One must be self-diffusing. What is diverse, on the contrary, presents something that flows out from the One's infinite and abundant capacity, and yet at the same time something that is grounded in it as a necessary consequence. The concept of necessity here must be understood as something that is plausible within the frame of the One's absolute freedom, for the One undertakes its act of production willingly. For this reason Plotinus writes: "And if this is so, it must follow that it is so and how it willed to be."⁷

Indeed, if the activity of the One consists in *wanting to be* that which is, that is to say, in the *freedom of being* what it is, the necessity of the One follows as a free activity. In Plotinus there is a positive concept of necessity that does not answer to acting in a way that is conditioned by external agents. There is a spontaneous character of the One in its fountal richness. The procession of all things from the One includes a type of necessity—something that is not ineluctable but utterly free. This act of giving birth supposes, for Plotinus, the perfection of what precedes and remains contained in its being. That the One produces something else is a fact that

⁴Cf. III.7, 3, 1–23.

⁵Cf. V.3, 7.

⁶For the interpretation of *τόλμα* in Plotinus, I follow the contributions of Naguib Baladi, "Origine et signification de l'audace chez Plotin" in P. Hadot et P. M. Schuhl, dir., *Le Néoplatonisme* (Paris: Éd. du CNRS, 1971), pp. 89–99; Natale J. Torchia, *Plotinus, Tolma, and the Descent of Beings: An Exposition and Analysis* (New York NY: Peter Lang, 1993); and Mariano Troiano, "Plotin et les Gnostiques: L'audace du Démonurge," *Journal of Coptic Studies* 15 (2013): 209–35.

⁷VI.8, 13, 8–9: εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, ὡς ἄρα ἐβούλετο, οὕτω καὶ ἔστιν. I follow the Greek text established by Paul Henry and Hans-Rudolf Schwyzer, *Plotini opera* (Oxford UK: Clarendon Press, 1964–1983, editio minor). For the translation I am primarily guided by the English version: Porphyry, *On the Life of Plotinus*, and Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. A. H. Armstrong (Cambridge MA: Harvard Univ. Press, vol. I: 1989, vol. II: 1966, vol. III: 1967, vol. IV: 1984, vol. V: 1984, vol. VI: 1988, vol. VII: 1988). I have also consulted the following editions: Porfirio, *Vida de Plotino y Plotino, Enéadas I–II, III–IV, V–VI*, intr. trad. y notas de J. Igal (Madrid: Gredos, vol. I: 1982, vol. II: 1985, vol. III: 1998); Plotin, *Ennéades*, texte établi et traduit par É. Bréhier (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, vol. I: 1954, vol. II: 1956, vol. III: 1956, vol. IV: 1927, vol. V: 1931, vol. VI: 1942); Plotino, *Enneadi*, trad. italiana e comentario critico di V. Cilento (Bari: Gius. Laterza and Figli, vol. I: 1947, vol. II: 1948, vol. III: 1949).

comes about on account of the perfection of its plenitude and yet remains in intimacy with itself. It is through imitation of such perfection that whatever is generated from it is produced by an imitation of such perfection. What is produced comes about as ontologically second according to the order of causality as well as according to the order of perfection. Therefore what is born by necessity does not come about as a deduction by some discursive logic, even if the operating necessity in the production of what is inferior preserves its participation in the ontological superiority of its progenitor.⁸

On account of this, García Bazán suggests that Plotinus's philosophical thought may be characterized in a global sense as a species within the genus of phenomenological realism. It is a conception that grasps all beings as images of an unimaginable reality or that shuns all possibility of manifestation beyond the ontic and ideal in a Platonic sense. He says that the principle of Plotinian system, the One, is required by rigorous thinking and that it is hidden into the things and archetypes. Persisting in its quiet and serene peace, the One makes possible not only the existence of the various entities but also the knowledge of them. This supreme principle of unity transcends what exists in time even if such a thing has always been and is above what could come to be. It is beyond to what has a permanent or temporary existence.⁹

On the other hand, Plotinus considers that the whole of reality is not static but rests on a dynamic and ceaseless unfolding, a passage of the one to the many.¹⁰ Its unfolding is enclosed in three self-subsisting levels of depth that are linked by an indissoluble cohesion. These are permanent, not transitory, realities that lie beneath perceptible and changing beings. In this sense the Plotinian system has been defined as an "immanence mystically framed within a transcendence metaphysic."¹¹ Its grasp can be perceived by considering the possibility of a presence of the One that reveals the whole number of beings without exhausting itself in any of them. The reason for this is that everything proceeding from the One is its own image, or at least capable of being apprehended in it. So, the multiplicity of beings (according to the measure of each one) has the possibility not only of receiving the One but also of reflecting it.¹²

When describing contemplation, Plotinus uses the Greek verb θεωρέω and its derivatives, such as the nouns θεωρία and θεώρημα, and the adjective θεωρητικός,

⁸Cf. Georgios Lekkas, "Le concept positif de la nécessité et la production des êtres chez Plotin," *Les Études philosophiques* 4 (2004): 553–61.

⁹Cf. Francisco García Bazán, *Plotino y la mística de las tres hipóstasis* (Buenos Aires: El Hilo de Ariadna, 2011), p. 29: "Este fundamento que es exigido por el pensamiento riguroso y que, oculto entre las cosas y los arquetipos, persiste en su silenciosa y serena paz sosteniendo la posibilidad misma de la existencia de las entidades diversas y su conocimiento, y de sus mudanzas y su organización, a causa de su inherente naturaleza intransferible y de su connatural sublimidad, trascenderá no sólo a cuanto eternamente es, sino también a cuanto haya poseído, posea o venga a tener una existencia indefinida o pasajera."

¹⁰Cf. Agustín Uña Juárez, "Plotino: el sistema del Uno. Características generales," *Anales del Seminario de Historia de la Filosofía* 19 (2002): 99–128.

¹¹Cf. Henri-Charles Puech, "Position spirituelle et signification de Plotin," *Bulletin de l'Assoc. G. Budé* 61 (1938): 31; Puech, *Enquête sur la Gnose* (Gallimard: Paris, 1978), t. I, p. 69.

¹²Cf. Patricia Ciner, *El amor y la unión mística en Plotino y Orígenes* (Mendoza: UNCuyo, 2000).

among others.¹³ These words should not here be taken to mean anything like “spectator,” “attending a religious holiday,” or “contemplating an oracle” (as they do in some of traditional senses of that root-word).¹⁴ Instead, Plotinus uses words with this root in the Platonic sense of “contemplation,” “speculation,” “intellectual consideration,” and “object of contemplation.”¹⁵ The same range of meanings is likewise present in the theological vocabulary of the Church Fathers.¹⁶

One of the Plotinian treatises that explicitly develops the topic of contemplation is *Enneads* III.8 (30), the first of the tetralogy known as *Anti-gnostic Paideia*.¹⁷ In these texts Plotinus comments on the way in which all realities that come from the One are the product of contemplation, things that contemplate, or things that tend to contemplation. This applies to the Intellect in its own right as well as to the Soul and to Nature.¹⁸ In the procession from the One, the emergent being is the product of an intense state of unitive contemplation. This is the way in which the hypostases (Intelligence and Soul) return to their progenitor and, seeing it, engender their own content. Likewise, contemplation as such does not correspond to only one of the processive moments—the return—but to all three phases: remaining, advancing, and returning, for all three are moments of contemplation. An entity that has contemplation and the power of reflection can in this way be related to lower beings.¹⁹

Intelligence is of a “uni-multiple” nature (despite having an underlying primordial otherness) that desires and achieves what is desired. The Soul is “one and multiple,” for it desires attainment but this attainment is a synthesis that is only produced at the price of understanding the intelligible paradigm reflected in it. This process does not yet generate an actually *intelligible* activity but only one that is *intellective*, an action through which the Soul always contemplates the Intellect at the same time that it cares for the body present in itself and inseparable from it. This is the reason for saying that the Soul is not Intelligence but a different hypostasis. If Intelligence were susceptible of being qualified as the pure reign of the essence, Soul would endure a distancing from its source and have a dimension linked to the realm of what is made, that is, to the sensitive world.²⁰ The following passage summarizes this point:

Intelligence possesses, while the Soul of the world receives forever and has already received, and in this consists its life: in an understanding as it follows its intelligible way

¹³Cf. Sleeman and Pollet, *Lexicon Plotinianum*, 501.6–504.29; Radice, *Lexicon: II Plotinus*, pp. 191–92.

¹⁴Cf. Chantraine, s.v. θεωρός, p. 416–17.

¹⁵Cf. André-Jean Festugière, *Contemplation et vie contemplative selon Platon* (Paris: Vrin, 1936).

¹⁶Cf. Geoffrey W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford UK: Clarendon Press, 2009, 1961), pp. 647–49.

¹⁷Cf. Vincenzo Cilento, *Paideia antignostica. Ricostruzione d'un unico scritto da Enneadi III.8, V.8, V.5, II.9* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1971). The philological reasons advocating the literary unity of the great tetralogy were initially held by Richard Harder, “Eine neue Schrift Plotins,” *Hermes* 71 (1936): 1–10, reprinted in *Kleine Schriften* (Munich: Beck, 1960), pp. 303–13.

¹⁸Cf. Pierre-Marie Morel, “Comment parler de la nature? Sur le traité 30 de Plotin,” *Les Études philosophiques* 90, no. 3 (2009): 387–406.

¹⁹Cf. René Arnou, *ΠΡΑΞΙΣ et ΘΕΩΡΙΑ chez Plotin* (Roma: Università Gregoriana, 1972), passim; Ma. Luisa Gatti, *Plotino e la metafisica della contemplazione* (Milán: Vita e Pensiero, 1996), passim.

²⁰Cf. John N. Deck, *Nature, Contemplation, and the One: A Study in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (New York NY: Larson Publications, 1991, 1967), pp. 49–52.

according to what it is always shown; on the contrary, what is reflected by it in matter is Nature, in which, or even before this reflection, the beings halt.²¹

For Plotinus the subject of contemplation is associated with the principle of life that originates a new entity from its progenitor.²² Plotinus exemplifies this point by resorting to various comparisons, including a comparison with a luxuriant tree. He claims that just as the life of a gigantic tree spreads through it while the principle remains without losing itself in the whole, so is the supreme principle found as something settled in the root; it is not multiple but simply the beginning of abundant life. If the principle had not remained in itself distinct from the whole, this abundance would never have begun.²³

Indeed, all beings are called to contemplate and thereby respect this principle, for the seed of each thing is conceived as an active potency. In this argument Plotinus follows Speusippus's line and draws away from the Aristotelian notion of the first principle as pure act.²⁴ Contrary to what Aristotle had theorized about the supreme and divine principle (Νοῦς), Plotinus considers that Intellect and its inherent duality already represent a certain activity arising from the One-the Good as from an infinite potency, because this potency is immovable and vivifying. The One is perfect because it searches for nothing, has nothing, and lacks nothing. Its overabundance has originated the other. The One is not (that is, does not have existence as a finite being), so that what is begotten from it can be (that is, exist in finite form). On the contrary, the absolute simplicity of the One would make everything disappear in complete indifference. In this sense, the Intelligence is subsequent to the One to the same measure that it participates in the One.²⁵ Only within itself, arising from the becoming, the Intelligence can continue to be. From the mere capacity of what Intelligence is, it becomes real in the determination of what it is.²⁶ The reality of the second hypostasis denotes the presence of a yearning for unity that precedes it, a lack that turns into its ostensible difference with respect to the transcendent principle.²⁷ Intelligence has its unity only after having received this difference, after having found it. And such dependence happens because every experience of self-knowledge includes in itself a severance between the known and the knowable, between the lack of unity and the yearning that searches to fill that insufficiency.²⁸ It is precisely in self-knowledge that the Intelligence is not itself, but has its unity only by participation in the One.²⁹

²¹IV.4, 13, 17–21.

²²Cf. David P. Hunt, "Contemplation and Hypostatic Procession in Plotinus," *Apeiron: A Journal for Ancient Philosophy and Science* 15, no. 2 (1981): 71–79.

²³Cf. III.8, 10, 10–20.

²⁴Cf. Francisco García Bazán, *Plotino: Sobre la trascendencia divina: sentido y origen* (Mendoza: FFyL-UNCuyo, 1992), pp. 189, 268–80.

²⁵Cf. John Rist, "The One of Plotinus and the God of Aristotle," *The Review of Metaphysics* 27, no. 1 (1973): 75–87.

²⁶Cf. V.5, 5, 16–19.

²⁷Cf. V.3, 15, 7–11.

²⁸Cf. V.3, 10, 44–46.

²⁹Cf. Heribert Boeder, "Weshalb 'Sein des Seienden'?" *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 78 (1971): 111–33.

Even if the surging of Intelligence returns to the absolute principle from which it issued, some passages in the *Enneads* suggest a certain pessimism with relation to the generation of the multiple. An emblematic case on this point can be found in the first lines of *Enneads* V (the tenth according to the Porphyrian chronology):

What is it, then, that has made the souls forget their father, God, and be ignorant of themselves and him, even though they are parts that come from his higher world and altogether belong to it? The beginning of evil for them was audacity and coming to birth and the first otherness and the wishing to belong to themselves.³⁰

The following fragment also confirms the original nature of Intelligence:

Intellect is not dispersed in itself but is in reality all together with itself and its nearness after the One has kept it from dividing itself, though it did somehow dare to stand away from the One.³¹

As a third example, Plotinus's nostalgic tone can be recalled in a passage where he narrates the future of the second hypostasis:

But beginning as one, it did not stay as it began, but, without noticing it, became many, as if heavy [with drunken sleep], and unrolled itself because it wanted to possess everything—how much better it would have been for it not to want this, for it became the second!—for it became like a circle unrolling itself, shape and surface and circumference and center and radii, some parts above and some below. The better is the whence, the worse the whither. For the whither is not of the same kind as the whence-and-whither, nor, again, the whence-and-whither the same kind as the whence by itself.³²

In addition to various distinctions that might be mentioned in a careful and fruitful analysis, a common factor in the above examples concerns the theme of the desire, be it on the part of Intelligence or of individual souls, to set themselves up as entities different from the One, that is to say, for having the audacity of separating themselves and descending towards the multiple instead of remaining in a concentrated way in the primordial unity. This desire implies, among other things, the notion of a *will to be* that contributes to the loss of original unity. This notion does not agree with the general tenor of Plotinus's way of thinking, which is largely optimistic about the overabundant and infinitely diffusive goodness of the One. In fact, it is just the opposite.³³

The Plotinian notion of *τόλμα* takes being to be born through an act of audacity. Together with this surging, audacity marks the passage of the One to the multiple. Referring to Intelligence, Plotinus explains how Intelligence issues from the One: first in an indeterminate way and then by turning back to contemplate what had begotten it. On this turning to face the One, “being” simply becomes an “entity”—

³⁰V.1, 1, 1–5.

³¹VI.9, 5, 28–29.

³²III.8, 8, 32–40.

³³Cf. Torchia, *Plotinus, Tolma, and the Descent of Beings*, pp. 1–9.

that is, an archetype in an intelligible universe already containing the multiplicity of forms. In this application of the language of audacity to the descent of Intelligence Plotinus's thinking shows a neo-Pythagorean influence. The notion of τόλμα comes from the Pythagorean tradition of Middle Platonism. The equation of δύο and τόλμα, favored by the Pythagorean exegesis, exhibits a highly significant development since it connects audacity with the emergence of plurality, which it considers an estrangement or, in the worst case, an evil.³⁴ This pessimism toward the diverse enters into Plotinus's thinking to such an extent that he relegates multiplicity to an inferior state in the hierarchy of being.³⁵

From a consideration of this point we can discern two interpretations of the description of passage from the absolute unity of the One to a multiplicity. One is marked by Plotinus's usual optimism, but the other is more pessimistic in its emphasis on the desire for otherness (τόλμα). According to the first view, the procession is a necessary step, for it is a spontaneous expression of the essential goodness of the One, which must communicate with itself. According to the second view, the procession coincides with the audacity of drawing away from the One. In this latter consideration, the concept of τόλμα offers a different tone to the explanation given to the problem of otherness in the face of the absolutely transcendent One.

In the first scenario, how does being emerge? This view exhibits a certain optimism that the emergence does not generate any conflict, for it only appeals to the perfection of the One-the Good in order to explain the procession of the many. But this account does not fully explain the generation of the otherness of beings with respect to the One. It requires the postulation of a second moment at which what is generated becomes a hypostasis different from the One. The needed act involves turning back to contemplate the progenitor, to fill itself with content and thus to engender its immanent offspring (the archetypal ideas in the case of Intelligence, the world of the higher and lower reasons or λόγοι in the Soul). This means that the apparition of a hypostasis, as a self-constituting reality and as different from its progenitor, is the product of a distinct activity that is just as necessary as its predecessor.

Other interpretations of the Plotinian texts about otherness attempt to formulate a way to dodge this inconvenience by postulating a middle way that involves consideration of the One's own look and the self-look of the one issued from it. This approach would explain the separation of the many from the absolute principle as a fruitful plenitude and would see audacity as relative to the way in which that procession can be seen from the One's initiative.³⁶ With this proposal it is easy to understand why the production of the intelligible world is placed between two opposing but complementary visions: that of the eruption of the beginning in the primal chaos and that of the derivation from a first principle.³⁷

³⁴Cf. Benjamin A. G. Fuller, *The Problem of Evil in Plotinus* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1912), p. 25ss.

³⁵Cf. Torchia, *Plotinus, Tolma, and the Descent of Beings*, pp. 11–36.

³⁶Cf. García Bazán, *Plotino y la mística de las tres hipótesis*, p. 133.

³⁷Cf. Aldis Uzdavinyis, *The Heart of Plotinus* (Bloomington IN: World Wisdom, 2009).

Placed between these two levels, the synthesis of an absolute cause secures both the original transcendence and the being's emanation.³⁸ But how can an interpret to be sure of avoiding some mistake in developing this possibility? *Enneads* VI.8 illustrates the diffusion of being in terms of an inseparable love that flows from the One's own nature. The paradox here comes from the fact that the One continues to be ultimately responsible for the surging of multiplicity. Since it is the cause of everything in the universe of being, whatever exists depends on the fruitfulness of this supreme principle.

Because the One is absolutely perfect, only it can love itself alone. Any inclination toward anything external would sever the unity of the One. But in loving itself the One generates Intelligence and, as a consequence, offers a foundation for the intelligible paternity of all things. Named ἔρωϛ by Plotinus, and more precisely, αὐτοῦ ἔρωϛ,³⁹ the supreme One not only attracts, being the loved one, but is the very one that loves. As an operating force and a producer of itself, it also forges for itself the object of its own love; it donates itself to itself. Plotinus teaches this through images close to the beauty of lyrical language when he says:

But he, since he has the highest place, or rather does not have it, but is himself the highest, has all things as slaves; he does not happen to them, but they to him, or rather they happen around him; he does not look to them, but they to him; but he is, if we may say so, borne to his own interior, as it were well pleased with himself, the pure radiance, being himself this with which he is well pleased; but this means that he gives himself existence, supposing him to be an abiding active actuality and the most pleasing of things in a way rather like Intellect. But Intellect is an actualization; so that he is an actualisation. But not of anything else: he is an actualization of himself. He is not therefore as he happens to be, but as he acts. And then, further, if he is supremely because he so to speak holds to himself and so to speak looks to himself, and this so-called being of his is his looking to himself, he as it were makes himself and is not as he chanced to be but as he will, and his willing is not random nor as it happened; for since it is willing of the best it is not random.⁴⁰

It is true that the descending process of generation presupposes a cherished desire for autonomy. But in referring to desire here Plotinus presents an innovation by transforming this desiring into a dynamic element for the procession of being from the One. This desire of the One for the other presents a way to understand the emergence of the lower hypostases as well as an explanation for the introduction of souls into the bodies. The movement towards otherness is somehow rooted in the same creative and diffusive power of the One. In spite of this omnipresence there is a tension that arises from considering the Intelligence and the Soul in terms of a desire toward a separation and a structure of autonomous existence.

Such a desire for outwardness on the part of the One resides at first in the Intelligence, the initial instance of being in an intelligible universe. But the generation of otherness, which is nothing else but otherness as distinctness from One, is the greatest

³⁸Cf. Florent Tazzolio, "Le problème de la causalité du Principe chez Plotin," *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 102, no. 1 (2004): 59–71.

³⁹Cf. VI.8, 15, 1: καὶ ἔρωϛ ὁ αὐτὸς καὶ αὐτὸ ἔρωϛ.

⁴⁰VI. 8, 16, 8–24.

problem of Plotinian metaphysics.⁴¹ Even though Plotinus explicitly states that no otherness is present in the One, he also maintains that what is diverse derives from a supreme principle. At the beginning of *Enneads* V. 2 he asks: How can we relate this surging of everything from the One to his simplicity? And he answers: That nothing was in it is the reason why everything proceeds from it. As it is impossible for everything to be inside it, everything must be outside it, as an exteriorization of the One, like a unity in multiplicity and the identity of a double nature.⁴²

One of the clearest passages about the deduction of the second hypostasis is found in a fragment of *Enneads* V.4 (2, 26–27), in whose lines the principle of a double activity is suggested: “In each and every thing there is an activity that belongs to substance and one that goes out from substance (ἐνέργεια ἢ μὲν ἐστὶ τῆς οὐσίας, ἢ δ’ ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας ἐκάστου).”⁴³ The first form of activity corresponds to the very act of the thing. It forms a unity with the essence of the thing. The activity that springs from something must necessarily follow the nature of each thing and, therefore, must distinguish itself and be different from the proper activity of the same thing and its essence. If the first necessarily designates an activity of permanence in itself, the second refers to what withdraws from it, like a derived activity from that permanence and from that unitive intensity. Related to this principle, the following points can be singled out: (1) there is a proper activity of the One, the one by which the One is what it is and remains in itself as absolute potency, that is to say, as self-generating activity and absolute freedom; (2) the unitive intensity of that activity lets a second form of activity surge, derived from the first, although different from it. This second type of activity corresponds to a potency surged from the same potency and produces the total number of beings. Thus the first form of activity is essentially the activity that coincides with the self-generating freedom; the second follows as a need of the first.

With respect to the second hypostasis, it can be said that as an activity surging from the One, Intelligence is not generated in an immediate way but is at first generated is a kind of otherness, rather like something indeterminate that becomes determined and becomes a world of forms once it returns for the One to see it. It is, in fact, an attempt at completely re-thinking the “indefinite dyad” of the Pythagoreans: the indeterminate (intelligible matter) is the antithetical principle that is determined and formed by turning to face the One in order to contemplate it. Through contemplative looking upon the One the indeterminate otherness is determined. This turning to contemplate is not yet the Intelligence but the condition that makes Intelligence exist. Thus pure being constitutes itself in hypostatic Intelligence once that potency in a contemplative state is made fruitful by the One. After brimming over, that potency reflects over its own content since it can—and, in fact, is—active vision, although in a lower degree than the One. Both these moments show forth aspects of Intelligence, namely, as “being” and “thinking” or as “being” and “entity.”

⁴¹Cf. Giovanni Reale, “Fundamentos, estructura dinámico-relacional y caracteres esenciales de la metafísica de Plotino,” *Anuario Filosófico* 33 (2000): 163–91.

⁴²Cf. V.2, 1, 1–13.

⁴³Cf. V.4, 2, 19–48.

First, the substance that constitutes the content of thought is born. Next there is born the true and proper thought that surrenders to the contemplative reflection of intelligible substance. A fragment from V.2 explains it in the following way:

The One, perfect because it seeks nothing, has nothing, and needs nothing, overflows, as it were, and its superabundance makes something other than itself. When this has come into being, it turns back upon the One and is filled, and becomes Intellect by looking toward it. Its halt and turning towards the One constitutes being, its gaze upon the One, Intellect. Since it halts and turns towards the One that it may see, it becomes at once Intellect and being.⁴⁴

From this bi-phasic genesis the multiplicity and totality of forms can be deduced. Although Intelligence contemplates the One and is filled by it, Intelligence does not see the One immediately since the One is in itself, but on reflecting over its intelligible substance and knowing itself conceived by the One. In this way Intelligence sees itself in the One, being born from it, being generated by it, depending on it, and turning eternally to it. For this reason the nature of Intelligence is defined by its own uni-multiple character, i.e., an eternal and effective longing that has life entirely without term and that, while longing, actually obtains a loving permanence in its being. This state corresponds to the first difference with respect to the absolute principle: it begins as one but ends as multiple.

As regards explaining the development of Intelligence, the notion of *τόλμα* is used in close connection with the references to otherness in the Plotinian universe. The relation of otherness and plurality poses an important challenge in his philosophy. Indeed, everything different from the One must be inferior in goodness to the supreme reality that is beyond being, including life and knowing. Therefore, the ontological distance between the absolute primary unity and everything derived from it demands a principle of differentiation that maintains that distance in a balanced synthesis, neither forcing it toward the extreme of monism nor toward dualism. The concept of *τόλμα* satisfies this requirement and consequently sustains the first instance of being. Every time that *τόλμα* impels the emergence of something different from the One, it establishes a distinction between the Intellect—as eternally contemplating the One—and the One itself, the supreme object of contemplation.⁴⁵ By virtue of its eternal contemplation of the One, the Intellect translates the unlimited power of its Father in the world of intelligible forms. Plotinus is careful, however, not to fall into a logical reductionism at the moment of deducing the existence of beings. This observation is based on the fact that through *τόλμα* a feeling of longing is unfolded that harmonizes the pulsional tension between procession (*πρόοδος*) and conversion (*ἐπιστροφή*).⁴⁶

⁴⁴V.2, 1, 7–13.

⁴⁵Cf. Torchia, *Plotinus, Tolma, and the Descent of Beings*, pp. 37–49.

⁴⁶Cf. Patricia Ciner, “Unión Mística y Osadía: implicancias del término *tolmeteón* en el *Comentario al Evangelio de Juan*” in *Actas del Colloquium Origenianum Decimum: “Origen as writer,”* ed. S. Kaczmarek and H. Pietras (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2010), pp. 420–35.

Plotinus introduces the theme of daring or desire in the very heart of the procession, making it run together with rational deduction to whatever is diverse. Even more, the very nature of the One is defined from desire. The One maintains itself by being at the same time the desiring and the desired. This wish (βούλησις) seems to present a necessary condition for the presence of the One, and so *a fortiori* it will be necessary for the existence of everything proceeding from its own desiring. The difference intervening between both poles is that the One, being a unified unity (self-contained and complete) admits neither duality nor distinction of any sort. Its desire and its being must be identical, and this implies that the One desires to be what it is. Such a choice cannot tend toward anything in particular. It cannot desire any other thing than what it is, because the One is *eo ipso* the supreme goodness. Its desire coincides with the best of all possible realities in that it does not need to be except what it desires to be; and the One is because it desires it.⁴⁷

It can thus be claimed that by means of τόλμα Plotinus's system sets up a paradoxical differentiation principle. On the one hand, it impels and on the other sustains the One's distinct reality in being. This is clearly evident on the level of the Intelligence, the first instance of otherness within the intelligible universe. Some Plotinian passages preserve vestiges of a pessimistic view about the emergence of reality that remain in sharp contrast to the predominant optimism in his philosophy. This pessimism is expressed in those passages where τόλμα is referred to the desire for autonomy and overcoming with respect to the One. But the audacity of Intelligence is fundamental to the processional economy of the hypostatic diversity. It has been shown that a necessary complement of this withdrawing involves turning around or conversion. The emanated being, having had the audacity of drawing away from the One, consolidates itself as a new hypostasis by turning on itself and reflecting on its content. Therefore, audacity means both separation and withdrawal, as in the case of the production of an autonomous being. For this reason audacity not only leads toward a degradation of the potency emanated from the One, but also toward a conversion in order to know the true source of its origin. Thanks to audacity, the Intellect is found near the One. It is thus on account of audacity that the transcendent principle becomes compatible with a separate existence.⁴⁸

This study also brings out the unity of Plotinus's paradoxical thought by reconciling "self-subsisting" with "otherness" and "drawing away" with "contemplating." In fact, the being engendered by the One is Intelligence. Its generation begins in its procession from the One and this procession is the ontological act of audacity *par excellence*. By virtue of this audacity, what was engendered separates and draws away from the One. But in the extension of that same audacity what was engendered halts, looks at the One, and now does not see it as it is in itself but sees an engendering potency that has become manifest by the same One. Thus, audacity suffers both the act of separation and engendering of being. These are two moments of the same audacity, and the one may add the notion of goodness to it.⁴⁹ Intelligence controls

⁴⁷Cf. Torchia, *Plotinus, Tolma, and the Descent of Beings*, pp. 94–108.

⁴⁸Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 49–53.

⁴⁹Cf. Troiano, "Plotin et les Gnostiques," pp. 211–18.

its audacity and advances toward the constitution of a new hypostasis while, on the contrary, the souls withdraw more and more as they become weaker and incarnate in bodies. In order to keep to the immediate objectives of this essay, it is impossible for me to go into further detail concerning the *τόλμα* on a level with Soul nor of sensitive matter.⁵⁰

Ultimately, it could be said that despite its audacity and withdrawal, despite its contingent character, Intelligence as well as the Soul, in their own measure, remain linked to the One because they, by withdrawing, can produce from their same potency a return toward the One. On withdrawing, they advance and develop, but this same possibility is what allows them to return to their homeland, to the original dwelling by aiming at a definitive union with the One, which preserves them in the fundamental condition of their being.⁵¹

⁵⁰Cf. Torchia, *Plotinus, Tolma, and the Descent of Beings*, pp. 59–93. About Nature (*phúsis*) and its connection with time, cf. my “Plotino y la potencia desasosegada del Alma: ¿dispersión o contemplación?” *Tópicos. Revista de Filosofía* 48 (2015): 169–99.

⁵¹Cf. Juliana Espinal Restrepo, “Metafísica y Ética en Plotino. Reflexiones en torno a una divergencia,” *Universitas Philosophica* 56, no. 28 (2011): 85–107.