Lasting Light: Plotinus, Likeness and Images

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Lasting Light: Plotinus, Likeness and Images[1]

Gareth Polmeer

This cosmos, then, is plausibly said to be an image,
always remaining dependent on its source.[2]

In this paper I will discuss the significance of images in Plotinus' thought to the relation between philosophy, poetry and art. I will consider modern interpretations of Plotinus, where images and imagination have been explored through the nature of meaning and self-understanding. The role of the likeness in contemplation, and the imaginative dimensions of philosophical reflection, will be explored as a metaphysics of the image. It will be proposed that interpreters of Plotinus have adapted images common to the *Enneads*, remaining partly faithful to the original texts, and interpreting and adapting elements of Plotinus' thought towards new philosophies of participation.

The paper will draw upon passages in which Plotinus discusses image and likeness, and passages where likeness is intimated by a form of self-directed artistry in the shaping of inner-vision. I will consider how certain poetic images in Plotinus' thought become like freeze-frames, in which the ineffable is held in contemplative suspension – a suspension which seems to communicate the silence of vision.[3] I will focus on Plotinus' celestial imagery, and the language of light, considering the dependency of an image upon its source, and the sense in which the One

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[1] Some of the reflections on the themes in this paper were undertaken during a period as a Visiting Scholar in the Faculty of Divinity at the University of Cambridge, during the academic year 2021/22.

[2] Plotinus, *Enneads*, 2.3.18, p. 163. All translations quoted in this paper are from the edition edited by Lloyd Gerson.

[3] ' And if someone were to ask nature why it produces, if it were willing to listen and answer the questioner it would say: 'You should not ask but understand and fall silent yourself, as I am silent and not accustomed to speak. Understand what, then? That what comes to be is my vision, in my silence…'. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 3.8.4, p.358

is something both known and unknown, 'everywhere' and 'nowhere',[4] 'shapeless' and 'formless'.[5] Such passages, it will be proposed, suggest ways that image-making is a practice important to the artist, poet and philosopher alike.[6] It will be proposed that the image becomes, at times, a hypostatic link between between inner and outer worlds, such that it allows, however incompletely, one to 'see' the invisible, or articulate the unknowable.

My considerations will be expanded around the selected works of two thinkers: Owen Barfield and Pierre Hadot. Each emphasises a poetical and imaginative dimension to reading Plotinus. Barfield's thoughts on participation, symbolism and poetic language, as well as a connection to the Neoplatonic tradition in his work, emphasise the mystery of poetic meaning in philosophy. Barfield will be proposed as a thinker sympathetic to Plotinian contemplation, albeit through his own quite different thoughts on participation. The discussion of Hadot's work will focus on the importance of images in Plotinus' thought, and Hadot's meditations on the spiritual exercises of contemplative activity. A crucial point of comparison will be Barfield and Hadot's shared references to the relation or reciprocation between inner and outer worlds.

The discussions in this paper introduce two principle connections that I have thought important about the reception and interpretation of Neoplatonism in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries: firstly, the imaginative, creative or poetical elements of philosophy; secondly, how such philosophy is relevant to and furnishes an understanding of the arts. How, in other words, do philosophy and the arts create different, though fundamentally complementary perspectives on the same contemplative goals? And how can a reading of Plotinus and his metaphysics of the image illuminate these perspectives through thinkers who share many of Plotinus' ideas, framed through the vision of the modern age?

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[4] '…the Good is everywhere and again nowhere…'. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 6.8.16, p. 873.

[5] Plotinus, *Enneads*, 6.9.3. p. 886

[6] 'The One is certainly absent from nothing and from everything; it is present without being present, except to those who are able to receive it, and who are prepared for it, so as to be harmonious with it and in a way grasp it and touch it through their likeness to it, that is, the power in themselves akin to what comes from it. When one is in the state one was in when one came from the One, at that moment one can see, insofar as the One is such as to be seen.' Plotinus, *Enneads*, 6.9.4, pp. 887-888

The Light of the Sun

The light of the sun, as an image of the Good or the One, is a lasting symbol of meaning in the Neoplatonic tradition. It is a symbol that irradiates both inner worlds and outer worlds. The sun's participatory light is a symbol for the vision and experience of the transcendent, and it is an image to which both Barfield and Hadot refer. As an image of participation, the sun indicates how sensory vision points to an inner, noetic vision, or the interconnection of inner and outer worlds. For, as Plotinus says of the One:

> …one must not try to discover where it comes from. For there is not any 'where'; it neither comes from nor goes anywhere, it both appears and does not appear…But from where will that which the sun imitates arise? And rising over what horizon will it appear? In fact, it arises over the Intellect which contemplates it.[7]

Plotinus speaks of the sun in a participatory manner, both to express the archetypal nature of the One, from which all things emanate, and to express the ability by which one participates in the One, in likeness to the One. For example, in *Ennead* 6.9.4 Plotinus says that '…everything beautiful is posterior to the One, and comes from it, just as all daylight comes from the sun.'[8] Or, in *Ennead* 1.6.9 he says that '…the one who sees has a kinship with that which is seen, and he must make himself the same as it if he is to attain the sight. For no eye has ever seen the sun without becoming sun-like, nor could a soul ever see Beauty without becoming beautiful.'[9]

The influence of celestial imagery in Neoplatonic thought has been notable in the poetic beauty of the image of the sun in Christian theology, and its Neoplatonic influences, through which so many artists and philosophers have later drawn. Barfield could be counted among them, and his thought is interwoven with reflections on the imagery of Christian thought. Images of the sun are guides towards a vision of the unknowable – they are imaginative supports to contemplation. References to the sun's light are replete in the spiritual writings of the

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[7] Plotinus, *Enneads*, 5.5.8, p. 591

[8] Plotinus, *Enneads*, 6.9.4, p. 887

[9] Plotinus, *Enneads,* 1.6.9, p. 102. This notable section in the *Enneads* also contains Plotinus' imagery of the inner-self being shaping and sculpted, in the manner of the artist; an idea to which this paper will return. Plotinus' image of the sun draws parallels to Socrates' discussion of the sun and the Good in the *Republic.* Plato, *Republic VII*, p. 1129.

Philokalia, where prayer leads from sensible reality to divine images. St. Gregory Palamas writes that '…the divine and uncreated grace and energy of God is indivisibly divided, like the sun's rays that warm, illumine, quicken and bring increase as they cast their radiance upon what they enlighten, and shine on the eyes of whoever beholds them.'[10] And St Symeon the New Theologian writes that

> …when the visible sun set, he found that its place was taken by the tender light of spiritual luminosity, which is the pledge and foretaste of the unceasing light that is to succeed it. And this was as it should be; for the love of that for which he was searching took him out of this world, beyond nature and all material things, filling him wholly with the Spirit and transforming him into light.'[11]

Using the language of the image, Pseudo-Dionysius writes in *The Divine Names:*

> The great, shining, ever-lighting sun is the apparent image of the divine goodness, a distant echo of the Good. It illuminates whatever is capable of receiving its light and yet it never loses the utter fullness of its light.[12]

The fullness of the lasting light and the imagery of likeness are suitable points to extend my discussion to modern interpretations of Plotinus and the Neoplatonic tradition. Discussing Barfield and Hadot, I will consider the use of poetic imagery in contemplative vision to picture what is otherwise unknowable. The likeness is a journey or direction to something at a higher contemplative level – something which transports, or attempts to suggest or intimate something else. The likeness is an intimation of the human made in the image of the eternal, or the divine. Barfield and Hadot each adopt elements of Plotinus' thought to suggest the relevance of the likeness to understanding the modern age.

Barfield and Participation

The participation in, or likeness to the divine, is a recurrent theme of Barfield's philosophy. Barfield identified a Neoplatonic 'stream' of

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[10] St Gregory Palamas, 'Topics of Natural and Theological Science and on the Moral and Ascetic Life: One Hundred and Fifty Texts'. *Philokalia*, Vol. 4, p. 377

[11] St Symeon the New Theologian, 'On Faith', *Philokalia* Vol. 4, p. 20

[12] Pseudo-Dionysius, 'The Divine Names'*, The Complete Works* p. 74.

thinkers, with whom he associated a broad continuity of participatory thought, from Plotinus to William Blake and Kathleen Raine.[13] Barfield's thought on language, image, poetry and participation is a modern articulation on the nature of meaning, traceable to arguments in the *Enneads*. Interestingly, Barfield aimed to demonstrate that it would be both erroneous and anachronistic to attribute a modern way of thinking to philosophers such as Plotinus; he believed that one could not make assumptions about such things as poetic images, or imagination in texts like the *Enneads*, when Plotinus did not – as modern thought tends to – assume a distinct separation between subject and object. A comparable point is made by Stephen MacKenna in his translation of the *Enneads,* where he writes that *'*A serious misapprehension may be caused, to take one instance among several, by incautiously reading into terms used by Plotinus meanings or suggestions commonly conveyed by those words in the language of modern philosophy or religion…'.[14] Barfield was attuned to the very different nature of Plotinus and others' cosmology and metaphysics, and to the specific meaning of words and images, and emphasised its difference to a mechanical understanding of nature: a difference he felt was in need of rediscovery. What such views meant, for Barfield, was that thinkers such as Plotinus, and the value and lastingness of their thought, could be rediscovered through an act of the imagination, and in order to do so, one had to look to the use of images, language and symbols particular to an age.

Barfield's essay, *The Harp and the Camera*, explores many facets of his philosophy of the 'evolution of consciousness'. Barfield argues that participation, in historical consciousness, was a unity of inner and outer worlds. However, he argues that the history of language and symbol, and the advent of modern science shows a developing separation between these worlds. The separation is double-edged: it has brought developments in science and the material understanding of nature, with all of its attendant benefits, but it has also created a loss of participation, and a loss of a type of consciousness for which the world was imbued with spiritual meaning. *The Harp and the Camera* explores this loss of

[13] Barfield, *Poetic Diction*, pp. 219-220. Although Barfield is not a Neoplatonist, given that he would define Neoplatonism within a broader 'evolution of consciousness', I believe that his work can be read in a way that is sympathetic to Plotinus.

[14] MacKenna in Plotinus, *Enneads*, (MacKenna edition), p. xxx-xxxi. See Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, p.xv

participation through a meditation on symbols.[15] Barfield suggests that the relationship between the harp and the camera demonstrates a transformation in participation. The transformation is one from inspiration to imagination – a common theme of Barfield's work – with the wind harp a symbol of a type of participation where meaning occurs through the reciprocation of subject and object. Wind passes through and interacts with the harp, its sounds responsive to the wind's influence. The camera is symbolic of a more active way of seeing that has brought with it a form of projection, distance, or measurability. The act of perception changes from the movement of exteriority to interiority – and their dynamic interrelation – to the movement of interiority to exteriority, or what might be called a greater degree of subjectivism. The symbols of harp and camera together relate a kind of passive/inspired, active/imaginative relationship, but crucially, for Barfield, each has a part to play in self-understanding.

For Barfield, the rediscovery of historical participation is realised in a 'marriage' of the harp and the camera. Barfield held that the rediscovery of meaning in the modern age sat between the past and the present, and between harp and camera. Finding meaning involves an imaginative engagement with thinkers like Plotinus, and a recognition of the possibilities of science in the modern 'camera civilisation'.[16] Returning to Plotinus and the imagery of the sun, Barfield notes that S.T. Coleridge places the image of the sun into the 'punctiliar nothingness' of the vanishing point of projection. 'For us', Barfield argues, 'there must be projection, and the question…is whether it is to be a projection of nothingness or a projection of the sun-spirit, the spirit of light.'[17] Barfield cites Coleridge's reference to *Ennead* 1.6.9 – where Plotinus speaks of the sun-like nature of vision[18] – and then brings together the symbols of harp and camera through Apollonian imagery, as a way of looking with the imagination.[19]

Barfield argues that it is through the historical study of language, and particular attention to the diction, expression and consciousness of an age, that one can observe a change in the relation of inner and outer

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[15] Barfield, 'The Harp and Camera', in *The Rediscovery of Meaning,* pp. 94-114

[16] Barfield, 'The Harp and Camera', in *The Rediscovery of Meaning*, p. 110

[17] Barfield, 'The Harp and Camera', in *The Rediscovery of Meaning*, p. 112

[18] Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.6.9, pp. 101-102. Barfield, 'The Harp and the Camera', in *The Rediscovery of Meaning*, p. 112. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria,* pp. 114-115

[19] Barfield, 'The Harp and the Camera', in *The Rediscovery of Meaning*, p. 113.

worlds. For Barfield, the language and consciousness of a thinker like Plotinus is imbued with an innate interconnectedness which has been lost by the sundering forces of modernity, in which subject and object stand apart. In a notable example, Barfield argues that the greek *πνεῦμα* meant spirit and wind all at once, or similarly the Latin *spiritus*, breath and wind, such that the words had an '*undivided* meaning' in which inwardness and outwardness interpenetrated.[20] Not to understand such complexity of expression would be to assume that historical thinkers only spoke metaphorically of such things, when they did not, he contends. Myth and image was indivisibly connected to perception, and the use of image was an innate part of the world in which humans saw themselves.

In modern understandings of ancient thought, many would argue that it is impossible for such meanings to be indivisibly combined; such meaning would be dismissed as images used in the absence of modern scientific understanding. However, the undivided meaning, for Barfield, is evidence of a different consciousness. The expression of language in such a consciousness is not imaginative as such, but rather innately felt or perceived as being of the very nature of reality for that consciousness. This thought might give pause for reflection on Plotinus' imagery of the sun. In a Barfieldian sense, Plotinus' imagery is not strictly intended as an imaginative metaphor, in the way that a modern poet might employ the sun's light. Rather, a consciousness for whom celestial light is both noetic and sensible, as it were, uses such an image as a bridge between inner and outer worlds – or rather, the image *is* both inner and outer worlds. The image connects such worlds because they are *really* connected for Barfield, and it is only on account of later historical distinctions between subject and object that such a connection is hard to comprehend: '[M]eaning is always an inwardness expressed as outwardness, whether that outwardness is a word or words, or some other image',[21] wrote Barfield, but as he says elsewhere, the modern age has '…lost for the time being that felt union with the inner origin of outward forms which constitutes perception of their meaning'.[22]

Barfield's *The Nature of Meaning* is another exploration of the shift or change of participation between inner and outer worlds. The change has occurred in such a way, Barfield considers, that interiority and

[20] Barfield, *Poetic Diction*, pp. 71-72

[21] Barfield, 'The Nature of Meaning'

[22] Barfield, 'The Rediscovery of Meaning' in *The Rediscovery of Meaning*, p. 29

exteriority have moved: 'Nature, as expressed in words, has moved in the course of time from inwardness to outwardness; consciousness, as expressed in words, has moved from outwardness to inwardness.'[23] *The Nature of Meaning* adumbrates many of the central philosophical concerns of Barfield's work, and reflects on the way in which the use of metaphor, 'fiction' or 'other-saying' relates to meaning. Barfield considers the way that certain words have a numinous quality. This could be encapsulated by his idea of the 'felt change of consciousness'.[24] Barfield suggests that the meaning of a sentence is not itself the essence of meaning, but rather meaning emerges, or is felt in the transformation in thought to which the sentence points. Barfield considers how a statement such as 'the dawn has rosy-fingers 'reveals a sense of meaning which is irreducible to the words in the statement.[25] In the *Enneads*, the sun does not arise over the horizon of an inner landscape, but the image seems to encapsulate a deep significance and meaning that only images can seem to represent. What is more, there is something which feels participated in such an image. Barfield wonders why such a phrase as the dawn having rosy fingers should move us. Why should such an evocation of the beautiful seem to elicit such profound feeling? How, in the image of those outstretched fingers do we see some intangible connection to nature and to the divine in the felt warmth of the material rays? How, in this sense does the image seem to mean something? The answer, perhaps, is that inwardness must be realised to be a central condition of the experience and discovery of meaning, and we must understand the nature of inwardness to have changed. For, Barfield writes:

> '[T]here is only one inwardness and… what has been changing over is not the inwardness itself, but what I may perhaps call the centre of gravity of the inwardness. So that, for us, now, it would be truer to say, if we want to say something of the sort, that the soul of nature is part of our souls; or that nature is a system of collective representations of our own inwardness.[26]

Thus, for Barfield, ancient thought was of a different consciousness; a consciousness for whom the nature of inwardness was beginning to

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[23] Barfield, 'The Nature of Meaning'

[24] Barfield, *Poetic Diction*, p. 44

[25] The rosy-fingered dawn is a phrase frequently repeated in *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. See Richmond Lattimore's translations.

[26] Barfield, 'The Nature of Meaning'

change, but not as much to resemble the consciousness of the modern age. Barfield's thought therefore suggests that the immanent, participative thought of philosophers like Plotinus –for whom, his arguments imply, the interconnection of subject and object, or the human and the divine is a more given quality of perception – is at a key, emergent stage of the imagination in the consciousness of the early centuries AD, where there is the beginning sense of a shift of inwardness towards individuation, and the role of imagination. Plotinus was 'aware,' he writes, 'in a way that Pythagoras and Plato were not yet aware, of the active role of individual human spirit.'[27] Barfield contends here that the currents which flow from the third century AD have led to elements of modern consciousness in which a certain recovery or rediscovery of meaning occurs. Where meaning could be previously articulated philosophically – as participation of the lower in the higher was assumed at every stage of philosophical contemplation – traces of meaning emerge in modern times as part of the activity of poetic imagination.

Elsewhere in his writings on language, meaning and consciousness, Barfield has argued that in parallel to a shift from a more immanent kind of participation, there has been a shift from a 'psychology of inspiration' to a 'psychology of imagination'.[28] Barfield associates the shift in psychology with a change that occurs, in his view, between Plato and Plotinus, in terms of how each thinker addresses the idea of imitation or mimesis – a point to which I will return in reference to Pierre Hadot. As with the arguments propounded in *The Harp and the Camera*, Barfield defines the psychological shift in terms of a move from inspiration to imagination – a means by which the subjective awareness of the latter, changes the nature of the former. Thus, the imitative work of the artist or poet, being once an inspired or immanently participated act, becomes a creative act of imaginative, or active form of participation.

Barfield writes of a '…transition from *the being taken hold of by something*, some force or being, or some element of not-self, without any personal effort on the part of the poet, to *an active taking hold of something by* the poet – a producing, an animating, or reanimating of something within himself, which only his personal effort can make

[27] Barfield, *Poetic Diction*, p. 221

[28] Barfield, 'The Psychology of Inspiration and of Imagination' in *Speaker's Meaning*, pp. 68-91

available to him.'[29] Barfield is here talking about the move to the imitation of the invisible, not the visible, so to speak, in reference to *Ennead* 5.8. There begins to be, as it were, a move from the imitation of imitation – or making images of nature, which are copies of invisible forms – to making images based on a noetic vision of the invisible, whilst also being aware of nature's image.

In the context of the poetical images of the *Enneads* – of the relation, one might say, between self and not-self, knower and known, form and the formless – Barfield's theory marks a particular significance to Plotinus' thought, insofar as it stands between the relational forces of imitation and imagination: stands, that is, in such a way as to make the contemplative activity of the individual a distinct act of creative self-discovery. In a Barfieldian sense then, when one looks at Plotinus' use of images, there is both an imitative and imaginative impulse, one drawing from the universality of inspiration, the other from the particularity of the imagination – but each moving through one another, such that imagination begins to become the primary, or universal direction towards a participative relation to the Good, or the One. Barfield's thought differs distinctly from Plato and Plotinus, but it is clear that he drew from the well of thought in the Platonic tradition to formulate a distinctive sense of what participation means, and what Plotinus' philosophy contributes to a kind of philosophical poetics of the modern age. Through reading Barfield, we are invited to use imagination to get into modes of historical consciousness, attempting to remove the obstacles to spiritual vision which he felt had been brought about by the modern age.

Spiritual Exercises

I would like to develop these themes and connections by turning to Pierre Hadot's interpretations of Plotinus, especially where Hadot connects poetic sensibility to the understanding of Plotinian images. I will further connect these interpretations to Barfield. The theme of inner and outer worlds is developed intriguingly in Hadot's study of Plotinus, and in a striking remark he notes that Plotinus' 'treatises are spiritual exercises in which the soul sculpts herself.'[30] As Barfield considered the

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[29] Barfield, 'The Psychology of Inspiration and of Imagination', *Speaker's Meaning*, pp. 84-85

[30] Hadot, *Plotinus or The Simplicity of Vision*, p. 22. See also, Hadot's book on Marcus Aurelius, *The Inner Citadel.*

poetic imagination a form of self-discovery, connected to a higher contemplative truth, Hadot's image of the artist sculpting intimates the inner transformative principle of contemplation. As Barfield meditated on the mystery of meaning and language, in what could be termed a spiritual exercise, Hadot looks closely at Plotinus' imaginative contemplation through spiritual exercises.

Hadot asks if the 'sensible world is irreparably separated from [the inner] spiritual world?'. 'No', he answers, 'although the spiritual world is within us, it is also outside us.' '[I]nner vision' has a 'counterpart' in 'physical vision.' 'Knowing how to look at the world of the senses is', Hadot says in quoting Henri Bergson, to 'prolong the vision of the eye by means of the vision of the spirit', it is 'to pierce the material envelope of things by a powerful effort of mental vision'.[31] Recalling the earlier points made by Barfield around mimesis, Hadot writes,

> Art must not copy reality: in that case, it would only be an inferior copy of that copy which is the object perceived by our senses. The true function of art is "heuristic": through the work of art, we discover, or "invent," the eternal model, the Idea, of which sensible reality is a mere image. The work of art is an attempt to imitate this Idea…the artist's work can be a symbol of the quest for our true self.[32]

These ideas present an interesting consideration of the nature of archetypes and images, and of the participation of the lower in the higher. The artist may look contemplatively to an inner vision, depicting the forms or principles from which nature derives, and making an image of such things in a way directly representing the vision, rather than copying the form or principle's appearance or image. For example, one might say that an artist creating an image of a flower looks inwardly and deeply to the archetypal energies of a flower's beauty in its invisible forms and brings this into a representational shape, rather than to the flower that may exist sensibly before their eyes. But perhaps too, if we recall Bergson's remarks around the participation of inner and outer vision, 'sensible reality' is not 'mere image' as Hadot says, but a valuable component in seeing the spiritual world both within and outside of us. Nature's image, being an image of the 'eternal model', becomes a vehicle for the artist to realise a vision of what stands behind nature's imagery, so to speak. One might look to Plotinus, where he says that:

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[31] Hadot, *Plotinus or The Simplicity of Vision*, pp. 35-36.

[32] Hadot, *Plotinus or The Simplicity of Vision*, pp. 20-21

> …if someone lacks respect for the crafts on the grounds that they make imitations of nature, it should be said first that natural things imitate other things. Next, one should know that it is not simply that which is seen that they imitate, but they go back to the expressed principles from which nature comes. Next, as well, one should know that the crafts produce many things by themselves and, as they possess beauty, they supply whatever is missing, as in the case of Phidias, too, who did not produce his statue of Zeus according to anything sensible, but grasping what he would be if Zeus wanted to appear before our eyes.[33]

If the soul has an 'amphibious' nature as Plotinus says,[34] then perhaps the artist's or poet's vision is also somewhat amphibious. The artist combines inner and outer vision into the form of the work of art. It is a vision combining sight of the higher and the lower, the noetic and the sensible. Only by a deep act of contemplative vision could anyone 'see' such principles or forms, and even then their recollection could not be realised in the form of the original. Nature's images, connected to the artist's earthly experience, form shapes that brings invisible forms into visible form, through a combination of visible and invisible forms.

Hadot's remarks about invention relate to a broader conception of the creative imagination which invents or re-creates in a form of recollection – a point with which Barfield would be sympathetic.[35] Imaginative thinking has the function of originating and recollecting together. Through undertaking particular spiritual or contemplative activities, one finds oneself in a kind of disappearance of the self, which is simultaneously a stage to deeper self-recognition. In this activity, there is seeing, and a seeing beyond. Contemplation creates images or likenesses of inexpressibility, but not the forms of archetypes in which the images participate. To return to Barfield, the poetic imagination – with its use of invention and innovation with language – discovers or recollects the truths of historical consciousness, and this is a process of discovery and of 'inwardness', in Barfield's terms, that one could liken to the ascent of self-discovery in Plotinus. For, as Andrew Louth writes,

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[33] Plotinus, *Enneads*, 5.8.1, p. 611

[34] 'Souls, then, come to be, in a way, amphibious, as of necessity they live part of their life in the intelligible world and part of their life in the sensible world'. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 4.8.4, p. 517

[35] Michael Chase's translation points out that the word invention relates, in both French and English, to the Latin *invenire*, meaning to discover. Intriguingly, this is a large part of Barfield's philosophy of poetry and meaning, i.e. the 'rediscovery of meaning'. Hadot, *Plotinus*, p. 20

> For Plotinus, the higher is not the more remote; the higher is the more inward: one climbs up by climbing in, as it were….As the soul ascends to the One, it enters more and more deeply into itself: to find the One is to find itself. Self-knowledge and knowledge of the ultimate are bound up together, if not identified. Ascent to the One is a process of withdrawal into oneself.[36]

Hadot's considerations of the relation between inner and outer vision can be elucidated a little further by returning to the imagery of the sun, and Plotinus' remarks on the sun rising above the horizon of Intellect in *Ennead* 5.5.8. Prior to the passage about the sun rising, Plotinus discusses ideas around the 'twofold' nature of vision (5.5.6 - 5.5.7).[37] In attempting to contemplate the intelligible, says Plotinus, one may set aside the sensible to see that which 'transcends the sensible'.[38] This, one might recall, could be the imagery behind nature's imagery, to which I earlier alluded, or Plotinus' 'expressed-principles'. In contemplating further and looking towards that which transcends the intelligible says Plotinus, one must also attempt to set aside the intelligible. Plotinus compares the nature of light, and that which gives light substance, to the intelligible, and that which illuminates it. In the twofold nature of seeing, says Plotinus, there is the sensible thing seen and the sensible light by which the sensible thing is seen.[39] One can attempt to see the light alone, in its nature apart from the things that it illuminates in a 'concentrated impression', however, even then it remains connected to a sensible support.[40]

Plotinus next speaks about the nature of this type of seeing or vision. If one attempts to look at that which transcends the intelligible, he suggests, in the manner in which one attempts to see light apart from that to which it gives sensible form, then one might experience something significant – a kind of sudden appearance that occurs as an experiential outcome of contemplative activity, rather than from the content of that contemplative activity. Even perhaps, what Barfield called a 'felt change of consciousness' or Hadot a 'spiritual exercise'. Plotinus says:

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[36] Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys,* p.39

[37] Plotinus, *Enneads,* 5.5.7, p. 590

[38] Plotinus, *Enneads,* 5.5.6, pp. 589-590

[39] Plotinus, *Enneads*, 5.5.7, p. 590

[40] Plotinus, *Enneads*, 5.5.7, p. 590

> So, the seeing of Intellect is like this. It itself also sees by means of another light the things that are illuminated by that primary nature, and sees since the light is in them…But since Intellect must look at this light as not being outside it, we must go back to the eye.
>
> This at times will itself see not light that is outside or alien to it, but for a moment, something akin to it, prior to that which is outside, and more brilliant. Either it springs from the eye in the darkness of night or, when it does not want to look at other things, it lowers the eyelids and nevertheless emits light, or when the eyelids are shut, one sees the light in the eye. For then it sees without seeing and it is most of all then that it sees. For then it sees light. And other things it saw were light-like in their form, though they were not light.
>
> It is actually in this way that Intellect, covering its eyes so that it does not see other things, and collecting itself into its interior, and not looking at anything, will see a light that is not other than it or in another, but itself by itself alone and pure, and it appears to it all of a sudden so that it is in doubt as to where it appeared from, outside or inside, and when it goes away it says, 'so it was inside – but, again, not inside'.[41]

This remarkable passage – with its emphasis that 'it sees without seeing and it is most of all then that it sees' – presents striking images on the relation of inner and outer worlds. The image of inside/not-inside, one could say, is the interweaving of inner and outer worlds in noetic vision. The images that Plotinus uses become approximations to that which lie beyond them. Some images have a twofold nature, being as they can be both sensible images that transcend the sensible, and intelligible images that transcend the intelligible. The sun, or the light as visible/invisible, or presence/absence, is just such an image. Plotinus' holds the oppositions of inner/outer or visible/invisible together within the image of the rising sun over Intellect. The poetic image of that which 'both appears and does not appear'[42] is an image which holds other images in the freeze-frame of contemplative suspension. Hadot also refers to the above passages in *Ennead* 5.5 in a discussion of light as divine gentleness, saying that

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[41] Plotinus, *Enneads*, 5.5.7, p. 591

[42] Plotinus, *Enneads*, 5.5.8. p, 591

> For Plotinus, as for Plato, vision consists in contact between the inner light of the eye and exterior light. Yet Plotinus concludes from this that when vision becomes spiritual, there is no longer any distinction between inner and outer light. Vision is light, and light is vision. There is a kind of self-vision of light, in which light is, as it were, transparent to itself.[43]

Both Barfield and Hadot suggest that there is a form of inner discovery and inner journey through the contemplation of images. Barfield suggests that there is a change of consciousness and Hadot, an inner shaping of consciousness. Recalling Plotinus' 'twofold' vision, Barfield has also written on the nature of philosophical double vision and cites William Blake's double-vision of the sun.[44] Barfield too writes of a form of doubleness of vision:

> There is a certain kind of nocturnal dream, in which we dream with one part of ourselves, and yet at the same time we know with another part that we are dreaming. The dream continues, and is a real dream (that is, it is not just a waking reverie). And yet we know that we are dreaming; we are there outside the dream, as well as being there within it. I think we may let ourselves be instructed by such dreams in the nature of true vision. Poets have sometimes been called "visionaries" and sometimes "dreamers"; but they are likely to be poor poets, unless it is *this* kind of dream that we are connoting when we use the word. Poetic imagination is very close to the dreaming of such dreams, and has little to do with reverie. In reverie we lose ourselves (we speak of being "lost in reverie"), we are absorbed; but in imagination we find ourselves in finding vision.'[45]

We 'find ourselves in finding vision'. These words express the Plotinian sense in which one becomes more oneself when one also becomes less than oneself in contemplation: how 'the seer [becomes] one with what is seen', having within them 'an image' of the One, as

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[43] Hadot, *Plotinus or The Simplicity of Vision,* p. 62

[44] '"What," it will be Question'd, "When the Sun rises, do you not see a round disk of fire somewhat "like a Guinea?" O no, no, I see an Innumerable company of the Heavenly host crying 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty.' I question not my Corporeal or Vegetative Eye any more than I would Question a Window concerning a Sight. I look thro' it & not with it.' Blake, 'A Vision of the Last Judgment', *Complete Writings*, p. 617

[45] Barfield, 'Dream, Myth and Philosophical Double Vision', in *The Rediscovery of Meaning*, pp. 41-42

Plotinus says.[46] One is not 'lost' in vision, but is in an act of self-discovery. There is also, perhaps, a refutation here of the Socratic view in the *Ion* that the merit of poets is their capacity for a kind of passive inspiration or reverie.[47] In the union with the One or the Good there is a deepening of inner self-understanding in becoming like it, and in reaching beyond ourselves we find ourselves. This, in Hadot's sense, is a deeply spiritual exercise of self-discovery – a sense of contemplative dreaming, a movement to '…where the One is waiting, which is nowhere.'[48]

I would like to conclude this paper by discussing how many of the aforementioned ideas relate to an inner capacity of directed contemplation and self-transformation. This is a point particularly emphasised by Hadot in his reading of the *Enneads* as spiritual exercises when he refers to *Ennead* 1.6, where Plotinus says:

> How, then, can you see the kind of beauty that a good soul has? Go back into yourself and look. If you do not yet see yourself as beautiful, then be like a sculptor who, making a statue that is supposed to be beautiful, removes a part here and polishes a part there so that he makes the latter smooth and the former just right until he has given the statue a beautiful face…[Do] not stop 'working on your statue' until the divine splendour of virtue shines in you, until you see 'Self-Control enthroned on the holy seat'.
>
> If you have become this and have seen it and find yourself in a purified state, you have no impediment to becoming one in this way nor do you have something else mixed in with yourself, but you are entirely yourself, true light alone, neither measured by magnitude nor reduced by a circumscribing shape nor expanded indefinitely in magnitude but being unmeasured everywhere, as something greater than every measure and better than every quantity. If you see that you have become this, at that moment you have become sight, and you can be confident about yourself, and you have at this moment ascended here, no longer in need of someone to show you. Just open your eyes and see, for this alone is the eye that sees the great beauty.[49]

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[46] Plotinus, *Enneads*, 6.9.10, p. 896

[47] Plato, 'Ion', *Complete Works*, pp. 937-949

[48] Plotinus, *Enneads*, 5.5.8. p. 592

[49] Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.6.9, p. 102.

Looking to archetypes, and shaping one's vision, is a creative act of self-discovery. One shapes one's inner image into the likeness of that which one contemplates. This paper has explored how different considerations of the likeness stress the importance of images to the philosophical, imaginative and creative dimensions of Plotinus' thought and the broad Neoplatonic tradition that it influenced in modern thought. The paper has also attempted to distinguish what could be termed the innate interconnectedness of Plotinus' imagery, with later interpretations, where the nature of imagination informs the understanding of Plotinian images and language, from the perspective of modern consciousness and its attendant forms. In the depth and plurality of the approaches taken to understanding Plotinus, there is rich ground to develop further reflections where Neoplatonism comes into contact with art and poetry in the twenty-first century. The paper has explored how aspects of Plotinian contemplation appear in later thinkers, such as Barfield and Hadot, and of how by approaching the *Enneads* both philosophically and poetically, one can meditate on the depths of the creative imagination. This meditation occurs in a form of journeying inwards, as well as looking outwards in a dynamic movement of the perception of the eternal emerging into the ephemeral world.

Such a meditation, or vision, is what returns one to the role of artworks, poetry and the works of the imagination to develop a form of contemplation which, like Plotinus's rising sun, awakens an inner light of meaning. 'The metamorphosis of inner vision', writes Hadot, 'has as its counterpart the metamorphosis of physical vision.'[50] In this sense, art can be a means to shape the contemplative spirit. In artworks, one might see an image reflecting back, the shapes of meaning within. The work of poetry and literature, and the messages of work in stone, sound, paint or light intimate a different nature, and a different consciousness. The artwork can stand as a mediating form of the contemplative life, being as it is drawn from interior and exterior vision – a threshold between the visible and the invisible, and a simultaneous presence and absence that brings into one creative form both inner and outer worlds. The images of Plotinus' *Enneads* suggest and imagine the relation of these worlds in the lasting light of the sun.

[50] Hadot, *Plotinus or The Simplicity of Vision*, p. 35

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Plotinus' Rational Approach to Artistic Beauty Through Imagination, and its Reflection on Picasso and Einstein's Creative Thought

Aphrodite Alexandrakis

Albert Einstein: said "Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited whereas imagination embraces the entire world, stimulating progress, giving birth to evolution."[1] Following Einstein's principle, Picasso, referring to his painting *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907), added: "Everything you can imagine is real…"[2]

Similarly, eighteen centuries earlier, Plotinus held that the rational, conscious, human activity consists of the *imagination* (*φανταστικόν*) and innate knowledge (*διανοητικον*). For "intellectual activity is accompanied by a mind-picture *τῆς νοήσεως φαντασίας"*[3]. We are the activity of the intellect; so that when that is active, we are active. And while *διάνοια* can be independent of *imagination* (has its own consciousness*), imagination* works along with *διάνοια.* Hence, a *synergy* takes place between the *διανοητικον* and the *φανταστικον* as creative powers. Both the *διανοητικόν* (innate knowledge) and the *φανταστικόν* are found in the human intellect's experience and therefore, they mirror the rational activity of the soul. Accordingly, Plotinus says, "…the arts do not simply imitate what they see: they go back to the rational principles from which nature derives..."[4] Hence, the rational basis of artistic creations.

The aim of this paper is not the historical development of the notion of *fantasia* [5](*φαντασία) imagination*, for this has already been done. Naturally, from the historical point of view, long before Plotinus, Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and later Proclus, they were all thinking about what *Imagination – φαντασία* - is, and how it functions in the

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[1] George Sylvester Viereck, "*Saturday Post*," October 26, 1929.

[2] *https//www.gregfaction.com*.

[3] *Ennead*, 1.4, 23-25.

[4] *Ibid.* V.8.1, 35-37.

[5] See: E. Warren, Imagination in Plotinus*. The Classical Quarterly*, Nov.1966).

mind.[6] According to some authors,[7] Plotinus established the notion of *fantasia* against mimesis, that is, copying – *imitation*-, as the main cause of artistic and scientific stimulation of the mind for creativity. However, for him, the beauty of the perceptual world's images derives from the intellectual world of the mind (thinking). And while the c*osmos* for Plato is only a perceptual image, Plotinus uses the example of the sculptor who creates because the *form or,* the image of what he creates is in his mind. He thinks about it through his *imagination* – φαντασία, he visualizes it. Hence, it is a conscious experience; without it, there is no conscious experience. Below it is the *sense imaginative soul,* and below it, *nature*. This form's origin is not sensual (from the world of sense) but … a direct intuition.[8] Interestingly, for Proclus, like the ancients, *fantasia* and *nous* are identical.[9]

My goal is to explore the nature, role, and importance of the Plotinian thought and meaning of the concept of *imagination* (mental image) in scientific and artistic thought of the early twentieth century; specifically, on Einstein's and Picasso's thought. They both shared the same concept independently. This does not suggest any direct influence of Plotinus on Einstein or Picasso, but a similar way of thinking between a third century philosopher and a twentieth century scientist and artist.

My interest in Plotinus' thoughts on the notion of *imaginati*on (*φαντασία*) was stimulated and inspired by three books and articles I read[10] on Einstein and Picasso's views on how a mathematical and/or artistic idea is the result of one's imaginative power, φαντασία, which originates in the mind. That idea reminded me of its resemblance to the way Plotinus thinks about *φαντασία*. And even though there is no direct influence of thinking between them and they are twenty centuries apart, Plotinus the philosopher, Einstein the physicist, and Picasso the artist created their theories by being stimulated by their *imagination* φαντασία in the same way, and that resulted in the creative process of the mind.

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[6] See: Eva, T.H, Brann, *The World of the Imagination,* (1990). M.W. Bundy J.M. Studies in Language and Literature, vol. 7,

[7] J.M, Cocking, *A Study in the History of Ideas*, 1991.

[8] *Ennead*, I.8.1.

[9] Cocking, p.50.

[10] Arthur I. Miller, *Einstein, Picasso: Space Time, and the Beauty that causes Havoc* (New York, New York, 2001.

Insights of a Genius, New York, 1996, Colliding Worlds, 2014.

In 1905, Albert Einstein's *Special Relativity Theory* made a breakthrough that influenced the world of science and, interestingly, it also impacted the world of the Arts resulting in an abstract style. This influence was crucial to Picasso's revolutionary new way of thinking about painting through the execution of his abstract atemporal compositions.

Like Plato and Plotinus, Einstein's *Special Relativity Theory* resulted in the distrust of the senses by both the twentieth century scientist (Einstein) and artist Picasso. Both Einstein and Picasso believed that "art and science are means for exploring worlds beyond expressions, beyond appearances, that direct perception deceives."[11] Thus "thinking not seeing leads to truth." Hence, the return to the Platonic and Plotinian rational ideas. And like Boethius who said "the ultimate object of reality is *atemporal,*"[12] the same idea holds for Plotinus, Einstein, and Picasso. Thus, contrary to all scientific and artistic theories expressed up to that time, Einstein and Picasso created new theories in science and new artistic styles triggered by, and based on, *imagination* and *inspiration*. Their inspiration went along with and contributed to their rational thought and functioned as a messenger to the creator's (scientist/artist) unique possession of *imagination* (το *φανταστικόν*), which in turn is triggered by the intellect (*νους*) and provides a consciousness of the thinking process.

Einstein's trust in the power of *imagination* and creativity is reflected in the following statement: "*Imagination* is more important than knowledge; for knowledge is limited, whereas *imagination* embraces the entire world, stimulating progress, giving birth to evolution."[13] Thus, *imagination* is a conscious experience in thinking of new ideas. This idea is again underscored in another powerful statement of Einstein's, which was the inspiration to writing this paper. He said that "…when he was a teenager, he imagined himself riding on a beam of light and wondering about the consequences." This means his imagination (internal vision),[14] in a deep sense, preceded his thought; his perception of his "seeing" (*imagining*) of nature was the necessary forerunner of all

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[11] Steven G. Brush, "Einstein, Picasso: Space, Time and the Beauty that Causes Havoc." *Physics Today*: 54, 12, 49 (2007), 1-5.

[12] Michael Chase, "Time and *Eternity from* Plotinus and Boethius to Einstein." *Researchgate.com,* ΣΧΟΛΗ *Vol.8.1.,* Jan. 2014.

[13] *"The Saturday Evening Post,"* 1929.

[14] Whittaker, Dillon, and others.

thinking that followed.[15] Hence, as he held, thinking not seeing leads to truth.

It is my conviction that Einstein and Picasso's approach to the *imagination* as the basis of and stimulus to creating scientific and/or artistic theories, echoes Plotinus' theory of *imagination* seventeen centuries earlier, as presented in his *Enneads*. The function and importance of imagination will be explored as analyzed by several Neoplatonic scholars and/or artists' minds. It will be held that there is an agreement in thought between Plotinus' notion of *imagination* and that of Picasso and Einstein. That will reveal the role and power of the *imagination* as a rational and inspirational source of human understanding.[16] This process of mind is of utmost importance in understanding the source from which certain artistic, philosophical, and scientific ideas spring.

Both Einstein and Picasso's theories on the role and importance of the *imagination* and its rational function in constructing scientific theories and/or creating works of art was crucial to understanding. We know that for Plotinus, artistic and scientific creations are rooted in imagination. He says:

> …the arts do not simply imitate what they see, but they run back up to the founding principles from which nature derives … for Pheidias too did not make his Zeus from any model perceived by the senses but understood what Zeus would look like if he wanted to make himself visible…[17]

Hence, the artist's direct perception of the intelligible world through his *imagination*.

Certain Plotinian concepts on the function of both the artistic and scientific thinking process will be discussed. Based on this, Einstein's position on the importance of *imagination*, and Picasso's painting *"Les Demoiselles d'Avignon"* will be brought up as an example and result of his imagination's influence by the contemporary, new mathematical/ scientific theories such as Princet's and Poincare's *Non-Euclidean Geometry*, its emphasis on four-dimensional space, and the elimination of perspective. It will be seen that Einstein's *imagination* on his statement of "his riding on a beam of light" was the result of his thinking

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[15] *Ibid.*

[16] *Ibid*.

[17] *Enne*ad, v.8.1., 6-11.

of *space – cosmos* – through his inspirational *imagination* - *φαντασία*. The idea was in the scientist's mind, that is, he thought of it through his *imagination* since when he was a teenager. Accordingly, as Plotinus put it, "…We are the activity of the intellect … *τοῦ νοοῦντος ενέργεια*.[18] Thus, when the intellect is active, we are active.[19] Our imagination is our consciousness of things around us but always separate from the object of awareness *αντίληψης*.[20] Plotinus points out that:

> …As regards the soul, when that kind of thing in us which mirrors the images of thought (διάνοια) and intellect (νους) is undisturbed, we see them and know them in a way parallel to sense – perception, along with the prior knowledge that it is the intellect and thought that are active.[21]

Since *imagination is our consciousness* of and mirrors whatever surrounds us and comes in parallel to sense perception but is more reliable for, as mentioned, it is triggered by our *intellect*, thought, for we are "*…τοῦ νοοῦντος ενέργεια*" (the activity of the intellect). Importantly, for Plotinus, an intellectual activity is accompanied by a *mind-picture*.[22] Consequently, *imagination* becomes *νόησης,* which is the basis for artistic and scientific activity.

As mentioned, Plotinus' conscious human activity consists of the *imagination φανταστικόν* and innate knowledge, *διανοητικόν*. This indicates a *synergy* between thinking and the imagination as creative powers. Both the *φανταστικόν* and *διανοητικόν* are found in the human intellect's experience and they, therefore, mirror the rational activity of the soul/mind/intellect/*νους*. This *synergy* between the *imagination, φανταστικόν,* and the *Intellect, νους*, takes place through *αντίληψής* (awareness) that plays an important role. This Plotinian kind of "*synergy*," this Plotinian thought, is expressed in both the twentieth century scientist's (Einstein's) ideas and interestingly, in the artist's (Picasso's) thought. More specifically, it is found in Einstein's statement below and on a certain painting by Picasso. Since the human mind is in direct communication with and has access to the intelligible world, what

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[18] *Ibid*.

[19] *Ibid*, I.4.9, 14-17.

[20] The notion of αντίληψής and its importance has been analyzed by E.W. Warren, ˙Imagination in Plotinus˙, *The*

Classical Quarterly, v.1, No. 2, (Nov. !966), Cambridge Univ. Press, pp 277-285.

[21] *Ennead,* I.4.10, 14˜15.

[22] *Ibid*., I.6.1.

the artist/scientist creates is of a divine nature, that is, it is created by his imaginative νοῦς by following the rational principles.

This is clearly indicated in:

1. Einstein's statement that he imagined *"riding on a beam of light in space*" and his belief in the importance, power, and creative force and role of the *imagination*…

2. Picasso's statement: *"Everything you can imagine is real."* This statement's reflection is mirrored in his painting*: Les Demoiselles Avignon* painted in 1905, and in Plotinus statement:

> …the arts do not simply imitate what they see, but they run back up to the forming principles from which nature derives and since they possess beauty, καλλος, they make up what is defective in things. For Pheidias too did not make his Zeus from any model perceived by the senses but understood what Zeus would look like if he wanted to make himself visible."[23]

Thus, the artist becomes the mediator sensible and ideal, and his interests are "the ultimate values of the universe."[24]

Plotinus' above statement is mirrored in Picasso's painting: *"Les Demoiselles D'Avignon"* painted in the early twentieth century (1905). Like Plotinus, both Einstein and Picasso, the physicist, and the artist, inspired by their own "Plotinian" internal vision - *imagination* - along with logic, are driven to think. It is a Plotinian *synergy* between *φαντασία* -mental image of consciousness: *imagination* and the intellect *νοῦς,* taking place through *αντίληψής* (*awareness*). This communication of *fantasia* and *nous,* taking place through *αντίληψής* (awareness). This communication of fantasia and nous for both the scientist and the artist led them to create their own theories on the same principle in both the scientific and artistic field. As the mathematician *Poincare*, who was Picasso's main influence on discovering and painting the fourth-dimension with no perspective, put it, "the scientist's quest for this special beauty, the sense of the harmony of the cosmos…" is in parallel to Plotinus' statement "…just as the artist chooses from among the features of his model, those which perfect the picture and give it character and life…"[25] Accordingly, when Einstein said "thinking not

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[23] *Ennead*, v.8.I, 35-41.

[24] J. P. Anton, Plotinus" Conception of the Functions of the Artist, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 26. No.1, 1967.

[25] A.I.Miller, *Colliding Worlds* New York, 2014, p. 27..

seeing leads to truth," he, like Plotinus, meant – thinking through his "*internal vision*" – his *imagination – φαντασία*, which precedes thought.

As mentioned earlier, Einstein's *–φαντασία– imagination* (internal vision), made him wonder even as a teenager when he uttered the statement of seeing himself riding on a beam of light. Later, his interpretation of the *cosmos* on the basis and in terms of mathematical equations, was the result of his "internal vision," his *imagination*. His *imagination* acted as the stimulus on his intellect (*νους*) resulting in thought (*διάνοια*). This scientific approach to *beauty* and *harmony* of the *cosmos* echoes the Plotinian search of special beauty where "…the artist chooses from among the features of his model those who perfect the picture and give it character and life."[26] Accordingly, when Einstein said "…thinking not seeing leads to truth," like Plotinus, he meant thinking through his *internal vision*, his *φαντασία, imagination*.

During that time, 1905, Einstein had just finished his *Special Relativity Theory*, while Picasso was still working on his breakthrough controversial painting, "*Les Demoiselles D' Avignon"* that was completed in 1907 and became the foundation of Cubism. Like the Ancients, both men, the artist, and the physicist, were working on the idea and belief that "…art and science are means for exploring worlds beyond perceptions, beyond appearances and… direct viewing deceives…",[27] as they both knew it in science and in art.

It has been noted that Einstein's approach to space and time was not primarily mathematical. Notions of aesthetics were essential to his discovery in 1905 of *relativity* with a new theory of representation of light, according to which, light is in a vacuum and is independent of the observer. Nor were Picasso's studies of space totally artistic in the narrow sense of this term, as his interest in scientific development reveals. Picasso's new aesthetic for *The Demoiselles*, was the reduction of forms on the canvas to geometric shapes, and the creation of a fourth dimension.[28]

As mentioned, like Plato and Plotinus, Einstein and Picasso believed that direct viewing (perception) deceives, therefore leading to a distrust for the senses. This kind of thought resulted in Einstein's refutation of the theory of *Absolute Space and Time*. Simultaneously Picasso, influenced by the mathematicians, Princet and Poincare, dethroned

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[26] A.H. Armstrong, *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Medieval History,* Cambridge University Press, 1967.

[28] A. I. Miller, Einstein, Picasso, N.Y. Basic Books, 2001, p..4.

perspective in art[29] and created a flat surface consisting of flat geometric shapes without perspective. Hence, he chose a style that he could translate into a conceptual one. The concepts of this style were based on Einstein's *Relativity Theory* of absolute space and time[30] for which he abandoned perspective and used flat geometric shapes. While Einstein's intuition included the question for *generality*, like Plotinus, both Einstein and Picasso were interested in expanding the concept of *synergy* between thinking (*το διανοητικόν*) and *imagination* (*φανταστικόν*). They both understood the importance and role of *imagination* as a creative intellectual tool in triggering and inspiring creative ideas in the mind. They knew that *imagination* involves and triggers thinking that leads to creative thoughts. Both men's influence by Princet and Poincare's writings is reflected in their thinking of space in a new way through *imagination* as their tool. This idea is like Plotinus' reference to Pheidias' visualization and thoughts when he created Zeus, the chryselephantine statue in the temple of Zeus. His visualization process through *fantasia, imagination* triggered the new, rational idea in his mind.

As mentioned, like the ancients, Einstein refused to take perceptive time as being true or valid.[31] His notion of time was that of the ancient philosophers, and like Proclus later, *atemporal*. He wrote that the equations of physics were interpreted in a way that "led to asymmetries that do not appear to be inherent in the phenomena. This led him to the discovery of his *Relativity Theory* in 1905 and introduced the notion of asymmetry in the 20th century.[32]

Based on this idea, he created the theory of *Absolute Space and Time*. This theory had a great impact and influence on Picasso's work. Following non-Euclidean four-dimensional ideas, in 1907, he constructed a geometrically shaped design on canvas in his painting *Les Demoiselles d' Avignon,* which is a conceptual work. The painting shows all four perspectives viewed at once and all abstract geometrically designed figures on the foreground. Thus, the reduction of the composition to geometrical forms. Therefore, the language of this painting style was *geometry*. The painting is a visual imagery expressed in geometric

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[29] *Ibid*. p.4.

[30] *Ibid*., p. 250.

[31] Michael Chase, Time and Eternity from Plotinus and Boethius to Einstein. CNRS, Paris, Jan. 2014. Scholle, 8 (1):67-100. Researchgate.net.

[32] Colliding Worlds, p.9.

language. His concern was that of space and time on canvas and its aesthetic representation in an aesthetically satisfying way. And just as in science, the elements of his composition shift between symmetry and asymmetry. Thus, for Picasso, geometry became the language of his art for, as did Plato and Plotinus, he distrusted the senses. He painted a world beyond appearance and perception to be explored through art and science in the fourth dimension. Hence, geometry became the language of the new form of art: *Cubism* and the new notions of space and time became the foundation of his artistic creations. When Picasso was asked about the fourth dimension, he answered that he depicted the fourth dimension on the abstract face of one of the women in the foreground. Thus, like Boethius, the ultimate object of reality for Einstein, Picasso, and Plotinus is *atemporal.*

That kind of design was the result of Picasso's *imagination*, influenced by his learning of time and space as being *atemporal.* Hi aim was to show all four perspectives at one. Interestingly, he depicted the fourth dimension in the abstract face of one of the foreground's painted women, and reduced all natural forms into geometric shapes, painted in four dimensions without the traditional perspective. Picasso's geometry became the language of his art, for like Plato and Plotinus we cannot trust our senses. The world beyond appearances and perception could therefore be explored through art and science in a fourth dimension. Thus, new trends were created in both science and art. Those trends were devised and filtered by the scientific and artistic creators through their *imagination* and resulted in *harmony*. For *harmony* is the result of contraries (Unity in multiplicity).

Einstein and Picasso's theories of scientific and artistic creations were inspired by their *imagination*_and are rooted in Plotinus' theory of *imagination φαντασία* in which direct perception deceives. *Imagination*, internal vision, *φαντασία*, in collaboration-synergy-with the intellect νους, through awareness αντίληψης, results in thinking of and creating artistic and scientific theories. Thus, imagination is an intellectual power, like thinking. (*οιον νόησης*) and the *image* is the result of awareness of it *κρίσις* και *αντίληψής.*

Like philosophical ideas, science, and art (at least, serious art works) are means for exploring worlds beyond perceptions, beyond appearance. A *synergy* takes place in nous between the *διανοητικόν*, and *imagination (φανταστικόν*). This *synergy* results in rational thought (activity) and therefore, as Plotinus put it, "…the arts do not simply imitate what they see…they go back to the rational principles from which nature

derives…"[33] And at that moment of creation… "the boundaries between art and science cease to exist and they *aesthetically* play a central role."

This is the moment during which fantasia, *imagination,* is present, and leads to and triggers rational thoughts and ideas. Therefore, direct viewing deceives. As mentioned earlier, this kind of thinking later resulted in Einstein's refutation of the theory of Absolute Space and Time. Simultaneously, Picasso, influenced by the mathematicians Princet and Poincaree, dethroned perspective in art. Hence, Picasso chose a style that he could translate into a conceptual one based on Einstein's influence of *Relativity Theory*. While Einstein's intuition included the question for generality, like Plotinus, he and Picasso were interested in expanding the concept of *synergy* between thinking and *imagination* (*διανοητικο* και *φανταστικο*). They both understood the importance of *imagination* as a creative intellectual tool in triggering and inspiring creative ideas in the mind.[34] Thus, their theories were the result of their *imagination*'s inspiration.

Art and science are means for exploring worlds through *φαντασία* beyond perceptions, beyond appearance. As Plotinus put it, "…at the moment of creation, a *synergy* takes place in νους (intellect) between thought (*διανοητικόν*) and imagination (*φανταστικόν*)." This *synergy* results in rational thought (activity) and so, for Plotinus, "…the arts do not simply imitate what they see… they go back to the rational principles from which nature derives…"[35] And at that moment of creation "…the boundaries between art and science cease to exist and aesthetically, play a central role.

It was the power *of imagination*, *φαντασία,* along with consciousness, thinking, *διάνοια,* that the ancient Greek philosophers were wondering and thinking of questions about nature, man, space, beauty, and the natural world. Their wonder and imagination led them to thinking and creating logical theories about nature, humans, beauty, and the Universe. Like Plato and Plotinus, Einstein, and Picasso were seeking a world beyond sense perception…the deep structure of objects and representations. And like Plotinus, both men emphasized the cosmic dimension of the aesthetic vision.[36]

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[33] *Ennead*, v.8.10, 37.

[34] Aesthetics and Creativity, (Einstein and Picasso), p. 4.

[35] *Enn.*v.8.10, 37

All three men (Plotinus, Einstein, and Picasso) thought that to understand nature deeply, one must go and look beyond perceptual appearances for they are not real. Like Plotinus, both Einstein and Picasso used their deep insights *φαντασία* which leads to issues and nuances hidden from those unable to penetrate beyond technical difficulties; hence, was created the fourth dimension of Cubism. Creativity for Plotinus, Einstein, and Picasso is the result of conscious thought: *imagination.* It is *imagination* that inspires the artist/scientist/philosopher to create a theory. Only human beings have consciousness; nature does not. Man's *consciousness* leads to *imagination* (mental image).

Finally, all three thinkers: Plotinus, Einstein, and Picasso, held that:

- direct viewing deceives.
- art and science are means for exploring worlds beyond perception, and
- *imagination* is the cause and source of *thinking* and *creativity*.

Thus, for all three thinkers, Plotinus, Einstein and Picasso, creativity is the result of a conscious thought springing out of *φαντασία* through *διάνοια*, dianoia.

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