**The One as the Giver in Plotinus – metaphysical and spiritual implications**

Center for the Study of Platonism, University of Cambridge – 19th Oct 2020

Mateusz Stróżyński

Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland

monosautos@gmail.com

**1. The One’s creative activity as giving**

**1.1.**

*Enn.* 5.2.2.25-26 (Greek and English: A.H. Armstrong, Loeb edition)

Πάντα δὲ ταῦτα ἐκεῖνος καὶ οὐκ ἐκεῖνος· ἐκεῖνος μέν, ὅτι ἐξ ἐκείνου· οὐκ ἐκεῖνος δε, ὅτι ἐκεῖνος ἐφ᾿ ἑαυτοῦ μένων **ἔδωκεν**.

All these things are he and not he: they are he because they come from him; they are not he, because it is in abiding by himself that he **gives**. [Armstrong: “gives them”]

**1.2.**

6.9.9.7-11

Οὐ γὰρ ἀποτετμήμεθα οὐδὲ χωρίς ἐσμεν, εἰ καὶ παρεμπεσοῦσα ἡ σώματος φύσις πρὸς αὑτὴν ἡμᾶς εἵλκυσεν, ἀλλ᾿ ἐμπνέομεν καὶ σῳζόμεθα οὐ **δόντος**, εἶτ᾿ ἀποστάντος ἐκείνου, ἀλλ᾿ ἀεὶ **χορηγοῦντος** ἕως ἂν ᾖ ὅπερ ἐστί.

For we are not cut off from him or separate, even if the nature of body has intruded and drawn us to itself, but we breathe and are preserved because that Good **has not given** [its gifts] and then gone away but is always **bestowing** them as long as it is what it is.

**1.3.**

1.6.7.25-28

Εἰ οὖν ἐκεῖνο, ὃ **χορηγεῖ** μὲν ἅπασιν, ἐφ᾿ ἑαυτοῦ δὲ μένον **δίδωσι** καὶ οὐ δέχεταί τι εἰς αὐτό, ἴδοι, μένων ἐν τῇ θέᾳ τοῦ τοιούτου καὶ ἀπολαύων αὐτοῦ ὁμοιούμενος, τίνος ἂν ἔτι δέοιτο καλοῦ¡

If then one sees That which **provides for all** and remains by itself and **gives** [to all] but receives nothing into itself, if he abides in the contemplation of this kind of beauty and rejoices in being made like it, how can he need any other beauty?

**1.4.**

1.8.2.2-9

Ἔστι δὲ τοῦτο, εἰς ὃ πάντα ἀνήρτεται καὶ οὗ πάντα τὰ ὄντα ἐφίεται ἀρχὴν ἔχοντα αὐτὸ κἀκείνου δεόμενα· τὸ δ᾿ ἐστὶν ἀνενδεές, ἱκανὸν ἑαυτῷ, μηδενὸς δεόμενον, μέτρον πάντων καὶ πέρας, **δοὺς ἐξ αὐτοῦ** νοῦν καὶ οὐσίαν καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ ζωὴν καὶ περὶ νοῦν ἐνέργειαν. Καὶ μέχρι μὲν τούτου καλὰ πάντα· αὐτός τε γὰρ ὑπέρκαλος καὶ ἐπέκεινα τῶν ἀρίστων βασιλεύων ἐν τῷ νοητῷ

It is that on which everything depends and ‘to which all beings aspire’ [Aristotle, *Eth.Nic*. 1094a3]; they have it as their principle and need it: but it is without need, sufficient to itself, lacking nothing, the measure and bound of all things, **giving from itself** intellect and real being and soul and life and intellectual activity. Up to it all things are beautiful. But he is beautiful beyond all beauty, and is king in the intelligible realm, transcending the best.

**1.5.**

6.7.16.22

Οὕτως καὶ ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ φύσις αἰτία οὐσίας καὶ νοῦ οὖσα καὶ φῶς κατὰ τὸ ἀνάλογον τοῖς ἐκεῖ ὁρατοῖς καὶ τῷ ὁρῶντι οὔτε τὰ ὄντα οὔτε νοῦς ἐστιν, ἀλλὰ αἴτιος τούτων καὶ < νοεῖν καὶ> νοεῖσθαι φωτὶ τῷ ἑαυτοῦ εἰς τὰ ὄντα καὶ εἰς τὸν νοῦν **παρέχων**.

In this way also the nature of the Good, which is cause of substance and intellect and light, according to our analogy, to the things seen there and the seer, is neither the real beings nor intellect but cause of these, **giving** by its own light thinking and being thought to the real beings and to intellect.

**1.6.**

6.7.25.30-32

Τῷ δὲ νῷ τὸ ἀγαθόν, ὅ φαμεν καὶ εἰς τοῦτο ἥκειν, καὶ ὅτι ἐνέργεια ἐξ αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὅτι καὶ νῦν **δίδωσι** <τι> φῶς λεγόμενον· ὃ δὴ τί ποτ᾿ ἐστίν, ὕστερον.

But for Intellect the Good effects something, the Good which we maintain comes also to this, both because its active actuality comes from it and because now also it **gives** something called light: what this is, we shall see later.

**1.7.**

5.6.4.18-22

[νοῦς] οὐ φῶς ὢν μόνον, ἀλλ᾿ ὃ ἐστι πεφωτισμένον ἐν τῇ αὑτοῦ οὐσίᾳ, τὸ δὲ **παρέχον** τούτῳ τὸ φῶς οὐκ ἄλλο ὂν φῶς ἐστιν ἁπλοῦν **παρέχον** τὴν δύναμιν ἐκείνῳ τοῦ εἶναι ὅ ἐστι. Τί ἂν οὖν αὐτὸ δέοιτό τινος¡

[Intellect] is not only light but that which is enlightened in its own being; and that which **gives** it light is nothing else but is simple light **giving** Intellect the power to be what it is. Why then would it have need of anything?

**1.8.**

6.7.15.18-20

Δύναμιν οὖν εἰς τὸ γεννᾶν εἶχε παρ᾿ ἐκείνου καὶ τῶν αὐτοῦ πληροῦσθαι γεννημάτων **διδόντος** ἐκείνου ἃ μὴ εἶχεν αὐτός.

Intellect therefore had the power from him to generate and to be filled full of its own offspring, since the Good **gave** what he [Intellect] did not himself have.

**1.9.**

5.3.14.13-5.3.15.3

Οὕτω καὶ ἡμεῖς κινδυνεύομεν ἔχειν πρὸς ἐκεῖνο, ὅταν νοῦν καθαρὸν ἔχωμεν, χρώμενοι, ὡς οὗτος ἐστιν ὁ ἔνδον νοῦς, **ὁ δοὺς** οὐσίαν καὶ τὰ ἄλλα, ὅσα τούτου τοῦ στοίχου, αὐτὸς δὲ οἷος ἄρα, ὡς οὐ ταῦτα, ἀλλὰ τι κρεῖττον τούτου, ὃ λέγομεν ‘ὄν’, ἀλλὰ καὶ πλέον καὶ μεῖζον ἢ λεγόμενον, ὅτι καὶ αὐτὸς κρείττων λόγου καὶ νοῦ καὶ αἰσθήσεως, **παρασχὼν ταῦτα**, οὐκ αὐτὸς ὢν ταῦτα. ἀλλὰ πῶς **παρασχών**¡ ἢ τῷ ἔχειν <ἢ τῷ μὴ ἔχειν>. ἀλλ᾿ ἃ μὴ ἔχει, πῶς **παρέσχεν**¡ ἀλλ᾿ εἰ μὲν ἔχων, οὐχ ἁπλοῦς.

So we seem to be disposed towards the One, divining, when we have our intellect pure, that this is the inner intellect, which **gives** substance and everything else which belongs to this level, but that he is not only of a kind not to be these, but something higher than what we call 'being', but is more and greater than anything said about him, because he is higher than speech and thought and awareness; he **gives us these,** but he is not these himself. But how does he **give** them? By having them, or by not having them? But how did he **give** what he does not have? But if he has them, he is not simple.

**1.10.**

6.7.17.4-10

ἢ οὐκ ἀνάγκη, ὅ τις **δίδωσι**, τοῦτο ἔχειν, ἀλλὰ δεῖ ἐν τοῖς τοιούτοις τὸ μὲν **διδὸν** μεῖζον νομίζειν, τὸ δὲ **διδόμενον** ἔλαττον **τοῦ διδόντος**· τοιαύτη γὰρ ἡ γένεσις ἐν τοῖς οὖσι. Πρῶτον γὰρ δεῖ τὸ ἐνεργείᾳ εἶναι, τὰ δ᾿ ὕστερα εἶναι δυνάμει τὰ πρὸ αὐτῶν· καὶ τὸ πρῶτον δὲ ἐπέκεινα τῶν δευτέρων καὶ **τοῦ διδομένου τὸ διδὸν** ἐπέκεινα ἦν· κρεῖττον γάρ.

There is no necessity for anyone to have what he **gives**, but in this kind of situation one must consider that the **Giver** is greater, and that what is **given** is less than the **Giver**; for that is how coming to be is among the real beings. For that which is actual must be first and those that come after must be potentially those before them; and the first transcended the seconds and the **Giver** transcended **the gift**: for it was stronger.

**1.11.**

5.3.7.4-7

Καὶ γὰρ ὅσα ἔχει [sc. νοῦς] παρ᾿ ἐκείνου γνώσεται, καὶ ἃ **ἔδωκε**, καὶ ἃ δύναται ἐκεῖνος. Ταῦτα δὲ μαθὼν καὶ γνοὺς καὶ ταύτῃ ἑαυτὸν γνώσεται· καὶ γὰρ ἓν **τι τῶν δοθέντων** αὐτός, μᾶλλον δὲ **πάντα τὰ δοθέντα** αὐτός.

For it [sc. Intellect] will know all that it has from him, and what he **gives**, and what his power is. But when it has learnt and knows this, then in this way also it will know itself: for it is itself **one of his gifts**, or, rather, itself **all of his gifts**.

**1.12.**

5.4.1.27-36

ὅ τι δ᾿ ἂν τῶν ἄλλων εἰς τελείωσιν ἴῃ, ὁρῶμεν γεννῶν καὶ οὐκ ἀνεχόμενον ἑφ᾿ ἑαυτοῦ μένειν, ἀλλ᾿ ἕτερον ποιοῦν, οὐ μόνον ὅ τι ἂν προαίρεσιν ἔχῃ, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅσα φύει ἄνευ προαιρέσεως, καὶ τὰ ἄψυχα δὲ **μεταδίδοντα ἑαυτῶν** καθόσον δύναται· οἷον τὸ πῦρ θερμαίνει, καὶ ψύχει ἡ χιών, καὶ τὰ φάρμακα δὲ εἰς ἄλλο ἐργάζεται οἷον αὐτά – πάντα τὴν ἀρχὴν κατὰ δύναμιν ἀπομιμούμενα εἰς ἀιδιότητά τε καὶ ἀγαθότητα. Πῶς οὖν τὸ τελεώτατον καὶ τὸ πρῶτον ἀγαθὸν ἐν αὑτῷ σταίη ὥσπερ φθονῆσαν ἑαυτοῦ ἢ ἀδυνατῆσαν, ἡ πάντων δύναμις¡

Now when anything else comes to perfection we see that it produces, and does not endure to remain by itself, but makes something else. This is true not only of things which have choice, but of things which grow and produce without choosing to do so, and even lifeless things, which **impart themselves** to others as far as they can: as fire warms, snow cools, and drugs act on something else in a way corresponding to their own nature – all imitating the First Principle as far as they are able by tending to everlastingness and generosity. How then could the most perfect, the first Good, remain in itself as if it grudged [to give of itself] or was impotent, when it is the productive power of all things?

**2. Contemplation as giving**

**2.1.**

5.6.6.33-36

ἀλλ᾿ οὐδὲ τὰ ἄλλα δεῖ αὐτὸν εἰδέναι· κρεῖττον γάρ τι καὶ μεῖζον **δίδωσιν** αὐτοῖς τοῦ εἰδέναι αὐτά - ἦν τὸ ἀγαθὸν τῶν ἄλλων - ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ, καθόσον δύναται, ἐφάπεσθαι ἐκέινου.

But other things need not know him either; for he **gives** them something better and greater than that they should know him - he is the Good of the others - he gives them rather to be in the same place with him and to lay hold on him, as far as they are able.

**2.2.**

5.5.8.3-7

Διὸ οὐ χρὴ διώκειν, ἀλλ᾿ ἡσυχῇ μένειν, ἕως ἂν φανῇ, παρασκευάσαντα ἑαυτὸν θεατὴν εἶναι, ὤσπερ ὀφθαλμὸς ἀνατολὰς ἡλίου περιμένει· ὁ δὲ ὑπερφανεὶς τοῦ ὁρίζοντος - ἐξ ὠκεανοῦ φασιν οἱ ποιηταὶ - **ἔδωκεν ἑαυτὸν θεάσασθαι** τοῖς ὄμμασιν.

So one must not chase after it, but wait quietly till it appears, preparing oneself to contemplate it, as the eye awaits the rising of the sun; and the sun rising over the horizon (‘from Ocean’, the poets say [*Il*. 7.421-2]) **gives itself to the eyes to see**.

**2.3**

6.7.35.39

ἐκταθὲν δὲ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἐπ᾿ αὐτοῖς καὶ συναρμοσθὲν τῇ ἀμφοτέρων συστάσει ἐπιδραμὸν καὶ ἑνῶσαν τὰ δύο ἔπεστιν αὐτοῖς μακαρίαν **διδοὺς** αἴσθησιν καὶ θέαν, τοσοῦτον ἄρας, ὥστε μήτε ἐν τόπῳ εἶναι, μήτε ἔν τῷ ἄλλῳ.

But the Good is spread out over the them and fitted in to the union of both; playing upon them and uniting the two it rests upon them and **gives** them a blessed perception and vision, lifting them so high that they are not in place nor in anything other.

**2.4**

6.7.22.5-8

ἔστι γὰρ ἕκαστον ὅ ἐστιν ἐφ᾿ αὑτοῦ· ἐφετὸν δὲ γίνεται ἐπιχρώσαντος αὐτὸ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, ὥσπερ χαρίτας **δόντος** αὐτοῖς καὶ εἰς τὰ ἐφιέμενα ἔρωτας. Καὶ τοίνυν ψυχὴ λαβοῦσα εἰς αὐτὴν τὴν ἐκεῖθεν ἀπορροὴν κινεῖται καὶ ἀναβακχεύεται καὶ οἴστρων πίμπλαται καὶ ἔρως γίνεται. Πρὸ τοῦδε οὐδὲ πρὸς τὸν νοῦν κινεῖται, καίπερ καλὸν ὄντα· ἀργόν τε γὰρ τὸ κάλλος αὐτοῦ, πρὶν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ φῶς λάβῃ, ὑπτία τε ἀναπέπτωκεν ἡ ψυχὴ παρ᾿ αὑτῆς καὶ πρὸς πᾶν ἀργῶς ἔχει καὶ παρόντος νοῦ ἐστι πρὸς αὐτὸν νωθής. ἐπειδὰν δὲ ἥκῃ εἰς αὐτὴν ὥσπερ θερμασία ἐκεῖθεν, ῥώννυταί τε καὶ ἐγείρεται καὶ ὄντως πτεροῦται καὶ πρὸς τὸ παρακείμενον καὶ πλησίον καίπερ ἐπτοημένη ὅμως πρὸς ἄλλο οἷον τῇ μνήμῃ μεῖζον κουφίζεται. Καὶ ἕως τί ἐστιν ἀνωτέρω τοῦ παρόντος, αἴρεται φύσει ἄνω αἰρομένη **ὑπὸ τοῦ δόντος τὸν ἔρωτα**.

For each [Form] is what it is by itself; but it becomes desirable when the Good colours it, **giving** a kind of grace to them and passionate love to the desirers. Then the soul, receiving into itself an outflow from thence, is moved and dances wildly and is all stung with longing and becomes love. Before this it is not moved even towards Intellect, for all its beauty; the beauty of Intellect is inactive till it catches a light from the Good, and the soul by itself ‘fall flat on its back’ [*Phaedr*. 251b] and is completely inactive and, though Intellect is present, is unenthusiastic about it. But when a kind of warmth from thence comes upon it, it gains strength and wakes and is truly winged; and though it is moved with passion for that which lies close by it, yet all the same it rises higher, to something greater which it seems to remember. And as long as there is anything higher than that which is present to it, it naturally goes on upwards, lifted by **the Giver of its love**.

**2.5.**

6.9.9.38-47

ἐκεῖ δὲ τὸ ἀληθινὸν ἐρώμενον, ᾧ ἔστι καὶ συνεῖναι μεταλαβόντα αὐτοῦ καὶ ὄντως ἔχοντα, οὐ παριπτυσσόμενον σαρξὶν ἔξωθεν. ὅστις δὲ εἶδεν, οἶδεν ὃ λέγω, ὡς ἡ ψυχὴ ξωὴν ἄλλην ἴσχει τότε καὶ προσιοῦσα καὶ ἤδη προσελθοῦσα καὶ μετασχοῦσα αὐτοῦ, ὥστε γνῶναι διατεθεῖσαν, ὅτι πάρεστιν **ὁ χορηγὸς ἀληθινῆς ζωῆς**, καὶ δεῖ οὐδενὸς ἔτι.

But there is our true love, with whom also we can be united, having a part in him and truly possessing him, not embracing him in the flesh from outside. But ‘whoever has seen, knows what I am saying,’ that the soul then has another life and draws near, and has already come near and has a part in him, and so is in a state to know that **the Giver of true life** is present and we need nothing more.

**2.6.**

6.9.11.23-25

τὸ δὲ ἴσως ἦν οὐ θέαμα, ἀλλὰ ἄλλος τρόπος τοῦ ἰδεῖν, ἔκστασις καὶ ἅπλωσις καὶ **ἐπίδοσις**.

But that other, perhaps, was not a contemplation but another kind of seeing, a being out of oneself and simplifying and **giving oneself over**.

**2.7.**

5.5.8.10-14

ἑστήξεται μὲν γὰρ ὁ νοῦς πρὸς τὴν θέαν εἰς οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἢ πρὸς τὸ καλὸν βλέπων, ἐκεῖ ἑαυτὸν πᾶς τρέπων καὶ **διδούς**, στὰς δὲ καὶ οἶον πληρωθεὶς μένους εἶδε μὲν τὰ πρῶτα καλλίω γενόμενον ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἐπιστίλβοντα, ὡς ἐγγὺς ὄντος αὐτοῦ.

For Intellect will be standing first to its contemplation, looking to nothing but the Beautiful, all turning and **giving itself up** to him, and, motionless and filled somehow with strength, it sees first of all itself become more beautiful, all glittering, because he is near.

**2.8.**

3.8.9.26

ὥσπερ εἰ φωνῆς κατεχούσης ἐρημίαν ἤ καὶ μετὰ τῆς ἐρημίας καὶ ἀνθρώπους ἐν ὁτῳοῦν τοῦ ἐρήμου στήσας οὖς τὴν φωνῆν κομιεῖ πᾶσαν καὶ αὖ οὐ πᾶσαν. Τί οὖν ἐστιν ὃ κομιούμεθα νοῦν παραστησάμενοι¡ Ἤ δεῖ τὸν νοῦν οἷον εἰς τοὐπίσω ἀναχωρεῖν καὶ οἷον **ἑαυτὸν ἀφέντα** τοῖς εἰς ὄπισθεν αὐτοῦ ἀμφίστομον ὄντα, κἀκεῖ, εἰ ἐθέλοι ἐκεῖνο ὁρᾶν, μὴ πάντα νοῦν εἶναι.

Just as if there was a voice filling an empty space, or with the empty space, men too, and by setting yourself to listen at any point in the empty space, you will receive the whole voice, and yet not the whole. What is it, then, which we shall receive, when we set our intellect to it? Rather, the intellect must return, so to speak, backwards, and **give itself up**, in a way, to what lies behind it(for it faces in both directions); and there, if it wishes to see that First Principle, it must not be altogether intellect.