

Giorgio Colli and Plotinus

- I. To catch the intuition, or to be caught by the *pathos*, that the world in which we live is an appearance, an illusion, with the consistency of a dream or, in non-emphatic terms, is a representation, is an unusual experience - as a state of mind - in youthful years, but decisive, when it reaches a fervent and enduring degree of intensity. This is not a discovery of yesterday: you go back almost three thousand years, when you look for its origin. (G. Colli, "Enjoyment of the Contemplator", *Philosophy of expression*, Adelphi, Milano 1969, p.10, my translation)
- II. The world of things is nothing more than a concatenation, a cognitive structure [...] And so the universe of nature, the sky and the stars with their supposed laws, man and his history, with his subtlest thoughts and his most material actions, all this is nothing but representation, and it is legitimate only to interpret it as a cognitive fact. (G. Colli, "Solidity of the representation", *Philosophy of expression*, Adelphi, Milano 1969, p. 11-12, my translation)
- III. As an iridescent mist rises from dark marshes or a damp prairie, so is the world of things that we call life. (G. Colli, "Life and Nature of Life", *Philosophy of expression*, Adelphi, Milano 1969, p. 11, my translation)
- IV. The saying of having touched is the primitive judgment A is.
 [the saying, which is the expression, the objectification of touch, doubles the immediacy in the objective element A - which expresses the concreteness, the *tóde ti* of the touch - and in the *is*, which expresses the cognitive reproduction of that experience] the content expressed is poorer when it is expressed compared to when it was experienced in its immediacy. (G. Colli, *The wandering reason*, Adelphi, Milano 1982, [6], p. 30, my translation)
- V. Consider: the visible Socrates is a man, yet we give the name of Socrates to that likeness of him in a portrait, which consists of mere colors, mere pigments: similarly, it is a Reason-Principle which constitutes Socrates, but we apply the name Socrates to the Socrates we see: in truth, however, the colors and shapes which make up the visible Socrates are but reproductions of those in the Reason-Principle, while this Reason-Principle itself bears a corresponding relation to the truest Reason-Principle of Man". (Plotinus, *Enn.* VI, III, chap. 15, in *Select works of Plotinus*, Bell, London 1912)
- VI. Despite its divine origin, language is a sign of imperfection: the soul is forced to speak for a defect, because not being identical to the true Being and having to contemplate something different from itself, it takes a search, to learn what it also possesses through sharing". (Cleto Carbonara, *La filosofia di Plotino*, Libreria scientifica editrice, Napoli 1964, p. 281, my translation)
- VII. The thought for its purity and simplicity has a certain intuitive character and, consequently, captures, like sensation, the differences between the various things, but being superior to the discourse, does not reason and, knowing intuitively, does not care to have a criterion for evaluating the differences themselves. Because of its immediacy, the thought can also be said to be somewhat unconscious [...], because it means that the discursive reflection intervenes to weaken the intensity of intellectual life. (Cleto Carbonara, *La filosofia di Plotino*, Libreria scientifica editrice, Napoli 1964, p. 271, my translation)
- VIII. How therefore, can we speak of it? We are able indeed to say something of it, but we do not speak it. Nor have we either any knowledge, or intellectual perception of it. For we can say what is not, but we cannot say what it is, so that we speak of it from things posterior to it. We are not, however, prevented from possessing it, though we cannot say what it is. But in the same manner of those who energize enthusiastically and become divinely inspired, perceive indeed, that they have something greater in themselves, though they do not know what it is; but of the things by which they are excited they speak, and from these receive a certain sensation of the moving power, which is different from them; in this manner also we appear to be affected about that which is perfectly simple" (Plotinus, *Enn.* V, III, XIV, in *Select works of Plotinus*, Bell, London 1912)
- IX. Whoever undergoes this *pathos* has a tendency to contemplation, since to understand means to contemplate; and to contemplate is to distance oneself from the bottom of life. He who is immersed in this can feel the illusory nature of it. To know is to lose something from the bottom of life. But the enjoyment of the moment, paradoxically, is more intense in the knower. The instantaneous vision of a fragment of life is unsettling for those who are separated from life, cutting off their impulses of appropriation, and in doing so they are thwarted, pouring themselves out of themselves, into the image recognized as illusory. The saving of action transforms itself into the acquisition of power: those who attend a show receive strength. (G. Colli, "Enjoyment of the Contemplator", *Philosophy of expression*, p. 10-11, Adelphi, Milano 1969, my translation)
- X. Virtue is only the ascent of the soul towards the superphysical and therefore its liberation from all interest in bodily things and from the passions that may derive from it. Not acting in the world is supreme wisdom, but withdrawing from the noise of the physical world - the noise of nothingness - in the silence of the soul, to make itself as much as possible similar to God, who dwells unchangeable and quiet, yet possessing an infinite life. (Cleto Carbonara, *La filosofia di Plotino*, Libreria scientifica editrice, Napoli 1964, p. 264, my translation)
- XI. Greatness is still power, but not consumed in struggle [...] It is alone, without duality, contemplates life, reflects it in its totality, it is not a single knot of struggle. (G. Colli, *The wandering reason*, Adelphi, Milano 1982, [122], p. 144, my translation)
- XII. In that which is perfectly simple, there is nothing discursive; but it is sufficient to come in contact with it intellectually (*νοερώς ἐράψασθαι*). That, however, which comes into contact with it, when it is in contact, is neither able to say anything, nor has leisure to speak; but afterwards reasons about it. (Plotinus, *Enn.* V, III, chap. XIV, in *Select works of Plotinus*, Bell, London 1912)