

Trinity University

## Digital Commons @ Trinity

---

Philosophy Faculty Research

Philosophy Department

---

2008

### Plotinus on Primary Being

Damian Caluori

Trinity University, dcaluori@trinity.edu

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/phil\\_faculty](https://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/phil_faculty)



Part of the [Philosophy Commons](#)

---

#### Repository Citation

Caluori, D. (2008). Plotinus on primary being. In H. Gutschmidt, A. Lang-Balestra, G. Sebalerba (Eds.), *Substantia &mdash; Sic et non: Eine geschichte des substanzbegriffs von der antike bis zur gegenwart* (pp. 85-103). Ontos Verlag: Frankfurt, Germany.

This Contribution to Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Philosophy Department at Digital Commons @ Trinity. It has been accepted for inclusion in Philosophy Faculty Research by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Trinity. For more information, please contact [jcostanz@trinity.edu](mailto:jcostanz@trinity.edu).

instruxit fragmentorum collectionem retractavit Olof Gigon, 5 Bde., Berlin-West 1960-1987.

Aristoteles, Topik, übersetzt und mit Anmerkungen versehen von Eugen Rolfes. Mit einer Einleitung von Hans Günther Zekl, Hamburg 1992.

Bonitz, H., Index Aristotelicus, Darmstadt 1960. Photomechanischer Nachdruck der Ausgabe von 1870.

Frede, M., Substance in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, in: Aristotle on Nature and Living Things, edited by A. Gotthelf, Pittsburgh 1985, Seiten 17-26; oder in: Essays in Ancient Philosophy, Oxford 1987, Seiten 72-80.

Frede, M., Essays in Ancient Philosophy, Oxford 1987.

Frede, M. – Patzig, G., Aristoteles "Metaphysik Z". Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar, 2 Bde., München 1988.

Hicks, R. D., Aristotle De Anima, with Translation, Introduction and Notes by R. D. Hicks, London 1907, Amsterdam 1965, Olms 1990.

Kung, J., Aristotle on Theses, Suches and the Third Man Argument, in: „Phronesis“, XXVI, 3 (1981), Seiten 207-247.

Leszl, W., Il "De Ideis" di Aristotele e la teoria platonica delle idee. Edizione critica del testo a cura di Dieter Harlfinger, Florenz 1975.

Loux, M. J., Primary Ousia. An essay on Aristotle's *Metaphysics Z* and *H*, Ithaca and London 1991.

Ross, W. D., Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary, Oxford 1924.

Schwegler, A., Die *Metaphysik* des Aristoteles. Grundtext, Übersetzung und Kommentar nebst erläuternden Abhandlungen. Erster Band. Grundtext und Kritischer Apparat, Tübingen 1847-1848. Unveränderter Nachdruck Frankfurt am Main 1960.

Smith, J. A., Tóde ti in Aristotle, in „Classical Review“, 35, (1921), Seite 19.

## Damian Caluori: Plotinus on Primary Being

Late antique philosophers took a great interest in metaphysics. Indeed, the discipline's very name, "metaphysics", goes back to late antiquity.<sup>1</sup> One of the main reasons for this great interest can be found in the view – widespread in this period – that an understanding of reality is crucial for our lives and for the destiny and salvation of our souls.<sup>2</sup> Only by contemplating and by possessing knowledge of reality – a reality that was thought to be beyond the world of our ordinary experience – is the soul in an uncorrupted state of well being. Metaphysics is precisely the discipline that aims at this understanding. It aims at explaining reality. Given the importance of understanding reality we can see why the study of metaphysics was considered to be of prime importance.

How important late antique philosophers considered metaphysics can, for example, be seen from Porphyry's edition of Plotinus' writings. Porphyry divided them into six parts (each consisting of nine treatises and hence called an *Ennead*), one containing treatises devoted to ethics, two containing treatises devoted to physics and three containing treatises devoted to metaphysics. The fact that half of Plotinus' writings deal with metaphysics clearly shows how hugely important metaphysics was to Plotinus.<sup>3</sup>

From its very beginning, the central question of metaphysics has been the question "what is being?" Plotinus was the heir of a long tradition of thinking about this question. It had first been explicitly raised, as far as we can tell, in Plato's *Sophistes*. Considering the views of his predecessors, Plato has Theaetetus ask: "Or do you think we first have to examine what those who talk about being believe themselves to make clear?" (*Soph.*

<sup>1</sup> Presumably this name originally derives from the place that early editors of Aristotle's corpus gave to a number of treatises that they found themselves unable to place according to the traditional tripartite division of philosophy into logic, physics, and ethics. Given that these writings, just like the physical writings, are of a theoretical kind, they decided to put them after the physical writings (*meta ta physika*). Later, when Platonism with its two-world-view (see below) became the dominant philosophy in late antiquity, this place was quite fitting: while physics deals with the sensible world, metaphysics deals with the intelligible world. See Alexander in *Metaph.* 171, 5-7 and Asclepius in *Metaph.* 1, 19-22. For an alternative account see Reiner (1954) 210-237.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Porphyry *Abst.* I 29.

<sup>3</sup> Some of the most important works on Plotinus are: Armstrong (1940); Schwyzer (1951); Armstrong (1967); Rist (1967); Bréhier (1968); Igal (1992); O'Meara (1992); Gerson (1994). An impressively comprehensive bibliography is Dufour (2001).

243D) Plato thinks that his predecessors talk about being as if it was clear what they are talking about in doing so. Given what they say about being, however, such clarity is, according to Plato, misplaced. This is why Plato sets himself the task of clarifying what it is that his predecessors are talking about when they are talking about being and at *Soph.* 246A he explicitly asks the question “what is being?”

Plato’s question is referred to by Aristotle in his *Metaphysics* as “the old and today still pressing question, which leads every time it is asked into difficulties” (*Metaph.* 1028b2-4). As a first step to answering the question “what is being?” Aristotle distinguishes primary being from all other kinds of being and calls primary being *ousia* (e.g. *Metaph.* Z 1, 1028a10ff; *Metaph.* Θ 1, 1045b26ff.). Beings that are not primary (such as, e.g., qualities or quantities) are not primary because they depend for their being on another kind of being, namely on primary being. A quality, for example, presupposes something that is a primary being (such as, e.g., a man) and of which it is the quality. Thus a quality can only be what it is (namely a quality) because there is something else (namely an *ousia*) of which it is the quality. This is why a quality is not a primary being. Accordingly, primary beings are primary because they, for their being, do not presuppose any other being. They are *simpliciter* what they are.

Now according to Aristotle, *ousia* is not only prior in *being* but also in knowledge (*Metaph.* Z 1, 1028a36ff.). Aristotle believes that in order to be able to understand non-primary being we first have to understand primary being. Only on the basis of primary being will we be able to explain non-primary being. Thus, also in this sense non-primary being depends on primary being. But if so then in order to answer the question “what is being?” we primarily have to answer the question “what is *ousia*?” Accordingly, Aristotle claims that the question “what is being?” actually is the question “what is *ousia*?” In this sense the question “what is *ousia*?” is the central question of metaphysics (*Metaph.* Z 1, 1028b4-7).<sup>4</sup>

With Aristotle’s question in mind let us now turn to Plotinus. In order to try to understand what, according to Plotinus, *ousia* is, it is useful, I think, to look at the things that Plotinus calls *ousiai*. Plotinus applies the word “*ousia*” to bodies, to the soul, to the intellect and to the world of Platonic

<sup>4</sup> Usually, scholars translate “*ousia*” with “substance”. Now substances, as we use the word “substance”, are concrete individual beings that are bearers of attributes. In this sense “substance” is already an answer to the question: “what is *ousia*?” The reason why we use the word “substance” in the way we do can be ultimately found in the Latin tradition of commentaries on Aristotle’s *Categories*. In this tradition the Latin word “*substantia*” from which our word “substance” derives, was used to denote the first Aristotelian category, the category of *ousia*, which primarily consists of individual beings that are bearers of attributes. As we will see, however, according to Plotinus this is not the correct answer to the question “what is *ousia*?” This is why it is perhaps better not to translate it in this way. For the relation of “*substantia*” and “*ousia*” see Arpe (1941) 65–78 and Mann (2000), in particular 11f.

Forms. Already by looking at this list we can see that Plotinus puts himself into the tradition of Plato and Aristotle. For Plato famously calls the world of Forms *ousia*. He also holds that intellect and soul are true beings and belong to the realm of *ousia* (*Soph.* 248Aff.). Aristotle, while rejecting the world of Platonic Forms, agrees with Plato on the being *ousia* of soul and intellect, and adds bodies to the list.

In what follows I wish to discuss in what sense Plotinus calls each of the items on the list *ousia*. It will turn out that not all of them are called *ousia* in the same way. There is only one entity that is *ousia* in the primary way and hence primarily and properly called *ousia*. All other beings that are called *ousia* are not primary *ousia*. Their being *ousia* depends, as will turn out, in one way or other on the “*ousia*-hood” of the primary *ousia*. To give content to this rather abstract claim let us start with a discussion of the first item on our list: bodies.

#### Ousia in the sensible world: bodies

Bodies may seem to be uncontroversial cases of *ousia*. They are the things that primarily make up the sensible world, the world that surrounds us and that we perceive with our senses. It seems quite plausible to assume that whatever else there might be in the sensible world depends in one way or other on bodies. This view was already held by Aristotle. Thus he claims in *Metaphysics* Z 2: “Now it seems that *ousia* most clearly applies to bodies; this is why we say of animals and of plants and of their parts that they are *ousiai*; but also of natural bodies like fire and water and earth... and what is composed of them... as, for example, the universe and its parts, the stars, the moon and the sun” (*Metaph.* 1028b8-13). In a first analysis, following what Aristotle has to say about *ousia* in the *Categories*, it becomes clear why – at least to start with – we might be inclined to believe that bodies are primary beings. They are primary in the two ways discussed above in relation to such things as qualities or quantities. Whilst qualities, for example, depend on bodies in these two ways, there is nothing on which bodies depend in these two ways. Hence, in a first analysis, bodies seem to be *ousiai*. Yet, as is well known, Aristotle further analyses the notion of *ousia* in the *Metaphysics*. Before considering his further analysis, however, let us see how Aristotle’s view so far discussed relates to Plotinus. In order to do so we have to turn to *Ennead* VI 3.

*Ennead* VI 3 is the third part of a long treatise called *On the genera of Being* (*Peri tōn genōn tou ontos*). The title of the treatise, given by Porphyry, corresponds to the title sometimes given in late antiquity to Aristotle’s *Categories*. The *Categories* were named “On the Genera of Being” by philosophers who considered it to be a treatise on the highest genera of being and thus to be a metaphysical treatise. Now Plotinus’

treatise of the same name was divided by Porphyry into three parts. These three parts have since then been called *Ennead* VI 1, VI 2, and VI 3 respectively. *Ennead* VI 1 is devoted to a critique of both Aristotle's categories and the so-called Stoic categories. *Ennead* VI 2 is devoted to the genera of being of the intelligible world and *Ennead* VI 3 is devoted to the genera of being of the sensible world. In the present context we are only interested in the genera of the sensible world since it is to this world that bodies belong.

According to Plotinus there are five genera of being in the sensible world: *ousia*, quantity, quality, motion, and relatives. Although, as already a cursory glance at Plotinus' list of categories will reveal, there are differences from Aristotle's categories, we can also detect close parallels. In particular, both contain a category of *ousia*. Moreover, Plotinus agrees with Aristotle that things of all other categories depend for their being on *ousia*. For he states that all things that belong to the four other categories are predicated of *ousia* or are accidents of it (*Enn.* VI 3, 3, 3-6). So far, Plotinian *ousiai* (in the sensible world at least) seem to be very similar to Aristotle's *ousiai*. Despite these similarities a further analysis reveals important differences between the two notions of *ousia*.

As stated above, Aristotle, in his *Metaphysics*, goes further in his analysis of *ousia*. In *Metaphysics* Z 3 he considers three candidates for being *ousia*, namely matter, form and the composite.<sup>5</sup> According to Aristotle, precisely these candidates are ultimate subjects in one sense or other, and he believes that for something to be an *ousia* it has to be an ultimate subject (compare also *Metaph.* Δ 8, 1017b23-4). In his further analysis matter and composite turn out not to be *ousia* (at least not in a primary sense) and form remains as the only candidate for being *ousia* (1029a27-33) and thus becomes the proper subject of his metaphysical enquiry.

Although matter and composite are no longer considered to be *ousiai* in a primary sense by Aristotle there remains the question of their ontological status. If we bear in mind the schema of the categories, it is clear that they do not belong to any of the traditional accidental categories. They are no qualities, no quantities etc. Do they, then, nevertheless belong to the category of *ousia* and – given that they are not *ousiai* – how and in what sense? Or do we have to introduce two new categories, namely that of matter and that of the composite? These questions had been discussed in late antiquity from Boethus of Sidon onwards (see Simplicius, *in Cat.* 78, 4ff.).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> I shall write "Form" with a capital "F" to refer to Forms of the Platonic type and "form" with a small "f" to refer to forms of the Aristotelian type.

<sup>6</sup> See Moraux (1977) 155 and a more detailed discussion in Chiaradonna (2002) 65-77.

Plotinus readily dismisses the view that matter, form and composite are three distinct genera (*Enn.* VI 3, 3), one reason being that matter is not a genus at all. But if they all belong to the same genus, namely *ousia*, then there must be something that they have in common. Plotinus considers several criteria that something has to fulfil in order to be an *ousia* and thus several characteristics that all three should have in common. He considers, for example, the criterion that something has to be a subject in order to be an *ousia*. He concludes that even if matter, form, and composite fulfil these criteria, they do so in different ways. Accordingly, Plotinus believes, they are *ousia* in different senses (*Enn.* VI 3, 5, 35-39).

Since he believes that this analysis does not lead us to an understanding of what *ousia* is in the sensible world, Plotinus makes a fresh start. At *Enn.* VI 3, 8, 1, he starts systematically to consider what he now calls "sensible *ousia*" (instead of "*ousia*" unqualifiedly). He claims that matter and form, although present in the sensible world, are not *ousia*, "or at least not sensible *ousia*" (*Enn.* VI 3, 8, 4). In doing so, he rejects Aristotle's further analysis of sensible *ousia* into matter and form in the following sense. Contrary to Aristotle he does not believe that the analysis of sensible *ousia* will reveal something that is prior to sensible *ousia* in the sensible world in such a way as to be *ousia* properly speaking. While according to Aristotle it will turn out in a final analysis that – properly speaking – (Aristotelian) forms are *ousiai*, Plotinus does not think so. Plotinus rejects Aristotelian forms as basic entities of the sensible world and argues that the basic entities of the sensible world are sensible *ousiai* (namely bodies) and that no further analysis of them will reveal something that is – properly speaking – *ousia*.

Despite rejecting Aristotle's further analysis, Plotinus nevertheless allows for a further (albeit non-Aristotelian) analysis of sensible *ousiai*. A sensible *ousia* is, as he defines at *Enn.* VI 3, 8, 20, "a conglomeration of qualities and matter", with "qualities" to be understood here in a broad sense including, for example, quantities. In keeping with what we have discussed above Plotinus insists that the things that make up a sensible *ousia* are not themselves *ousiai* (*Enn.* VI 3, 8, 29-30). They are not, for example, Aristotelian forms. Thus, he believes that sensible *ousiai* are made up of things that are not *ousia* (*Enn.* VI 3, 8, 30-31). Instead, the things that make up sensible *ousia* are matter and qualities ("quality" to be understood in a broad sense). Thus, a quality can be in a sensible *ousia* in two ways. It can either be a constitutive part of a sensible *ousia* or it can only be an accident of a sensible *ousia* without, however, being constitutive of it.

In order better to understand this let us look at a particular body as an example, the body of Socrates. Let us assume that Socrates is pale. This quality is constitutive of the *ousia* of the body of Socrates. If Socrates gets angry and turns red, the redness, although also being a quality of Socrates,

is not constitutive of him. Instead it is only one of his accidents. To use Plotinian phrases, in the former case the paleness is “hidden in the mixture” and in the latter case the redness “comes as an addition” (*Enn.* VI 3 8, 24-27). Let us now compare our pale Socrates with John who is not pale by nature but who sometimes, when he sees something shocking, turns pale. Now the paleness of Socrates and the paleness of John (when John is in a state of paleness) do not – as paleness – differ from one another. Nevertheless, Socrates’ paleness is constitutive of Socrates while John’s paleness is only an accident of John and hence not constitutive of him.

But does this example not show, one might ask, that Plotinus misses Aristotle’s point? For Aristotle is not only looking for something that is the bearer of accidents when he asks the question “what is *ousia*?” The *ousia* of something is crucially what the thing really is and, accordingly, it is our understanding of the *ousia* that allows us to understand what the thing really is. What Aristotle tries to show in the *Metaphysics*, is precisely this: what a thing really is, is its form.

Plotinus, on the other hand, it seems, does not account for this at all. In claiming that bodies, his primary entities in the sensible world, are made up only of things that are themselves not *ousia*, he does not account for what bodies really are. As we have seen, his bodies, even the bodies of living beings, are nothing but conglomerations of qualities and matter. Hence, there is nothing within them that accounts for what they are.<sup>7</sup> Hence, since bodies are *ousiai*, the primary beings of the sensible world, he does not explain what *ousia* in the sensible world is.

Plotinus is happy to concede this. At *Enn.* VI 3, 8, 30ff he states: “And there is no need to object if we make sensible *ousia* out of what is not *ousia*; for even the whole is not true *ousia* but imitates true *ousia* ...” Thus, Plotinus believes that *ousiai* in the sensible world are not true *ousiai* at all. They are mere imitations of true *ousia*. The fact that they are no true *ousiai* can precisely be seen in the fact that they lack something that is what they really are. If *ousiai* in the sensible world are not true *ousiai* then, clearly, there is nothing in the sensible world – corresponding, for example, to Aristotelian forms – that makes bodies true beings.<sup>8</sup>

Plotinus’ view must be seen against the background of a division that is crucial to Plotinus and to every Platonist. It is the division of intelligible world and sensible world that can be found in a famous and highly

<sup>7</sup> Perhaps one may object that the *soul* is the thing that accounts for what the body is. I do not wish to dispute this. However, the soul is not part of the sensible world and, in particular, it is not a constitutive part of the body for whose being it accounts. This is why the soul is not considered here. I will, however, discuss it below.

<sup>8</sup> For a discussion of Plotinus’ rejection of Aristotle’s theory of sensible substance and for the historical background of Plotinus’ view in late antiquity see Chiaradonna (1999) 25-57.

influential passage of Plato’s *Timaeus*. At *Ti.* 27D-28A it is claimed: “First of all we have, according to my opinion, to make the following distinction: what is that which always is and has no becoming and what is that which always is becoming and never is? The former is to grasp by thought with reason, being always the same. The latter is subject to opinion by belief with non-rational perception, becoming and passing away but never really being.” Thus, there are two realms, only one of which consists of true being. This is the realm that was to be called the intelligible world by later Platonists. The other realm, as the *Timaeus* will later reveal, is the sensible world, a world of becoming that never really is. Whatever the details of this basic Platonic division, if the sensible world is such as claimed in this passage, then there is no being in the sensible world, let alone primary being, *ousia*.

This point is well understood by Plotinus. At *Enn.* VI 2, 1 he starts his discussion of the intelligible world and distinguishes it from the sensible world. At *Enn.* VI 2, 1, 16ff. he claims: “Since we are now investigating being or the things that are beings, it is first necessary to distinguish between what we call being... and what others think is being, but we call it becoming and say that it is never really being.” In this passage Plotinus clearly alludes to our *Timaeus*-passage. He even quotes the last few words of it. In numerous other passages, too, we can see that Plotinus holds the two-world-view common among Platonists (e.g. *Enn.* IV 7, 8<sup>5</sup>, 46-50; *Enn.* VI 5, 2, 9-16). Thus Plotinus believes that there is an intelligible world and that there is a sensible world and that being and *ousia*, properly speaking, can only be found in the former.

But if Plotinus endorses the Platonic view that there is no being in the sensible world – let alone *ousia* – we might think that something has gone fundamentally wrong in the former discussion. For we claimed that there are five genera of *being* in the sensible world. Moreover, we called the first genus of being *ousia* and identified sensible *ousiai* with bodies. But now Plotinus seems to be saying that there is no being in the sensible world at all and in particular no *ousia*. Moreover, at the beginning of this paper I claimed that bodies, sensible *ousiai*, are among the things that Plotinus calls *ousia*, and this was the reason for our discussion so far. Why does Plotinus talk of sensible *ousiai* and why does he call bodies *ousia* if there is no *ousia* in the sensible world?

We can find a way out of this difficulty in claiming that Plotinus uses the words “being” and “*ousia*” ambiguously. They are not applied in the same sense when applied to true being and *ousia* in the intelligible world (we leave open for the moment what this world contains) and when applied to bodies in the sensible world. The introduction of this homonymy is not, as might seem to be the case, ad hoc. It is, rather, a special case of a general principle that Plotinus endorses according to which things that have the same name but do not belong to the same ontological level are

systematically homonymous. A full discussion of this principle lies outwith the confines of the present paper. For our purposes perhaps the following example helps to explain the function of this principle. Let us assume that according to Platonists there is the (Platonic) Form *Human Being* and that there are human beings in the sensible world. On the one hand the Form and the sensible things of the same name are not called by the same name accidentally. Instead, there is a systematic ontological connection between the Form *Human Being* and sensible human beings. For the Form is the principle and paradigm of sensible things of the same name. But Platonists (not least to avoid the Third Man argument) also made sure that the Form *Human Being* and sensible human beings are not called by the same name synonymously. Sensible human beings are not human beings in the same way, in which the Form *Human Being* is what it is. Unlike the Form *Human Being*, sensible human beings are human beings through their participation in the Form *Human Being*. Accordingly, the Form *Human Being* and sensible human beings are not called “human being” synonymously. Instead, there is a systematic homonymy. This example suffices, I hope, to give an idea of how Plotinus dealt with the problem that things on different ontological levels are called by the same name homonymously.

Let us now apply this principle to Plotinus’ use of the words “being” and “ousia”. There are things called “being” and there are things called “ousia” on different ontological levels. But they are not called “being” or “ousia” synonymously. Instead, they are called “being” or “ousia” homonymously in a systematic way. But if so, then talking of sensible *ousia* and of being in the sensible world is compatible with denying that there is *ousia* and being in the sensible world. For there is no *true* being and no *true ousia* in the sensible world.<sup>9</sup>

Let us now return to our discussion of *ousia* in the sensible world and to a further question one might wish to ask. At the beginning of this paper I listed the soul among the things that Plotinus calls *ousia*. So one might wonder why *bodies* are considered the primary beings of the sensible world. Why not souls? For, clearly, in a Platonic framework the soul is ontologically prior to the body. Moreover, the sensible world, as it is described in Plato’s *Timaeus*, is a composite of body and soul, and so are all corporeal living beings in the sensible world. Plotinus would certainly not disagree with this Platonic claim. Moreover, souls, according to Plotinus, care for their respective bodies. They occupy a “middle rank” among beings (*Enn.* IV 8, 7, 5), i.e. a middle rank between the world of Platonic Forms and the sensible world. They are, “one might say,

<sup>9</sup> Compare also Aristotle’s understanding of *being* and *ousia*. Aristotle claims that they are systematically homonymous. For *being* see, e.g., his analysis in *Metaph.* Γ 2 and for *ousia* *Metaph.* Z 3, 1028b33 and *Metaph.* Λ 1, 1069a30. See also Morrison (1987).

amphibious, living by turns the life there [i.e. in the intelligible realm] and the life here [i.e. in the sensible world]” (*Enn.* IV 8, 4, 31ff.). In so far as souls care for bodies and live their lives in the sensible world, one might think they are in the sensible world. So why are souls not the primary beings of the sensible world?

At the beginning of his discussion of the sensible world (*Enn.* VI 3, 1, 21-31) Plotinus considers this question. True, the soul is active both in the intelligible world and in the sensible world. This is why Plotinus claims, as quoted above, that the soul occupies a middle rank among beings. Thus, in the sense in which the soul is active both in the intelligible world and in the sensible world, it is also present in both worlds. However, the soul’s activity and presence in the sensible world is not essential to the soul. It is only what Plotinus calls the soul’s *external* activity (as opposed to its internal and essential activity). This external activity consists in the soul’s giving life to bodies (*Enn.* IV 7, 9, 6). The soul provides the body with everything that is necessary for the latter to be a living body. It keeps its body alive, for example, in taking note of the body’s states. If the body is in a state of needing food the soul will try to act in such a way as to provide it with food. To use another example: in exercising sense perception the soul is able to detect whether there is something around that threatens the body’s health or survival. If the soul sees or hears something that it considers to be a threat for its body’s survival it will usually try to save its body by making it run away or by undertaking some equivalent action. These and many other such actions are activities of the soul in the sensible world. Although the soul has to exercise all these activities in order to care for its body, they are not essential to the soul. Since the soul’s activity in the sensible world is not essential to the soul, the soul does not essentially belong to the sensible world. Instead, it essentially belongs to the intelligible world, the world of true being and *ousia* (*Enn.* VI 3, 1, 25).<sup>10</sup>

I shall consider the soul’s belonging to the intelligible world in the next section of this paper. For the moment it is only important to see that the soul’s activity in the sensible world does not make it a member of this world precisely because its activity here is not essential to it. This is why Plotinus considers bodies – and not souls – to be the primary beings of the sensible world. And for this reason he claims that the soul must be left out in an investigation of the sensible world, “although it is difficult” (*Enn.* VI 3, 1, 25). In the same passage Plotinus compares the presence of the soul here with the presence of resident foreigners in a city. Just as the resident foreigners have to be left out in a classification of the citizens of a city so the soul has to be left out in an account of the sensible world (*ibid.*).

<sup>10</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the distinction between the soul’s activities in the intelligible and in the sensible world see Caluori (2005).

To conclude this section of the paper, bodies are the primary beings of the sensible world. Everything else in the sensible world depends on them ontologically, and in this sense they are primary beings. They are, however, not properly called *ousia*. For the sensible world is not the world of true being and *ousia*. Rather, it is the world of becoming and change. Sensible *ousiai*, bodies, are mere images or shadows of true being. They lack an inherent principle, which accounts for what they are (such as Aristotelian forms). Instead, the principle that keeps them in being and alive comes from outside. This principle is the soul. The soul, however, unlike the body, does not belong to this world and is for this reason not the primary being of the sensible world.

#### Ousia in the intelligible world I: the soul

The soul, I claimed above, essentially belongs to the intelligible world. Since, moreover, the intelligible world is the world of true being and *ousia*, the soul's claim to being *ousia* seems to be better justified than the claim of bodies. Whether, however, the soul is *ousia* in the proper and primary sense, remains to be seen. For we know that Plotinus also calls the intellect and the world of Forms *ousia*. Thus, either the soul is *ousia* in the same sense as the intellect and as the world of Forms (and all are rightly and primarily called *ousia*) or the soul, although being rightly called *ousia* in one way is nevertheless not rightly called *ousia* in another way.<sup>11</sup> In order to establish which alternative holds true, we first have to consider in what sense the soul is called *ousia*.

In a discussion of the Peripatetic view of the soul Plotinus states: "The soul, therefore, does not have its being by being the form of something, but it is an *ousia* which does not derive its being from its foundation in a body" (*Enn.* IV 7, 8<sup>s</sup>, 40-41). We have already seen that the soul is not the form of a body. This is important. For were the soul dependent on the body for its being, it would not be *ousia*, i.e. it would not be *primary* being. It would rather be something like a quality, in that qualities are dependent for their being on the things whose qualities they are. Were the soul a form of a body in the sense that it had its being from its foundation in a body, it would, just like a quality, depend for its being on the body whose soul it is.

Instead of having its being from its foundation in a body, the soul "has being of itself" (*Enn.* IV 7, 9, 1). This is crucial for its status as being an *ousia*. For an *ousia*, as we have learnt from Aristotle, is what it is *per se*. It does not derive its being from any other being. In our passage Plotinus makes clear that the soul does not derive its being from its foundation in

<sup>11</sup> The third option, namely that the soul is rightly and primarily called *ousia* whilst the intellect and the world of Forms are not, can be ruled out from the start.

the body. He does not explain, however, whether the soul only has its being of itself as opposed to having its being from its foundation in a body or – what is a stronger claim – whether the soul has its being of itself *tout court*, i.e. independently of any other being. This is a question to which we shall have cause to return. But first we need to try to understand better why the soul is an *ousia* and a true being. For while Plotinus claims in the same passage that it is "clear that it [i.e. the soul] is what we call real being" (*Enn.* IV 7, 8<sup>s</sup>, 46), we might think that this is not so clear.

In order to understand Plotinus' claim it is helpful, I think, to go back to the passage of the *Timaeus* (27D-28A) discussed above. Plato distinguishes in this passage the world of true being from the world of becoming. Members of the former world fulfil two criteria that members of the latter do not fulfil: firstly, true being must always be and never become and, secondly, true being is always the same. These criteria are not only necessary conditions that something has to fulfil to count as *ousia*. They also teach us something about *ousia*, about what *ousia* is like. We will see both in this and in the next section that everything that is *ousia* in the intelligible world not only fulfils these two criteria but also that fulfilling these criteria is crucial for what they are.

Does the soul fulfil them? Let us first consider the first criterion and ask whether the soul always is and never becomes. The discussion of this question can also be found at *Enn.* IV 7. In this treatise Plotinus argues, among other things, for the immortality of the soul. His argument relies on a passage in Plato's *Phaedo* (*Phd.* 102Aff.). According to the *Phaedo*'s final argument for the immortality of the soul, the soul is necessarily always accompanied by life. According to Plotinus' interpretation this amounts to the claim that the soul is essentially alive and that, for this reason, it always is. But life is not one essential attribute of the soul among others – it is more than that. For Plotinus even identifies the soul with life – at least with life of a certain kind (*Enn.* IV 7, 11, 9ff.). I shall come back to the qualification "of a certain kind" later. For now let us focus on the claim that the soul and life (of a certain kind) are identical. This identification is helpful in determining what the soul is if we can establish what the life is with which it is identical. Before, however, trying to determine what kind of life the soul is identical with, let us first consider something that might seem puzzling about this identity claim.

We might wonder how the soul, if it is life, can fulfil the second criterion stated above: how can it always be the same if it is life? For life seems to be a manifold activity, always changing, motivated by desires that have to be satisfied. Now this picture of life is clearly modelled on the life as seen in the sensible world. We need not assume, however, that this is the only kind of life and that there is not another kind of life, a kind of life that is compatible with the second criterion. As a matter of fact, at least some philosophers in antiquity held the view that there is also a kind of life that

is unchanging and always the same. Let me put forward two examples to show this.

Firstly, God as considered by Aristotle in *Metaphysics*  $\Lambda$  7 lives an unchanging life. God's life exclusively consists of the highest form of thinking (namely intellectual contemplation, *noêsis*). This thinking is not a process leading, for example, from premises to conclusions, and hence there is no change in the life of God. Instead, God's thinking, his life, is eternally unchanging and pure actuality, to use Aristotle's term. Moreover, this kind of life, Aristotle claims, is the best life and thus a life that is better than the life of change that sublunary beings live.

Secondly, some pagan Platonists, like those in Ps. Justin's *Quaestiones Christianorum ad Gentiles*, thought that the Christian view of a creation in time caused problems because it would imply that God is not unchanging. For God would have had an unrealised potentiality before creating the sensible world. In creating the sensible world at some point in time he would actualise this potentiality and thus change – a claim that was considered incompatible with God's perfection.<sup>12</sup>

The second example differs from the first in that the life of God as considered by these pagan Platonists does not only consist of theoretical contemplation. God's creation of the sensible world rather implies, according to them, a creative activity of God – an activity that leads to the creation of the sensible world. The second example shares with the first the claim that the essential activity of God, even though it is not identical with the essential activity of Aristotle's God, is also eternally unchanging.

How do these examples relate to Plotinus' view of the soul? We have seen in the last section that the soul is active in the sensible world and that this activity is not essential to the soul. There is, however, another activity of the soul that is essential to it and that is prior to the soul's activity in the sensible world. This essential activity consists of a certain kind of thinking. The soul thinks about how to create a sensible world in such a way as to make the latter as good as possible. The non-essential activity in the sensible world follows the essential activity of the soul: it results from the soul's practical thinking about how to create a sensible world. Whatever the relation of the soul's non-essential to its essential activity is, in exercising an essential activity that is concerned with the creation of the sensible world Plotinus' soul is similar to the God as conceived of by the pagan Platonists in Ps. Justin. Whilst Ps. Justin does not explicitly have his pagans explain to us what kind of activity God's essential activity is, Aristotle can help. Plotinus' soul – like Aristotle's intellect – is essentially thinking. The kind of thinking of Plotinus' soul, however, differs from that of Aristotle's God. This will be crucial later because this difference not

<sup>12</sup> See the pagan answer to the fourth question in Ps. Justin, *Quaest. Christianorum ad Gentiles* 187CD. For a similar worry see Cic. *nat. deor.* I 21ff.

only holds between the soul in Plotinus on the one hand and God in Aristotle on the other but also between Plotinian soul and intellect. Whilst the Plotinian intellect thinks noetically (and thus like Aristotle's God) the soul thinks in a different way, namely rationally (or discursively). This does not imply, however, that the soul's thinking implies change. Plotinus makes it clear that it does not change (e.g. *Enn.* IV 4, 11, 11ff.). The difference between the two ways of thinking is rather a difference of articulation. Whilst the intellect grasps its object all at once, as Plotinus puts it, the soul grasps its object in an articulated and structured way. Its thought, unlike that of the intellect, is propositional. The soul's essential activity thus consists in rational thinking, an activity that – although being different from noetic thinking (or intellection) – does not imply change.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, since, as I have claimed above, Plotinus identifies the soul with its essential activity it follows that the soul itself is identical with its rational thinking, its rational thinking being the soul's essential activity.

The view that the life of the soul is unchanging is not only something that Plotinus might wish to claim for the sake of satisfying Platonic criteria. It is also systematically necessary, and this for the following reason. The life of the soul is constitutive for the soul and, as we have seen, even identical with it. Furthermore, it consists of a certain kind of thinking. Now let us suppose the soul's essential thinking were changeable. Were it changeable, the soul would undergo *essential* change, i.e. the soul would become another thing every time it thinks something else. For life is an activity and not only a potentiality. Thus, if the soul is life, the soul is an activity. This stands in contrast to another conception of soul, a conception that we find in Aristotle. In Aristotle the soul is something that possesses (or is) the potentiality to be active. It is able sometimes to activate its potentiality and sometimes not to activate it without thereby losing its identity. The Plotinian soul, by contrast, is essentially active. Hence it cannot change its essential activity without thereby losing its identity. But since the soul is immortal, it cannot lose its identity. Hence the soul's essential thinking must be eternally unchanging.

When considered in the context of contemporary approaches to metaphysics, the claim that life is essential to *ousia* might seem bizarre. Whether it is or not – it is at least not a Plotinian eccentricity. Aristotle, as we have seen, already considered the thing that is primary *ousia* a living being, a thinking actuality. Plato, too, believed that what really is must be

<sup>13</sup> It is often held that, in Plotinus, the thinking of the soul *is* a process in time. For the reasons given below, this is, as it seems to me, incompatible with Plotinus' view that the soul is essentially active. Moreover, the claim that the thinking of the soul is propositional does not as such imply that it is a process. For example, at least part of the thinking of the soul is structured in the form of arguments, relating premises to conclusions. This does not make the thinking an activity moving in time from premises to conclusions.



alive. In his discussion of what being is in the *Sophistes*, he musters the views of those who believe that only bodies are being, and the views of the friends of Forms in the famous *gigantomachia*. In this context Plato criticises the friends of Forms for not taking into account that true being must be attributed with life and understanding. He rhetorically asks: "Shall we easily be convinced that true being is neither alive nor thinking but stands revered and holy, unmoved and without understanding?" (*Soph.* 248E-249A) Plato, like Aristotle (at least as far as primary *ousia* is concerned) and Plotinus after him, believed that the answer to this question is clearly no: what truly is must be alive and endowed with understanding. This is the background against which to evaluate Plotinus' view. Plotinus identified the soul as *ousia* with a life that consists of thinking. We shall see below that this also holds true of the intellect. Since the intellect's thinking, however, is different from the soul's thinking, the intellect's life also differs from that of the soul. This is why Plotinus claims, as we noted earlier, that the life that the soul is, is "a certain kind of life". The soul is only identical with the life that consists of rational thinking, as opposed to the life that consists of intellectual or noetic thinking.

So far, the soul seems to be *ousia* in the proper sense. It always is unchangingly the same. We have also considered passages where Plotinus explicitly claims that the soul is *ousia* and real being and that it belongs to the realm of true being and *ousia*. However, there are also other passages where Plotinus seems to be more reluctant. At *Enn.* VI 2, 5, 24-25 and at *Enn.* VI 8, 12, 6 Plotinus calls the soul "a sort of *ousia*" or "*ousia* in a qualified sense" (*tis ousia*). Why so? Because there is one sense, in which the soul crucially is not *ousia*. We have seen in our discussion of Aristotle that an *ousia* has to be a primary being in the sense that there is no other being on which *ousia* depends for its being. The soul, however, is not – in this sense – independent.

In order to know how to act in the sensible world, the soul also needs to think about the world of Forms. After all, the world of Forms is the paradigm according to which the sensible world is created. Since the soul wants the sensible world to be an image as perfect as possible of the world of Forms, it needs to know the paradigm. For this reason the contemplation of the world of Forms is essential to the soul. Now the world of Forms also belongs to the intelligible world, to the realm of true being and *ousia*. Moreover, the world of Forms is ontologically prior to the soul. Thus, since the soul essentially contemplates the world of Forms the soul depends for its being on the world of Forms. Since the world of Forms is being, the soul depends for its being on another being. But if so, the soul is not – in this sense – a primary being. This is the reason, I think, why Plotinus sometimes hesitates to call the soul *ousia* although the soul, as we have seen, fulfils the criteria for being *ousia*.

### Ousia in the intelligible world II: the intellect and the world of Forms

It is clear from Plato, for example from his simile of the line, that the object of intellectual activity is, for a Platonist, the world of Forms. This does not imply, however, that the world of Forms is prior to and independent of the intellect. Plotinus follows an important strand of the Platonist tradition which denies that it does. Some Platonists, for example, believed that Forms are thoughts in the intellect of God.<sup>14</sup> In *identifying* the world of Forms and the intellect, Plotinus adopts a third course: the intellect, in contemplating the world of Forms, contemplates itself.<sup>15</sup>

In many ways, Plotinus' view of the intellect is inspired by Aristotle. Aristotle's God is not only an intellect, but also, like Plotinus' intellect, identical with the object of his thought (*Metaph.* Λ 7 1072b21). True, the object of thought differs. For Plotinus, unlike Aristotle, identifies it with the Platonic world of Forms. Apart from this the two intellects are remarkably similar: Aristotle identifies the divine intellect with the eternal activity of noetic thinking (*Metaph.* Λ 7 1072b27) and so does Plotinus; the eternal life of Aristotle's intellect consists in eternally unchanging intellectual thinking and so does the life of Plotinus' intellect. Following Plato, Plotinus calls the intellect even the *perfect* living being. At *Enn.* VI 2, 21, 57f. he refers to two passages in Plato's *Timaeus*, namely 31B and 39E. Plato claims in the former passage that the divine Craftsman creates the sensible world on the basis of the model of the perfect living being (*to panteles zōon*). In the latter passage the intellect is said to look at the Forms that are in that which is the living being (*ho esti zōon*). Plotinus understands "the living being" in both passages as referring to the world of Forms which is, accordingly, the living being *par excellence*. Since the intellect is identical with the world of Forms, it, too, is the perfect living being.

In order to understand why Plotinus thinks that the intellect is the perfect living being let us make a fresh start and discuss in what way Plotinus considers the intellect to be *ousia*. This discussion can be found in *Enn.* VI 2. As stated earlier, *Enn.* VI 2 is the treatise about the genera of being in the intelligible world.

As was to be expected from a Platonist, Plotinus believes the genera of Being in the intelligible world to be the five greatest genera of Plato's *Sophistes*, namely Being, Motion, Stasis, Sameness and Otherness. But he does not only dogmatically state this with reference to Plato. Instead, he tries to argue why these genera must be the highest genera of the intelligible world.

<sup>14</sup> See Pépin (1956).

<sup>15</sup> See Armstrong (1960).

Before considering how Plotinus develops this view we might wonder why *ousia* is missing in Plotinus' list of genera. In order to address this worry we first have to consider in what sense Plotinus talks about genera at all. For Plotinian genera differ in a number of ways from Aristotelian genera. As Plotinus explains at *Enn.* VI 2, 2, 10-13, for example, genera, as he understands them, are also principles. Aristotle, on the other hand, argues in *Metaphysics* Z 13-14 that genera are not principles.<sup>16</sup> Another difference is more important for our concern.

Aristotle's highest genera are exclusive. If something is a quality, for example, then it is neither an *ousia* nor a quantity etc. It does not belong to any other highest genus but quality. Plotinian highest genera, on the other hand, are not exclusive. Something's belonging to one highest genus does not exclude its belonging to another one. This is not only true of the *things* belonging to highest genera but also of the *highest genera* themselves. In his understanding of genera Plotinus clearly follows Plato's account in the *Sophistes* (251Aff.). For Plato discusses there which of his highest genera "want to get mixed" (256B) with other highest genera. In other words: which of his highest genera participate in which other highest genera. The genus of Being, for example, is participated in by all other highest genera. If a genus did not participate in Being, it would, according to Plato, lack being and thus would not be at all. Since all the other genera are, they must participate in Being.<sup>17</sup> This participation does not make Being, however, a higher genus than the other highest genera. It does not reduce the other highest genera to species of Being. As opposed to Aristotle, Plato is entitled to this claim in so far as he does not postulate that genera are exclusive in the sense in which Aristotelian genera are.

According to Plotinus, every highest genus gets mixed with every other highest genus. This is even true of the two genera whose possible mixture with one another is rejected by Theaetetus in the *Sophistes* (252D). I mean the mixture of the genus of Motion and the genus of Stasis. For Plotinus this mixture is not a problem because, according to his understanding, motion must not be identified with change. This is important: as we know from our former discussion, members of the intelligible world do not change. If motion was identical with change and if all other genera participated in motion then they could not be members of the intelligible world – a consequence that would devastate Plotinus' metaphysics.

Motion, rather than being restricted to change, is activity and life quite general. Plotinus states at *Enn.* VI 2, 7, 4-7: "Life is also in the intellect – if

<sup>16</sup> See also his discussions in *Metaph.* B3 and M10.

<sup>17</sup> I have claimed above that Platonic genera are also principles. Here we see in what way. For everything that participates in a genus  $x$  is  $x$  because it participates in  $x$ . For example, everything that participates in Being is being because it participates in Being. Being, in this example, is the principle for the being of those things that participate in Being.

we bring in also intellect and its life then we shall posit as common to all life a single genus, Motion." This squares nicely with Plotinus' interpretation of the intellect as a living being. Now life, as we know it, is constituted by many changes. But, as our discussion of the life of the soul has revealed, life need not involve any change at all. Yet the genus of Motion does not in itself guarantee that motion is unchanging. Instead, its participation in another highest genus is responsible for the fact that the genus of Motion is unchanging. This other highest genus is Stasis. Thus, because the genus of Motion participates in the genus of Stasis, the genus of Motion is an unchanging activity or – what amounts to the same – an unchanging life. Accordingly, everything that participates in both the genus of Motion and the genus of Stasis possesses an unchanging life.

The three genera discussed so far are distinct from one another and each of them is identical with itself. In order to account both for their being different from one another and for their being identical with themselves, we need, on Platonist terms, to introduce two more genera, namely Otherness and Sameness. Their being different from one another gets explained by their participation in Otherness whereas their identity gets explained by their participation in Sameness. This is why Plato, in Plotinus' interpretation, introduces these two Forms as highest genera.<sup>18</sup>

I have claimed above that the five highest genera are not exclusive.<sup>19</sup> According to Plotinus it is crucial for each of them to participate in the other highest genera. Thus, for each of them there is a sense in which it is being, alive, unchanging, the same as itself and other than the others. But Plotinus goes further than this. For him, the highest genera together form a whole whose parts they are. They are all "contributing to one nature" (*Enn.* VI 2, 2, 6-9). This one nature is *ousia*. As can be seen from the fact that *ousia* consists of five genera, *ousia* is not one genus, let alone *simpliciter* one. Taking up a phrase from Plato's *Parmenides* (145A2-3) Plotinus calls *ousia* one and many. We considered above Plotinus' assumption that primary being must be alive. But if so then *ousia* must be being and alive. Since its life must be unchanging we need to introduce Stasis. Since *ousia* thus possesses many parts that differ from one another, Otherness gets postulated as a further part and since its parts are identical with themselves, Sameness, too, must be a part of *ousia*. As can already be seen from this, *ousia* must be manifold.

I only wish to note in passing that the manifold of *ousia* goes even beyond this. For the genera are genera of species. Since these species are, according to the Platonist theory of genera and species, parts of their

<sup>18</sup> Plotinus relies for his discussion of Sameness and Otherness (*Enn.* VI 2, 8, 25-43) on Plato's *Soph.* 255AB.

<sup>19</sup> I shall not discuss why Plotinus believes that there is no further highest genus. He considers this question at length in *Enn.* VI 2, 9-18.

genera which, in turn, are parts of *ousia*, they also belong to *ousia*. In this way, *ousia* becomes even more complex than it seemed to be above.<sup>20</sup>

*Ousia* is the world of Forms. It is a hierarchically structured and highly unified whole – a whole which consists of many parts. It is important to note that the fact that *ousia* is the world of Forms does not imply that it is constituted by the sum of all Forms. If it were thus constituted, the constituting Forms would be prior to the whole world of Forms. Since Forms are beings, the world of Forms – as a whole – would not be the primary being. Instead, Forms would be prior to it and thus primary. But if so, the world of Forms would not be *ousia* in the strict sense since only primary being is *ousia* properly speaking. Now in order to deny the priority of Forms and in order to affirm the priority of the *world of Forms*, Plotinus has to deny that Forms are constitutive of the world of Forms.

Plotinus claims that a true whole is prior to its parts. At *Enn.* III 7, 4, 9ff. he states: “this which is truly a whole has not been put together out of its parts but has produced its parts itself.” Thus, the whole is prior to its parts, Plotinus claims, and it is even the principle of its parts. The view that a whole is prior to, and the principle of, its parts was not a Plotinian innovation. It can already be found in the Old Academy. One of the main concerns in the discussion there was the relation of genera to species, genera considered as wholes and species as their parts. The Platonist view – considered above – that genera are principles, also belongs to this discussion. But the claim that wholes are prior to their parts is not restricted to a theory of genera and species. It goes beyond this. For the world of Forms, although it is not a genus, is a whole which is prior to its parts. Hence the world of Forms as a whole – and not the Forms as its parts – is true *ousia*, primary being in the strict sense.

There is no other being prior to the world of Forms. The intellect, far from being prior to it, is identical with it. Only Plotinus’ highest principle, the One enjoys priority. But the One is no being at all. Instead, it is *beyond* being and *beyond ousia*.<sup>21</sup> Since there is no being that is prior to the intellect (i.e. the world of Forms), the intellect is the primary being. It is *ousia* in the proper sense. Thus even the highest form of being possesses an irreducible complexity: it is a being that leads an unchanging life of pure contemplation.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> If there are Forms of individuals, a topic of scholarly dispute, then they belong to *ousia*, too, because they also are members of the world of Forms.

<sup>21</sup> See Whittaker (1969) 91-104.

<sup>22</sup> I would like to thank Michael Frede, Pavlos Kalligas, Gabriele Galluzzo, Kaspar Howald, and Peter Turner for helpful discussions of earlier drafts of this paper.

## References

- Armstrong, A. H. (1940), *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus*, Amsterdam.
- (1960), ‘The background of the doctrine “that the intelligibles are not outside the intellect”’ in *Les sources de Plotin*, *Entretiens sur l’antiquité classique* 5, 391-425.
- (1967), ‘Plotinus’, in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, ed. by A. H. Armstrong, Cambridge, 195-268.
- Arpe, C. (1941), ‘Substantia’, *Philologus* 9, 65–78.
- Bréhier, E. (1968), *La Philosophie de Plotin*, Paris.
- Caluori, D. (2005), ‘The essential functions of a Plotinian soul’, *Rhizai* 2, 75-93.
- Chiaradonna, R. (1999), ‘ΟΥΣΙΑ ΕΞ ΟΥΚ ΟΥΣΙΩΝ. Forma e sostanza sensibile in Plotino (Enn. VI 3 [44], 4-8)’, *Documenti e Studi sulla Tradizione Filosofica Medievale* X, 25-57.
- (2002), *Sostanza Movimento Analogia. Plotino critico di Aristotele*. C.N.R.
- Dufour, R. (2001), *Plotinus: A Bibliography 1950-2000*, Leuven.
- Gerson, L. P. (1994), *Plotinus*, London/New York.
- Igal, J. (1992) *Porfirio Vida de Plotino. Plotino Enéadas I-II. Introducciones, Traducciones y Notas*, Madrid.
- Mann W.R. (2000), *The Discovery of Things*, Princeton.
- Morau, P. (1977), *Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen I*, Berlin, New York.
- Morrison D. (1987), “The Evidence for Degrees of Being in Aristotle”, *Classical Quarterly* 37, 382-401.
- O’Meara, D. (1992), *Plotin: une introduction aux Ennéades*, Fribourg/Paris. English version: *Plotinus: an introduction to the Enneads*, Oxford (1993).
- Pépin, J. (1956), ‘Eléments pour une histoire de la relation entre l’intelligence et l’intelligible chez Platon et dans le néoplatonisme’, *Revue philosophique de la France et de l’étranger* 146, 39-64.
- Reiner, H. (1954), “Die Entstehung und ursprüngliche Bedeutung des Namens Metaphysik” *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 8, 210-237.
- Rist, J. (1967), *Plotinus. The road to reality*. New York.
- Schwyzler, H.-R. (1951), ‘Plotinos’ in *Paulys Realencyclopädie, Neue Bearbeitung*, 41. Halbband (XXI, 1), Stuttgart, coll. 472-592.
- Whittaker J. (1969), “ΕΠΙΧΕΙΝΑ ΝΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΟΥΣΙΑΣ”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 23, 91-104.