

Fate, Providence and Moral Responsibility in Ancient, Medieval and Early Modern Thought.
Studies in Honour of Carlos Steel

Edited by: Pieter d'Hoine & Gerd Van Riel

Contributors: Lambros Couloubaritsis (Université Libre de Bruxelles), Pierre Destrée (FNRS/Université Catholique de Louvain), Sylvain Delcomminette (Université Libre de Bruxelles), John Dudley (KU Leuven), Jörn Müller (Universität Würzburg), Frans De Haas (Leiden University), Keimpe Algra (Utrecht University), Jan Opsomer (KU Leuven), Luc Brisson (CNRS, UPR 76, Paris), Riccardo Chiaradonna (Università di Roma Tre), Alessandro Linguiti (Università di Siena), John Dillon (Trinity College Dublin), Bert van den Berg (Leiden University), Christoph Helmig (Universität zu Köln), Antonio L.C. Vargas (Humboldt Universität Berlin), Danielle A. Layne (Georgia Southern University), Alain Lernoùl (CNRS, Lille III), Geert Roskam (KU Leuven), Gary Gabor (Hamline University), Claudio Moreschini (Università di Pisa), Caroline Macé (KU Leuven), Michele Trizio (Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro), Peter Van Deun (KU Leuven), Erika Gielen (KU Leuven), Daniel De Smet (CNRS, UMR 8584, Paris), Jules Janssens (KU Leuven), Richard Taylor (Marquette University), Wu Tianyue (Beijing University), Valérie Cordonier (CNRS, Laboratoire SPHERE, UMR 7217), Andreas Speer (Universität zu Köln), Rudi Te Velde (Tilburg University), Pasquale Porro (Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro), Marialucrezia Leone (KU Leuven), Gordon Wilson (University of North Carolina, Asheville), Jean-Michel Counet (Université Catholique de Louvain), Kent Emery, jr (University of Notre Dame), Demmy Verbeke (KU Leuven), Filips Defoort (KU Leuven), and Guy Guldentops (Thomas Institut, Köln)

© 2014 by Leuven University Press / Presses Universitaires de Louvain / Universitaire Pers
Leuven, Minderbroedersstraat 4, B-3000 Leuven (Belgium)

ISBN 978 90 5867 970 3

D / 2014 / 1869 / 15

Distributed by Leuven University Press

<http://upers.kuleuven.be/nl/book/9789058679703>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0
Unported License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>

FATE, PROVIDENCE AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY
IN ANCIENT, MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN THOUGHT

ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY

DE WULF-MANSION CENTRE

Series I

XLIX

Series Editors

Russell L. Friedman

Jan Opsomer

Carlos Steel

Gerd Van Riel

Advisory Board

Brad Inwood, University of Toronto, Canada

Jill Kraye, The Warburg Institute, London, United Kingdom

John Marenbon, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

Lodi Nauta, University of Groningen, The Netherlands

Timothy Noone, The Catholic University of America, USA

Robert Pasnau, University of Colorado at Boulder, USA

Martin Pickavé, University of Toronto, Canada

Pasquale Porro, Università degli Studi di Bari, Italy

Geert Roskam, KU Leuven, Belgium

The “De Wulf-Mansion Centre” is a research centre for Ancient, Medieval, and Renaissance philosophy at the Institute of Philosophy of the KU Leuven,

Kardinaal Mercierplein, 2, B-3000 Leuven (Belgium).

It hosts the international project “Aristoteles latinus” and publishes the “Opera omnia” of Henry of Ghent and the “Opera Philosophica et Theologica” of Francis of Marchia.

**FATE, PROVIDENCE AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY
IN ANCIENT, MEDIEVAL AND EARLY
MODERN THOUGHT**

Studies in Honour of Carlos Steel

Edited by
Pieter d'Hoine and Gerd Van Riel

LEUVEN UNIVERSITY PRESS

Published with support of Universitaire Stichting van België



© 2014 by De Wulf-Mansioncentrum – De Wulf-Mansion Centre
Leuven University Press / Presses Universitaires de Louvain /
Universitaire Pers Leuven
Minderbroedersstraat 4, B-3000 Leuven (Belgium)

All rights reserved. Except in those cases expressly determined by law, no part of this publication may be multiplied, saved in an automated datafile or made public in any way whatsoever without the express prior written consent of the publishers.

ISBN 978 90 5867 970 3
D / 2014 / 1869 / 15
NUR: 732



CONTENTS

Gerd Van Riel (KU Leuven) & Pieter d’Hoine (KU Leuven): <i>Fate, Providence and Moral Responsibility. An Introduction</i>	IX
PART 1: PLATO AND ARISTOTLE	1
1. Lambros Couloubaritsis (Université Libre de Bruxelles): <i>Émergence de la thématique de la providence divine de Diogène d’Apollonie à Platon</i>	3
2. Pierre Destrée (FNRS/Université catholique de Louvain): <i>Comment être responsable de son destin ? Platon et le mythe d’Er</i>	23
3. Sylvain Delcomminette (Université Libre de Bruxelles): <i>Liberté et caractère dans le mythe d’Er</i>	39
4. John Dudley (KU Leuven): <i>The Fate of Providence and Plato’s World Soul in Aristotle</i>	59
5. Jörn Müller (Universität Würzburg): <i>Was Aristotle an Ethical Determinist? Reflections on His Theory of Action and Voluntariness</i>	75
PART 2: HELLENISTIC AND EARLY IMPERIAL PHILOSOPHY	101
6. Frans A.J. de Haas (Leiden University): <i>Presuppositions of Moral Action in Aristotle and Alexander of Aphrodisias</i>	103
7. Keimpe Algra (Utrecht University): <i>Plutarch and the Stoic Theory of Providence</i>	117
8. Jan Opsomer (KU Leuven): <i>The Middle Platonic Doctrine of Conditional Fate</i>	137
PART 3: PLOTINUS	169
9. Luc Brisson (CNRS, Paris/Villejuif): <i>The Question of Evil in the World in Plotinus</i>	171

10.	Riccardo Chiaradonna (Università 'Roma Tre'): <i>Plotinus' Metaphorical Reading of the Timaeus: Soul, Mathematics, Providence</i>	187
11.	Alessandro Linguiti (Università di Siena): <i>Choice, Self-Determination and Assimilation to God in Plotinus</i>	211
PART 4: THE NEOPLATONIC COMMENTATORS		225
12.	John Dillon (Trinity College Dublin): <i>Signs and Tokens: Do the Gods of Neoplatonism Really Care?</i>	227
13.	Robbert M. van den Berg (Leiden University): <i>A Problem concerning Providence: Proclus and Plutarch on Inherited Guilt and Postponed Punishment</i>	239
14.	Christoph Helmig (Universität zu Köln) & Antonio L.C. Vargas (HU Berlin/Princeton): <i>Ascent of the Soul and Grades of Freedom. Neoplatonic Theurgy between Ritual and Philosophy</i>	253
15.	Danielle A. Layne (Georgia Southern University): <i>A Fatal or Providential Affair? Socrates and Alcibiades in Proclus' Commentary on the Alcibiades I</i>	267
16.	Alain Lernould (CNRS, Lille III): <i>Le cycle triadique de la causalité démiurgique : Bonté, Vouloir, Providence. L'interprétation proclienne de Timée 29e1-30c2</i>	291
17.	Geert Roskam (KU Leuven): <i>Hermias of Alexandria on Socrates' Divine Sign</i>	309
18.	Gary Gabor (Hamline University): <i>When Should a Philosopher Consult Divination? Epictetus and Simplicius on Fate and What Is Up to Us</i>	325
PART 5: GREEK PATRISTICS AND THE BYZANTINE TRADITION		341
19.	Claudio Moreschini (Università degli Studi di Pisa): <i>Goodness, Evil and the Free Will of Man in Gregory of Nyssa</i>	343

20.	Caroline Macé (KU Leuven): <i>Édition d'un fragment Contre les astronomes, contenant une contribution à la théorie des quatre humeurs et des tempéraments</i>	357
21.	Michele Trizio (Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro): <i>A Late Antique Debate on Matter-Evil Revisited in 11th-Century Byzantium: John Italos and His Quaestio 92</i>	383
22.	Peter Van Deun (KU Leuven) & Erika Gielen (KU Leuven): <i>The Metochion, Holy Sepulchre 363 Manuscript and an Unpublished Byzantine Opusculum on Predetermination</i>	395
PART 6: THE ARABIC TRADITION		419
23.	Daniel De Smet (CNRS, Paris): <i>La Providence selon le "Livre de la réprimande adressée de l'âme" attribué à Hermès Trismégiste. Un document néoplatonicien arabe oublié</i>	421
24.	Jules Janssens (KU Leuven): <i>What about Providence in the Best of All Possible Worlds? Avicenna and Leibniz</i>	441
25.	Richard Taylor (Marquette University/KU Leuven): <i>Providence in Averroes</i>	455
PART 7: THE MEDIEVAL LATIN TRADITION		473
26.	Tianyue Wu (Peking University): <i>Are First Movements Venial Sins? Augustinian Doctrine and Aquinas's Reinterpretation</i>	475
27.	Valérie Cordonier (CNRS, UMR 7219/Université Paris Diderot/KU Leuven): <i>La doctrine aristotélécienne de la providence divine selon Thomas d'Aquin</i>	495
28.	Andreas Speer (Universität zu Köln): <i>Divine Government and Human Freedom</i>	517
29.	Rudi te Velde (Tilburg University): <i>Thomas Aquinas on Providence, Contingency and the Usefulness of Prayer</i>	539

30. Pasquale Porro (Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro/Université Paris-Sorbonne): <i>Divine Predestination, Human Merit and Moral Responsibility. The Reception of Augustine's Doctrine of Irresistible Grace in Thomas Aquinas, Henry of Ghent and John Duns Scotus</i>	553
31. Marialucrezia Leone (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin): <i>Henry of Ghent and the Ethics of Intention</i>	571
32. Gordon Wilson (University of North Carolina, Asheville): <i>Henry of Ghent on Fatalism and Naturalism</i>	591
33. Jean-Michel Counet (Université catholique de Louvain): <i>Voir la Providence. Autour du De Visione Dei de Nicolas de Cues</i>	605
34. Kent Emery, jr (University of Notre Dame): <i>Fate, Providence and Predestination in the Sapiential Project of Denys the Carthusian</i>	617
PART 8: EARLY MODERN THOUGHT	637
35. Demmy Verbeke (KU Leuven): <i>Human Nature and Moral Responsibility in the Work of Juan Luis Vives</i>	639
36. Guy Guldentops (Thomas Institut, Köln): <i>L'anti-fatalisme de Julius Sirenius</i>	653
37. Filips Defoort (KU Leuven): <i>Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) on Predestination, Providence and Free Will</i>	677
BIBLIOGRAPHY	697
1. Editions and Translations	697
2. Studies	719
INDICES	771
1. Index of Primary Sources	771
2. Index of Secondary Authorities	777

**PLOTINUS' METAPHORICAL READING OF THE *TIMAEUS*:
SOUL, MATHEMATICS, PROVIDENCE**

Riccardo Chiaradonna
(Università 'Roma Tre', Roma)

1. PLATO AND ARISTOTLE IN NEOPLATONISM: HARMONY OR DISAGREEMENT?

Aristotle's treatises were part of the late Neoplatonic school curriculum and the doctrine of the harmony between Plato and Aristotle is among the key philosophical views of Greek Neoplatonism; yet not all Neoplatonists endorsed this thesis in the same way. For some of them, the harmony between the two masters was virtually complete. In his *Commentary on the Categories*, for example, Iamblichus developed a thoroughly Platonic/Pythagorean reading of Aristotle's treatises, which, as Simplicius reports, made extensive use of the theory of intelligible principles (this is what Simplicius dubs νοερά θεωρία: Simpl., *In Cat.* 2.13). Iamblichus pushed his reading of Aristotle along Platonic/Pythagorean lines so far that (as David [Elias] reports) he did not refrain from assuming that Aristotle was not opposed to Plato on the theory of Ideas.¹ Another famous champion of the harmony between Plato and Aristotle is Simplicius, whose celebrated statement on the good exegete at the beginning of his *Commentary on the Categories* reveals his overall approach: "[The good exegete] must, I believe, not convict the philosophers of discordance by looking only at the letter of what [Aristotle] says against Plato; but he must look towards the spirit, and track down the harmony which reigns between them on the majority of points" (Simpl., *In Cat.* 7.30-32; trans. Chase).²

These examples, however, do not reflect the attitude of all Neoplatonists. For example, Porphyry, the first Platonist commentator of Aristotle, probably did not regard the harmony between Plato and Aristotle as complete. Porphyry is in fact

¹ See David [Elias], *In Cat.* 123.2-3. The authorship of this work is disputed: see the in-depth discussion by V. Calzolari, 'Aux origines de la formation du corpus philosophique en Arménie: quelques remarques sur les versions arméniennes des commentaires grecs de David', in: C. D'Ancona (ed.), *The Libraries of the Neoplatonists*, Leiden: Brill, 2007, 259-278 (here 273-278).

² On all of this, see I. Hadot, *Simplicius: Commentaire sur les Catégories*, 1: *Introduction, première partie* (p. 1-9, 3 *Kalbfleisch*), traduction de Ph. Hoffmann (avec la collaboration de I. et P. Hadot), *Commentaire et notes à la traduction par I. Hadot, avec des appendices de P. Hadot et J.-P. Mahé*, Leiden: Brill, 1990, 123-130. For further details on Iamblichus' *noera theôria*, see D.P. Taormina, *Jamblique critique de Plotin et de Porphyre. Quatre études*, Paris: Vrin, 1999.

known to have composed two works comparing Aristotle's philosophy to that of Plato: one on their harmony (see Suda, s.v. Porphyrius) and one on their difference (see Elias, *In Porph. Isag.* 39.6-7 Busse). Furthermore, on issues such as the theory of the soul he qualified the theses of the Peripatetic tradition.³ An important fragment from Porphyry's *Commentary on Physics* shows that he regarded Aristotle's theory of the four causes as partial: before Aristotle, Plato is said to have provided a fuller account by also considering the 'paradigmatic principle' (*apud* Simpl., *In Phys.* 10.25 ff. = Fr. 120 Smith).

Let us come now to Plotinus and Proclus. Marinus famously reports that Proclus read all of Aristotle's works in less than two years under the guidance of his master Syrianus (*Vita Procli* §13.1-4 Saffrey-Segonds). Proclus' attitude to Aristotle is too vast a topic to be tackled in this contribution. Some recent works have shown very convincingly that Proclus attempted to incorporate and adapt elements of Aristotle's hylomorphism within his own physics and metaphysics.⁴ However, as Carlos Steel has shown, Proclus was far from unreservedly positive in his overall assessment of Aristotle. In particular, in his *Commentary on the Timaeus* Proclus regards Aristotle's causal explanation of the physical world as clearly inferior to that of Plato, on account of the fact that he confined his research to physical 'subservient' causes, i.e. matter and enmattered forms, leaving out the most fundamental causes that transcend the physical world, i.e. the efficient and productive cause (the Demiurge), the paradigmatic cause (Ideas) and the final cause (the Idea of the Good). It is worth quoting Steel's remarks in full:

Compared with Plato's sublime views, Aristotle is only a mediocre thinker, for he only speaks of two subservient causes, matter and form. Whereas Aristotle criticised his predecessors for not having fully distinguished the causes, he is now censured in his turn for such a rudimentary simplification having reduced the full system of causes discovered by Plato to only matter and form [...] The Aristotelian explanation of the world never raises the level of proper causality. Aristotle's celebrated four causes are only applicable to the understanding of what happens in the sublunary world.⁵

³ See G. Karamanolis, 'Porphyry's notion of *Empsychia*', in: G. Karamanolis – A. Shepard (eds.), *Studies on Porphyry*, London: Institute of Classical Studies, 2007, 91-109. G. Karamanolis, *Plato and Aristotle in Agreement? Platonists on Aristotle from Antiochus to Porphyry*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006, 243-330, provides a comprehensive assessment of Porphyry's reception of Aristotle.

⁴ See J. Opsomer, 'The Integration of Aristotelian Physics in a Neoplatonic Context: Proclus on Movers and Divisibility', in: R. Chiaradonna – F. Trabattoni (eds.), *Physics and Philosophy of Nature in Greek Neoplatonism*, Leiden: Brill, 2009, 189-230.

⁵ C. Steel, 'Why Should We Prefer Plato's *Timaeus* to Aristotle's *Physics*? Proclus' Critique of Aristotle's Causal Explanation of the Physical World', in: R.W. Sharples – A. Shep-

Plotinus' attitude to Aristotle is at least as complex as that of Proclus. To the best of our knowledge, Plotinus is the first Platonic philosopher to engage in an extensive reading of Aristotle and of Peripatetic commentators on Aristotle such as Alexander of Aphrodisias.⁶ Philosophical terms and notions borrowed from Aristotle are virtually ubiquitous in the *Enneads* and it is impossible to make sense of Plotinus' treatises without constantly comparing them to their Peripatetic sources. Yet Plotinus' approach to Aristotle was not uncritical. Whereas according to Proclus Aristotle's account must be criticised as *partial* (one that only has limited validity and must be supplemented with Plato's true causes), according to Plotinus Aristotle's account of the physical world is ultimately inconsistent and self-refuting. This emerges especially when Plotinus expounds key theories such as those of substance, motion and time (on substance: VI 1 [42], 1-3 and VI 3 [44], 4-10; on motion: VI 1 [42], 15-19 and VI 3 [44], 21-26; on time: III 7 [45], 9 and 13). Generally speaking, Plotinus regards Aristotle's hylomorphism as incapable of satisfying the requirements set out *by Aristotle himself* for the theory of causes.⁷ Thus, for example, Aristotle's theory of enmattered forms is not capable of providing adequate ground for the (Aristotelian) thesis of the priority of substance with respect to what depends on it. Plotinus' internal criticism is different from that of Proclus in that it does not entail a quasi-ideological evaluation of Aristotle from a Platonic perspective; rather, Plotinus attempts to develop an internal criticism of Aristotle which shows how the difficulties and inconsistencies in Aristotle's account can

pard (eds.), *Ancient Approaches to Plato's Timaeus*, London: Institute of Classical Studies, 2003, 175-187 (here 179, 181); see also C. Steel, 'Proclus' Defence of the *Timaeus* against Aristotle's Objections. A Reconstruction of a Lost Polemical Treatise', in: Th. Leinkauf – C. Steel (eds.), *Plato's Timaeus and the Foundations of Cosmology in Late Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005, 163-193. Proclus' attitude is very close to that of Syrianus: on Syrianus, see H.D. Saffrey, 'Comment Syrianus, le maître de l'école néoplatonicienne d'Athènes, considérait-il Aristote?', in: H.D. Saffrey, *Recherches sur le Néoplatonisme après Plotin*, Paris: Vrin, 1990, 131-140, and, more recently, the articles collected in A. Longo (ed.), *Syrianus et la métaphysique de l'antiquité tardive*, Napoli: Bibliopolis, 2009. On Syrianus' and Proclus' anti-Aristotelian stance, see now Ch. Helmig, *Forms and Concepts: Concept Formation in the Platonic Tradition*, Berlin-Boston: W. de Gruyter, 2012, 204-221.

⁶ Porph., *Vita Plotini* § 14, provides crucial evidence for this. See R. Chiaradonna – M. Rashed, 'Before and After the Commentators: An Exercise in Periodization. A discussion of Richard Sorabji, *The Philosophy of the Commentators, 200-600 AD*', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 38, 2010, 251-297 (here 256-266, with further references).

⁷ According to Plotinus, this also holds for Aristotle's account of the first principle. That is, at least, how I suggest we should read Plotinus' famous criticism of Aristotle's unmoved mover in V 1 [10], 9.7-9: Aristotle assumes the existence of a first principle, but the way in which he conceives of this principle makes it impossible for it to be really the 'first' (since it is supposed to think itself and thus entails multiplicity).

only be solved through solutions that go beyond Aristotle's philosophical perspective (and coincide with Plotinus' reading of Plato).⁸ According to Plotinus, for instance, the priority of essence can only adequately be grounded by regarding essence as a formal principle distinct from bodies and not inherent in them.

This, however, does not prevent Plotinus from incorporating Aristotle in his thought. Even more: whereas Plotinus' general theses are clearly inspired by Plato, his philosophical resources largely depend on Aristotle and the Peripatetic tradition. This fact has sometimes escaped the attention of scholars, yet it is extremely significant and demands some explanation. In what follows, I will focus on the issue by discussing some aspects of Plotinus' natural philosophy, such as his theory of the soul and his account of the Demiurge and providence.

2. DEMATHEMATISING PLATO'S *TIMAEUS*: PLOTINUS' HYLOMORPHIC READING

Scholars often emphasise the crucial importance of Plato's *Timaeus* for Plotinus' natural philosophy, and rightly so. The *Timaeus* is undoubtedly one of Plotinus' principal sources of inspiration and allusions to this dialogue are scattered throughout the *Enneads*.⁹ Plotinus' ideas about order in nature would simply not exist without the *Timaeus*. Yet some further remarks are necessary. Scholars who rightly note the impact of Plato's *Timaeus* on Plotinus should also consider the fact that its mathematical background is completely missing from the *Enneads*.¹⁰

⁸ For further discussion, see R. Chiaradonna, *Sostanza movimento analogia. Plotino critico di Aristotele*, Napoli: Bibliopolis, 2002.

⁹ References to the *Timaeus* cover no less than 7 columns in P. Henry's and H.-R. Schwyzler's *Index fontium in Plotini Opera*, ed. P. H. et H.-R. S., t. III, Oxonii, 1982, 361-364; this list is certainly not complete: for additions see e.g. Ch. Riedweg – E. Gritti, 'Echi dal *Timeo* nelle aporie sull'impassibilità dell'anima in *Enneadi* III 6, 1-5. Frutti di una *synousia* plotiniana', *Elenchos* 31, 2010, 123-150. There is an extensive literature on Plotinus's reading of the *Timaeus*. Two comprehensive (although somewhat outdated) surveys are H. Charrue, *Plotin lecteur de Platon*, Paris: Vrin, 1978, 117-155, and P. Matter, *Zum Einfluss des platonischen Timaios auf das Denken Plotins*, Winterthur: Keller, 1964. More recent studies include: W. Mesch, 'Plotins Deutung der platonischen Weltseele', in: Leinkauf – Steel (eds.), *Plato's Timaeus and the Foundations of Cosmology*, 41-66; J. Opsomer, 'A Craftsman and his Handmaiden. Demiurgy according to Plotinus', in: Leinkauf – Steel (eds.), *Plato's Timaeus and the Foundations of Cosmology*, 67-102; F. Fronterotta, 'Ragionamento divino e principio del discorso: Plotino e l'εἰκὼς μῦθος del *Timeo* platonico in *Enn.* VI 7 [38] 1-3', in: W. Lapini – L. Malusa – L. Mauro (eds.), *Gli antichi e noi. Scritti in onore di Mario Battegazzore*, Genova: Brigati, 2009, 461-477.

¹⁰ Surprisingly enough, this is rather seldom remarked. The most important exception is, to the best of my knowledge, F.R. Jevons, 'Dequantitation in Plotinus's Cosmology', *Phronesis* 9, 1964, 64-71, who focuses on Plotinus' non-quantitative reading of Plato's ac-

For example, Plotinus often refers to Plato's account of the composition of the world soul (*Tim.* 35a ff.), but ignores its harmonic structure.¹¹ In IV 2 [4], 2.49-52 he quotes 'the divinely inspired riddling saying' of the *Timaeus*: "He mixed a third form of being from both, from the indivisible which is always in the same state, and that which becomes divisible in the sphere of bodies" (trans. Armstrong). Plotinus, however, strips these words of their mathematical connotations and takes them to express the idea that the soul has a middle ontological *position* between intelligible (indivisible and unextended) and sensible (divisible and extended) beings:¹² Plato's emphasis on the mathematical *composition* of the soul is simply left out.¹³ In itself, the soul is an intelligible and incorporeal entity and is, therefore, an indivisible whole that can in no way be split into parts; yet the soul is present to bodies and hence 'divisible', i.e. it is "in all the parts of that in which it is" (IV 2 [4]; see also IV 3 [27], 19.11-15). Plotinus nonetheless makes it as clear as possible that the soul does not come to be extensional, quantitative and located in space in virtue of its presence to bodies (IV 2 [4], 1.73-76; see also VI 4 [22], 1.17-29): this is instead what happens to enmattered forms and qualities such as colours (IV 2 [4], 1.32-39; see also VI 4 [22], 1.17-19; 3.12-14; 8.14 ff.).¹⁴ There is no trace of Plato's mathematical explanation of psychogony in Plotinus' reading.

counts of the receptacle and of time. I agree completely with Jevons' remark that "Plotinus followed the account in the *Timaeus* closely up to, but not including, the elements of quantity, measurement and number, which he firmly deleted" (p. 64). More recently, see J. Wilberding, *Plotinus' Cosmology. A Study of Ennead 11.1 (40)*, text, translation, and commentary, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006, 8 (n. 49) and 195.

¹¹ See IV 1 [21]; IV 2 [4], 1-2; IV 3 [27], 19; IV 9 [8], 2.

¹² More precisely, the soul is intermediate between separate forms and enmattered qualities: see IV 2 [4], 2.44-49; 53-57; 62-66.

¹³ On this issue, see H.-R. Schwyzer's masterly article 'Plotins Interpretation von *Timaios* 35a', *Rheinisches Museum* 74, 1935, 360-368. As Schwyzer remarks, according to Plotinus "die Seele [...] wohl eine Mittelstellung zwischen dem ἀμέριστον und dem μεριστόν einnehmen, nicht aber aus einem ἀμέριστον und einem μεριστόν gemischt sein kann" (p. 366). Schwyzer's interpretation is rejected by J. Phillips, 'Plato's *Psychogonia* in Later Platonism', *The Classical Quarterly* 52, 2002, 231-247 (here 245-246). It is certainly true, as Phillips remarks, that the soul and the enmattered forms are "'divided among bodies' to different degrees", and that the soul is 'one and many'. However, I would not retain his suggestion that the soul's structure can aptly be regarded as that of a mixture in virtue of these facts. See also W. Mesch, 'Plotins Deutung der platonischen Weltseele', esp. 54-58. All of these studies compare Plotinus' interpretation to the ancient readings of Plato's psychogony from Xenocrates onwards. Phillips ('Plato's *Psychogonia* in Later Platonism', p. 241 ff.) emphasises Plotinus' proximity to Numenius. See now the excellent discussion in F. Karfik, 'Parts of Soul in Plotinus', in: K. Corcilius – D. Perler – C. Helmig (eds.), *The Parts of the Soul*, Berlin-Boston: W. de Gruyter (forthcoming).

¹⁴ On this, see the discussion in Ch. Tornau, *Plotin: Enneaden VI 4–5. Ein Kommentar*, Stuttgart-Leipzig: Teubner, 1998, 23-32.

This fact clearly emerges from Plotinus' reception of *Timaeus* 36d-e as well:

When the whole fabric of the soul had been finished to the satisfaction of its maker's mind, he next began to fashion within the soul all that is corporeal, and he brought the two together and fitted the centre to centre. And the soul, being everywhere inwoven from the centre to the outermost heaven and enveloping the heaven all round on the outside, revolving within its own limit, made a divine beginning of ceaseless and intelligent life for all time. (trans. Burnyeat)

As noted by Myles Burnyeat, the spatial language in these lines is unmistakable: "Soul, both human and divine, has extension in three dimensions. [...] [T]he distinguishing marks of corporeality for Plato are visibility and tangibility (*Timaeus* 31b); in more modern terms, corporeal things must have secondary qualities. Soul, then, as a non-corporeal thing, must be invisible and intangible, without secondary qualities. But this is compatible with its having extension in three dimensions and primary qualities such as size or shape."¹⁵ I will not go into Plato's account (and into Burnyeat's interpretation of it), but only point out some features of Plotinus' reception of this passage, which provides an extremely interesting example of his idiosyncratic reading of the *Timaeus*.

In IV 3 [27], 19 ff. Plotinus focuses on the relation between soul and body and his views on the issue are largely shaped by his interpretation of the *Timaeus*. First Plotinus focuses on the 'indivisible' and the 'divisible' aspects in the soul (IV 3 [27], 19); then he goes on to discuss the issue of whether the soul and its 'so-called parts (λεγόμενα μέρη)' (IV 3 [27], 20.2) are in the body. Here comes his interpretation of the Platonic passage quoted above.¹⁶ Yet Plotinus very significantly does not begin his discussion with Plato: before coming to the *Timaeus*, he provides a long Peripatetic preamble. In order to explain how the soul is in the body, Alexander of Aphrodisias employs Aristotle's classification of the meanings according to which one thing is said to be 'in another (ἐν ἄλλῳ εἶναι)' (*Physics* IV 3, 210a15-34) (see Alex. Aphr., *De an.* 13.9 ff.). Aristotle's list includes the following meanings:

- a part in a whole
- a whole in its parts
- the species in the genus
- the genus in the species (more generally: a part of the species in its definition)

¹⁵ M. Burnyeat, 'Plato on Why Mathematics is Good for the Soul', in: T. Smiley (ed.), *Mathematics and Necessity: Essays in the History of Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, 1-81 (here 58).

¹⁶ Plotinus employs Plato's passage on the world soul in order to explain how the *individual* soul is related to the body: this is not unusual in Plotinus. See R. Chiaradonna, *Plotino*, Roma: Carocci, 2009, 53 (on IV 2 [4]).

- “health in hot and cold, and generally form in matter”
- events in their primary motive agent
- a thing in its good or in its end (“that for the sake of which”)
- finally (and most properly of all) as something is in a place

Alexander modifies this list only slightly, but with one crucial change: whereas Aristotle's list equates the relation between form and matter to that between “health in hot and cold” (*Phys.* IV 3, 210a20-21), Alexander draws a clear-cut distinction between the relation of an accident in a substance and that of form in matter (Alex. Aphr., *De an.* 13.20-14.3; 14.24-15.5).¹⁷ This distinction plays a key role, since the soul is in the body as form is in matter, but the soul is definitely not an accident of the body (for, as Alexander repeatedly points out, form is not an accident of matter: see *Quaest.* I 8, 17.17-22; I 17, 30.10-16; I 26, 42.24-25; *De an.* 6.3; *Mant.* 122.4-12).¹⁸

Plotinus' discussion begins with a critical (and indeed somewhat free) paraphrase of Alexander (as always, his name is not mentioned, but the parallel is unmistakable).¹⁹ In order to explain how the soul is in the body Plotinus sets out the different meanings according to which one thing may be said to be in another. Like Alexander, Plotinus regards the cases of accidents in substance and of form in matter as two *different* relations (IV 3 [27], 20.27-30; 36-39). However, the paraphrase is directed at showing that Alexander's discussion is misleading, since according to Plotinus the soul is not in the body as form is in matter. Rather, the soul is a self-subsisting entity that produces form in the body, but is in no way identical to enmattered form (20.38-39). Thus, according to Plotinus, there is no sense of ‘being in something’ according to which the soul may said to be ‘in the body’. However, the question arises as to why the soul is said by everyone to be in the body (20.41-42). Plotinus' answer leads us to his paraphrase of the *Timaeus*. Unlike the body, the soul is invisible. We see the body and are aware that it is en-

¹⁷ See *Alessandro di Afrodisia. L'anima*, trad., intr. e comm. a cura di P. Accattino e P.L. Donini, Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1996, 125; R. Chiaradonna, ‘Plotino e la corrente antiaristotelica del platonismo imperiale: analogie e differenze’, in: M. Bonazzi – V. Celluprica (eds.), *L'eredità platonica. Studi sul platonismo da Arcesilao a Proclo*, Napoli: Bibliopolis, 2005, 235-274 (here 260-263).

¹⁸ On Alexander's views on essential form, see M. Rashed, *Essentialisme. Alexandre d'Aphrodise entre logique, physique et cosmologie*, Berlin-New York: W. de Gruyter, 2007. On Plotinus' reception of Alexander's essentialism, see R. Chiaradonna, ‘Hylémorphisme et causalité des intelligibles: Plotin et Alexandre d'Aphrodise’, *Les études philosophiques* 86, 2008/3, 379-397.

¹⁹ Here I am inclined to disagree with H. Blumenthal, ‘Plotinus *Ennead* IV. 3.20-1 and its Sources: Alexander, Aristotle and Others’, *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 50, 1968, 254-261, and P. Accattino – P. Donini, *Alessandro di Afrodisia. L'anima*, 125, whose prudence is perhaps exaggerated.

souled “because it moves and perceives, and so say that it has a soul” (20.44-45). As a consequence of this fact, we say that the soul is actually in the body, but this is misleading: if we could see the soul, we would realise that things are the other way round, since it is actually the soul that has the body in it:

But if the soul was visible and perceptible, in every way surrounded by life and extending equally to all the extremities [of the body], we should not have said that the soul was in the body, but that the unimportant was in the more important, and what is held in what holds it together, and that which flows away in that which does not. (IV 3 [20], 20.46-51; trans. Armstrong)

This passage is unmistakably reminiscent of Plato’s description of the world soul in *Timaeus* 36d-e. Yet (and this has hardly been noted) Plotinus modifies Plato’s argument in one crucial respect. Whereas Plato does not hesitate to present the world soul as extended and “enveloping heaven all round on the outside (κύκλω τε αὐτὸν ἔξωθεν περικαλύψασα)”, Plotinus points out that this spatial language would aptly describe the relation between soul and body *if the soul were a visible thing*: Εἰ δέ γε ὁρατὸν ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ αἰσθητὸν ἦν περιειλημμένον πάντῃ τῇ ζῳῇ καὶ μέχρις ἐσχάτων οὕσα εἰς ἴσον κτλ. What Plotinus is suggesting is that Plato’s language does not convey the relation between the soul and the body in itself, but rather describes this relation from the perspective of the *visible* world.

According to Plotinus, then, while Plato holds a correct view on the actual relation between the soul and the body (the soul is not ‘in the body’, but ‘holds the body together’), his language conveys this metaphysical relation in a spatial, quantitative way that (in Plotinus’ view) calls for a *metaphorical* interpretation. As Plato puts it, the soul is invisible but can possess primary qualities such as quantity and shape. According to *Plotinus’ reading of Plato*, instead, both secondary (visibility) and primary (size and shape) qualities are unfit to express the nature of the soul, and Plato’s language should be read metaphorically: we should retain the *Timaeus*’ general view that the soul holds the body together and is not ‘in the body’, but leave out all the quantitative and extensional connotations of Plato’s language. Indeed, metaphor was a familiar resource for readers of the *Timaeus*: from Xenocrates onward, Plato’s account of the generation of the world (*Tim.* 28b-c) was interpreted metaphorically by a conspicuous number of exegetes.²⁰ Plotinus certainly relies on the previous tradition, but pushes the metaphorical approach so far that it becomes a peculiar aspect of his overall reading. He discreetly leaves out or explains away as metaphorical accounts such aspects of the dialogue as the view that God’s

²⁰ An excellent survey of this debate may be found in H. Dörrie (†) – M. Baltes, *Der Platonismus in der Antike*, v, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann Holzboog, 1998, 84-180 (text = *Bausteine* 136-145) and 373-535 (commentary).

causality is based on 'reasoning (*λογισμός*)' (see VI 7 [38], 1.29-32; cf. *Tim.* 34a8),²¹ the mathematical structure of the world soul and, most predictably, the generation of the world (see III 2 [47], 1.15-19). Even when Plotinus follows Plato closely, we find important adaptations based on Peripatetic theories: this is the case with Plato's account of knowledge in *Tim.* 29b, the reception of which in Plotinus (VI 5 [23], 1-2) is shaped by Aristotle's theory of science set out in the *Posterior Analytics* and in *Metaphysics* IV.²²

Significantly, immediately after alluding to the *Timaeus* Plotinus returns to Aristotle and Alexander. In IV 3 [27], 21 Plotinus goes on to discuss why the soul is not in the body as a steersman is in his ship. This is an obvious allusion to Aristotle's *De an.* II 1, 413a9, yet again we find Alexander lurking behind the *Enneads*, since the latter had focused on the steersman analogy just after the section of his treatise on the meanings of the expression 'to be in something' (*De an.* 15.9-28): this is exactly what we find in IV 3 [27], 20-21. This whole section of the *Enneads*, then, is structured along the lines of Alexander's discussion. It is tempting to suppose that Alexander's *De anima* was actually being read in Plotinus' seminars: that Plotinus may have developed his view by critically commenting Alexander and showing that Plato's *Timaeus* (if interpreted correctly, i.e. non literally and by leaving out all quantitative connotations) provides the correct view about the relation between soul and body.

Both Plotinus and Alexander reject the steersman analogy. Alexander ultimately rejects this analogy because it suggests that the soul is a body composed of matter and form; hence, in his view, the soul does not correspond to the steersman, but, if anything, to the art of steering (*De an.* 15.10-13; 23-25). Plotinus' discussion is more nuanced. He regards the analogy as a good comparison as far as the soul's capacity to exist separately from the body is concerned. He nonetheless suggests that the steersman comparison is misleading when it comes to the way in which the soul is present to the body. Plotinus points out a set of shortcomings in this analysis (e.g., unlike the steersman, the soul is present as a whole in the body: IV 3 [27], 21.10-11, again, a reminiscence of Alex. Aphr., *De an.* 21.10-11) and predictably rejects Alexander's analogy between the soul and the art of steering (IV 3 [27], 21.11-21). This discussion leads to the following chapter IV 3 [27], 22, where this section comes to an end. Plotinus overtly refers to Plato with a paraphrase of *Timaeus* 36 d-e:

²¹ See below, Part 3.

²² See R. Chiaradonna, 'Plotino e la scienza dell'essere', in: Th. Bénatoüil – E. Maffi – F. Trabattoni (eds.), *Plato, Aristotle or Both? Dialogues between Platonism and Aristotelianism in Antiquity*, Hildesheim: Olms, 2011, 117-137.

That is why Plato rightly does not put the soul in the body when he is speaking of the universe, but the body in the soul, and says also that there is a part of the soul in which the body is and a part in which there is no body, clearly the powers of the soul of which the body has no need. (IV 3 [27], 22.7-11; trans. Armstrong)

This view is further developed in the following lines, where Plotinus sets out his celebrated theory that the soul in itself is not located in the body, but its powers are connected with some parts of the body without being situated in them, in function of the ‘adaptation (ἐπιτηδεσιότης)’ (IV 3 [27], 23.3) of each bodily part to its task. Basically this theory is intended to construe the soul as present to the body without suggesting that it is an extended and spatially located entity (hence Plotinus’ prudence about Plato’s view of the soul’s tripartition: see IV 3 [27], 23).²³ Plotinus’ theory famously entails several problems, but what is important for the present discussion is how Plotinus incorporates Plato. Before referring to the *Timaeus*, Plotinus outlines the presence of the soul to the body through one of his favourite analogies, i.e. that of the presence of the fire’s light in the air: “For this too like soul is present without being present (παρὸν οὐ παρῄσστι), and is present throughout the whole and mixed with none of it, and stays still itself while the air flows past [...]” (IV 3 [27], 22.2-4; trans. Armstrong).²⁴ This paraphrase of Plato’s

²³ See T. Tieleman, ‘Plotinus on the Seat of the Soul: Reverberations of Galen and Alexander in *Enn.* IV. 3 [27], 23’, *Phronesis* 43, 1998, 306-325 (who detects the presence of Alexander behind Plotinus’ discussion). On Plotinus’ view about the presence of the soul in the body, see J. Wilberding, “‘Creeping Spatiality’: The Location of *Nous* in Plotinus’ Universe’, *Phronesis* 50, 2005, 315-334.

²⁴ This analogy is of unmistakable Stoic origin: cf. Chrysippus’ view in Alex. Aphr. *De mixt.* 218.8 = S.V.F. II 155.38 (see H. Dörrie, *Porphyrios’ “Symmiktá Zetemata”*, München: Beck, 1959, 74-75). This opens the *vexata quaestio* of how far Plotinus’ account is indebted to Stoicism. I would be inclined to prudence on this issue. Plotinus certainly takes over a number of Stoic views (most famously, that of the *logos*, which he strips of all corporeal connotations). But while hylomorphism is probably Plotinus’ major ‘philosophical resource’, the influence of Stoic natural philosophy is hardly prominent and would appear to have been significantly mediated (more often than is usually acknowledged, I suspect) by the Peripatetic criticism of Alexander. For further details, see R. Chiaradonna, ‘L’anima e la mistione stoica. *Enn.* IV 7 [2], 82’, in: R. Chiaradonna (ed.), *Studi sull’anima in Plotino*, Napoli: Bibliopolis, 2005, 127-147. This issue certainly calls for more research. The situation is rather different in the case of Plotinus’ ethics, whose connection with Stoicism is a well-established fact (see A. Linguisti, *La felicità e il tempo. Plotino*, Enneadi, I 4-I 5, Milano: LED, 2000, 63 ff.). Be that as it may, *Enn.* IV 3 [27], 20-22 displays an overall structure that is not unusual for Plotinus: the main theses are (idiosyncratically) drawn from Plato; their demonstration is developed through a critical use of Aristotle and Alexander’s hylomorphism; and Stoic tenets are incorporated in the discussion and stripped of all material connotations.

Timaeus confirms, in Plotinus' view, the overall conception we have just outlined, namely the idea of an unextended, non-localised presence of the soul in the body. As noted above, Plotinus' incorporation of Plato is achieved at a very high price: Plato's geometrical language is simply left out or explained away as metaphorical.

Significantly, Aristotle raised an objection against Plato which is crucial for any understanding of Plotinus' account: "it is quite wrong to say that the soul is a magnitude" (*De an.* I 3, 407a2-3; trans. Burnyeat). Here as elsewhere, Plotinus' incorporation of Plato may be seen as an attempt to develop an interpretation of Plato that resists Aristotle's objections.²⁵ While this is no doubt the case, in my view it is only part of the truth: for leaving out the mathematical background of Plato's account of the soul is to provide a rather strange defence of his ideas against Aristotle. It entails not only a defence of Plato, but a radical transformation of his original philosophical framework, one that comes very close to Aristotle's 'demathematisation' (*Entmathematisierung*) of Plato's philosophy.²⁶ Furthermore, this is anything but incidental, since Plotinus systematically connects corporeality and quantitative extension. There are several antecedents of this view in Plato (*Theaet.* 155e; *Leg.* 896d), in Aristotle (*Phys.* III 5, 204b20), and in the Stoics (more precisely in Apollodorus of Seleucia: S.V.F. III, Apollodorus 6)²⁷. It is with Plotinus, however, that this connection acquires a crucial position and is systematically used to demarcate the difference between sensible (i.e. material, quantitative and extended) and intelligible (i.e. non-material, non-quantitative and non-extended) beings. Extension comes to be the fundamental attribute of bodies, since all bodies are bound to be extended and, in addition, qualities inherent in bodies such as colours and shapes must be extensionally divisible (cfr. IV 2 [2], 1.34-40; VI 4 [22], 1.20-23).²⁸ So if something is not extensional and divisible according to quantity, that thing is neither a body nor the property of a body.²⁹

²⁵ See C. D'Ancona, 'AMOPΦON KAI ANEΙΔΕON. Causalité des formes et causalité de l'Un chez Plotin', *Revue de philosophie ancienne* 10, 1992, 71-113; and 'Le rapport modèle-image dans la pensée de Plotin', in: D. De Smet – M. Sebt – G. de Callatay (éds.), *Miroir et savoir. La transmission d'un thème platonicien, des Alexandrins à la philosophie arabe*, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2008, 1-47.

²⁶ On Aristotle's 'Entmathematisierung' of Plato, see e.g. H.J. Krämer, 'Zur geschichtlichen Stellung der aristotelischen *Metaphysik*', *Kant-Studien* 58, 1967, 313-354.

²⁷ See A.A. Long – D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. I, Cambridge: CUP, 1987, 272-274 (= L.S. 45).

²⁸ See E.K. Emilsson, *Plotinus on Sense-Perception: A Philosophical Study*, Cambridge: CUP, 1988, 147, and the challenging discussion in V. De Risi, 'Plotino e la Rivoluzione scientifica. La presenza delle *Enneadi* nell'epistemologia leibniziana dello spazio fenomenico', in: R. Chiaradonna (ed.), *Il platonismo e le scienze*, Roma: Carocci, 2012, 143-163.

²⁹ Indeed, as emerges from III 6 [26], 6.3-4, this also holds for matter, which is an incorporeal thing, albeit in a different manner from intelligibles (εἰ καὶ ἄλλον τρόπον).

Since the soul is an intelligible and incorporeal being, it entails a perfect mutual interconnection and interpenetration of 'whole' and 'parts' (something Plotinus expresses through his famous analogy of science and its theorems: IV 3 [27], 2.50-59; IV 9 [8], 5.7-9; VI 2 [43], 20.15-16; etc.).³⁰ This structure exceeds not just what we find in concrete sensible bodies, but also what is proper of numbers and geometrical figures:

Now in the case of numerical units and geometrical figures it is necessary that, *just as with bodies* (Ἐπὶ μὲν δὴ τῶν μονάδων καὶ τῶν σχημάτων ἀνάγκη ὥσπερ ἐπὶ τῶν σωμάτων), the whole should become less by division into parts, and each of the parts should be less than the whole; for since they are quantitative and have their reality in their quantity, but are not absolute quantity (αὐτοποσόν), they necessarily become more and less. (IV 3 [27], 2.24-29; trans. Armstrong)

The reference to 'absolute quantity (αὐτοποσόν)' in this passage suggests that Plotinus does not reject quantity outside the intelligible world altogether (but see also VI 2 [43], 13). However, the passage quoted above rather disconcertingly conveys the idea that intelligible quantity lacks the features that define quantity in itself. This is consistent with Plotinus' general account of intelligible causes, as he argues that forms are not characterised by those features for which they are causally responsible in sensible beings (hence his rejection of 'self-predication').³¹ This theory raises significant problems, but becomes desperately difficult to understand when it comes to the status of intelligible quantity. For if quantity as such is the basic feature of the sensible world (that which defines the specific mode of existence of bodies), and if (as Plotinus argues in II 4 [12], 12.21 ff.) quantitative extension is directly connected to the presence of matter in bodies, then it is virtually impossible to understand just what αὐτοποσόν might be and why we should regard it as related to quantity after all.

In a sense, these are traditional problems linked to Plato's theory of 'ideal numbers' as reported by Aristotle:³² scholars at times have sought to connect Plotinus to the tradition of mathematising and Pythagorising Platonism that stems from the Ancient Academy.³³ Certainly, Plotinus makes use of *broadly* mathematical

³⁰ See Ch. Tornau, 'Wissenschaft, Seele, Geist. Zur Bedeutung einer Analogie bei Plotin (Enn. IV 9, 5 und VI 2, 20)', *Göttinger Forum für Altertumswissenschaft* 1, 1998, 87-111.

³¹ See on this the articles by C. D'Ancona mentioned above, n. 25.

³² An excellent account of this debate can now be found in D. Lefebvre, 'Aristote, lecteur de Platon', in: A. Castel-Bouchouchi – M. Dixsaut – G. Kevorkian (éds.), *Lectures de Platon*, Ellipses: Paris, 2013, 291-320.

³³ The reference study on this is H.-J. Krämer, *Der Ursprung der Geistmetaphysik. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Platonismus zwischen Platon und Plotin*, Amsterdam: Schippers, 1964, famously criticised by Th. A. Szlezák, *Platon und Aristoteles in der Nuslehre Plotins*, Basel-Stuttgart: Schwabe, 1979, 113-119.

analogies (such as that of science and its theorems, or that of the circle and its centre); furthermore, allusions to Plato's unwritten doctrines (in particular that of the indefinite dyad) are unmistakably present in the *Enneads* (e.g. v 1 [10], 5.14; v 4 [7], 2.7-8: cf. Arist., *Metaph.* I 6, 987b21-22; XIII 7, 1081a13-15). In a well known treatise (vi 6 [34], *On Numbers*) Plotinus famously develops an ontology of numbers within the framework of his metaphysical system. In my view, however, this is not strong enough evidence to ascribe any real philosophy of mathematics to Plotinus. His metaphysics of numbers actually entails a thorough demathematisation of the notion and is merely devoted to explaining how multiplicity is structured in the intelligible world. As noted by S. Slaveva-Griffin, intelligible figures and numbers "have ontological, not quantitative meaning".³⁴ And it is worth emphasising again that what Plotinus develops is at most a 'metaphysics of numbers' bereft of any real arithmetical or geometrical background: his demathematised reading of the *Timaeus* provides sufficient evidence for this. Thus, Plotinus' theory of numbers has no genuinely mathematical background; what we find is rather a demathematised metaphysics of numbers shaped by his overall metaphysics.³⁵ Despite the markedly Platonic roots of his views, Plotinus departs significantly from what we find e.g. in the *Republic*, where the dianoetic thought of mathematics is set out as "mediator between (μεταξύ) opinion and understanding" (*Resp.* vi 511d). This passage is what probably lies behind Plotinus' view that our discursive self has a middle position between sense-perception and the Intellect (v 3 [49], 3.36-40). Plato, however, connects 'geometry and related sciences' to dialectic (the upper sections in the line analogy: *Resp.* vi 509d) in that they differ from opinion and are relative to the intelligible: hence the crucial position of abstract mathematical disciplines in the curriculum of philosophers in the ideal city (*Resp.* vii 525d-531e). None of this is to be found in the writings of Plotinus, who (as emerges from the passage cited above) is instead inclined to bring together mathematics and the visible world of bodies (the *lower* part of Plato's line!), since both involve a kind of quantitative, extensional multiplicity which differs from that of intelligible substances. Plato's overall thesis about the philosophical and ethical significance of mathematics has no echo in Plotinus.³⁶ It is perhaps worth recalling what Por-

³⁴ S. Slaveva-Griffin, *Plotinus on Number*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009, 9 and 120-122.

³⁵ C. Maggi, in *Plotino. Sui numeri*. Enneade vi 6 [34], intr., trad. e comm. a cura di C. Maggi, Napoli: Università degli Studi Suor Orsola Benincasa, 2009, is more inclined to find traces of genuine mathematics in Plotinus. See also C. Maggi, *Sinfonia matematica: aporie e soluzioni in Platone, Aristotele, Plotino, Giamblico*, Napoli: Loffredo, 2010.

³⁶ Plotinus' reference to 'mathematical studies' (μαθηματικά) as preparatory to philosophical thought in I 3 [20], 3.5 is too cursory and conventional to provide a genuine counterexample. On Plato's view, see Burnyeat, 'Plato on Why Mathematics is Good for the Soul'.

phyry says about Plotinus' attitude to mathematics in *Vita Plotini* 14.7-10: "He had a complete knowledge of what is called a theorem, in geometry, arithmetic, mechanics, optics and music, but was not disposed to apply himself to detailed research in these subjects" (trans. Armstrong modified). Porphyry's testimony on the previous tradition has sometimes been described as a *Schönfärberei*,³⁷ and the above lines may perhaps be seen as an embellished allusion to Plotinus' lack of proper mathematical background.

To sum up: Plotinus' account of the relation between soul and body in iv 3 [27], 19 ff. has a double ancestry, so to speak. His overall view is explicitly reminiscent of Plato's *Timaeus* and his theory may also be regarded as an (indeed very idiosyncratic) exegesis of *Timaeus* 36d-e. Plotinus' philosophical resources, however, have little (if any) connection with those of the *Timaeus* and are instead heavily indebted to Peripatetic hylomorphism. Here as elsewhere, Plotinus uses concepts drawn from Aristotle and Alexander in order to make sense of Plato's general views.³⁸ Plotinus is nonetheless perfectly aware that his general Platonic outline of intelligible causes is different *toto caelo* from that of hylomorphism: Alexander's theses are not only adapted, but *criticised*. Hence, what we get is a somewhat paradoxical situation: when Plotinus has to explain in detail how things work in his Platonic physical world, he develops a sort of pseudo-hylomorphism³⁹ largely based on Peripatetic theories, while at the same time critically adapting these theories to a philosophical framework which is definitely anti-hylomorphic (for, according to Plotinus, matter is identical with privation, enmattered forms are not essences, and essential forms are not in matter). At the cost of oversimplifying things, Plotinus' Platonism may thus be described as an inverted Aristotelianism built on Peripatetic notions, in which Plato's original mathematical background plays virtually no role; hence the pivotal function of Plotinus' criticism of Aristotle within his philosophy. This interpretation is compatible with the view according to which Plotinus developed an interpretation of Plato capable of resisting Aristotle's objections. It provides a more satisfying explanation for the highly idiosyncratic character of Plotinus' defence, which involves a radical transformation of

³⁷ This is how M. Baltes characterises the report of 'Porphyry/Hierocles' on Ammonius Saccas *apud* Photius: see H. Dörrie(†) – M. Baltes, *Der Platonismus in der Antike*, III, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann Holzboog, 1993, 249.

³⁸ On this, see Chiaradonna, 'Plotino e la scienza dell'essere'.

³⁹ This expression was introduced by J. Igal, 'Introducció general' in: *Porfirio. Vida de Plotino. Plotino. Enéadas I–II*, Traducciones y notas, Madrid: Gredos, 1982, 68. On this, see also A. Linguiti, 'La materia dei corpi. Sullo pseudoilemorfismo plotiniano', *Quaestio* 7, 2007, 105-122. Further discussion in C. Arruzza, 'Passive Potentiality in the Physical Realm: Plotinus' Critique of Aristotle in *Enneads* II 5 [25]', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 93, 2011, 24-57 (here 45-46).

Plato's original philosophical framework and a large use of concepts drawn from the Peripatetic tradition.

I will offer another example of this, drawn from Plotinus' account of matter in *III* 6 [26], 12. In this treatise Plotinus aims to show that incorporeals do not undergo any affection. The first chapters are devoted to the impassibility of the soul, whereas chapters 6 ff. are devoted to matter. Plotinus' account of matter is heavily indebted to Plato's outline of the receptacle in the *Timaeus*: references to this dialogue in *Ennead III* 6 [26] are unsurprisingly ubiquitous.⁴⁰ Since Plotinus focuses extensively on how forms are present in matter, one might expect him to make some allusions to Plato's elementary triangles. Indeed, Plotinus talks of the 'forms (*σχήματα*)' in matter in *III* 6 [26], 12; furthermore, he alludes to a passage from the *Timaeus*, where Plato holds that bodies acquire sensory qualities in virtue of the geometric shapes of their constitutive particles (for example, the heat of fire consists in the sharp experience produced by its pyramids in our flesh: *Tim.* 61d-62a):⁴¹ "He therefore framed a hypothesis that it is by shapes that matter produces affections in ensouled bodies, although matter itself has none of those affections" (*III* 6 [26], 12.12-14; trans. Fleet modified).⁴² Matter, then, remains without affections and alteration. It produces affections in us 'by its shapes' (i.e. by the shapes that are 'in' matter without entailing any affection on its part).⁴³ Since Plotinus talks of *σχήματα* and refers overtly to Plato's account of sensory affections, one may well suppose that these shapes are somehow related to Plato's elementary triangles. Furthermore, Plotinus cites Democritus (*Fr.* 9 and 125 D.-K.) and it is tempting to suppose that the *σχήματα* in matter are somewhat analogous to Democritus'

⁴⁰ Again, this emerges from a cursory look at the *Index Locorum* in B. Fleet, *Plotinus. Ennead III.6. On the Impassivity of the Bodiless*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996, 307-308; for further evidence, see Riedweg – Gritti, 'Echi dal *Timeo* nelle aporie sull'impassibilità dell'anima'.

⁴¹ This reference was rightly noted by P. Kalligas, *ΠΛΩΤΙΝΟΥ ΕΝΝΕΑΣ ΤΡΙΤΗ, ΑΘΗΝΑΙ* 2004, 498, and its significance is considerably expanded by S. Magrin, 'Sensation and Scepticism in Plotinus', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 39, 2010, 249-297. Note, however, that Plotinus' most obvious reference in the whole chapter is to Plato's description of the receptacle in *Tim.* 50c-51 b, where there is still no mention of the elementary triangles. See Fleet, *Plotinus' Ennead III.6*, 210-211.

⁴² At 12.13 I retain *ἐμψύχοις* with the MSS. Fleet's emendation *ἀψύχοις* is unconvincing in my view. As the parallel with *Tim.* 61d-62a suggests, here Plotinus focuses on the capacity of matter to produce affections in perceivers. Accordingly, Plotinus argues that sensory qualities depend on the 'shapes in matter', which affect the perceiver, but are not proper to matter in itself. Thus, it is only 'by convention' that we ascribe these qualities to matter.

⁴³ In *Enn.* *III* 6 [26], 9 and 13 matter is compared to a mirror in order to convey its peculiar status: see D'Ancona, 'Le rapport modèle-image dans la pensée de Plotin'.

atomic shapes.⁴⁴ This, however, is not the case. Let us quote some lines from this chapter:

But since matter has no shape, nor even size, how could one even homonymously say that the presence of shape in any degree was an alteration? Thus in this instance it would not be perverse to use the term 'colour by convention' or to claim that 'other things exist by convention', because the underlying nature 'has' nothing in the way that it is usually thought to. (III 6 [26], 12.19-24; trans. Fleet)

This passage ultimately relies on Aristotle's theory that what is affected and undergoes alteration must possess qualities contrary to those of the things which come upon it (see *De gen. et corr.* I 7, 323b30 ff.; *Phys.* I 7, 190a13 ff.). At III 6 [26], 8.1-3, Plotinus explicitly mentions this view, which shapes the whole discussion of matter in this treatise: for, since matter has no qualities in itself and cannot acquire any form, it remains impassive and does not undergo any change. Here the same overall approach is at work which we noted above: Plotinus relies on the philosophical resources of Aristotle's hylomorphism in order to develop his interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus*, an interpretation whose general conclusions are opposed to those of hylomorphism (since according to Plotinus matter is identical with privation and there is no *materia secunda*). The general thesis is therefore Platonic (i.e. based on Plotinus' interpretation of Plato), whereas the philosophical resources through which the thesis is developed are largely influenced by Aristotle and the Peripatetic tradition.

The lines quoted above show that Plotinus' shapes are actually neither Platonic elementary triangles nor the atomic shapes of Democritus. For Plotinus suggests that it is only by convention – i.e. according to common linguistic usage with no real ground – that we believe that matter has *shapes and colours*. He thus equates the status of shapes in matter with that of secondary and perceptual qualities such as colours, since he points out that they are all 'conventional' according to Democritus' jargon. Here the words 'shape (σχῆμα)', 'size (μέγεθος)' and 'colour (χρoιή / χρoά / χρoμα)' denote the whole set of a thing's *perceptual* qualities, which are in bodies but not in matter. This is not unusual in Plotinus (on 'shapes and colours', see *Enn.* I 6 [1], 5.9; III 6 [26] 9.27; IV 7 [2], 10.3; V 3 [49], 8.3; VI 2 [43], 4.20-21; VI 3 [44], 10.12-13; VI 3 [44], 15.33-35; these are obvious echoes of such Platonic passages as *Phaedr.* 247c; *Phaed.* 100d; *Soph.* 251a). There is no distinction between primary and secondary qualities in the lines quoted above, and Plotinus' shapes are nothing but secondary qualities which he conceives of as real features

⁴⁴ This reading is developed by Magrin, 'Sensation and Scepticism in Plotinus'. I discuss her interpretation critically in R. Chiaradonna, 'Plotinus' Account of the Cognitive Powers of the Soul: Sense-Perception and Discursive Thought', *Topoi* 31, 2012, 191-207.

of bodies according to Aristotle's perceptual realism.⁴⁵ To the best of my knowledge, there is no single allusion to Plato's elementary triangles in any of Plotinus' accounts of the physical world.

3. PROVIDENCE WITHOUT CRAFTSMANSHIP⁴⁶

The most striking example of Plotinus' metaphorical reading of the *Timaeus* is certainly provided by his account of providence and demiurgic causality. Again, a Peripatetic preamble is necessary in order to assess Plotinus' position correctly. In a number of well-known texts, Alexander of Aphrodisias rejects Plato's views on demiurgic causality in nature and argues that order in the sublunary region does not depend on craftsmanlike reasoning. Hence Alexander defines nature as an 'irrational power' (ἄλογος [...] δύναμις, *apud* Simpl., *In Phys.* 311.1; see Alex. Aphr., *In Metaph.* 104.3). In order to illustrate how natural motion is transmitted from the first mover, Alexander adopts the mechanical analogy of a marionette whose parts are connected with strings (see Alex. Aphr. *apud* Simpl., *In Phys.* 311.8 ff.).⁴⁷ No choice or plan is involved in this process and Alexander develops extensively the distinction between nature and art both in his treatise *On Providence*, preserved in Arabic (see *Prov.* 79 Ruland), and in his commentary on the *Metaphysics* (*In Metaph.* 104.3-10).

When focusing on these texts, scholars have emphasised Alexander's critical attitude towards Platonism and Stoicism. Furthermore, Alexander's account of nature as an 'irrational power' has been seen as raising several problems as to its relation to Aristotle's original view.⁴⁸ Alexander certainly does not intend to deny that rational structures and regularities exist in the sublunary region. This holds especially for natural species, which exist in virtue of the hylomorphic forms (it

⁴⁵ See Chiaradonna, 'Plotinus' Account of the Cognitive Powers of the Soul'.

⁴⁶ This section is based on Chiaradonna, 'Hylémorphisme', 393-397 (with several changes).

⁴⁷ On the interpretation of this analogy, see Rashed, *Essentialisme*, 278-285.

⁴⁸ See R.W. Sharples, 'Alexander of Aphrodisias on Divine Providence: Two Problems', *Classical Quarterly* 32, 1982, 198-211; Ch. Genequand, 'Quelques aspects de l'idée de nature, d'Aristote à al-Ghazālī', *Revue de théologie et de philosophie* 116, 1984, 105-129; P. Accattino, 'Processi naturali e comparsa dell'*eidos* in Alessandro di Afrodisia', in: G. Movia (ed.), *Alessandro di Afrodisia e la Metafisica di Aristotele*, Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2003, 167-186; Rashed, *Essentialisme*, 278-285 and 294-304; P. Adamson, 'Porphyrius Arabus on Nature and Art: 463 Smith in Context', in: Karamanolis – Sheppard (eds.), *Studies on Porphyry*, 141-163. On Alexander's *On Providence*, see *Alessandro di Afrodisia. La provvidenza. Questioni sulla provvidenza*, a cura di S. Fazzo, trad. dal greco di S. Fazzo, trad. dall'arabo di M. Zonta, Milan: Rizzoli, 1999; *Alexandre d'Aphrodise. Traité de la providence*, éd., intr. et trad. de l'arabe par P. Thillet, Paris: Verdier, 2003.

is a human being who begets a human being: see *In Metaph.* 103.33), and whose eternal and regular character is connected to the cyclical motions of celestial bodies. What Alexander rejects is the Platonic view that such rational structures should be seen as depending on a demiurgic and reasoning cause that produces cosmic order by contemplating an external paradigm. Alexander argues, instead, that such a paradigm is nothing but the hylomorphic immanent form insofar as it is taken as the goal of natural motion (*In Metaph.* 349.6-16). Furthermore, Alexander (*Prov.* 33.1 ff.; 87.5 ff. Ruland; *Quaest.* I 25, 41.8 ff.; II 19, 63.15 ff.) regards natural regularities (such as the processes of coming to be and perishing, and the continual existence of sublunary natural species) as connected to (and depending on) the cyclical celestial motions. Therefore, the hylomorphic structure of the sublunary region, and the cosmological relation of that region with the regular celestial motions, make it possible to account for natural order without having to conceive of nature as a demiurgic and reasoning power. Alexander's remarks against the Epicureans are interesting from this point of view, for Alexander argues that his opponents denied finality in nature since they mistakenly connected it to choice and reasoning (κατὰ προαίρεσιν [...] καὶ λογισμόν, *apud* Simpl., *In Phys.* 372.9-15). Alexander's theory of cosmological causality in nature aims at refuting this conclusion: there certainly is order in nature, but this does not depend on reasoning and choice exerted by an external cause.

Alexander's view is highly distinctive. Charles Genequand has rightly emphasised the difference between Alexander's non-demiurgical view of natural causation and Galen's account of providential nature as a benign craftsman (see esp. his *De usu partium*).⁴⁹ Indeed, pre-Plotinian Platonist philosophers argued that natural order should be explained as caused by the reasoning of the Demiurge, and this is anything but surprising, for Plato himself clearly presents the Demiurge as endowed with rational thought (λογισμός; see *Tim.* 33a; 34b). It is worth quoting a passage from Alcinous' *Didaskalikos* which sets out this position clearly:

[I]t is necessary that the most beautiful of constructions, the world, should have been fashioned by God looking to a Form of world, that being the model of our world, which is only copied from it, and it is by assimilation to it that it is fashioned by the creator, who proceed through a most admirable providence ad administrative care (δίαίτην) to create the world, because 'he was good' (*Tim.* 29e). (*Didasc.* 167.12-15; trans. Dillon)⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Cf. Genequand, 'Quelques aspects de l'idée de nature, d'Aristote à al-Ghazālī'. See Galen, *De usu partium* III, 505-507 Kühn. The difference between Alexander and Galen is striking, but we cannot prove with certainty that Alexander developed his view in order to reject that of Galen: see Accattino, 'Processi naturali e comparsa dell'*eidos*', 172-173.

⁵⁰ On this usage of δίαίτην, see J. Whittaker in *Alcinoos. Enseignement des doctrines de Platon*, Introduction, texte ét. et comm. par J. Whittaker et trad. par P. Louis, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1990, 110 n. 224.

Alexander's innovative view on providence was extensively discussed by the later tradition: in a recent article, Peter Adamson has focused on its presence in fragments from Porphyry's lost *Commentary on Physics*, as well as in Simplicius and Philoponus; Arabic philosophers were also familiar with it.⁵¹ Unlike what happens with the passages on the soul/body relation, there is no clear textual parallel between Plotinus and Alexander on this topic. Prudence, then, is necessary in comparing their views. Plotinus' criticism of the demiurgic view of causality, however, is strikingly similar to that of Alexander.⁵²

The position of the Demiurge in Plotinus' metaphysical hierarchy is a famously difficult issue, which later Neoplatonists also regarded as puzzling (see Procl., *In Tim.* I 305.16-309.13). In a recent study, Jan Opsomer has discussed this topic and suggested that Plotinus ascribes features of demiurgic causality to both the Intellect and the cosmic Soul.⁵³ Such an ambiguity is not incidental. (1) Unlike later Neoplatonists, Plotinus has a rather fluid and dynamic view of the metaphysical hierarchy, whose internal distinctions are less precise than those laid out in later theories. (2) The very notion of a Demiurge has a difficult position in Plotinus' philosophy, for his account of causal derivation (Plotinus' so-called theory of the 'double activity'⁵⁴) is different from (and opposed to) any account of artisanal demiurgic causality. Certainly Plotinus repeatedly argues that the bodily world results from 'action' or 'production' on the part of intelligible principles (see Plotinus' usage of the verbs ἐργάζεσθαι and ποιεῖν in II 7 [37], 3.9; IV 4 [28], 12.29-41; VI 3 [44], 15.28, etc.). This production should however not be explained as a demiurgic or artisanal one, for Plotinus' primary concern is that of stripping intelligible causality of any anthropomorphic connotation. True principles do not actually exert any reasoning or calculation and their causal action merely depends on their essential nature, without involving any deliberation or choice among different alternatives.

This is the background of Plotinus' impressive interpretation of Plato's account of the Demiurge in the *Timaeus* (VI 7 [38], 1). Through this metaphorical reading (which is closely similar to the metaphorical reading of the soul's numerical and quantitative features set out above), Plotinus explains away Plato's mention of the λογισμός of the Demiurge:

⁵¹ Adamson, 'Porphyrius Arabus on Nature and Art'.

⁵² See Thillet, *Alexandre d'Aphrodise. Traité de la providence*, 46-54. Peter Adamson has recently emphasised the parallel between Alexander's *On Providence* and Plotinus' discussion of astrology (see P. Adamson, 'Plotinus on Astrology', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 34, 2008, 265-291).

⁵³ Cf. Opsomer, 'A Craftsman and his Handmaiden'; see also F. Fronterotta, 'Ragionamento divino e principio del discorso'.

⁵⁴ For an in-depth discussion, see E. K. Emilsson, *Plotinus on Intellect*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 60 ff.

Therefore neither forethought of a living thing nor forethought for this universe in general derived from a plan; since there is no planning (λογισμός) there at all, but it is called planning to show that all things there are as they would be as a result of planning at a later stage, and foresight because it is as a wise man would foresee it. (VI 7 [38], 1.28-32; trans. Armstrong)⁵⁵

Here Plotinus is definitely not following the standard interpretation of Plato. As noted above, Platonists before him were perfectly happy to ascribe λογισμός to the Demiurge and conceived of him as a benign craftsman. Plotinus, instead, denies that true causes act according to a plan: order in the sensible world derives from a superior nature but this does not require any reasoning, choice or calculation on its part (see III 2 [47], 2.8-9; 3.3-4; 14.1-2; III 8 [30], 3.13). Hence Plotinus' suggestion that Plato's allusion to the λογισμός should be explained away, for there is actually no choice or reasoning at the level of the intelligible principles and the universe does not derive from a plan. This conclusion plainly contradicts what Plato says in the *Timaeus*, but Plotinus provides (again!) a metaphorical solution for this predicament: whilst there is no rational plan at the level of the real principles, what they do is like the result of planning *if seen 'from below'* (i.e., from the perspective of our discursive embodied reason). Hence we talk about 'foresight' in this world, since it is organised *as if* a wise man would foresee it. But this is a merely metaphorical way of speaking, for foresight and reasoning do not really apply to genuine realities that are above becoming and have no deficiency.

Both in Alexander and in Plotinus the term λογισμός has the same position and refers to that which does *not* explain order in nature. Both authors reject the idea that teleology should be explained anthropomorphically, i.e. through a plan on the part of nature. Plotinus' criticism of anthropomorphic causes has interestingly been linked to his anti-gnostic stance,⁵⁶ but it is plausible that Alexander's rejection of demiurgic causality also played a role in the genesis of Plotinus' theory.

This should indeed not lead to the conclusion that Alexander's and Plotinus' views are identical. Whereas the criticism of artisanal causality is similar, their

⁵⁵ Οὐτ' οὖν ζῶου πρόνοια οὐθ' ὅλως τοῦδε τοῦ παντὸς ἐκ λογισμοῦ ἐγένετο· ἐπεὶ οὐδὲ ὅλως λογισμὸς ἐκεῖ, ἀλλὰ λέγεται λογισμὸς εἰς ἔνδειξιν τοῦ πάντα οὕτως, ὡς [ἄλλος σοφὸς] ἐκ λογισμοῦ ἐν τοῖς ὕστερον, καὶ προόρασις, ὅτι οὕτως, ὡς ἂν τις σοφὸς [ἐν τοῖς ὕστερον] προϊδοίτο. On this passage, see *Plotin. Traité 38*, intr., trad., comm. et notes par P. Hadot, Paris: Cerf, 1988, 198-199 (with further parallels) and *Plotin. Traité 38 (VI, 7)*, prés., trad. et notes par F. Fronterotta, in *Plotin. Traités 38-41*, trad. sous la direction de L. Brisson et J.-F. Pradeau, Paris: Flammarion, 2007, 112.

⁵⁶ Cf. P. Hadot, 'Plotin et les Gnostiques', *Annuaire de l'École Pratiques des Hautes Études (Ve section)*, 1971-1972, 55-58; 1973-1974, 64-65; 1974-1975, 67-69; 1975-1976, 75-77, repr. in P. Hadot, *Plotin, Porphyre. Études Néoplatoniciennes*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1999, 211-223.

overall views on nature and natural kinds are indeed extremely different. Alexander rejects Plato's Demiurge in favour of a cosmological account of teleology which does not involve Platonic separate Ideas and is based on the theory of the immanent specific form. This is certainly not the case with Plotinus, who rather develops a distinctive account both of Plato's metaphysical essential causes and of the participation theory. Plotinus' Platonist views on natural kinds and on their derivation from intelligible causes are certainly *toto caelo* different from Alexander's hylomorphic essentialism.⁵⁷ The relation between Plotinus and Plato (or, rather, the relation between Plotinus' reading of Plato and Plato's original views) appears, however, as problematic as in the examples discussed above, since Plotinus' interpretation of the *Timaeus* actually entails an overt correction of the theory developed in that dialogue, and this correction incorporates some features of the Peripatetic position.

4. CONCLUSION: PLOTINUS' AMBIVALENT RECEPTION OF ARISTOTLE

The passages just discussed provide significant evidence that Plotinus uses hylomorphic notions in order to make sense of Plato's views in the *Timaeus*: Plato's mathematical background is either simply ignored, or explained away as metaphorical; the same holds for Plotinus' account of Plato's Demiurge, which strikingly recalls Alexander's Peripatetic view of providence in the hylomorphic world. This does not mean that Plotinus aims to incorporate Aristotle within his interpretation of Plato, since Plotinus argues that Aristotle's views are wrong and self-contradictory. As noted above, the main problem with Aristotle is that his own philosophical distinctions can only be maintained by accepting *further* distinctions that eventually go against Aristotle's own principles. For example, the distinction between essence and accidents or that between actuality and motion can only be maintained by separating essence and actuality from the structure of bodies, i.e., by transgressing the boundaries of Aristotle's hylomorphism. If, instead, we remain within the boundaries of Aristotle's theory, his views prove unsatisfactory: it becomes impossible, for instance, to draw any adequate distinction between the essence of bodies and their other features.

As I see it, this is the reason why in some passages Plotinus presents Aristotle's theories in a way that appears partial and misleading. For example, in IV 7 [2], 8^s.5-9 he regards Aristotle's enmattered form as extensional and divisible into parts, just like the body.⁵⁸ And in III 6 [26], 12.1-5 Plotinus presents the composition of matter

⁵⁷ On Plotinus' theory, see J. Wilberding, 'Intelligible Kinds and Natural Kinds in Plotinus', *Études platoniciennes* 8, 2011, 53-73.

⁵⁸ See Ch. Tornau, 'Plotinus' Criticism of Aristotelian Entelechism in *Enn.* IV 7[2], 85.25-50', in: Chiaradonna (ed.), *Studi sull'anima in Plotino*, 149-179.

and form as a physical process in which both components become mingled and mutually affected. While this might recall the Stoic theory of blending, Plotinus is not critically reporting the Stoic view: his language is unmistakably that of Peripatetic hylomorphism ([...] οὐχ ὥς ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ εἶδους γενομένου καὶ μορφήν διδόντος ὥστε ἐν σύνθετον γενέσθαι [...]). What Plotinus implicitly suggests is rather that a Stoicising corporeal view necessarily results from Aristotle's hylomorphism, if we conceive of matter and form as Aristotle suggests us to do. If, instead, we wish to take Aristotle's essentialism seriously, then we must transgress the boundaries of his own views and endorse a different, 'Platonic' account of essential causality. But Plotinus actually develops this account through the philosophical resources of the rival school, so that Plotinus' Platonism ultimately amounts to a very sophisticated kind of anti-hylomorphism (or inverted hylomorphism).

This overall outline may perhaps help explain certain unresolved ambiguities in Plotinus' account of the physical world. For example, in his early treatise II 6 [17], 2.20-26 Plotinus is apparently happy to establish a distinction between 'completing' (ὅσαι λέγονται συμπληροῦν οὐσίας: II 6 [17], 2.21) and 'accidental' (ἃ δ' ἐστὶν ἑξῶθεν πάσης οὐσίας: 2.23) qualities within bodies. He presents 'completing qualities' as actualities stemming from the essential, intelligible forming principles (λόγοι), and other qualities as having a different origin (which Plotinus significantly does not specify). That of 'completing (συμπληρωτικός)' qualities is a theory typical of the commentary tradition on Aristotle's *Categories*.⁵⁹ Such qualities (in particular, specific differences) were conceived of as the 'constituent parts' of sensible particulars. Completing or substantial qualities make sensible particular substances the (kind of) entities which they are. In consequence of this, sensible particulars are essentially determined and are ultimately a subject of predication for their non-essential properties (see e.g. Porph., *In Cat.* 95.31-35).⁶⁰

Some scholars rely on II 6 [17], 2 in order to present Plotinus as willing to incorporate the Peripatetic account of sensible particulars as consisting of matter and endowed with essences.⁶¹ I would be prudent on this point. First of all, Plotinus' account in II 6 [17] is anything but clear and its structure is close to that of a scholastic *quaestio* where hypotheses are discussed and provisional solutions furnished: it is extremely difficult to rely on this treatise in order to outline Plotinus'

⁵⁹ Apparently the enigmatic 'Lucius' (probably 1 BC - 1 AD) had already polemically referred to this theory: see Simpl., *In Cat.* 48.1-11.

⁶⁰ There is an extensive scholarly debate on this topic. Here I would only refer to *Porph., Introduction*, trans., with a comm. by J. Barnes, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003, 180 and 350-356. For further details and references, see also Chiaradonna, *Sostanza movimento analogia*, 70-72.

⁶¹ See e.g. Ch. Horn, *Plotin über Sein Zahl und Einheit*, Stuttgart-Leipzig: Teubner, 1995, 88-96.

views. Plotinus' lack of clarity regarding the origin of accidental properties should also suggest a more cautious reading, as it further shows that the whole discussion is provisional and incomplete to say the least.⁶² As is often the case in his early treatises, here Plotinus attempts to track provisional hypotheses, but this does not mean that he is endorsing them without qualification (as I see it, this also explains Plotinus' highly puzzling discussion of 'intelligible matter' in II 7 [12], 1-5). In addition to this, we should consider the fact that even in treatise II 6 [17], 1.49 Plotinus argues that the objects of sense are in no way substance, for they are only 'affections of substance': this claim is hardly compatible with any form of physical essentialism. And finally, the idea that sensible particulars are endowed with essences is overtly rejected in Plotinus' treatises *On the Genera of Being* (VI 3 [44]), where the non-essential character of the 'so-called sensible substance' (VI 3 [44], 9.1) is stressed with all desirable clarity (see VI 3 [44], 8.19-37; 9.27-36; 10.12-17; 15.24-38). Here Plotinus claims that sensible particulars should be regarded as mere conglomerations of matter and qualities (VI 3 [44], 8.20); the distinction between completing and accidental qualities is rejected (VI 3 [44], 8.27-32). This position, however, raises significant problems on its turn, for sensible particulars come to be conceived as unstructured aggregates of properties that are all on the same level, so that no specific identifying feature can be singled out (thus, for example, biped would not be an identifying feature of the species human being). If this were the case, it would be very difficult, e.g., to identify a sensible object as a human being without involving in this cognition the grasping of its intelligible form. This is indeed counter-intuitive, and Plotinus himself is happy to state that sense-perception "sees a human being" (V 3 [49], 3.1) without (at least explicitly) suggesting that this entails any preliminary grasping of the intelligible Form *human being*. How can this be so, if the identity of a human being as such cannot in any way be founded on its sensible properties?⁶³

There have been astute attempts to present the view in II 6 [17], 2 as compatible with that of VI 3 [44], 8.⁶⁴ This may well be possible, but the impression re-

⁶² Here I summarise what I try to show in detail in R. Chiaradonna, 'Ενέργειαι e qualità in Plotino', in: Lapini – Malusa – Mauro (eds.), *Gli antichi e noi*, 443-459, and 'Plotinus on Sensible Particulars and Individual Essences', in: J. Zachhuber – A. Torrance (eds.), *Individuality in Late Antiquity*, Burlington: Ashgate, 2014, 47-61.

⁶³ Similar tensions and problems arise with Plotinus' account of change: see the fine discussion in C. Arruzza, 'Passive Potentiality in the Physical Realm'. I have argued elsewhere that the account in VI 3 [44], 8 represents Plotinus' last word on these questions and that this account is philosophically much more satisfying than that of II 6 [17]: see R. Chiaradonna, *Sostanza movimento analogia*, 140-141. I would now be more prudent on this point.

⁶⁴ See e.g. G. Karamanolis, 'Plotinus on Quality and Immanent Form', in: Chiaradonna – Trabattori (eds.), *Physics and Philosophy of Nature in Greek Neoplatonism*, 79-

mains that Plotinus' accounts reveal an inner tension. For either he conceives of sensible particulars as endowed with an internal structure, which corresponds to a hierarchical order among their properties (but this comes too close to the notion of 'essential property', and according to Plotinus sensible particulars are *not* endowed with essences), or he conceives of sensible particulars as integrally qualitative wholes, where 'completing' and 'extrinsic' properties cannot be opposed (but this apparently jeopardises an adequate explanation of sensible particulars, and Plotinus does not completely abandon the idea that some properties are more 'important' than others). While I cannot find any adequate solution to this predicament within Plotinus' way of reasoning, I can suggest one likely reason for the existence of the quandary as such. As I see it, these problems closely depend on what has been argued so far: in his account of the physical world, Plotinus makes use of Aristotelian hylomorphic concepts in order to express a different philosophical view inspired by Plato's *Timaeus*, that according to which sensible particulars are nothing but ontic degradations of higher, supra-sensible essential principles. Plotinus' hylomorphic reception of the *Timaeus* may possibly be seen to explain some unresolved tensions in his natural philosophy.

101, who argues that Plotinus employs 'quality' in two senses, a wide and a narrow one. According to the wide sense, all features of sensible things are qualities; according to the narrow sense, only accidental features are qualities.