Plotinus and the individual principle

A commentary on Ennead *V.7.1*

Thesis Research Master Classics

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"We must remember that from first to last the aim of the Platonic philosopher is to live on the universal plane, to lose himself more and more in the contemplation of truth, so that the perfect psyche would, it seems, lose itself completely in the universal mind, the world-psyche. Hence it remains individual only in so far as it is imperfect, and personal immortality is not something to aim at, but something to outgrow."

(Grube 1958: 148)

"Zoek je zelf broeder
Vind jezelf
Wees en blijf alleen jezelf
...
Zoek je zelf zuster
Vind jezelf
Wees en blijf alleen jezelf"

(Van Kooten en De Bie, *Simplisties Verbond*, 1975)

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1. INTRODUCTION

Does every individual human being have its own Form in the intellectual world? This question was, in the words of Dillon and Morrow, a 'very vexed one' in ancient Platonism.[1] It was embedded in the larger context of an uncertainty about the limits of the intelligible realm: of what entities do Forms exist and of what entities not?[2] Because Plato nowhere gives a complete 'Theory of Forms', the post-Platonic philosophers attempted to explain the various remarks that he made concerning the Form as such. By combining those remarks, they often tried to present a coherent representation of what might have been his theory of Forms and as a part of that they construed a definition of a 'Form' which they believed came closest to that of Plato. With that definition as a fundament, some of them argued that of a variety of things no Forms were to be accepted, among which at times the Form of an individual human being was included.[3]

Their casual and slight remarks about the Form of an individual human being contrast with the extensive philosophical discussion of this question that we find in one of the treatises of the founder of neo-Platonism, Plotinus, who for the first time deals with the issue in relatively extensive terms. In contrast with his Platonic forerunners, Plotinus presents in *Ennead* V.7 an original approach to the question and does not hesitate to deal with the question with a perspective that is broader than purely metaphysical. He goes beyond his predecessors in trying to come up with a comprehensive and philosophically correct discussion and does not contend himself with a didactic and dogmatic repetition of the (presumed) Platonic point of view.

However, largely due to the fact that this treatise is no exception to the general rule that Plotinus' works are (too) tightly argued, the interpretation of the work has been controversial indeed in modern (neo-)Platonic studies.[4] This is only amplified by the fact that a reasoned comprehension

[1] Dillon & Morrow (1987: 153).

[2] Fronterotta (2011: 46); cf. Dillon (1993: 97; 2003: 118-120); Ferrari (2007).

[3] Cf. e.g. Chiaradonna (2014).

[4] See e.g. Kalligas (1997a: 208-209, 'scholars have felt uneasy'), D'Ancona Costa (2002: 531, 'doctrine is problematic'), Vassilopoulou (2006: 371, 'decidedly inconclusive [scholarship]'), Tornau (2009: 336, '[une] question debattue depuis longtemps'). Compare the remark of Porphyry about Plotinus: νοήμασι πλεονάζων ἢ λέξεσι, 'he abounds more in ideas than in words' (*Vita Plotini* 14.2-3); Porphyry also informs us that Plotinus refused to go twice over anything he had written (8.1-2).

of any Plotinian text requires a thorough understanding of its background and historical context, also beyond (neo-)Platonism.[5] According to some scholars, Plotinus accepts and supports the existence of Forms of individuals, whereas others argue that he denies such a thing. The discussion about this text is further complicated because of the peculiar habit in modern scholarship to regard the Plotinian tractates as a sort of philosophical candy store, from which separate sentences and loose remarks may be taken and combined to argue that Plotinus was of a certain opinion (or not).[6] These publications are in itself useful exercises as far as they force us to look at the work of Plotinus' as a consistent whole (although we are far from certain whether he indeed intended to be coherent) and to combine the philosophical arguments of the various *Enneads*, but too often they neglect the internal argumentative structure of the treatises and overlook the necessity of an understanding of its direct context in order to fully grasp the meaning of a single remark.[7]

In recent decades, this tendency has been countered by the publication of a whole range of in-depth commentaries on the respective tractates, in which every work is regarded on its own and we are forced to look for an internal argumentative consistence.[8] This thesis joins that trend and fills up a lacuna by presenting a commentary on (the first section of) *Ennead* V.7, in which Plotinus presents his answer to the question whether Forms of individual human beings are acceptable.

The commentary has a philosophical focus. It answers the question whether Plotinus accepted Forms of individual Forms – or, in other words, how does Plotinus answer the question that is traditionally used as the title of V.7? Premises are identified, hidden premises are added and arguments are tested for its validity.[9] In this respect, the commentary uses a strongly structuralistic approach to identify his argumentation. Although the focus is thus placed on an analysis of the philosophical argumentation, this commentary is keyed to the Greek text, instead of to a translation,

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[5] Kalligas (2014: x). Cf. *Ennead* V.8.1, 10-14 and Porphyry, *Vita Plotini* 14.6-25.

[6] Examples are Aubry (2008), Tornau (2009) and (to a lesser extent) Remes (2007). This habit is of course not confined to studies on Plotinus.

[7] Cf. Annas (2006: 28), who remarks in her admirable article on the position of ancient philosophy in modern scholarship that 'it [became] apparent that an understanding of the structure and motivation of Plato's theory of forms, say, is unlikely to come from the format of short, snappy exchanges of journal articles'. See also Rorty (1984: 49).

[8] The best examples are the French series under supervision of Hadot (e.g. Schniewind (2007)) and the English series edited by Dillon & Smith (e.g. Dillon & Blumenthal (2015)).

[9] Paraphrasing Annas' (2006: 26) definition of analytical ancient philosophy.

of which the added value will become clear at numerous instances.[10] Next to a definite answer to the 'very vexed' question regarding the existence of Forms of individual human beings, this thesis and commentary are intended to show the value of 'close reading', also when dealing with philosophical texts.

This commentary furthermore adopts a method commonly known as 'historical reconstruction', in which the historical context of the treatise is strongly taken into account. This means that we look for the possible causal factors that may have influenced Plotinus, ranging from what he might have read to his motivation to present his philosophy in the way he does.[11] The commentary is therefore preceded by a chapter on the intellectual history of the question, to clarify the way in which the earlier Platonists dealt with the issue. In ancient philosophy, it is hardly possible to exclude the historical context, because of the scarcity of the evidence and the need to look to other (earlier) philosophers in order to fully understand the presented doctrine. This does not mean we should exclude the other main method for doing ancient philosophy, which Rorty dubbed 'rational reconstruction', which favours a critical appraisal of the doctrines of the ancient philosopher by themselves, without questioning the peculiarities of the historical situation. As far as an rational ('internal') understanding of the work of Plotinus is possible, I believe that it should be preferred. In this respect we are lucky to have the entirety of the *Enneads* transmitted to us. In this commentary, the primary focus is therefore put on a structural analysis of Plotinus' work, before we look to other philosophers.

Plotinus' works, however, at least on first sight (and often also on second), appear to be structured haphazardly and to swerve off topic regularly, which has undoubtedly influenced interpretations of his work and in particular strengthened the mentioned tendency of scholars to connect passages from different works in order to explain a given passage. However, a close look at the structure of his argument, with particular attention for Greek syntax (e.g. εἰ μέν … εἰ δέ) and particles (e.g. ἤ), is in the end indispensable when establishing the interpretation or 'meaning' of the argument.[12]

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[10] Both the series mentioned in n. 8 are free of any Greek text; a notable exception to the mentioned rule are the monumental commentaries of Kalligas, of which the first volume (2014) has now been translated into English.

[11] Rorty (1984: 49-56).

[12] Cf. Annas' (2006: 28 n. 4) observation that in the past decades we have seen a movement towards more attention for formal features in philosophical texts (particularly those of Plato).

Such a structural study of V.7 in its entirety has shown that the main issue of Forms of individuals, is in fact only dealt with in the first of the three chapters that constitute the treatise. The second and third section, on the other hand, only discuss the logical consequences of the position taken up in the first section: they are thus less fundamental in the sense that they do not add to the philosophical framework set up in the first section. For that reason, and also out of more practical considerations of space, only that section is commented in this thesis. The other two are for now left aside, also because the second and third chapter are worth our careful attention.

This thesis has the following structure. The commentary will be preceded by two chapters which offer an extensive and contextualizing introduction to V.7. In the first place, an overview will be presented of the modern interpretations that have been offered for this treatise (ch. 2). After that, the 'intellectual history' of the question into the existence of Forms of individuals will be discussed (ch. 3), beginning with Plato and up to the neo-Platonist Proclus (who lived after Plotinus), in which it will be demonstrated that Plotinus' approach to the traditional question is highly original.

The actual discussion of V.7 (ch. 4) starts off with general remarks on the position of the treatise in the broader context of Plotinus' own work and an outline of the structure and the argument, which functions as the framework for the line-by-line commentary. In every case, these comments are introduced by the Greek text, a new translation and an argumentative scheme (whenever appropriate). The commentary is divided in a discussion about the argumentative purport of the specific passage and detailed observations about specific words or phrases. In the ensuing chapter 5, the position of Forms of individuals in the theology and philosophy of the church-father Augustine will be examined to demonstrate the influence that Plotinus and the argumentation of treatise V.7 in particular have had, as well as showing that a close-reading of a text of Plotinus can help us to (better) understand texts of those authors he inspired. The thesis will be concluded with an epilogue (ch. 6), in which the first section will be related to the other parts of V.7 and the findings of this treatise will be summarized.

2. MODERN INTERPRETATIONS OF *ENNEAD* V.7

For a very long time the dominant position in the *Plotinforschung* has been that in V.7 Plotinus accepted Forms of individuals.[13] This interpretation then immediately led to a different problem: how should the acceptance of Forms of individuals in V.7 be rhymed with the apparent denial of such forms in other treatises like V.9.12?[14] These were the issues that were prominent in the first phase of modern scholarship on *Ennead* V.7, which began with the polemical publications of Rist and Blumenthal.[15] Both these eminent classicists suggested that Plotinus in V.7 accepted Forms of individuals, but they thought differently about the relation of V.7 with other texts. Whereas Rist assumed that Plotinus wholeheartedly accepted Forms of individuals after an initial hesitant approach in V.9 (which comes fifth in the chronological order), Blumenthal was much more cautious and aphoristically declared that V.7 is 'inconveniently sandwiched' between two strong denials of Forms of individuals (in V.9 and VI.5).[16] He argues that V.7 is the only treatise that offers a clear affirmation, while other treatises like IV.3 might support Forms of individuals.[17] His overview of the various texts that might touch on Forms of individuals, has an unsatisfactory conclusion: Plotinus did not hold a consistent view (perhaps out of fear of straying too far from the doctrine of Plato) and we can only be sure that he did not accept Forms of individuals at the end of his life.[18]

This problem remained the focus of the scholarly output on V.7 and a small number of articles was published that offered different solutions, but which all had their centre the

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[13] It is custom in the anglophone world to use a capital letter when using the Platonic concept Form or Idea, to distinguish it from a 'form' or an 'idea' in the literal sense (compare in Dutch: de Idee versus het Idee). In this paper, this usance will be followed and to simplify things, I will use the term 'Form' throughout. Cf. the commentary on line 1.

[14] See the commentary on lines 18-23.

[15] This leaves out the rather odd chapter by Heinemann (1921: 63-73) on V.7, in which he argues that the treatise must be a σχόλιον ἐκ τῶν συνουσιῶν. He argues that the treatise is obviously presented as a dialogue (see the commentary on lines 1-2) and represents a dialogue between two students of Plotinus, because of the inconsistent answers, the Stoic influences and the poor Greek (repetition of εἰ, ἤ, ἐκεί etc.). The closest parallel to this interpretation is that of Harder (1956: 555), who proposed that V.7 is a *Selbstgespräch*. Both these arguments did not persuade later scholars – and rightly so (cf. Blumenthal (1971: 119, 130)).

[16] Rist (1963) and (1970: esp. 299), which is a reaction to Blumenthal (1966); Blumenthal (1971: 113).

[17] Blumenthal (1971: 120). On IV.3 and V.7 see Dillon & Blumenthal (2015: 26).

[18] Blumenthal (1971: 132-133).

substantiated belief that in V.7 Forms of individuals are accepted. An unorthodox answer was proposed by Mamo in suggesting that V.9 in fact is an affirmation of Forms of individuals and that all other texts that could contradict this point of view are not relevant for Plotinus' case about individual human beings.[19] Armstrong's proposal is organized along the same lines: V.7 is evidence for Forms of individuals, whereas the other texts do not clearly deny such Forms nor clearly affirm them. The passage in V.9, in particular, leaves the question wide open and is only concerned with minor physical properties, which can be explained in the Aristotelian way (*i.e.* as a result of matter). He assumes that the assumption of individual Forms could for P never exclude higher universal Forms, in which such lower individual Forms participate.[20] Likewise Gerson argues that V.9 should not be regarded as presenting a denial of the Form of an individual, because out of the affirmation of a Form of Man (which we find there) does not follow the denial of the Form of an individual.[21] Kalligas takes a different outlook and suggests that in V.7 the ascent of the individual human being is treated (individual perspective), which contrasts with the universal *Anschauung* we find in V.9 (the character of man in general). However, he also for the first time mentions the concept of λόγοι as it is found in V.7 and includes it in his argument, but without giving it the prominent role it deserves.[22]

The turn of the century meant also a reversal in scholarship on V.7. D'Ancona Costa remarked on V.7, although in a different context, that Plotinus did not reach full consistency on the question – but that he also boldly denies such a thing as an intelligible model (*i.e.* a Form) for the individual Socrates in V.7. She for the first time remarked that the element in V.7 (lines 1-2), which I will mark as the 'assumption', is indeed not the answer to the question (line 1), but is merely an 'implication'.[23] Although the word 'implication' might not be aptly chosen here, this is the first interpretation of V.7 which questions whether it affirms the existence of Forms of individuals. This interpretation was then taken on by other recent scholars like Vassilopoulou and Remes, who both in a comparable manner (although they do not refer to one another) argue that V.7 cannot be seen as evidence for

[19] Mamo (1969: 79-83).

[20] Armstrong (1977: 49-56).

[21] Gerson (1994: 72-78).

[22] Kalligas (1997a: 208-212).

[23] D'Ancona Costa (2002: 531).

Forms of individuals, but both go into the role the λόγος is given to play in determining individuality.[24]

The most fundamental difference between this commentary and these earlier interpretations of V.7 (including those of Vassilopoulou and Remes) is the emphasis that is laid here on the principle of individual ascension that pervades the argumentation. The readings that have been offered before without exception revolve around a largely metaphysical perspective, through which it is attempted to align the position of Forms of the individual (or, in more recent years, the forming principle) with the other information we have on the metaphysical hierarchy that Plotinus argued for. The worth of Plotinus' discussion of the question, however, extends far beyond these solely metaphysical concerns, as he shifts the character of the issue away to the need of an individual principle to allow any individual to outgrow its mortality and find his true, 'higher' self in the intelligible realm – thereby using a perspective on the question which could perhaps be called with a slightly anachronistic term 'soteriological'.[25] The metaphysical system, in which admittedly this ascension takes place and in which the individual principle should be posited, is of course extremely relevant, but the significance of this treatise is lost when a discussion of it does not go any further.

To conclude this helicopter view of the scholarly work on V.7: the question 'whether or not there are square circles' has not been yet been answered definitely.[26] We still find the occasional publication that argues that Plotinus does indeed accept Forms of individuals, or which suggests that the Plotinus never came to a definitive view.[27] It is the intention of this commentary to put this controversy to rest, while taking the earlier interpretations into account.[28]

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[24] Vassilopoulou (2006); Remes (2007: 76-85).

[25] Cf. Grube (1958: 248). See the commentary on lines 1-3 in particular. See also Porphyry, *Vita Plotini* 23, in which Plotinus explains the goal of his philosophy and the eternality (διατελεῖν) of blessed life in the intelligible realm.

[26] The rephrasing of the central question by O'Meara (1999: 263).

[27] Sikkema (2009) resp. Dillon & Blumenthal (2015: 27, 191-192). It is, however, possible that the latter adhere to the view that no Forms of individuals are accepted in V.7 – their formulation leaves us uncertain.

[28] The overview here presented is not meant to be exhaustive, although I believe that all of the relevant publications are included. More detailed references to all of them are presented in the commentary: this discussion of the *status quaestionis* is largely designed as an introduction to modern scholarship on V.7.

3. FORMS OF INDIVIDUALS: THE INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

3.1. PLATO

Although his theory of Forms is probably the philosophical innovation Plato is most famous for, he never gives an extensive overview of his theory.[29] In fact, nowhere in his dialogues is a concise, explicit definition of the concept 'Form' to be found, nor does the assumed definition of a Form appear to be consistent. Any reader of the Platonic works will have to assemble a definition himself, out of the various building bricks that a multitude of remarks offer him.[30] This has also, already in antiquity, caused the uncertainty regarding Plato's view on the possibility of Forms of individual human beings in the his metaphysical system (*i.e.* his 'theory of Forms')?

In general, it has been assumed that there is no such possibility, because the core of that system is the conception of a Form as an example (paradigm) of every instantiation of it that we find in our world. Thus, the idea of a man functions as the paradigm of every human being on earth, which excludes the possibility that every human being has his own form. This conception finds his basis in one of the few defining characteristics of a Form that we can find in Plato's work, namely in his *Politeia*:

> εἶδος γάρ πού τι ἓν ἕκαστον εἰώθαμεν τίθεσθαι περὶ ἕκαστα τὰ πολλά, οἷς ταὐτὸν ὄνομα ἐπιφέρομεν.
>
> We are in a habit of postulating a single 'Form' for each multiplicity of things, for which we use the same name.[31]
>
> (*Politeia* 596a6-7)

This argument has, since Aristotle, become known as the 'one-over-many' argument, according to which there are is one eternal and separate Form corresponding to a general term that is true for

[29] Ross (1953: *passim*); Gallop (1975: 95). Cf. Annas (1981: 217) and Fine (1993: 20), who both point to the possibility that Plato did not have a 'Theory of Forms'.

[30] Cf. Annas (2006: 30-32).

[31] Cf. Aristotle, *Categoriae* 1a. All translations are my own, unless noted otherwise.

many things.[32] It is also included, but in more shrouded terms, in the *Parmenides* (at 131b7-9, 132a1-4).[33] If thus a Form exists of every multitude of objects that we call by the same name, it is obvious that we do need a Form for the *homo sapiens* as a species, but not for each human being as such, because each is called by its own name.[34]

Although the definition given in the *Politeia* as well as the absence of any reference to Forms of individuals suffices to conclude that Plato would not have held the view that Forms of individual human beings exist,[35] it is worthwhile to discuss a passage from the *Parmenides*, in which a young Socrates is asked by Parmenides of what things he believes that Forms exist, because this passage has been influential for later Platonists.[36]

As a part of his criticism of Socrates' theory of Forms, Parmenides asks him four questions about the extent of the existence of separate ideas (*Prm.* 130a-e). This question leads to a binary categorization: objects of which Forms exists and those which are excluded from having an eternal paradigm in the intellectual world.[37] Socrates acknowledges that Forms exist of abstract concepts such as 'likeness' and 'many', referring back to the previous discussion on Zeno's paradox (*Prm.* 127d-130a).[38] These concepts could be grouped as those things that govern the relative positions of sensible objects.[39] He is equally prepared to accept Forms of qualitative aspects of objects that need

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[32] Fine (1993: 103-119) contains an intelligent discussion, including Aristotle's criticism of the theory. See for Aristotle's criticism in general section par. 3.2.

[33] Often the passage that 'forms carve at the natural joints' (*Phaedrus* 265e1-3) has been regarded as a different definition of Forms (e.g. Fine (1993: 20), but we should keep in mind that Socrates there speaks rather more about forms of speeches and rhetoric than of Forms in the metaphysical sense (although both require the same method of understanding). Cf. Ross (1953: 80-82); Scully (2003: 52, 125-126).

[34] It it this definition that best fits with the definition that the middle-Platonist Alcinous would later offer for Forms, see below.

[35] Gerson (1994: 72) remarks that 'nowhere in the dialogues does Plato even hint that Forms of individuals make the slighest bit of sense'. Cf. Cherniss (1944: 506), Blumenthal (1971: 114), Aubry (2008: 272). But it has been proposed that Plato could have hold that there were such Forms (by Robin (1908: 589), on the basis of Aristotle's apparent ascription of individuality to a Form.

[36] The term 'Platonists' refers to the entire range of ancient Platonic philosophers from Old Academy up to (at least) neo-Platonisms.

[37] Fronterotta (2011: 46).

[38] See Allen (1997: 76-103) for an extensive discussion.

[39] Unless noted otherwise, over the course of this thesis 'objects' should be regarded as including both objects in the literal sense (table, chair), vivid beings, and immaterial concepts.

not necessarily be considered in relative perspective, like 'beauty', 'good' and 'just'. On the other hand, Socrates argues that there are no Forms of 'mud', 'hair' and 'dirt'.[40] These things are 'vile and worthless' (ἀτιμότατόν τε καὶ φαυλότατον, 130c6-7) and there presence in the intellectual Form is therefore not to be accepted: it would indeed be ἄτοπον (absurd, out of the way) to believe so.[41]

Socrates admits that he is uncertain (ἐν ἀπορίᾳ) whether (separate) Forms exist of man, fire and water, which we could perhaps categorize as 'sensible objects'.

> [PARM.] τί δ', ἀνθρώπου εἶδος χωρὶς ἡμῶν καὶ τῶν οἷοι ἡμεῖς ἐσμεν πάντων, αὐτό τι εἶδος ἀνθρώπου ἢ πυρὸς ἢ καὶ ὕδατος;
>
> [SOC.] ἐν ἀπορίᾳ, φάναι, πολλάκις δή, ὦ Παρμενίδη, περὶ αὐτῶν γέγονα, πότερα χρὴ φάναι ὥσπερ περὶ ἐκείνων ἢ ἄλλως.
>
> [PARM.] "And does a abstract Form of Men exist, separate from us and all others like us, or of Fire or of Water?"
> [SOC.] "I have often been uncertain, he said, Parmenides, whether we should speak about these things as about the others or not."
>
> (*Parmenides* 130c2-4)

It has been rightly argued that this passage does not function as an illustration of the Platonic views on the extent of the Forms, because in other works Plato puts forward and defends Forms of objects of which Socrates here seems doubtful.[42] For instance, immediately after having given the 'one-over-many-argument', Plato in the *Politeia* comes up with the existence of Forms of Couch and Table:[43]

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[40] Parmenides responds to this remark that Socrates, after he has aged, will value even these 'absurd' things (*Parmenides* 130e); cf. *Sophista* 226e8-227c6 and *Politeia* 266d4-9, where it is said that a true philosopher does not despise anything.

[41] This rationale for this denial is only accentuated by the specific use of the word ἄτοπον, which also means 'monstrous' or 'disgusting' (cf. *LSJ* s.v. I.3).

[42] Allen (1997: 119-124); Fronterotta (2011: 45-46). Plotinus acknowledges the existence of Forms of air and water in *Ennead* V.9.4, 28. Henceforth, I will refer to the *Enneades* in abbreviated manner (only the numbering).

[43] Cf. the anecdote about Diogenes the Cynic and Plato as told by Diogenes Laertius VI.2.53, in which Diogenes remarks that he can see a table and a cup, but not 'Tableness' and 'Cupness'. Plato retorts that Diogenes has the eyes to see a table and a cup, but not the intelligence to discern tableness and cupness.

[SOC.] οἷον, εἰ 'θέλεις, πολλαί πού εἰσι κλῖναι καὶ τράπεζαι.

[GLAUCON] πῶς δ' οὔ;

[SOC.] ἀλλὰ ἰδέαι γέ που περὶ ταῦτα τὰ σκεύη δύο, μία μὲν κλίνης, μία δὲ τραπέζης.

[SOC.] "For example, if you like, there are, I suppose, many sorts of couches of tables."
[GLAUCON] "How could it not be?"
[SOC.] "But there are, I suppose, only two Forms associated with these objects, one for a couch, another for a table."

(*Politeia*, 596a10-b4)

In the *Meno*, Plato is likewise prepared to accept the existence of a Form of another sensible 'object':[44]

[SOC.] [...] ᾆρα τούτῳ φῂς πολλὰς καὶ παντοδαπὰς εἶναι καὶ διαφερούσας ἀλλήλων, τῷ μελίττας εἶναι; ἢ τούτῳ μὲν οὐδὲν διαφέρουσιν, ἄλλῳ δέ τῳ, οἷον ἢ κάλλει ἢ μεγέθει ἢ ἄλλῳ τῳ τῶν τοιούτων;

[MENO] τοῦτ' ἔγωγε, ὅτι οὐδὲν διαφέρουσιν, ᾗ μέλιτται εἰσίν, ἡ ἑτέρα τῆς ἑτέρας.

[SOC.] "[...] Do you say that, by being bees, there are many and various sorts and different from each other? Or do they not differ in that respect, but in something else, like shapeliness or size or some other quality of them?"
[MENO] "Of course this, that each is not different from the other, by that they are bees."

(*Meno*, 72b3-9)

[44] Cf. Klein (1965: 47-49) on these lines.

When in the *Philebus*, Socrates asserts, albeit veiled, that a Form of Man exists, his youthful ἀπορία has apparently been resolved:[45]

> [SOC.] ὅταν δέ τις ἕνα ἄνθρωπον ἐπιχειρῇ τίθεσθαι καὶ βοῦν ἕνα καὶ τὸ καλὸν ἓν καὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἕν, περὶ τούτων τῶν ἑνάδων καὶ τῶν τοιούτων ἡ πολλὴ σπουδὴ μετὰ διαιρέσεως ἀμφισβήτησις γίγνεται.
>
> [SOC.] "When someone attempts to posit man is one, and cow is one, and beauty is one, and the good is one, the strong interest in these and comparable unities changes into dispute and controversy."
>
> (*Philebus* 15a4-7)

And, to conclude, in the *Cratylus* (389b8-c2) Forms of tools are mentioned and the *Phaedo* refers to the Form of Fire (103d10-13), of which the young Socrates of the *Parmenides* was still doubtful.[46]

These various passages appear to offer a slightly inconsistent perspective of Plato himself on the question of the limits of the intelligible realm, but it could well be that this perceived inconsistency is no more than a growing understanding of the nature of a Form. Although it is impossible to distinguish with certainty what Plato's ideas were on the question of what objects Forms exist, we can assert that he did not hold that of every individual human being a different Form exists, as there is no evidence whatsoever for such a position in his dialogues. This is however already doubted by the other great philosopher of antiquity, Aristotle.

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[45] Whether Plato here exactly refers to Forms of each of these, is however a matter of discussion: see e.g. Gosling (1975: 143-153). I believe that the reference to the unity of all of these things indeed presents its own philosophical problems, but the accentuation of their unity by itself is so close to the presentation of the Forms as each being unified and singular, that it is unlikely to interpret these lines as *not* referring to the Forms, notwithstanding the context this remark is placed in and the difficulty of the One and Many problem (see also *Parmenides* 129b). The existence of the Form of Man was of course also implied by the use of the term 'Third Man Arguments' for regress arguments (e.g. at *Parmenides.* 132a-b). Cf. Rist (1963: 223).

[46] Cf. Ademollo (2011: 129-132); Rowe (1993: 249-254). Plotinus accepts a Form of Fire at VI.5.8 (πυρὸς ἡ ἰδέα) .

3.2. ARISTOTLE

Obviously, this paragraph on Aristotle is not concerned with Aristotle's own views on causes of the individuality of every human being, which would take us far from the Platonic background of Plotinus.[47] Whether Aristotle believed in the existence of an individual Form as the sense of a principle of individuation (or, instead, matter), is still a question that is highly controversial, not in the least because his work seems to point in both directions.[48]

We are here concerned with the criticism that Aristotle raised against Plato's theory of Forms, in which he also dealt with the relation between the theory of Forms and the existence of particulars, both as artificial objects and individuals. In his *Metaphysica*, Aristotle mentions five arguments used by the Platonists to prove the existence of Forms, but which according to him fail to do so. One of those arguments is the so-called 'Object of Thought Argument' (OTA), of which it is however probable that Plato himself did not explicitly use it to argue the existence of Forms. At the same time he did not distinguish his position enough to avoid being committed to this argument, as he often relates 'a cognitive condition' (knowledge about something) with 'what (really) is'.[49]

The OTA argues that if we can think of anything, a Form of it must exist. So it is explained that we can think of things that are no longer present in the material world (like a deceased person), as we cannot think of something that does not exist. If we can therefore think of something that is no longer sensible, there must still be something else, i.e. a Form. Aristotle suggests that if we follow this argument, we must accept Forms to exist of perishable individual things, of which he suggests that Plato did not acknowledge their existence. He phrases this point as follows:

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[47] Plotinus was a diligent student of Aristotelian philosophy, as Aristotle's work, including the commentaries on it by e.g. Alexander of Aphrodisias, was regarded as an effective tool to understand the philosophy of Plato himself – including the explicit objections Aristotle raised against Plato's work. See the following remarks of Porphyry: καταπεπύκνωται δὲ καὶ ἡ Μετὰ τὰ φυσικὰ τοῦ Ἀριστοτέλους πραγματεία, 'Aristotle's *Metaphysica* is concentrated [in his writings]' (*Vita Plotini* 14.6-8) and likewise the commentaries (14.10-14). Cf. Kalligas (1997a: 208) and Gerson (2014: *passim*).

[48] Cf. e.g. Gill (1994) and Kalligas (1997a: 207-208).

[49] Fine (1993: 129-141).

> ἔτι δὲ καθ᾽ οὓς τρόπους δείκνυμεν ὅτι ἔστι τὰ εἴδη, κατ᾽ οὐθένα φαίνεται τούτων [...] κατὰ δὲ τὸ νοεῖν τι φθαρέντος τῶν φθαρτῶν: φάντασμα γάρ τι τούτων ἔστιν.
>
> again, not one of the arguments by which we try to prove that Forms exist demonstrates our point [...] and because [of the argument] that we [can] think of what has perished, [there will be Forms] of perishables: because we have a mental image of them.
>
> (*Metaphysica* 990b8-9, 14-15)

The φάντασμα, 'mental image', presumably refers to the thought of the individual: we can think of something that has perished, thus Forms must exists of those perishable things. Aristotle does not further substantiate this point any further in these lines, who speaks here as if he is a Platonist.[50] However, in another treatise, he has dealt *in extenso* with the five objections he levied against the (presumed) Platonic arguments for the Forms. In the commentary of Alexander of Aphrodisias on Aristotle's *Metaphysica*, we find fragments of a short essay of Aristotle titled *De Ideis* (Περί Ἰδεῶν). There has been considerable discussion regarding the authenticity and authorship of this treatise, but the inclusion of the work in the catalogues preserved by Diogenes Laertius and Hesychius and the reference to it in the commentaries of Alexander of Aphrodisias and Syrianus are convincing enough.[51] In the end, however, it does not matter whether we are sure that Aristotle indeed wrote this treatise: Alexander believed that Aristotle had said so and among the ancient Platonists, his ascription would have been accepted (probably at face value).[52]

Among the elaborations on the five objections introduced in the *Metaphysica*, we find a considerable segment on the Object of Thought Argument, in which Aristotle repeats his point that the acceptance of the arguments necessitates Forms of perishable individuals:

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[50] In the otherwise similar treatment of this question presented at *Metaphysica* 1079a, Aristotle by contrast explicitly distinguishes between the Platonists and himself.

[51] See further Fine (1993: 30-31). I follow the line-numbering of Harlfinger; cf. Fine (1993: xiv).

[52] The same is true of the possibility that the Περί Ἰδεῶν of Aristotle does not discuss Plato, but instead Xenocrates' eponymous treatise (on which see below), as is suggested by Isnardi Parente (1981). If indeed we accept that Plato did not use the Object of Though Argument, it could give further credibility to the idea that this argument was included in the works of the Platonists, perhaps of Xenocrates. Fine (1993: 34-36 with n. 34) suggests that there is no definite answer to the question, aside from the fact that Alexander himself believed that Aristotle was discussing Plato (see *In M.* 78.1-2).

φησὶ δὴ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον καὶ τῶν φθειρομένων τε καὶ ἐφθαρμένων καὶ ὅλως τῶν καθ' ἕκαστά τε καὶ φθαρτῶν ἰδέας κατασκευάζειν, οἷον Σωκράτους, Πλάτωνος· καὶ γὰρ τούτους νοοῦμεν καὶ φαντασίαν αὐτῶν φυλάσσομεν καὶ μηκέτι ὄντων.

> He [Aristotle] says that this argument also establishes Forms of perishing and perished things, and in general of all individual and perishable things, like Socrates and Plato: because we think of them and preserve some image of them, even when they exist no more.
>
> (*De Ideis* = Alexander of Aphrodisias, *In Aristotelis Metaphysica commentaria* (= *In M.*) 82.1-82.5)

'This argument', referring to the Object of Thought Argument, establishes Forms of Socrates and Plato, as we can think of them (νοοῦμεν) and preserve some image of them (φαντασίαν αὐτῶν φυλάσσομεν, compare φάντασμα τι above). This would have created difficulties for any Platonist, as it led to a conflation of the very distinct notions of the universal Form (see the description at *Politeia* 596a) with that of the particular incarnation of such a Form in the material world.[53] If Plato or the Platonists indeed used this argument, Aristotle shows that it leads to an impossible solution and the Platonists should give it up.[54]

3.3. PLATONISTS

The Platonist philosophers have over nine centuries, been concerned with a question that can be best paraphrased as '*de quoi* (*n'*)*y a-t-il* (*pas*) *des formes*'?[55] In other words: of what objects should Forms (not) be included in the intelligible realm?[56] This question is already discussed by Plato's immediate successors in the Old Academy, but it appears to have remained a point of discussion in all the subsequent Platonic movements, up to neo-Platonism, not in the least because, as we have seen, a clear-cut definition of a Form is notably absent in all of Plato's dialogues.

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[53] Cf. Fine (1993: 127). See also *Metaphysica* 1078b30-34, in which also Aristotle emphasizes the universal (τῶν καθόλου) character of Forms.

[54] Rist (1963: 229); Fine (1993: 126-128). Cf. Gerson (1994: 73-74).

[55] Inspired by Fronterotta (2011: 46).

[56] See n. 2. Cf. Fronterotta (2011: 43).

However, the loss of many of their treatises prohibits us forces us to approach the subject sensitively and be careful with any statements about their opinions. An useful starting point for each of them is to search for a theoretical definition of a Form, after which, if possible, explicit remarks on the limits of the intellectual world should be traced. Furthermore, it is impossible to discuss the whole range of theoretical points of view the Platonists offered over the course of those nine centuries (this is not to suggest that each of them proposed a unique theory, because as we will see, many give closely related solutions). In this paragraph, only a selective number of Platonists will be discussed, beginning with Xenocrates, Plato's second successor as head of the Academy and who is thus to be placed in the Old Academy.

From the catalogue of his works that has been transmitted by Diogenes Laertius (IV.11-14), it becomes clear that Xenocrates made a considerable attempt to categorize and systematize the teachings of Plato 'in a way that constitutes the true foundation of a 'Platonist' system of philosophy'.[57] The main goal of the earlier Platonists was to compile a systematic overview of Platonic theory, without putting in much personal original though, in order to clarify and explain Plato's philosophy.

Among the treatises written by Xenocrates, we also find a work titled *On Ideas* (Περὶ Ἰδεῶν), which possibly included a discussion of the question at hand, but sadly, however, all of Xenocrates' works have been lost.[58] Yet in Proclus' commentary on the *Parmenides* – which we will encounter later on in more detail – a definition of a Form is ascribed to Xenocrates, which gives us an idea of what his systematization of Plato's work meant for the Forms:

> (φησιν ὁ Ξενοκράτης) εἶναι τὴν ἰδέαν θέμενος αἰτίαν παραδειγματικὴν τῶν κατὰ φύσιν ἀεὶ συνεστώτων.
>
> (Xenocrates has said) that the Forms are the paradigmatic cause of those things that are at any time construed according to nature.
>
> (*In Platonis Parmenidem commentarii* (= *In P.*) 888.18-19 = Xenocrates, *fr.* 94)

[57] Dillon (2003: 97-99, 120).

[58] Dillon (2003: 119 n. 87) suggests so, but we have no inkling of what the treatise actually discussed.

The inclusion of κατὰ φύσιν, *according to nature*, implies that Form of artificial objects (like the Form of Table in *Cratylus* 389b8-c2) are excluded, as well as everything unnatural (compare, below, Alcinous' παρὰ φύσιν). The latter is logical given the remark of Socrates in the Parmenides – if we should indeed regard mud, hair and dirt as unnatural - but the denial of the existence of Forms of human-made entities, would be at variance with the examples of Forms of artificial objects we find in Plato. Likewise, to understand a Form of only those things that are 'construed' (συνεστώτων), would necessarily leave out the existence of Forms of abstractions, like of Beauty and Justice, which is fundamentally impossible given the references in Plato to such Forms (e.g. *Symposium* 211d2).[59]

It has therefore been proposed that Xenocrates with κατὰ φύσιν .. συνεστώτων meant those things that are 'properly' formed, thereby only excluding mistakes or distortions of any kind, yet including Forms of abstractions.[60] Another interpretation, which works along the same lines, suggests that the term φύσις in Xenocrates, but also in other early Platonists, refers to the physical world in general and does not lead to the exclusion of any kind of Form, but only emphasizes the characteristic difference between the realm of Forms and that of the sensible world.[61] Both these interpretations allow us to believe that Xenocrates did not intend to exclude Forms of artificial objects, and neither of Forms of abstract notions.

The αἰτίαν παραδειγματικὴν, 'paradigmatic cause', is a clear reference to the doctrine expounded in the *Timaeus* and we should probably understand Xenocrates' in that perspective: each Form represents a class of objects that is incarnated through the force of Soul in the material world.[62] The inclusion of ἀεὶ is often translated as 'at any time':[63] it surely cannot refer to the creation of perpetually existing objects, as the Form is the eternal entity, not the material instantiation. It much rather refers to the repetitive character of creation on the basis of the Forms and their everlasting influence on the material world: the Forms always cause the construction of those things according to nature. As we will see, the word is later on replaced by slightly more apt alternatives, which better bring about the eternal character of the Form. We can therefore not exclude, at least not on the basis

[59] 'More or less Plato's favourite type of Forms': Dillon (1977: 96, 2003: 119).

[60] Cherniss (1944: 256-257 and esp. n. 167).

[61] Dörrie & Baltes (1987: 314).

[62] See also the commentary on lines 14-18.

[63] For instance by Dillon (2003: 119).

of this definition, the possibility that Xenocrates accepted Forms of Individuals, although it is unlikely given his tendency to stay very close to Plato himself.

Xenocrates' definition would become the standard definition of a Form in Middle Platonism.[64] If we turn to the second century AD Platonist Plutarch, we nevertheless find a more obscure reference to the nature of the Form.

> τὸ γὰρ ὂν καὶ νοητὸν καὶ ἀγαθὸν φθορᾶς καὶ μεταβολῆς κρεῖττόν ἐστιν· ἃς δ' ἀπ' αὐτοῦ τὸ αἰσθητὸν καὶ σωματικὸν εἰκόνας ἐκμάττεται καὶ λόγους καὶ εἴδη καὶ ὁμοιότητας ἀναλαμβάνει, καθάπερ ἐν κηρῷ σφραγῖδες οὐκ ἀεὶ διαμένουσιν …
>
> For what truly exists and is intelligible and is good prevails over destruction and change; but the images which that which is perceptible and corporeal fashions from it, and the forming principles, forms and likenesses which it assumes, are like *figures stamped on wax* in that they do not endure for ever.[65]
>
> (*De Iside et Osiride* 373a1-9)

This is not a strict definition of a Form nor does it indicate of what objects we should accept the existence of Forms, but it merely emphasizes the distinct difference between Form and matter. Plutarch's characterization of a Form reminds us of Xenocrates in that it distinguishes between the eternal Form and the transitory corporeal 'images' which are created on the basis of the Forms. His metaphor of the seal and wax for the relation between Form and matter is not original, but often found in Plato.[66] The inclusion of the λόγος for the forming principle coincidentally prefigures what we will see in V.7.[67]

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[64] Cf. Dillon (1977: 28).

[65] Translation Dillon (1977: 200), my cursivation.

[66] The image of the λόγος as a seal stamped on wax was current in Middle Platonism: cf. Dillon (1977: 200), Fowler (2016: 157 n. 66) and Apuleius (*cera, inpressio*) and Alcinous below (but also at 8.2). Plotinus also uses it for the impact of Forms on matter: see VI.5.6, 10. Ultimately it goes back to Plato himself, e.g. in *Timaeus* 50e; it reminds us in particular of his metaphor for the human memory (*Theaetetus* 191c-d).

[67] Cf. Dillon (1977: 214) for the Plutarchean four-level being of Being, which seems to prefigure the Plotinian system of hypostases. See note on lines 7-9.

Before moving on to Alcinous, we should briefly look at the philosophy of the Roman author Apuleius, who, in the dominant fashion of Middle-Platonism, gave a basic outline of the Platonic philosophy in his treatise *De dogmate Platonis*.[68] In chapter 6 of that treatise, Apuleius turns to the Forms:

> Ἰδέας *vero, id est formas omnium, simplices et aeternas esse nec corporales tamen; esse autem ex his, quae deus sumpserit, exempla rerum quae sunt eruntve; nec posse amplius quam singularum specierum singulas imagines in exemplaribus inveniri gignentiumque omnium, ad instar cerae, formas et figurationes ex illa exemplorum inpressione signari.*
>
> The Ideas, which are the Forms of all, are simple and eternal, yet not corporeal; but out of these, which the god has taken, the models of the things are created, both of those that are and will be; and it is not possible to find more than individual images of the individual species amongst the models and the shapes and characteristics of all the things have, like wax, been shaped by the imprint of these models.
>
> (*De dogmate Platonis* 1.6)

Apuleius' definition is hardly surprising and in fact 'rigorously orthodox', unlike Plutarch.[69] The Forms are simple (*simplices*), eternal (*aeternas*, compare ἀεί in Xenocrates) and incorporeal (*nec corporales*), included by God, out of which everything that is or will be, is created.[70] Yet his definition is sufficiently broad to include any sort of individual thing as the object of the process of imprint and creation and thus passes over the question of what specific things in fact Forms exist.

We can conclude this discussion of the Middle-Platonists with the *Didaskalikon* or *Handbook on Platonism* by the mysterious Alcinous. This work has been said to give us the best 'understanding

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[68] It has long been thought that this work and the *Didaskalikon* (to be discussed below), stem from a common source, 'Gaius', which would have been Alcinous' teacher. Göransson (1995: 137-156) has definitely shown there is no possibility to identify a common source for both texts. Cf. Dillon (1993: ix-xiii) for a discussion regarding the authorship (Albinus or Alcinous); I believe that uncertainty has been definitely decided in favour of attribution to Alcinous.

[69] Fowler (2016: 157 n. 66).

[70] Cf. the definition given by Seneca, *Epistulae ad Lucilium* 58.19.

of the development of the Platonist tradition', as it clearly demonstrates the largely repetitive, explanatory and systematizing character of the Platonic works composed in the period up to neo-Platonism. The title *Didaskalikon*, which is found in the first sentence, was indeed often used in the second century CE for an instruction manual, in this case into Platonism, which did include little original additions.[71] Both chapter 9 and 12 of the work are concerned with the Forms; the beginning of chapter 12 is as follows:

> Ἐπεὶ γὰρ τῶν κατὰ φύσιν αἰσθητῶν καὶ κατὰ μέρος ὡρισμένα τινὰ δεῖ παραδείγματα εἶναι τὰς ἰδέας, ὧν καὶ τὰς ἐπιστήμας γίνεσθαι καὶ τοὺς ὅρους· παρὰ πάντας γὰρ ἀνθρώπους ἄνθρωπόν τινα νοεῖσθαι καὶ παρὰ πάντας ἵππους ἵππον, καὶ κοινῶς παρὰ τὰ ζῷα ζῷον ἀγένητον καὶ ἄφθαρτον, ὃν τρόπον σφραγῖδος μιᾶς ἐκμαγεῖα γίνεται πολλὰ ...
>
> Since of natural individual objects of sense-perception there must exist certain definite models, to wit the Forms, which serve as objects of scientific knowledge and definition (for besides all (individual) men one possesses the concept of Man, and besides all (individual) horses that of Horse, and in general, besides all living things the uncreated and indestructible form of Living Thing, just as from one seal there derive many impressions ...[72]
>
> (*Didaskalikon* 12.1 = 166.39-167.5)

[71] Dillon (1993: xiii-xiv); cf. Whittaker (1990: xiii-xvi) for a history of the term. We might suppose that Alcinous could have been mentioned in the enumeration we find at Porphyry, *Vita Plotini* 20.57-60 of those philosophers that wrote nothing except compilations and transcriptions of earlier work. Cf., however, 20.80-86, where Porphyry explains that he omitted other works (including, possibly, Alcinous) because they are not worth our attention. It has been long argued that the work of Alcinous is essentialy unoriginal and nothing more than a 'new edition' based upon a largely lost treatise (*On the Doctrines of Plato*) of Arius Didymus), possibly the eponymous adviser to the Roman ruler Augustus: the beginning of the twelfth chapter indeed appears to be a verbatim borrowing from one of the few remaining passages of that work (cf. Göransson (1995: 196-202)). However, it has since been shown that, because of the uncertainty regarding the authorship of text (of this Alcinous is nothing known), we cannot be sure about the order of both the works and it might well be that Alcinous was a source for Arius Didymus.

[72] Translation Dillon (1993: 20), with adaptations.

These lines remind us that the sensible world is creation through the intelligible world, that is with the Forms as the models (παραδείγματα). Next to all human beings, we can think of the Form of Man (ἄνθρωπόν τινα); likewise of Form of Horse (ἵππον) or of Living Thing (in general) (ζῷον). A Form is 'the cause and the principle of each thing such as it itself is' (τῆς ἰδέας ... ὑπάρχει). Alcinous uses the Platonic terminology (παραδείγματα, δεδημιουργῆσθαι), which is clearly reminiscent of the *Timaeus*: in general, this definition offers nothing new.[73] The references to all the (individual) human beings (παρὰ πάντας ἀνθρώπους) only accentuate the existence of one Form of Man which constructs each individual natural object.

The most promising remark about the limitations of the intelligible world is found in *Didaskalon,* chapter 9, of which the second paragraph is here cited in full:

> Ὁρίζονται δὲ τὴν ἰδέαν παράδειγμα τῶν κατὰ φύσιν αἰώνιον. Οὔτε γὰρ τοῖς πλείστοις τῶν ἀπὸ Πλάτωνος ἀρέσκειτῶν τεχνητῶν εἶναι ἰδέας, οἷον ἀσπίδος ἢ λύρας, οὔτε μὴν τῶν παρὰ φύσιν, οἷον πυρετοῦ καὶ χολέρας, οὔτε τῶν κατὰ μέρος, οἷον Σωκράτους καὶ Πλάτωνος, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ τῶν εὐτελῶν τινός, οἷον ῥύπου καὶ κάρφους, οὔτε τῶν πρός τι, οἷον μείζονος καὶ ὑπερέχοντος· εἶναι γὰρ τὰς ἰδέας νοήσεις θεοῦ αἰωνίους τε καὶ αὐτοτελεῖς.
>
> Form is defined as an eternal model of things that are in accordance with nature. For most Platonists do not accept that there are Forms of artificial objects, such as a shield or a lyre, nor of things that are contrary to nature, like fever or cholera, nor of individuals, like Socrates or Plato, nor yet of any trivial thing, such as dirt or straw, nor of relations, such as the greater or the superior. For the Forms are eternal and perfect thoughts of God.[74]
>
> (*Didaskalikon* 9.2 = 163.23-31)

Alcinous starts by giving a different definition of a Form from the one in chapter 12, but at the same time one which is strikingly familiar to that of Xenocrates: in the adjective αἰώνιον, 'eternal', resounds Xenocrates' use of ἀεὶ. As with him, it is interesting that Alcinous excludes Forms of natural things

[73] Dillon (1993: 115).

[74] Translation Dillon (1993: 16), with adaptations.

both produced by art as well as those that are 'contrary to nature'. With Xenocrates it was possible to interpret his definition in such a way that he only refers those things are that 'properly formed' (*i.e.* things produced 'according to nature' instead of (exclusively) 'by nature'). Alcinous, on the other hand, explicitly rejects Forms of 'things' that are not in accordance with nature, such as Forms of evil, individuals, diseases and artificial objects.[75] This perhaps shows that the nuance of the Xenocratean broad meaning of the word φύσις, 'nature', as the physical realm in general, is lost on (at least some of) his Platonic successors.

This understanding of the term φύσις and the definition of a Form that Alcinous proposes, leads him to survey the question of what entities 'most Platonists' accept Forms. This is for the first time that we find such a full discussion of this question, because as we have seen in many other Platonists, the definition of a Form does not go with any observations regarding the limits of the intelligible universe. Alcinous, on the other hand, notes that many Platonists are not prepared to acknowledge the existence of Forms of a whole range of things.[76] He refers here to the passage of the *Parmenides* which are cited above: he also, just like Socrates, denies the existence of Forms of τῶν εὐτελῶν τινός, 'worthless things', including dirt (ῥύπου, which we also find in the *Parmenides*) and straw (κάρφους).[77]

We find, included in the list, the first extant reference to the question of Forms of individual human beings. Alcinous remarks that 'most Platonists' are not prepared to accept Forms τῶν κατὰ μέρος, οἷον Σωκράτους καὶ Πλάτωνος, 'of individuals, like Socrates or Plato'. Given the almost casual presentation of this exclusion and the inclusion of the remark in a work deliberately presented as an handbook, Forms of individuals must have been a common ingredient of this discussion. This impression is only strengthened by the claim on the authority of 'many Platonists'. We should therefore abandon the belief that this question only came up in neo-Platonism or that Plotinus even was the first to treat the existence of Forms of individuals, although the lack of evidence of any other extensive discussion before the *Didaskalikon* (whenever that might have been exactly published) suggests the novelty of his idea. To the contrary: the remark that Alcinous bases his statement on

[75] Cf. Dillon (2003:120).

[76] This again suggests that the Xenocratean definition of a Form and the meaning of κατά φύσιν in particular was already lost soon after him.

[77] Cf. for κάρφους: LSJ s.v. I and Whittaker (1990: 99 n. 161).

the theories of 'most Platonists' must leave us very curious to the arguments of those (few) Platonic philosophers who perhaps did accept Forms of Individuals.[78] At the same time, however, whether Forms of individuals exist is quite a different case than the other objects: whereas the latter are merely concerned with how far one is willing to go in postulating a Form for every feature with a common name ('one over many'), Forms of individuals require the acceptance of a theoretically different sort of Form ('one over one').[79]

Alcinous argumentation for all these exclusions is, nevertheless, rather flimsy: next to eternal model of things (τὴν ἰδέαν παράδειγμα αἰώνιον), Forms are the 'eternal and perfect thoughts of God'.[80] No further argumentation is offered: it has been suggested that he means that some of these exclusion are perishable instead of eternal (individuals, relative terms), whereas others are not perfect (dependent relative terms).[81]

We when leave Middle-Platonism for neo-Platonism, we find two passages comparable to the catalogue presented by Alcinous.[82] One of those is found in Plotinus, *Ennead* V.9.10-14. It is too long to cite here in full, but over the course of it Plotinus rejects the existence of Forms of objects contrary to nature (παρὰ φύσιν, 10.2-3), artefacts and the (imitative) arts who produce them (αἱ τέχναι μιμητικαί, 11.1-6; αἱ τέχναι ποιητικαί, 11.13-17), creatures originating from putrefaction, savage beasts, dirt, and mud (τῶν ἐκ σήψεως, ῥύπου, πηλοῦ, τῶν χαλεπῶν, 14.7-11), and casual composites, which are created by themselves as things of senses, instead of produced by the Intellect (τὰ σύνθετα εἰκῇ ὄντα, 14.14-17). Plotinus clearly joins the tradition of presenting a list of objects excluded from a presence in the intelligible realm. The inclusion of savage beasts and casual composites indeed appears to be a novelty, but it probably is not: savage beasts could be understood as meaning hypothetical, fantasy animals (see the 'Form' of Hippocentaur and Chimera in Aristotle, *De Ideis* 82.6, which are used as

[78] Cf. Cherniss (1944: 508).

[79] Cf. O'Meara (1999: 265) and Remes (2007: 81).

[80] The use of αὐτοτελεῖς, as Dillon (1993: 98) remarks, is notable, because it is rather more Aristotelian than Plotinian.

[81] Dillon (1993: 98). The equilization of Forms and the thoughts of God is further investigated by Dillon (2011), who argues that this was very much consensus in the second century CE (= in Middle Platonism), but was later on problematized because the inherent dualization of God and his thoughts and the need to define the supreme divinity as 'radical unity' (at 42).

[82] In Aristotelianism, we find a version of this list (including individuals) in Syrianus, *In Aristotelis Metaphysica commentaria* 39.1-5.

objection to the Object of Thought Argument), while the casual composites are used for those objects that are a combination of various things, of which each will have its own Form. In the midst of this catalogue, we find a reference to a Form of Man and the Form of Socrates, just like in Alcinous, which will be discussed in the commentary.[83] We could perhaps regard this catalogue (fifth in the chronological order) as the first attempt of Plotinus to deal with this question, before treating the issue of Forms of individuals in more detail and with more originality in V.7.[84]

A second list of this kind is included in Proclus' commentary on the *Parmenides* in a passage of considerable length, on section 130c-d. The introductory passage (*In P.* 815.15-39) contains eleven problems, ranging from a Form of Soul to Forms of Evil. The existence of Forms of individuals is also questioned and is taken on in more detail later on, of which a part is cited here below:

> Ἆρ' οὖν οὐ τῶν εἰδῶν μόνων, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν καθ' ἕκαστα τὰ εἴδη θετέον, λέγω δὲ οἷον Σωκράτους καὶ ἑκάστου, μὴ καθ' ὅσον ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλ' ᾗ ἰδίως ποιὸν ἕκαστος προβέβληται; Καὶ πῶς οὐκ ἀνάγκη τὸ θνητὸν ἀθάνατον εἶναι κατὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦτον; εἰ γὰρ πᾶν τὸ κατ' ἰδέαν γιγνόμενον κατ' αἰτίαν ἀκίνητον γίγνεται, πᾶν δὲ τὸ κατ' αἰτίαν ἀκίνητον ὑποστὰν ἀμετάβλητόν ἐστι κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν, ἔσται ὁ Σωκράτης καὶ ἕκαστον τούτων τῇ οὐσίᾳ ἀεὶ ταὐτὸν καὶ ἀϊδίως ἱδρυμένον· ἀλλὰ ἀδύνατον. Ἔτι δὲ ἄτοπον τὴν ἰδέαν ποτὲ μὲν εἶναι πα άδειγμά τινος, ποτὲ δὲ μή· τὸ γὰρ αἰωνίως ὂν, πᾶν ὃ ἔχει, διαιωνίως ἔχει, καὶ τὸ παραδειγματικὸν οὖν ἢ οὐχ ἕξει τὸ εἶδος ἢ ἀεὶ ἕξει· τὸ γὰρ συμβεβηκέναι τινὰ λέγειν ἐν ἐκείνοις ἄτοπον.

[83] See in particular the commentary on lines 18-21.

[84] We should however be aware that both V.9 and V.7 were written before Porphyry joined Plotinus' school and its relative chronological order is therefore not certain (see Porphyry, *Vita Plotini* 4).

> Then shall we suppose there are not only Forms of species but also Forms of particulars – such as an Form of Socrates or any other individual, not as members of the species Man, but as manifesting, each of them, its individual property? Yet would this argument compel us to say that the mortal is deathless? For if everything that comes to be by virtue of an Form comes to be from an unchangeable cause, and if everything exists through an unchangeable cause is unchangeable in its being, Socrates and every other individual thing is the same at every moment of its being and established in eternity. But this is impossible.[85] Furthermore, it is absurd that the Form should be at one time a paradigm of something and at another time not, for what eternally is has eternally what it has; hence the Form either does not have the character of a paradigm or it has it always, for it is absurd to speak of accidental characters in the intelligible world.[86]
>
> (*In P.* 824.9-824.19)

With Proclus, we have gone from the period before Plotinus, to that after him, or in other words, we have now reached the period of Platonic philosophy commonly known as 'neo-Platonism'. Plotinus had a strong influence on Proclus and it is therefore likely that the latter read his works, including the tractate on the Forms of individuals. However likely that may be, we find no reference to Plotinus' theory in this passage. Proclus disregards the possibility of Forms of individuals in a fairly traditional and syllogistic manner: the Forms are eternal and universal paradigms for the sensible world, an individual is neither eternal nor universal, so no Forms of individuals can exist. Although the structure of the argument is thus very clear and is presented almost carelessly, we should remember that this is only the second (after Plotinus) explicit and argued denial of Forms of individuals in extant Platonic philosophy. In another passage (888.34-35), Proclus remarks that if the Form only exists of those things are eternal (clearly referring to the definition given by Xenocrates), there are no Forms of individuals, because they are perishable.[87] In the passage following on the one

[85] The same word that Socrates' used to deny the existence of certain Forms (*Prm.* 130c).

[86] Translation Dillon & Morrow (1987: 185-186), with minor adaptations.

[87] Cf. O'Meara (1999: 266). This is reminiscent of the Aristotelian objection against the Object of Thought Argument.

cited above (824.19-825.25), Proclus attempts to find a different explanation for the individuality of each human being: he suggests that this is due to causes within the cosmos, such as seasonal and regional differences between individuals, rather than intelligible causes.[88]

From this discussion of the Platonists' 'answers' to the question of what a Form is and of what entities Forms must exist, it has become clear the extant sources allow us to draw some sketchy lines. For most of the post-Platonic philosophers, the question regarding the limits of the universal universe must have been on their mind, given the reference in Alcinous to 'many Platonists' and the casual exclusion of a number of entities, but in their transmitted works only abstract definition of the Form is given. Only with Alcinous does the question pop up explicitly, but at the same time no detailed argumentation for the exclusion of some entities from the intelligible realm is given, which could perhaps have been included in now-lost treatises on the Form (e.g. the treatise *On Ideas* of Xenocrates).

When the neo-Platonic era begins, we find more detailed and well-argued discussions for the (non-)existence of Forms of specific entities, for example in Proclus, but there are of the same nature as in the other philosophers. In general, the focus of these Platonists quite obviously was a systematizing and scholastic character: they tried to organize Plato's thought in such a way that it became more easily comprehensible, without having to deal with the specific and difficult character of his dialogues. Secondly, their perspective on the Form and, (as far as we know) for Alcinous and Proclus, the Form of the individual in particular, was largely metaphysical: their concerns were the positions of Forms in the metaphysical framework that Plato set up and the position of the Form in it, with some specific attention to the Form of the individual. The argumentation for the rejection of a Form of an individual has likewise a metaphysical colour and can be summarized as 'only Forms of universal objects can exist, not of the perishable individual and thus a Form of the individual is to be rejected'. This appears to have been the dominant position among the Platonists up to Plotinus, but we should be aware that this assertion is based upon one remark by Alcinous.[89]

With Plotinus, we come across a philosopher who, as far as we know, was the first to devote a treatise solely to the existence of Forms of individual human beings, after having dealt with the limits of the intelligible realm earlier on in a rather more traditional way in tractate V.9. In including

[88] See ch. 6 for a concise discussion of the second and third chapter of V.7, in which Plotinus refers to season and place.

[89] See e.g. Dillon (1977: 281) and (1993: 98).

such discussions in his works, he clearly fits in with the tradition, in which such Forms were a matter of debate. His perspective on the question, however, radically changes in V.7, as will be come apparent over the course of the next chapter.[90] He does not rework the dogmatic Platonic theory, but instead he presents a great deal of original thought, already in the positing of the question: much rather than treating this issue with a solely metaphysical gaze, he uses the metaphysical perspective on the individual's ascent to the intelligible, to explain the need for some sort of individual principle.[91] His theory about Forms of individuals is much more comprehensive and philosophical in character than the relatively short statements made on this issue by those who came before him. The problem is thought through in the terms of his own philosophical theory and answered in an unique and personal fashion.

[90] See especially the commentary on lines 1-3.

[91] Cf. the (corruptly transmitted) remark of Porphyry, *Vita Plotini* 14.3-4: ἐκπαθῶς φράζων † καὶ τὸ συμπαθείας ἢ παραδόσεως †, which could perhaps be understood as 'he speaks passionately and states what he himself feels about the matter and not what has been handed down by tradition'.

4. COMMENTARY ON *ENNEAD* V.7.1

4.1. GENERAL REMARKS

Ennead V.7 is number 18 in the chronological order, included by Porphyry in the fifth *Ennead*, which is devoted to the Intellect. It is preceded by II.6, which deals with the nature of quality or substance, and is followed by I.2, on virtue. Especially II.6 will appear to be crucial in understanding the philosophical argumentation of V.7.[92]

The treatise has been divided into three sections. Of those three, only the first is directly and explicitly devoted to the question whether there are such things as Forms of individuals. Particularly the first half of the first section (lines 1-12) contains the philosophical argumentation for Plotinus' answer to that question, after which he continues to reply to a number of objections to his point of view. The second and third section are further explanations and clarifications of the position he has taken in the first half of the first section. This commentary, as has been mentioned, leaves those two sections for a later moment and occasion and focuses on the first section only.[93]

4.1.1 *Structure and outline*

The structural overview of the arguments of the first section of V.7, which will be taken as the framework for the detailed commentary, in which a close reading of each segment will be presented, is as follows:

question (l. 1)	does every individual human being have its own Form?
assumption (l. 1-3)	every human being has a way to ascend to the intelligible: thus of every human being a intelligible principle exists
alternative 1 (l. 3-4)	that intelligible principle is a Form
alternative 2, part 1 (l. 4-6)	an individual reincarnates, whereas Forms are eternal instead, that intelligible principle is a forming principle (λόγος)
alternative 2, part 2	soul has the forming principles of all individuals it consecutively incarnates

[92] In recent publications, this relevance has been acknowledged, for example by Vassilopoulou (2006), Remes (2007) and Chiaradonna (2014). See the commentary on lines 5-6. The relative order of II.6 and V.7 is, however, uncertain: cf. n. 84.

[93] References to the second and third section will nevertheless be made, wherever relevant, over the course of the commentary.

(l. 7-9)	
elaboration 1 (l. 9-10)	soul contains as many forming principles as the universe
elaboration 2 (l. 10-12)	soul contains the forming principles of all living beings
objection 1 (l. 12-14)	individual forming principles would lead to infinity in the intelligible realm?
reply 1 (l. 12-14)	repetitive circles of time place boundaries to number of forming principles
objection 2 (l. 14-18)	why not one forming principle for all human beings?
reply 2, part 1 (l. 18-21)	individual differences are not caused by matter, but by intelligible content
reply 2, part 2 (l. 21-23)	different men are not pictures of the archetype (Form) 'Man'
conclusion (l. 23-27)	no infinity in the intelligible world, but finite number of Forms constitute infinite number of human beings

The first section starts with the crucial assumption behind the question (lines 1-3), after which it continues with the juxtaposition of two alternative answers (lines 2-9). On closer notice, however, it is obvious that the first of them (lines 3-4) is rejected in favour of the second alternative (lines 4-9), which becomes apparent through the use of an εἰ μὲν ... εἰ δέ-construction. This second option, which includes the denial of the existence of Forms for every individual, is then followed by the introduction of a different metaphysical principle (ὁ λόγος). It is this forming principle that explains both the uniqueness of every individual and its relation with the intelligible world. Plotinus goes on to mention the relationship between the world soul and the individual soul to explain the possibility that every soul contains the forming principles of a (seemingly) infinite number of individuals (lines 9-10). He elaborates that we should think of the 'individual' as not only referring to humans, but also to animals (but probably not plants) (lines 10-12). After this argumentation, Plotinus continues with discussing a number of objections to this theory, most of which are dealt with in the second and third section of the treatise, but in the first section already two objections are dealt with. The first challenge to his theory is the suggested infinity it would create in the intelligible world, but Plotinus quickly neutralises it, for he describes that the universe repeats itself in circles of time (lines 12-14). The second is arguably the most consequential one: why is it not possible that every individual human being is formed by one Form (presumably that of 'Man') (lines 14-18). This indeed is the obvious Platonic point of view and, as far as Plotinus rejects Forms of individuals, he confirms to this philosophical paradigm, but he also argues that matter cannot sufficiently explain the differences

between individuals, so that (in addition) some intelligible cause is necessary (lines 18-21). Every individual, according to Plotinus, cannot be regarded as a picture of the archetype of a Form: the forming principles cause the individuality (lines 21-23). In this way, he both combines the Platonic view of an intelligible Form for the individuals in the sensible world with the need of an individual immaterial principle which causes both individuality and the ability to ascend to the intelligible realm. He concludes by repeating his reference to the circles of time and that this allows for denying infinity in the intelligible realm while at the same allowing for an intelligible principle of every individual (lines 23-27).

4.1.2 *Other treatises*

Although *Ennead* V.7 is the only treatise specifically devoted to Forms of individuals, a number of other treatises contain passages that have been taken to refer to that question. As has been discussed in the second chapter, V.7 has often been seen as evidence for Plotinus' acceptance of Forms of individuals, of which this commentary demonstrates that that is an interpretation not supported by a close reading of the text. This improved understanding of V.7 also takes away many of the difficulties commonly associated with the text, as many other texts offer no indication that Plotinus accepted Forms of individuals, or indeed argue for the opposing point of view.[94] These treatises will be touched upon in the commentary whenever the philosophical argument coincides or there is another relevance.

Only two other tractates of Plotinus have at times been regarded as supporting a reading of V.7 which argues for the existence of Forms.[95] In the treatises IV.3 and IV.4, which are often and rightly taken together as originally belonging to one treatise on various issues related to the Soul, Plotinus seems to refer to the existence of individual Forms for every individual. These are the two most relevant passages:

[94] Others are III.2, VI.4, VI.7 and VI.2 (cf. Blumenthal (1966), Rist (1970)).

[95] By e.g. Rist (1970: 303).

> Οὕτω τοίνυν καὶ ψυχαὶ ἐφεξῆς καθ' ἕκαστον νοῦν ἐξηρτημέναι, λόγοι νῶν οὖσαι καὶ ἐξειλιγμέναι μᾶλλον ἢ ἐκεῖνοι, οἷον πολὺ ἐξ ὀλίγου γενόμεναι, συναφεῖς τῷ ὀλίγῳ οὖσαι ἀμερεστέρῳ ...
>
> So the same is true, in turn, of souls, depending on each individual intellect, being the forming principles of the intellects, and being more diffused than they are, like having become much from little, being in contact with the little which is less diffused ...
>
> (IV.3.5, 8-11)

> Ἔστι δὲ καὶ τὴν μὲν πρὸς τὸν ὅλον νοῦν ἰδεῖν, τὰς δὲ μᾶλλον πρὸς τοὺς αὐτῶν τοὺς ἐν μέρει.
>
> And [the One] can look to the one of the Intellect, but the others to their own partial [intellects].
>
> (IV.3.6, 15-17)

Dillon and Blumenthal, in their commentary on these treatises, propose two different alternatives for the first of these passages: either Plotinus suggests that each soul has his own intellect (νοῦς), which would support the thesis that Plotinus accepted Forms of individuals, or he merely refers to groups of souls which each have their own intellect, like every human being 'having' the Form of Man, and every horse the Form of Horse, which would deny the existence of Forms of individuals.[96] They hesistantly support the former of these options; the second option has been embraced by Rist.[97] Others have proposed that these lines do not make clear beyond reasonable doubt whether Plotinus accepted Forms of individuals, as the treatise is concerned with a different topic.[98]

The reference to the soul depending on each intellect should indeed not be taken as evidence for Forms of individuals. In the first place, we should not equalize a νοῦς directly with a Form, as is done by Dillon and Blumenthal. In addition, these remarks become all the more understandable if we compare them with the interpretation of V.7. The souls indeed are the *locus* for

[96] They render λόγοι as 'representations' in their translation, which suggests a too straightforward relation between a Form and the forming principles as contents of the soul.

[97] Dillon & Blumenthal (2015: 195), Blumenthal (1971: 113); Rist (1970: 299).

[98] E.g. Armstrong (1977: 51-52).

the forming principles emanating from every individual Form, be it the World Soul or the souls of individual living beings; as such, they depend on each Form in the intelligible realm, but it is not necessary to confine this to a one-to-one relation between the soul and the intelligible realm. The soul contains the forming principles of a large number of Forms, both with regard to the fact that it possesses the forming principles of an (only seemingly) infinite range of individuals as well as that every individual being is characterized (or created) by an (again seemingly) infinite number of Intellects. The words καθ' ἕκαστον νοῦν do not point to the individual Form for each individual soul, but to the abundance of individual Forms that are included in the soul (in the identity of forming principles); likewise the plural λόγοι νῶν (as well as the πρὸς τοὺς αὐτῶν in the second passage) could well be taken to refer to this abundance. The solution adopted by Dillon and Blumenthal thus fails to include the evidence proposed by V.7, which they indeed interpret in a different way (see above); their second alternative is much more to the point, although it goes by the option that not only the Form of Man is meant, but also a large number of other Forms used to instantiate each forming individual principle.

4.2. LINE-BY-LINE COMMENTARY

Title

ΠΕΡΙ ΤΟΥ ΕΙ ΚΑΙ ΤΩΝ ΚΑΘΕΚΑΣΤΑ ΕΙΣΙΝ ΙΔΕΑΙ

On whether there are also Forms of every individual being

This is one of a few Plotinian treatises of which the title takes the form of an (indirect) question, the others being I.1, I.5 and II.3, while it was very common for Plotinus to start the actual text of his treatise with a question (see commentary on line 1). It should however be noted that these titles have not been assigned by Plotinus himself, but where coined by his pupils. Porphyry therefore gives the first words of every treatise in his *Vita Plotini* to make this list more accessible to the reader (4.19-22), as in his day different titles were used for the each of the treatises. We cannot be sure whether Porphyry was the one that gave the final titles to the works, but it is most likely that he had a very important say, as he was the one who supervised the publishing of the tractates. The fact that, as we saw before, the title of this treatise does not seem to cover the whole of its contents, could point us in two directions: either we should understand the entire treatise as an answer to the title, or we should acknowledge that Porphyry gave the title on the basis of the first paragraph only. The first

direction appears to be impossible, as even a relatively free explanation of the treatise does not allow us to argue that also the second and third paragraph are devoted to something which has to do with Forms (ἰδέαι). The second option is much more feasible: Porphyry appears to have given the title which almost exactly reproduces the first line of the work.[99] In this case it may lead the reader to be 'baffled and disappointed', because the treatise does in fact not deal with this question (at least not in the traditional way).[100]

In the enumeration that Porphyry gives of Plotinus' treatises (*Vita Plotini* 4), the title of the treatise included the word εἴδη instead of ἰδέαι. The latter, however, is found in the manuscripts and is printed by Henry and Schwyzer. This indeed rhymes with the first line of the body of the text. See further on these words and their further absence from V.7 the detailed discussion on line 1.

Question (line 1)

Εἰ καὶ τοῦ καθέκαστόν ἐστιν ἰδέα;

Is there also a Form of each individual being?

Plotinus often starts his treatises out of a position of ἀπορία.[101] More specifically, he has a predilection for starting his treatise with a question (cf., in *Ennead* V alone, V.1, V.2, V.3, V.5). This question is the central subject of V.7, in particular of the first section, as section 2 and 3 already presuppose that an answer to this question has been given and only deal with (failing) objections to that solution.

Details

καθέκαστόν. This word obviously reminds us of V.9.12, 5 (εἰ καὶ ὅ καθέκαστα). The pronoun κατά strengthens the meaning 'each' of ἑκαστόν to 'by itself', 'singly'; the combination is only found in philosophical texts, see e.g. Plato, *Theaetetus* 188a.[102] For a parallel of the meaning 'particular' see Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* 1143b4 and *De Ideis* 82.3 (on which see par. 3.2).

ἰδέα. Both this term and εἶδος were used by Platonic philosophers to denote the Platonic Form, just as we still speak of Idea and Form (see for instance Plato, *Parmenides* 135b5-c2, where

[99] This principle of nomenclature seems also to have been at work in e.g. I.5 and III.7.

[100] D'Ancona Costa (2002: 532).

[101] Cf. Dillon & Blumenthal (2015: 166).

[102] LSJ s.v. ἕκαστος III.2.

both terms are used in one sentence). Plotinus almost explicitly remarks that they are synonymous at V.9.8, 1-7, although just before that (at V.9.7, 14-18) he has noted that one cannot say that the Intellect thinks the Forms instead of the Ideas (τὰ εἴδη).[103] Despite its use here, it appears that Plotinus has had a preference for the term εἶδος (instead of ἰδέα), which is illustrated by its use in this treatise (3 times εἶδος, versus once (twice if we include the title, but see above) ἰδέα) and in V.9 (15 times εἶδος, versus once ἰδέα).[104] It is however telling that both terms are only sparsely used in V.7, in contrast to the abundant use (22 times) of the term λόγος.[105]

Assumption (lines 1-3)

> **Ἢ εἰ ἐγὼ καὶ ἕκαστος τὴν ἀναγωγὴν ἐπὶ τὸ νοητὸν ἔχει, καὶ ἑκάστου ἡ ἀρχὴ ἐκεῖ.**
>
> *The fact is that, if I and every one have a way of going up to the intelligible, then also a principle of each must be there.*

The argument is structured along the lines of an incomplete syllogism, in which the major premise is suppressed.

	major premise
	(someone can only ascend to the intelligible when an own principle is there)
	minor premise
ἐγὼ καὶ ἕκαστος τὴν ἀναγωγὴν	I and everyone have a way to go up
ἐπὶ τὸ νοητὸν ἔχει	to the intelligible
	conclusion
ἑκάστου ἡ ἀρχὴ ἐκεῖ	a principle of each must be there

[103] Schniewind (2007: 164).

[104] We should however be aware that the term εἶδος is also used to refer to a (non-intelligible) form in the sensible world (LSJ s.v. εἶδος I and III.2/3).

[105] Vassilopoulou (2006: 374 with n. 6). No other commentator – a little incredulously – has mentioned this issue, although the assumption that for Plotinus λόγος is synonymous to ἰδέα/εἶδος lies behind many proposed interpretations of V.7. See further the discussion on lines 4-6.

It seems that Plotinus in these lines immediately gives an answer to the question posed.[106] In some of the translations of this treatise, this is made explicit by translating the introductory particle ἦ with an affirmative "Yes" (Armstrong, Gerson, Sikkema), "Oui, c'est le cas" (Bréhier and Brisson, Laurent & Petit) or 'Sí' (Igal).[107] The particle is notoriously difficult in Plotinus and takes a rather specific meaning in its many manifestations in the treatises, but to translate it as an affirmative seems to be off the mark here. Others have translated the particle with a somewhat more hesitant "eh bien" (Tornau), "surely" (D'Ancona) or "nun" (Harder).[108] These latter translations are better, because this remark does in fact not answer the question posed, although its location right after the question indeed tempts us to think so, but suggests that this sentence merely functions as the (minor) premise of the argumentation.[109] In general, I believe that ἦ has a structuring force that organizes the various steps Plotinus takes in setting up his theory.

If each of us can return (τὴν ἀναγωγὴν) to the intelligible world (τὸ νοητὸν), it is necessary that of each and every one of us, there is a principle (ἡ ἀρχὴ) there, *i.e.* in the intelligible realm. That each individual can return to the intelligible world is a fundamental principle underlying Plotinus' philosophy: every *hypostasis* is a logical consequence of the hypostasis above (in which logical consequence should be understood as atemporal ontological dependence), but at the same time every hypostasis strives to go back to the 'higher' level.[110] It has already been discussed in more recent literature that this conditional obviously not functions as the answer to the question posed here, but as the crucial *assumption* for what will follow.[111] However, I believe this line is crucial to understand Plotinus' originality in dealing with this issue. First of all, the introduction of the ascension of the

[106] So, for instance, for Rist (1963: 224). Mamo (1969: 85) rightly points out that εἰ does not introduce a mere, hypothetical possibility.

[107] Gerson (1994: 74); Sikkema (2009: 139). It appears to be an error that Armstrong does not print ἦ.

[108] Tornau (2009: 336); D'Ancona Costa (2002: 532 with n. 37).

[109] Cf. Gerson (1994: 75), D'Ancona Costa (2002: 532), Remes (2007: 77).

[110] Plotinus himself uses the terms lower and higher, as in this sentence; at the same time, this gives a false impression as far as that each of the hypostases should not be understood as forming a sort of metaphysical pyramide. The use of higher and lower (hypostasis in itself has a physical connotation) should be regarded as metaphorical languages, both in terms of causal relations as of relative value, in which the highest hypostates logically takes the highest value.

[111] Cf. D'Ancona Costa (2002: 532); Gerson (1994: 75); Remes (2007: 77); Vassilopoulou (2006: 372-374). As very often in Plotinus, the seemingly conditional protasis therefore in fact has causal force. Any unexperienced reader of Plotinus would expect him to argue the protasis ('that every man has a way of returning') in the following passage, but in fact he goes on with a different subject – namely the reply to the question.

individual soul to the intelligible realm immediately changes the perspective through which the question of individual Forms is regarded. As has been discussed before (see par. 3.3), the main focus of the Platonist philosophers from Xenocrates onwards, was to define whether Plato could have accepted Forms of individuals, or in other words, whether they can have a place in the metaphysical framework he put up but never fully (at least not explicitly) worked out. The philosophers of the Old Academy and the middle-Platonists were primarily focussed on the Forms of individuals out of a dogmatic and systematizing interest. Plotinus, here, right after asking himself whether Forms of individuals exist, all of a sudden suggests that that is not hís interest. His answer to the question will be much more original – rather than trying to explain the absence of Forms of individuals in the Platonic system, he regards the question out of a perspective, which could perhaps be called 'soteriological', as it is concerned with the individuals ability to escape from his mortal body and instead enter through contemplation into the eternal intelligible realm.[112]

But 'if everyone and each of us' can ascend to the intelligible realm, than surely we should accept some sort of individual principle 'over there' – be it a Form or be it something else. That of every human being a part remains in the intelligible world (here the conditional) was indeed an essential part of Plotinus' philosophy and the conditional is thus easy to affirm: a principle (ἀρχή) of each of us must be there (ἐκεί).[113] It is already stated in one his earlier treatises: οὐ πᾶσα οὐδ' ἡ ἡμετερα ψυχὴ ἔδυ, ἀλλ' ἔστι τι αὐτῆς ἐν τῷ νοητῷ ἀεί, 'not all of our soul descends, but there is always a part of it in the intelligible realm' (IV.8.8, 2-3).[114] It is necessary for everyone of us to have a part of us at the intelligible level (see below on τὸ νοητὸν), otherwise we would not have the ability to rise up (again). We are not aware of this because the soul-part which is in the world of sense-perception, has assumed control, or rather has been brought under the control of our body (IV.8.8, 4-6).

In this way, the question he only just introduced undergoes a metamorphosis: it already is a fact that some sort of individual intelligible principle is necessary. The new question is: what sort of principle should it be? This is the only relevant point that Plotinus deems worth discussing and in the ensuing lines, he will introduce two different types of principle. This change in perspective on a

[112] The 'soterological' aspect of the individual principle will again be adressed in the discussion of Augustine: see ch. 5.

[113] Cf. on this point and V.7: Tornau (2009: 335-340).

[114] See also IV.3.5, IV.8.4, V.1.10 and VI.2.22.

question which has been discussed by many of his predecessors, is where Plotinus' philosophical originality and difference in outlook comes in.

The second point, which is closely intertwined with the earlier one, is the focus on the individuality of this principle. This is obvious from the stress on the individual aspect through the use of the words ἐγὼ καὶ ἕκαστος: Plotinus' additional use of the 'I' instead of only 'everyone' points out that he is dealing with a very individual matter and thus an individual principle. It is clearly reminiscent of the account of Plotinus' own ascensions to the intelligible realm, which he managed to do at least four times according to Porphyry.[115] The phrasing of the sentence (with the emphasis on ἐγὼ καὶ ἕκαστος ἐγὼ καὶ ἕκαστος) makes it clear that Plotinus has in principle only Forms of human beings in mind, despite his later reference to 'all living beings' (lines 10-12).[116]

Details

τὸ νοητόν ... ἐκεί. As has also become apparent through the quotation above out of IV.8.8, the substantive use of this adjective denotes the concept of the intellectual world, as opposed to the world of sense-perception (τὸ αἰσθητόν).[117] In the context of these lines, ἐκεί can only refer to τὸ νοητόν. The word often, but not always explicitly refers to the Intellect and it could just as well refer to the *hypostasis* of the Soul.[118] However, the word is in every instance used to 'distinguish the intelligible world from the material world'.[119] Plotinus appears to not have had a specific *hypostasis* in mind: although the previous sentence points to Forms, which of course exist at the level of Intellect, the remainder of the text is much more concerned with the forming principles, which are said to exist at the level of the Soul. If we use that argument to understand this line, we should regard the term as indeed referring to the level of Soul, but it is equally possible that Plotinus is here merely referring to the intelligible realm as distinguished from the sensible world.[120]

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[115] Porphyry, *Vita Plotini* 23.17-18.

[116] Kalligas (1997a: 212).

[117] LSJ s.v. νοητός; Runia (1999: 165-168), cf. Armstrong (1977: 52).

[118] Cf. Blumenthal (1966: 73); Kalligas (1997a: 209).

[119] Vassilopoulou (2006: 373), referring to Armstrong (1977: 52).

[120] Vassiloloupou (2006: 373) believes that Plotinus is already here referring to the level of Soul in particular.

τὴν ἀναγωγήν.[121] The verb ἀνάγειν and its derivatives are used by Plato and the neo-Platonists (Porphyry, Plotinus) in a dual, but connected, sense: both to ascend and to return (to the intelligible level).[122] This double sense is caused by the use of the prefix ἀνα-, which expresses its ambivalence in a number of related words. Pépin has pointed out that in most instances one of the meanings is used, but that in texts which deal with philosophical hierarchy, the two meanings are combined.[123] This is already visible in the principle (Platonic) source for the words, which is the allegory of the cave in Plato, *Politeia* 7, in which compounds with ἀνα- are used to denote the ascension (or return) of the soul of the prisoner ((ψυχῆς) ἄνοδον .. περιαγωγή, ἐπάνοδον .. ἀναγει ἄνω).[124] The perhaps most striking use of this word (ἀνάγειν) is in the last transmitted remark of Plotinus (Porphyry, *Vita Plotini* 2.23-27).[125]

ἀρχή. This word is used abundantly in Plotinus. It obviously has a rich history, as from the pre-Socratics onwards the word was used for that concept that formed the origin, the beginning, the first principle of everything else.[126] In V.1.11, Plotinus uses this term for the One as the principle of intellect; in V.7.3, it is used for 'beginning', which is its primary meaning.[127] Both these instances point to a meaning of ἀρχή that Plotinus, as he indeed did, believes that the essence (*i.e.* the οὐσία) of a human being remains at the intelligible realm. Plotinus' use of ἀρχή leaves the precise quality of this principle open for further discussion. This is indeed another argument to regard this entire section as the background for what will follow, instead as the answer to the central question.

Two alternatives (lines 2-6)

These lines form the core of the answer to the question posed in the first line and the title. The answer takes the form of two alternatives (presented through εἰ μὲν ... εἰ δέ), of which the first would answer the question positively and lead to the acceptance of Forms of individuals, whereas the

[121] See Pépin (1992).

[122] Cf. LSJ s.v. ἀνάγω I resp. II. See for the nature of this ascension I.3.1.

[123] Pépin (1992: 363).

[124] Pépin (1992: 365), referring to *Politeia* 517b, 521c and 533c-d respectively.

[125] Pépin (1992); cf. D'Ancona Costa (2002: 517).

[126] LSJ s.v. ἀρχή I.2.

[127] LSJ s.v. ἀρχή I.1.

second alternative leads to a negative answer and a denial of Forms of individuals.[128] That we are dealing here with two alternatives, has been overlooked by most interpreters of V.7, although to read both remarks as subsequent statements would immediately lead to problems.[129] Such a reading also could cause the interpretation that Plotinus accepted Forms of individuals, which is not supported by the remainder of the treatise and his other work.[130]

Smyth in his *Greek Grammar* notes that 'antithetical (concessive) μέν distinguishes the word or clause in which it stands from a following word or clause marked usually by δέ or by other particles denoting contrast'.[131] In addition, he remarks that 'μὲν ... δέ serves to mark stronger or weaker contrasts of various kinds [...]. The μέν-clause has a concessive force when it is logically subordinate (*while, though, whereas*)'.[132] I am well aware of the fact that Plotinus' Greek does often not adhere to the syntax of classical Attic Greek, but it should be accepted that Plotinus was well versed in the more fundamental principles of Attic prose, of which the μέν ... δέ-construction is an example.

When we apply these syntactical principles to these lines, the μέν-clause here must have a concessive force and functions here as the alternative which should be rejected. Although this rejection is not explicit, the syntax of these two sentences and a philosophical analysis of the two arguments leave no other options.

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[128] Remes (2007: 78) has also observed that Plotinus here offers two alternatives. She, however, assumes that Plotinus does not endorse one of these alternatives. I believe that the grammatical structure, as discussed below, gives enough reason to asssume that Plotinus adopted the second alternative.

[129] As happens in e.g. Rist (1963: 224), Mamo (1969: 85-86), Blumenthal (1971: 115-116), Gerson (1994: 75), Sikkema (2009: 139-140).

[130] Rist (1963: 224-225), Blumenthal (1971: 115-116), Gerson (1994: 75). Vassilopoulou (2006: 373-374) denies that this line proves the existence of Forms of individuals, but she does so on the basis of unjustified arguments (on which see n. 135).

[131] Smyth (1956: no. 2903).

[132] Smyth (1956: no. 2904). See no. 2170 for the use of *parataxis* when a thought is naturally subordinate but placed independently.

Alternative 1 (lines 3-5)

> Ἢ εἰ μὲν ἀεὶ Σωκράτης καὶ ψυχὴ Σωκράτους, ἔσται Αὐτοσωκράτης, καθὸ ἡ ψυχὴ καθέκαστα καὶ ⟨ὡς λέγεται⟩ ἐκεῖ [ὡς λέγεται ἐκεῖ].
>
> *The fact is that, if, on the one hand, Socrates, that is the soul of Socrates, always exists, there will be a Form of Socrates, as far as the individual soul is also said to be there.*

The argument is structured along the lines of an incomplete syllogism, in which the major premise is suppressed; the argument in its entirety is presented as a hypothetical alternative. The syllogism is further qualified by a restricting protasis.

	major premise
	(anything that always exists is a Form)
	minor premise
ἀεὶ Σωκράτης καὶ ψυχὴ Σωκράτους	the soul of Socrates always exists
	conclusion
ἔσται Αὐτοσωκράτης	there will be a Form of (the soul of) Socrates
	restriction
καθὸ ἡ ψυχὴ καθέκαστα καὶ ⟨ὡς λέγεται⟩ ἐκεῖ	as far as the soul is said to be *there*

The first alternative maintains that if it could be said of Socrates that he always exists, there would be an 'absolute' Socrates, as far as we can say that the individual souls exist in the intelligible world. Although we should bear in mind that Plotinus' rejects this option in favour of the second alternative, it is worthwhile to examine the philosophical background of this remark, which has led to considerable scholarly attention, not in the least because this sentence has been taken as the decisive evidence in favour of Forms of individuals.

In the first place, we should ask ourselves how we should translate καί in the remark Σωκράτης καὶ ψυχὴ Σωκράτους. The particle here has, as in other places, an explanatory function.[133] It serves to further define the subject of the *protasis* Socrates as the soul of Socrates. It is of course a classic position in (neo-)Platonic philosophy that the soul is eternal, whereas our body is merely our

[133] Vassilopoulou (2006: 373).

'earthly abode' (on which see lines 5-7) similarly that a Form is an eternal and unchanging entity.[134] Plotinus argues here that if the soul of Socrates always is the soul 'of Socrates', it would be necessary to acknowledge the existence of the Form Socrates.[135] It has been suggested that the particle, in addition, establishes an identity between the person Socrates and his soul.[136] This does not seem right, because individuality is both a question of soul and body; it can thus not be said that Socrates only is Socrates because of his character and soul; he is also defined by his outward appearance. Plotinus does not argue this very explicitly, but there are indications in V.7 that he also refers to the individual body: e.g. 2.16-18 (on ugliness) and 3.3 (on externally indistinguishable individuals). This also means that we cannot sustain that Plotinus in V.9.12 proposes a different reason for minor physical phenomena (which could only be matter) than for other individualizing characteristics.[137]

A second terminological issue surrounds the term Αὐτοσωκράτης. A literal translation would by 'Socrates itself', but for Plato the combination αὐτο-X is the standard formula to refer to the 'Form of X', in addition to the (synonymous) terms εἶδος and ἰδέα.[138] This we can perhaps understand as that the Form of X is just X and nothing else, e.g. not a particular example of beauty, but beauty itself (e.g. *Phaedo* 75c9-d1, αὐτοῦ τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ αὐτοῦ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ δικαίου, 'beauty itself and the good itself and justice [itself]'; *Symposium* 211d2, αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν, 'beauty itself').[139] This formulaic expression is taken on by Plotinus at numerous instances, although he leaves out the article (e.g. V.9.13, 2-3, αὐτοάνθρωπος .. αὐτοψυχή .. αὐτονοῦς; IV.3.2, 28, αὐτοποσόν). Αὐτοσωκράτης should therefore likewise be understood as the 'Form of Socrates'. The expression clearly echoes that of αὐτοέκαστον in

[134] See the discussion in par. 3.3 and the definition of a Form in Xenocrates respectively Alcinous in particular.

[135] See e.g. Rist (1963), Blumenthal (1966: 64), Rist (1963: 224). Vassilopoulou (2006: 372-373) rejects this reading and suggests that this line could simply state that the soul of Socrates is eternal, which is too simple. First of all, if Plotinus had intended to make that statement, I believe that (even) he would have phrased it more straightforwardly; but more importantly, such a reading fails to appreciate the added meaning of the term Αὐτοσωκράτης, on which see below.

[136] Cf. Armstrong (1977: 57); Mamo (1969: 86, 'taking the καί to mean 'that is to say' leads to an interpretation which renders the argument worthless').

[137] This is proposed by e.g. Gerson (1974: 77-78).

[138] Ross (1953: 17). See for instance *Phaedo* 103e3 αὐτὸ τὸ εἶδος. Cf. LSJ s.v. εἶδος III.2 resp. ἰδέα II. See also the commentary on line 1.

[139] So Rowe (1993: 7-8).

Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* 1096a35.[140] Socrates is Plotinus' favourite example in discussions regarding the individual, but also in other contexts.[141]

The perhaps most complicated line of V.7.1 is the additional restrictive protasis: καθὸ ἡ ψυχὴ καθέκαστα καὶ ⟨ὧς λέγεται⟩ ἐκεῖ [ὡς λέγεται ἐκεῖ]: the Form Socrates can only exist so far as (καθὸ ἡ) the individual soul can be said to be *there*, which is in the intelligible. Two different emendations have been put forward. Nevertheless, it is still not very clear what Plotinus precisely means and it is well possible that these words are corrupt.[142] The gist, which also has been included in the argumentative scheme above, must be something like the following: the Form of Socrates will exist, in so far as the individual soul can be said to exist there, which is in the intelligible realm. If indeed the intelligible principle of the individual would be a Form, that would mean that the individual, which includes his soul, in some way or another is at the intelligible realm: his unique Form is namely there as well. The fact that Plotinus phrases this remark in a restrictive manner could serve as further evidence that this alternative is to be rejected: because the individual soul is indeed not found at the intelligible realm, but one *hypostasis* lower. The human and the cosmic soul in Plotinian metaphysics, obviously, each have an existence which transgresses the hypostatic boundaries: the upper, non-descended part of the soul is said to be at the intelligible level, whereas the lower parts of the soul are in 'our' earthly world.[143] So in this case, as far as it would be possible for Socrates' soul to be at the intelligible level, it is said to be the Form Socrates.

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[140] Chiaradonna (2014).

[141] Dillon & Blumenthal (2015: 192), on IV.3.5, 3, with reference to VI.3.9, 27-32. See also V.9.12, 3. Cf. for Socrates and Plato as examples: Alexander of Aphrodisias, *In M.* 81.1-3 (and 84.6-7) .

[142] Igal (1973: 71-72); Kalligas (1997a: 214 n. 27).

[143] Cherniss (1944: 508) has suggested that the reference to the individual soul here implies that Plotinus is not writing about Forms of individuals, but merely about individual souls and that the highest part of the individual soul is thus conflated with the Form of that individual, for which Kalligas (1997a: 215-226) attempts to find further evidence. Because this all depends on the correct reading of this remark, it will remain difficult to fully grasp what Plotinus is trying to say. Rist's (1967: 86-87) objection that such a reading requires anything immortal to be a Form indeed is forceful. In any case, the reading presented here does not require us to go into this question too deeply (see Kalligas), as I argue that Plotinus does not accept Forms of individuals at all, because he rejects this alternative.

Details

The syntactical structure of the restriction is another matter: it appears that ψυχὴ is the subject of a suppressed main verb, which most likely would be a form of εἶμι 'to be', with καθέκαστα as a modifying adverb ('individually').

καθὸ ἡ. In the *editio minor* of Henry-Schwyzer, both the words καθὸ and their conjecture ᾗ for ἡ have a similar meaning: 'in so far as', but both would need to serve a different purpose here. The adverb καθὸ stands by itself and determines the scope of the entire *protasis* in a broad sense: it defines that the soul of Socrates is a Form as far as a soul exists at the intelligible level. The relative pronoun ᾗ is a conjecture by Henry-Schwyzer in their *editio minor* (taken on by Armstrong) instead of ἡ (still found in their *editio maior*) and would then be used in this sentence in an adverbial sense.[144] It would define the scope of ψυχὴ: 'in so far as soul' or rather '*qua* soul'. A comparable use of this term can be found in Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* 1096b2 (ᾗ ἄνθρωπος). It is however not entirely clear with what necessity ᾗ is written here instead of ἡ; it even complicates matters because ᾗ cannot serve to define ψυχὴ as the subject, unless we adopt an other unexpressed word to function thus. It appears that this is the choice of Henry-Schwyzer, who note in the *apparatus criticus* as their translation *secundum id, qua anima, singula sic quoque dicuntur illic esse*, in which *id* is the subject of the sentence referring back (presumably) to Αὐτοσωκράτης. That is of course possible, but it has not been made clear why ἡ could not be retained. In this text, therefore, ἡ is printed.

⟨ὡς λέγεται⟩ ἐκεῖ [ὡς λέγεται ἐκεῖ]. The original ἐκεῖ ὡς λέγεται ἐκεῖ is unintelligible, as it would read something like 'there which is called there'. A emendation for the original ἐκεῖ ὡς λέγεται ἐκεῖ was first proposed by Igal, who suggested καὶ ἐκεῖνως λέγεται ἐκεῖ. With this reading, ἐκεῖνως would come to be on the same level as καθέκαστα: 'individual and in such a way'. According to Igal, 'that way' would refer to the 'transcendental existence' of the Soul in the intellectual realm (ἐκεῖ).[145] This suggestion was not taken on by Henry and Schwyzer, who instead rightly chose for a less intrusive option and transposed the words ὡς λέγεται.[146] When read thus, these words further define ἐκεῖ, which literally takes the sense of 'elsewhere', and is almost exclusively used by Plotinus to denote a world other than ours, namely the transcendent world of the *hypostases*, most often that of

[144] LSJ s.v. ᾗ. In the *editio maior* of Henry-Schwyzer, ἡ is still printed, but ᾗ is included in the *emendationes probandae* (at 404).

[145] Igal (1973: 91-92).

[146] Cf. Henry-Schwyzer (*editio minor*) *apparatus criticus ad* 4-5.

the Intellect. As in the previous sentence, ἐκεῖ can in this sentence only be thought to refer again to τὸ νοητὸν, the non-material realm.

Alternative 2, part 1 (lines 5-7)

> **Εἰ δ' οὐκ ἀεί, ἀλλὰ ἄλλοτε ἄλλη γίγνεται ὁ πρότερον Σωκράτης, οἷον Πυθαγόρας ἤ τις ἄλλος, οὐκέτι ὁ καθέκαστα οὗτος κἀκεῖ.**
>
> *If, on the other hand, Socrates not always exists, but he that was formerly Socrates becomes different persons at different times, like Pythagoras or someone else, he will no longer be there as an individual.*

The conclusion of the second alternative is based upon two separate premises, of which the latter is the logical consequence of the former. This conclusion is then used as the fundament for the second part of this alternative (lines 7-9).

	premise 1
οὐκ ἀεί [Σωκράτης καὶ ψυχὴ Σωκράτους]	the (soul of) Socrates not always exists
	premise 2 (= **partial consequence of premise 1**)
ἀλλὰ ἄλλοτε ἄλλη γίγνεται ὁ πρότερον Σωκράτης, οἷον Πυθαγόρας ἤ τις ἄλλος	the soul becomes different persons
	conclusion
οὐκέτι ὁ καθέκαστα οὗτος κἀκεῖ	then he [Socrates] will not be as an individual there

The second alternative is marked by the words εἰ δε, which stresses that this is the correct option.[147] The position is taken that if Socrates is not always Socrates, but if he will become different persons at different times, for instance Pythagoras, it can not be said that he will be *there* (i.e. in the intelligible world) individually. It is necessary to read 'Socrates' here as the 'soul of Socrates', as his body will by no means become that of a different person. This is in line with how we understood

[147] Cf. Smyth (1956: no. 2903). *Contra*: Remes (2007: 78), on which see n. 128. Blumenthal (1971: 115) proposes this is an objection to the previous statement.

'Socrates' (at least partially) in the first argument. It will have been obvious for Plotinus that the (soul of the) person who formerly was Socrates, will have become someone else at a later moment, because he believed in reincarnation (see III.4.5, IV.3.25-26, IV.7, V.3.8, 8-9 and VI.4.14, 17), as Plato and the neo-Platonists in general did.[148] Because this aspect of Plotinus' philosophy is undisputed, it gives additional force to our understanding of this second alternative as the correct one: Socrates does not always exist, which distinguishes this alternative from the first, εἰ μέν-alternative.[149]

Reincarnation and individual Forms are fundamentally irreconcilable: only of those objects that exist in our sensible world, an intelligible counterpart is found as Forms (see e.g. V.9.10, 1-2).[150] If a human being is reincarnated in some sort of living creature, he will no longer be in our sensible world as the human being in the incarnation that he was before. We should separate this from the eternal existence of a (human) soul: Socrates' and everyone's ψυχή is not perishable, but it is perpetually and consecutively instantiated as different (human) beings, for instance as Pythagoras or as τις ἄλλος.[151]

Having thus established the impossibility of a Form of an individual being, Plotinus turns back to the main question: what principle (ἀρχή) allows any human being to ascend to the intelligible realm? In other words: how can the existence of Socrates-as-Socrates be explained or how can we argue that the soul is instantiated in a particular way (be it Socrates, Pythagoras or τις ἄλλος)? His answer to this problem is given in the second part of this alternative.

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[148] Rich (1957). *Contra*: Mamo (1969: 87), but without argumentation.

[149] The idea that a Form of Socrates cannot exist, because Socrates is 'not deathless' and that therefore Socrates cannot exist in the intelligible world, as that would make him eternal, is used in a comparable form by Proclus to deny the existence of Forms of Individuals (*In Parm.* 824.9-824.16; see also par. 3.3). Cf. Gerson (1994: 76-77), who formulates this problem very clearly, but who is apparently not prepared to draw the conclusion that Forms of individuals cannot exist. In fact, his interpretation that the Form of Socrates is only called the Form of Socrates as long as it is instantiated as Socrates, but could at another time and place be identified as the Form of Pythagoras misses the mark completely, the defining characteristic of a Form being its eternity and immutability.

[150] Cf. Mamo (1969: 86); Kalligas (1997a: 212). Rist (1963: 228) undertakes an – in my view failed – effort to combine both views by suggesting that the reïncarnated Socrates would never be able to 'blot out' his former 'Socrates-ness': there is no evidence in Plotinus for that position. See also n. 149. Cf. also Armstrong (1977: 51), who proposes that this line merely shows that one incarnation of the individual Form does not exhaust it possibilities, which is a suggestion that denies the fundamental definition of a Form of an individual.

[151] Cf. IV.3.5, 7-13.

Details

Πυθαγόρας. Socrates first and Pythagoras second is of course a reversal of the chronological order.[152] Much more significant is, however, that it was not a coincidence that Plotinus here mentions Pythagoras in particular to illustrate someone else in which the soul of Socrates could reincarnate, as Pythagoras was perhaps the strongest supporter of the philosophy of *metempsychosis* or reincarnation.[153] In addition, another antithesis may be at play here, since Pythagoras was famously beautiful and Socrates of course infamously ugly (with a snub-nose: see lines 18-21).[154]

κἀκεῖ. As in line 3-5 (protasis), καί means 'also'. Socrates would be both here, in our world, and there (ἐκεῖ), in the intelligible world.

Alternative 2, part 2 (lines 7-9)

Ἀλλ᾽ εἰ ἡ ψυχὴ ἑκάστου ὧν διεξέρχεται τοὺς λόγους ἔχει πάντων, πάντες αὖ ἐκεῖ·

But if the soul of each [individual] possesses the forming principles of all [individuals] it goes through, all will be there again:

Two circular premises and one suppressed premise lead to the conclusion.

	(circular) premise 1
ἡ ψυχὴ ὧν διεξέρχεται τοὺς λόγους	the soul of each goes through all λόγοι it contains
	(circular) premise 2
ἡ ψυχὴ ἑκάστου τοὺς λόγους ἔχει πάντων	the soul of each contains all the λόγοι it goes through
	premise 3
	(having an individual λόγος in the soul equals a presence in the intelligible realm)
	conclusion
πάντες αὖ ἐκεῖ	all [would be] *there* again

[152] Harder (1956: 557).

[153] Cf. Porphyry, *Vita Pythagorae* 19.

[154] See for Pythagoras e.g. Diogenes Laertius VIII.11 and Iamblichus, *Vita Pythagorae* 2.9-10.

Plotinus suggests– in short – that although a Form of Socrates cannot exist, we can accept the concept of a λόγος of Socrates.[155] The eternal soul, which manifests itself over a time in an (infinite) number of individual persons, contains the λόγοι of all those persons.[156] Those λόγοι, still according to this argument, then again (αὖ) place the (partial) existence of every individual (πάντες) in the intelligible world (ἐκεῖ). In this way, of each individual an ἀρχή, 'principle' is in the intelligible realm, which allows an ascent to it.

This argument brings up the difficult question what the term λόγος in Plotinus means.[157] In almost all the scholarly literature on V.7 it is simply treated as a synonym for τοῦ καθέκαστον ἰδέα, which is used in the introduction of the treatise; yet this identification is not and cannot be substantiated.[158] We should first look beyond neo-Platonism before we can truly ascertain the concept that is conveyed by Plotinus' use of λόγος.

In Stoicism, the λόγος is 'the divine fire', which acts upon matter, in which it is inherent. It is thus a forming principle, which orders the chaotic and passive world into a well-organised cosmos. The λόγος governing the cosmos contains the λόγοι of each individual, which are also called the λόγοι σπερματικοί: these are the individual forming principles, which are embedded in each individual being and in that way regulate its individuality and character.[159] They are the seed from which everything arises at birth and to which disintegration brings everything back.[160] Although the evidence in Stoic texts is scarce, it is presumed that the λόγοι are corporeal and form a part of the (human) soul.[161]

Graeser has demonstrated that Plotinus seems to have taken on this Stoic conception to deal with a question Plato neglected: in what sense can the Forms be supposed to influence the sensible

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[155] Mamo (1969: 86-88) is very sceptical of the introduction of the λόγος, but he believes that Plotinus accepts Forms of Individuals in V.7: his scepticism loses its force as soon as that has been dropped.

[156] Cf. Witt (1931: 107).

[157] Kalligas (1997b: 400) calls 'the word itself one of the most ambiguous and multifaced in ancient Greek philosophy'. Sleeman & Pollet (1980: s.v.) discern five different meanings of the word, some of which correspond with the meaning of the word in more general contexts, while others are more specifically philosophical and/or Plotinian.

[158] Cf. n. 105.

[159] Witt (1931: 103); Kalligas (1997b: 400). See for instance Seneca, *Epistulae ad Lucilium* 90.29.

[160] Witt (1931: 103), with reference to *SVF* II.1074 .

[161] *SVF* II.828 and II.1051.

world?[162] He integrated these λόγοι σπερματικοί with his adoption of the Platonic theory of Forms and used the doctrine of λόγοι to explain the relationship between entities placed on different levels of Being. Graeser adopts the term λόγος νοητὸς ἄυλος, which we find in V.8.1, for the causal relation between Intellect and Soul, whereas the λόγος ἔνυλος (see e.g. I.8.8) in turn is supposed 'to relate the sensible world to the world soul'.[163] Brisson's definition is rather alike, as he argues that the λόγος refers to the 'Form' on the level of the *hypostasis* Soul and that the λόγοι function as the intermittent factor between the purely transcendent Forms and the physical objects we see around us.[164] Kalligas describes that this definition of the λόγος comes closer to the Aristotelian conception, in which the term is used for the definition of a particular object, for which several (universal) forms might be combined. The most relevant text is a passage from the tractate *On Quality or on Substance*:

> Δεῖ τοίνυν ἐπὶ τῆς ποιᾶς οὐσίας τὴν οὐσίαν πρὸ τοῦ ποιὰν εἶναι καὶ τὸ τί ἐστι. Τί οὖν ἐπὶ τοῦ πυρὸς πρὸ τῆς ποιᾶς οὐσίας ἡ οὐσία; Ἆρα τὸ σῶμα; Τὸ γένος τοίνυν οὐσία ἔσται, τὸ σῶμα, τὸ δὲ πῦρ σῶμα θερμὸν καὶ οὐκ οὐσία τὸ ὅλον, ἀλλ' οὕτω τὸ θερμὸν ἐν αὐτῷ, ὡς καὶ ἐν σοὶ τὸ σιμόν. Ἀφαιρεθείσης τοίνυν θερμότητος καὶ τοῦ λαμπροῦ καὶ κούφου, ἃ δὴ δοκεῖ ποιὰ εἶναι, καὶ ἀντιτυπίας τὸ τριχῇ διαστατὸν καταλείπεται καὶ ἡ ὕλη οὐσία. Ἀλλ' οὐ δοκεῖ· τὸ γὰρ εἶδος μᾶλλον οὐσία. Ἀλλὰ τὸ εἶδος ποιότης. Ἢ οὐ ποιότης, ἀλλὰ λόγος τὸ εἶδος.

[162] Likewise Heinemann (1921: 67). Rist (1963: 229-230) and Armstrong (1984: 226) suggest that Plotinus was also influenced by the Stoics in a more general way concerning their focus on individual qualities (ἰδίως ποιόν, cf. *SVF* II.395). Cf. also Rist (1967: 95), Sedley (1982). Sikkema (2009: 140) defines λόγοι as 'means'. Kalligas (1997a: 212, cf. 2011: 770-771) mentions it as a way for the individual Form to express itself in the sensible world.

[163] Graeser (1972: 42).

[164] Brisson (1999). See e.g. VI.7.11, 3-4. Cf. the inclusion of the λόγος in Plutarch's characterization of a Form, par. 3.3.

> It is therefore necessary that in a qualified being, the being must be there, what it itself is, before the qualification. So what is in fire the being itself before the qualified being? The body? Then it will be the genus 'body' as being, but fire will be a hot body and the whole [would not be] being, but the heat [will be] in it, just like a snub-nose in you.[165] So having taken away the heat and the brightness and the light, which surely seem to be qualities, the resistance of a hard body is left in three dimensions and the matter [will be] the being. But it does not seem so: because the Form, rather, [is] being. But the Form [is] quality. The fact is that the Form is not (a) quality, but forming principle (λόγος).
>
> (II.6.2, 6-15)

In these 'cryptic but important' lines, Plotinus argues that some Forms are used to form, in combination with matter, sensible objects, whereas other Forms are necessary to produce the 'accidents' which serve as attributes for those sensible objects.[166] He asks the question what the true 'essence' of any object is, when all of its qualities are taken away: 'what it itself is' (καὶ τὸ τί ἐστι). This latter formulation has a distinctive Aristotelian ring, who uses it frequently to distinguish the essential characteristics of an object from the fleeting 'accidents' (συμβεβηκότα) that the object endures.[167] It is interesting that Plotinus here uses the term οὐσία, 'being', to describe the object without its accidents, because he most often adheres to the traditional Platonic view that true *being* only exists at the level of the Intelligible (ἐκεῖ, 'there').[168] This seems to be a concession to the Aristotelian view instead of the Platonic, as Kalligas notes, but with him I would like to focus on the use of καὶ τὸ τί ἐστι to indicate the 'essence of the object'. For Plotinus such an essence cannot truly 'exist' in the sensible world, since the sensible world is only perceived because it is a reflection of the Intelligible world (in Plotinian terms, the Νοῦς) with the Forms in it. So an object, be it fire or (as we

[165] Plotinus often uses the shape of the nose as an example in such discussions, the most famous example being his treatment of aquiline and snub noses in V.9.12.

[166] This discussion of this text is largely inspired by Kalligas (1997b: 397-400).

[167] See e.g. *Analytica Priora* 43b7 and *Topica* 120b21.

[168] He even does so a few lines before this passage, at II.6.2, 1-6. Because this is the traditional Platonic view, to render οὐσία as 'substance' (which Armstrong does) is unconvincing: although the intelligible sphere is that where only true being exists, it is of course unmaterial and no 'substance' in our sense will exist there.

will see) an individual person, does indeed need something to make it 'what it itself is', but it can never have an 'self-subsistent essential core'.[169] Plotinus then takes the argument further: the 'what it itself is' can never be matter (ἡ ὕλη οὐσία. Ἀλλ' οὐ δοκεῖ), because it is devoid of every characteristic to the extent that even quantitative determinations are impossible.[170] Instead, it should be some sort of formal constituent (τὸ γὰρ εἶδος μᾶλλον οὐσία), because only the Forms truly 'are' in a strict sense.

In the final lines of this passage, Plotinus finally comes to the point that is most relevant for our discussion. This formal constituent, which brings about the 'quality' (ποιότης) of the object, can not be a Form (εἶδος), Plotinus argues, but should be a 'forming principle' (λόγος).[171] One might indeed assume that the Form is in fact the formal constituent, but in combination with the Stoic background of the λόγοι σπερμάτικοι as discussed above, it is obvious that Plotinus cannot accept the Form as directly influencing the matter on Earth. In fact, the Form might serve for any secondary qualities, those that Aristotle calls 'accidents', but they cannot function for the primary creation of sensible objects. Any object is not able to be the 'bearer' of any Form if not his essence, his 'what it itself is', has been established.[172]

Instead, the characteristics of the sensible individual object are created by the forming principle. Its identity is defined by it, its being constituted by it. If it would lose this forming principle, the object would again fall back into a total privation of *being*: it would again become pure matter. As long as it 'keeps' its λόγος, on the other hand, the sensible object or person exists and is able to sustain any accidents, which are created by the second category of Forms.[173]

It is very probable that we should regard every individual λόγος as a combination of individual characteristics, for which different Forms are necessary. The λόγος therefore 'is a combination of several Forms into a unified whole, which describes and corresponds exactly to what a particular thing is'.[174] To put it more visually: the λόγος is like an prism turned around. The multiplicity of various and necessary Forms beam their differently coloured rays of lights through

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[169] Cf. Chiaradonna (1996: 56-61).

[170] See for instance II.5.4, 12 (ἀνείδεος) , IV.7.3, 8 (ἄποιος) and VI.1.27, 2 (ἄμορφος) . Cf. Blumenthal (1971: 113-114).

[171] The remark that 'Form is quality' does not convey Plotinus' opinion but is an objection like we find in V.7; this structure is emphazised by the use of ἤ to separate objection and answer (or question and answer).

[172] Gerson (1994: 105), instead, believes that 'Forms of natural kinds' serve 'as the subjects themselves'.

[173] See e.g. the second part of the passage cited above: II.6.2, 15-34.

[174] Cf. Graeser (1972: 42-43) and Remes (2007: 79-81).

the prism, out of which on the other side comes a bright white light which shapes the sensible object and which is an invisible compound of a variety of forms (in the case of fire: heat, brightness and light). See for instance the follow passage from the treatise titled *On Matter*:

> ἐπεὶ καὶ λόγοι σύνθετοι καὶ ἐνεργείᾳ δὲ σύνθετον ποιοῦσι τὴν ἐνεργοῦσαν εἰς εἶδος φύσιν.
>
> Since the forming principles are compounds and by activation they produce a compound, nature striving toward a Form.
>
> (II.4.3, 6-7)

To conclude this excursus on the nature of the λόγος in Plotinus, it is obvious that it is an amalgam of both Stoic and Aristotelian influences. Its relevance for our text becomes even more apparent when we look at the term for the essential characteristics of any object: διαφόραι, 'differences', and they indeed differentiate the one object from the other and to 'indicate, pick it out, or highlight it against its environment'.[175] This term, as we will see, is used often by Plotinus in the remainder of this treatise to indicate the 'differences' between individuals (for example in section 2, lines 1-7).

Finally, it is very striking that also in other passages, the Soul is regarded as the *agens* for the production or actualization of the λόγος. Although sometimes the Soul is regarded as synonymous to the concept of λόγος (see e.g. V.9.3), in other texts (VI.4.10), Plotinus argues that the soul 'mixes and rearranges the reflection of intelligible Forms projected into the sensible realm according to λόγοι, formal patterns [forming principles], which organise these disparate reflections into coherent wholes or sensible objects'.[176] We furthermore have a remarkable parallel for this remark in Porphyry:

> Ἡ ψυχὴ ἔχει μὲν πάντων τοὺς λόγους, ἐνεργεῖ δὲ κατ' αὐτούς ...
>
> Soul contains the forming principles of all, and it energizes according to them ...

[175] It takes us to far to trace back the background of this Plotinian combiniation of Stoic and Aristotelian theories on the λόγος, but it worthwhile to mention that it is also found in other neo-Platonists: see Kalligas (1997b: 401-402).

[176] In III.8.2, Plotinus demonstrates that the lowest kind of λόγος is the one responsible for the creation of the sensible form of a body.

(*Sententiae* 17, 1-3)

This account of these two passages from other parts of Plotinus's work have so far almost only been used for the creation of inanimate objects, which was also the scope of Kalligas' article.[177] Remes has shown that the structure of V.7 follows the argumentation of II.6 quite logically; the relation between these texts becomes even more obvious when we remember that II.6 comes chronologically directly before our text.[178] If we combine this discussion with our text, it becomes obvious that it can serve as a convincing and plausible explanation of the introduction of λόγοι as the individuating principle in the sensible world and the intellectual basis of every individual in the intellectual world. We can directly transpose the theory that the λόγος is a compound of various Forms, 'the productive seminal force and of noetic construct defining [..] the essence of each thing'.[179] Every individual person, be it Socrates, Pythagoras or someone else, is characterized by a large number of qualities, many of which are immutable, others being more transient. Those fixed qualities of every individual person, which thus make up καὶ τὸ τί ἐστι, 'what it itself is', are caused by the λόγος of that individual.[180] The λόγος of Socrates, for instance, will at least have included the Forms Man, Bald, Intelligent etc. That forming principle, of course, resides in the soul, which is the actor behind the creation of both Nature (World Soul) and individual person (the individual soul).[181] The soul, being eternal and capable of

[177] Remes (2007: 78) and Vassilopoulou (2006: 377-378) are notable exceptions. The latter indeed remarks that this text helps to elucidate the difficulties encountered in V.7. She, however, excludes the role of the λόγος; even more surprisingly, she takes it to be synonymous to τοῦ καθέκαστον ἰδέα (at 374-375), although it is remarked (at n. 6) that they are strictly not identical. She believes that Plotinus in V.7 only affirms the individuality of the soul (n. 6 and 378).

[178] Vassilopoulou (2006: 377); Remes (2007: 78). That is, if we are to believe the relative chronological order as mentioned by Porphyry, of which he could not have been certain (*Vita Plotini* 4; cf. n. 84 and 92).

[179] Kalligas (1997b: 401).

[180] Remes (2007: 81) assumes (cf. n. 128 above) that the individual being is formed by a 'bundle' of different λόγοι, for which I see no evidence in the texts; instead it is more probable that the different Forms are emanated in the singular λόγος for each individual. Furthermore, she describes that the λόγοι are 'possibilities within the form of human being' and 'incomplete images of the form of human being', which denies that the λόγοι are a separate intelligible entity that governs the relation between the intellectual and the sensible world (cf. Sikkema (2009: 141-143); in addition, this passes over the possibility to reincarnate as a living creature other than human (see lines 6-7). The Form of Man (or Human Being) only causes the matter to take the shape of a Man, but does not explain the 'what it itself is' of every specific individual; therefore, the Form of Man is an essential ingredient, but ultimately unsufficient to completely shape every individual human being. Cf. also Aubry (2008: 276).

[181] See lines 9-10 for the relation between these souls.

reincarnation, consecutively activates the different forming principles that are inherent in it to create the total number of individuals that it successively instantiates.[182]

This also clarifies the slightly puzzling final sentence of this argument, πάντες αὖ ἐκεῖ, if the existence of individual Forms at the level of Intellect is categorically denied.[183] Through the use of the λόγοι, of which each is a compound of Formal characteristics, every individual person still has an ἀρχή in the intelligible realm. The λόγος creates the essence, the καὶ τὸ τί ἐστι, of every individual, by both integrating the Formal cause of the individuality in the sensible world as well as the existence of a true principle at an intelligible level. It is not necessary to postulate, in addition to the Forms of every quality or characteristic, the existence of Forms of every possible combination (i.e. every individual).[184]

Elaboration 1 (lines 9-10)

> ἐπεὶ καὶ λέγομεν, ὅσους ὁ κόσμος ἔχει λόγους, καὶ ἑκάστην ψυχὴν ἔχειν.
>
> *because we also assert that each soul has as many forming principles as the universe possesses.*

An argument from analogy is presented, without further substantiation for the basic analogy, which emphasizes its (presumed) self-explanatory character.

	analogy
	(the universe is organized like the individual soul)
	statement
ὅσους ὁ κόσμος ἔχει λόγους	the universe contains (a large) number of λόγοι
	conclusion
καὶ ἑκάστην ψυχὴν ἔχειν	the individual soul contains as many λόγοι

[182] Cf. Armstrong (1977: 62) who connects this remark with Plotinus' belief in reincarnation.

[183] See lines 1-3 for ἐκεῖ as the intelligible realm.

[184] Cf. Vassilopoulou (2006: 378). This should remind us of the reference to 'casual composites' (τὰ σύνθετα εἰκῇ ὄντα) in V.9.14, 14-17, in which Plotinus rejects the existence of Forms of such compounds. Just like here, Forms are there rejected because they exist of different things which have come together and are not produced by the Intellect. In contrast, however, these casual composites are said to have come together by themselves, whereas the individual is created by a activiation in the Soul.

After Plotinus has thus introduced the concept of λόγος as the individual formative principle, instead of a Form, he continues to further elaborate this notion, by giving further qualifications on the nature of these λόγοι. Two elaborations focus on the amount and scope of these λόγοι.

He introduces the first elaboration with the words ἐπεὶ καὶ λέγομεν. These words suggest that this is something which he has argued before or is obvious for any reader of his philosophy. In a way, these words can be seen as a different phrasing of the same sentiment as is conferred with the particle ἤ. Despite Plotinus' confidence here, it is not immediately clear how he comes to conclude that the number of λόγοι in the universe equals that in the each soul. At the same time, the dubious basis of this line has been overlooked in the scholarly literature, in which the argumentation has been taken for granted. It is therefore that we should try to find out how Plotinus confidently gets to this assertion.

The first step that has to be taken is to decide what is meant by ὁ κόσμος. The universe as such (*i.e.* as a space) has no possibility to contain any λόγοι, because the λόγοι are transcendental and as such do not obtain any physical space. It is much more likely that the term ὁ κόσμος refers to the Soul of the universe, which is also known as the World Soul or the Soul of the All, because the natural location for the λόγοι is in a soul. When that has been established, we can secondly turn to the question how the relationship between the World Soul and the individual souls should be regarded. In a number of treatises, Plotinus devotes attention to this question and it is difficult to discern any consistent philosophy.[185]

In some of his earlier treatises (e.g. IV.9), he does not hesitate to accept a (basic) unity of the World Soul and that of the individual souls.[186] Our bodies, which are produced by the λόγοι in our (individual) souls, constitute a part of nature, which as such is produced by the λόγοι that are found in the World Soul. In his later tractate *On the Problems of the Soul* (IV.3-4), Plotinus says on discussing the nature of the World Soul (IV.3.10) that it contains the λόγοι of all things.[187] In the following part of that treatise, he is concerned with establishing a relation between the World Soul and the individual

[185] Dillon & Blumenthal (2015: 24-28). It is far beyond the scope of this thesis to give a full account of how Plotinus defined the relationship between the World Soul and the individual souls; therefore, the theory here presented is a shortened version of that found in Blumenthal (1971) and Dillon & Blumenthal (2015).

[186] Blumenthal (1971: 28-29).

[187] Cf. Dillon & Blumenthal (2015: 225).

soul that is not akin to a mother-daughter relation, but to a sister-sister relation.[188] He uses in that respect an analogy (IV.3.2) of a whole science (which represents the hypostasis Soul) with individual theorems (which represent the individual souls and the World Soul); in that way, every individual soul has an individual coherence, but each, in the words of Dillon and Blumenthal, 'encapsulates potentially the whole of the science in question'.[189] The individual soul (theorem) is not 'born out of' the hypostasis Soul (the science), but every individual soul is both an individual and a necessary part to make up the entire hypostasis Soul. We also find elsewhere that each individual soul is with regards to its shape identical to the World Soul.[190]

In fact, the present treatise presents an additional argument why every individual soul cannot make up a part of the World Soul: because I and every individual being (that is, our soul) need to have a way to return to the intelligible world, we need to be an individual in our own right. If our soul were to be a part of the World Soul, there would be no possibility to ascend to the intelligible world, because our soul as such would not exist.[191]

How does this influence our understanding of this sentence? That every individual soul contains as much as the soul of the universe, is supported by the denial of the individual soul as a part of the World Soul. In fact, these lines call for a reading that the individual soul and the World Soul can be regarded as identical in terms of metaphysical level and ontological dependence on the hypostasis Soul. This is also what is meant by the definition of the relation between these two 'types' of soul as one of sisters – in which the term 'types' is somewhat misleading, because the point is that World Soul as well as the individual soul are manifestations of 'the general stock of soul'.[192] The only difference between them is that these are the soul *of* different sorts of bodies.[193] It is in this line that we should understand these lines: because both the World Soul and the individual soul are 'founded upon' (below, that is) the hypostasis Soul, which in turn is dependent on the hypostasis Intellect with the Forms, they contain the same amount of λόγοι. This does not mean that every individual soul has the same forming principles as the universe: the focus is on the numerical identity between

[188] Cf. Dillon & Blumenthal (2015: 26), with reference to II.9.18.

[189] Dillon & Blumenthal (2015: 27).

[190] III.4.6; cf. Remes (2007: 78).

[191] A connection between V.7 and IV.3 is also drawn by Dillon & Blumenthal (2015: 27).

[192] Blumenthal (1971: 28).

[193] Dillon & Blumenthal (2015: 26).

the contents of every soul. Every individual soul, just like the soul of the universe, naturally have different λόγοι, otherwise every individual would not be unique but instead be created multiple times.

Elaboration 2 (lines 10-12)

> **Εἰ οὖν καὶ ὁ κόσμος μὴ ἀνθρώπου μόνου, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν καθέκαστα ζῴων, καὶ ἡ ψυχή·**
>
> *So, if the universe has [the forming principle] not of man alone, but also of every individual living being, then likewise the soul [has them].*

This remark is organized along the same lines as the previous elaboration and assumes the analogy between the universal and the individual soul. It gives a further qualification to the concept of λόγος.

	analogy
	(the universe is organized like the individual soul)
	statement
καὶ ὁ κόσμος μὴ ἀνθρώπου μόνου καὶ τῶν καθέκαστα ζῴων	the universe has [the principle] of every individual living being
	conclusion
καὶ ἡ ψυχή	the soul too [has those principles]

This correspondence in *number* of λόγοι between the World (Soul) and the individual soul is expanded in scope: in this elaboration, Plotinus concludes that the fact that every individual soul must have as many λόγοι as the cosmos has, is both true of the human species as of every other living being. Remarkably, this 'transfer' is not accentuated in this sentence but is mentioned rather parenthetically. When examining the argumentation in more detail, it becomes obvious that in fact two different statements are integrated. The first is – again – that the number of λόγοι in the cosmos (World Soul) must be identical to that in the individual soul. The connection between this statement and the (indeed) identical remark in the previous sentence is accentuated by the use of the particle οὖν, but also through the elliptical phrasing of the three parts of this sentence, which all lack verb and object. For the former, we should understand ἔχω, for the latter, given the close link between this and the previous sentence, it appears λόγους would be in place. In fact, the structure of this

sentence, especially if read in isolation, suggests that this point adds the most 'value' to Plotinus' argumentation, whereas in reality another statement, although seeming rather more of a definition or at least an argumentation for the seemingly main point, is what we should direct our attention to. In the first part of this sentence, and this is the second meaning of this tripartite remark, Plotinus namely suddenly moves from the sphere of the human beings to that of every individual living being, like animals and plants.[194]

It is actually not altogether obvious on first sight why Plotinus is urged to broaden the scope of his enquiry from the individual human being to individual beings of every species. Admittedly Plotinus has not yet defined the 'individual' here at stake (at best, he has used neutral forms, like καθέκαστά (title) and καθέκαστον (line 1)), but the use of the examples of Socrates and Pythagoras led the reader to assume we were talking about individual beings. However, not only those examples point in that direction, but also the fundamental background of the entire treatise, namely that every individual human being has a way of going up to the intelligible and that therefore an ἀρχή of every individual should exist 'up' there. Does Plotinus here then acknowledge the possibility that also the souls of animals (and plants?) are capable of going up to the intelligible world? That is very odd indeed: although Plotinus accepted that animals have a soul, they are said to be irrational, so it is unlikely that they could have the ability to enter the intelligible world through the art of contemplation.[195]

This remark of Plotinus must have a different purpose. Animals can obtain their souls through the functions of the World Soul or nature, in a manner comparable to that described in Plato's *Timaeus* (see IV.7.14). A second possibility is by the reincarnation of the human soul into the soul of an animal.[196] The remark in these lines therefore serves to explain the fact how that is possible, if the soul of a human being only had the λόγοι of other human beings. If the cosmos indeed

[194] We should understand ζῷων to not only denote animals, but also plants. The *Timaeus*, for instance, contains a passage in which it is argued that everything that partakes of ζῆν ought to be called a ζῷον (this, admittedly, is sort of a circular and etymological argumentation) and that therefore plants, being ζῷα, are endowed with a soul (Plato, *Timaeus* 77b1-6). Cf. Carpenter (2010: 281-283).

[195] Cf. IV.7.14, I.1.11. This is *a fortiori* true of plants, who in Plato (*Timaeus* 77b1-6) are said to have a soul that is only able to feel sensations, but does not have the capacity to think, let alone contemplate.

[196] IV.9.4; VI.7.7. Plotinus even accepted the possibility that the human soul could reincarnate at the plant level (e.g. at III.4.2, VI.7.6-7): cf. Armstrong (1977: 62-63, with n. 42).

has the λόγοι of every living being, it allows the soul of a human to 'return' as the soul of an animal. In section 3 Plotinus will indeed include animals in his treatment without further ado.[197]

Objection and reply 1 (lines 12-14)

> ἄπειρον οὖν τὸ τῶν λόγων ἔσται, εἰ μὴ ἀνακάμπτει περιόδοις, καὶ οὕτως ἡ ἀπειρία ἔσται πεπερασμένη, ὅταν ταὐτὰ ἀποδιδῶται.
>
> *Thus there will be a infinite number of forming principles, if it is not turned back by circles of time, and so the infinity would be limited, when everything would be returned.*

A possible consequence (with the character of an objection) of the second alternative and the ensuing two elaborations is mentioned, which is then denied. Although the phrasing of the remark is rather extensive and thus appears complicated, it is in fact a straight-forward syllogism, in which the minor premise is not fully explicit.

	major premise
εἰ μὴ ἀνακάμπτει περιόδοις	[there is no infinity] if it is repeated by circles of time
	minor premise
ὅταν ταὐτὰ ἀποδιδῶται	the forming principles are repeated by circles of time
	conclusion
οὕτως ἡ ἀπειρία ἔσται πεπερασμένη	the number of forming principles is finite

With these lines, Plotinus embarks upon the answering of a number of objections to his theory. He appears to regard his answer to the question posed in the first line as sufficiently dealt with and now continues for the remainder of the treatise with treating a number of questions that his answer could raise. Obviously Plotinus attempts to answer those questions in such a manner that they further underpin his theory, instead of allowing those questions to turn into valid critiques.

It is interesting that none of the inquiries focus on the foundation of his philosophy: they all seem to take the fact that there are no Forms for individuals as granted, but instead focus on rather minor or detailed points or consequences of his theory. I believe that that does not say anything

[197] The remark of Rist (1970: 299) that Plotinus finds Forms of animals and inanimate things less acceptable than those of men seems to be unfounded.

about the acceptance of Plotinus' theory, but instead point to the fact that these objections are imaginary. A treatment of the real objections that (perhaps) his students raised on discussing with Plotinus would to be realistic include the possibility that Forms of individuals indeed exist.[198] The rapid repetition of question-and-answer in the rest of this text is then nothing more than an example of the abundant use that Plotinus made of questions (see commentary on line 1-3) and of the philosophical motive of question-and-answer structures in general.

The first objection to (or logical consequence of) this theory is that the number of λόγοι necessary to produce the number of individuals (both human and non-human) would need to be infinite, but Plotinus immediately presents a possible solution by dividing the seemingly endless flow of time into different (circular) periods (περιόδοις).[199] It is logical that establishing a different forming principle for every individual living being necessitates an infinite number of those principles, that is, unless one would expect an 'end of time'. In that case a finite number of λόγοι would suffice, but Plotinus instead accepted the notion of eternity (at least as far as the Intellect is concerned, see e.g. III.7.11). He, however, shrinks back from accepting an infinite number of λόγοι, which is consistent with that in other places he denies any infinity in the Intellect, including the possibility that an endless number of Forms could exist (e.g. VI.6.17-18).[200] His vehement defence is obvious when we realize that the Intellect is said to be a unified whole by itself, although all its parts, *i.e.* the Forms, are separate. Any acceptance that that unified whole could be infinite would lead to an collapse of any unified whole, as an infinity can *qualitate qua* never be unified. His denial in these lines that the number of λόγοι is not infinite is therefore consequent, even more so when we take into account the relationship that is said to exist between the Intellect and the λόγοι: as long as the λόγοι are said to be transcendental principles of the sensible universe, they make up a part of the intellectual world. It is therefore that such an endless number of λόγοι cannot be accepted, which is why he comes up with the Stoic notion of circles of time (περιόδοις) that would repeat itself.[201] He

[198] See n. 15 for the rejected view that V.7 represents an actual dialogue.

[199] Cf. Blumenthal (1971: 116), with further references.

[200] Not all neo-Platonists were opposed to an infinite number of Forms: according to Syrianus, *In M.* 147, Amulius accepted it.

[201] Cf. on this point Armstrong (1967: 249) and Dillon & Blumenthal (2015: 231). Heinemann (1921: 72-73) emphetically exclaims 'etwas Unplotinischeres lässt sich kaum vorstellen' and uses this Stoic 'loan' as one of the arguments to declare V.7 a spurious text, on which see further n. 15.

presents this solution in a rather wavering fashion: it is placed in a conditional sentence, whereas the conclusion that the number of λόγοι is infinite does not take an *irrealis*. The presentation of this solution is however more convincing than it appears, as in the following discussion, Plotinus repeatedly comes back to this notion and uses it as his foundation to answer some objections.

Details

περιόδοις. This term has a basic meaning of going around (περί- and ὁδός), but in philosophical texts the word refers to a cycle or period of time.[202] This meaning is often attested in Plato (see e.g. *Politeia* 546b4), but likewise in Plotinus (13 times, e.g. at III.2.13, 2; IV.3.25, 22 and VI.4.16, 3). The introduction of the circle of time, after which everything exactly is repeated, is a distinctive part of Stoic philosophy, in which the God is said to consume the whole cosmos after a certain period of time and to then again bring it forth.[203] A number of variants of this Stoic doctrine of eternal recurrence was discussed amongst the Stoics, who also considered whether this exact repetition called for the existence of identical persons over the course of different cycles.[204] Plotinus also discusses this question in section 2 of this treatise.

Objection 2 (lines 14-18)

> **Εἰ οὖν ὅλως πλείω τὰ γινόμενα τοῦ παραδείγματος, τί δεῖ εἶναι τῶν ἐν μιᾷ περιόδῳ πάντων γινομένων λόγους καὶ παραδείγματα; Ἀρκεῖν γὰρ ἕνα ἄνθρωπον εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους, ὥσπερ καὶ ψυχὰς ὡρισμένας ἀνθρώπους ποιούσας ἀπείρους.**
>
> *So if on the whole [the number of] beings is higher than [the number of] models, why is it necessary that in one period of time forming principles and models of every being exist? Because one human being suffices for all human beings, like souls limited [in number] make an infinity of men.*

[202] LSJ resp. Sleeman & Pollet (1980) s.v. περίοδος.

[203] Diogenes Laertius VII.137; *SVF* II.625.

[204] *SVF* II.626, II.627. Cf. White (2006: 141-143).

This second objection appears to be more fundamental in character, as its premise goes against one of the main reasons to postulate individual forming principles: what if multiple beings can be created on the basis of one forming principle? This challenges the metaphysical foundation of the individual λόγοι, although it passes over the necessity of an individual principle to ascend to the intelligible and focuses purely on the creation of every individual.

It could also be possible that the objection takes a broader scope, which is suggested by τὰ γινόμενα: perhaps we are not only dealing with individual living beings, but also with inanimate objects. In that case we should regard this remark as an attempt at an analogous approach to the question of individuality in humans: if multiple tables can be created by one Form of table, why not in the case of humans? This would indeed be a forceful objection to Plotinus' theory, because Platonism (see par 3.1) accepted the existence of a Form of Man: why would that not be enough for the creation of all men?

The objection is further substantiated by (another) analogous comparison with the souls: a limited number of souls can create a multitude of beings (because the soul reincarnates), so why would that not be possible for the forming principles of every being?[205] The introduction of circles of time is left undisputed here: the focus is on one period of time (ἐν μιᾷ περιόδῳ) and the possibility of having fewer forming principles than (living) beings.[206] In fact it transposes Plotinus' acceptance of the repetition of the use of λόγοι in various circles of time to their repeated use in *one*: if the former is possible, why not the latter? The answer, including two elaborations, takes up the remainder of this section.

Details

τοῦ παραδείγματος. This is the first time in the treatise that Plotinus uses the term παράδειγμα for the function of the λόγος (or Form) as the principle that produces the individual. In the beginning of the treatise (lines 1-3), the term ἀρχή was used as the general term for the transcendental origin of every individual. Although it appears that Plotinus here uses both terms interchangeably, it points to a shift in perspective.[207] The term ἀρχή describes an upward direction, towards the intellect: it is used in the context of the 'beginning' of every individual that exists in the intellectual world and

[205] Armstrong (1977: 50) takes this remark as decisive evidence for Forms of individuals, but such an interpretation ignores the philosophical argumentation up to this point.

[206] Cf. Rist (1963: 224-225).

[207] It is worth noting that παραδειγμα (34 times) is used much less than αρχη (385) by Plotinus.

thus allows for the possibility to 'go there', through the use of contemplation. Opposite to that is here the word παράδειγμα, which has in itself more of a downward direction, towards the sensible world: it is used for the transcendental principle that causes an individual being to come into being, moulding its body and character to its counterpart the intellectual world (hence my translation 'model'). In the following sentence, Plotinus even uses λόγους καὶ παραδείγματα, but we should not understand these terms as both pointing to something different. It is obvious, I believe, from the context of this sentence, that both words point to the transcendental principle of every individual, but perhaps one could see that the former is, in comparison with the παράδειγμα, more like the ἀρχή as described above. In general, the use of παράδειγμα was common in Platonism and was already used by Plato (e.g. *Timaeus* 28a, 29b); compare also the αἰτία παραδειγματική in Xenocrates, *fr.* 94 (on which see par. 3.3).[208]

ἕνα ἄνθρωπον. It is striking that Plotinus here uses 'one man' for the transcendental principle or model for all men. This might be the closest we get to an objection to the entire λόγος-as-ἄρχη idea, because the acceptance of this possibility would in fact be accepting the denial of the idea that for every individual a separate principle exists (be it a Form or a forming principle).

ψυχάς ὡρισμένας. Plotinus alludes to the fact that the number of souls in the (neo-)Platonic theory is limited and that is enough to create an infinite number of people (over time). Why could it then not be enough to have a limited number of λόγοι? The translation of ὡρισμένας as 'limited [in number]' is a little uncertain, because it can also well mean 'limited [in size]' or even separate.[209] In the context of this analogy, it is however very probable that some reference to an amount is made, as it is used to describe to the possibility that one human example suffices for many.

[208] Cf. the Latin *exemplum* we find in Apuleius and Seneca, see par 3.3.

[209] Cf. LSJ s.v. ὁρίζω.

Reply 2, part 1 (lines 18-21)

> Ἢ τῶν διαφόρων οὐκ ἔστιν εἶναι τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον, οὐδὲ ἀρκεῖ ἄνθρωπος πρὸς παράδειγμα τῶν τινῶν ἀνθρώπων διαφερόντων ἀλλήλων οὐ τῇ ὕλῃ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἰδικαῖς διαφοραῖς μυρίαις·
>
> *The fact is that it is impossible that the same forming principle exists for different [men], nor [is it possible that] a man functions as an example for those men, being unlike from another not only because of matter, but also because of countless differences of form:*

A problem with these question-and-answer structures has been the difficulty to see where the question ends and the answer begins: it is here again that the particle ἤ comes into play. As has been said above (see commentary on lines 1-3), the particle has no affirmative but rather a structuring force in Plotinus' treatises, as is the case here. Here, it separates the question from the immediate answer.

Plotinus' reply is introduced by plainly denying both the abstract (one principle for many) as well as the concrete part of the question (one man for men), after which this denial is substantiated by the argument that differences between men are not only due to matter (τῇ ὕλῃ) but also to 'countless differences of form' (ἰδικαῖς διαφοραῖς μυρίαις). This is illustrated in the second part of the reply (lines 16-17) by the introduction of Socrates (see lines 1-3) to further clarify the nature of such a λόγος. It is very probable that behind this denial we should seek the missing premise that in any circle of time, no identical individuals exist.[210]

Plotinus strikingly introduces, over the course of his reply to these objections, arguments and substantiates his answers with points that have not been put forward in his fundamental answer to the principal question: for the first time, Plotinus here comes up with any possible role of matter in determining individuality. As matter is regarded as formless and the complete privation of being in his metaphysical system (see e.g. I.6, II.4), which takes up a shape under the influence of a Form with a λόγος as enacting principle, it needs explanation that in this passage matter plays a formative role, albeit weakened by the following reference to the dominant role of a forming principle. It is

[210] Rist (1963: 225).

clearly presumed that those accepting one Form for many individuals, believe that the visible differences between men are caused by matter alone, whereas Plotinus instead poses an (additional) intellectual reason, namely the forming principle. How can matter have such a role?

We find a very comparable passage on the role of matter in determining individuality in V.9.12, the treatise often cited as a strong denial for the existence of Forms of individuals: Plotinus explicitly remarks that no Form of Socrates exists, but only a Form of Man.[211] As we have shown that neither in V.7 Forms of individuals are established, the discrepancy between these texts dissolves.[212] In the following lines, however, Plotinus also brings up the influence of matter and formative principle in determining individuality:

> τὸ δὲ καθέκαστον, ὅτι [μὴ] τὸ αὐτὸ ἄλλο ἄλλῳ· οἷον ὅτι ὁ μὲν σιμός, ὁ δὲ γρυπός, γρυπότητα μὲν καὶ σιμότητα διαφορὰς ἐν εἴδει θετέον ἀνθρώπου, ὥσπερ ζῴου διαφοραί εἰσιν· ἥκειν δὲ καὶ παρὰ τῆς ὕλης τὸ τὸν μὲν τοιάνδε γρυπότητα, τὸν δὲ τοιάνδε. Καὶ χρωμάτων διαφορὰς τὰς μὲν ἐν λόγῳ οὔσας, τὰς δὲ καὶ ὕλην καὶ τόπον διάφορον ὄντα ποιεῖν.
>
> But the individuality, because the same [individual feature] is different for different people: because for example, one has a snub nose, but the other a aquiline nose, and snubnosed and aquilinity must be regarded as differences in the forming principle of man, just like differences among living being[s]: but it also comes from matter that one has a aquiline nose, the other a [snub nose]. And some differences of colour are included in the forming principle, others also being made by matter and differences of place.[213]
>
> (V.9.12, 4-10)

These lines help us to understand the meaning behind lines 18-21. Plotinus gives an example: one man (Socrates?) has a snub nose, the other an aquiline nose. 'Snubnosedness' and 'aquilinity' are qualities that are contained in the forming principle of Man, he remarks; it is however because of

[211] In par. 3.3 this treatise is more extensively discussed.

[212] See ch. 2 for earlier interpretations of the relation between V.9 and V.7.

[213] This references to difference of place is also found in the second section of V.7 (ἐν ἄλλῃ χώρᾳ); the emendation of that latter passage into ἐν ἄλλῃ ὥρᾳ (suggested by Igal and adopted by Henry & Schwyzer) is thus not necessary.

matter that the one man has a snub nose and the other an aquiline one. In conclusion, he mentions differences ((see on διαφοράς lines 7-9) of colour, some of which are included in the forming principle (ἐν λόγῳ), others being caused by matter and difference of place. The chiastic references to the influence of Form or forming principle vis-à-vis of matter appear to be rather confusing and we are tempted to ask which of the two plays a dominant role.

The example of the nose is not randomly chosen: in fact, Aristotle uses the snub nose to explain that the snub nose as such is caused by matter and form, whereas 'concavity' (κοιλότης) is independent of matter (and thus only form).[214] Plotinus here draws a comparable distinction between Socrates' snub nose in particular and the quality 'Snubnosed' in general, of which a Form will exist.[215] In addition, matter does play a (passive) part in the creation of a snub nose: the Form 'Snubnosed' will act on the matter (with the λόγος its agens) and the particular nose will thus also be 'created' by the matter.[216] This is comparable to passages in which ugliness is said to be caused by the absence of a forming principle in the matter (see also V.7.2, lines 16-18).[217] To a certain extent it can then be said that matter 'causes' a different (and ugly) shape.

The reference to colour works along the same lines: the different skin colour of different human beings is for some caused by forming principle, whereas for others a darker skin is more likely to caused by geographical factors and the intensity of the sun. With this argumentation, Plotinus present a double perspective on the individuality of human beings, which we have not seen before (but is also visible in section 2 and 3): most characteristics that cause individuality are found in the forming principle and in the end in the intelligible world, whereas others are caused by matter or

[214] Aristotle, *Metaphysica* 1025b30-1026a5. Cf. Schniewind (2007: 199).

[215] Plotinus refers to ἐν εἴδει ἀνθρώπου, which some have taken to mean 'in the Form of Man' (see e.g. Schniewind (2007: 82); Remes (2007: 80-81)); as has been discussed above (lines 13-16), it is improbable that the differences between individuals are included in the Form of Man; instead, we find them in each specific forming principle. This justifies my translation of εἴδει with forming principle; an equally likely option would be to understand the lines as referring to all the Forms that are relevant in order to form a particular man (e.g. Man, Baldness, Male etc.) – in the end, it does not make a difference for the interpretation (see also below on ἰδικαῖς διαφοραῖς μυρίαις).

[216] Cf. Remes (2007: 81) who rightly remarks that the λόγοι are not dependent on matter as such, but that they explain the differences that are found in the material world.

[217] Cf. I.8.9, 11-14 for matter being allowed a certain resistance to Form.

circumstantial factors, like place and time.[218] These factors are also mentioned by Proclus, *In Prm.* 824.19-825.25).[219]

This reading of V.9) is directly transposable to V.7 and explains the reference to matter in determining individuality, while it emphasizes the 'countless differences of form' as ultimately defining the individual being.

Details

ἰδικαῖς διαφοραῖς μυρίαις. These 'countless differences of form' no doubt refer to the transcendental λόγοι, of which an unique specimen is necessary to create a unique individual. The word ἰδικαῖς is an later form of εἰδικός, which bears a link with εἶδος ('Form'), but both words are exceedingly rare: εἰδικός is never found in Plato nor Plotinus, whereas this is the only instance of ἰδικαῖς.[220] The exact value of the link with εἶδος is thus impossible to estimate, but I believe it would stretch to far to interpret this term as exclusively referring to the Form in the Intellect and to rather regard is as referring to the opposite of ὕλη, so formal versus material.[221]

Reply 2, part 2 (lines 21-23)

> οὐ γὰρ ὡς αἱ εἰκόνες Σωκράτους πρὸς τὸ ἀρχέτυπον, ἀλλὰ δεῖ τὴν διάφορον ποίησιν ἐκ διαφόρων λόγων.
>
> *because [they are] not like pictures of Socrates in relation to an archetype, but it is necessary that the difference is the result of different forming principles.*

His answer concludes with this remark (with aphorism-like quality) that they (?) do not function as images of Socrates with respect to an archetype, but that it is necessary that the differences are caused by distinct λόγοι. Although the general meaning of this sentence is logical and does not contain any new philosophy (unlike the former), the question is what the subject of the remark is: the forming principles or rather the different human beings? It seems reasonable to take τὸ

[218] Cf. Schniewind (2007: 200).

[219] See par. 3.3 for a discussion.

[220] Some manuscripts indeed contain εἰδικαῖς: see the *apparatus criticus* of the *editio maior*.

[221] This is also the definition found in LSJ s.v. εἰδῐ́κος III.

ἀρχέτυπον as a synonym for εἶδος (Form), which is also the meaning it has in (again) V.9.13, 1-8, in a highly comparable discussion whether an Form of the Soul (αὐτοψυχή) exists:

> οὐ πάντα δεῖ, ὅσα ἐνταῦθα, εἴδωλα νομίζειν ἀρχετυπων
>
> we should not consider all things that are down here, [to be] phantoms of archetypes
>
> (V.9.13, 4-5)

We can now only conclude that the 'different individual human beings' are 'not like pictures of Socrates in relation to an archetype'. They are not identical to one another, which one would expect if they are all formed on the same basis. Instead, each is different as the result of the different forming principles, each of which in a manner of speaking functions as its highly individual archetype (albeit unique only in the context of one circle of time). The λόγος is a combination of the relevant Forms which are necessary to create the individual. It can thus not be said that the individual 'down here' is a phantom of an archetype 'up there', if we take the archetype to be a 'Form' – the individuality of Socrates is thus not caused on the level of the Intellect, but rather at the level of the (individual) soul, in which the forming principle of his highly individual being is present.[222]

Another problem is the insertion of the words 'of Socrates'. How could Plotinus speak of different 'images of Socrates', if he remarked in the beginning of this section that Socrates' not eternally exists, but instead his soul is transferred into the bodies of other human beings? Surely, Plotinus not asserts the existence of different 'Socrateses' in one circle of time. This qualification could point to two things. In the first place, Plotinus could refer to the existence of different Socrateses in cycles of time. This solution has its own problem, because these different instantiations of the same person do base themselves on one archetype, namely the λόγος Σωκράτους. The other option is therefore more viable: the remark is meant metaphorically, not as an actual instantiation of Socrates but as the craftsman's possibility to create identical images (in its strict sense) of Socrates, based on one archetype.[223] In section 3, Plotinus will again come to the example of the craftsman who creates multiple objects that are identical to one another.

[222] Cf. Vassilopoulou (2006: 379-380).

[223] This is comparable to the use of εἴδωλα we find in Plato, *Politeia* 598b-601b.

Conclusion (lines 23-27)

> Ἡ δὲ πᾶσα περίοδος πάντας ἔχει τοὺς λόγους, αὖθις δὲ τὰ αὐτὰ πάλιν κατὰ τοὺς αὐτοὺς λόγους. Τὴν δὲ ἐν τῶι νοητῶι ἀπειρίαν οὐ δεῖ δεδιέναι· πᾶσα γὰρ ἐν ἀμερεῖ, καὶ οἷον πρόεισιν, ὅταν ἐνεργῇ.
>
> *And each circle of time has all the forming principles, and in turn [it produces] again the same things according to the same principles. So it is necessary not to fear the infinity in the intelligible: because all [is] undivided, and they only come forward, when activated.*

Plotinus repeats the point he has made about the cycles of time (πᾶσα περίοδος), in which the whole set of λόγοι is repeated. In this way, he can abstain from acknowledging an infinite set of transcendent principles, be it Forms or those forming principles (see commentary on lines 8-10). It has been suggested that this final line of section 1 again introduces this infinity and thus renders the previous discussion pointless, but the final sentence needs to be interpreted differently than merely putting forward an infinity in the intelligible world.[224] 'It is not necessary to fear the infinity (ἀπειρίαν) in the intelligible (ἐν τῷ νοητῷ)' because such an infinity in fact does not exist, after the explanations (cycles of time) that have now been given. The total number of λόγοι (πᾶσα) is used again and again over the course of the endless repetition of time.[225] The apparent infinity that might be thought to exist, when assuming that every individual person has his own metaphysical principle, is thus countered.

The remark that the *all* [*is*] *undivided* (πᾶσα ἐν ἀμερεῖ) again refers to the level of the Intellect, where the Forms reside in an unified multiplicity. It functions as reassurance for the reader that indeed the world of Forms is just as finite and undivided as it was before (and that there hence is no need to fear for any infinity), while it is followed by a remark that once again changes the

[224] Cf. Blumenthal (1971: 117-118).

[225] Blumenthal (1971: 118). A comparable meaning of 'infinity' is found in the final line of V.7.3.

perspective to the world of λόγοι. These 'only come forward, when activated (ἐνεργῇ)', which refers to the moment a new individual is born (created) by the activation of his specific λόγος.[226]

[226] Sleeman & Pollet (1980: s.v.) include this instance of ἐνεργεῖν under the meaning 'be active' (s.v. *sub* a), but the focus lies upon the process of actualisation or activated. It would therefore be better to categorize it *sub* d, 'be actualized', also because the word is here used passively.

5. *ENNEAD* V.7 AND AUGUSTINE

Plotinus has had a profound influence on the theological traditions of the world religions, like Christianity and the Islam, whose scholars looked to ancient Greek philosophy for arguments to present their own religious views. The philosophy of Platonism suited the theological views of many of them best and Plotinus was one of the principal authors that made Platonism readily accessible, next to other Platonist philosophers who had influenced Christian thought (e.g. Origen).[227]

One of the better understood examples of direct influence of (neo-)Platonism on Christian thought is through the church-father Augustine of Hippo.[228] He was heavily influenced by neo-Platonic thinking, in particular through his own studies of Plotinus, before he converted himself to Christianity.[229] He was inspired by Plotinus and found his writings compelling. This is partly due to the fact that Plotinus, as has been noted before, had a different perspective on Platonism and philosophy than many of his predecessors. In fact, his and Augustine's perspective are remarkably alike, as they are both concerned with the return of the individual human to a higher and better place (the Intellect vis-à-vis the kingdom of Heaven), in order to save him from the bodily and sinful mortal life. This soteriological aspect naturally plays a dominant role in Christian theology and ethics, but the way in which Plotinus included such a perspective in his philosophy will have made his works all the more attractive to Christian authors and Augustine in particular. There is, however, a complete uncertainty about which *Enneads* that Augustine was aware of or even read himself. Scholars have tried to identity verbal parallels between his texts and those of Plotinus, but often to no avail. It is remarked that we should rather believe that Plotinus' philosophy is creatively reworked and integrated in the works of Augustine.[230]

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[227] Rist (1996: 386-387); Gerson (2014).

[228] As Rist (1996: 387, 409) rightly points out, there was no distinction between Platonism and neo-Platonism for Augustine (nor for Plotinus): Plotinus only offered the 'footsteps' through which he 'traced back' Platonism.

[229] Cf. Grandgeorge (1896), Rist (1996: 405), King (2005). That it is not always easy to see the neo-platonic contribution to Augustine's thought is, according to King (at 1-3), due to the fact that Augustine's publications are all after his *conversion*. See e.g. Augustine, *Confessiones* 7.9.13.

[230] Rist (1996: 405-406).

Just like the Platonists, Augustine explicitly deals with (or appears to deal with) the issue of Forms of individuals in particular, which apparently was a topic of discussion in the 'Milanese Neoplatonic environment of Augustine's youth'.[231] He did so in two texts in particular, which will be discussed in this chapter, to show that it is possible to find verbal links between one of these texts and treatise V.7. This indicates that Augustine was aware of Plotinus' works in more detail than is thought, while it at the same time demonstrates that a close-reading of Plotinus has (even) more to offer than a better understanding of Plotinus himself.[232]

The first passage comes out of *De diversis quaestionibus*, in a question devoted to the Forms:

> *Sunt namque ideae principales quaedam formae vel rationes rerum stabiles atque incommutabiles, quae ipsae formatae non sunt ac per hoc aeternae ac semper eodem modo sese habentes, quae divina intellegentia continentur.* (...) *...restat ut omnia ratione sint condita, nec eadem ratione homo qua equus; hoc enim absurdum est existimare. Singula igitur propriis sunt creata rationibus.*
>
> Because the Ideas are a sort of principal forms or stable and immutable principles, which are not formed themselves and therefore are eternal and eternally constituted in that way, that they are held together by the divine intelligence. (...) it remains that all things are created in rationally, not man by the same principle as a horse; because it would be absurd to think so. Accordingly, every individual thing is created by its own principles.
>
> (*De diversis quaestionibus* 46.2)

The definition that Augustine here gives of the Forms is very much like the definition we have encountered in Middle-Platonism (*eternal, principle*), except for absence of (Xenocratean) restrictions to those things created by nature.[233] The reference to a divine intelligence reminds us of

[231] Karfíková (2013: 480).

[232] This discussion – of course – hardly does justice to the question of the Platonic theory of Forms in the works of Augustine: cf. O'Daly (1987: 189-196) for a more comprehensive overview.

[233] Although, elsewhere, Augustine possibly echoes that definition: see *De vera religione* 113.

the perception of the Forms as the thoughts of God in Alcinous and others.[234] In fact, Augustine does not refer to any particular sort of sensible object and its relation with the (limits of the) intelligible realm. Some lines later, Augustine argues that everything is created in correspondence with its own principles (Forms). Although the wording of that sentence (with *singula* in first position) might suggest that Augustine here deals with individual (human) beings, it is much more likely that he is merely concerned with establishing the existence of different principles (Forms) for man and horse respectively (the use of *absurdum* reminds us of the ἄτοπον we encountered in Plato and Proclus, whereas horse is also found in a comparable passage in Alcinous, *Didaskalikon* 12.1). These lines can therefore not be taken to refer to a denial of the Forms of individual human beings, as it much rather presents a general overview of the Theory of Forms to the uninformed reader.[235]

In one of his *Epistulae*, however, Augustine clearly refers to Forms of individuals, when answering his friend Nebridius' question regarding these. The fact that Nebridius specifically asks about the Forms of individual human beings instead of Forms of individual things in general (which would include artefacts and/or animals) does not immediately suggest that Nebridius was (as well) aware of Plotinus' treatise, but he takes a specific interest in it.[236]

> *Item quaeris utrum summa illa veritas et summa sapientia* (…) *generaliter hominis, an etiam uniuscuiusque nostrum rationem contineat. Magno quaestio! Sed mihi videtur quod ad hominem faciendum attinet, hominis quidem tantum, non meam vel tuam ibi esse rationem, quod autem ad orbem temporis, varias hominum rationes in illa sinceritate vivere.*

[234] Likewise O'Daly (1987: 193). Cf. also n. 81.

[235] O'Daly's (1987: 197) more restrictive interpretation that Augustine here implies that only Forms of species exist, is not supported by the text.

[236] This is suggested by Karfíková (2013: 480). To determine that, we would need the question as it was phrased by Nebridius to see how he formulates the issue and whether we can identify (preferably verbal) links with Plotinus, but that letter has not come down to us.

> You have also asked me whether that highest truth and wisdom (...) contains the principle of man in general, or of each and everyone of us. Good question! I think that, with regard to the creation of man, only the principle of Man is there, not yours and mine, but that in the circle of time, the principles of the various men live in that purity.
>
> (*Epistulae* 14.4)

Augustine, in his reply to Nebridius' question, makes a distinction between the creation of men and the circle of time. On the former level, he clearly denies the existence of Forms of individuals and asserts that only the principle of Man as such is in the intelligible realm. On the second level, however, he mentions the existence of *varias hominum rationes*, which could easily be understood as a reference to the existence of 'Forms' of individuals. It is unclear which of these seemingly contradictory perspectives contains his definite answer. To complicate matters further, the positing of two viewpoints is followed by a geometric analogy: what every human being is to the entire population is identical to what an angle is to a square. Augustine seems to argue that the creation of an individual human is due to the Form of Man, whereas also the Form of People is necessary.

The term *ratio* in Augustine is surrounded with difficulties. He himself remarked in the beginning of *De diversis quaestionibus* 46.1 that it actually is the translation of the Greek λόγος, but afterwards he points out that he regards *ratio* and *Idea* as synonyms and to be used interchangeably.[237] Probably Augustine did so in the remainder of that text, as well as in his letters.[238]

If we accept that in Augustine's time the conceptual differences between a Form and a *logos* were less strict and that he indeed use the term *ratio* to refer to both, it becomes clear that in his fourteenth letter Augustine draws on Plotinus' line of thought and to *Ennead* V.7 in particular. Plotinus' distinction between Form of Man in general in the intelligible realm and the individual forming principles (λόγοι) in the soul, whose number is limited by the repetition of circles of time, is evoked by Augustine's reference to the principle of man in general in and the *rationes* of various men that are *ad orbem temporis*, 'in the circle of time'. In particular the inclusion of those words proves that Augustine was well aware of V.7 and used it as the basis for his answer to Nebridius' question, as Plotinus mentions the almost exact same sort of repetition (περιόδοις) to counter the

[237] Cf. Karfíková (2013: 480).

[238] His *De diversis quaestionibus* (396) is believed to be later than his fourteenth letter (387/388).

otherwise infinite number of principles At the same time, we should be aware that it requires us to read the word *ratio* in both sentences to have two different meanings, which are more clearly distinguished by Plotinus. When the passage in the *De diversis quaestionibus* is brought in the equation, however, such a reading is acceptable.

These two passages show that Augustine was perhaps better aware of the details of Plotinus' work than has been suggested before. Although we should indeed look most diligently for those instances in which Augustine reworked the neo-Platonic philosophy into his own terms without directly reusing many Plotinian formulations, an attempt to find verbal links is at times very fruitful and allows us to interpret Augustine's work more convincingly.

This interpretation does not yet include the subsequent analogy, which has been suggested to show Augustine's emphasis on the role of man as an historical and social human being.[239] The use of two 'plans' has also been taken, in a more likely interpretation, to resemble Augustine's distinction between the physical creation of each individual and the process by which every human becomes (or rather, is) known to God. To reach that omniscience, God would not need entirely individual Forms, but rather the people 'are present' in God as a multitude of individuals.[240] We can establish that the analogy does not appear to have a counterpart in the Plotinian treatises, but is characteristically Christian and is probably Augustine's own work.[241] The distinction that Plotinus draws between the Form of Man in general and the specific individual principles in the human soul, nonetheless, appears to have paved the way for such an addition.

[239] O'Daly (1987: 197-199).

[240] Karviková (2013: 480-485).

[241] Somewhat comparable is the equalization of the relation between the Intellect and the Forms with a genus and its species or (especially) a whole and its parts: V.9.6, 3-4 and 10-11.

6. EPILOGUE

Does Plotinus believe that every individual human being has its own Form in the intellectual world? That was the starting point for this commentary. In the scholarly literature of the past fifty years, the answer to that question has been varied, although in recent years a tendency can be discerned to answer the question negatively. This thesis has presented a structuralistic and detailed commentary on the part of the treatise most directly devoted to this question. It has been shown that Plotinus in V.7.1 does not accept Forms of individuals and that any such interpretation of the text is based upon a wrong understanding of the very first lines of the tractate, in which the possibility that such Forms exist is raised but is also rejected in favour of an original and novel alternative. Plotinus was indeed concerned with individuality and whence the differences between individual vivid beings, be it humans or animals, come from. His interest in individuality however goes beyond the mere metaphysical: he is concerned with the ascent of the individual, which is his 'salvation' from his mortal life. That perspective on the individual distinguishes him from his predecessors in almost all aspects.

Instead of positing a Form of every individual being in the intelligible realm, he suggests that such individuality should much rather be sought at the level of the soul. Just as the World Soul contains the forming principles of all things that are present in the sensible world, the individual soul possesses those of every individual being that it consecutively instantiations, explicitly including both humans and other living beings. Those forming principles, or λόγοι in Plotinian metaphysical terminology, function as the means by which the Forms are activated, transmitted and present in the material world that surrounds us. They bring the contents of the intelligible world, only accessible through contemplation, to our visible and tangible environment. To understand what such a forming principle exactly is, it has been necessary to look to other treatises, which are more readily involved with the creation of that sensible world. The individual being is thus not modelled to a individual Form in the intelligible realm, but to an individual (forming) principle inside the eternal soul, which for the time being has become his or her own. This interpretation of Plotinus has also brought to light the originality of his thought, in contrast with the more scholastic nature of the works of his predecessors, like Xenocrates and the Middle-Platonists. Plotinus presents his own philosophy and does not content himself with a systematic overview of the philosophy of

his predecessors: instead he places the question in the context of his own philosophy and reworks it to give it meaning and value in that environment.

In the second and third part of the treatise, Plotinus elaborately shows his care and interest in the determination of individuality and the metaphysical principles that cause it. The main part of the argument in contained in the first section, but these other segments, although largely more explanatory, strongly deal with how the process of creating individuality specifically takes place. In the second section, Plotinus is concerned with how the forming principle comes to a newly born individual and the role of parents in that process. And what role does the place of birth play in determining individuality?[242] The third section deals with another thorny issue: do twins have two different forming principles, although they are completely identical? And taking this line of enquiry even further, are different forming principles necessary for those animals that bear litters? Plotinus diligently answers all these questions (or implicit objections), while not straying from the general theory that he has developed in the first section.

This commentary has been composed on the basis of a forceful believe in a structuralistic approach to ancient philosophy. As has been observed in modern literature on the position of ancient philosophy in modern times, it is not enough (and perhaps undesirable) to practice ancient philosophy through a modern viewing-glass and by ways of detailed articles on isolated passages in specific ancient works. Much rather, I believe that an holistic analysis of a coherent treatise or piece of text has more to offer and this commentary has attempted to demonstrate that. In particular, the tendency to put that magnifying glass to work on those passages that resonate more easily with issues that have taken centre stage in modern philosophical, as well as societal, issues (like what constitutes 'individuality') carries the risk that the contemporary context of ancient texts and the inherent structure of such a text, both internally and externally in the context of the authors other work, are neglected. To an even larger extent this is true of those publications that base themselves on translations of the original text, which, useful they may be for a quick and general understanding of a treatise, can never function as the fundament of scientific research (see commentary on lines 2-6). These considerations argue for a discussion of an ancient text on the merits of its own worth and interest, with texts in the original language as the only valid source and while taking note of the

[242] Cf. the reference in Proclus to the place and time of birth (see par. 3.3).

contemporary and historical context of the philosophical argument. This thesis has taken these considerations as its basic requirements.

The value of such an approach has become even more visible when trying to establish the influence this particular Plotinian treatise has on later authors. The influence of Plotinus on Christian authors, like Augustine, has been known for a long time, but it has proven to be difficult to find direct verbal links between both authors, as Augustine creatively and originally reworked his source (just like Plotinus did). However, a close reading of both Plotinus and the relevant texts in Augustine has shown that direct verbal links can be found, which gives credibility to the idea that he might have read and known more (details) of the *Enneads* than is currently presumed. Although his articulation of this solution is at first sight unclear, Augustine also differed between the Form of Man in general and the individual principle, which explains his individuality in the passing of time. Such an understanding of the text is only possible on the basis of its Plotinian counterpart.

Although a completely and unified discussion of V.7.1 is presented here, the remaining two sections are as much worth our attention, in particular because a structuralistic approach to the chapters has much to offer (as it has of the other Plotinian treatises). It will be left for a later occasion and – preferably – another context than that of a thesis to present the results of such an analysis. For now, it is the hope and intent of this commentary to definitely close the book on the search for Forms of individuals in Plotinus.

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