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This article was originally published in

Platonism and its Legacy

*Selected Papers from the Fifteenth Annual Conference
of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies*

Edited John F. Finamore and Tomáš Nejeschleba

ISBN 978 1 898910 886

Published in 2019 by

The Prometheus Trust, Lydney.

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Lenka Karfíková

Porphyry's *Sentences*, also known by its manuscript title as "Starting-points leading to the intelligibles" (Ἀφορμαὶ πρὸς τὰ νοητά),¹ are considered a succinct, systematic summary of Plotinus' thoughts which Porphyry had the opportunity to imbibe during his six-year-long studies at Plotinus' school in Rome (from the year 263 to 268).² According to Porphyry himself, he really endeavoured to clarify Plotinus' philosophy³ through the posing of questions and he actually contributed to its systematisation by editing Plotinus' works in the six "Enneads".⁴

Nevertheless, Porphyry's *Sentences* are by no means a systematic work, either in terms of arrangement or balance of topics.⁵ It is rather a collection of passages of text of varying length (from two to one hundred and forty lines) whose arrangement does not exhibit any particular logic. As regards the content, the question discussed most widely here is that of the relationship between the corporeal and the incorporeal, or more precisely the conjunction of the individual soul and body, i.e. a subject of an alleged three-day-long discussion between Plotinus and Porphyry.⁶ Only a few passages in his collection deal with other levels of the Neoplatonist universe, i.e. the One and Intellect, relations between them, and of the soul to them. The topic of the cosmos as a whole and associated Neoplatonist questions are rather left aside. Instead, Porphyry's interest is aroused by ethical problems

¹ Cf. Goulet (in: Brisson 2005) 11-16.

² For Porphyry's stay by Plotinus, cf. Porphyry, *Vita Plotini*, 4-5. For Porphyry's chronological dates, cf. Goulet (1982) 187-227 (esp. diagram, 213).

³ Cf. Porphyry, *Vita Plotini*, 13.

⁴ For this edition, cf. Porphyry, *Vita Plotini*, 7; 24-26.

⁵ H. Dörrie finds the systematic principal of "going out and return" or "unification and division" in the *Sentences*, to explain that Porphyry's soul is itself divided in this double motion, cf. Dörrie (1976) 444-445. However, the structure of the *Sentences* does not seem to follow this pattern. According to M.-O. Goulet-Cazé, *Sentences* were rather a help for meditation or spiritual exercises, cf. Goulet-Cazé (in: Brisson 2005) 27.

⁶ Porphyry, *Vita Plotini*, 13.

which closely relate to the conjunction of the soul and the body. The longest of his Sentences (32) investigates the classification of the virtues.⁷

Thus, Sentence 44 with its focus on eternity and time is rather atypical. It is the last entry in Porphyry's collection and is considered unfinished. Its arrangement corresponds precisely to Plotinus' examination of the same topic as presented in *Ennead* III,7 (45), i.e. it first explores eternity in its relation to Intellect and subsequently time in its relation to soul. The thought background of Plotinus' and Porphyry's interpretations is found in the treatise on time as a moving image of eternity, presented in Plato's *Timaeus* (37c6-39e2), which Porphyry approaches towards the end of his account even more explicitly than Plotinus.

In this article, I would like to point particularly to the most important characteristic features of Porphyry's account of eternity and time, which can certainly be done only with regard to Plotinus' conception.⁸

Both the interpretations differ considerably in their length. In recent editions, Porphyry's Sentence 44 has 68 lines, whereas Plotinus' treatise is presented in thirteen chapters. Plotinus in his account, quite atypically, gives extensive content over to his predecessors' (both real and fictional) thoughts on time as well as on eternity.⁹ This doxographic work is completely neglected by Porphyry, as he just briefly defines his positions against others, what he believes to be fallacies where he finds it useful for the aim of his own exposition.¹⁰

⁷ For a systematization of *Sentences*, as to metaphysics, physics and ethics, cf. Goulet-Cazé – Brisson (in: Brisson 2005).

⁸ For Plotinus' concept of time and eternity, cf. Beierwaltes (1981³); Smith (1996); Strange (1994); Karfíková (2011); Karfíková (2016).

⁹ Plotinus, *Enn.* III,7(45),2 and 7-10.

¹⁰ The passage *Sent.* 44,48-59 (Brisson) is sometimes understood as "two false hypotheses on eternity and time", cf. Baltes (1998) 297 and 302; Pépin (in: Brisson 2005) 768-769: The first one explains eternity as a uniform motion or rest (cf. Proclus, *In Tim.* III, 24,32 – 25,2 Diehl, on Porphyry's pupil Theodor of Asine, who considered eternity as the circle of the same); the second one holds eternity for an unlimited time (cf. Aristotle, *De coelo* I,9, 279a26-27: τὸ τὸν πάντα χρόνον καὶ τὴν ἀπειρίαν περιέχον τέλος αἰῶν ἐστίν). In *Sent.* 44,55-59, Porphyry also explains the source of these mistakes: Time presents eternity as an everlasting motion, eternity presents time as an identical activity, both giving to the other their own features, cf. also Sodano (1979) 66, n. 7. The similarity between time and eternity consists in everlastingness (τὸ ἀεὶ) and activity (ἐνέργεια), even if both are different in case of time and eternity.

Plotinus probably deemed it necessary to differentiate his conception of time from the opinions of other thinkers, i.e. to demonstrate the dependence of time on eternity as its model (as presumed by Plato too) as well as its connection with the soul (which is actually not emphasised by Plato). Porphyry, on the contrary, takes this scheme for granted without providing any special justification.

Although Plotinus was a teacher and intellectual predecessor of Porphyry, Sentence 44 quite probably reflects the same, if not earlier stage of Plotinus' thinking as Ennead III,7. Plotinus' treatise belongs to his later works (opus 45 out of a total of 54). Porphyry describes it as the last of those written by Plotinus during Porphyry's six-year-long stay in Rome.¹¹ Thus, the chronological order of these two conceptions is not very clear. Apart from Porphyry's specific emphases, one should also take into account the potential development of Plotinus' thought. Admittedly it was not that radical, but certain shifts in emphasis concerning the aforementioned topic can still be traced.¹²

Another question arises as to when Porphyry compiled his Sentences. It is widely accepted to have been completed after Plotinus' death but before the edition of Enneads, i.e. circa 270-301, not earlier than 268.¹³ It therefore seems probable that at the time of writing Sentences, Porphyry already had Plotinus' treatise at his disposal.¹⁴

1. *Intellect and Eternity*

Porphyry opens his interpretation of eternity with a consideration of Intellect, as in his eyes, eternity belongs to the Intellect in its mode of knowledge. This aspect is obviously different from Plotinus' treatise where Intellect is surprisingly omitted being subsumed by "(intelligible) being" ([νοητῆ] οὐσία), "intelligible nature" (νοητῆ φύσις), or "intelligible world" (κόσμος νοητός).¹⁵ Intellect and being in the Neoplatonist universe are of course identical, yet the emphasis is still different. From the beginning, Porphyry states that eternity (and eventually time as well) derives from the mode of *cognition*, not of being. Thus, he characterises Intellect as perfect and complete self-cognition, which is not cognition of one part by another.

¹¹ Porphyry, *Vita Plotini*, 5.

¹² Cf. Karfik (2012).

¹³ Cf. Schwyzer (1974) 221-222 with n. 2.

¹⁴ So Schwyzer (1974) 239-240. See also Henry (1938) 41.

¹⁵ Cf. Plotinus, *Enn.* III,7(45),2,2.6.9.

As an example of an activity which is performed by one part of the same organism on another part Porphyry takes the verb τρίβω (“to rub”, “to scrub”, “to massage”).¹⁶ As demonstrated by a single article used for both the participles (ὁ τρίβων καὶ τριβόμενος), these are not two different subjects but only two different parts of the same subject. This example was already mentioned by Alexander of Aphrodisias and similarly by Plotinus.¹⁷

Also the conception of Intellect, as presented by Porphyry in his Sentence 44, i.e. as simultaneously contemplating and contemplated, not as two parts, one of which would contemplate the other, is completely identical with that of Plotinus¹⁸ even if it is not mentioned in his treatise on eternity.

Plotinus himself begins his reflections on eternity with an explanation of the intelligible being as a unity of five supreme genera as analysed in Plato’s *Sophist*.¹⁹ He presents eternity as “life” being “immutably itself”, “always all”, not existing now in one mode and now in another, but as a consummation without any part or interval; it is like a point not yet developed in lines. Therefore, this life does not change at all but is always in the present (ἐν τῷ παρόντι ἀεί), because nothing of it has passed away nor again is there anything to come into being, but that which it is, it always is.²⁰

It follows that eternity is not identical with the intelligible being nor an accidental feature from outside, but rather its “state” and “nature” (ἡ διάθεσις αὐτοῦ καὶ φύσις),²¹ “inherent to it and derived from it”,²² i.e. its inner structure or life. According to Plotinus’ definition, it is “the life which belongs to that which exists in its being, all together and full, completely without extension”.²³

¹⁶ *Sent.* 44,8-12: εἰ μὲν οὖν νοητὸς ὁ νοῦς καὶ οὐκ αἰσθητός, νοητὸν ἂν εἴη· εἰ δὲ νοητὸς νῶ καὶ οὐκ αἰσθήσει, νοῦν ἂν εἴη. ὁ αὐτὸς ἄρα νοῦν καὶ νοούμενον ὅλον ὄλω, καὶ οὐχ ὡς ὁ τρίβων καὶ τριβόμενος. οὐκ ἄλλω οὖν μέρει νοεῖται καὶ ἄλλω νοεῖ.

¹⁷ Cf. Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De an. mant.* (CAG Suppl. 2/1, 114,32-33); Plotinus, *Enn.* VI,1(42),20,9.

¹⁸ Cf. e.g. Plotinus, *Enn.* V,3(49),1; V,3(49),5; V,3(49),6,1-8.

¹⁹ Plotinus, *Enn.* III,7(45),3,8-11; cf. Plato, *Sph.* 254d ff.

²⁰ *Enn.* III,7(45),3,16-23.

²¹ *Enn.* III,7(45),4,42.

²² *Enn.* III,7(45),4,3: Ἐνορᾶται γὰρ ἐνὼν παρ’ αὐτῆς... (my translation).

²³ *Enn.* III,7(45),3,36-38: ἡ περὶ τὸ ὄν ἐν τῷ εἶναι ζωῇ ὁμοῦ πᾶσα καὶ πλήρης ἀδιάστατος πανταχῆ (translation Armstrong, who interprets ἀδιάστατος by “without extension or interval”).

Porphyry, on the other hand, does not open his considerations with “the intelligible being” to reach eternity as its life accomplished at once, without any succession; he rather starts from Intellect in its perfect self-knowledge, to acquire a ground for explaining that Intellect embraces itself at once through a single view and with no sequence.²⁴

Porphyry's interpretation is full of Plotinian borrowings and allusions²⁵ and – as with Plotinus – eternity is here “established” through the activity of intelligible being, i.e. Intellect (although Plotinus in this context does not use the verb *παρυσσιτῆναι*, unlike Porphyry).²⁶ Yet, this activity is not presented by Porphyry as life on the first place, but instead as contemplation. To sharpen this difference in focus between both authors, we can say that Plotinus presents

²⁴ *Sent.* 44,17-31: Οὐδὲ ἀφιστάμενος οὖν τοῦδε ἐπὶ τὸδε μεταβαίνει· ἀφ' οὗ γὰρ ἀφίσταται μὴ νοῶν ἐκεῖνο, ἀνόητος κατ' ἐκεῖνο γίνεται. εἰ δὲ μὴ τὸδε μετὰ τὸδε ἐπ' αὐτοῦ γίνεται, ἅμα πάντα νοεῖ· ἐπεὶ οὖν πάντα ἅμα καὶ οὐ τὸ μὲν νῦν, τὸ δὲ αὐθις, πάντα ἅμα νῦν καὶ αἰεὶ. εἰ οὖν ἐπ' αὐτοῦ τὸ νῦν, ἀνήρηται δὲ ἐπ' αὐτοῦ τὸ παρεληλυθὸς καὶ τὸ μέλλον, ἐν ἀδιαστάτῳ τῷ νῦν ἀχρόνῳ παραστήματι, ὥστε τὸ ὁμοῦ κατὰ τε τὸ πλῆθος κατὰ τε τὸ χρονικὸν διάστημα ἐπ' αὐτοῦ· διὸ καθ' ἑν πάντα ἐν ἐνὶ καὶ ἀδιαστάτῳ καὶ ἀχρόνῳ. εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, οὐδὲ τὸ ποθέν ποι ἐν τῷ νῶ οὐδὲ κίνησις ἄρα, ἀλλὰ ἐνέργεια καθ' ἑν ἐν ἐνὶ αὐξῆς τε ἀφηρημένη καὶ μεταβολῆς καὶ διεξόδου πάσης. εἰ δὲ τὸ πλῆθος καθ' ἑν καὶ ἅμα ἢ ἐνέργεια καὶ ἄχρονος, ἀνάγκη παρυσσιτῆναι τῇ τοιαύτῃ οὐσίᾳ τὸ αἰεὶ ἐν ἐνὶ ὄν· τοῦτο δὲ ἐστὶν αἰών· παρυσσιτῆ ἄρα νῶ ὁ αἰών.

²⁵ Cf. Plotinus, *Enn.* V,3(49),6,30-34: ... καὶ ὅτι μὴ οἷόν τε τοῦτον τὸν τοιοῦτον ἐκτὸς ἑαυτοῦ εἶναι—ὥστε εἴπερ ἐν ἑαυτῷ ἐστὶ καὶ σὺν ἑαυτῷ καὶ τοῦτο, ὅπερ ἐστὶ, νοῦς ἐστὶν (ἀνόητος δὲ νοῦς οὐκ ἄν ποτε εἶη) ἀνάγκη συνεῖναι αὐτῷ τὴν γνῶσιν ἑαυτοῦ. Cf. *Enn.* VI,7(38),1,54-57. On the simultaneity of all things in Intellect, see, e.g. *Enn.* V,9(5),6,3 (πάντα δὲ ὁμοῦ); 7,11 (ὁμοῦ πάντα); 10,10-11. (ὁμοῦ πάντων ὄντων); II,4(12),3,13 (ἅμα πάντα); VI,7(38),1,57 (ὁμοῦ ... πᾶν); III,7(45),2,18 (ὁμοῦ τὸ ὅλον); 3,18 (ἅμα τὰ πάντα); V,3(49),15,21 (ὁμοῦ πάντα), cf. Parmenides (DK 28 B 8,5: ὁμοῦ πᾶν) and Anaxagoras (DK 59 B 1,5-7: ὁμοῦ πάντα). On the absence of past and future in eternity, cf. Plato, *Ti.* 37e5-38a2; Plotinus, *Enn.* V,1(10),4,22-24; III,7(45),3,22-23. *Enn.* V,1(10),4,13 (οὐδὲ αὐξῆσιν ζητεῖ); IV,4(28),1,15-16 (οὐδὲ διεξόδος οὐδὲ μετάβασις ἀφ' ἐτέρου ἐπ' ἄλλο). See also D'Ancona (in: Brisson 2005) 248-250.

²⁶ The verb *παρυσσιτῆναι* is used only once by Plotinus for two parallel causes, cf. *Enn.* II,9(33),14,33 (see Sleeman – Pollet, 1980, 816), but very often by Porphyry, cf. *Sent.* 19,9; 42,14; 43,23; 44,31.34-35.45. This term means consequence or parallelity, see Pépin (in: Brisson 2005) 777-782. The translators of the *Sentences* understand it as the dependence of eternity on the Intellect, so Brisson (2005) 375; Dillon (in: Brisson 2005) 834; or as the parallelity of both, so Baltes (1998) 51,21-22, 299; Larrain (1987) 104.

eternity as the way of *life* of the intelligible being, whereas Porphyry introduces it as the way of *knowledge* of the Intellect.

2. Time of Soul

In same vain, still focusing on being and life, Plotinus derives time from the fact that things which have come to be, and which time applies to, *are not* everything simultaneously, but they are continually acquiring being, they are what they became (ἄτε ἐπικτωμένοις ἀεί).²⁷ Thus, they hasten to what is going to be, which they adhere to hoping to fill their incomplete being.²⁸

In distinguishing time from eternity Plotinus let time metaphorically speak of its own genesis,²⁹ which is also a genesis of ourselves, as far as we are temporal beings.³⁰ He derives time from “an unquiet power” of “a restless nature”³¹ included in the soul which is not content with its resting in being but rather wants to control itself, to belong to itself, and choose to seek for more than its present state. In this way, Plotinus says, it has set itself in motion as “we” started to move always on “to the next and the after”, and to “what is not the same, but something else and else again”, one thing after another, thereby constructing time.³² Soul thus “temporalized itself” (ἐαυτὴν ἐχρόνωσεν)³³ and time can be described as “the life of soul in a movement of passage from one way of life to another”.³⁴ Yet, the soul according to Plotinus in a strict sense is not subject to time or at least is not entirely subject to it³⁵ and “we” are not properly speaking temporal beings or not temporal beings only.³⁶ The dynamic concept of “self” and that of the soul

²⁷ *Enn.* III,7(45),4,19-20.

²⁸ *Enn.* III,7(45),4,24-28.

²⁹ *Enn.* III,7(45),11,10-11.

³⁰ *Enn.* III,7(45),11,1.18-20.

³¹ *Enn.* III,7(45),11,15.21.

³² *Enn.* III,7(45),11,15-20 (translation Armstrong, modified).

³³ *Enn.* III,7(45),11,30.

³⁴ *Enn.* III,7(45),11,44: ... ψυχῆς ἐν κινήσει μεταβατικῇ ἐξ ἄλλου εἰς ἄλλον βίον ζωὴν (translation Armstrong).

³⁵ Cf. *Enn.* IV,4(28),15,16-18: ἐπεὶ οὐδ’ αἱ ψυχαὶ ἐν χρόνῳ, ἀλλὰ τὰ πάθη αὐτῶν ἅπτα ἐστὶ καὶ τὰ ποιήματα. Ἄιδιοι γὰρ αἱ ψυχαί, καὶ ὁ χρόνος ὕστερος.

³⁶ Plotinus’ question of “who we actually are” (τίνες δὲ ἡμεῖς;) does not find any easy response, see *Enn.* VI,4(22),14,16-26; IV,4(28),18,10–15; V,3(49),3,35f.; I,1(53),7,14–17. Besides our true self in the Intellect, we are also many other things (πολλὰ γὰρ ἡμεῖς), I,1(53),9,7.

include rather a whole scale of degrees.³⁷ Also in his treatise “On eternity in time” Plotinus primarily concentrates on the question of how soul can have a share in time while still being in eternity.³⁸

Porphyry completely refrains from this introspection of time and its mythic metaphoric as he concentrates on the difference in the mode of cognition rather than in the mode of being. Although there are all intelligible contents present in soul, they are not available simultaneously as in Intellect. They emerge from certain latency into actuality to return into latency again. Through this motion of soul's attention (not through the incompleteness of its being which hastens to what is going to be), time comes into being according to Porphyry.³⁹ His description of the correlation between time and soul comes very close to Plotinus,⁴⁰ with the exception of one important circumstance. Soul, according to Porphyry, does not construct time through its focusing on what is going to be or through its desire for one thing after another, but rather through various attention it directs to itself.⁴¹

Time is therefore established by the attention of soul which never grasps everything at the same time, yet which – in a certain sense – has everything at once. Intelligible objects, which are latently known to soul (otherwise, it could not recognise them at all), must be brought to actualisation by a “self-motion of the soul arising from itself and directed towards itself” (παρ’ αὐτῆς καὶ αὐτόθεν εἰς ἑαυτὴν κινουμένης),⁴² i.e. by a certain kind of recovery of the soul's

³⁷ Cf. Trouillard (1955) 26f.; Himmerich (1959) 92-100; Blumenthal (1971) 109-111; Remes (2000) 239-246; Ham (2000) 116-118.

³⁸ *Enn.* III,7(45),7,1-7. Cf. Baltes (1998) 300; Karfik (2012).

³⁹ *Sent.* 44,32-36: Τῷ δὲ μὴ καθ’ ἐν ἐν ἐνὶ νοῦντι, ἀλλὰ μεταβατικῶς καὶ ἐν κινήσει καὶ ἐν τῷ τὸ μὲν καταλείπειν, τὸ δὲ ἐπιλαμβάνειν καὶ μερίζειν καὶ διεξοδεύειν παρυπέστη χρόνος· τῆ γὰρ τοιαύτη κινήσει παρυφίσταται τὸ μέλλειν καὶ παρεληλυθέναι.

⁴⁰ *Sent.* 44,45-47: Τῆ μὲν οὖν ταύτης κινήσει παρυφίσταται χρόνος, τῆ δὲ τοῦ νοῦ μονῆ τῆ ἐν ἑαυτῷ ὁ αἰὼν, οὐ διηρημένος ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ ὡσπερ <οὐδ’> ὁ χρόνος ἐκ ψυχῆς. Cf. *Enn.* IV,4(28),15,2-4: εἰ γὰρ αἰὼν μὲν περὶ νοῦν, χρόνος δὲ περὶ ψυχῆν—ἔχειν γὰρ φαμεν τῆ ὑποστάσει τὸν χρόνον περὶ τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἐνέργειαν καὶ ἐξ ἐκείνης. See also *Enn.* V,1(10),4,17-25; III,7(45),11 and 13.

⁴¹ *Sent.* 44,36-42: ψυχὴ δὲ μεταβαίνει ἀπ’ ἄλλου εἰς ἄλλο ἐπαμείβουσα τὰ νοήματα, οὐκ ἐξισταμένων τῶν προτέρων οὐδέ ποθεν ἄλλοθεν ἐπεισιόντων τῶν δευτέρων, ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν ὡσπερ παρελήλυθε καίπερ μένοντα ἐν αὐτῇ, τὰ δ’ ὡσπερ ἀλλαχόθεν ἔπεισι, ἀφίκετο δ’ οὐκ ἀλλαχόθεν, ἀλλὰ παρ’ αὐτῆς καὶ αὐτόθεν εἰς ἑαυτὴν κινουμένης καὶ τὸ ὄμμα φερούσης εἰς ἃ ἔχει κατὰ μέρος.

⁴² *Sent.* 44,40-41 (my translation).

possession which can only be done by a recollection of the very soul, through its own motion (be it with a help from the outside). To illustrate this anamnetic motion, Porphyry uses a remarkable metaphor of “a spring which never flows outwards but which causes its contents to well up and circulate within itself”, a prototype image of which cannot be found in Plotinus.⁴³

According to this metaphor, various intelligible contents successively emerge and disappear like water circulating in a fountain (in “a circulation device”, *Umwälzanlage*, as Matthias Baltes puts it).⁴⁴ Porphyry borrowed the words for this description from a Hesiod’s verse speaking of “the everflowing spring which pours down”, which is often quoted in Porphyry’s works.⁴⁵

3. Time of Stars

According to Plotinus, the universe, as a whole, “hastens towards what is going to be” and “draws being to itself in doing one thing after another”. The universe, too, “has an aspiration to reach being” (ἐφέσει τινὶ οὐσίας) which is for it always something to become, and therefore the universe circles around (as suggested by Plato).⁴⁶ This circular motion of the universe is substantiated by its incomplete being that hopes to complete itself in the future.

Although Porphyry does not speak of the time of the universe, he still makes a distinction between the time of soul and the time of aesthetic things. He does not suggest a uniform time for all these things, but rather a specific time for each individual object, or at least the time proper to the sun, another to the moon, another to Venus and yet

⁴³ *Sent.* 44,42-44: πηγῆ γὰρ ἔοικεν οὐκ ἀπορρῦτω, ἀλλὰ κύκλω εἰς ἑαυτὴν ἀναβλοζούσῃ ἧ ἔχει (translation Dillon). See Henry (1938) 373. Cf. perhaps Plotinus, *Enn.* VI,7(38),41,22-25; for the One as a source, cf. *Enn.* III,8(30),10,5-10; for the circular movement of soul, cf. *Enn.* IV,4(28),16,20-25.

⁴⁴ Baltes (1998) 300.

⁴⁵ Hesiod, *Opera et dies*, 595: κρήνης ... ἀπορρῦτου (translation Evelyn-White). Literally and mentioning Hesiod’s name also Porphyry, *Abst.* IV,20,33-34.

⁴⁶ *Enn.* III,7(45),4,28-33: Καὶ τῷ παντὶ δεῖ, εἰς ὅπερ οὕτως ἔσται. Διὸ καὶ σπεύδει πρὸς τὸ μέλλον εἶναι καὶ στήναι οὐ θέλει ἔλκων τὸ εἶναι αὐτῷ ἐν τῷ τι ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο ποιεῖν καὶ κινεῖσθαι κύκλω ἐφέσει τινὶ οὐσίας (translation Armstrong, modified). On the circular motion of the universe and its cause, cf. Plotinus, *Enn.* II,2(14); Plato, *Ti.* 38a7-8.

another proper to other stars.⁴⁷ The same stars are also mentioned by Plato as the generators and obvious measures of time.⁴⁸ Plato also states that the “wanderings” of these planets which constitute time are different.⁴⁹ Yet, different times for individual stars are quite a contentious concept (unlike different years) and Plotinus explicitly refutes such a conception. According to Plotinus, there are not different “times”, but the individual stars just indicate and measure time.⁵⁰ Porphyry refers to this type of time as “divided” (ὁ διηρημένος χρόνος) probably as an allusion to Plotinus’ (imaginary) “division” of the time the stars need for their journeys (ὁ τε χρόνος ... εἰ καὶ διηρεῖτο).⁵¹

In an analogy to Plato, Porphyry also presupposes a “complete year”⁵² which he does not refer to as “complete” literally but describes it as the year that comprises all the years of stars and “finds its consummation in the motion of the soul” or “is derived from the motion of the soul” (κεφαλαιούμενος εἰς τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς κίνησιν).⁵³ This hard-to-translate expression is an allusion to *Timaeus* 39d5-6 which reads that individual circuits “come to a head” (σχηῖ κεφαλὴν) when all the planets return simultaneously to their original starting points. Plato’s cosmic time is – as an image of eternity – actually “entire” when it emulates eternity which “abides in unity” with a

⁴⁷ *Sent.* 44,60-68: Λοιπὸν δὲ ἐν τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς ὁ διηρημένος χρόνος ἄλλος ἄλλου, οἷον ἄλλος ἡλίου, ἄλλος σελήνης, ἄλλος ἑωσφόρου, καὶ ἐφ’ ἐκάστου ἄλλος. διὸ καὶ ἄλλου ἐνιαυτὸς ἄλλος· καὶ ὁ τούτους περιέχων ἐνιαυτὸς κεφαλαιούμενος εἰς τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς κίνησιν· ἥς κατὰ μίμησιν κινουμένων τούτων, ἀλλοίας δὲ τῆς ἐκείνης κινήσεως οὔσης καὶ ἀλλοίας τῆς τούτων, ἀλλοῖος καὶ ὁ χρόνος ἐκείνης τοῦ τούτων. διαστηματικὸς μὲν οὗτος καὶ ταῖς κατὰ τόπον κινήσει καὶ μεταβάσει **

⁴⁸ *Ti.* 38d.

⁴⁹ *Ti.* 39c-d.

⁵⁰ Plotinus, *Enn.* III,7(45),12,25-28: Εἰ δὲ τις λέγοι χρόνους λέγεσθαι αὐτῶ καὶ τὰς τῶν ἄστρον φοράς, ἀναμνησθήτω, ὅτι ταῦτά φησι γεγενῆσθαι πρὸς δήλωσιν καὶ διορισμὸν χρόνου καὶ τὸ ἴνα ἧ μέτρον ἐναργές. Cf. Baltes (1998) 304.

⁵¹ Plotinus, *Enn.* IV,4(28),8,38-41.

⁵² Plato calls this year “perfect” (τέλειος ἐνιαυτός, *Ti.* 39d), Aristotle „great“ (*magnus*, or *maximus annus*, see *Protrept.*, frag. 19 [Ross] from Censorinus = frag. 25 [Rose]). Cf. Baltes (1998) 295 and 497.

⁵³ *Sent.* 44,63f.: “finds its consummation in the motion of the soul” (Dillon 835) or “is derived from the motion of the soul” (Baltes 55,65f., Brisson 377, Sodano 66).

complete circle of all its parts.⁵⁴ If Porphyry presumes that the complete cosmic year “finds its consummation in the motion of the soul” in the same way as the individual circuits in *Timaeus* “come to a head” when all the heavenly bodies return simultaneously to their original starting points, then the motion of the soul, as interpreted by Porphyry, would be a sum or a result of individual astral motions. This is however quite far from Porphyry’s previous reflections on the time of soul as well as from his comment that individual motions of stars are an imitation of the motion of the soul even if they differ from it. It seems more likely that Porphyry’s all-comprising year is “derived” from the motion of the soul (this interpretation is also acceptable based on the expression κεφαλαιούμενος εἰς τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς κίνησιν). Porphyry apparently wishes to express that cosmic motions have their basis in the motion of the soul, and finally in the successive nature of its cognition.

This last motif surely falls in with Plotinus’ conception which suggests that the motion of heaven imitates the motion of soul (καθ’ ἣν καὶ αὕτη ὑφέστηκε κατὰ μίμησιν).⁵⁵ According to Plotinus’ formulation, the world “moves in soul – there is no other place of it than soul” – thus, “it moves also in the time of soul”.⁵⁶ It has no time of its own, yet it has its own movement.⁵⁷ In addition, Plotinus (elsewhere) presumes that no memory of places or times is implied in the movement of stars, not even a successive reasoning (λογισμός),⁵⁸ i.e., he probably does not presuppose for stars a movement corresponding to successive cognition, where the actuality unfolds out of latency. Porphyry, on the other hand, sees the movement of stars as a certain visible demonstration of this successivity, to which the corporality of stars adds an extension in place. Thus, the time of stars is different from that of the soul for Porphyry.

It is conspicuous how Porphyry does not mention extension when speaking of the soul. As we have seen, he explains its movement as “self-motion arising from itself and directed towards itself”, instead, i.e. as a transition from latency to actuality, apparently without any

⁵⁴ Cf. *Ti.* 37d5-7; 39d7-e2.

⁵⁵ Cf. Plotinus, *Enn.* III,7(45),13,36-37. The circular movement of heaven also imitates the Intellect, see *Enn.* II,2(14),1,1.

⁵⁶ Cf. Plotinus, *Enn.* III,7(45),11,33-35.

⁵⁷ Plotinus, *Enn.* III,7(45),13,52-65.

⁵⁸ Plotinus, *Enn.* IV,4(28),8,38-41.

extension. It is only the time of stars which Porphyry calls “extended” (διαστηματικός); for Porphyry the terms διάστημα and διάστασις (and their derivations) primarily maintain their original local meaning⁵⁹ (soul is not localised; that is to say, it is everywhere to an equal extent).⁶⁰ Time was referred to as an “extension (διάστημα) of movement” by the Stoics⁶¹ who – however – understood it as a corporal extension in place, which induced criticism by Plotinus.⁶² Plotinus himself sees time involved in “the spreading out (διάστασις) of life”,⁶³ which belongs to soul, the soul itself remains (at least in its root) “spreading out (i. e. interval) without interval” (διάστημα ἀδιάστατον).⁶⁴ Porphyry mentions “temporal extension” only once and this is done not to assign it to soul but to exclude it from the Intellect.⁶⁵

Nowadays, it is impossible to guess how Porphyry's account on the time of aisthetic things (would) have continued, because the only preserved manuscript of Sentences closes with the above quoted comment on the diastematic nature of the time of stars. Porphyry (would) have probably added a comment on the continuous nature of the time of soul, in contrast with the “divided” time of stars.⁶⁶ Or would (did?) he continue with a reflection on the time of aisthetic things, other than the stars?⁶⁷ Be it this way or the other, Porphyry quite obviously demonstrated his opinion that time is of a different characteristic as the time of soul and as the time of aisthetic things. What we miss here is primarily the answer to the question that apparently was the most burning in Porphyry's thoughts, i.e. how to imagine the connection of both these times.

⁵⁹ Cf. *Sent.* 2,2; 33,5-6.8.11.18-19.54; 43,18. Plotinus knows both the local and temporal meaning of this term, see Sleeman – Pollet (1980) 246-247.

⁶⁰ *Sent.* 2: πανταχῆ ἐστίν, οὐ διαστατῶς, ἀλλ' ἀμερῶς. See also *Sent.* 31,6-7.18. Similarly Plotinus, e.g. *Enn.* V,2(11),2,20-21; V,5(32),9,26-35.

⁶¹ Cf. Stobaeus, *Anthal.* I,8 (40e2-3; 42,3-4.14-15.25-28).

⁶² Cf. Plotinus, *Enn.* III,7(45),8.

⁶³ Plotinus, *Enn.* III,7(45),11,41: Διάστασις οὖν ζωῆς χρόνον εἶχε... (translation by Armstrong).

⁶⁴ *Enn.* IV,4(28),16,22.

⁶⁵ *Sent.* 44,24 (quoted above, n. 24).

⁶⁶ So Baltes (1998) 304 with a reference to Plotinus, *Enn.* III,7(45),11,53-54.

⁶⁷ So Pépin (in: Brisson 2005) 757-758.

4. Conclusion

To sum up Porphyry's conception, we see that for him time does not imitate eternity directly, like in Plato's *Timaeus* (i.e. when all the stars, as the executors of time come to a head after completing the whole circle of their movements). Just as for Plotinus, time is for Porphyry derived from the soul (and it is dependent on eternity as much as soul is dependent on Intellect which eternity is conjoined with). Nevertheless, Porphyry (unlike Plotinus) does not present time as life of soul or as a mode of soul's being, but rather as a mode of its (self-) knowledge.

While Intellect always grasps itself in a single act, the soul contemplates its intelligible contents one by one, in a certain circulation or by shifting its intention from one to the other. This is how it creates time, not through the incompleteness of its being which hastens to what is going to be, as suggested by Plotinus. This circulating attention is represented in an aesthetic image by the movement of stars where the temporal sequence is supplemented with extension in place. Thus, time is divided into several times of individual astral circuits each of which imitates the soul's time in its proper fashion.

Just like Plotinus, Porphyry might have probably insisted on the unity of time, given by the unity of souls,⁶⁸ yet when speaking of soul connected to the body (which attracted his attention a lot) he dares to speak of various times. He might have intended to express the idea that the time of the incarnated souls is diversified as long as their attention is not only directed towards the intelligible structure, that is common to all souls, but also towards the accidents of the incarnated life, which influence their time quite differently.

As regards the conception of time, Porphyry states that it is based on soul's cognition, which interchanges actuality and latency (and consequently, it is based on variously directed attention of soul) while obtaining the plurality of times of individual corporeal things through movements of which time acquires extension.

This image of time is significantly different from that of Plotinus' who sees time as a life of soul extended into multiplicity which the soul hopes to find as a whole always and only in the future. This orientation towards the future, and thereby the extension of the soul's life, is completely missing in Porphyry's Sentence 44. In Porphyry's

⁶⁸ Cf. Plotinus, *Enn.* III,7(45),13,66-69.

treatise, the soul moves through its successive cognition “towards itself”, i.e. towards the contents which have always belonged to it (apparently) free of any extension as well as (apparently) without any distinctive orientation towards the future. It is like “a spring which causes its contents to well up and circulate within itself”, i.e. its movement is a transition from latency to actuality, never a movement to something really new. Soul, according to Porphyry, already owns all its possession, it does not hasten to it as if it was something to come to being; its only task is to bring its possession from latency to actuality through its self-motion.

Porphyry writes in his short Sentence 15 on memory: “Memory is not the preservation of representations, but rather the projection anew of items on which one has been exercised previously.”⁶⁹ One can say, with a certain hyperbole, that according to Porphyry, time is not based on the movement towards the future, but rather on actualising of the (time-free) past (i.e. of the innate).

In the same vein, Porphyry gave the following recommendation to his wife Marcella: “You should collect and combine into one, the notions implanted within you, endeavouring to isolate those that are confused and to drag to light those that are enveloped in darkness.”⁷⁰ All these motifs are definitely traceable in Plotinus too, yet his emphasis in the treatise on time is somewhat different. Time, according to Plotinus, is not based on the self-relation of soul, but instead its relation to the other. If soul was to turn back to itself completely, time would change (back) into eternity.⁷¹

It is quite symptomatic of Late Antiquity Christian authors to incline to Plotinus rather than to Porphyry in relation to their conceptions of time. The straining towards what is ahead is a well-known idea conceived by Gregory of Nyssa,⁷² whereas Augustine brought forth the

⁶⁹ *Sent.* 15: Ἡ μνήμη οὐκ ἔστι φαντασιῶν σωτηρία, ἀλλὰ τῶν μελετηθέντων ἐκ νέας προβάλλεσθαι προβολή (translation Dillon).

⁷⁰ Porphyry, *Ad Marcellam*, 10,8-10: συνάγοις δ' ἄν καὶ ἐνίξοις τὰς ἐμφύτους ἐννοίας καὶ διαρθροῦν συγκεχυμένας καὶ εἰς φῶς ἔλκειν ἔσκοτισμένας πειρωμένη (translation Zimmern).

⁷¹ Cf. Plotinus, *Enn.* III,7(45),12,4-15.

⁷² Cf. e.g. Gregory of Nyssa, *De virg.* 4 (*GNO* VIII/1, 272,4 ff.); *De beat.* 4 (*GNO* VII/2, 122,25-123,4); *In Eccl. hom.* 6 (*GNO* V, 379,12 f.); *C. Eun.* II,459 (*GNO* I, 360,17-21); *C. Eun.* I,673 (*GNO* I, 220,6 ff.). See Karfiková (2001).

conception of time as an extension of soul⁷³ (yet both the motifs can be traced in both the authors, and their predecessor was certainly Basil of Caesarea).⁷⁴ Marius Victorinus' less known and less influential conception is probably the only one which may show affinity with Porphyry's ideas. For Marius Victorinus, the predecessor of Augustine, "our 'to live' (*vivere*) also consists in an always present time",⁷⁵ as it already has all things, just as eternity itself has them all. Victorinus also suggests that time differs from eternity by not offering all at once to the attention of soul, yet he does not mention the self-relation of soul, but instead, only the presence of various things:

"We do not live the past nor do we live the future, but always are in the present; for the present is the only time; and it alone, because it is the only time, is said to be the image τοῦ αἰῶνος, that is, of eternity. For just as the αἰὼν has all things always present and is them always, we also, through present time, have all that we can have; therefore this time of ours is image τοῦ αἰῶνος (of the eternity), but only an image, because our present is not always present to the same things and because it is not always identical to itself."⁷⁶

⁷³ Cf. Augustin, *Conf.* XI,26,33 (CCL 27, 211): *distentio ... animi*. See Karfíková (2007).

⁷⁴ Basil of Caesarea, *Adv. Eun.* I,21 (PG 29, 557c-560c).

⁷⁵ Marius Victorinus, *Adv. Ar.* IV,15 (SC 68, 542): *Sed et nostrum vivere constat ex praesenti semper tempore*.

⁷⁶ Marius Victorinus, *Adv. Ar.* IV,15 (SC 68, 542-544): *non enim vivimus praeteritum aut vivimus futurum, sed semper praesenti utimur; hoc enim solum tempus est; quod ipsum solum, quia solum tempus est, imago esse dicitur τοῦ αἰῶνος, id est aeternitatis. Quomodo enim αἰὼν semper praesentia habet omnia et haec semper, nos quoque, quia, per praesens tempus, habemus omnia quae habere possumus, idcirco hoc tempus nostrum τοῦ αἰῶνος imago est, quia nostrum praesens non in isdem neque idem semper est praesens* (translation Clark, modified). Cf. Karfíková (2010).

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