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Mašhad, Kitābhāna-i Āsitān-i Quds-i Raḡawī 300, f. 1v
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Maurice Borrmans MAfr. (1925-2017)

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God and Intellect at the Dawn of Arabic Philosophical Thought

*Plotinus' Treatise V 4[7], Aristotle's Metaphysics and De Anima
in the Age of al-Kindī*

Cristina D'Ancona*

Abstract

Plotinus' treatise V 4[7], *How that which is after the First comes from the First, and on the One* argues that Intellect, that coincides with the intelligible Forms, stands as a second principle after the One, whose absolute simplicity implies transcendence even to this degree of being, the highest. Translated into Arabic in the first half of the 9th/3rd century, *How that which is after the First comes from the First, and on the One* was combined with other treatises of *Ennead V* in an *Epistle on the Divine Science* falsely attributed to al-Fārābī. This paper investigates the adaptations that characterize the Arabic rendering of V 4[7], and compares the Arabic rendition with the coeval translations of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and *De Anima*. The issue at stake is that of the nature of the first principle: is it an intellect, or beyond intellect?

Treasured by the present writer, the exchange of letters with Father Maurice Borrmans M.Afr. contains the invitation, in his tiny beautiful handwriting, to clarify “la problematica degli scambi filosofici tra Grecia, Occidente, mondo arabo e Occidente medievale, dando con equilibrio un bilancio degli arricchimenti reciproci e settoriali a seconda delle domande filosofiche e metafisiche”. This paper is a small contribution to the goal indicated by Father Borrmans. It attempts to do so by investigating the early Arabic reception of Plotinus' topic of the Intellect as a substance second after the One and derived from it. The ways in which the first generation of *falāsifa* naturalised this Plotinian idea will be discussed, in themselves and in their relationship with the competing model derived from Aristotle's *Metaphysics Lambda* and *De Anima* III 5, where the divine Intellect is the First Principle itself.

1. How That Which Is After the First Comes From the First: a 'Platonic' Problem?

Although no modern reader of Plato is ready to acknowledge that the provenance of a multi-level hierarchy of realities from the One can be listed among Plato's own doctrines, there are good reasons for beginning this paper with Plato and the *Phaedo*, for it is against the backdrop of the causality of Forms as expounded in this dialogue that Plotinus' *How that which is after the First comes from the First, and on the One*¹ can be better understood. This treatise – one of the first written by Plotinus after the decision he took around 254 AD² to add to his usual lectures on Plato also the composition

* My warmest thanks go to Concetta Luna for her remarks on a first draft of this paper.

¹ Πῶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πρώτου τὸ μετὰ τὸ πρῶτον καὶ περὶ τοῦ ἐνός (V 4[7]), in *Plotini Opera* II, *Enneades* IV-V ediderunt P. Henry et H.-R. Schwyzer, Desclée de Brouwer - L'Édition Universelle, Paris - Louvain 1959 (Museum Lessianum Series Philosophica, 34), pp. 332-8; also in *Plotini Opera* ed. P. Henry et H.-R. Schwyzer, II, Clarendon, Oxford 1977 (OCT), pp. 234-7.

² R. Goulet, “Le système chronologique de la *Vie de Plotin*”, in *Porphyre, La Vie de Plotin*, I. Travaux préliminaires et index grec complet, par L. Brisson, M.-O. Goulet-Cazé, R. Goulet et D'O'Brien, Vrin, Paris 1982 (Histoire des Doctrines de l'Antiquité Classique, 6), pp. 187-227, esp. p. 206, places in 254 the beginning of Plotinus' activity as writer.

of written works³ – was placed by Porphyry in the Fifth *Ennead* when, towards the end of the 3rd century, namely three decades after Plotinus' death, he decided to give a systematic layout to the works of his master and to put in circulation the official edition of them.⁴

The *Phaedo* counts for Plotinus as the key to correctly understand the *Timaeus* without running the risk of depicting the causality of the divine νοῦς in terms of efficiency.⁵ The same reader who is justly suspicious about any trace of the Neoplatonic One in Plato's dialogues will readily acknowledge that the Plotinian answer to the question 'how the supra-sensible principles are causes' has its starting point in *Phaedo* 96 A - 102 A, with Plato's interpretation of the scientific inquiry on nature as the endeavour to "know the causes of everything, why a thing comes into being, why it perishes, why it exists (εἰδέναι τὰς αἰτίας ἐκάστου, διὰ τί γίγνεται ἕκαστον καὶ διὰ τί ἀπόλλυται καὶ διὰ τί ἔστι, 96 A 9-10)".⁶ Section 96 D 7 - E 4, with its discussion of the inept explanation of a state of affairs – say, the fact that someone is tall – in terms of physical features, and section 97 E 6 - B 7, with its criticism of the idea that the physical union or separation of two things can count as the real αἰτία for something to become 'one', or 'two', pave the ground for the critical assessment of Anaxagoras' claim to have established the νοῦς as the cause (97 B 8 - 98 B 6) – a claim doomed to failure in Plato's eyes. Thus, section 97 C 6 - D 1 develops the idea that if one wants to discover the αἰτία of something, which means the cause "for anything coming into being or perishing or existing" (ὅπη γίγνεται ἢ ἀπόλλυται ἢ ἔστι, 97 C 7),⁷ one has to raise the question "how it was best for that thing to exist or to act or to be acted upon" (ὅπη βέλτιστον αὐτῷ ἔστιν ἢ εἶναι ἢ ἄλλο ὀτιοῦν πάσχειν ἢ ποιεῖν, 97 C 8 - D 1).⁸ At 97 E 1-2 this inquiry is alluded to by the pair of concepts τὴν αἰτίαν καὶ τὴν ἀνάγκην, "why it must be"⁹ – a clear signal that we are no longer looking for an event or a transitory feature; rather, for a rational, necessary, and intrinsic feature that accounts for something to be this or that.¹⁰ Only once a principle of this kind has been reached can one say that

³ D. O'Brien, "Plotin et le vœu du silence", in *Porphyre, La Vie de Plotin*, II. Études d'introduction, texte grec et traduction française, commentaire, notes complémentaires, bibliographie, par L. Brisson, J.-L. Cherlonneix, M. O. Goulet-Cazé, M.D. Grmek, J.-M. Flamand, S. Matton, D. O'Brien, J. Pépin, H.D. Saffrey, A.-Ph. Segonds, M. Tardieu, P. Thillet, Vrin, Paris 1992 (Histoire des Doctrines de l'Antiquité Classique, 16), pp. 419-59.

⁴ H.D. Saffrey, "Pourquoi Porphyre a-t-il édité Plotin? Réponse provisoire", in *Porphyre, La Vie de Plotin*, II, pp. 31-69 (repr. in Id., *Le Néoplatonisme après Plotin*, Vrin, Paris 2000 [Histoire des Doctrines de l'Antiquité Classique, 24], pp. 3-26.

⁵ That the *Timaeus* is indeed exposed to the risk to be interpreted in terms of efficient causality is a constant worry for Plotinus, who devotes the long treatise VI 7[38] to counter the literal interpretation of the divine Demiurge as an efficient cause planning his actions as a craftsman and acting in a real sequence of deeds.

⁶ *Plato's Phaedo*. Translated, with Introduction and commentary, by R. Hackforth, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 1955 (2nd printing The Library of Liberal Arts, Bobbs-Merrill, Indianapolis - New York, n.d.), p. 122.

⁷ Trans. Hackforth, p. 125.

⁸ Trans. Hackforth, *ibid.*

⁹ Trans. Hackforth, *ibid.*

¹⁰ G. Vlastos, "Reasons and Causes in the *Phaedo*", *The Philosophical Review* 78 (1969), pp. 291-325, repr. in G. Vlastos (ed.), *Plato. I. Metaphysics and Epistemology*, Doubleday Anchor, Garden City 1971, pp. 132-66; further problems are discussed virtually in every paper of the volume of the "Oxford Readings in Philosophy" edited by G. Fine under the same title *Plato I. Metaphysics and Epistemology*, Oxford U.P., Oxford 1999 (reprinted 2003), but especially in T.H. Irwin, "The Theory of Forms", pp. 143-70. On the notion of cause as 'explanation' in Aristotle, cf. J. Annas, "Aristotle on Inefficient Causes", *The Philosophical Quarterly* 32 (1982), pp. 311-26 and, from a different viewpoint, D.J. Furley, "What Kind of Cause is Aristotle's Final Cause?" in M. Frede - G. Stricker (eds.), *Rationality in Greek Thought*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1966, pp. 59-79; see also T. Irwin, *Aristotle's First Principles*, Oxford 1988, pp. 95-102; on the Stoic notion of causality as efficiency in the physical sense, cf. M. Frede, "The Original Notion of Cause", in Id., *Essays in Ancient Philosophy*, Clarendon Press - Oxford U.P., Oxford - New York 1987, pp. 125-50.

real knowledge has been reached by “assigning the cause, ἀποδιδόντα τὴν αἰτίαν (98 B 1)”.¹¹ Any feature that does not provide a rational explanation is useless, precisely because the true causes in this way are neglected (ἀμελήσας τὰς ὡς ἀληθῶς αἰτίας λέγειν, 98 E 1). It is from the distinction between real and instrumental causes (99 B 2-4) that famously arises the necessity of the “second-best method” in the search for explanation (τὸν δεύτερον πλοῦν ἐπὶ τὴν τῆς αἰτίας ζήτησιν, 99 C 9-D 1),¹² whose field is now defined: the λόγοι, where it is possible to examine τῶν ὄντων τὴν ἀλήθειαν. Among the λόγοι, the one which excels as the most reliable (ἐρρωμενέστατος) will be accepted, the others being discarded.¹³ This kind of reasoning enables us to establish that there are principles of a rational nature which provide the real causes, thus eliciting also the assessment of the immortality of the soul.¹⁴ The structure of the most reliable λόγος is famously described in the section that begins at 100 C 4 and contains the “hypothesis of the Forms”. If, in addition to the Beautiful taken in and by itself, there is something that is ‘beautiful’, it is so because the latter takes part in the Beautiful: διότι μετέχει ἐκείνου τοῦ καλοῦ (100 C 5-6). Note that the possibility that there is such a thing is not argued for, which means either that it is taken for granted – a point that will resurface in Plotinus – or that the hypothesis is an inference whose criterion of truth is a logical one, or both. Be that as it may, the fact that something which is not ‘the Beautiful’ takes part in it (μετέχει ἐκείνου τοῦ καλοῦ) is also expressed in terms of the presence (παρουσία) or share (κοινωνία) of the Beautiful (100 D 5-6). This, and only this, accounts for the presence of features like that ‘greatness’ that remained unaccounted for before (96 D 8 - E 1), when, faced with the question why a man is taller than another man, or a horse than another horse, we were dissatisfied with the answer “by the head (τῆ κεφαλῆ)”. The real cause why someone is bigger than someone else is the presence of a rational structure in him: διὰ τὸ μέγεθος (101 A 3). In order to prevent the strange conclusion that one and the same thing – say, the ‘head’ or the ‘two’ – produces contradictory effects, making one man taller than another and the ‘ten’ bigger than the ‘eight’, but also the reverse (one man smaller than another, and the ‘eight’ smaller than the ‘ten’), it is necessary to maintain that the way by which anything comes to be is “by its participating in the special being in which it does participate (μετασχὼν τῆς ἰδίας οὐσίας ἐκάστου οὗ ἂν μετᾶσχη, 101 C 3-4)”.¹⁵

Plotinus took all this very seriously, and the criticism of the causality of the Forms set in place in Aristotle’s *De Generatione et corruptione* inspired quite an unprecedented solution in him. Aristotle had rejected the doctrine of the *Phaedo* arguing that another kind of causality was needed, had one to account for the presence of a property in something: “For it is the doctor who implants health and the man of science who implants science”.¹⁶ Instead of following in the footsteps of his fellow-

¹¹ Trans. Hackforth, p. 126.

¹² Trans. Hackforth, p. 127.

¹³ *Phaedo*, 99 E 4 - 100 A 6, trans. Hackforth, p. 133: “So I decided I must take refuge in propositions, and study the truth of things in them. [...] On each occasion I assume the proposition which I judge to be the soundest, and I put down as true whatever seems to me in agreement with this, whether the question is about causes or anything else; what does not seem to be in agreement I put down as false”.

¹⁴ *Phaedo*, 100 B 3-9, trans. Hackforth, p. 134: “I am going to attempt a formal account of the sort of cause that I have been concerned with, and I shall go back to my well-worn theme and make it my starting-point; that is, I shall assume the existence of a beautiful that is in and by itself, and a good, and a great, and so on with the rest of them; and if you grant me them and admit their existence, I hope they will make it possible for me to discover and expound to you the cause of the soul’s immortality”.

¹⁵ Trans. Hackforth, p. 135.

¹⁶ Arist., *De Gen. corr.* II 9, 335 b 7-23 (trans. Joachim).

Platonists who, possibly in the attempt to counter Aristotle's remark, had traditionally added the productive causality of the Demiurge to the paradigmatic causality of the Forms, Plotinus spent much labour to convince the Platonists that it was rather the *Timaeus* to be interpreted in the light of the immobile causality of the *Phaedo* – the causality of the Forms, whose ratio as principles had been placed by Plato in their *παρουσία* to the things that are named after them.¹⁷

This short and rather inaccurate survey of one of the main points in Plotinus' interpretation of Plato was necessary as an introduction to the treatise *How that which is after the First comes from the First, and on the One* (V 4[7]), because, even though the main point of this treatise is an idea that can hardly be traced back to the *Phaedo* – namely that the entire reality depends upon a unique principle, the One – Plotinus argues for the causality of the One in a way that is reminiscent of the causality of the Forms in this dialogue. Not only the One, but all the supra-sensible principles are causes in a way that has nothing to do with efficiency, and much to do with the *παρουσία* of the principle to its participants, that had been set in the *Phaedo*. After Plotinus and thanks to him, the causality of the intelligible principles was phrased in the entire Neoplatonic school by an expression that sums up the refusal of efficient causality with all its implications, chiefly that of a change in the causal principle: *αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι*, “due to the being of the cause”.¹⁸

It goes without saying that Plotinus does not stand alone in front of Plato's dialogues; rather, he is part and parcel of an entire history of reception and transformation of the heritage of Greek philosophy between Hellenism and the early Imperial Age, whose main points relevant to the present purpose can only be mentioned here: the rise of a cosmic theology based on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*,¹⁹ the transformation of Platonism into a systematic whole,²⁰ and the cross-pollination between

¹⁷ Aporias about the *παρουσία* of the Form to its participants are discussed by Plotinus in a treatise subdivided into two by Porphyry and placed in the sixth *Ennead* under the title *On the Presence of Being, One and the Same, Everywhere as a Whole* (VI 4-5[22-23]) – a title which is clearly reminiscent of the first part of Plato's *Parmenides* with the discussion of such aporias.

¹⁸ Cf. C. D'Ancona, “Les Sentences de Porphyre entre les *Ennéades* de Plotin et les *Éléments de Théologie* de Proclus”, in *Porphyre. Sentences sur les intelligibles*, texte grec, traduction française, introduction, notes et lexique. Études réunies sous la direction de L. Brisson, Vrin, Paris 2005 (Histoire des Doctrines de l'Antiquité Classique, 33), pp. 139-274, in part. pp. 207-8 (on the relationship between Porphyry's *Sentence* 13 and Plotinus) and Ead., “L'influence du vocabulaire arabe: *Causa Prima est esse tantum*”, in J. Hamesse - C. Steel (eds.) *L'élaboration du vocabulaire philosophique au Moyen Age*, Brepols, Turnhout 2000 (Rencontres de Philosophie Médiévale, 8), pp. 51-97, in part. pp. 92-4 (on the dependence from Porphyry's *Sentence* 13 of the formula of causality *αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι* created by Syrianus).

¹⁹ Cf. R. Sharples, “Aristotelian Theology after Aristotle”, in D. Frede - A. Laks (eds.), *Traditions of Theology. Studies in Hellenistic Theology, its Background and its Aftermath*, Brill, Leiden - Boston - Köln 2002 (Philosophia Antiqua, 89), pp. 1-40; Id., “Alexander of Aphrodisias and the End of Aristotelian Theology”, in T. Kobusch - M. Erler - I. Männlein-Robert (eds.), *Metaphysik und Religion. Zur Signatur des spätantiken Denkens*, Akten des Internationalen Kongresses vom 13.-17. März 2001 in Würzburg, Saur, München - Leipzig 2002 (Beiträge zur Altertumskunde, 160), pp. 1-21. On a specific point, but of crucial importance, see P.L. Donini, “Θεία δύναμις in Alessandro di Afrodisia”, in F. Romano - L. Cardullo (eds.), *Δύναμις nel neoplatonismo*, La Nuova Italia, Firenze 1996 (Symbolon. Studi e testi di filosofia antica e medievale, 16), pp. 11-30, repr. in P.L. Donini, *Commentary and Tradition. Aristotelianism, Platonism, and Post Hellenistic Philosophy*, ed. by M. Bonazzi, De Gruyter, Berlin - New York 2011 (Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca et Byzantina. Quellen und Studien, 4), pp. 125-38.

²⁰ In addition to the fundamental collection initiated by H. Dörrie and M. Baltes and now directed by Ch. Pietsch, *Der Platonismus in der Antike. Grundlagen-System-Entwicklung*, Frommann-Holzboog, Stuttgart - Bad Cannstatt 1987-2008 (seven volumes published), the essential bibliography includes: J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists. A Study of Platonism 80 b.c. to AD 220*, Duckworth, London 1977 (2nd ed. revised, 1996); J. Gucker, *Antiochus and the Late Academy*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1978; J. Whittaker, “Platonic Philosophy in the Early Centuries of the Empire”, in W. Haase - H. Temporini (eds.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* (henceforth: *ANRW*) II.36.1, De Gruyter, Berlin - New York 1987, pp. 81-123; P.L. Donini, “Testi e commenti, manuali e insegnamento: la forma sistematica e i

Platonism and a revival of Pythagoreanism.²¹ All these elements should be taken into account, were one to comment upon V 4[7] in a satisfactory way. But the purpose of this introduction is much more modest: to set the scene for a survey of its contents in view of an account of the reception of this topic in early Arabic philosophy.

It has been recalled above that Plato does not discuss the nature of the hypothesis εἴ τί ἐστιν ἄλλο καλὸν πλὴν αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν at *Phaed.* 100 C 4-5, nor does Plotinus spend time in explaining what he means by the opening words of V 4[7], “If there is anything after the First, εἴ τι ἔστι μετὰ τὸ πρῶτον”. The existence both of a thing that is beautiful without being ‘the Beautiful’ and of the derivative realities after the First counts as the starting point of the inquiry and is left unexamined. Far from being a truism, this implies that the problem with which Plotinus deals here is not “why should the One give rise to the many?”. Rather, his point is that, taken for granted that there are such things, their relationship with the First has to be investigated. This is stated in the subsequent lines, where the protasis “if [as it is the case] there is anything after the First” is followed by the apodosis “then it necessarily derives from it, either in way (i), or in way (ii)”.

V 4[7], 1.1-5

Εἴ τι ἔστι μετὰ τὸ πρῶτον, ἀνάγκη ἐξ ἐκείνου εἶναι ἢ εὐθὺς ἢ τὴν ἀναγωγὴν ἐπ’ ἐκεῖνο διὰ τῶν μεταξὺ ἔχειν, καὶ τάξιν εἶναι δευτέρων καὶ τρίτων, τοῦ μὲν ἐπὶ τὸ πρῶτον τοῦ δευτέρου ἀναγομένου, τοῦ δὲ τρίτου ἐπὶ τὸ δεύτερον.

If there is anything after the First, it must necessarily come from the First; it must either come from it directly or have its ascent back to it through the beings between, and there must be an order of seconds and thirds, the second going back to the first and the third to the second (trans. Armstrong).²²

This only apparently simple sentence contains the ‘if-then’ statement mentioned above, with its subdivision in way (i) and way (ii); then we are told that way (ii) determines a hierarchy (τάξις). Before going deeper into detail on this, let me pause to examine the kind of necessary implication set here by Plotinus: we shall see later that in the Arabic rendition there is a shift on this point. What is posited as necessary is that the derivative levels of reality depend upon the first principle either in the form of direct derivation, or through intermediaries. Is this an exclusive disjunction, or an inclusive one? Are we speaking of *aut-aut*, or of *vel-vel*? Note that the sentence is strangely asymmetrical: it is necessary either that what comes after the First derives directly from it, or that it has its ascent to

metodi della filosofia in età post-ellenistica”, in *ANRW* II.36.7 (1994), pp. 5027-100 (repr. in Id., *Commentary and Tradition* [quoted n. 19], pp. 211-81); M. Bonazzi - J. Opsomer (eds.), *The Origins of the Platonic System. Platonisms of the Early Empire and their Philosophical Contexts*, Peeters, Leuven 2007; F. Ferrari, “Esegesi, sistema e tradizione: la prospettiva filosofica del medioplatonismo”, in Ch. Riedweg (ed.), *Philosophia in der Konkurrenz von Schulen, Wissenschaften und Religionen. Zur Pluralisierung des Philosophiebegriffs in Kaiserzeit und Spätantike*, De Gruyter, Boston - Berlin 2017 (Philosophie der Antike, 34), pp. 33-59.

²¹ Cf. H. Dörrie, “Der Platoniker Eudoros von Alexandria”, *Hermes* 79 (1944), pp. 25-38 (repr. in Id., *Platonica minora*, W. Fink Verlag, München 1976 [Studia et testimonia antiqua, 8], pp. 297-309); Ph. Merlan, “Monismus und Dualismus bei einigen Platonikern”, in K. Flasch (ed.), *Parusia. Studien zur Philosophie Platons und zur Problemgeschichte des Platonismus. Festgabe für J. Hirschberger*, Minerva, Frankfurt a.M. 1965, pp. 143-54; J.M. Dillon, “Orthodoxy and Eclecticism. Middle Platonists and Neo-Pythagoreans”, in J.M. Dillon - A.A. Long (eds.), *The Question of Eclecticism*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1988, pp. 103-26; M. Bonazzi, “Pythagoreanising Aristotle: Eudorus and the Systematisation of Platonism”, in M. Schofield (ed.), *Aristotle, Plato and Pythagoreanism in the First Century BC. New Directions for Philosophy*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 2013, pp. 160-86.

²² Plotinus with an English translation by A.H. Armstrong (...) in seven volumes. V. *Enneads* V.1-9, Harvard U.P. - Heinemann, Cambridge - London 1984 (Loeb Classical Library), p. 141.

it through intermediaries, which implies that what comes after the First is considered as something that is already in place, so to speak; its derivation from the First is examined from the viewpoint of the intermediary degrees that permit its connection with the First. The asymmetry supports inclusive disjunction: we can either examine the derivation of what comes after the First, and in this case we shall see that what comes after the First derives directly from it, or we can examine the same issue from the viewpoint of the relationship that permits conducting the effects back to the First. Way (i) refers to direct derivation. : Way (ii) traces back to the First the derivative entities that count as the starting point of the inquiry and is reminiscent of a usual Plotinian procedure: the discourse that “teaches and reminds the soul how high its birth and value are”.²³ This reasoning is meant to help the reader to see that the reality around him simply could not exist without the Soul; that beyond the Soul there is the intelligible world; finally, that beyond the Forms there is another principle, whose absolute simplicity grants it unsurpassed priority over everything else. This argumentation, carried on by Plotinus at greater length in a work written shortly after V 4[7] – the treatise V 1[10], *On the Three Principles that are Causes* – was evidently a crucial point in his lectures on Plato, because it is alluded to also at the beginning of V 4[7], in an elliptical but recognisable way, by the mention of intermediate degrees from the lower to the highest level of reality. Treatise V 1[10] – and much of what Plotinus has written – argues that if our individual soul wants to reactivate the self-awareness of its true nature, it has to carry on an ascent towards the real causes; one may go as far as to say that it has to search not for events or accidental features, but for the causes as they are analysed in the *Phaedo*. In the reasoning of V 1[10] the first cause that one meets in proceeding bottom-up is the soul as that principle that, imparting form to matter, is by the same token also the cause of the coming-to-be of any kind of reality that exists (irrespective of its being a living being or not).²⁴ This implies that another level of reality is necessary for the soul to perform its causal role: the intelligible Forms. However – and despite the fact that the *Timaeus* tells another story – the multiplicity of the Forms does not count as the ultimate principle of the entire reality. In Plotinus’ view, Plato has explained himself on this point in the *Republic*, where the multiplicity of the Forms is set below the anhypothetic principle ‘Good’; now, the Good of the *Republic* coincides with that One whose separation from and anteriority to Being is established in the *Parmenides*.

It is well known that the account summarized above forms the backbone of Plotinus’ recast of Platonism – Neoplatonism. In a nutshell, the ascent detailed in V 1[10] and outlined at the beginning of V 4[7] points to this analysis of the status of ‘what comes after the First’. That the third level of reality should be traced back to the second, and the second to the first, frames the typically Plotinian ἀναγωγή in terms of a hierarchy whose model is the pseudo-Platonic *Second Letter*. This Neopythagorean writing contains a tripartite hierarchy of principles: the universal King, a second principle, and a third principle;²⁵ Plotinus’ hierarchy of δεύτερα and τρίτα is a silent quotation from

²³ V 1[10], 1.27-28: [ὁ δὲ λόγος, line 22] διδάσκων καὶ ἀναμιμνήσκων τὴν ψυχὴν οἷον τοῦ γένους καὶ τῆς ἀξίας, trans. Armstrong, vol. V, p. 13.

²⁴ To articulate this point would go beyond the limits of this paper, but the causality of the soul (individual or cosmic) is the typical Plotinian response to Aristotle’s objection to the causality of the Forms as argued for in the *Phaedo*. In Plotinus’ view the principle that implants form in matter is the individual soul in the case of the living being, the cosmic soul in the case of cosmos as a whole, including items not provided with a biological life. The (revised) λόγοι σπερματικοί provided by the soul (individual or cosmic) are the enmattered forms in individuals.

²⁵ Ps.-Plato, *Second Epistle*, 312 E 1- 313 A 2: περὶ τὸν πάντων βασιλέα πάντ’ ἐστὶ καὶ ἐκείνου ἕνεκα πάντα, καὶ ἐκεῖνο αἴτιον ἀπάντων τῶν καλῶν· δεύτερον δὲ περὶ τὰ δεύτερα, καὶ τρίτον περὶ τὰ τρίτα. ἢ οὖν ἀνθρωπίνη ψυχὴ περὶ αὐτὰ ὀρέγεται μαθεῖν ποῖ’ ἄττα ἐστίν, βλέπουσα εἰς τὰ αὐτῆς συγγενῆ, ὧν οὐδὲν ἰκανῶς ἔχει. τοῦ δὲ βασιλέως περὶ καὶ ὧν εἶπον, οὐδὲν ἐστὶν τοιοῦτο (“Upon the king of all do all things turn; he is the end of all things and the cause of all

these lines.²⁶ Then Plotinus hastens to align the *Second Letter* with passages from the dialogues that shape his understanding of Platonism.

V 4[7], 1.5-20

Δεῖ μὲν γὰρ τι πρὸ πάντων εἶναι ἀπλοῦν, τοῦτο καὶ πάντων ἕτερον τῶν μετ' αὐτό, ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ ὄν, οὐ μεμιγμένον τοῖς ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, καὶ πάλιν ἕτερον τρόπον τοῖς ἄλλοις παρεῖναι δυνάμενον, ὄν ὄντως ἓν, οὐχ ἕτερον ὄν, εἴτα ἓν, καθ' οὗ ψευδὸς καὶ τὸ ἓν εἶναι, οὐ μὴ λόγος μηδὲ ἐπιστήμη, ὃ δὴ καὶ ἐπέκεινα λέγεται εἶναι οὐσίας – εἰ γὰρ μὴ ἀπλοῦν ἔσται συμβάσεως ἕξω πάσης καὶ συνθέσεως καὶ ὄντως ἓν, οὐκ ἂν ἀρχὴ εἴη – αὐταρκέστατον τε τῷ ἀπλοῦν εἶναι καὶ πρῶτον ἀπάντων· τὸ γὰρ τὸ μὴ πρῶτον ἐνδεὲς τοῦ πρὸ αὐτοῦ, τό τε μὴ ἀπλοῦν τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ ἀπλῶν δεόμενον, ἔν' ἢ ἕξ ἐκείνων. Τὸ δὴ τοιοῦτον ἐν μόνον δεῖ εἶναι· ἄλλο γὰρ εἰ εἴη τοιοῦτον, ἐν ἂν εἴη τὰ ἄμφω. οὐ γὰρ δὴ σώματα λέγομεν δύο, ἢ τὸ ἐν πρῶτον σῶμα. οὐδὲν γὰρ ἀπλοῦν σῶμα, γινόμενόν τε τὸ σῶμα, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀρχή· ἢ δὲ ἀρχὴ ἀγέννητος· μὴ σωματικὴ δὲ οὔσα, ἀλλ' ὄντως μία, ἐκεῖνο ἂν εἴη τὸ πρῶτον.

For there must be something simple before all things, and this must be other than all things which come after it, existing by itself, not mixed with the things which derive from it, and all the same able to be present in a different way to these other things, being really one, and not a different being and then one; it is false even to say of it that it is one, and there is “no concept or knowledge”²⁷ of it; it is indeed also said to be “beyond being”.²⁸ For if it is not to be simple, outside all coincidence and composition, it could not be a first principle; and it is the most self-sufficient, because it is simple and the first of all: for that which is not the first needs that which is before it, and what is not simple is in need of its simple components so that it can come into existence from them. A reality of this kind must be alone: for if there was another of this kind, both would be one.²⁹ For we are certainly not talking about two bodies, or meaning that the One is a first body. For nothing simple is a body, and body is what comes into being, but not the first principle; and “the first principle has not come into being”;³⁰ if then it was a principle which was not bodily, but was truly one, that [other of this kind] would be the First. (trans. Armstrong)³¹

good. Things of the second order turn upon the second principle, and those of the third order upon the third. Now the soul of man longs to understand what sort of things these principles are, and it looks toward the things that are akin to itself, though none of them is adequate; clearly the king and the other principles mentioned are not of that sort”, trans. G.R. Morrow, *Plato's Epistles. A Translation, with Critical Essays and Notes*, The Library of Liberal Arts, The Bobb-Merrill Company, Howard, Indianapolis - New York 1962, p. 196).

²⁶ R.S. Bluck, “The Second Platonic *Epistle*”, *Phronesis* 5 (1960), pp. 140-51; J.M. Rist, “Neopythagoreanism and ‘Plato’s’ *Second Letter*”, *Phronesis* 10 (1965), pp. 71-81; H. Dörrie, “Der König. Ein platonisches Schlüsselwort, von Plotin mit neuem Sinn erfüllt”, *Revue internationale de philosophie* 24 (1970), pp. 217-35 (repr. Id., *Platonica minora*, pp. 390-405); H.D. Saffrey - L.G. Westerink, *Proclus. Théologie Platonicienne*, Livre II. Texte établi et traduit, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1974 (CUF), Introduction, pp. XXXIV-LIX (in part, pp. XLIII-XLIX on Plotinus); M. Isnardi Parente, “Plotino lettore delle *Epistole* di Platone”, in A. Brancacci (ed.), *Antichi e moderni nella filosofia di età imperiale*. Atti del II colloquio internazionale Roma, 21-23 settembre 2000, Bibliopolis, Napoli 2001 (Elenchos. Collana di testi e studi sul pensiero antico, 34), pp. 197-211.

²⁷ *Parm.*, 142 A 3-4.

²⁸ *Resp.*, VI, 509 B 9.

²⁹ Plotinus adapts to his own purposes a reasoning set in place by Aristotle, *Phys.* III 5, 204 b 13-22, to exclude that, should there be an infinite body, this body might be composed out of two or more other bodies.

³⁰ *Phaedr.*, 245 D 1.

³¹ Trans. Armstrong, vol. V, pp. 141-3.

The Platonic and Aristotelian texts that should be quoted in order to comment upon this passage are many and the discussion of the way in which Plotinus understands them would exceed the limits of this article. Suffice it to say that the interpretation of Platonism outlined here is framed by the assumption that, far from being hampered by separation (as implied by Aristotle's criticism), the *παρουσία* of a supra-sensible principle to its participants is grounded exactly in its independence from and anteriority to them. Plotinus will deal extensively with this topic in a later treatise, where the aporias on participation are discussed;³² here, the same status is granted to the One. The verb *παρεῖναι* in the passage above echoes the *παρουσία* of the *Phaedo*: what is true for the Forms is true a fortiori for the First Principle, whose causality consists in that everything that possesses unity as a property does so by participation in the One. The difference between the causality of the Forms in the *Phaedo* and that of the One in V 4[7] lies in that while the *παρουσία* of a Form refers to the set of things that are named after it, the *παρουσία* of the One is universal, for everything that is – i.e. everything that participates in a Form – has to participate in unity 'before' such participation and as a prerequisite for it. This is the philosophical sense of the "enigmatic" formula of the *Second Letter* alluded to by Plotinus, "Upon the king of all do all things turn".³³ But if so, a consequence follows that elaborates on another formulaic expression, this time genuinely Platonic: *ἐπέκεινα οὐσίας*. If the One is anterior to Being, i.e. the intelligible reality, the consequence is that it cannot be grasped by knowledge, whose field is true Being.³⁴ Once ascended to see the absolute simplicity of this principle, the search of the soul comes to an end: there cannot be another principle prior to this, nor is it possible that this unique principle is an Intellect: beyond Being, it is also beyond Intellect.

Having concluded his rephrasing of the *Second Letter*, Plotinus moves to (i), namely the analysis of the direct derivation from the One of that kind of reality that can 'do' so, and that will be described as the One-Many – i.e. the intelligible world – in the rest of the treatise. That the discussion of (i) begins here is made clear by the fact that the structure of the first sentence of the treatise is recalled. Plotinus repeats: "εἰ ἄρα ἕτερόν τι μετὰ τὸ πρῶτον εἴη, If, then, there is something else after the First..." (V 4[7], 1.20-21). This part of the treatise, important as it is in itself, will not be taken into account here: the Arabic version replaces most of it by an interpolated part, that will be examined below. However, as a conclusion to the present introduction it should at least be mentioned that the rest of the treatise contains the so-called "doctrine of the double *energeia*", namely the subtle, and perhaps not innocent transposition of the Aristotelian *ἐνέργεια* to the Platonic supra-sensible principles. Aristotle was right: what is actual also operates, and produces effects in so far as it is actual.³⁵

³² *On the Presence of Being, One and the Same, Everywhere as a Whole* (VI 4-5[22-23]).

³³ See above, n. 25; the doctrine of the three principles is introduced by the expression δι' αἰνιγμῶν: cf. ps.-Plato, *Second Epistle*, 312 D 7-8. Plotinus makes use of the verb αἰνίττεσθαι for topics that myths, ancient wise men, Pythagoras and at times even Plato express in an allusive manner: cf. I 6[1], 8.11; III 6[26], 19.26; IV 2[4], 2.49; IV 8[6], 1.32; V 1[10], 7.33; V 8[31], 4.26; VI 2[43], 22.13; VI 9[9], 11.27.

³⁴ Cf. E.R. Dodds, "The *Parmenides* of Plato and the Origin of the Neoplatonic One", *The Classical Quarterly* 22 (1928), pp. 129-42, and J. Whittaker, "Ἐπέκεινα νοῦ καὶ οὐσίας", *Vigiliae christianae* 23 (1969), pp. 91-104 (repr. in Id., *Studies in Platonism and Patristic Thought*, Aldershot 1984 [Variorum Collected Studies, 104], same pagination).

³⁵ V 4[7], 2.27-33: Ἐνέργεια ἢ μὲν ἐστὶ τῆς οὐσίας, ἢ δ' ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας ἐκάστου· καὶ ἢ μὲν τῆς οὐσίας αὐτὸ ἐστὶν ἐνέργεια ἕκαστον, ἢ δὲ ἀπ' ἐκείνης, ἣν δεῖ παντὶ ἐπεσθαι ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἕτερον οὖσαν αὐτοῦ· οἷον καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ πυρός ἢ μὲν τίς ἐστὶ συμπληροῦσα τὴν οὐσίαν θερμότης, ἢ δὲ ἀπ' ἐκείνης ἡδὴ γινομένη ἐνεργούντος ἐκείνου τὴν σύμφυτον τῇ οὐσίᾳ ἐν τῷ μένειν πῦρ. Οὕτω δὲ καὶ κεῖ. "In each and every thing there is an activity which belongs to substance and one which goes out from substance; and that which belongs to substance is the active actuality which is each particular thing, and the other activity derives from that first one, and must in everything be a consequence of it, different from the thing

But this is exactly the status of the supra-sensible principles in their immobile causality; hence no need of efficient causality to account for their capability to produce effects (and no basis, one may add, to argue against the *Phaedo* that it is the doctor who implants health). What is true for the Forms is true also for the One: it gives rise to the many because of its being ‘the One’, with no need to ‘do’ something. But the “many” that derive directly from the One are a “One-Many”. The protasis quoted above, “εἰ ἄρα ἕτερόν τι μετὰ τὸ πρῶτον εἴη, If, then, there is something else after the First” (V 4[7], 1.21), is followed by the apodosis “it cannot still be simple: it will therefore be a One-Many” (V 4[7], 1.22), an expression that, taken once again from the *Parmenides*,³⁶ is taken by Plotinus as Plato’s indication that Intellect and the multiplicity of the Forms are one and the same reality. In other words, the One-Many of the *Parmenides* counts as the philosophical truth in the background of the mythical account of the *Timaeus*, where the intelligible Forms and the divine Intellect feature as two distinct items. Having dealt with this topic shortly before, Plotinus feels free not to engage again in the discussion of this topic, admittedly controversial for a Platonic audience.³⁷ His focus here is on another question, that of the way one has to understand the derivation of the One-Many from the One. No need to imagine any action, not even a trace of an intermediary between the perfect simplicity of the One and the multiplicity of the Forms in the divine Intellect. The idea that the intrinsic causality of something whose definition implies agency (e.g., the sun) does not imply any efficient causality stands also in the background of what has been labelled “emanation”.³⁸ Here in V 4[7] this idea is cast, not without malice, in the Aristotelian language of ἐνέργεια, but the conceptual point in both cases – ‘emanation’ and the doctrine of the ‘double *energeia*’ – consists in the application of the model of the *Phaedo* to the derivation from the First of all that comes after it.

itself: as in fire there is a heat which is the content of its substance, and another which comes into being from that primary heat when fire exercises the activity which is native to its substance in abiding unchanged as fire. So it is also in the higher world” (trans. Armstrong, V, p. 147). Cf. Ch. Rutten, “La doctrine des deux actes dans la philosophie de Plotin”, *Revue philosophique de la France et de l’Étranger* 146 (1956), pp. 100-6.

³⁶ *Parm.*, 144 E 5.

³⁷ This is the topic of treatise V 9[5], *On Intellect, the Forms, and Being* and of another work written some time later: *That the Intelligible are not Outside Intellect, and on the Good* (V 5[32]).

³⁸ V 4[7], 1.27-34: “Ὁ τι δ’ ἂν τῶν ἄλλων εἰς τελείωσιν ἔη, ὁρῶμεν γεννῶν καὶ οὐκ ἀνεχόμενον ἐφ’ ἑαυτοῦ μένειν, ἀλλ’ ἕτερον ποιοῦν, οὐ μόνον ὅ τι ἂν προαίρεσιν ἔχη, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅσα φύει ἄνευ προαιρέσεως, καὶ τὰ ἄψυχα δὲ μεταδιδόντα ἑαυτῶν καθόσον δύναται· οἷον τὸ πῦρ θερμαίνει, καὶ ψύχει ἢ χιών, καὶ τὰ φάρμακα δὲ εἰς ἄλλο ἐργάζεται οἷον αὐτὰ - πάντα τὴν ἀρχὴν κατὰ δύναμιν ἀπομιμούμενα εἰς αἰδιότητά τε καὶ ἀγαθότητα. “Now when anything else comes to perfection we see that it produces, and does not endure to remain by itself, but makes something else. This is true not only of things which have choice, but of things which grow and produce without choosing to do so, and even lifeless things, which impart themselves to others as far as they can: as fire warms, snow cools, and drugs act on something else in a way corresponding to their own nature – all imitating the First Principle as far as they are able by tending to everlastingness and generosity” (trans. Armstrong, V, p. 143). The topic resurfaces in V 1[10], 6.30-39: Καὶ πάντα τὰ ὄντα, ἕως μένει, ἐκ τῆς αὐτῶν οὐσίας ἀναγκαίαν τὴν περὶ αὐτὰ πρὸς τὸ ἐξω αὐτῶν ἐκ τῆς παρουσίας δυνάμεως δίδωσιν αὐτῶν ἐζηρητημένην ὑπόστασιν, εἰκόνα οὖσαν οἷον ἀρχετύπων ὧν ἐξέφυ· πῦρ μὲν τὴν παρ’ αὐτοῦ θερμότητα· καὶ χιών οὐκ εἴσω μόνον τὸ ψυχρὸν κατέχει· μάλιστα δὲ ὅσα εὐώδη μαρτυρεῖ τοῦτο· ἕως γὰρ ἐστί, πρόεισί τι ἐξ αὐτῶν περὶ αὐτὰ, ὧν ἀπολαύει ὑποστάντων ὁ πλησίον. Καὶ πάντα δὲ ὅσα ἤδη τέλεια γεννᾷ· τὸ δὲ αἰεὶ τέλειον αἰεὶ καὶ αἰδιον γεννᾷ “All things which exist, as long as they remain in being, necessarily produce from their own substances, in dependence on their present power, a surrounding reality directed to what is outside them, a kind of image of the archetypes from which it was produced: fire produces the heat which comes from it; snow does not only keep its cold inside itself. Perfumed things show this particularly clearly. As long as they exist, something is diffused from themselves around them, and what is near them enjoys their existence. And all things when they come to perfection produce; the One is always perfect and therefore produces everlastingly” (trans. Armstrong, V, pp. 31-32).

To sum up, the One-Many that arises from the perfect simplicity of the One is the Intellect, and in the rest of the treatise Plotinus engages in the discussion of the way in which it can be so. The model of the causality of the First is the *παρουσία* of the *Phaedo*, and the reality that derives immediately from the First is the intelligible realm of the Forms, as implied by Plotinus' adoption of the hierarchy of the *Republic*, with the intelligible beings caused by the Good. This is the overarching picture of Plotinus' Platonism. But once stated that the Forms coincide with the divine Intellect – in other words, that the intelligible model and the Demiurge are one and the same – the derivation of the Intellect/intelligible from the First is cast in the frame of intellection as the nature, essence and 'act' of this principle, a move that opens a dialogue with Aristotle and Alexander of Aphrodisias, that cannot be examined here. It is however necessary at least to mention that Plotinus endorses the Aristotelian and Peripatetic idea of Intellect having itself as the object of its contemplation; but for him this divine principle has also another, prior object of contemplation: the First itself. In V 4[7] the One is described as the *νοητόν* of the Intellect and self-contemplation depends upon a prior, more fundamental intellectual 'act': the Intellect's 'vision' of the One-Good beyond Being and Intellect. This crucial point in Plotinus' articulation of the tripartite hierarchy of principles marks his distance from the Neopythagoreanism of the *Second Letter*, and is at one and the same time a complex issue on which he will never cease to reflect, from V 4[7] onwards. For the present purposes it is important to remark that it is the One cast as the *νοητόν* of the Intellect³⁹ that prompts the Arabic adaptation, as we shall see in section 3 below.

2. Plotinus' Treatise V 4[7] and the pseudo-Farabian Epistle on the Divine Science

An *Epistle on the Divine Science* (*Risāla fī l-'ilm al-ilāhī*) attributed to al-Fārābī was discovered around 1940 by the Orientalist Paul Kraus in the manuscript Cairo, Dār al-Kutub, *Ṭaymur, hikma* 117.⁴⁰ In an essay that was destined to be ground-breaking in many respects, he published some passages of the *Epistle* and examined it from the viewpoint of its contents and place in the history of Arabic-Islamic thought. Kraus easily disproved the Farabian authorship and established that the work was part and parcel of an Arabic version of Plotinus, whose main attestation was at

³⁹ V 4[7], 2.19-26: Εἴ τι οὖν μένοντος αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ γίνεται, ἀπ' αὐτοῦ τοῦτο γίνεται, ὅταν ἐκεῖνο μάλιστα ᾗ ὅ ἐστι. μένοντος οὖν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ οἰκείῳ ᾗθει ἐξ αὐτοῦ μὲν τὸ γινόμενον γίνεται, μένοντος δὲ γίνεται. ἐπεὶ οὖν ἐκεῖνο μένει νοητόν, τὸ γινόμενον γίνεται νόησις· νόησις δὲ οὕσα καὶ νοοῦσα ἀφ' οὗ ἐγένετο – ἄλλο γὰρ οὐκ ἔχει – νοῦς γίγνεται, ἄλλο οἷον νοητόν καὶ οἷον ἐκεῖνο καὶ μίμημα καὶ εἶδωλον ἐκείνου. "If, then, something comes into being while the Intelligible abides in itself, it comes into being from it when it is most of all what it is. When, therefore, the Intelligible abides 'in its own proper way of life' [*Tim.* 42 E 5-6], that which comes into being does come into being from it, but from it as it abides unchanged. Since, therefore, it abides as Intelligible, what comes into being does so as thinking; and since it is thinking and thinks that from which it came – for it has nothing else – it becomes Intellect, like another intelligible and like that Principle, a representation and image of it" (trans. Armstrong, V, p. 147). In later treatises Plotinus will abandon this terminology, that somewhat conflicts with the transcendence of the One with respect to Being and Intellect. However, he continues even in the last treatise where this question is addressed, i.e. V 3[49], to consider that the the divine Intellect is what it is, namely all the intelligible Forms in their timeless actuality, because of the intellection it has of the One. The relevant passages in chronological order are examined by J. Bussanich, *The One and its Relation to Intellect in Plotinus. A Commentary on Selected Texts*, Brill, Leiden 1988 (*Philosophia Antiqua*, 49).

⁴⁰ P. Kraus, "Plotin chez les arabes. Remarques sur un nouveau fragment de la paraphrase arabe des *Ennéades*", *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte* 23 (1940-41), pp. 263-95 (reprinted in *Alchemie, Ketzerei, Apokryphen im frühen Islam*. Gesammelte Aufsätze hrsg. u. eingeleitet von R. Brague, G. Olms, Hildesheim - Zürich - New York 1994, pp. 313-45).

that time already well-known: the pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle*.⁴¹ This assessment was based on a thorough study of the *Epistle* that remained unpublished until Kraus' translation into French was edited, together with the Arabic text, by Father G.C. Anawati O.P.⁴² Anawati took on him to publish the work that Kraus' untimely death had left unfinished.⁴³ It was in Kraus' *Cahiers*, now at the University of Chicago Library, that Anawati had found the preparatory material for the 1940 article.⁴⁴ The Arabic text was edited also by 'A. Badawī in 1955, still on the basis of the Cairo manuscript.⁴⁵ In the same year 1955 another ground-breaking study was published by F. Rosenthal, who examined a collection of philosophical treatises housed in Istanbul, at the Süleymaniye kütüphanesi, in MS *Carullah* 1279. Rosenthal informed us that among many other important texts he had found in this manuscript also a copy of the *Epistle*.⁴⁶

In sum, the *Epistle on the Divine Science* is a part of the adapted Arabic version of Plotinus that has come down to us in two manuscripts: Istanbul, Süleymaniye kütüphanesi, *Carullah* 1279, dated 882/1477, and Cairo, Dār al-Kutub, *Ṭaymur*, *ḥikma* 117, dated 936/1529.⁴⁷ In what follows they will be indicated by the siglas C and T.

All the Plotinian treatises mirrored in the *Risāla fī l-'ilm al-ilāhī* come from *Ennead* V. Here as in the pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle*, the flow of the Greek text is altered, though remaining recognisable. It begins with the last treatise of this *Ennead*, namely V 9[5], which is split into two: most chapters are located at the beginning, but the first two are placed at the end of the *Epistle*. Then the Enneadic sequence V 3[49], V 4[7], and V 5[32] is reproduced.⁴⁸ As a conclusion, the *Epistle* features Chapters 1-2 of V 9[5].⁴⁹

⁴¹ F. Dieterici, *Die sogenannte Theologie des Aristoteles aus arabischen Handschriften zum ersten Mal herausgegeben*, J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, Leipzig 1882 (repr. Rodopi, Amsterdam 1965); F. Dieterici, *Die sogenannte Theologie des Aristoteles aus dem Arabischen übersetzt und mit Anmerkungen versehen*, J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, Leipzig 1883.

⁴² G.C. Anawati, "Le néoplatonisme dans la pensée musulmane. État actuel des recherches", in *Plotino e il Neoplatonismo in Oriente e in Occidente*, Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Roma, 5-9 ottobre 1970, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Roma 1974 (Problemi attuali di scienza e cultura, 198), pp. 339-405 (repr. in G.C. Anawati, *Études de philosophie musulmane*, Vrin, Paris 1974 [Études Musulmanes, 15], pp. 155-221). This edition is indicated below as "Kraus-Anawati".

⁴³ See below, n. 50.

⁴⁴ About these notebooks one can see my article "Paul Kraus. *Cahiers* (© Jenny Strauss-Clay) transcrits et annotés. *Théologie d'Aristote*, 35", *Studia graeco-arabica* 6 (2016), pp. 211-62.

⁴⁵ 'A. Badawī, *Aflūṭīn 'inda l-'arab. Plotinus apud Arabes. Theologia Aristotelis et fragmenta quae supersunt*, Dār al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, Cairo 1955, 1966² (Dirāsāt Islāmiyya, 5), pp. 167-83. This edition is indicated below as "Badawī".

⁴⁶ F. Rosenthal, "From Arabic Books and Manuscripts V: A One-Volume Library of Arabic Philosophical and Scientific Texts in Istanbul", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 75 (1955), pp. 14-23, here p. 14: "I was reminded by 'Ilm ilāhī of the treatise ascribed to al-Fārābī which was identified by P. Kraus as a collection of the excerpts from the *Enneads* of Plotinus".

⁴⁷ Another copy of the *Epistle* may be housed in Patna, Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, whose catalogue (vol. 40, p. 6) informs us that manuscript 3472 contains a short anonymous *Risāla fī 'ilm al-ilāhiyyāt*. However, judging from the *incipit* and *explicit*, this is not the same work; I have not yet been able to consult this manuscript. For preparatory material towards the edition of the *Epistle* one may see the Appendix to my article "Aux origines du *dator formarum*. Plotin, l'Épître sur la science divine et al-Fārābī", in E. Coda - C. Martini Bonadeo (eds.), *De l'Antiquité tardive au Moyen Age. Études de logique aristotélicienne et de philosophie grecque, syriaque, arabe et latine offertes à Henri Hugonnard-Roche*, Vrin, Paris 2014 (Études Musulmanes, 44), pp. 381-414.

⁴⁸ *Treatises* V 1[10], V 2[11] and V 8[31] are attested in Arabic, but in the pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle*. *Ennead* V is the only one which is attested in Arabic in its entirety, meaning that all its treatises have been translated, even though often with gaps.

⁴⁹ Speaking of 'chapters' is useful but inaccurate, because the subdivision of Plotinus' writings into chapters was made by Ficinus as he was proceeding in his translation of the *Enneads* into Latin. Hence, what the translator

<i>Enneads</i>	<i>Epistle</i>
V 9[5], 3-13 (with gaps)	pp. 182-6 Kraus-Anawati = pp. 167-70 Badawī
V 3[49], 1-16 (with gaps)	pp. 187-95 Kraus-Anawati = pp. 170-7 Badawī
V 4[7] (the whole treatise, but with gaps)	pp. 195-7 Kraus-Anawati = pp. 178-80 Badawī
V 5[32], 2-13 (with gaps)	pp. 197-201 Kraus-Anawati = pp. 180-3 Badawī
V 9[5], 1-2 (with gaps)	p. 201 Kraus-Anawati = p. 183 Badawī

The table above makes it clear that the *Epistle* is a deliberate selection of passages from *Ennead V*. Roughly speaking, it begins with an account of the nature of the intelligible realm based on chapters 3, 6-7, 10-11 and 13 of V 9[5], *On Intellect, the Forms, and Being*, where Plotinus sets in place the main points of his interpretation of Intellect as a separate substance that coincides with the Forms. A selection of passages from V 3[49] follows. This difficult treatise, *On the Knowing Hypostases and that which is Beyond*, is excerpted almost in its entirety: short passages are taken from all its chapters except 10 and 17. Our treatise V 4[7], *How that which is after the First comes from the First, and on the One*, which is very short, is entirely present except to some 20 lines of Chapter 2 (i.e. the section that contains the doctrine of the ‘double *energeia*’). Then comes V 5[32], *The Intelligibles are not Outside Intellect*. As in the case of V 3[49], the treatise is excerpted in an orderly way: all its 13 chapters, though only in the form of short passages, are attested except 1 and 7-8.⁵⁰ The *Epistle* ends with Chapters 1-2 of V 9[5], the treatise with which it started.

At the beginning of V 9[5], that is located instead at the end of the *Epistle*, Plotinus lists three kinds of men: those who do not care for philosophy, those who strive for it but only in terms of ethical engagement, and those who are able to rise from sense-perception towards the intellectual contemplation of the “true region” of the Forms.⁵¹ This third kind of “godlike men, τρίτον ... γένος θείων ἀνθρώπων” (V 9[5], 1.16) resurfaces only slightly adapted in the Arabic rendition, where it is transformed into the “third class, superior men, *ṭabaqa ṭālīṭa afādīl*”.⁵² True, in the Arabic version the philosophers are no longer ‘divine’ as in the Greek original; but the place of philosophy as the highest activity one can devote oneself to, and as the way of life that grants the most perfect human beings the direct vision of Truth,⁵³ could not have been stated more clearly. If, as it seems to be the case, this statement mirrors the attitude of the circle that translated and

into Arabic had at his disposal were only the units represented by the treatises (at times the titles are translated); still, since Ficinus’ subdivision is almost everywhere based on turning points in Plotinus’ phrasing, it is useful to take the ‘chapters’ into account.

⁵⁰ Kraus’ translation finishes with the end of the Arabic rendition of chapter 10 of V 5[32], i.e. p. 199.21 Kraus-Anawati = p. 182.5 Badawī.

⁵¹ V 9[5], 1.1-22.

⁵² Cf. p. 201.10 Kraus-Anawati = p. 183.13 Badawī; English trans.: *Plotiniana Arabica* ad codicum fidem anglie vertit G. Lewis, in *Plotini Opera* II, *Enneades* IV-V ed. P. Henry et H.-R. Schwyzler, Desclée de Brouwer - L’Edition Universelle, Paris-Louvain 1959 (quoted above, n. 1), p. 411.

⁵³ Plotinus’ τῷ τόπῳ ἀληθινῷ καὶ οὐκ εἰς ὄντι (line 20) is rendered “*al-mawḍū’ al-ḥaqq mulā’im li-afādīl al-nās*, the true place, suited to the superior ones of mankind”: p. 201.13 Kraus-Anawati = p. 183.16 Badawī, trans. Lewis, *ibid*.

adapted Plotinus' writings, no surprise that other intellectual groups of the coeval Muslim world might have reacted with incredulity and irritation.

3. *God and Intellect in the pseudo-Farabian Epistle on the Divine Science*

As outlined in Section 1, treatise V 4[7] begins by distinguishing between direct derivation from the One and dependence upon it through intermediate principles. The rest of the treatise argues for direct derivation from the One of the One-Many, i.e. Intellect: a derivation that is described as the contemplation that the Intellect directs to the One. Having the One as its νοητόν, the Intellect 'sees' in it the all-embracing causality of unity, that counts as the prerequisite for participation in one or other Form. The universal παρουσία of the One is the foundation for the παρουσία of the Forms to their participants and gives the ratio of intelligible causality. This explanation of the causal relationship between the Good and the Forms (*Republic*), that is typical of Plotinus, in V 4[7] is cast in the Aristotelian language of the νόησις of the divine νοῦς, thus giving rise to a riddle repeatedly examined from treatise 7 onwards, till treatise 49 of the chronological series.⁵⁴

Once arrived in 9th century Baghdad, all this was naturalised in the admittedly different frame of creation on the one hand, and divine Oneness (*tawhīd*) on the other. I said before that for Plotinus it is not the case that the 'if' of line 1 of V 4[7] means 'why on earth should the One give rise to the many', but the reverse is true for the Arabic Plotinus. A treatise entitled *How that which is after the First comes from the First, and on the One*⁵⁵ had good chances to be read as the philosophical account of God's creation, and this is in fact the way it was understood. It was not the only one among Plotinus' (and Proclus') writings to originate the doctrine of creation as seen by the *falāsifa* – the backbone of the views about God's causality which were destined to be criticized by al-Ġazālī. As outlined in section 1 above, Plotinus had taught all Platonists (and not only) after him to abandon the demiurgic model of a divine principle that begins to operate, performs his production in distinct steps, and at a given moment ceases to create. After Plotinus, the demiurgic model or, to be more precise, the model of efficient causality was superseded by that of the causality ἀτῶ τῶ εἶναι of the supra-sensible principles, including the One. The adoption of this model as a rational account of creation out of nothing took place at the very beginning of Arabic-Islamic philosophy, and has been examined time and again in the scholarship. Also the philosophical interpretation of the divine Oneness (*tawhīd*) in terms of the Neoplatonic transcendence to any quality whatsoever has been examined over and over again. Both changes with respect to Plotinus – the transformation of the causality ἀτῶ τῶ εἶναι into creation out of nothing, and the interpretation of the One as God Almighty – are omnipresent in the Arabic adapted translation of Plotinus that took place, as is well known, in the early stage of *falsafa*. Especially interesting in the Arabic adaptation of V 4[7] are the developments it gives rise to. Both the immediate derivation of the Intellect from the One and the account of this derivation in terms of the One as the νοητόν of the Intellect resurface in the Arabic *Epistle*, in part transmitting a genuine Plotinian insight, in part giving rise to adaptations and even substantial changes.

We have seen before that the 'if-then' statement of V 4[7], 1.1-5 is structured as follows: if, as is the case, there is anything after the First, then necessarily it (i) comes directly from it, or (ii) depends upon it through intermediate principles. This structure went lost in the Arabic rendition, where we read:

⁵⁴ See above n. 39.

⁵⁵ The title was translated too. It runs: *On the First and on the things that are after it and how they come from it*, p. 195.11 Kraus-Anawati = p. 178.1 Badawī. The title is attested both in C and T.

كل ما كان بعد الأول فهو من الأول اضطرارا

Whatever is after the First is necessarily from the First (trans. Lewis).⁵⁶

In the Arabic sentence Plotinus' ἀνάγκη, rendered by *idṭiraran*, does no longer establish the logical necessity of the disjunction discussed above; rather, it refers to the derivation itself. The rest of the sentence reproduces the Plotinian disjunction in the form of a clause that specifies the two modes of this necessary derivation. In other words: the derivation, which is necessary, takes place either in one way or another:

إلا أنه إما أن يكون منه سواء بلا توسط ، وإما أن يكون منه بتوسط أشياء أخرى بينه وبين الأول
Though it may come from it either directly, without intermediary, or through the medium of other things that are between it and the First (trans. Lewis).⁵⁷

The part of the sentence introduced by 'though' (*illā*) states that the necessary derivation from the First is of two sorts: either with no intermediaries, *bi-lā tawassuṭ*, or through intermediaries. The topic of the "creation by intermediaries" typical of the Arabic adaptation of Proclus (*Liber de causis*, prop. 3) features also here and shows by itself how close to each other are all the reworkings of Neoplatonic texts at the beginning of *falsafa*. Plotinus' analysis of the double status of the derivatives, (i) immediately dependent upon the First or (ii) depending upon the First because they depend upon the Soul and Intellect, is transformed into a philosophical account of creation, and creation can happen either *bi-lā tawassuṭ* (= εὐθύς in Plotinus) or *bi-tawassuṭ ašyā' uḥar biya baynahu* (i.e., *kull mā kāna ba'da l-awwal*) *wa-bayna l-awwal*. Plotinus' expression διὰ τῶν μετὰξὺ qualified the ἀναγωγῆ. The "things that are in between" of the Arabic version, instead, descend from the First:

فيكون إذا للأشياء نظام وشرح . ذلك أن منها ما هو ثان بعد الأول ، ومنها ثالث . أما الثاني فيضاف إلى الأول وأما الثالث فيضاف إلى الثاني

So things come to have order and arrangement. Some are secondary after the First, and some are tertiary. The secondary are connected to the First, and the tertiary are connected to the secondary (trans. Lewis).⁵⁸

The subdivision into distinct sentences of the unique Plotinian sentence, with ἀνάγκη governing both εἶναι and ἔχειν, gives rise here to a new step in the reasoning, where the particle *idan* assigns the reason why there is a hierarchy in the universe. The reason for this to be so is that there is a second degree directly issued from the First, and a third degree that derives from the second one.

As we have seen before, with line 5 Plotinus begins to discuss the way in which what comes directly from the First arises from it. It is this topic – the main point in treatise V 4[7] – that has guided the Arabic reception. To the sentence Δεῖ μὲν γάρ τι πρὸ πάντων εἶναι ἀπλοῦν (line 5) corresponds the Arabic

وينبغي أن يكون قبل الأشياء كلها شيء مبسوط

Before all things there must be something simple, (trans. Lewis, modified)⁵⁹

⁵⁶ P. 195.12 Kraus-Anawati = p. 178.2 Badawī, trans. Lewis, p. 333.

⁵⁷ P. 195.12-13 Kraus-Anawati = p. 178.2-3 Badawī, trans. Lewis, p. 333.

⁵⁸ P. 195.13-15 Kraus-Anawati = p. 178.3-5 Badawī, trans. Lewis, p. 333.

⁵⁹ P. 195.15-16 Kraus-Anawati = p. 178.5-6 Badawī, trans. Lewis, p. 333, modified.

provided that we correct with Kraus the reading *بلا متوسط* (“something without an intermediary”) into *شيء مبسوط* (“something simple”). The comparison with the Greek *τι ... ἀπλοῦν* made Kraus write, instead of the reading of T that makes no sense, his own conjecture *شيء مبسوط*. Badawī has the text as in T and, more importantly, this erroneous reading features also in C.⁶⁰ But, if we read with Kraus, we have the Arabic text stating in purely Plotinian vein that before the multiplicity that characterizes the whole reality there must be a unique principle, transcendent in its perfect simplicity.⁶¹ It is from this principle that everything derives – a philosophical claim for *tawhīd* most welcomed indeed among the early *ḡalāsifa*, who were eagerly reading the Greek metaphysical works just translated, and were elaborating on them in search of rational foundations for their idea of God.⁶²

The rest of the passage, with the exception of a couple of lines corrupted, reproduces more or less faithfully the Plotinian account quoted above.⁶³ I cannot go deeper into detail here, but at least the final sentence has to be commented upon. To conclude his reasoning about the necessary unicity of the First Principle, Plotinus has set in place the following inference: since (i) no body is simple, and every body is generated; and (ii) since ‘principle’ implies ‘not-generated’, then no body can be first; in fact, prior to it there would be that principle which, being incorporeal, is not-generated (lines 17-20: οὐδὲν γὰρ ἀπλοῦν σῶμα, γινόμενον τε τὸ σῶμα, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἀρχή· ἢ δὲ ἀρχὴ ἀγέννητος· μὴ σωματικὴ δὲ οὖσα, ἀλλ’ ὄντως μία, ἐκεῖνο ἂν εἴη τὸ πρῶτον).⁶⁴ In the Arabic version, the nature of the inference has been lost and the entire sentence is rendered in a simplified manner: “No body is simple, but is composite and liable to corruption. The First is not corporeal but one and simple, so it is indubitably the first of all things”.⁶⁵

After this sentence, a passage comes that has no Greek counterpart.

المعقولات ثلاثة : المعقول^(a) الأول الذي هو معقول حقاً، وذلك أن الأشياء العقلية والحسية تشتاق إلى أن تعقله ، وهو^(b) لا يشتاق إلى أن يعقل شيئاً ، لأنها فيه وهو علة لها بأنه فقط ، وهو مبدع العقل . والمعقول الثاني هو العقل ، إلا أنه معقول وعقل يشتاق إلى أن يعقل ما فيه ، ومعقول لما تحته . والمعقول الثالث هو^(c) الصورة الحسية الهيولانية ، التي هي معقولة بعرض لا بذاتها . وذلك أن العقل هو الذي يميزها من حاملها في أمر المنطق أن يصفها كأنها قائمة بذاتها مباينة لحواملها .

(a) Kraus CT هي Badawī هو (c) ان C هو (b) Kraus Badawī T : om. C المعقول (a)

The intelligibles are three: the first intelligible, which is truly intelligible – for things intelligible and sensible desire to exercise intellection on it, whereas it does not desire to exercise intellection on anything, because they are in it and it is a cause of them, solely by the fact of its being, and is the originator of mind. The second intelligible is mind, but it is both intelligible and intelligent, desiring

⁶⁰ Badawī p. 178.6, reflected in Lewis’ trans., p. 333: “something without an intermediary”. The fact that also C reads here the erroneous *بلا متوسط* suggests, together with other conjunctive errors, that the two manuscripts form a group. See my “Aux origines du *dator formarum*” (above, n. 47).

⁶¹ The note 159 of p. 195 in the Kraus-Anawati edition states that the reading *بلا متوسط* has been corrected on the basis of the Greek; Kraus’ French translation, p. 219, runs: “Il faut qu’avant toutes les choses, il y ait une chose simple”, and the note on this passage emphasizes how literal the translation is: *ḡay* renders *τι*.

⁶² The Kindian treatise *On First Philosophy*, with its argument for the pure One as the creator of the whole reality, is a telling example of this attitude.

⁶³ V 4[7], 1.5.21 quoted above, p. 139, with Armstrong’s translation.

⁶⁴ Cf. above, n. 29.

⁶⁵ P. 196.3-5 Kraus-Anawati = p. 178.14-16 Badawī, trans. Lewis, p. 333.

to exercise intellection on what is inside it and being the object of intellection of what is below it. The third intelligible is the sensible and material form, which is accidentally and not essentially intelligible. For it is mind that distinguishes form from its bearer in the process of reason; it describes forms as though they were self-existent, distinct from their bearers (trans. Lewis).⁶⁶

Not only is this passage original: it is also alien from Plotinus' ideas on many counts. First and foremost, to the One an intelligible content is attributed; second, the intermediate position of the Intellect below the One and above all the rest is established on a basis that is quite different from Plotinus'; finally, the lowest level of the intelligible, namely the enmattered form, is described in terms that are clearly reminiscent of an 'Aristotelian' abstraction. Where does all this come from? It seems evident to me that no source-hunting would be successful, because what we have in front of us with this passage is a philosophical elaboration on the part of a reader of Plotinus, be it the translator himself or someone of his circle. The author recasts in his own terms Plotinus' idiosyncratic play of the One and the One-Many as two intelligibles – a play that is typical of V 4[7]. Plotinus had been led by his reasoning about the One-Many as νοῦς to reflect on the object of its νόησις, and had concluded that its νοητόν had to be two sorts: on the one hand, the divine νοῦς had to intelligise itself (in exactly the same way and for the same reason as Aristotle's νόησεως νόησις), but, prior to itself (and at variance with Aristotle), it had to intelligise also the One. Instead, the Arab reader posits a tripartite hierarchy: in addition to the first intelligible, that is the One, there is a second intelligible, namely the true Forms located in the divine Intellect; then again, there is a third sort of intelligible, namely the form in the human mind, abstracted from matter.

No doubt that it is the Plotinian account of the One as the νοητόν of the Intellect to have suggested the identification of the First Principle with the “truly intelligible (*mā'qūl haqqan*)” that everything strives to know; still, the Arabic sentence gives a distinct non-Plotinian ring.⁶⁷ The reason why this supreme intelligible, that cannot be but the First Principle itself, is situated so high in the hierarchy consists in that, at variance with everything that comes after it, it does not want to know anything – a statement that is clearly reminiscent of the status of the divine Intellect of Aristotle's *Metaphysics Lambda*.⁶⁸ The explanation provided in this passage, however, goes further than any claim Aristotle would have been ready to subscribe to: we are told that all the forms are 'already' in the First Principle – something that Aristotle does not say at all, even though this idea is not unprecedented in the Peripatetic school.⁶⁹ Even more important for the profile of the author

⁶⁶ P. 196.6-11 Kraus-Anawati = p. 179.1-6 Badawī, trans. Lewis, p. 333, slightly modified.

⁶⁷ While continuing to assign to the One this 'role' in the origination of the intelligible world out of an act of intellection performed by the Intellect, Plotinus avoids in later treatises to qualify the One as the νοητόν of the Intellect. See above n. 00.

⁶⁸ The passage of *Metaph.*, XII 9, 1075 a 25-35 famously states that the perfection and the actuality of the divine Intellect prevents it from having anything but itself as the object of its intellection.

⁶⁹ This is what Alexander of Aphrodisias states in his *De Anima*, pp. 87.25-88.3 Bruns (“But if there are forms that have their being in themselves, apart from all matter or any subject, such forms are intelligible in the highest degree, since they possess their intelligibility within their own nature and not as a result of the aid provided by the knowing faculty. Thus the intelligibles that are naturally such are intelligibles in act, whereas material [forms] are only potentially intelligible. But the intelligible in act is identical with the intellect in act, on the principle that the cognitive object is one with the cognitive power. Therefore, the purely immaterial form is intellect in the supreme degree, intellect that is [truly] in act”, trans. A.P. Fotinis, *The De Anima of Alexander of Aphrodisias. A Translation and Commentary*, University Press of America, Washington 1979, p. 115).

of this passage is the fact that he endorses the Plotinian doctrine of the causality $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omega\ \tau\omega\ \epsilon\tilde{\iota}\nu\alpha\iota$. For him the highest intelligible is the cause of the Forms “*bi-annihī faqaṭ*, solely by the fact of its being”, a statement that elaborates on the rendition of Plotinus’ $\epsilon\upsilon\theta\acute{\upsilon}\zeta$ by the expression “without intermediary”, and that features also in the pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle* and in the *Liber de causis*.⁷⁰ In all these works the First Cause creates the universe via the creation with no intermediary of the intelligible world, upon which the visible world depends. When Themistius’ paraphrase of *Metaphysics* XII will be translated into Arabic, bringing with it the idea that the First Cause knows its effects because it knows in itself the Forms that are the causes of the things, this will come as a confirmation that the genuine Aristotelian doctrine, far from implying that God ignores the lower degrees of reality, is that God knows all the things, intelligible and sensible, as their cause.⁷¹ As a matter of fact, what the passage quoted above rules out is not the First’s knowledge of what is outside it, rather the desire to know them, i.e. any tension towards them. Instead, the second intelligible, the Intellect, strives to know the First. Coming second because of this, it is also known by the things below it: the implication is that nothing can know the First, we only can know the Intellect. Once again, this topic characterizes another text produced in the same milieu: the *Liber de causis*, where it is said in as many words that “The First Cause is signified only from the second cause, which is an intelligence”.⁷² Finally, the last instantiation of the intelligible is the result of abstraction from sense-perception.

Only a philosopher somewhat familiar with Aristotle can plausibly have written this passage, and it comes as no surprise that the *Epistle* has been attributed to al-Fārābī, where we find the same mix of abstraction from sense-perception and tension towards the intelligible Forms that are located in the divine Intellect.⁷³

4. *The Divine Intellect in the Arabic Metaphysics Lambda and De Anima III 5*

In the same period and milieu in which Plotinus was rendered into Arabic, also Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* was translated.⁷⁴ That the first principle of the entire cosmos is a divine Intellect is beyond

⁷⁰ For some examples cf. “*Causa prima est esse tantum*”, above n. 18.

⁷¹ Sh. Pines, “Some Distinctive Metaphysical Conceptions in Themistius’ Commentary on *Book Lambda* and their Place in the History of Philosophy”, in J. Wiesner (ed.), *Aristoteles: Werk und Wirkung Paul Moraux zum 65. Geburtstag gewidmet*, II. *Kommentierung, Überlieferung, Nachleben*, De Gruyter, Berlin - New York 1987, pp. 177-204 (repr. *The Collected Works of Shlomo Pines*, III, Brill - The Magnes Press, Jerusalem 2000, pp. 267-94); R. Brague, *Thémistius. Paraphrase de la Métaphysique d’Aristote (livre Lambda)*, traduit de l’hébreu et de l’arabe, introd., notes et indices par R. Brague, Vrin, Paris 1999 (Tradition de la pensée classique); E. Coda, “A Revised Aristotelian Theology. Themistius on the Soul of the Heavens and the Movement of the Heavenly Bodies”, in F. Baghdassarian - G. Guyomarc’h (eds.), *Réceptions de la théologie aristotélicienne d’Aristote à Michel d’Éphèse*, Peeters, Louvain-la-Neuve 2017 (Aristote. Traductions et Études), pp. 207-38.

⁷² *Liber de causis*, prop. 5(6), trans. R. C. Taylor, in *St. Thomas Aquinas. Commentary on the Book of Causes* translated by V. A. Guagliardo O.P., Ch.R. Hess O.P., and R.C. Taylor, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C. 1996, p. 46.

⁷³ Cf. “Aux origines du *dator formarum*”, above, n. 47.

⁷⁴ G. Endress, “The Circle of al-Kindī. Early Arabic Translations from the Greek and the Rise of Islamic Philosophy”, in G. Endress - R. Kruk (eds.), *The Ancient Tradition in Christian and Islamic Hellenism*, Research School CNWS, Leiden 1997, pp. 43-76; Id., “Building the Library of Arabic Philosophy. Platonism and Aristotelianism in the Sources of al-Kindī”, in C. D’Ancona (ed.), *The Libraries of the Neoplatonists*. Proceedings of the Meeting of the European Science Foundation Network “Late Antiquity and Arabic Thought. Patterns in the Constitution of European Culture” (Strasbourg, March 12-14, 2004), Brill, Leiden-Boston 2007 (*Philosophia Antiqua*, 107), pp. 320-50.

doubt for the readers of the *Metaphysics*, both in Greek and in Arabic. The version of *Metaph.*, XII 9, 1074 b 25-26, δῆλον τοίνυν ὅτι τὸ θεϊότατον καὶ τιμιώτατον νοεῖ, καὶ οὐ μεταβάλλει, assigns the most divine “intellect” as the object of thought of the First Principle:

فإنه بين أنه يعقل عقلا إلهيا جدا وكريم جدا ولا يتغير

It is clear that it thinks a most divine and noble intellect, and that it does not change,⁷⁵

and that of *Metaph.*, XII 9, 1074 b 33-35, αὐτὸν ἄρα νοεῖ, εἴπερ ἐστὶ τὸ κράτιστον, καὶ ἔστιν ἡ νόησις νοήσεως νόησις, runs as follows:

فإذا يعقل ذاته إذ كان الأقوى وهو يعقل التعقل

therefore it thinks itself since it is the most powerful, and it thinks intellection.⁷⁶

Thus, a hypothetical reader of both the Arabic *Metaphysics* and the Arabic version of V 7[4] could always have found a confirmation of the former in the latter, and vice versa. One can go even further than this, and surmise that passages like the interpolation in V 4[7] discussed above were fostered by the authoritative tenets of the Arabic Aristotle, were it not for the fact that the First Principle as a νοητόν features also in Plotinus. Be that as it may, an ‘Aristotelian’ inspiration in the interpolated passage is also evident. Unless we imagine that first V 4[7] was read, with its One-νοητόν, and then this reading set the tone for all the other passages in the Arabic Plotinus (and Proclus) where the One is credited with some sort of intellection, the ‘Aristotelian’ influence on adaptations of this kind is the most plausible explanation, especially in consideration of the fact that the *Metaphysics* was available to the same group of scholars who adapted Proclus and Plotinus.⁷⁷

A curious case of cross-pollination occurs in the ancient version of the *De Anima*.⁷⁸ In Book III Aristotle famously describes the agent principle that enables our intellect to intelligise by the same features as the divine Intellect of *Metaphysics Lambda*:

De An., III 5, 430 a 17-18

καὶ οὗτος ὁ νοῦς χωριστός καὶ ἀπαθής καὶ ἀμιγής, τῆ οὐσία ὧν ἐνέργεια

And it is this intellect which is separable and impassive and unmixed, being in its essential nature an activity.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ *Tafsir Ma ba'd at-tabi'at*, Texte arabe inédit établi par M. Bouyges, Imprimerie Catholique, Beyrouth 1938-1952, III 2, pp. 1691.11-1692.1, English trans. Ch. Genequand, *Ibn Rushd's Metaphysics. A Translation with Introduction of Ibn Rushd's Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics, Book Lām*, Brill, Leiden 1986 (Islamic Philosophy and Theology. Texts and Studies, 1), p. 190.

⁷⁶ *Tafsir Ma ba'd at-tabi'at*, p. 1692.7-8 Bouyges, trans. Genequand, p. 190.

⁷⁷ See above n. 74.

⁷⁸ On the various translations of the *De Anima* and the problems in their direct and indirect attestations, cf. H. Gätje, *Studien zur Überlieferung der aristotelischen Psychologie im Islam*, C. Winter, Heidelberg 1971 (Annales Universitatis Saraviensis, Philosophische Fakultät, 11); A.L. Ivry, “The Arabic Text of Aristotle's *De Anima* and its Translator”, *Oriens* 36 (2001), pp. 59-77.

⁷⁹ English trans. Aristotle. *De Anima* with Translation, Introduction and Notes by R.D. Hicks, Cambridge at the University Press 1907, p. 135.

Parallel with this passage, the Arabic version that has come down to us reads:

وهذا العقل الفعال مفارق لجوهر الهيولى وهو غير معروف ولا مفارق لشيء

And this Agent Intellect is separated from the substance of matter, and it is unknowable and not separated from the thing.⁸⁰

a claim of ineffability that gives a distinct Neoplatonic ring. This was by no means the sole text of this crucial passage of the *De Anima* to be available in Arabic, as we learn from Averroes, who attests an Arabic translation faithful to the original Greek text;⁸¹ still, the claim of ineffability that intrudes the Aristotelian account of the First Principle is telling, and even more so if one takes into account that this version probably traces back to the same early period under examination here.

All in all, the passages discussed point to cross-pollination at the dawn of Arabic philosophy of the Neoplatonic and Aristotelian accounts of the First Principle. That it features both as the Neoplatonic One and as the divine Intellect of the *Metaphysics* and *De Anima* is a typical landmark of the works translated and adapted in the “circle of al-Kindī”,⁸² and a move that was in all likelihood facilitated by works like V 4[7].⁸³ However, there is a feature where the Neoplatonic tradition is clearly distinct from and irreconcilable with the Aristotelian one: the claim for the existence of a separate Intellect below the First Principle. There is no trace in Aristotle of a second Intellect distinct from the Unmoved Mover, whose duty would be to cause the soul to intelligise, neither is there any trace of this in Alexander of Aphrodisias. For both Aristotle and Alexander only one divine Intellect stands at the pinnacle of the whole reality, and if Alexander explains in his own *De Anima* the role of the ποιητικόν in *De Anima* III 5 in terms of an indirect causality that consists in that the Agent Intellect has in itself the true intelligibles, this is made possible precisely by the fact that for him the identity between the Agent Intellect and the Unmoved Mover is even more clearly stated than it is in Aristotle himself. If we turn to Arabic-Islamic philosophy, we see on the contrary that from al-Fārābī onwards the Agent Intellect is a separate substance distinct from and subordinated to the First Principle itself.

⁸⁰ ‘A. Badawī (ed.), *Aristūṭālīs fī l-naḥs. al-Ārā’ al-ṭabī’iyya al-mansūb ilā Fulūṭarḥus. al-Ḥāss wa-l-maḥsūs li-Ibn Rušd. al-Nabāt al-mansūb ilā Aristūṭālīs*, Maktabat al-naḥḍa al-miṣriyya, Cairo 1954 (Dirāsāt islāmiyya, 16) repr. Kuwait - Beirut 1980, in part. pp. 3-88 (= *Kitāb Aristūṭālīs wa-naṣṣ kalāmihī fī l-naḥs. Tarḡamat Ishāq ibn Ḥunayn*), here p. 75.4-5. It is tempting to read in the bizarre “not separated from a thing” an echo of the Neoplatonic omnipresence of the First Cause. In the Neoplatonic paraphrase of the *De Anima* edited by R. Arnzen, whose translation into Arabic was produced within the “circle of al-Kindī”, the lines 430 a 17-18 are missing; cf. R. Arnzen, *Aristoteles’ De Anima. Eine verlorene spätantike Paraphrase in arabischer und persischer Überlieferung. Arabischer Text nebst Kommentar*, Quellengeschichtlichen Studien und Glossaren, Brill, Leiden [etc.] 1998 (Aristoteles Semitico-Latinus, 9), p. 325. The paraphrase skips from 430 a 12 to 430 a 22.

⁸¹ *Averrois Cordubensis Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De Anima libros* recensuit F.S. Crawford, Cambridge [MA] 1953 (Corpus Commentariorum Auerrois in Aristotelem ... Versionum Latinarum VI 1), p. 440 (lemma): “Et iste intellectus etiam est abstractus, non mixtus neque passibilis, et est in sua substantia actus”, a Latin text whose Arabic antecedent, lost to us, was different from the text edited by Badawī and faithful to the Greek.

⁸² See above n. 74.

⁸³ Also the case of the Arabic adaptation of VI 7[38] is interesting: this treatise, attested in the ps.-*Theology of Aristotle*, contains an account of the causality of the divine Intellect that had been elaborated by Plotinus as an exegesis of the Demiurge of the *Timaeus*, but that in the Arabic adaptation is instead referred to the way in which God creates the whole reality.

In his *Epistle On the Meanings of 'Intellect'* al-Fārābī rules out explicitly the possibility that the Agent Intellect that in the *De Anima* operates as the cause of our intelligising coincides with the First Cause of the *Metaphysics*.

وأما أن العقل الفعال موجود فإنه بيّن في كتاب النفس (...)
فمن ذلك يتبين أنه ليس فيه كفاية في إعطاء جميع الأشياء (...)
فأما مبدؤه الذي هو مبدأ ما يتجوهر به محرك السماء الأول فهو واحد من كل الجهات اضطراراً
وليس يمكن أن يكون موجود أكمل منه ولا أن يكون له مبدأ فهو إذا مبدأ المبادئ كلها
ومبدأ أول للموجودات كلها وهذا هو العقل الذي يذكره أرسطو في حرف اللام من كتاب ما
بعد الطبيعة وكل واحد من تلك الآخر أيضاً عقل إلا أن ذلك هو العقل الأول والموجود الأول
والواحد الأول والحق الأول وهذه الآخر إنما صارت عقلا عن ذلك على ترتيب⁸⁴.

That the agent intellect exists has been shown in the *De Anima* [...]

From that it is clear that there is not in [the agent intellect] sufficiency through which it is the first principle of all existing things [...]

But that principle which is the principle through which the first heaven becomes a substance is necessarily one in all respects, and it is not possible that there is an existing thing more perfect than it, or that it have a principle. Thus it is the principle of all principles and the first principle of all existing things. And this is the intellect which Aristotle mentioned in letter *Lam* [book *Lambda*] of the *Metaphysics*. Each one of these others is also an intellect, but this one is the first intellect and the first existing, the first one, and the first true. The others only become an intellect from it according to order.⁸⁵

The existence of a separate Intellect distinct from and subordinated to the First Principle is the landmark of post-Farabian *falsafa* whose roots are in the works produced within the circle of al-Kindī. From this point of view, it is fair to conclude that it was Neoplatonism to influence the Arabic Aristotelian tradition, at the beginning of *falsafa* as well as in the long run.

⁸⁴ *Alfarabi: Risalat fi l-'aql*. Texte arabe intégral en partie inédit établi par M. Bouyges S.J., Beyrouth 1938 (Bibliotheca arabica scholasticorum. Série arabe. Tome VIII, fasc. 1), repr. in *Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Fārābī (d. 339/950). Texts and Studies* III, collected and reprinted by F. Sezgin in collaboration with M. Amawi, C. Ehrig-Eggert, E. Neubauer, Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science at the J.W. Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main 1999 (Islamic Philosophy, 9), pp. 23-94, here pp. 32.8; 33.5-7; 35.12-36.2

⁸⁵ Trans. A. Hyman in A. Hyman - J.J. Walsh (eds.), *Philosophy in the Middle Ages. The Christian, Islamic, and Jewish Traditions*, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis 1973, pp. 215-21, here pp. 220-21.