

Plotinus' Conception of the Genera of Sensibles

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Plotinus, as it is well known, follows the Platonic ontological distinction between the intelligible realm (κόσμος νοητός) of real being, and the sensible realm (κόσμος αἰσθητός), that is the word of phenomena or becoming. Additionally, he treats the Aristotelian and the Stoic categories as if they were kinds of being or existents (γένη τῶν ὄντων).¹ Thus, he is able to compare the doctrine of Plato to those of the Peripatetics and Stoics. As a result of the comparison, Plotinus criticizes and rejects the categorical schemes of Aristotle and the Stoics as inadequate and wrong in relation to the real being. He accepts, then, Plato's doctrine of the "highest kinds" (μέγιστα γένη);² namely: being (ὄν), movement (κίνησις), rest (στάσις), sameness (ταυτόν) and difference (θάτερον).³ These genera are defined by Plotinus as the only "genera of being" that properly apply to the intelligible realm.⁴ The genera of being constitute the aspects of the Intelligible Hypostasis⁵ and are *the principles of being* (ἀρχαὶ τοῦ ὄντος).⁶ They are not concepts derived from reality, but they form the reality and are *real beings* by themselves. The sensible realm, according to Plotinus, differs significantly from the intelligible. The genera of sensibles, thus, differ from the "genera of being," inasmuch as the sensible realm is distinct from the intelligible. In relation to the real genera, they are genera by homonymy and likeness.⁷ Therefore, for the sensible cosmos Plotinus introduces the set of "genera of becoming," i.e., substance, motion, quantity, quality and relation.⁸ Those genera, on the one hand, are compatible with the five "highest kinds" of the intelligible realm. On the other hand, they ostensibly present the modified version of the Aristotelian categories.⁹

1. *Enn.* 6.1.1.15–18.

2. *Soph.* 254a–256e.

3. *Enn.* 6.2.

4. *Enn.* 6.3.1.1–2.

5. *Enn.* 6.2.1–8.

6. *Enn.* 6.2.2.11–14.

7. *Enn.* 6.3.1.19–21.

8. *Enn.* 6.2.1.19–20.

9. See C. Evangelou, "Plotinus' set of Categories for the Kosmos Aisthetos," 209–39.

Thus, the “genera of becoming” are treated either as the Aristotelian categories limited exclusively to the domain of the sensible cosmos, or as the Peripatetic (and Stoic) categories subordinated to the Platonic “highest kinds” of the intelligible realm. But what I am going to contend is that Plotinus, because of his “sole” understanding of particular substance, modifies the ontological meaning of categories or genera applied to the sensibles. I propose to abstract, as much as possible, from Plotinus’ interpretation of Plato’s μέγιστα γένη, as well as from his critique of the Aristotelian and Stoic categories.¹⁰ Instead, I intend to analyze the genera of the sensible realm *as such*, in relation to the metaphysical status of their subject, namely the sensible particular.

I. SENSIBLE PARTICULAR

In contrast to the intelligible realm that is domain of True Being, Plotinus presents the sensible realm as the field of “becoming” (γένεσις). Following Plato’s task of assuring and explaining the real existence of sensible particulars, he focuses on the analysis of their existence or, speaking properly, on the becoming of particular things. According to Plotinus, particular objects of the sensible realm are in permanent alteration. In other words they are in “flux.” Therefore, the proper name for the nature manifested in bodies is “becoming,” but not “substance” in the meaning of real being. The notion of substance, when applied to the sensibles, is modified according to their nature and differs from the real substance of the intelligible world significantly. As Plotinus underlines, the sensible objects can be named “substance” (οὐσία) only homonymously (ὁμωνύμως).¹¹

Plotinus applies to sensible objects the Aristotelian notion of primary substance that denotes the proper subject for assertions of real existence or ascriptions, which presuppose real existence. With this, substance is neither what is present in a subject nor what is predicated of a subject.¹² However, Plotinus differs significantly from Aristotle on the account of the sensible realm and as a consequence on the nature of the sensible object. In fact, the sensible substance, which is the primary substance of Aristotle’s *Categories*, is relegated to the status of pseudo-substance: οἶον οὐσία; ἐνθάδε οὐσία.¹³

What is more, the becoming by itself is not uniform. According to Plotinus this notion comprises the simple and composite bodies (τά τε ἀπλά τά τε σύνθετα); the accidentals and derivables (τά δὲ συμβεβηκότα ἢ παρακολουθοῦντα); matter (ἕλη) and form imposed upon matter (τὸ δὲ εἶδος

10. See on this subject L.P. Gerson, “Categories and the Tradition,” 79–103.

11. *Enn.* 6.3.2.1–4.

12. *Cat.* 5.3a21–28; *Enn.* 6.3.5.13–16; 6.3.8.10–11.

13. *Enn.* 6.2.4.7: οἶον οὐσία; 6.3.5.1: ἐνθάδε οὐσία. Cf. J.P. Anton, “Plotinus’ Approach to the Categorical Theory,” 86f; M.F. Wagner, “Plotinus on the Nature of Physical Reality,” 130.

ἐπ' αὐτῇ). Matter and form either can be considered as each of a separate genus or both of them can fall under one genus.¹⁴ Therefore, even the Aristotelian notion of primary substance, being applied to sensibles, is insufficient.¹⁵ But, what is the sensible substance *as such* in Plotinus' doctrine?

In order to define sensible substance, Plotinus searches for "items" common to all sensible objects. In his opinion, such common "items" are matter, form, and the composite of both (ἡ ὕλη καὶ τὸ εἶδος καὶ τὸ συναμφοτέρον).¹⁶ Plotinus considers them rather logically as common elements, which are observed in all sensible substances. To be sure, matter and form are components, which complete composite substance (συντελεῖ εἰς σύνθετον οὐσίαν).¹⁷ Here, however, they are taken into consideration not as completive components, but as common features of sensible substances. Every sensible substance can be viewed through those three common items (τὰ τρία). According to Plotinus, neither matter alone nor form alone nor only composite of both can be regarded as sensible substance *sensu stricto*. Matter cannot be a substance, in the meaning of genus, because it has no differentiae and it is an element of the particular.¹⁸ In turn, form bound up with matter does not embrace all of the substantial forms and as a consequence cannot be their genus. Even if the form is regarded as the formative principle of substance and its essential logos (reason-principle or rational principle), the form alone does not explain the nature of sensible substance.¹⁹ If, possibly, the composite of matter and form is a substance alone, then matter and form are not substances.²⁰ However, as we have noted above, form and matter are completive components of substance. Thus, according to Plotinus, they must be substances by themselves.²¹ Hence, it seems that none of the above elements make up a sensible substance, but all of them taken together do. Yet, if it is so, then as Plotinus says himself: "it remains to enquire what they have in common (τί τὸ κοινόν)" and "what will it be that makes them substance in things?"²²

Plotinus, in 6.3.4 and 6.3.8, lists properties corresponding to the Aristotelian primary substance as common for form, matter and composite.²³

14. *Enn.* 6.3.2.4–9; also *Enn.* 6.3.3.1–6.

15. See Wagner, "Plotinus on the nature of physical reality," 130–33.

16. *Enn.* 6.3.3.

17. *Enn.* 6.3.5.8–14.

18. *Enn.* 6.3.3.6–13.

19. *Enn.* 6.3.3.13–17.

20. *Enn.* 6.3.3.17–18.

21. *Enn.* 6.3.5.8–14 in relation to *Cat.* 3a7–10; 29–32; see also P. Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen: von Andronikos bis Alexander von Aphrodisias* vol. 2, 537–8.

22. *Enn.* 6.3.3.18–19; 6.3.4.1–2; also *Enn.* 6.3.3.25–26.

23. Cf. C. Evangelidou, *Aristotle's Categories and Porphyry*, 144–50 and M. Israndi Parente, *Enneadi 6.1–3: Trattati 42–44 sui generi dell'essere* 427–31; 442–46.

Those properties are: serving as a base (ὑποβάθρα) or being a substrate (τὸ ὑποκείμενον) to the other; but neither being in a substrate nor belonging to the other (οὐκ ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ οὐδὲ ἄλλου), nor being said to be of the other (ὁ ἄλλου ὄν ἐκείνου λέγεται). They relate to each of the elements, i.e. to matter, form and composite, in a different sense. The reason for it is that the mutual relation between substantial elements differs from their relation (as taken together and forming a particular substance) to the items external to this substance. Accordingly, while “serving as a base” as well as “being a substrate” is common for matter, form and the composite, the matter is a substrate or a base to the form in a different sense than the form and the composite is a base and a substrate for accidents, affections etc. Similarly, matter and form as composite elements of particular substance are in the substrate and belong to it as well. However, the sensible composite of matter and form neither is in a substrate nor belongs to another object.²⁴ All of the above features characterize sensible substance as a whole. According to Plotinus, in respect to sensible substance, its division into elements must be abandoned. The constituent parts of particular substance by themselves are not substances, or at least not sensible substances.²⁵ Form, matter, and composite of both are only components of sensible substance and what is really common for them is that they are combined within an ontological unity, which constitutes particular substance in the sensible world.²⁶ Such constructed particular substance Plotinus defines as follows:

[Substance is] what the others come from and what the others exist through (ἀφ’ ἧς δε τὰ ἄλλα καὶ δι’ ἣν τὰ ἄλλα) and the subject, which is affected and the origin of doing and making. [6.3.4.35-37]²⁷

The sensible substance, thus, appears to be a kind of source from which other things, that are non-substantial entities, derive their existence. Moreover, the non-substantial entities exist in the sensible world due to the sensible substance. The sensible particular constitutes the basis, as well as the reason, for their existence. In turn, taken as a subject, the particular is a center of its experience and activity. This description of sensible substance, then, resembles the description of intelligible substance. Yet, the correlation between those descriptions must be explained by homonymy of terms as well as by analogy, which exists between two realms. In contrast to the real substance of the intelligible realm, the sensible substance constantly appears as a kind of

24. *Enn.* 6.3.4.3–29; 6.3.8.5–12.

25. *Enn.* 6.3.8.1–5.

26. *Enn.* 6.3.3.6–19; 25–26; 6.3.8.1.

27. In this paper, I use the edition of the text of *Enneads*, as well as the translation (slightly modified) of A.H. Armstrong’s Loeb *Plotinus* (Cambridge, 1966), vol. 6.

qualified substance (ποιὰ οὐσία) and cannot be found apart from quality and quantity.²⁸

According to Plotinus, the reason for the sensible particular being a qualified substance is that the form of substance is bound up with matter. The matter, in his doctrine, is not anything but a particular; e.g., it is nothing apart from the sensible substance itself. As has been stated above, the sensible substance is an entity composed of form and matter, and that entity is composed in a certain way. The way in which a particular is composed must be explained by its form. Yet, the fact that a particular is an appropriate subject to which we may ascribe its being composed in such a way, is a consequence of form's being in the matter. In other words, a particular is what it is because of its form, for instance a human being, an animal, a plant, a statue. But, because of matter, it is *a particular* of that kind. The form fully explains a particular's *being of such a kind*. The matter, thus, does not explicate the particular as such, but causes the particular being of a given kind to be ascribed to nothing but the particular itself.²⁹

Again, particular sensible substance, according to Plotinus, is always a particular *of a certain kind*. In other words particular sensible substance is never something endowed with an essence, i.e., it is not τὸ τί, but it is always something qualified that is ποιόν τί.³⁰ In fact, Plotinus claims that the sensible substance is a collection (συμφορησις) or mixture (μίγμα) of qualities, quantities and matter.³¹ The qualities and quantities are compounded together (συνπαγέντα) with matter into one substance. Some of the qualities observed in particular substance complete a substance to be the substance of a given kind. Their absence leaves the substance incomplete, which presumably allows it to be something else, rather than such a substance. However, the qualities that complete substance are not to be considered the substance. Only a particular as a whole is a substance: "the whole made up from them all is a substance" (ἀλλὰ μὴδὲ ἐκεῖ ἕκαστον οὐσίαν, τὸ δ' ὅλον τὸ ἐν πάντων οὐσίαν). It is possible to say, then, that, according to Plotinus, the given sensible substance is completed by its qualities and quantities to be the par-

28. *Enn.* 6.3.8.12–16.

29. M.F. Wagner, "Plotinus on the Nature of Physical Reality," 133f.

30. Here lies the basic difference between the Platonic conception of particular substance as a bundle of qualities only and the Peripatetic doctrine, according to which the sensible substance cannot be found apart from quality and quantity. According to the first opinion, the sensible substance is nothing more than a collection of qualities (*locus classicus*: *Tim.* 49–50, in agreement with *Tim.* 157b). According to the second view, the sensible substance is an essence. It possesses additionally some qualities and quantities. Qualities, for Aristotle, are rather the abstract names of what exists καθ' ὑποκειμένον and ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ. See A.C. Lloyd, "Neoplatonic Logic and Aristotelian Logic I," 61.

31. *Enn.* 6.3.8.16–30.

ticular of such and such a kind.³² However, those completive elements, even being considered as constitutive parts of substance, are not that substance. The sensible particular is a substance only as a whole. In other words it is a substance as a kind of unity, which is physically indivisible into its components. Even though it is a particular of this kind, because of its components, the certain sensible substance is not equal to them.³³

Nevertheless, so-called substance is not “something,” or in other words it is not the essence, but “something qualified” (οὐ τὶ ἄλλὰ ποιὸν μᾶλλον), whereas the real substance is the essence (τὸ τί) by itself.

It was said about the qualitative that, mixed together with others, matter and the quantitative, it effects the completion of sensible substance, and that this so-called substance is this compound of many, and is not a “something,” but a “something qualified” (οὐ τὶ ἄλλὰ ποιὸν μᾶλλον); and the rational form (ὁ λόγος), of fire for instance, indicates rather the “something” (τὸ “τί”), but the shape it produces is rather a quale (ποιόν). And the rational form (ὁ λόγος) of man is the being a “something” (τὸ “τί”), but its product in the nature of body, being an image of the form, is rather a sort of “something qualified” (ποιόν τι). [6.3.15.24–31]

As has been stated, according to Plotinus the particular substance is made up by the possession of all its qualities. Thus, it appears that a sensible particular “is made” of a non-substantial, or, in the words of Wurm, it is “οὐσία ἐξ οὐκ οὐσίωv.”³⁴ That is to say, the sensible substance seems to be made of something that does not exist. Yet, for Plotinus, this is only an apparent difficulty, since the sensible substance is not a true substance, but only an imitation (μιμούμενον τὴν ἀληθῆ) and a shadow (σκιὰ) of a real entity. As a matter of fact, Plotinus denies the essence of a particular to be a definitional formula that mentions its genus and provides it with a specific difference, as had been stated by Aristotelian tradition.³⁵ The real essence of a particular thing is identical with its *logos*, in the sense of reason-principle, or in other words the forming-principle of individual substance.³⁶ The *logos* of a given particular reveals its essence, while sensible features are external. The *logos* of fire, for instance, or of human, is “something” (τὸ τί). In other words, it is the essence. But the “incarnation” of logos, i.e., “this particular fire” or “this concrete, two meters tall, snub-nosed, rational animal named Socrates,” is rather a sort of “something qualified” (ποιόν τι). In other words, the rational

32. See C. Horn, *Plotin über Sein, Zahl und Einheit: eine Studie zu den systematischen Grundlagen der Enneaden*, 83–105.

33. M.F. Wagner, “Plotinus on the Nature of Physical Reality,” 134f.

34. K. Wurm, *Substanz und Qualität*, 256. Cf. R. Chiaradonna “Οὐσία ἐξ οὐκ οὐσίωv. Forma e sostanza sensibile in Plotino (*Enn.* 6.3 [44], 4–8).”

35. Wagner, “Plotinus on the Nature of Physical Reality,” 135–37, 157.

36. *Enn.* 6.3.8.35–37; 6.3.15.31 ff. See also *Enn.* 2.6.1.49 ff.

formative principles of particular things in the intelligible world are “something” (τὰ τί), while the things produced by them (τὰ ἀποτελέσματα) are qualified and are not “something” (ποιά, οὐ τί).³⁷

To conclude: Plotinus' view on the nature of the particular substance basically corresponds to the Platonic position.³⁸ The sensible substance always is perceived and comprehended as qualified and as a mix of qualities. However, according to Plotinus, this is exactly the reason why we are making mistakes in our investigations on the nature of sensible subject. Being made of qualities or being a mixture of qualities is only one side of being a particular. If a particular was only such a mixture it could not exist at all. It even could not exist in a manner of shadow, for it would be a mix of non-existing things. The appearance of sensibles as being qualified leads us away from the essence of a thing. Thus, we are concentrated on the definition of what is only qualified and we miss what really a thing is. But this is the way of existence, i.e., becoming, of sensible substances, and they cannot be perceived without qualities and quantities.³⁹ To be sure, the sensible substance is a sort of ontic union constituted by matter, form and composite, which existence is caused by its *logos*—i.e., reason-principle. However, the sensible particular *as such* emerges not as an essence but only as a qualified something. Anyway, the particular as a collection of qualities can be regarded as a unity, at least for the purposes of linguistic analysis. Thus, the particular, in Plotinus' doctrine, can be interpreted rather as a logical subject than as a kind of being. It is a being only with reference to its cause.⁴⁰

II. GENERA OR CATEGORIES

The particular substance, as it appears in our perception, is a subject of sensible genera. As we have observed, for sensible entities Plotinus adopts the so-called “genera of becoming” (γένη τῶν γιγνομένων), i.e., substance (οὐσία), motion (κίνησις), quantity (ποσόν), quality (ποιόν) and relation (πρός τι).⁴¹ It is clear that if the sensible world is only an image of the world of forms, then “genera of becoming,” in relation to the genera of intelligibles, are merely quasi-genera. Synonymy between prior and posterior, i.e., between intelligible and sensible respectively, is impossible. The relation between

37. *Enn.* 6.3.15.24–31; 2.6.1.40–42.

38. *Theaet.* 157BC, *Tim.* 49–50, *Phileb.* 61 DE, *Sept. Epist.* 343C.

39. *Enn.* 2.6.1.42–49.

40. On the nature of the sensible particular in Plotinus see also J.M. Rist, “The Sensible Object,” 103–11.

41. *Enn.* 6.3.3.19–33. The substance is considered as matter (ύλη), form (εἶδος) and composite (συναμφότερον). Additionally, Plotinus claims that “motion” can be considered as included in “relation.”

those two realms can be considered only according to the union of origin ($\acute{\alpha}\phi' \acute{\epsilon}\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$) and analogy. The sensible genera, thus, are called “genera” either by analogy or homonymy to the “genera of being.”⁴² But what are they *as such*, if their subject is understood as an imitation of the real essence and as a “mixture” of qualities?

To be sure, the sensible substance, as an ontic union of form and matter, is a center from whence all other items derive their existence, and it is also a subject of affections and a source of action.⁴³ Those derivable existences are affections of substance ($\acute{\pi}\acute{\alpha}\theta\eta$) and might be regarded as substances in “a secondary and weaker sense.”⁴⁴ However, Plotinus points out that in particulars there is nothing of what is called substance, but only affections of substance ($\alpha\upsilon\tau\eta\grave{\nu}\varsigma \acute{\pi}\acute{\alpha}\theta\eta$).⁴⁵ According to Plotinus, even in relation to the sensible substance itself we cannot point at what is the most essential in it, from which the others come. But he accepts it *as if* it had something over and above the other genera.⁴⁶ The sensible genera, thus, cannot be related to anything but to those affections of sensibles. The sensible substances, as we have stated, always appear as a qualified something and are comprehended according to their common features. And since there is nothing essential, the genera of sensibles correspond to and are derived from those common characteristics according to which particular substance emerges within its becoming. The above features, however, neither constitute generic unity nor reveal the real nature of the individual.

But one might say that these are peculiar properties ($\tau\alpha\upsilon\tau\alpha \mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu \acute{\iota}\delta\iota\alpha$) of substances as compared with other things, and for this reason one might collect them into one and call them substances, but one would not be speaking of one genus, nor would one yet be making clear the concept and nature of substance ($\tau\eta\grave{\nu} \acute{\epsilon}\nu\nu\omicron\iota\alpha\nu \tau\eta\varsigma \omicron\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma \kappa\alpha\acute{\iota} \tau\eta\grave{\nu} \phi\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\iota\nu$). [6.1.3.19–23]

The genera of sensibles derived from the common features cannot be united generically, because, for generic unity, synonymy is required between a genus and its subject. Due to the nature of sensible objects, the genera cannot be predicated of them synonymously, but only homonymously. According to Plotinus, in the case of the sensible genera we are dealing with the unity of common source ($\acute{\alpha}\phi' \acute{\epsilon}\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$). This kind of unity corresponds rather to categories than to genera.⁴⁷ Therefore, in Plotinus’ opinion, the unity of

42. *Enn.* 6.1.1.23–28; 6.3.1.6–7; 6.3.2.1–4; 6.3.5.2–3.

43. *Enn.* 6.3.4.35–37.

44. *Enn.* 6.1.3.6–9.

45. *Enn.* 2.6.1.49.

46. *Enn.* 6.1.3.9–12.

47. *Enn.* 6.1.3.1–6.

sensible genera is not generic, but categorical.⁴⁸ In other words, the “genera of becoming” are nothing more than κατηγορίαί—predications, or external denominations, which are ascribed to the sensible objects.⁴⁹

The categorical unity of sensible genera comes from the line of common features of substance. In other words, it is an accidental unity. This can be deduced from Plotinus' view of essential and accidental (in the meaning of non-essential) predication. Accordingly, essential predication reveals the immanent genus (γένος ἐνυπάρχον) in the particular subject, and, as a consequence, the essential character (τὸ τί) of this subject. It appears when universal or secondary substance is predicated of particular substance.⁵⁰ In this way humanity is predicated of a particular man [Socrates]. There is an affirmation of the humanity of mankind in Socrates.⁵¹ Any other kind of predication, as a predication “of something else” (κατηγορεῖσθαι κατ' ἄλλου), in Plotinus' opinion, is accidental. Therefore, since the categorical predication is a predication “of something else,” it is also an accidental predication.⁵² In fact, Plotinus identifies the categories with accidental (non-essential) predicates and opposes them to the real genera.⁵³

48. This rule relates not only to the category of substance but to the others too: category but not genus: quantity: *Enn.* 6.1.4.50–52 – 6.1.5.24–26; relation: *Enn.* 6.1.8.8–27; 6.1.9.27–32; 6.1.7.22–23; quality: *Enn.* 6.1.9.32–39 – cf. 6.1.12.13–14; 6.1.10.33–43.

49. Being convinced by M. Frede's argumentation for rendering “κατηγορία” in Aristotle, I accept the rendering of this term as ‘predication’ in Plotinus. Yet, by “predication” I mean a particular mode of signification, naming, and designation. See M. Frede, *Essays in Ancient Philosophy*, 32–33; cf. De L.M. Rijk, *Aristotle: Semantics and Ontology*, 385–74.

50. *Enn.* 6.1.3.16–19.

51. *Enn.* 6.3.5.18–23.

52. Cf. A.C. Lloyd, “Neoplatonic Logic and Aristotelian Logic I,” 154f.

53. Horn and Strange claim that “κατηγορία” in Plotinus is the logical analogue of what Lloyd calls P-series, which relates to genera. In other words, it is a technical term that covers ordered series, namely participation series from original down to image. But in contrast to genus, which is predicated synonymously, a category is predicated by the homonymy of “ἄφ' ἑνός” or “πρὸς ἓν” type. See C. Horn, *Plotin über Sein, Zahl und Einheit: eine Studie zu den systematischen Grundlagen der Enneaden*, 41–48; S.K. Strange, “Plotinus, Porphyry and the Neoplatonic Interpretation of the Categories,” 69. Concerning P-series, see A.C. Lloyd “Genus, Species and Ordered Series in Aristotle”; idem, *The Anatomy of Neoplatonism*, 76–85. In my opinion, the analysis offered above rather supports the opinion of de Haas, according to which “κατηγορίαί” in Plotinus corresponds “to a general designation of the application of a name, more particularly the application of the name of one of the ten items of the *Categories* or candidates for such a position, or the application of the name of one of the true genera.” See F.A.J. De Haas, “Did Plotinus and Porphyry disagree on Aristotle's *Categories*?” 513. However, the interpretation of the categories as a kind of non-essential predicates should not be taken as support for the so-called “nominalism of sensible genera.” Cf. C. Rutten, *Les catégories du monde sensible dans les Ennéades de Plotin*, 48–56, 48: “identifie l'une à l'autre la notion de catégorie et celle d'accident”; M. Isnardi Parente, *Enneadi 6.1–3: Trattati 42–44 sui generi dell'essere* 250: “categoria, unità accidentale e nominale.”

The Plotinian interpretation of the nature of categories seems to be connected with the Stoic concept of sayables (τὰ λεκτά).⁵⁴ This kind of entity belongs to the Stoic classes of incorporeals,⁵⁵ which cannot be said to exist properly. However, incorporeals possess some kind of subsistence and constitute an irremovable part of the objective structure of the world.⁵⁶ The sayables convey the impressions of material objects by meanings and concepts.⁵⁷ In fact, they denote predicates, which come to be true of a body, or belong to it as attributes. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that the Stoic genera *as such* exist as incorporeals, and *as such* they are conceived to be the species of sayables. In Plotinus' doctrine, in turn, category does not express the nature of signified objects. According to Plotinus, category is an incorporeal accident of what is sensible, and *as such* it does not present more than *lekton*.

According to Plotinus, the sensible subjects of categorical division are something qualified, i.e., their very being (or nature) is not essential but accidental. Similarly to the Stoics, particular things, in Plotinus, are the occasion for multiple different significations. The notions designating those items derive the accidental character from their content. Consequently, the "genera of becoming" as categories of sensible substances, possess an accidental character. In fact, the notion of genus, in contrast to *Ennead* 6.1 where it was opposed to the Aristotelian categories, lost its real meaning and rank. The unity of sensible genus is not the unity by nature. As a category it is united by common origin and homonymy, and, as a kind of sayable, it is united semiotically.

This account of the sensible genera presented by Plotinus in *Ennead* 6.3 [44] corresponds to his treatment of Aristotle's categories in *Ennead* 6.1 [42]. There, he focuses on denying the status of the genera of being to the Aristotelian categories. At the beginning of the *Sixth Ennead*, Plotinus claims that he is going to consider whether the well-known ten genera are to be ranged under *the common name of being* (κοινοῦ ὀνόματος τυχόντα τοῦ ὄντος), or to be *the ten predications* (κατηγορίας δέκα).⁵⁸ As a consequence of his critique of the Aristotelian categorical schemes, they are not genera of being because of their lack of the truly generic meaning and unity. *De facto*, according to Plotinus, the categories of Aristotle, likewise the "genera of becoming," are nothing more than predications. The strong echo of such treatment of the

54. Rutten, *Les catégories du monde sensible dans les Ennéades de Plotin*, 52–54.

55. A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. 1 162–66.

56. Cf. *Enn.* 6.1.30.20–24 (SVF II, 402), Sextus E. *adv. Math.* 8.453 (SVF II.402).

57. Diog. Laert. VII, 57. See also A.A. Long, "Language and Thought in Stoicism," 82–84.

58. *Enn.* 6.1.1.15–19. Cf. F. De Haas, "Did Plotinus and Porphyry disagree on Aristotle's *Categories*?" 504, 507–14.

Aristotelian categories and the sensible genera is to be found in the works of Plotinus' disciple Porphyry. Thanks to Plotinus' critique, he reduces the ontological status of the genera ascribed to the sensibles and develops the conceptions of categories as significant words.⁵⁹

To conclude, there are no real genera except those of Plato, which constitute the intelligible. The "genera of becoming" are not real genera, but they are named so only by homonymy and analogy with the real "genera of being." According to Plotinus, the genera of sensibles are categories, i.e. *predications*. And a sensible genus is an accidental and external denomination, which is ascribed by discursive intellect to phenomena, which are qualified and accidental by themselves.

59. De Haas also supports the opinion that Porphyry adopted and further developed Plotinus' view on the Aristotelian categories, in spite of differences between their doctrines. See De Haas, "Did Plotinus and Porphyry disagree on Aristotle's *Categories*?" 518–24; idem, "Context and Strategy of Plotinus' Treatise on the Genera of Being (*Enn.* 6.1–3 [42–44])." Cf. S.K. Strange, "Plotinus, Porphyry and the Neoplatonic Interpretation of the Categories." But the opinion that Plotinus rejects the Aristotelian categories while his Neoplatonic successors re-install them, is accepted by many other scholars, e.g.: H.J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus in Later Platonism*, 216–217; R. Chiaradonna, *Sostanza, movimento, analogia: Plotino critico di Aristotele*; idem, "The Categories and the Status of the Physical World: Plotinus and the Neo-platonic Commentaries"; C. Evangelou, "The Ontological Basis of Plotinus' Criticism of Aristotle's Theory of Categories," 73–74; idem, *Aristotle's Categories and Porphyry*; A.C. Lloyd, "Neoplatonic Logic and Aristotelian Logic I," 58, L.P. Gerson, "Categories and the Tradition," 84–96. It seems that most scholars read Porphyry through the lenses of Simplicius' texts *in Cat.* 2.5–29; 16.16–9.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- Cat.* = Aristotelis *Categoriae*
Diog. Laert. = Diogenis Laertii *Vitae Philosophorum*
Enn. = Plotini *Enneades*
Phileb. = Platonis *Philebus*
Sextus, adv. Math. = Sexti Empirici *Adversus mathematicos*
Sept. Epist. = Platonis *Epistula Septima*
Soph. = Platonis *Sophista*
Theat. = Platonis *Theaetetus*
Tim. = Platonis *Timaeus*

