PLOTINUS

DOMINIC J. O’MEARA

(Université de Fribourg)

Fortuna.

Bibliography.

1. Enneades.
   Translations.
   2. Marsilius Ficinus.
   Commentary.
   a. Marsilius Ficinus.
   b. Doubtful commentary.
   1. Paulus Scalichius (Book III).

Fortuna*

Plotinus was born in A.D. 204/205, probably in Egypt, and died in Campania (Italy) in 270. In 231/232 he began to study philosophy in Alexandria, changing teachers until he found Ammonius Saccas with whom he studied for eleven years. In 243 he joined Gordian III’s military expedition against the Persians. After the emperor’s murder in 244, Plotinus left the expedition, fleeing to Antioch. He then went to Rome. He began teaching philosophy in Rome to a circle of friends and pupils (he occupied no formal teaching post). Ten years later he began writing treatises based on his lectures and, by the time Porphyry joined the circle (263), he had written twenty-one. Twenty-four more were completed when Porphyry left for Sicily (268). Plotinus fell ill and retired to the farm of a friend, Zethos, six miles from Minturnae (modern Minturno) in Campania, where he died in 270, having completed the remaining treatises.

Plotinus had close ties with the Roman senatorial class and with the Emperor Gallienus and his wife, but his project to found a city (Platopolis, to be governed, it seems, according to Plato’s political ideas) in Campania was not realized. Among his pupils were Porphyry, Amelius, Castricius Firmus, Eustochius, Paulinus, Zoticus, Zethos, and Serapion. His treatises had a very restricted circulation among his friends. Eustochius prepared an edition of Plotinus’ treatises, which was replaced by the edition Porphyry published in 301–305, following Plotinus’ instructions. Porphyry took some liberties

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in his edition: he broke up some of the treatises to reach the numerologically desirable number of fifty-four (six times nine); he then rearranged the treatises into six subject groups of nine treatises each ("Enneads") dealing (in epagogic order) with morals (Enn. I), natural philosophy (Enn. II, III), soul (Enn. IV), Intellect (Enn. V), and the One (Enn. VI). The text of the treatises in Porphyry's edition is reliable. Porphyry also gave titles to the individual treatises and prefaced the edition with his invaluable Vita Plotini, the sole reliable source for Plotinus’ biography.

GREEK NEOPLATONIC

Although the various Neoplatonic schools that flourished in Syria, Alexandria, and Athens between the third and sixth centuries embodied different tendencies which led to disagreement with some of Plotinus' ideas, and although they derived inspiration from other philosophers besides Plotinus, there is little doubt but that they owe to him their philosophical foundation. Much of their achievement consists in working out in various ways the implications of Plotinus’ philosophy. Besides his edition and Vita of Plotinus, Porphyry published an introductory philosophical manual (the Ἀφοράματα, or Sentences) composed largely of paraphrases and excerpts from Plotinus. He also published commentaries, headings, and summaries for Plotinus’ works (see p. 57 below). Another pupil of Plotinus, Amelius, produced 100 books (now lost) of “scholia” based on Plotinus’ lectures, which he may have brought with him to Syria, where Iamblichus later organized an influential Neoplatonic School. Longinus, an Athenian Platonist who was a contemporary but not a member of Plotinus’ circle, received some of Plotinus’ treatises and requested more. Later in Athens Proclus wrote a commentary on the Enneads, of which some excerpts only survive. Many members of the Neoplatonic schools of late antiquity used and quoted the Enneads: Iamblichus, Dexippus, Sallustius, Hermias of Alexandria, Syrius, Proclus, Marinus, Damascius, Simplicius, Priscianus Lydus, Olympiodorus, John Philoponus, David, and Elias. In some cases, however, the quotations derive not directly from the Enneads, but indirectly, from Porphyry’s (or, for the later authors, Proclus’) works. It has been argued that some quotations for which no exact source can be found in the Enneads may reflect Plotinus’ oral teaching as preserved perhaps in Amelius’ scholia or in reports in Porphyry.

PATRISTIC AND PAGAN LATIN

Plotinus’ philosophy exerted wide influence on patristic authors. To list only those who quote him by name in their works one might mention, among the Greek authors, Eusebius, Cyril of Alexandria, Theodoret of Cyrus, and Aeneas of Gaza. The Enneads were also known to, and used by, Basil of Caesarea (the authenticity of the De spiritu sancto in which some Plotinian extracts are found is, however, in dispute), Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Synesius of Cyrene. In the Latin West the Enneads became available in a partial or complete Latin translation by Marius Victorinus, a rhetor in Rome, who converted to Christianity (see below, p. 67). Although Victorinus made little use of Plotinus in his theological writings, his translation of the Enneads was of great importance to St. Augustine, who names and quotes Plotinus in some of his major works. A spiritual mentor of St. Augustine, St. Ambrose incorporated in his sermons (without acknowledgment) large extracts from the Enneads, which he either took from Victorinus’ translation, or translated himself directly from the Greek, or found already excerpted in a Greek patristic source. Plotinus was also read by Latin authors of the time who were (or appear to have been) pagan. Macrobius names and quotes Plotinus at length, translating him from the Greek. Servius and Ammianus Marcellinus also seem to have read Plotinus.

BYZANTINE

Plotinus could be found by the Byzantines in their various dictionaries, Hesychius, the Suda (in which extracts derived indirectly from the Enneads are also found). In the sixth century John of Scythopolis made use of the Enneads in his comments on Pseudo-Dionysius. A little later Theophylactus Simocattus composed a laudatory letter dedicated to Plotinus. Interest in Plotinus was greatly stimulated in the eleventh century by the polymath Michael Psellus who sought to rescue him, along with the later Neoplatonists, from neglect. Psellus made extensive
use of the *Enneads* in his own works and also excerpted Proclus’ commentary on the *Enneads*. The interest in Plotinus carried over into the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: the earlier manuscripts of the *Enneads* were copied in this period, by which time, also, a florilegium of Plotinian texts (represented in several manuscripts) had been compiled. Plotinus was known to Theodore Metochites and Nicephorus Choumnos; the latter composed an *Antitheticum adversus Plotinum*. Plotinus is cited and a considerable number of extracts from the *Enneads* are found in the works of Nicephorus Gregoras. Sometime later a Byzantine scholar inserted excerpts from the *Enneads* in the text of John Lydus’ *De mensibus*. Plotinus was known to Petho, whose opponent, George (Gennadius) Scholarios, wrote a work *On Human Happiness, Harmonizing Aristotle and Plotinus*, and who appears to have corrected a Plotinus manuscript. Bessarion’s interest in Plotinus no doubt is derived from Petho and can be seen not only in his references to Plotinus in his works but also in the Plotinus manuscripts which he acquired and annotated in the 1450s and 1460s.

**Syriac, Arabic, and Jewish**

Plotinus is little known by name in medieval Islam, and, when he is referred to by name, little reliable information is given about him. By contrast, his writings, specifically paraphrases of parts of *Enneads* IV–VI, were attributed to a variety of authors and were well known and influential in medieval Islamic and Jewish intellectual history. These paraphrases—conveniently available in an English translation by G. Lewis in Henry and Schwizer’s *Plotini opera*, II (1959)—can be grouped as follows.

(i) The *Theology of Aristotle* purports to include exegesis by Porphyry, to have been translated into Arabic by Ibn Na’ima of Emesa, and to have been revised (or edited) by Al-Kindi. A “long” and a “vulgate” recension of the *Theology* survive, but the relation between the two recensions has not yet been clearly established. It seems that in some respects the long version includes materials added later; the vulgate recension seems to be an incomplete version of an earlier Arabic paraphrase of Plotinus. Nor has it been made clear how the attribution to Aristotle came about. The *Theology* includes an introduction, list of chapter headings (for *Ennead* IV.4), and some explanatory paraphrase of *Enneads* IV–VI. It has been argued that the *Theology* includes Porphyry’s otherwise lost comments on and summaries of the *Enneads*. Some scholars find signs that the *Theology* was translated from a Syriac original about which nothing as yet is known.

(ii) The *Letter of Divine Science* falsely attributed to Al-Fārābī includes paraphrases of parts of *Ennead* V and is very close in terminology and style to the *Theology*, which suggests that it was produced by the same translator, derived possibly from the same Arabic and ultimately Greek original.

(iii) Various materials attributed to Aš-Šayḫ Al-Yūnānī (“The Greek old man [or sage]”) have been found to be paraphrases of *Enneads* IV–VI and to parallel in part the *Theology*, indicating a common source. The “old man” may be Porphyry. The *Theology* in particular had a long and influential history in Islam. After Al-Kindi it was known to Al-Fārābī, the Ilhām as-Ṣafā (the Brethren of Purity), Ibn ‘Arabī, Avicenna (who wrote comments on it and was aware that its Aristotelian authorship was suspect), and many others. The *Theology* was also read by medieval Jewish writers. Fragments of the “long” recension survive in Arabic texts written in Hebrew characters. The *Theology* was known (possibly indirectly) to Ibn Gabirol and Ibn Ezra. It appears, however, not to have been translated into Hebrew before the sixteenth century. The variety of Islamic authors who quote “the Greek old man” indicates to some degree the extent to which these Plotinian materials were also known.

**Western Medieval**

Marius Victorinus’ Latin translation of the *Enneads* seems not to have survived into the early medieval period, and there is no evidence that the *Enneads* were read in the West between the end of late antiquity and the time when Ficinus prepared his new translation. Attempts to document a reading of the *Enneads* in medieval authors such as John Scottus Eriugena and William of Saint-Thierry have not been convincing: the “Plotinian” passages in these authors can be shown to derive from the substantial amount of Neoplatonic philosophy which reached the
medieval West through the works of St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, Macrobius, Boethius, Pseudo-Dionysius, Maximus the Confessor, and Gregory of Nyssa. If Western medieval readers did not have access to the Enneads, they were nevertheless made aware of Plotinus’ identity and importance by St. Augustine in particular, and they also read passages from the Enneads quoted in Augustine and Macrobius. Among such readers one might list Albert the Great, St. Bonaventure, St. Thomas Aquinas, William of Auvergne, Vincent of Beauvais, and Meister Eckhart. Some Plotinus could be read (but not recognized for what it was) in Ambrose’s sermons and in the commentaries on Pseudo-Dionysius by John of Scythopolis, which were translated into Latin by Anastasius Bibliothecarius in the ninth century. One medieval writer, Hugh Etherian, seems to have read Plotinus in Greek in Constantinople ca. 1166–82, quoting him very imprecisely in his De sancto et immortaliti Deo (PL 202, 233C, and 339B). There is no evidence that the Arabic Theology of Aristotle (which contains Plotinian texts) was available in Latin in the West before the sixteenth century (see below).

**Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries**

Knowledge of Plotinus in the early Italian Renaissance was much what it was in the Latin medieval period. Petrarch and Lorenzo Valla, for example, were aware of Plotinus through what was reported in Augustine and Macrobius. In the first quarter of the fifteenth century Italian collectors such as Giovanni Aurispa, Francesco Filelfo, Pietro Miani, Leonardo Giustiniani, and Palla Strozzi had acquired Greek manuscripts, including manuscripts of the Enneads. Aurispa and Filelfo also taught Greek in Florence in the 1420s and 1430s, and one can assume they at least glanced at their Plotinus manuscripts. Indeed, Filelfo quotes Plotinus (IV.7.12) in his funeral oration for Francesco Sforza (1467).

Although references in the Latin sources (Augustine and Macrobius) would have been enough to stimulate reading of Plotinus in the original, other factors intervened. The presence of Plotho at the Council of Florence (1439) was considered by Marsilius Ficinus as the source of Cosimo de’Medici’s interest in Platonism. The continued presence thereafter in Italy of Bessarion served to maintain this interest in Platonism. When he began to lecture on Aristotle in Florence in 1457, Argyropoulos referred to Plotinus. It is thus possible that Argyropoulos played an important part in drawing attention to Plotinus in Florence. He may have already read a Plotinus manuscript present before 1462 in the library of Palla Strozzi in Padua and at some time before 1471 himself made a copy of the Greek text of Plotinus (Par. gr. 1976).

In 1456 the young Marsilius Ficinus presented his first major philosophical work, the Institutiones ad Platonice disciplinam, to his future patron Cosimo de’ Medici and to Cristoforo Landino. This work (which appears not to survive) of Platonic philosophy was drawn exclusively from Latin sources such as Cicero, Macrobius, Boethius, and Augustine. Landino and Cosimo recommended that rather than publishing the work, Ficinus learn Greek so he could draw from the original Greek sources. In 1462 Ficinus was established at Careggi by Cosimo and provided with Greek manuscripts. Two Plotinus manuscripts have been found which exhibit annotations in the hand of Ficinus (Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana 87.3 and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale gr. 1816), and he also compiled excerpts from Plotinus in Greek (Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana F 19 sup.) and brief excerpts and summaries in Latin (Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana 92 and Vatican Library, Borg. gr. 22).

Ficinus’ first major task was a translation of Plato after which (1484) he began his translation of Plotinus. We can suppose that the very high opinion Ficinus had of Plotinus in 1492 (Plotinus as a Plato redivivus) reflects ultimately the importance given to Plotinus in the Latin sources Ficinus used in 1456, and indeed Ficinus had already begun to read Plotinus in the Greek in 1464 as he commented on Plato. In his Commentary on the Symposium (1469) he made good use of the Enneads and in writing his Platonic Theology (1469–74) he showed complete mastery of the Enneads. Ficinus’ interest in Plotinus in the 1460s and early 1470s is reflected in Landino’s Camaldolese Disputations in which Plotinus is quoted, in Janus Pannonius’ wish (reported in Vespasiano’s Vite) to translate Plotinus, and in Angelo Poliziano’s rendering in 1491 of a passage from Enn. I.3.4.2–19. Ficinus attributes to Giovanni Pico della Mirandola the credit
for stimulating him in 1484 to undertake a translation of Plotinus, but, given Ficinus’ previous interest in Plotinus and his understanding of the relation between Plato and Plotinus, it is hardly likely that Pico’s stimulation was needed. In 1489 Ficinus published his very popular and influential De vita, the third book of which was a commentary on Enn. IV.3.11.

When Ficinus’ Latin translation of Plotinus was published with a commentary in 1492, it was widely used by humanists in Italy and elsewhere—Robert Gaguin, Francesco di Giorgio, Francesco Cattana da Diacceto, John Colet, Louis Le Roy, Symphorien Champier, Francesco Piccolomini, Sebastian Fox Morcillo, Tasso, Giordano Bruno, and many others—and a number of manuscript excerpts from it (and the commentary) are known. It was reprinted five times in the sixteenth century, and the commentary was reprinted separately three more times. The version published by Perna at Basel in 1559 was a revision of the Florence, 1492, edition prepared for Perna by Domenico Montesoro of Verona, who consulted a Greek manuscript for the purpose (according to Perna’s Preface, fol. 3v and ad Enn. IV.3.28, fol. 203v).

In 1519 Plotinus made another (disguised) appearance when the “long” version of the Theology of Aristotle was published at Rome from an Arabic manuscript found in Damascus by Francesco Rosi and translated into Latin by Moses Rovas of Cyprus, which translation was revised by Pier Nicola Castellani. This text, entitled Sapientissimi philosophi Aristotelis Stagiritae Theologia sive Mystica philosophia secundum Aegyptios, was incorporated into the editions of Aristotle published by A. Jacobus Martin (Lyons, 1578), Joachim Péron (1580), and Claudius Marnius and Johannes Aubrius, “heredes Wecheli” (Frankfort, 1593). A revision and rearrangement of the text was published by Jacques Charpentier, in which he suggested parallels with Platonic and Neoplatonic texts (including Plotinus): Libri quattuordecim qui Aristotelis esse dicuntur, de secreto parte divinae sapientiae secundum Aegyptios. Qui si illius sunt, eiusdem metaphysica vere continent, cum Platonici magna ex parte conveniencia (1571, 1572). Francesco Patrizi da Cherso republished the 1519 text in his Nova de universis philo-
sophia (Ferrara, 1591) in the belief that the Theology was a transcript by Aristotle of oral teaching in “Chaldaean” philosophy delivered by Plato to his intimate pupils. He thus entitled the work Mystica Aegyptiorum et Chaldaeorum a Platone voce tradita ab Aristotele excepta et conscripta philosophia, and he noted the parallel between Plotinus, Enn. V.1.1.17f. and Theol. IV.4. The Theology’s “Aristotelian” authorship was treated in general, however, with increasing suspicion by scholars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (it was rejected outright by Luther and Pierre de la Ramée, among others) but its origin in Plotinus’ Enneads was not shown until 1812, by Thomas Taylor.

No vernacular translations of Plotinus seem to have been produced in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The single commentary that may have originated in the sixteenth century is now missing; it was attributed to the notorious adventurer Paulus Scalichius (1534–75) (see p.73 000 below) and concerned Enn. III.

AFTER 1600

Having become well known to humanists throughout Europe in the sixteenth century thanks to Ficinus’ prestige and as part of Ficinus’ revival of Platonism—a success that persisted in the seventeenth century among the Cambridge Platonists—Plotinus’ Enneads were less and less well received (as was also true for Ficinus) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Among the reasons for this rejection were the rise of secular rationalism (Ficinus had assimilated his version of Platonism to Christianity), theological attacks on the Platonizing of the Christian faith, and the criticism and rejection of the Neoplatonic interpretation of Plato. The decline in Plotinus’ fortune is reflected, for example, in the authoritative history of philosophy published by Brucker (1742). Plotinus was not, however, unknown: Berkeley read him, and he received favorable mention from Bayle. Toward the end of the eighteenth century in Germany this situation changed greatly. Novalis and Goethe read Plotinus enthusiastically (in Ficinus’ translation). By 1805 Schelling had studied with admiration the excerpts his friend Windischmann had put into German for him. Such was Hegel’s view of the developing structure of
the history of philosophy that Plotinus took on an important role as philosopher in that history. Hegel had used Ficinus and Perna’s edition (Basel, 1580), the first to offer a text of the Enneads in Greek; unfortunately, however, it was based on four inferior Greek manuscripts. Hegel’s colleague and admirer Friedrich Creuzer published two works that were close to the interests of German Idealism: a translation of Enn. III.8 (1805) and an edition of Enn. I.6 (1814). When Creuzer (together with G. H. Moser) published a new complete edition of Plotinus in 1835 (the first since Perna), he was well aware of the timeliness of this venture. Their edition, based on the unreliable and uncritical use of many more manuscripts, was followed by a regular succession of editions and translations by German scholars throughout the century. None of them can lay claim to being “critical”; e.g., the edition by A. Kirchhoff (Leipzig, 1856) used fewer manuscripts and took liberties in “improving” the text, a practice also followed in the edition of H. F. Müller (Berlin, 1878–80), and later by E. Bréhier (Paris, 1924–38) and G. Faggini (Milan, 1947–48). Franz Brentano’s attack on Plotinus toward the end of the nineteenth century was connected to his rejection of Hegelian philosophy. In France, an admirer of Hegel, Victor Cousin, helped establish a strong French tradition of interest in Plotinus and Neoplatonism, which was of consequence, for example, for Henri Bergson. In England, too, an increasing influence of German Idealism was associated with interest in Plotinus, in particular by Coleridge, although the ground had already been prepared by Thomas Taylor’s earlier efforts to revive Platonism (understood through the Neoplatonists) as an alternative pagan religion. His English paraphrases of Plotinus made the philosopher available to Blake, Wordsworth, and Yeats, among others, and to the adepts of Platonism in America.


BIBLIOGRAPHY

This bibliography is selective, especially in Sections I and II, where, because of the comprehensive bibliographies of Blumenthal and of Corrigan and O’Cleirigh (below), only larger works and some recent articles are listed. For older literature see Mariën (below). In Section III, references are given relating specifically to the Fortuna of the Enneads rather than to a more general Fortuna of Plotinian ideas.


I. EDITIONS OF PLOTINUS


II. LIFE, THOUGHT, AND WRITINGS OF PLOTINUS

A. H. Armstrong, The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plo-

III. Influence of Plotinus

A. General


B. Greek Neoplatonic


C. Patrician and Pagan Latin

C. Andresen, Bibliographia Augustiniana (Darmstadt, 1973), 53–57; R. Arnou, “Platonisme des Pères,” Dictionnaire de théologie catholique, XII (1935), 2258–2392; D. L. Balás, Μεταφυσική θεωρία: Man’s Participation in God’s Perfections according to Saint Gregory of Nyssa (Rome, 1966); P. Canivet, Histoire d’une entreprise apologistique au Ve siècle (Paris, 1959); H. F. Cherniss, The Platonism of Gregory of

D. Byzantine


E. Syriac, Arabic, and Jewish

F. Western Medieval

G. Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries

H. After 1600


I. Enneades

TRANSLATIONS

I. Gaius Marius Victorinus

The first known Latin translation of Plotinus was produced by Marius Victorinus less than a century after Plotinus’ death. It is certainly to be regretted that this translation has not survived, for it would shed much light on St. Augustine’s knowledge of Plotinus and on the influence Plotinus had both on him and on the other Latin writers of the period. Little is known about Victorinus’ translation: we do not know when he made it, whether it was a complete translation of the *Enneads* (assuming Victorinus used Porphyry’s edition of Plotinus, since he is otherwise much indebted to Porphyry), a partial translation, or merely a series of excerpts with commentary by Porphyry. What little evidence has been found (see above, Bibliography III, C) may be summarized as follows.

The existence of Victorinus’ translation is known from the combination of two texts in Augustine. In the *Confessions* (VIII,2,3), speaking of events leading to his conversion (in 386), Augustine reports that he told Simplicianus: “... leges mi me quosdam libros Platonicerum, quos Victorinum... in latinam linguam translatus est.” In the *De beata vita* (I,4), written in 386, he refers to his reading of Plotinus (“lectis autem Plotini paucissimis libris”). There is little doubt that the “libri Platonicerum” translated by Victorinus included Plotinus, but it is not clear whether these “libri” contained a complete or a partial translation of Plotinus and whether they also included works by Porphyry, another of the “Platonic” read and used both by Victorinus and Augustine.

Victorinus’ own extant works provide little information of use in determining the extent of his translation. Only one short quotation from Plotinus (*Enn. V*. 2.1–2) has been found in his works (*Adv. Ar.*, IV.22), together with a few possible allusions. More evidence can be found in Augustine. Brief excerpts from *Enn. IV*.2 have been discovered in the *De immortalitate animae* (387), from *Enn. I*. 6 and V.1 in the *Confessions* (ca. 400), from *Enn. V*. 1 again in the *De consensu evangelistarum* (400), from V.3 in the *De trinitate* (400–416), from *Enn. V*. 5 in the *De Genesi ad litteram* (400–415), and from *Enn. I*. 6 and V.1 in the *Tractatus in Johannem* (414–16/17). (Many other, but not indubitable, excerpts and allusions have been found.) This list suggests that Victorinus’ translation included not only short popular treatises (*Enn. I*.6; V.1) but also some longer, less accessible works (*Enn. V*. 3; V.5) and must therefore have been quite extensive, possibly even complete. By the time he wrote the *De civ. dei* (413–26), Augustine knew enough Greek to read Plotinus in the original. The treatises he now refers to and quotes (*Enn. I*.6; III.2–3; V.1; V.6) include those he had used earlier, but it is not possible to determine whether he still used Victorinus’ translation at this stage or read Plotinus in Greek. Augustine, in his last days as recorded in Possidius’ *Vita Augustini* 28, comforted himself with these words of Plotinus (*Enn. I*.4.7): “There would be no virtue left in him if he thought that wood and stones, and... the death of mortals were important” (tr. Armstrong).

Many excerpts from Plotinus (*Enn. I*.1; I.2; I.6; I.7; I.8; III.5; IV.8) have been found in St. Ambrose (*De Isaac, De bono mortis, De Jacob, De fuga*), but it cannot be established at present whether Ambrose used Victorinus’ translation, or read Plotinus in the original, or found the Plotinian excerpts already incorporated in a Greek patristic source of the sort on which he often depended. It has been argued (from a few cases) that the translation of Greek philosophical terms in the Ambrosian excerpts differs from that in Victorinus’ extant works. Yet there are similarities between the excerpts from *Enn. I*.6 in Ambrose and in Augustine. These have been explained by
supposing simply that both Ambrose and Augustine used Victorinus’ translation, or, less simply, that Ambrose influenced Augustine in his reading of Victorinus’ translation of Plotinus.

Biography:
Gaius Marius Victorinus (Afer) was born in North Africa toward the end of the third century and died, probably in Rome, not long after 363. He held the professorship of rhetoric at Rome during the reign of Constantius (353–361) and attained such influence and fame that a statue of him was erected in Trajan’s forum in 354. He converted late in life to Christianity (ca. 355–357) and resigned his position in 362 following Julian’s edict against Christian teachers.

In addition to the “libri Platoniciorum” Victorinus made translations of works in logic by Aristotle and Porphyry; he composed grammatical, rhetorical and logical treatises and commentaries; and, at the end of his life, he wrote theological works which included polemic directed against Arianism and commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul.

Bibliography:

2. Marsilius Ficinus
The documents and circumstances relating to Ficinus’ translation have been thoroughly presented and discussed by P. O. Kristeller (see Suppleentum Ficinianum, I, clvii–clxx; R. Marcel, Marsile Ficin [Paris, 1958], 46ff., reviews the evidence and disagrees on some points). It will suffice here to recall the main facts. In his Preface dedicated to Lorenzo de’ Medici reprinted below, Ficinus refers to the Byzantine Platonist Pletho as having inspired in Lorenzo’s grandfather Cosimo, on the occasion of the Council of Florence (1438), an interest in Platonic philosophy and a desire to found an “Academy”. He claims that he was selected as a boy by Cosimo and educated with this end in view (but see Fortuna above) and that Greek manuscripts not only of Plato but also of Plotinus were made available to him. He tells us that on finishing his translation of Plato (printed in 1484) he was stimulated to undertake the translation of Plotinus by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, who had recently arrived in Florence (1484). Ficinus viewed Pico’s encouragement as divinely inspired and as expressing the wishes of Cosimo. Pico, however, had been reading Ficinus’ Theologia Platonica in 1483 (see Marcel, 471) in which Plotinus is quoted, and, in any case, Ficinus’ own interest in Plotinus was by now long-standing; Plotinus was central to his interpretation of Platonic philosophy (see Fortuna above). Ficinus’ correspondence reflects the uneven progress of the translation, which was completed according to Ficinus in 1486. (A. M. Wolters, “The First Draft of Ficino’s Translation of Plotinus,” Bibliography above, III, G, argues that the manuscript in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale [see below] is a first draft completed in 1486 that Ficinus subsequently revised.) The printing of the translation with Ficinus’ commentary was completed in May 1492, one month after Lorenzo’s death.

The translation follows Porphyry’s enneadic ordering of Plotinus’ treatises as represented in the manuscripts. It is based on the Greek text given in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale gr. 1816, which contains marginalia in Ficinus’ hand and was copied (for Ficinus?) by John Skutariotes in August 1460 from Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana 87.3, a codex which probably belonged to Niccolò Niccoli and was part of the library set up by Cosimo de’ Medici in the monastery of San Marco and which may also have been consulted by Ficinus (see Henry, Les manuscrits (Bibliography above, III, D), 30–35, 47–62; Marcel, 253). Judgments concerning Ficinus’ translation have been very favorable (see J. Festugière, La philosophie de l’amour de Marsile Ficin et son influence sur la littérature française au XVIe siècle [Paris, 1941], 149–52). It continued to be found clear and useful and was reprinted (with corrections) as late as the nineteenth century (in F. Creuzer and G. H. Moser, Plotini Opera omnia [Oxford, 1835]; Plotini Enneades [Paris, 1855]), apparently removing the need for another complete translation until this century.
Prefatory Letter:

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1. “Vates” is also the reading given by the dedication copy, ms. Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana 82.10 (see below, Manuscripts). The sentence might be construed as follows: “And thus neither did I, not being so to speak a prophet, think to approach Plotinus.”

2. Professor Kristeller suggests reading “ante” for “apud.” But “apud” is also found in the dedication copy (above, n. 1), and the sentence might be construed as follows: “Therefore we, in translating and explaining the older theologians, have worked with Plato and Plotinus, so that. . . .”
Plotinum traducendis et explanandis elaboravi-
mus, ut hac theologia in lucem prodeat, et
poetae desinant gesta mysteriae pietatis impie
fabulis suis annumerarre, et Peripateticum quam-
plurimum, id est philosophiae paene omnes, admo-
neantur, non esse de religione saltem communi
tanquam de anilibus fabulis sentiendum. Totus
enim ferme terrarum orbis a Peripateticis occupa-
patus in duas plurimum sectas divisus est,
Alexandrinam et Averroicam. Illi quidem intel-
lectum nostrum esse mortale existiam, hi vero
unicum esse contendunt: utrique religionem
omnem funditus aequo tollunt, praesertim quia
divinam circa homines providentiam negare vidi-
tur, et utrohique a sueto Aristotele defe-
cisse. Cuius mentem hodie pauci praeter subli-
mem Picum complaticum nostrum ea pietate
qua Theophrastus olim et Themistius, Porphy-
rius, Simplicius, Avicenna, et nuper Pllethon
interpretantur. Si quis autem putet tam divulgat-
tam impietatem tamque acribus munitam inge-
niis sola quadam simplici praedicatione fidei
apud homines posse deliberi, is a vero longius
aberrare palam non re ipsa prosul dubio convicet:
maior admodum hic opus est potestate. Id au-
tem est vel divinis miraculis ubique patentibus,
vel saltem philosophica quadam religione philo-
sophiam eam libentius auditorius quandoque per-
susura. Placet autem divinæ providentiae his
saeculis ipsum religionis suae auctoritate rationeque
philosophica confirmare, quod statu-
to quodam tempore verissimam religionis spe-
ciem, ut olim quandoque fecit, manifestis per
omnes gentes confirmet miraculis. Divina igitur
providentia ducti divinum Platonem et magnum
Plotoninum interpretari sumus. Platonem quidem
ipsam misimus ad te iamdiu, ut apud eum ali-
quando revivisceret, in quo revixit Cosmus, at-
tque renatus adolvent ad votum et feliciter flor-
et adultus. Plotinum vero nunc et si iure missuri
sumus, non tam immissum quidem quam spec-
tum ad duas aedes ultro et alacriter properanter,
tanquam ab ipso Platone, velut fellum a lapide
quodam Herculeo raptum, ut penes te, magna-
nimine Laurenti, unice litteratorum patrono, una
cum Platone suo felicissime vivat. Audi ergo
feliciter Plotinum de omnibus philosophiae mys-
teriiis apud te cum Platone loquentem. Sed ante-
quam hunc auscultes, Porphyrius pius eius disci-
pulus tibi auscultandus erit, vitam, mores, gesta
magistri et brevissime simul et verissime nar-
rans. Cuius historiam Angelus Politianus noster,
alumnus tuus, acerrimo vir iudicio, tam orato-
rium quam philosophicam esse censet, propertea
hibi admodum placitura. Denique non solum
audi feliciter, sed etiam felicissime vive. Et
quantum nos amas, dilectissime Laurenti, tan-
tum precor nostrum ama Valorem, Philosophum
inquam egregium virum et platonicae sapientiae
studiorum et te ardentem amantem.

Plotini vita composita a Porphyrio discipulo
suo traducta vero a Marsilio Ficino Florentino.
[Inc.]: (fol. aii°) Plotinus delicias et inane glo-
rium vitamque contemnebat, obit angina, appa-
ruit draco. Plotinus philosophus nostro saeculo
singularis pudore quodam affici videbatur quod
anima eius in corpore esset . . . / . . . [Expl.]:
(fol. bi°) Et si quid usquam in dictionibus erra-
tum fuerit emendare conabimus ac si quid alius
nos mouet, opus ipsum significare potest.

Exhortatio Marsilii Ficini Florentini ad au-
diores in lectionem Plotini et similiter ad le-
gentes. [Inc.]: (fol. bi°) Principio vos omnes
admoneo, qui dividinum audiuntur Plotinum huc
acceditis, ut Platonem ipsum sub Plotini persona
loquentem vos audire existimetis. Sive enim
Plato quodam in Plotino revixit, quod facile
nobis Pythagorici dabunt, sive Deam idem
Platonem quidem prius afflavit, deinde vero Plot-
ininum, quod Platonici nulli negabant, omnino
aspirator idem os platonicum affect atque plotini-
cum. Sed in Platonem quidem affliendo spiritum
effundit uberiorem, in Plotino autem flatum an-
gustiore, ac ne augustiorem, saltem non minus
augustum, nonnunquam ferme profun-ndiorem. Idem itaque numer per os utrumque
humano generi divina fundit oracu, utrohique
sgacicissimo quodam interprete digna, qui ibi
quidem in evolvensis figurem turorum incumbat in-
vulcriis, hic vero tum in exprimendis secretissi-
mis ubique sensibus, tum in explanandis verbis
quam brevissimis diligentius elaboret. Memen-
tote praeterea vos haudquaquam vel sensu co-
mite vel humana ratione ducite, sed mente qua-
dam sublimiore excelsam Plotini mentem pen-
etratus. Profecto (ut platonice loquar) caeteros
hominem rationales animos appellamus, Ploti-
num vero non animum sed intellectum. Sic om-
nes eum philosophi suo saeculo praevertim Pla-
tonici nominabant. Atque utinam in mysteriis
huius interpretandis adminiculum Porphyrii aut
Eustochii aut Proculi, qui Plotini libros dispo-
suerunt atque exposuerunt, nobis adesset. Spero
tamen id, quod admodum felicius est, divinum
auxilium in traducendis explicandisque divinis Plotini libris Marsilius Ficino non defuturum. Sed iam caelestibus hinc auspiciis et nos ad transfe-
rendum primum Plotini librum et argumento bre-
viter exponendum, reliquisque deinceps felici-
ter accedamus. Et vos Platonem ipsum expla-
naire sic erga Platonum existimetis: Hic est filius
meus dilectus, in quo mihi undique placeo: ip-
sum audite. [The last sentence, from Matt. 3:17
and Luke 9:35, caused scandal, it seems, since
it was replaced in the edition of Basel, 1580
by the Homeric verse (Od. X.495) ὁ θεός πέπνυται,
τοι δ’ ὥς σκαί αἰώνιοι. Iste sapit solus, voli-
tant reliqui sicut umbrae.]

Enneades. [Inc.]: (fol. bvii”) Plotini Liber pri-
mus quid animal quid homo a Marsilio Ficino
Florentino translatus. . . . (L.1.1) Voluptates et
dolores, timores item atque audaciae, cupidita-
etes et fugae atque cruciatus, cuiusnam sunt?
Nunquid ipsius animae tantum? an animae po-
tius utentis corpore? An tertii cuissdam ex utris-
que compositi? Duplicitur autem et hoc accipi
potest. . . . [Expl.]: (fol. UX’x) (VI.9.11)
Haec igitur est deorum et hominum divinorum
feliciumque vita humanas omnino negligens vo-
luptates fugaque solius ad solum. Finis.

Consolaro letter. [Inc.]: (fol. UX’x) Marsi-
lius Ficinus magnanimo Petro Medici s. Cum
Idibus Novemberibus in agro Caregio una cum
magnio Laurentio Medice deambularem multa-
que Platonis mysteria ulteriori coeperis interpretare-
mur, decidi forte inter loquendum e sapientia in
fortunam coepisse hac acrius incursa . . . / . . . [Expl.]: (fol. UX’x) Plotinus denique mani-
busc nunc tuis apprehensus seniorem interea Pla-
tonem piis humeris substinebit teque duce pro-
duct in lucem.

Manuscripts:
(*) Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana 82.10
and 82.11: dedication copy dated 1490 (the con-
solatory letter to Piero de’ Medici is dated 1492)
includes the translation, commentary, and a dedi-
catory letter to Lorenzo de’ Medici from Filippo
Valori (edited in Suppl. Fic., I, 94) at whose
expense the manuscript was prepared (Bandini,
Catalogus, III, 194ff.; Suppl. Fic., I, xii).

(*) Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale,
Conventi soppr. E.1.2562: dated 1484; transla-
tion only; variant readings recorded in Suppl.
Fic., I, 93 (Suppl. Fic., I, xxvi).

(*) Holkham Hall, Library of the Earl of
Leicester, 448: Enn. I–III with commentary; s.
XV; copy of 1492 edition (Kristeller, Studies,
p. 166; Iter, IV, 45; S. De Ricci, A Handlist of
Manuscripts in the Library of the Earl of Leic-
est [Oxford, 1932], 39; A. Derolez, The Library of
Raphael de Marcatellis [Ghent, 1979], 236–37).

Missing manuscript in the library of Matthias
Corvinus (Suppl. Fic., I, liii).

Editions (listed in Suppl. Fic., I, lxvi; D.
O’Brien, “Bibliographie analytique des édi-
tions, traductions et commentaires de la Vie de
Plotin, 1492–1980,” in L. Brisson et al., Por-
phyre, la Vie de Plotin [Paris, 1982], 151–56):
1492, Florentiae (Florence): Antonius Mis-
cominus. Ficinos’ translation and commentary.
HC 13221*, Goff P-815; BMC VI, 640; Graesse
V 353; NUC. BL; BN; (DLC; MH).
1540, Salingiacum (Solingen): Ioannes Soter.
Reprint of the 1492 edition. (The identification
of “Salingiacum” as Solingen is confirmed by
H. Finger, Universitätsbibliothek Düsseldorf.)
Adams P-1598; NUC. Cambridge, University
Library; BN; (CUL; IMUS).
1559, Basileae (Basel): apud Petrum Pernam.
Ficinos’ translation and commentary. Some cop-
ies include an index. Adams P-1599; NUC (in-
cluding a listing under 1570 for the NNUT copy
under NP 0426038. The NNUT imprint date has
been altered by hand from MDLIX to MDLXX,
information I owe to D. O’Brien, verified by P.
O. Kristeller.) Cambridge, Trinity College; BL;
(DCU; ICU; NNUT).
1559, Basileae (Basel): per T. Guerinum [sic].
Perna’s 1559 edition with a different title
page. BN.
1562, Basileae (Basel): per T. Guarinum. Pern-
a’s 1559 edition with new title page. Adams P-
1600; NUC. BN; Cambridge, University Lib-
(rory; (CUL).
1580, Basileae (Basel): ad Pernean lecy-
thum. (Gr.-Lat.) Ficinus’ Latin translation and
commentary, with the Greek text. Adams P-
1597; Brunet IV, 727; NUC. Cambridge, Clare
College; BL; BN; (DFO; MH).
1615, Basileae (Basel): impensis Ludovici
Regis. Contents as in the edition of 1580.
Graesse V, 352; NUC. BL; BN; (ViU; MiD).
1835, Oxoni (Oxford): e Typographo aca-
demico. Creuzer and Moser’s edition of Ploti-
nus, which includes a corrected version of Ficinus’ translation and his commentary. NUC. BN; (CtY; IU).

1855, Parisiis (Paris): Didot. Enlarged reprint of the 1835 edition; it contains only the chapter headings of the first part of the commentary together with the entire second part. NUC. (Cu; MH).


Biography:


COMMENTARY

a. Marsilius Ficinus

Ficinus began composing his commentary upon completion of his translation (1486), on the basis of public lectures he gave on Plotinus (see Suppl. Fic., I, cxxvi–cxxviii). The first part of the commentary consisted of preliminary introductions and summaries (argumenta) for each treatise, each chapter of each treatise also being given a heading indicating briefly its contents. In some cases, depending on Ficinus’ interests, the argumentum could be quite extensive, incorporating in the commentary on Enn. III.1 material from the earlier unpublished Disputatio contra iudicium astrologorum (edited, omitting the material in the Plotinus commentary, by Kristeller, Suppl. Fic., II, 11–76) and giving rise, in connection with the commentary on Enn. IV.3.11, to the composition of another work, the “De vita coelitus comparanda ad Matthiam Corvinum Pannoniae regem” (Book III of the very popular De vita libri tres, in Opera omnia 529–71), completed in 1489, which still appears as part of the Plotinus commentary in Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana 82.10, and which, as separately published in the De vita libri tres, reflects its origin in the context of the commentary on Plotinus (see Suppl. Fic., I, xxi, lxxxiv). Various other tasks and events interrupted the progress of the commentary (see Suppl. Fic., I, cxxvi–cxxxviii; Marcel, 476–508) and from Enn. IV.3.15 it assumes a shorter form which is announced at the end of the commentary on Enn. IV.3.14 (Opera omnia, 1738): “Sed non licet ulterior in praesentia digredi, immo neque licet tenorem ab initio librorum exponendorum hactenus continuitatem ultra servare. Si enim longa similiter argumenta, immo et commentaria seorsumque ab ipsis Plotini capitibus disposita prosequamur, et confusa continget interpretatio, et opus exsercet immensus. Satis evagati sumus; satis multa iam diximus. Sat igitur erit deinceps breves quasdam annotationes, ut in Theophrasto fecimus, Plotini capitibus interservere.” From this point Ficinus discontinues composing argumenta for each treatise, providing only brief summaries at the head of each chapter of the remaining treatises, although some of these summaries are quite extensive. The commentary was completed in 1490 and was printed both with the editions of the translation (see above) and separately in the Opera omnia of Ficinus. The commentary is reprinted in the Oxford, 1835, Creuzer-Moser edition of Plotinus; the Paris, 1855 edition contains the chapter headings (only) of the first part of the commentary and the entire second part of the commentary.

Argumentum (ed. of Florence, 1492). [Inc.]: (fol. bii’) Argumentum Marsilii Ficini Florentini in primum librum Plotini platonici. Anima rationalis media est inter formas divinas atque naturales neque inest corpori, sed adest, et vitam ex se
propagat quae inest corpori, ex qua et corpore fit animal unum compositum. Capitolum primum.

Commentary. [Inc.]: (fol. bi) Peropportune primus hic omnium nobis occurrit liber, in quo nos ipsos velut in speculo contemplumur, ne tamquam nimium curiosi aliena prius quam nostra quaeramus. Docebit enim nos, id est hominem verum . . . / . . . [Expl.]: (fol. UUix') In- funde praetera lumen quo vera passim discernat a falsis, ne usquam vel meditando vel agendo a tua voluntate dissentiat.

Manuscripts:
(*) Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana 82.10 and 82.11 (see above, Manuscripts of Ficinus' translation).
(*) Holkham Hall 448 (see Manuscripts, above).

Editions (editions of the Opera omnia listed in Suppl. Fic., I):
1492, Florence (see Editions of Ficinus' translation, above).
1540, Solingen (see Editions, above).
1559, Basel: apud Petrum Pernam (see Editions, above).
1559, Basel: per T. Guerinium (sic) (see Editions, above).
1561, Basileae (Basel): ex officina Henricpe-trina. Opera omnia of Ficinus, including his commentary on Plotinus. Suppl. Fic., I, lxxi–lxxiii; Adams F-412; NUC. Cambridge, Pembroke College; (CLSU; NNC; NIC; ICU).
1562, Basle (see Editions, above).
1576, Basileae (Basel): ex officina Henricpe-trina. Opera omnia of Ficinus, including his commentary on Plotinus. Kristeller, Studies, 137; Suppl. Fic., I, lxxiii; NUC. BL; BN; (MH).
1580, Basel (see Editions, above).
1615, Basel (see Editions, above).

Opera omnia of Ficinus, including his commentary on Plotinus. BL; BN.
1835, Oxford (see Editions, above).
1855, Paris (see Editions, above).
1896, Paris (see Editions, above).

b. Doubtful Commentary
1. Paulus Scalichius.


"Pauli Schahy" is surely to be identified with "Paulus Scalichius" (Paul Skalich, 1534–75), who was born in Zagreb, studied in Vienna, Bologna, and Rome, and later in his adventurous career claimed descent from the Scala of Verona. Scalichius certainly cited Plotinus in his Encyclopaedias, seu Orbis disciplinarum tam sacram quam prophanarum epistemon (Basel, 1559), but there is no other evidence presently known, apart from the alleged commentary on Enn. III in the missing Greifswald codex, that Scalichius actually commented on Plotinus. For Scalichius' life and writings see G. Krabbel, Paul Skalich. Ein Lebensbild aus dem 16. Jahrhundert (Münster i. W., 1915), and also Schottenloher II 20125–30.