

PLOTINIAN RESEARCH IN BRAZILIAN LITERATURE: NOTES ON TRANSLATIONS, RESEARCH MATERIALS AND HISTORIOGRAPHIC TOOLS

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Abstract

The aim of this work is to reflect on the status of Plotinian research in Brazilian literature. That is, to evaluate translation works, research materials and historiographic tools, with the aim of diagnosing whether the available resources are satisfactory. There is a lack of lexicons and systematic studies that relate Plotinus and the “presocratics”, as well as the Hellenistic schools of Epicureanism, Stoicism and Skepticism. It is argued for the relevance of studies on philosophical problems, such as those of ethics and politics that are still marginalized in comparison to the classical themes of mysticism and the One. To this end, we take into account the two bibliographic repertoires produced under the direction of Luciana Santoprete and Loraine Oliveira (2010, 2020), published by *Archai* and *Classica*. The purpose is to indicate promising paths for bibliographical production on Plotinus’ philosophy to support the development of various works, including master’s and doctoral projects.

Keywords

Plotinus; research; Brazil; repertoire; historiography.

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Resumo

O objetivo deste trabalho é refletir sobre o status da pesquisa plotiniana na literatura brasileira. Isto é, avaliar obras de traduções, materiais de pesquisa e de historiografia, com o propósito de diagnosticar se os recursos disponíveis são satisfatórios. Identifica-se a carência de léxicos e estudos sistemáticos que relacionem Plotino e os “pré-socráticos”, assim como as escolas helenísticas do epicurismo, estoicismo e ceticismo. Argumenta-se pela pertinência de estudos sobre problemas filosóficos, tais como os de ética e política ainda marginalizados em comparação aos temas clássicos da mística e do Uno. Para tal, leva-se em consideração os dois repertórios bibliográficos produzidos sob a direção de Luciana Santoprete e Loraine Oliveira (2010, 2020), publicados nos periódicos *Archai* e *Classica*. Pretende-se indicar caminhos promissores à produção bibliográfica sobre a filosofia de Plotino para subsidiar o desenvolvimento de trabalhos diversos, dentre os quais os de projeto de mestrado e doutorado.

Palavras-chave

Plotino; pesquisa; Brasil; repertório; historiografia.

Introduction

The objective of this work is to reflect on the status, that is, the bibliographical condition of translations, research materials and historiographical works related to Plotinus (204/205-270 AD) in Brazilian literature. The reason for the relevance of this undertaking is due to the premise that such academic resources constitute the context that makes possible the access and discussion of the themes and interpretative problems of Plotinus' philosophy.

In parallel, as we intend to demonstrate below, although Brazilian Plotinian research experienced progress between 1991 and 2020, there are numerous gaps and bibliographical challenges that the specialized community has to deal with. Thus, this text can support the development of master's and doctoral research projects, as well as various productions, including articles and books, as it highlights the most promising objects in relation to the gaps in the current bibliography.

There are excellent scientific works, indexed in national periodicals, which are focused on reviewing this bibliographical production, but they focus on the association of Plotinus' philosophy with Neoplatonism and, more importantly, are focused on highlighting and quantifying what publications exist regarding the respective Neoplatonic authors, without a critical or qualitative analysis having been carried out on what was produced specifically about Plotinus.

In this regard, before any further note, the fabulous contribution of Brazilian researchers and philosophers, Luciana Gabriela Santoprete (CNRS) and Loraine Oliveira (UFPE), with the collaboration of Emmannuela Freitas de Caldas (UnB) must be given high regard. and Mayã Fernandes (UnB), due to the two bibliographic repertoires on Plotinus and Neoplatonism that they created in 2010 and 2020. Between the first and second repertoire there was a flow of research that lasted a decade, in addition to the years of preparation that preceded that very first review. This project demonstrates the strength of such efforts. It is mainly on these repertoires that our present reflection is based on.

In light of the aforementioned bibliographic repertoires, for example, the thematic or content differences existing between the texts collected there are not yet discussed. And, in fact, this is not the nature nor, therefore, the intention of repertoires to operate with specific critical evaluations. The greatness of these materials lies in promoting the collection of academic production data over time, in order to make possible the type of exercise

that is being proposed here: that of philosophical reflection regarding what was elaborated in terms of Plotinian thought in Portuguese language, in more detail the resources considered propaedeutic to philosophical research, as alluded to by the subtitle “translations, research materials and historiographical tools”.

In this sense, as expected, it must first be said that the notes intended by our work touch only a portion of the bibliographic universe regarding Plotinus’ philosophy. For the future, it is possible to delimit even more unique themes, such as the Soul, Cosmology, Anthropology and from them evaluate the scope of the available texts, in addition to highlighting their own interpretative problems and gaps. With this desire in mind, it can be observed that this analysis tool is quite useful and itself promising.

If we turn to the aforementioned repertoires, it is clear that they explored different aspects of Neoplatonic thought, including philosophers such as Boethius, Damascius, Iamblichus, Porphyry and Proclus (in order of index), while our article isolates Plotinus’ philosophy from this schedule. This work aims, therefore, to carry out not an exhaustive survey of everything that has been published, but to critically discern between research resources that have greater and lesser availability in the literature, considering not only the quantities, but the theoretical relevance that these tools have for the Brazilian Plotinian studies.

To this end, in addition to the two repertories that cover publications relating to the periods 1964-2010 and 2010-2019, texts in English from foreign universities will be consulted, solely as an international parameter of comparison. The proposal is to choose examples that are paradigmatic and that, therefore, capture the minimum essential to the characterization of a given gap in terms of research materials and tools. Thus, it is much more about praising these shortcomings, not to deny academic progress, but to demonstrate that it is pertinent to encourage philosophical research on Plotinus in Brazil.

There are two theoretical keys, which, in turn, constitute sections of this article: i. Research community and the state of the art of Plotinus’ work: Based on the repertoires, the available translations of treatises from the *corpus plotinianum* and the organization of studies by Brazilian researchers, the aim is to present a conception of the general bibliographic framework, observing advances and challenges; ii. Research materials, lexicons and historiographical tools, such as vocabularies or technical lexicons on Plotinus’ philosophy; keeping in mind works that deal, above all, with the

historiographical relationship between Plotinus and Greco-Roman antiquity.

The tradition of medieval studies will not be addressed, but we can mention that, although there are relevant studies that draw attention to the important connections between Plotinus and the medieval period, particularly considering the receptions of Arabic philosophy², they have not yet been properly explored in Brazilian research materials. It is more common to find articles that articulate Plotinus and Augustine or that discuss the philosophical-theological relationship between Neoplatonism and Christianity³. It has to be said that Modern and contemporary tradition will not be discussed, but it is also noted that there are few systematization resources. We find the important contribution of Edrisi Fernandes (UFRN) which, regarding the metaphysical problem of evil, permeates German idealism and the reception of Schelling. In his article (2013), the author examines, among other things, the interpretation that Plotinus would have carried out the transition from the original Good to matter and evil in an insightful, but insufficient, way. In terms of contemporary relations, it is worth mentioning Bergson's course translated into Portuguese (2000), in addition to the works of Pierre Hadot (2002 & 2019), both available in Brazilian translations.

The greatest attention is that given to the second section, whose arguments indicate the lack of systematic studies that articulate Plotinus and the presocratics, as well as the Hellenistic schools, namely Epicureanism, Stoicism and Skepticism. In other words, the theoretical plan of antiquity is prioritized. Finally, given the scope and extent of this work, it is only worth pointing out certain interpretative problems that remain further from Brazilian research, despite being recognized as central to understanding Plotinus' philosophy. By carrying out this exercise, we hope to offer a propaedeutic for advanced studies, which can take the present bibliographical suggestions as useful clues for the construction of works on the *Enneads*.

² In this regard, Galileia (2017: 58) comments: "In other words, the *Theology* of pseudo Aristotle, which corresponds to a paraphrase of Plotinus' *Enneads* IV-VI, not only serves to demonstrate how the Neoplatonist was known, but also to show the attempt to reconcile Aristotelianism and Neoplatonism in the Arab world".

³ For example, Di Silva (2018) links Plotinus and Augustine.

1. The research community and the state of the art of Plotinus' work

The first bibliographic repertoire on Plotinus' philosophy in Brazil was published in Archai through three documents (2010), in two parts, named "Part I: Research History", also accompanied by an annex; and "Part II: List of Authors and Titles" as part of a larger undertaking: to also list the state of the art regarding Neoplatonism, within which Plotinus figures as the main reference, that is, in terms of being the philosopher most researched among the authors indexed by the review.

Both parts of this first repertoire, prior to the catalog of their respective bibliographical samples, are preceded by introductory texts produced by the authors (Luciana Santoprete, Loraine Oliveira and Emmanuela Caldas), which explain the methodological choices that guided the work and summary indication of the contents covered by the repertoire. Includes very useful information on the chronology of Neoplatonic philosophers and their main schools. Part II is especially relevant, as it contains a section entitled "data analysis", whose writing and argumentation style is similar to that adopted for writing our article.

However, this subtopic focuses more on the timeline relating to publications and ends with a brief critical note, which considers the bibliographic challenges to be faced by the specialized community in Brazil, not proposing, however, to name specific objects, except for the timely indication that "aesthetics" and "mystique" (cf. 2010: 241) received a greater number of searches.

The second repertoire (2020), in turn, was published by Classica. As the authors of the research describe (in addition to Santoprete and Oliveira, Mayã Fernandes is a co-author), this review continues the work published in 2010. It is also preceded by an excellent presentation that offers an overview of advances over the last decade, which reveals the dizzying growth of Neoplatonic and Plotinian research. The review is accompanied by graphics, as well as catalogs with indexes of authors, translators and subjects.

On the other hand, there is still a need to more clearly demarcate the gaps and problems to be faced by our academic community based on awareness of what has been done and what remains to be done. This lack is addressed in the works, but in a general and allusive way. In the spirit of that analysis section, the aforementioned research data must be interpreted within the critical horizon of philosophy. To begin with, it is significant that only in

2019, through Editora Acropole, we have access, in full, to the *Corpus Plotinianum*, that is, to Plotinus' *Enneads*⁴.

Between 2014 and 2019, the aforementioned volumes that make up the complete translation and edition by José Seabra (USP) and Juvino Maia (UFPB) were published. Due to their relevance, it is natural that such works have yet to be properly appreciated and appropriated by the academic community, in order to consolidate them as standard versions for consultations and bibliographical productions on Plotinus in Portuguese. It is noteworthy that this full translation was made directly from Greek and promoted in a bilingual edition. Previous translations were not always conceived directly from the Hellenic language.

This is because we had partial translations, selections of texts, such as the treatise V.8 [31], *On the Intelligible Beauty*, the subject of Santoprete's master's thesis (1999, published as an article in 2003) and III.8 [30]⁵, *On Nature, Contemplation, and the One*, referring to Baracat's master's (2000, published as a book in 2008); the list of 12 treatises by Plotinus brought together by Sommerman (2000); Porphyry's *Vita Plotini*, translated as an annex to Ullmann's famous introductory study, (2002); ditto those relating to the second *Ennead* (Lupi, 2002); individualized texts such as treatise V.3 [49], *On the Knowing Hypostasis and on That Which Is Transcendent*, translated by Gollnick (2005) also in the context of a master's degree⁶.

⁴ Porphyry, disciple of Plotinus, edits the *Enneads*, six collections containing nine treatises each, the *corpus plotinianum*, and composes the *Vita Plotini*, which discusses the ordering of the treatises and provides a biographical narrative about the development of Plotinus' work. Also part of this editorial activity is the attribution of titles given to treatises. The *Vita* can be consulted, in Portuguese, in the translation by Baracat (2006) or Ullmann (2002). Regarding the reference to Plotinus' *Enneads* itself, it follows the standard reference (Cf. Rosseti, 2006: 177) in which the group of *Enneads* (I to VI) is indicated, the systematic position of the treatise in the group (1 to 9), chronological order (1 to 54). It is also customary to refer to the line interval in the last part of the quote. Regarding the division given by Porphyry to Plotinus' writings, that is, in the form of *Enneads*, it is always opportune to report Brandão's synthetic explanation (2020: 4): "The order of the treaties follows an anagogical principle: they represent the ascension of the philosopher, of the sensible world to the One. The *Ennead* I deals with ethical issues. *Enneads* II and III, with cosmological themes. The *Ennead* IV, with themes relating to the Soul; V has Intellect as its theme and, finally, VI, deals with the One".

⁵ In general, the dates assigned to dissertations follow the period indicated by the authors in the researchers' profiles published on the *Lattes* platform.

⁶ It should be noted that most of these partial translations were not made directly from Greek. To give just one example, the version of V.3 [49], present in Gollnick's dissertation (2005: 12), was constructed as follows: "Such translation was made based on a

In this vein, a milestone for the reception of Plotinus work in Brazil was Baracat's doctoral thesis (2006), which translated half of the *Enneads* (I, II and III, 27 treatises); there is also VI.9, *On the Good or the One*, translated by Brandão (2007 as a dissertation and published in 2020 as a book); I.9 [16], *On Exiting from the Body*, translated by Puente (2008) and I 1 [53]⁷, *What Is the Living Being and What Is the Human Being?*, translated by Ferreira (2009) as an appendix to his Master's dissertation. More recently, through a doctoral thesis from Portugal, we also had individual access to the VI. 7 (38), *How the Multiplicity of the Ideas Came to Exist, and on the Good*, elaborated by Santos (2013). As a book chapter, treatise III, 7 [45], *On Eternity and Time*, was re-presented by Baracat (2014). Through Edipro, translated by Maria Silva (2015), a new translation was made available for III.5 [50] *On Love*.

This time, as until 2019 there was no full access to the *Enneads* in Portuguese, Brazilian researchers had to rely, for example, on the English (Gerson, 2018; Armstrong, 1966), Spanish (Igal, 1992) or French (Bréhier, 1989); modernly, with the work of Henry & Schwyzer (1964-1982) as a reference edition. In time, it is important to praise the fruitful collaboration, in the context of Brazilian classical studies, between classical letters and ancient philosophy. Most of the translations and commentaries that allow qualified access to Plotinus' philosophy come from the efforts of researchers who were forged in Greek letters. Of the translations listed, those created by philosophers are the exception.

In the case at hand, that is, that of translations, perhaps we could consider that, by the expansion to the Lusophone language, we would find a good translation coming from Portugal, which is common practice to trace in the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. However, in this regard, a very current study (Rebalde, 2024: 25, emphasis added), after listing a set of foreign translations, considers that: "It is hoped that these translations can best resolve the absence until recently of complete translations into Portuguese. *Made in Portugal, to this day there is no complete translation of Plotinus' work.*"

comparison of texts in French, by Ham, and in English, by Armstrong, using Greek only with the intention of better choosing a term and elucidating obscure passages. Not having been entirely made from the Greek original [...]". In other words, in addition to access to works in Portuguese having been partial until recently, it was often also indirect, in the sense that it depended on the reception of texts in third or intermediate languages between Greek and the vernacular. Bilingual editions are rare as well.

⁷ With a theme related to suicide, this treatise is translated into a collection of philosophical texts on this topic.

Therefore, the fact that we only have Plotinus' work in our vernacular so late is one of the most robust evidences of the still marginal position of Neoplatonic philosophy in academic research at postgraduate level in Brazil. Added to this is the scarce bibliography regarding research tools, which we intend to show below. In this interlude, by way of contextualizing the state of the art, the oscillating participation of Neoplatonism and Plotinus researchers in the National Association of Postgraduate Studies in Philosophy (ANPOF), the main philosophical association in Brazil, is also symptomatic.

To stay in the most recent edition (2024), the Working Group (GT) Neoplatonism has 05 registered works, of which only 01 is specific to Plotinus, compared to 47 on Ancient Philosophy, 29 from the GT Plato and Platonism and 12 from the one that is focuses on Aristotle⁸. Due to the tradition and the list of authors they cover, one would not expect the respective GT's to be equivalent, but such a divergent number signals the need to consolidate the Neoplatonic and Plotinian community.

In fact, conventionally studies of late antiquity used to be incorporated under the heading "Ancient Philosophy". It is notable that, even after the establishment of the Neoplatonism Working Group, the writings produced at the ANPOF-2018 event, in Vitória-ES, were published as a book precisely in the edition of *Filosofia Antiga* (cf. Costa *et al.*, 2019) and there are few texts gathered there that deal with Plotinus.

In this sense, the data about ANPOF is ambiguous: on the one hand, it highlights the academic gaps specific to the aforementioned field of research, on the other hand, it reveals the growth of the Neoplatonic community, which more recently has the possibility of organizing itself as an autonomous Group. If it were not for the herculean work of researchers such as Cícero Bezerra (UFS/CNPQ), Coordinator of the Neoplatonism GT with ANPOF, who enable the existence of a perception of the advances and limits of this Group, the dilution of research such as those carried out on Plotinus would remain imperceptible.

To counterbalance this diagnosis that only captures a momentary snapshot, it is worth highlighting that experts have produced two dossiers on Plotinus and Neoplatonism, organized by Loraine Oliveira (Archai, UnB, 2013) and the most recent one by Cícero Bezerra (*Perspectiva Filosófica*, UFPE, 2022). Another publication of great vigor and which corroborates

⁸ According to the document "List of approved work for the working groups of the XX ANPOF Meeting, 2024" referenced at the end.

the observation of progress between the beginnings of Brazilian Plotinian research from the 1990s to the 2020s is the collection *Mística e os Místicos* (2022), in that it brought together a plethora of researchers high-level approach to thinking about a topic whose presence in Plotinus is unavoidable. But it should be noted, both the *Perspectiva Filosófica* dossier and the book on Mysticism published by *Editora Vozes* cover authors and themes that are not exclusive to Plotinus.

From these data, the preliminary intuition - which is twofold - of a certain marginality that Neoplatonic and Plotinian themes, in particular, occupy in the general context of university research and even at the internal level of research in ancient philosophy or classical Greek studies is substantiated. At the same time, there are signs that this community has strengthened and can develop even further, as long as it is well oriented as a community.

2. Research materials, lexicons and historiographical tools

When focusing on two examples, the most renowned in the light of studies in ancient philosophy, Plato and Aristotle, it appears that the aforementioned philosophers have a reasonable range of resources and research materials in Portuguese. In addition to the recognized tradition of Portuguese translations of his classic works, whether from Brazil or Portugal, by the philosopher of the Academy, for example, there is the “*Plato’s Lexicon*” (Schäfer, 2012) by Edições Loyola and the “*Plato’s Vocabulary*” by collection by Martins Fontes, which is the Brazilian translation of the work carried out by renowned Hellenists Luc Brisson and Jean-François Pradeau (2010).

In this same collection you can find “*Aristotle’s Vocabulary*” by Pierre Pellegrin. There are Brazilian authorial works on Aristotle, such as that of Lucas Angioni (2018: 295), who, although he warns that “comparing him to a contemporary philosophical lexicon is misleading, inappropriate and disappointing”, provides excellent research material. His observation is related to the nature of book V of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* which, despite being taken as a lexicon by tradition, presents several specificities in relation to the contemporary genre that is cognate to it. However, Angioni’s commentary, linked to the text of *Metaphysics*, provides a lexical tool of maximum value.

It is notable, therefore, that if from Plato and Aristotle we have lexicons translated into Portuguese or even originally written in our vernacular, from Plotinus there are simply none available. The silence regarding these materials can be observed when examining the repertoires. In the book coordinated by Barbara Cassin, whose Brazilian edition is organized by Brazilian researchers Fernando Santoro (UFRJ) and Luísa Buarque (PUC-Rio), entitled *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, the non-accessory nature of caring for languages and technical vocabularies is manifested:

Multiplicity is not just between languages, but within each language. A language, as we consider it, is not a fact of nature, an object, but an effect taken in history and culture, and which never ceases to be invented – again, *energeia* instead of *ergon*. So much so that the object of the dictionary is made up of the languages in his works, and the translations of these works into different languages and different times. The networks of words and meanings that we try to think of as networks of datable philosophical languages, installed by specific authors, in particular writings, are singular and punctual networks, linked to the destination (exoteric or esoteric), to the standard of language and style, to the relationship with tradition (models, references, palimpsests, ruptures, innovations). Every author, and the philosopher is an author, at the same time that he writes in a language, produces his language – as Schleiermacher says about the relationship between an author and his language: ‘he is his organ and she is his’ (Cassin, 2018: 20).

Cassin’s statement is emblematic for us: the philosopher, at the same time as he writes in a language, produces his language. If it is not true to assume that technical vocabularies resolve linguistic, conceptual and philosophical controversies, it is also unreasonable to consider that they are dispensable for the arduous task of exegeting ancient philosophers. In the opposite sense, such resources are fundamental to the rigorous work of interpretation. However, there is nothing about Plotinus in Portuguese. An objective possibility to overcome this lack would be to translate the *lexicon plotinianum* (1980) and a bold alternative, which involves a more challenging task, would be to produce original material in this regard.

Such an innovation would represent a great gain, including in terms of international contribution, as it would update the technical study of Plotinus’ conceptual vocabulary. As it is a large-scale research, it would probably require specific funding with the joint work of three or more research professors, acting as authors or organizers, together with a team of postgraduate fellows and/or collaborating professors. In this case, it

would also make perfect sense to bring together professionals from classical literature and ancient philosophy.

To alternate between gaps and advances, it is correct to say that, in recent decades (1990-2020), there have been important advances in the field of philosophical comments on Plotinus' texts, a genre that covers technical studies valuable to bibliographical research. Most of these materials were published as master's dissertations and doctoral theses or simply as studies that accompany the set of partial translations that we listed in the previous section. An exception is the article *Notes on logic and dialectics* in Plotinus by Loraine Oliveira (2007), which analyzes Plotinus' treatise I.3 [20] "*On Dialectic*" without translating it and without constituting an academic work of dissertation or thesis. In order not to be repetitive, this list of works can be consulted by reading the 2010 and 2020 repertoires mentioned above.

However, these works focus on specific treatises and do not, in general, carry out a step-by-step analysis of the texts; that is, for one reason or another, there is no research of the scope of Paul Kalligas, *The Enneads of Plotinus: a commentary*, that can cover a commented study of the *Enneads* as a whole and chapter by chapter of the treatises. In the first volume (2014), the scholar commented on the first three *Enneads*; in the second (2021), he commented on the fourth and fifth, leaving the sixth and final *Ennead* for the completion of this project in English, as these studies were originally written in Greek.

Not to mention the publishing company of *Parmenides Publishing*, which has made specific comments on Plotinus' treatises, also with the aim of forming a global set of the *Enneads*' writings. To cite just two examples, we have the work of Arruzza (2015), *Plotinus' Ennead II.5 On What Is Potentially and What Actually - Translation with an Introduction and Commentary* and A. A. Long (2022), *Plotinus Ennead II.4 On Matter - Translation with an Introduction and Commentary*. Again, then, even in areas where Brazilian research has more bibliographic resources, it must be encouraged to advance further.

From the point of view of the dimension of the history of philosophy, that is, the relationship of Plotinus' work with the philosophical tradition, there are important studies relating Plotinus to Plato and Plotinus to Aristotle, such as *Plato and Aristotle in Plotinus' doctrine of noûs* (Szlezák, 2010), translated by Monika Ottermann. In this vein, *The metaphysics of Plotinus* (Narbonne, 2014), translated by Maurício Marsola (UNIFESP), which

covers Plotinus' varied references to the Greek tradition. However, in addition to the need for more systematic reflections that analyze the fruitful relationships between these renowned philosophers, there is a lack of detailed study on the relationship between Plotinus and the presocratics, for example, as well as between Plotinus and the Hellenistic schools, read epicureanism, stoicism and skepticism.

In Portuguese, there is nothing similar to the work of Gianni Stamatellos (2007), *Plotinus and the Presocratics: A Philosophical Study of Presocratic Influences in Plotinus' Enneads* regarding the articulation between Plotinus and the "presocratics". The author explores the influences of Anaximander, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, among others, associating them with the themes of cosmology, body, matter, being, soul, eternity and time. In addition to carrying out this philosophical-interpretative exercise, it offers absolutely essential research tools such as mapping the presocratic fragments in Plotinus' Enneads, through an appendix. The entire work is well contextualized and aware of the receptions of Plato and Aristotle.

In postgraduate studies, I briefly referred to Empedocles (Silva, 2021), but very preliminarily, without the appropriate exegetical depth. There is an excellent study by Marcus Pinheiro (UFF) which, in fact, promotes an analysis that articulates Parmenides and Plotinus through a combined exegesis (2007). But these are very specific illustrations in relation to the academic challenge that the vast and important Greco-Roman philosophical tradition imposes on us. Now, in addition to Greek cosmology in general, the essential role of Eleatic ontology and epistemology stands out in the construction of Plotinian philosophy, heir to the receptions of Plato and Aristotle, but centrally linked to the tradition of the first Greek philosophers. Proof of this is the locus given to these thinkers in the treatise V.1 [10] *On the Three Primary Hypostases* by Plotinus.

There is, therefore, a long way to go in the web that unites Plotinus and the presocratics. As is known, Plotinus is a very precious doxographic source, which can be consulted based on the seminal study by Stamatellos. Alexandre Costa (UFF), a large-scale Brazilian researcher, did similar work, but on Heraclitus (2002: 141). In this study, Plotinus appears as one of Heraclitus' doxographic sources, in the fragment DK 22 B 84⁹:

⁹ Standard reference (cf. Rossetti, 2006: 188) to the edition of "Diels-Kranz", highlighting the position of the author [Heraclitus] in the catalog of the presocratics (22), the type of text as fragment (B) and the *locus* occupied by the fragment cited in the philosopher's order (84).

“transmuting himself, he rests”; which is found in *Ennead* IV 8 [6] 1. It would be desirable to have a study similar to that of Alexandre Costa, one of the differences being the fact that, conversely, Plotinus is a source of knowledge about the collection of fragments.

Along the same lines, there is a lack of study that evaluates the influences of Hellenistic schools, notably Epicureanism, Stoicism and Skepticism. There is no work on Plotinus’ association with any of the schools individually, even less about them as a whole. In the constant entries in the repertoires, for example, it is symptomatic that “skepticism” appears only once (cf. Santoprete, 2010a: 265).

It is true that even in the international community there is a greater lack of literature on the relationship between Plotinus and skepticism. At least in terms of books that give more detailed treatment. It is also necessary to recognize the controversial character of Plotinus’ own association with skepticism. Chiaradonna (2023: 31), for example, considers that “If the conceptual parallel is undeniable and very fruitful, it is more difficult, however, to establish whether Plotinus was really inspired by skeptical arguments [...]”. The scholar adds that “it is not easy to establish [...] whether Pyrrhonism and academic skepticism were effectively part of Plotinus’ philosophical background”. Before these notes, however, he records that “the arguments directed by skeptics against the possibility of knowledge, reported by Sextus Empiricus, were already noted by Émile Bréhier and were accurately examined in recent studies”.

The fact is that the philosophical relationship between Plotinus’ arguments and the skeptics is clear and thought-provoking, certainly much more due to the hermeneutic spirit of the polemic than to Plotinus’ adherence to the principles of that school. If in Portuguese we have the excellent article by Marsola (2007), “Plotinus and Skepticism”, in English there is a wider range, which includes the renowned studies by O’Meara (2000), *Scepticism and Ineffability in Plotinus*, Magrin (2010), *Sensation and skepticism in Plotinus* besides the one by Opsomer (2017), *Plotinus and Scepticism*, to name three of many other papers and book chapters. Now, the skeptical polemic is taken by Plotinus as fundamental for his investigation into the genres of knowledge. In particular, for the issue of self-knowledge and the Intellect Hypostasis (*Noûs*). This philosophical discussion is most prominent in treatise V.3[49]. The Brazilian researcher reconstructed this picture:

When consulting the *Index fontium* of Henry-Schwyzzer’s edition, there is a reference to the *Adversus Mathematicos* and the *Hypotyposes* in 30 passages throughout the *Enneads* (*Plotini opera [editio minor]*, vol. III: 367). Plotinus not only

appears to be aware of skeptical philosophy, but it is an object of discussion, whether from a refutatory point of view, or operating as one of the elements that make up the argument regarding topics such as self-knowledge, the sensitive basis of knowledge or the ineffability of the Principle. An examination of the *status quaestionis* in this regard leads us to the observation of a still small number of studies, given the importance of the theme in the aforementioned treatises [...] (Marsola, 2007: 248-249, emphasis added).

Since Marsola's publication in 2007, the only occurrence indexed in the repertoires consulted, new works have not been noticed in this study horizon, which makes his work extremely current. In this sense, there is also nothing like what was organized by Longo and Taormina, *Plotinus and Epicurus: Matter, Perception, Pleasure* (Cambridge, 2016), namely, that articulates Plotinus and Epicureanism. Or, in the case of Stoicism, there is no study similar to the one published by Graeser, entitled *Plotinus and the Stoics: A Preliminary Study* (Brill, 1972). In an article published in *Prometeus* (2020b), focused on a metaphysical-cosmological reading, I made some allusions to elements of Plotinus' text that are related to Epicurean and Stoic arguments, but without the systematic development of the studies mentioned above.

The need for work on these major historiographical keys is not limited to mere historical curiosity, but is central to the interpretation of philosophical problems relating to the sensitive cosmos, providence, matter, evil and freedom, which, although immanent in Plotinian treatises, presuppose Hellenistic philosophies within their formulations and, without which, it is difficult to arrive at any accurate interpretation. This was the perception I also had in an article published in *Polymatheia* (2020a) in which, with the purpose of examining the Plotinian conception of eudaimonia, alongside scholars, I found that Plotinus establishes a clear dialogue, not only with Aristotelian philosophy, but also with Epicureanism and Stoicism.

Our argument, therefore, is that these historiographical materials are decisive for the exegesis of Plotinus' treatises, insofar as they are the sources from which philosophy is woven dialectically. However, I noticed that until 2020, when I published the first article along these lines, there are no indices in the recensions that establish the link between Plotinus and Epicurus or Epicureanism. The term "stoicism", in turn, appears only once, not related to Plotinus, but indirectly to Boethius (cf. Santoprete, 2010: 256). Therefore, judging by the possibility that we have still missed one or another publication that has not been listed, we can safely say, at least, that the bibliography in this area is fragile.

Not only to highlight the gaps, it is encouraging to consider that, thanks to Marsola's studies, researchers can count on good access to the dialogue between Plotinus and Gnosticism, as well as studies on Mysticism and the One, as the authors of the review highlight:

a very current theme in studies on Plotinus has been gaining ground, the namely, the question of the relationship between Plotinian thought and the Gnostics. In 2018 it was a book entitled *Anti-Gnostic Strategies in the Writings of Plotinus* was published, but, due to difficulties in dissemination, we became aware of this work only after the closure of this Repertory. the volume consists of 6 articles, two of which are in Portuguese: that of Daniela P. Taormina, "Plotino: memória dos inteligíveis e experiência do belo. Um argumento contra os gnósticos" (p. 13-28), translated by Maurício Marsola, and his own, "Os 'homens divinos' no contexto polêmico de 33 (II 9) 6" [...] (Santoprete, 2020: 263).

It is necessary to consider that, despite the fact that proportionally certain themes gather a greater amount of production in relation to others, and this is the privileged case of Mysticism, the One and the Intellect and Soul hypostases (cf. Santoprete, 2010: 285-286), this does not mean that such objects - those most investigated - should be understood as less worthy of study or, worse, that they can be considered sufficiently explored or resolved in terms of their controversies. Especially because, as has been said, Plotinus' position in Brazilian classical studies is marginal, at least compared to that occupied by Plato and Aristotle. Thus, even the themes most explored by the Plotinian community still contain a lower number of publications compared to Greek thinkers from the 4th century BC.

Once these brief notes on historiographical resources that account for the relationship between the study of Plotinus' philosophy and ancient philosophical schools have been established, it is appropriate to suggest to the reader some interpretative problems in Plotinus' Philosophy which, as a whole, is marginalized in Brazilian classical studies, has themes that are especially neglected.

To begin with a topic that may seem prosaic, but which I believe is necessary, I invite the reader to consider evaluating Plotinian writing itself. From Plato, for example, we have the work of Trabattoni, *Orality and writing in Plato*, translated by Fernando Rey Puente (UFMG) and Roberto Bolzani Filho (USP), which evaluates the dialogical form of Platonic writing and its repercussion for the interpretation of philosophy consigned. In the case of Plotinus, there is specifically no work listed. On the other hand, we have very interesting and provocative clues in the Master's dissertation and Doctoral Thesis (2000 and 2006) by Baracat Júnior (UFRGS):

The language of the *Enneads* is a special case in Greek literature. In the *Enneads*, dialectics, exegesis, allegory and technical argumentation mix ‘in a distressing way’. The language in which they are written is often obscure and highly elliptical. Porphyry tells us that Longinus, the greatest literary critic of the time, begged for copies of Plotinian writings in perfect condition, as all the ones he had had many errors. However, Porphyry assures us that the copies in Longinus’s possession were perfect. The truth, he reveals, is that Longinus, the most eminent literary man of his time, was not used to Plotinus’ peculiar style of expressing himself. As can be seen, Plotinus’s style is so elliptical that even a great Greek-speaking intellectual, contemporary to him, is sure that there are words missing in the book he reads (Barakat, 2006: 39-40).

After transmitting this critical perception of part of the tradition to Plotinus’ text, given its complexity and richness, Barakat (2006: 42) emphasizes that “Plotinus is a writer who arouses great enthusiasm in his readers. Perhaps only Plato, among the philosophers of Antiquity, captivates them as intensely as Plotinus.” Jan Ter Reegen (UECE), quoting Llyod Gerson, informs that:

[...] Plotinus’s writings can hardly be characterized as systematic, although there is a Plotinian system in the sense that there are basic entities, principles of operation, and an effort at a unified explanation of the world (2007: 17).

In this sense, it would be pertinent to further investigate the style, genre fluctuations, and finally, the philosophical consequences of the editorial and methodological choices of Plotinian treatises. Little has been discussed about the relationship between Plotinus’ writing style, the writing of his treatises and the nature of his philosophical enterprise. Apart from this preliminary difficulty, if we talk about interpretative difficulties in the field of Plotinian philosophy, it is inevitable to mention the controversy that exists among specialists regarding the concept of matter (*hýlē*), whether as matter of the sensible or as intelligible matter. Stamatellos (2012: 1; 6) in his paper highlights, within this problem, two controversial questions: is matter the source of evil? Is matter generated or not?

Such problems, in my opinion, have not been exhausted, particularly the question of the generation of matter is still open. However, the repertoires already record relevant contributions. I highlight the master’s thesis by Deysielle Chagas (PUC-Rio) which explored the possibilities of interpretation in an enlightening way (2019). To just focus on the big picture, in this article I highlight the ethical-political issue. If we combine the entries “love, supreme good, ethics, happiness, morals, purification” (cf. Santoprete, 2010: 286-287), we have news of good works in ethics and there is a need for many others to be built. However, the most critical case

is that of politics. We do not find a single mention in the documents listed, not of Plotinus.

Since at least 2020 I have been interested in ethical topics. In addition to looking broadly at this area, in 2021 I made my first ventures into political issues. It must be admitted that it would be misleading to demand or presuppose that there actually was a bibliography on politics in Plotinus. As Igal (1992: 217) clearly discerns: “Aristotle clearly distinguishes between theoretical wisdom (*sophía*) and practical wisdom (*phrónesis*) as distinct habits (*Ét.Nic.VI 3- 8*). In Platón, and often in Plotinus, such distinction tends to blur [...]”. In this sense, there is a difficulty, in the ethical field of virtues, of separating theory and practice, and I think it extends to Plotinian philosophy in a general sense.

That is to say, Plotinus’ philosophy is, firstly, a philosophical mysticism or a metaphysics that, by its very reason for being, implies moral changes in behavior, reverberates in man’s vision of himself, as well as regarding cosmology, ontology and epistemology. Even Porphyry’s editorial effort to establish six *Enneads*, each with a thematic focus, despite being pertinent and justifiable, is still artificial.

As Porphyry organized, the first nine treatises fall exactly under the rubric of ethical writings or about man. But practically all treatises – from the first to the sixth *Ennead* – have reference to the One (*hén*), which is beyond being, thinking and saying. However, if we recognize that Plotinian ethics is not a practice separate from theory or that morality is an interest disconnected from its metaphysical bases, it is possible to move towards considering hypotheses about the ethical-political plane in the *Enneads*. In this regard, after recalling that Plotinus, in the treatise *on the virtues* (I.2 [19]), expresses that the issue of human life is not “stopping making mistakes”, but “being god”, Jan Ter Reegen captures precisely what the meaning and what Plotinian ethics is about:

How to ‘become god’, the path to be taken, the steps to be taken so that this objective becomes reality, all of this can then be called Plotinus’ Ethics. which can be characterized as the fundamental lines of a Plotinian ethics, which, however, cannot be considered independently of its metaphysics: ethics is rooted in this metaphysics and, if Plotinus deals with it more indirectly than directly, this occurs due to of metaphysics being ethics for him, as can also be seen in Plato, Plotinus’s great inspiration (Reegen, 2007: 14-15).

The fact is that there is an overly critical reception of mysticism in Plotinus’ thought, which has to do with the intuition that he was a philosopher who focused only on “mystical” subjects to the detriment of attention devoted

to practical-concrete dilemmas typical of life of the common man. As Almeida puts the question (2017: 48): “the emphasis on mysticism as the ultimate purpose of philosophical life also brought, to Plotinian thought, a notable depoliticization [...]”. In other words, there is a tendency to strain ethics, at least in the classical moral sense, and therefore politics, in the face of the primacy of the mystical approach.

Remes (2006: 1, our translation), in turn, reports this criticism made to Plotinus: Plotinus is said to have mutilated Plato by removing the political side of his philosophy and by making the control of reason an end in and for itself”. In Plotinian literature, the work of Henry (1969: XXXVI, our translation) is classic, which provides a detailed consideration of ethical-political thought: “[...] man is for Plotinus fundamentally isolated. He is not, as he is for Aristotle and perhaps even for Plato in the Laws, a ‘political animal’”. From this formulation, what stands out is the affirmation of a gap between Greek philosophy - from Plato and Aristotle - and that developed by Plotinus. Ousager (2005: 12, our translation) testifies to this comprehensive bias, but bets in another direction: “Against the still pervasive traditional view of Plotinus as apolitical, I set out to present all existing evidence and indications for a political philosophy in Plotinus”. Robertson (2008: 61, our translation), in turn, emphasizes that “This lofty metaphysical picture, however, has implications for Plotinus’ ethical and political theory, topics of increasing interest in recent studies”.

Having exposed these interpretative problems, observed through foreign bibliography, Brazilian repertoires, between 1999 and 2020, did not record any mention of politics in Plotinus’ philosophy.

The hypothesis of this work is that there is a good field of research to be covered, both in general terms of ethics and ethical-political thinking contained in Plotin’s work. It is not about defending great political aspirations or forcing some type of idea that is not organic in relation to the way of thinking consigned to Plotinus’ treatises, but rather paying attention to the topic and discussing it, even if the final option is to strengthen a vision denial of politics or a political philosophy.

In a recently published doctoral thesis, Nascimento (2023: 19) develops in-depth research on Plotinian ethics, shedding light on a provocative aspect: the place of the “other” in Plotinus’ philosophy. When making the warning that “It is quite true that Plotinus does not explore the nexus between metaphysics and ethics in the same way that we propose to do” and that, therefore, “Our philosopher does not focus on the problem of the other nor

does he emphasize the need for a ethical or political theory” turns to scholar John Rist, who provides valuable research advice, attentive to the very peculiar way in which Plotinus writes his treatises:

One of the major problems for the interpreter of Plotinus is to evaluate the importance in the *Enneads* of beliefs which are not formally stated but remain implicit, waiting to be made explicit by some later Neoplatonist [...] it would be equally absurd to pay no attention to an attitude solely because Plotinus does not always argue it explicitly (Rist, 1971: 77-78).

Perhaps a more encouraging perspective is this: studies are waiting for some Neoplatonist to invest his research in themes that have not been properly explained. Firstly, it involves evaluating the plausibility of the hypotheses and comparing them with the primary reference of the *Enneads* and secondary literature.

Concluding Remarks

It is clear that there is a wide gap in themes discovered by the bibliography published in Portuguese. In fact, many of the few titles available in the vernacular reflect translations of foreign research (eminently European, in English, Italian, Spanish, French, German). In comparative terms, what has actually been published by Brazilian postgraduate students and doctors in the form of articles, dissertations and theses covers a still small range of themes present in Plotinus’ philosophy and in a reduced proportion compared to what has been produced on Plato and Aristotle in Brazil.

It is evidently unfair and even incorrect to conclude, based on this critical assessment, that there is no robust Brazilian bibliography built over recent years. The repertoires demonstrate, on the contrary, the exponential growth of Plotinian and Neoplatonic research, at least from the end of the 90s to the present day. It is understood that when efforts are articulated in light of planning, the results tend to be more prodigious.

Thus, more than depending on the spontaneous interest of the most curious minds (those who meet Plotinus almost by chance and then decide to get to know him in more detail), it is important to produce new research, from which scholarships are made possible. studies; formulated dossiers, special issues; events and opportunities in postgraduate studies that can attract new philosophers interested in the macro theme of Neoplatonism and, especially, in Plotinus.

In this sense, firstly, without the preliminary bibliographical apparatus, the work tends to flow with more difficulty, as the researcher needs to carry out an extensive literature review study, in order to explore what is available. It is clear that, in postgraduate studies, access to foreign languages is a prerequisite and makes it possible to fill some of these gaps. Well, that's what Brazilian researchers have done. However, I understand that part of the equation responsible for strengthening any area of study is scientific dissemination and the formation of a research culture, in this case, classical or Greco-Roman studies, which prepares and creates the most conducive environment for the development of studies qualified. Hence the relevance of promoting the production of this bibliography in Portuguese.

Therefore, the clear intention is that this work will be of some value from the perspective of mapping the fundamental issues, the basic bibliography for qualified access to the most sensitive and powerful themes. Furthermore, the aim is to encourage new researchers to follow the paths of Plotinus' *Enneads*. In academic-scientific terms, major knowledge questions only advance when faced by a research community. I cannot assume that philosophical themes were outside this horizon that guides scientific production.

The present work hopes to support the elaboration of research projects, that is, master's and doctoral studies, with a view to facilitating the writing of the justification, relevance or problems of their philosophical enterprises based on Plotinus. By taking this article in hand, the researcher finds a tool to demonstrate the relevance of his studies in dialogue with the Brazilian community and how it stands in relation to international research, at least in an exemplary and paradigmatic sense.

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