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## IV 2 [4]. On the Essence of the Soul I

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### Synopsis

- 1 *Introductory*: Review of the arguments (cf. IV 7) on the intelligible nature of the soul.  
The four levels of “being”:
  - (a) The primarily divisible: bodies
  - (b) The indivisible Essence: intelligible Being
  - (c) The secondarily divisible: enmattered forms
  - (d) The secondarily indivisible: the soul
- 2 The soul is not solely divisible,  
nor solely indivisible;  
as the *Timaeus* teaches, it is simultaneously divisible and indivisible, “one and many.”

### Introduction

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P.’s first attempt to discuss in detail the—central to Platonism—theme of the soul occurs in his rather “early” treatise “On the Immortality of the Soul” (IV 7 [2]), where all the broader, fundamental characteristics pertaining to its nature were laid down, such as the soul’s incorporeality and its immortality. In this brief treatise, which can be considered as a complement to IV 7, P. revisits the question of the nature of the soul, approaching it from a more specialized viewpoint: he is interested in specifying its precise place in his ontological system, by clarifying, as much as possible, its mode of being, as well as the direct import of its position in the ontological hierarchy. To make headway with this sort of detailed examination of the theme, however, P. cannot rely solely on the rough distinction (inspired mainly by Plato’s *Phaedo*) between the corporeal and the incorporeal, which he employed in his earlier treatise.<sup>1</sup> He needs to resort to the more detailed

<sup>1</sup> See mainly IV 7.9.1–10, which also contains allusions to the *Phaedrus* and the *Republic*.

description of the composition of the soul that is included in the psychogony of the *Timaeus*. There, the cosmic Soul is portrayed as composed of three constituents, each of which is the intermediate between an indivisible and a divisible entity:

In between the kind of being (*ousia*) that is indivisible and always changeless, and the one that is divisible and comes to be in the corporeal realm, he [sc., the Demiurge] mixed a third, intermediate kind of being, derived from the other two. Similarly, he made a mixture of the Same, and then one of the Different, in between their indivisible and their corporeal, divisible counterparts. And he took the three mixtures and mixed them together to make a uniform mixture.<sup>2</sup>

P. focuses his attention on the first of these three constituents: the one that has to do with *ousia*. According to the prevalent interpretation, only one intermediate kind of being is mentioned here, something “third, derived from the other two” (*triton ex amphoin*), of which the soul is also constituted.<sup>3</sup> Yet P. holds that between the absolutely unitary and indivisible (intelligible) Essence on the one hand, and the utterly multiple and divisible “substance”<sup>4</sup> of sensible bodies on the other, there are *two* intermediate ontological levels: these are the modes of being that correspond to the souls and to qualities as observed in individual bodies, whose partition is not primary, but dependent on the bodies in which they inhere. Thus, a fourfold subdivision of all the ways in which something can “be” results; four different degrees of multiplicity correspond to these modes of being. If we add two additional gradients to this, such that would correspond to the level “beyond being” of the One-Good and the level “below being,” that of formless matter, a six-part schema would emerge,<sup>5</sup> one that can accommodate P.’s ontological hierarchy in its entirety:

Mode of being ( <i>ousia</i> )	“Formula”	Ontological level
1.	one only ( <i>hen monon</i> ) (cf. <i>Prm.</i> 137c4–5, d2)	the One
2. indivisible	one many ( <i>hen polla</i> ) (cf. <i>Prm.</i> 144e5)	Intellect

<sup>2</sup> Pl. *Ti.* 35a1–7, trans. Zeyl. With respect to the text and the interpretation of the citation, I basically follow the analysis (which is based on Procl. *In Tim.* II, 156.8–24) in Cornford 1937, 49–66. See also Brisson 1974, 273–75. P. quotes only the first part of the passage, which pertains to the three types of being, and does not discuss the other constituents of the final mixture of which the soul is said to be composed in that dialogue.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., “Alcinous” *Didasc.* 14, 169.22–25; Procl. *In Tim.* II, 127.28–130.1, 148.5–20.

<sup>4</sup> The derivative and precarious ontic status of the sensible bodies renders somewhat problematic the usage of the term “substance” (*ousia*) for them (cf. my comment on II 6.1.13–22), yet this is founded on Plato’s own practice (cf., e.g., *Tim.* 37a5; *Phlb.* 26d8). For this reason it should be understood here that P. is employing this term not to designate the real Being (which, of course, for P. is solely intelligible; cf. II 6.1.1–8 with my comment), but, broadly, the “mode of being” of any given ontic status.

<sup>5</sup> For a variety of reasons, this schema, inspired as noted by a systematic interpretation of the Hypotheses in Plato’s *Parmenides*, is not present in this treatise and in general remains rather implicit in P.’s work; in other parts of the *Enneads* he seems to be moving away from or modifying it somewhat. Cf. indicatively IV 1.19–20 and IV 3.19.11–22, where the formula for level 4 is attributed to lower psychic functions, and Porph. *Sent.* 5, 2.10–13. See further Hoppe 1965, 134–38.

3. indivisibly divisible	one and many ( <i>hen kai polla</i> ) (cf. <i>Prm.</i> 155e5)	soul
4. divisible in bodies	many and one ( <i>polla kai hen</i> ) (cf. <i>Prm.</i> 157c6)	enmattered forms
5. primarily divisible	only many ( <i>polla monon</i> ) (cf. <i>Prm.</i> 158b3)	bodies
6.	the others than one ( <i>ta alla tou henos</i> ) (cf. <i>Prm.</i> 159b3)	matter

The motives that led P. to devise such a schema, especially the distinction between levels 3 and 4, are not immediately obvious,<sup>6</sup> but could be correlated, among else, with the fact that, according to Iamblichus' testimony, certain Aristotelians, apparently considering the soul as an indivisible "enmattered form" (*enbulon eidos*), classified it as a quality (*poiotēs*) of the body.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, if P. was aware of such a view, it would be reasonable for him, qua Platonist, to seek to establish that the way in which the soul is present in the body is radically different from that of a simple accidental attribute, or even of an essential qualitative characteristic of the body. That is because, according to him, the soul constitutes a self-subsistent and autonomous substance, one that is not dependent on the body in the least.<sup>8</sup> Owing to its intellective origins, it is unitary and indivisible wherever it is present, yet it is expressed through its various activities. These activities allow it to come into contact with the multiplicity of sensible nature, and thus, in some sense, to become partitioned.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, the soul, according to the above analysis, appears to be an entity that is simultaneously divisible and indivisible: it is divisible because its functions are assigned to the body in accordance with its receptiveness and the qualitative differentiation of its parts;<sup>10</sup> but also indivisible, inasmuch as it inheres in its entirety in all the parts of the body, a fact that guarantees the body's functional unity as a living organism. In this way, it can act as an intermediate between the internally interdependent unity of the intelligible world and the disorderly (prior to its intervention) multiplicity of sensible bodies.

In all MS families preserving the *Enneads*, this treatise is placed first in the fourth *Ennead*. This classification is consonant with its citation in the systematic listing of *VP* 25.12–13,<sup>11</sup> as well as with its title: "On the Essence of the Soul I," on which the MSS are

<sup>6</sup> We know, however, that similar (albeit not identical) and repeated attempts at a systematic scaling of the ways of being had been undertaken by the Middle Platonists, as well as later by Porphyry: on this, see Hadot 1968, 1:148–67.

<sup>7</sup> See Iambl. *De an.* apud Stob. I 49.32 (363.19–21).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. my comments on IV 7.11.3–17.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. my comment on III 9.1.27–37.

<sup>10</sup> It is the latter that renders a body "such and such" (*toioude*), i.e., suitable to receive and support the vital functions afforded to it by the soul; cf. IV 4.19.22–28.

<sup>11</sup> As results from the *incipit* cited there. See Henry 1938, 16.

also in agreement.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, for reasons pertaining to the peculiar MS tradition of treatise IV 1 [21],<sup>13</sup> Ficino placed it second, after the latter, numbering it as IV 2. This practice was also adopted by later editors; in fact, from Volkman onward, its title was likewise adapted to “On the Essence of the Soul II,” so as to reflect its new position. H-S restored it to its original place in their editions, but retained Ficino’s numbering in order to avoid disturbing the manner in which it is cited. I opted to follow their example, notwithstanding the discrepancies between title and number, so as to avoid compounding the reader’s confusion.<sup>14</sup>

## Commentary

1.1–7. Τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς . . . αὐτῆς: In these lines, P. is conducting a brief review of the contents of his—chronologically—earlier treatise IV 7 [2]. There he argued for the incorporeality of the soul, mainly against the Stoics, in IV 7.2–8<sup>3</sup>, while in IV 7.8<sup>4</sup> he discussed and rejected the theory of the soul as the harmony between the body’s components. In IV 7.8<sup>5</sup> we had a rebuttal of the Peripatetic view of the soul as “actuality” (*entelecheia*) of the body. In IV 7.9–10 he goes on to establish the soul as a “different kind of nature” (*hetera phusis*), that is, “not a body or an affection of body” but purely intelligible and “akin to the diviner nature” (cf. Pl. *Resp.* X 611e2–3), and therefore belonging to the “divine portion” of higher entities (cf. Pl. *Phdr.* 230a5–6, and IV 8.7.6). We thus observe that this review covers the better part of IV 7, including sections of it that have come down to us only indirectly, through the *Preparatio Euangelica* of Eusebius of Caesarea. (For a summary presentation of the subject, see Kalligas 2001, 587–88.) Of greater interest is section IV 7.8<sup>5</sup>, whose place in Porphyry’s edition of the *Enneads* had been previously challenged, the theory being that Eusebius drew on some earlier version of this treatise that did not include this section. This debate partly revolves around the meaning of the participle *aphentes* (in l. 4), which can be translated as either (a) “omitted,” “left out” (Creuzer, Heinemann, Henry); or (b) “dismissed,” “abandoned” (Bouillet, Oppermann, Bréhier, Harder, Armstrong, Igal). For (a) to be true, the passage in contention could not form part of this treatise, while (b) presupposes the opposite; on this, see Henry 1935, 118–25. Although the second interpretation appears more compelling—more so in view of the precise correspondence, as noted by Oppermann 1928, 425–26, between the course of the argument in IV 7.8<sup>5</sup> and its summary here—it should be noted that either view on the question of the participle’s meaning cannot lead to a conclusive resolution of the matter of the passage’s exact provenance (notwithstanding the unequivocal

<sup>12</sup> The chronological listing in *VP* 4.28–29 mentions it as simply “On the Essence of the Soul,” while the summary “Pinax” that the MSS preserve after the end of the *VP* (see H-S<sup>2</sup>, 1:40) cites the full title but omits the *incipit*.

<sup>13</sup> On this treatise, see the relevant introduction.

<sup>14</sup> On the contrary, Cilento and Armstrong managed to exacerbate the confusion: while they do follow H-S in terms of the order of the treatises, they proceed to switch the numbering of treatises IV 1 and IV 2! Unfortunately, Guidelli follows their example in the most recent Italian collective translation. Igal, on the other hand, numbers and places this treatise second, yet translates its title as preserved in the MSS: “. . . Libro I.”

tone of, e.g., Goulet-Cazé 1982b, 293–94), inasmuch as the reference here is clearly to a pre-enneadic version of that treatise. Therefore, the whole question should be ultimately examined on the basis of stylistic and broader semantic cohesion criteria.

**1.7–9. ὁμῶς γε μὴν . . . τιθέμενοι:** That the pure soul is a purely intelligible entity is one of P.'s characteristic doctrines. Cf. indicatively IV 7.10.32–37, and Kalligas, 1997b, 219n.48.

**1.9–11. νῦν δὲ . . . μεταδιώκωμεν:** The method P. is about to employ here is entirely different from the one in IV 7. There, a dialectical examination of alternative materialistic or epiphenomenalistic theories led to the recognition of the intelligible nature of the soul. Here, making this thesis his point of departure, P. deduces its concomitants, mainly regarding the relation of the soul with the body and its presence in it. More specifically, after announcing an exhaustive fourfold subdivision of all the possible “modes of being,” the soul will be placed in the relevant grade in the resulting schema.

**1.11–17. λέγωμεν δὴ . . . ἐν πλείοσι τόποις εἶναι:** The examination commences with a description of the nature of bodies, which appear as sensible “magnitudes” (*megethē*) and “masses” (*ogkoi*), that is, as *res extensae*: things that have extension, occupy space, and impede (because of their “resistance,” *antitypia*) other bodies from being present in the same space as them. At the same time, their materiality limits them to that space and, somehow, renders them bound to it. Cf. my comments on III 6.18.24–41; on the meaning of the term *ogkos*, see Brisson 2000, 100–102.

This entails that every part of them, inasmuch as it is also bodily, will be distinct from every other part as well as from the whole—in contrast to the circumincessant nature of the intelligibles; compare my comments on III 2.1.26–34 and III 8.8.40–48. Therefore, each body's extension is connate to it, a direct consequence of its materiality; cf. my comment on II 4.11.27–43 and Matter 1964, 27. That is why space is logically subsequent to matter and bodies; see II 4.12.11–12 and Emilsson 1988, 215–16. It is the presence of bodies, their extension and arrangement that, somehow, engenders the local differentiations, and, consequently, space. Thus bodies are primarily divisible (“dispersible” *skedasta*: cf. Pl., *Ti.* 37a5; “Alcinous,” *Didasc.* 25, 177.25–26), and it is with reference to them that space is apportioned to particular places, and the various sensible forms to particular objects.

**1.17–24. ἡ δὲ ἐστίν . . . τῶν ἐφεξῆς:** In contradistinction to bodily nature, the intelligible Essence is altogether insusceptible to partition, for it lacks extension and is not apportioned in space and time, but is inherent, or rather through its presence governs all beings, which owe their existence to it and from which they draw their subsistence.

**1.24–29. οἶον κέντρον . . . αὐτὰς ἐκεῖ:** This foundational origin of intelligible beings, their common ontological essence, is wholly without parts and is compared—with the aid of one of the most celebrated images employed by P. (see the relevant list provided by Tornau 1998, 371–72)—to the center of a circle, on which its radii and circumference depend and, so to speak, “emanate” from. This image is at times used by P. to describe the relation of the Intellect to the intelligible object of its contemplation (see III 8.8.36–38

with my comment, and VI 5.5.1–23), and at times for the Intellect’s relation with the Good that lies beyond it (see I 7.1.23–26, V 1.11.10–13, VI 8.18.3–25); this adds some validity to the observation in Emilsson 1998, 210–13, that in his earlier treatises, like the current one, P. had not fully elaborated his view on the transcendence of the One with respect to Intellect; cf. also below, my comment on 2.52–55. His aim here is to underscore the wholly indivisible character of intelligible Essence, which remains undisturbedly unitary and compact, even though a multitude of individual intellects look toward it.

**1.29–41. τούτου δὴ . . . καὶ τοῦτο θετέον:** In between the wholly indivisible, intelligible Essence and the primarily divisible nature of the bodies, and closer to the latter, stands another category of entities, themselves also divisible, yet not primarily as in the case of bodies, but rather, in the words of *Timaeus*, 35a2–3, “divisible in the sphere of the bodies.” These are qualities that are inherent in these bodies, which become apportioned and individuated on the basis of bodies and are incapable of existing independently; on this, see Kalligas 1997c, 398. The “whiteness,” for example, that exists in a particular piece of paper is numerically different from the “whiteness” of another piece of paper, although, clearly, they may both be identical in “form” qua qualities, constituting manifestations or images of the same intelligible Form, Whiteness itself, which, nonetheless, according to P., does not constitute a quality, but an essence; cf. II 6.1.13–22 with my comment; and Emilsson 1988, 217–19. Should we, therefore, cut that white piece of paper in half, the result will be two individual “whitenesses,” one for each part, given that the identity of each is directly dependent on the identity of the “substance” to which it inheres. We could therefore claim that inherent entities of this kind are fully divisible, albeit in a derivative way, correlated with the bodies, on which their existence depends. At the same time, given that the presence of each such quality in each body is complete, and not partial or fragmentary, it could be said that their apportionment is indivisible, because a complete entity (*holon*) results from each part, exhibiting all the distinctive features also borne by the respective universal quality. The origin of this view regarding inherent individual qualities can, of course, be traced back to Aristotle’s *Categories*, 2, 1a24–29—according, that is, to at least one interpretation: cf., indicatively, Ackrill 1963, 74–75; Duerlinger 1970, 183–89—and entails certain difficulties, with which P. sought to deal later in treatise II 6 [17]; see the relevant introduction. Yet here he is content with demonstrating the existence of an intermediate ontological level, where the respective entities are neither absolutely indivisible—inasmuch as they are apportioned depending on the bodies to which they inhere—nor primarily divisible, for their apportionment depends on these. The use of the phrase “(enmattered) form” for these qualities, although alluding to the Aristotelian origins of the concept, had already become naturalized in the Platonic vocabulary by Seneca’s time; see *Epist.* 58.20–21, and cf. “Alcinous” *Didasc.* 4, 155.39–41, 10, 166.3–5; Theiler 1930, 10–12; Chiaradonna 2007, 39–42; and, with respect to P. himself, II 4.6.10 and my comment on III 6.17.1–12.

It is possible that a similar interpretation of the same passage from the *Timaeus* had been put forward by the earliest systematic commentator of Plato, Crantor; according to Plutarch *De an. proc.* I, 1012d, Crantor interpreted the mixture as being made up of

“the intelligible nature, and that which forms impressions of perceptible objects by means of opinions” (*doxastē*), provided, of course, that the final phrase can be regarded as referring to the sensible qualities of bodies, which the soul ought to be in a position to “know” (*gignōskei*, see op. cit. 2, 1012f).

**1.41–53. πρὸς δ’ αὖ . . . ἡ αὐτή:** Here we have the introduction of a fourth ontological level, mediating (*en mesōi* is the phrase in *Timaeus* 35a3; cf. Arnobius *Adu. nat.* II 30–31, 73.27–28: “A certain intermediate, the undecided and ambiguous nature of the soul . . .”) between the indivisible Essence and the secondarily divisible one that was just mentioned, a level that corresponds to the soul’s way of being. P. is firstly concerned with explaining the differences between these two intermediate levels. A universal quality can be present in many different bodies, yet the specific particular property of each of these is completely individuated and distinct (“cut off”) from those of other bodies; Callias’ bravery or whiteness is altogether distinct from that of Socrates’; and the whiteness of this piece of paper is “cut off” from the whiteness of another piece, lacking any sort of community of affection (cf. 1.40)—one of the two can be altered or vanish without the other suffering the least. The soul, on the contrary, although it too is able to be present in multiple and differentiated parts of a body, is present as a whole everywhere, in each and every single one of these (cf. V 1.2.35–38 and, with respect to this point, Tert. *De an.* 14.5). In this way, it ensures their *homopatheia*, that is, the fact that each of these parts is influenced and co-affected by what happens to the other parts through an internal apperception that binds and coordinates them into a unitary synergy of vital functions, what is elsewhere called “nature” (*phusis*); cf. my comments on III 8.4.15–31 and VI 4.1.17–29 with the comments of Tornau 1998, 26–30.

**1.53–59. ἦν δὲ . . . τοῦ εἶναι μία:** The soul too inheres in bodies, albeit not as a quality but as an autonomous substance, and is apportioned in these, without forfeiting, however, its indivisible unity with all the other souls, in such a way that they constitute a unitary nature. P. would examine the associated problems that arise in the chronologically not-so-distant treatise IV 9 [8]. At any rate, the apportionment of the soul does not constitute a component of its identity but rather a mere “accident” (*syμβainei*: cf. Santa Cruz 1979, 54; and Phillips 2002, 245), which is the consequence of the primary dispersion of the bodies, and does not alter the essential unity that binds the souls and renders possible their “concurrent awareness” (*sunaisthēsis*) and “co-affection” or “affinity” (*sumpatheia*); cf. II 3.9.39–42; IV 3.8.2–4; IV 4.45.8–19; and IV 9.3.1–9. This unity, of course, does not go as far as annulling the uniqueness and individuality of each soul, for it has its basis in the unitary multiplicity of the intelligible world itself; on this, see Kalligas 1997b, 220–23. It prevents individual souls, however, from becoming detached from each other and isolated, thereby losing their connate “kinship” (*sungeneia*). That is why each soul is both “one” (*hen*) and “many” (*polla*), or as it is claimed elsewhere “particular without being particular” (*hekastē ouch hekastē*); see VI 4.16.33.

**1.59–66. οὐχ οὕτως . . . αὐτοῦ ἅλη:** Bodies that lack a soul do not possess any internal unifying principle. The only thing securing their unity is their natural cohesion and the

coherence of one part with the other; once this is broken, these parts are left unconnected and isolated from one another. Not even possession of a shared property is capable of making two different bodies become one, that is, to constitute an autonomously unitary entity. Only the soul has the ability to unite disparate bodily parts into a unitary organism, where each part cooperates and collaborates with the rest, thanks to the coordinating presence of the entire soul; see also Emilsson 1991, 155–57.

**1.66–76. και ὁ τοῦτο κατιδὼν . . . οὐκ αὐτῆς:** The singular manner in which the soul is apportioned while remaining undivided suffices to show its incorporeal nature. No material body could exhibit such behavior, for it would be bound by the space its mass takes up; see below, my comment on 1.11–17. On the other hand, the soul is not essentially apportioned, only the bodies (and their parts); these are apportioned in space, and by participating with the soul, make it appear as if it becomes portioned out, whereas in reality it remains together, indivisible and unitary; cf. VI 4.4.27–32. Just as in the case of the soul’s affections, the apportionment attributed to it is *per extrinsecam denominationem*; cf. my comment on III 6.4.41–52.

**2.2–12. εἴτε γὰρ . . . μάταιον:** The first argument pertaining to the soul’s incorporeality involves its capacity to perceive: something purely corporeal could not possess a central perceptual faculty, to which all sensations from peripheral sensory organs arrive. Each stimulus would only pertain to the specific affected part, and would remain limited to it, without being capable of becoming perceived by any other part of the body, given that psychic activity is a prerequisite for that—this is a position to which even the materialist Stoics subscribed; cf. my comment on III 6.1.1–4 and IV 7.6.1–19. Cohesion, which as mentioned above in 1.60–61, is the sole unifying factor for bodies, does not suffice to impart the capacity to perceive, or their “community of affection” (*homopatheia*), that is, to render them unitary living organisms. Furthermore, as already noted by Alexander of Aphrodisias *De mixt.* 10, 223.25–224.14, the cohesive power attributed by the Stoics to “breath” (*pneūma*) can hardly be reconciled with its purely material subsistence. Even the Stoic Hierocles *El. Eth.* 6.11–17, admitted that in order to act cohesively on the body, any psychic “hegemonic power” (*hēgemonike dunamis*) would have to be “cohesive of itself” (*heautēs sunektikē*). Yet, according to P., this is above and beyond the capabilities of a simple body; cf. VI 9.1.10–14; but also Alex. Aphrod., *De an. mant.* II, 114.39–115.6.

**2.12–18. οὐ γὰρ δὴ . . . ἔντος:** The argument now comes to the question of the nature of the organism’s cohesive principle that, according to the Stoics, is to be identified with the soul’s “directive faculty” (*hēgemonikon*; P. here prefers the Platonic term *hēgemonoun*, i.e., “the ruling principle”; cf. *Ti.* 41c7), which is also the center at which all perceptual apprehensions arrive; see *SVF* 2:857. If the soul is a material body, the question is how it can be portioned out so that one part of it is the seat of the faculty of seeing, another is that of the faculty of hearing, and yet another part is the *hēgemonikon*, which apprehends these sensations (cf. *SVF* 2:854 and 860) and memorizes or processes them in a rational manner.

2.18–31. *καὶ πότερα . . . ἐκεῖ γεγονέναι*: A series of *aporiai* follows, surrounding the way in which sensory stimuli are transmitted from sensory organs to the *hēgemonikon*, provided we accept the view that the soul is corporeal. The term “transmission” (*diadosis*) already employed by P. in I. 13, is known to us from Plato (*Ti.* 45d2; 64b3–c3, e5; 67b2–5), but it appears that it had acquired a special significance in the context of the so-called pneumatic theory that emerged mainly among the Peripatetics; on this, see Jaeger 1913, 43ff. Apart from Aristotle (*Insomn.* 2, 459b2–5), we find it used by Theophrastus to describe the associated theories of Alcmaeon and Diogenes of Apollonia (*Sens.* 25 and 40; on this, see Solmsen 1961, 151–53), while in Strato it represents a basic constituent of his theory of sensory perception and is illustrated with the help of a characteristic example: “Hence, when we bump into something, we often instantly contract our eyebrows [which, according to Strato, constitute the seat of the “directive faculty”; see frs. 119–21], . . . while the center of command rapidly refers the sensation to the part which received the knock. Again, if our limbs are secured by bonds <there is no feeling in our extremities, and if we are wounded,> we press hard with our hands, resisting the transmission (*diadosin*) of the injury and squeezing the blow to keep it in the parts that have no feeling, so that it does not become a pain by making contact with the part of us that has understanding” (Strato fr. 111 = [Plut.] *Parsne an fac.* 4, 40.2–9, trans. Sandbach). Cf. also Alex. Aphrod. *De an.* 41.5, 63.16; and Galen *PHP* VII 4, 448.15–17, 452.23; and also *SVF* 2:882. As may be deduced by a parallel discussion of the subject in IV 7.7.2–28, P. holds that such a materialistic approach is incapable of accounting for the soul’s perceptual functioning. That is because only one of the two can be the case: either (a) the *hēgemonikon* alone perceives, without, however, coming into contact with stimuli, for it resides elsewhere, for example, in the heart, as the Stoics believed (see *SVF* 2:837–39); or (b) certain other parts of the soul also possess perceptual faculties. In fact, (a) formed the main thesis of Strato’s theory, who argued that “nothing has any sensation except the soul’s center of command” (op. cit.), indeed invoking a verse from Epicharmus (fr. 249): “It is the mind which sees, the mind that hears—all else is blind and deaf” (see Strato, fr. 112; but cf. also *SVF* 2:854). P. adduces three arguments against this:

(i) If affection impinges directly, and only to the *hēgemonikon*, it is impossible to identify its origin, that is, the sense organ responsible for it.

(ii) Should affection impinge on some other part of the soul, it will go unnoticed, inasmuch as that part will lack sensation.

(iii) If we regard the *hēgemonikon* as something composite, then the incidence of affection to one of its parts could not be transmitted to the rest, because in such a case either only the specific part would have sensation whereas the rest would have no reason to not remain senseless, or otherwise a myriad of successive sensations would arise (a fact underlined through their slightly humorous personification; most of the other brief personifications found in the *Enneads* are in the same playful vein, e.g., in III 6.15.28, IV 4.7.14, V 3.3.4, 10.35–37, 13.24, VI 4.6.15, in contrast to the dignified tone informing more extensive personifications, on which see my comment on III 2.3.20), and it would be impossible to ascertain their starting point. We should note here that Strato himself conceded that, in order to identify the source of a sensation, apart from its “transmission,” a further psychic action would be required, which he called “calculation” or

“appropriation” (*proslogizesthai* or *analegesthai*); through this, the soul ascertains “where it originated, as the soul is drawn towards the source that has affected it” (fr. 111).

**2.31–35. εἰ δὲ μὴ . . . γνώσεται:** Here P. examines the second branch (b) of the disjunction introduced in 2.18–19. In view of case (iii) discussed above, it becomes clear that here P. examines only the possibility that some part of the soul may have sensation without the involvement of the *hēgemonikon*. In that case, of course, the *raison d'être* of the *hēgemonikon* vanishes altogether. Only isolated sensory impressions, sights, sound, etc. would exist, without these being combined in a common perceptual process, along the lines of Aristotle’s “common sensation” (*koinē aisthēsis*). Cf. IV 7.6.3–19, and Pl. *Tht.* 184d1–5.

**2.35–39. εἰ δ' αὖ . . . ὄγκον:** On the other hand, if the soul is regarded as something completely unitary, it would remain devoted to its intelligible center (cf. 1.24–29), lacking the ability to apportion and deploy its various functions to the different parts of the body, which would thus remain soulless and unable to operate as an organism, where each part cooperates with and is co-affected by the rest, thereby contributing to a unitary life. In such a case, the soul would be deprived of its most distinctive property, namely, the provision of life to the body.

**2.39–42. δεῖ ἄρα . . . πολλαχού εἶναι:** The foregoing analysis leads to the conclusion that the soul cannot be totally multiple, in the manner of bodies, whose unity is superadded and essentially factitious, yet it cannot be perfectly uniform either. The remaining option, then, is to regard it as unitary and at the same time multiple, in accordance with the formula in Plato’s *Parmenides* (155e5: cf. V 1.8.26, and Jackson 1967, 325–27; the same formula was also employed by Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De an.* 63.13; *Quaest.* III 9, 96.16–17, with reference to the “common sensation”); or, according to the equivalent formula in the *Timaeus*, as partitioned and indivisible: unitary in terms of its essence, which is intellective, yet multiple in terms of its activities, which are apportioned in the multiplicity of bodies. P. is well aware of the paradoxical nature of these characterizations, yet he invites us to suppress our reservations, marshaling an expression commonly employed to describe extraordinary or even wondrous events; cf. Festugière 1960, 133–37. For the presence of the soul in the world and its activity in it constitute a veritable “wonder” (*thauma*); cf. III 2.13.20–25, III 3.3.30–34. At the same time, the terms in which the soul’s unitary presence in the body’s multiple parts is couched suggests that P. had in mind here the related *aporiai* expressed in the first part of Plato’s *Parmenides*; cf. mainly *Prm.* 131b3–8.

**2.42–49. εἰ γὰρ τοῦτο . . . μιμείται τοῦτο:** This intermediating role of the soul between unity and multiplicity constitutes its characteristic contribution in the world. It allows it to act cohesively and as an organizing capacity by subduing the chaotic multiplicity of matter into regularities, and imposing a rational order on it; cf. my comment on III 2.4.26–36. Of course, this occurs mainly through the so-called lower of the soul’s faculties, the perceptive and—chiefly—the vegetative; cf. IV 9.3.11–16. This cohesive action of the soul was particularly stressed, according to one testimony, also by P.’s teacher, Ammonius Saccas, who in so doing likewise sought to highlight its incorporeality: see

Nemesius *De nat. hom.* 69–70; this is a passage that presents notable similarities to another part of the present treatise, 1.11–12. It is likely, therefore, that here as in other cases, in the words of Porphyry we find P. “basing his lectures on his studies with Ammonius,” *VP* 3.33–34 (cf. *VP* 14.15–16).

2.49–52. τοῦτ' ἄρα . . . εἶδος: The final answer with respect to the nature of the soul is provided by quoting verbatim a celebrated passage from the *Timaeus* 35a1–4; this passage, however, is vexed by hermeneutical difficulties that have become proverbial (on this, cf. Sext. Emp. *Math.* I 301, and also Taylor 1928, 106: “the most perplexing and difficult passage of the whole dialogue”) and make it seem like a riddle or an oracle, one that requires careful interpretation; cf. my comment on I 6.8.19. The view that Plato was being vague deliberately, so as to render his doctrines inaccessible to those lacking the proper hermeneutical tools, had by the time of Middle Platonism become quite widespread; this certainly facilitated the boldest among Plato’s interpreters in resorting to elaborate and, at times, imaginative construals; on this see Baltes 1976–78, 1:125; Tarrant 2000, 19–25; Dillon 2006, 25–26.

As regards the text of the citation, the most noteworthy divergence from the version preserved in the MSS of Plato is the omission of the phrase “intermediate” (*en mesōi*) that occurs after “[derived] from the other two” (*ex amphoin*); this is a phrase, however, that P. seemed to have been aware of earlier, in 1. 45. The motive for this omission was arguably the fact that in 1. 54 the soul was shown to adhere (*proschoroūsa*) more closely to the intelligible Essence than to its sensible offprints. For the rest, the basic peculiarity of P.’s interpretation, as molded in the preceding discussion, is that whereas the “indivisible and always changeless” denotes (as was customarily accepted; cf., e.g., Procl. *In Ti.* II 147.23–24; Calc. *In Ti.* 27, 78.4–5) the realm of intelligible Forms (cf. above, 1.30), what is “divisible and comes to be in the corporeal realm” is interpreted not as the nature of these bodies (see Procl. op. cit. 148.27; Calcid. op. cit. 78.5–8; and Emilsson 1994, 5340), but as the nature of the qualities inherent in these—in other words, of the “enmattered forms”; cf. Schwyzer 1935, 363–64, and above, 1.31–41 with my comments. As we have seen, this interpretation is problematic inasmuch as it introduces two ontological levels mediating between the intelligibles and bodies, which appears to be out of tune with the dialogue’s wording. Similar fourfold classifications of the modes of being had become quite widespread in antiquity; in fact, according to Procl. *In Ti.* I 257.3–8, Porphyry, probably relying on Aristotle’s analysis in *Cael.* I 12, 282a4–25, had also put forward such a fourfold subdivision, as follows:

- |                                    |   |                            |
|------------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| 1. the primary eternal being       | — | the intelligible           |
| 2. what is both being and becoming | — | the area of the soul       |
| 3. what is becoming and being      | — | the borderline of becoming |
| 4. what is only becoming           | — | [sensible bodies]          |

By comparing this schema with the one P. has in mind (on this, see the introduction to this treatise) the pivotal role of the phrase “the one that is divisible and comes to be (*gignomenēs*) in the corporeal realm” in P.’s interpretation becomes evident. Because what comes to be and passes away from the bodies, “those that act” (*poiounta*) and “are acted upon” (*paschonta*), will be the conflicting images through the alternation of which

bodies acquire their various properties; cf. my comments on III 6.8.1–11, and 9.20–37. The general advantages this interpretation holds for P. are chiefly the following:

(a) It fully ensures the incorporeal character of the soul, inasmuch as both its components are, strictly speaking, non-bodily.

(b) The soul's composition will constitute a substantial basis for the duality of its cognitive capabilities: its indivisible component allows it to know the intelligible beings, while its divisible component affords it access to the qualitative characteristics that characterize sensible bodies; the soul is only able to come to know these, for their other component, matter, remains cognitively inaccessible, at least directly; cf. II 4.10.1–10 with my comment, as well as Kalligas 1997c, 400. As is well known, Crantor had worked out similar epistemological extensions for his own interpretation of the psychogony in the *Timaeus* (see Plut. *De an. proc.* 2, 1012f–1013a), yet his conclusions differ drastically from P.'s. See also "Alcinous," *Didasc.* 14, 169.18–27, with the observations in Deuse 1983, 87–91.

**2.52–55. ἔστιν οὖν . . . ἐν μόνον:** In four concise sentences, the author summarizes the treatise's conclusions. We are reminded of Porphyry's account of P.'s teaching style (*VP* 14.16–18): "He quickly absorbed what was read, and would give the sense of some profound subject of study in a few words and pass on." There is an element of surprise in the introduction of these final distinctions (Heinemann 1921, 101 describes them as *blasse Taschenpielerunterscheidung*) that, however, should not bewilder us. This is because here it becomes clear that the textual substrate behind this schematic construal is in fact Plato's *Parmenides*; the successive Hypotheses in that dialogue systematically correspond to the gradients of the hierarchical ontology expounded thus far; on this, see the introduction.

The sole difficulty here pertains to the exact meaning of the phrase *to hypertaton*. Appearing in one more passage in the *Enneads* (VI 8.16.8), this clearly refers to the One-Good, as one would expect keeping in mind the established structure of P.'s ontological system; see also Santa Cruz 1979, 55 with n.6. The absence of any reference to the One in the remainder of this treatise, however, has led some scholars, including Hoppe 1965, 136, with n.1; and Igal 1982, 282, with n.3, to regard it as the hypostasis of the Intellect. As Emilsson 1990, 208–12, has observed, we should note here that in P.'s earlier works there seems to be no radical distinction between the One and Intellect, something that is first touched upon in treatise V 4 [7].1.1–13, 2.1–3 (not yet in the usual manner) and becomes established through VI 9 [9], and V 1 [10]. If we recall that, according to the available evidence, Ammonius Saccas had not developed the doctrine of the One as beyond the intelligible (on this, see Baltes 1985, 328–30) and that, as we have already noted (see above, my comment on 2.42–49), P. seems here to be closely following his master's thought, one can plausibly assume that the "Supreme" (*hypertaton*) is to be understood here as the unitary originating "center" whence the Intellect springs (cf. above 1.17–29), and to which its primary energy is directed (cf. V 3.4.28–26). This can be described as "intelligible" (*noëton*, cf. V 4.2.4), but at the same time as "one" (*hen* op. cit. 2.8), thereby justifying its description above in 1.29–30, as "primarily indivisible being which dominates in the intelligible and among real beings." Therefore, without being completely identified with either the first or the second hypostasis of the mature Plotinian system, it acts as the ultimate intelligible principle of everything.

## Index of Passages Cited

With Their Abbreviations and Modern Editors

- Ach. Tat. = Achilles Tatius  
*Leuc. et Clit.* = *Leucippe et Clitophon* 17.3–5; 12.4
- Aelian = Claudius Aelianus  
*VH* = *Varia historia* (M. Dilts) IV 17: 5.4
- Aen. Gaz. = Aeneas Gazeus  
*Theophr.* = *Theophrastus* (M. Colonna) 9: 200–1; 85: 209
- Aesop  
*Fables* (É. Chambry) 303, 322: 49  
“Aëtius”  
*De placitis reliquiae* (H. Diels in *Dox. Gr.*) 403.2–4: 136; 403b6–11: 135; 404b14–21: 139  
“Alcinous”  
*Didasc.* = *Didascalicus* (J. Whittaker) 2: 156, 348; 4: 8, 119, 150n, 173, 175, 273; 8: 222; 9: 339, 365, 366; 10: 8, 175, 266n, 280, 286, 303n, 310, 321, 322, 360, 370; 11: 142, 177; 14: 4n, 14, 41, 236; 16: 203; 17: 64; 25: 7, 37, 78, 185, 191, 192, 193, 273; 26: 119
- Alcmaeon  
apud Theophr. *De sens.* 26: 145
- Alex. Aphrod. = Alexander of Aphrodisias  
apud Philop. *De aet. m.* 217.23: 40  
apud Simpl. *In Cael.* 373.6–12: 133; 463.3–8: 100  
apud Simpl. *In Ph.* 311.6–16: 131  
*De an.* = *De anima* (I. Bruns) 1.3–2.4: 26; 2.1–2: 166; 2.25–4.4: 359; 3.15–6: 42; 4.4–16: 347; 11.14–12.7: 183; 12.7–2.4: 184; 12.2.4–5: 63; 13.1–8: 105; 13.12–14.6: 57, 58; 13.20–16.10: 56, 60; 14.5–11: 59; 14.17–9: 58; 14.23–4: 57; 14.2.4–15.1: 59; 15.5–26: 60, 61; 15.2.6–16.10: 59; 17.9–15: 183; 20.2.6–21.21: 60; 24.18–26.30: 181; 25.4–9: 182; 29.2–5: 55; 31.28: 55; 37.4–38.15: 55; 39.18–21: 99; 41.5: 11; 42.11–9: 142–3; 42.20–43.1: 144; 43.7–11: 146; 43.12–5: 134; 43.18–20: 135; 44.9–18: 144; 60.19–61.3; 172; 62.5–7: 133; 63.8–13: 172; 63.13: 12; 63.16: 11; 63.17–9: 172; 68.4–69.2: 72; 72.5–13: 152; 83.3–13: 78, 250n; 83.8–23: 175; 84.4–9: 68; 84.10–2: 256; 84.22: 78; 84.2.4–88.16: 359; 86.1.4–29: 78, 268, 274, 277, 328; 87.25–88.9: 269n; 88.2.6–89.4: 244, 322; 89.1–6: 280; 89.4–18: 253, 275; 90.19–91.4: 255, 274, 327; 92.1.6–7: 55; 94.21–3: 184; 100.1–8: 111
- De an. mant.* = *De anima libri mantissa* (I. Bruns) 104.6–8: 93; 105.6–12: 55; 105.15–25: 64; 107.31–108.4: 280; 108.3–15: 280; 108.16–7: 268n; 108.22–109.4: 255; 109.4–110.3: 268, 278, 326; 112.7–9: 274; 112.18–30: 274; 112.25–113.2: 369; 114.39–115.6: 10; 115.6–12: 169; 115.15–23: 167, 359; 116.5–12: 69; 122.16–125.4: 177, 124.25–33: 178; 127.27–132.30–7: 135, 136; 128.31–129.7: 138; 130.13–134.27: 133, 135, 136; 131.22–30: 138; 131.30–132.19: 138; 133.2.8–32: 141; 133.3.8–134.2: 138; 134.28ff.: 136; 135.6–10: 139; 136.24: 107; 136.30–138.2: 134; 137.30–1: 107; 141.31–142.4: 132; 142.10–3: 143; 143.2–3: 272; 144.3–6: 132; 145.3–5: 134; 145.25–30: 143; 147.16–7: 143; 148.13–22: 103
- De mixt.* = *De mixtione* (I. Bruns) 220.6–11: 179; 221.7–222.16: 179; 223.25–224.14: 10; 226.10–22: 169; 226.2.4–30: 214
- Fat.* = *De fato ad imperatores* (I. Bruns) 168.11–19: 214
- In An. pr.* = *In Aristotelis analyticorum priorum librum I commentarium* (M. Wallies in *CAG* 2.1) 7.17: 226
- In De sensu* = *In librum de sensu commentarium* (P. Wendland in *CAG* 3.1) 29.15–27: 138; 31.19–29: 139; 56.10–5: 107; 84.11–3: 153; 163.6–16: 172; 165.13–20: 172; 167.5–7: 169

- Alex. Aphrod. *cont.*  
*In Metaph.* = *In Aristotelis metaphysica commentaria* (M. Hayduck in *CAG* 1: 1–439) 18.3; 20.2; 51.2: 365; 74.12–3: 232; 79.3–80.6: 367  
*In Mete.* = *In Aristotelis meteorologicorum libros commentaria* (M. Hayduck in *CAG* 3.2) 18.14–24: 133  
*In Phys.* = *In Physica* (M. Rashed) 50  
*Mund.* = *De mundo* (C. Genequand) A 9–10: 127; A 97–8: 348; A 102–4: 267–8, 326; A 113–7: 278  
*Prou.* = *De providentia* (M. Zonta) 69–71: 279; 119.13–30: 33; 145.19–147.10: 299  
*Quaest.* = *Quaestiones et solutiones* (I. Bruns) I 1: 340, 348, 354; I 11b: 369; I 25: 278; 26: 166; II 21: 84; III 9: 12, 16, 172; IV 1: 33  
[Alex. Aphrod.] = pseudo-Alexander of Aphrodisias  
*In Metaph.* = *In Aristotelis metaphysica commentaria* (M. Hayduck in *CAG* 1) 698.1–2.4: 268n; 707.28–708.15: 254  
Alex. Pol. = Alexander Polyhistor  
apud Diog. Laert. VIII 25: 231, 296; 32: 54; 27–28: 267  
Ambrose  
*De Isaac* (C. Schenkl) IV 11: 198  
Ammon. = Ammonius Hermiae  
*In Cat.* 28.9–16: 107; 29.5–17: 57  
*In Porph. Isag.* = *In Porphyrii Isagogen sive V voces* (A. Busse in *CAG* 4.3) 41.10–42.2.4: 222–3  
Anaxag. = Anaxagoras  
fr. (DK) A 15: 273; A 41: 343; A 55: 285; B 1: 15, 349; B 12: 251, 252, 274  
Andron. = Andronicus of Rhodes  
apud Aspas. *In Eth. Nic.* 4.4.21–4: 104  
Anon. = Anonymous Authors  
*Acta Thomae* (*AAA* II 2) 2: 321  
*Chald. Or.* = *Chaldaean Oracles* fr. (É. des Places) 20: 304n; 82: 316; 94: 203; 99: 119; 121: 240; 217: 290  
*Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis* (A. Henrichs—L. Koelen) 66.15: 131  
*Cyranides* 25n; II 14.10–3: 123  
*DSG* = *Dicta Sapientis Graeci* (H-S<sub>1</sub>) I 62–3, 84–6: 209  
*ESD* = *Epistula de scientia diuina* (H-S<sub>1</sub>) 372; 171: 297; 299: 271  
*In Prm.* = *In Platonis Parmenidem Commentarium* (A. Linguisti in *CPF* III 6) XII 23–35: 322  
*In Tbt.* = *Commentarium in Platonis Theaetetum* (G. Bastianini and D. N. Sedley in *CPF* III 9) 14.45–15.18: 225; 4.6.43–9: 159; 63.20–2: 306  
*PGeneva* inv. 203 = Geneva Papyrus inventory number 203 (W. Burkert) 253  
*PGM* = *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (K. Preisendanz) I 195: 128; 198: 108; IV 296–466: 108, 123, 124; 442: 108; 948: 310; 1165–1225: 124; 1331–90: 124, 128; 1496–1595: 123; 1598–1715: 124; 1608: 112; 1716–1870: 123; 1928, 2006–85: 124, 128; VII 880–912: 128; 973–80: 123; XII 15–39: 128; 252: 112; XIII 773, XXI 10: 112  
*SMag* = *Supplementum magicum* (D. W. Daniel—F. Maltomini) 46.23: 124; 47.1–5: 128; 47.23, 50.64: 124  
*Theos. Tubing.* = *Theosophia Tubingensis* (H. Erbse) 275: 108  
*VPyth.* = *Vita Pythagorae* (apud Phot. *Bibl.* 249) 439b36–38: 254  
Antipater of Tarsus  
fr. (*SVF* 3 Antipater Tarsensis) 50: 170  
[Apollodorus]  
*Bibliotheca* I 3: 354; 7: 353; 45: 49  
Apoll. Rhod. = Apollonius of Rhodes  
*Argonautica* I 153–5: 343–4  
Apul. = Apuleius  
*Apol.* = *Apologia pro se de magia* 15.12–5: 136  
*De Plat.* = *De Platone et eius dogmate* (J. Beaujeu) I 5: 286; 9: 27; 207: 64  
*Met.* = *Metamorphoses* III 16–18: 123  
Aratus  
*Phaenomena* 2–13: 85  
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*De sphaera et cylindro* (J. L. Heiberg) II 1: 226  
Ar. Did. = Arius Didymus  
*Epitome* (apud Stob. *Ecl.*) I: 104  
fr. *ph.* = *Fragmenta physica* (H. Diels in *Dox. Gr.*) 17: 131  
Arist. = Aristotle  
*An. post.* = *Analytica posteriora* 71b9–12: 225; 71b25–6: 305; 71b29–72a8: 348; 72a29–30: 322; 72b18–22: 305; 78a6–13: 226; 100b7–9: 305; 100b10–2: 348  
*An. pr.* = *Analytica priora* 70a7–9: 120  
*Cael.* = *De caelo* 269a19–20: 360; 269a30–b17: 167; 282a4–25: 13; 284a27–35: 188; 284a30–b1: 88; 284b13–8: 214; 292a19–22: 100; 298b30–3: 252  
*Cat.* = *Categoriae* 1a23–9: 8, 142; 6b34–5: 282; 7b23–8a12: 300; 14a29–35: 240, 294; 14a35–b3: 77  
*De an.* = *De anima* 403a10–6: 183; 403a16–b1: 104, 105, 183; 407a10–22: 175; 407b27–408a2: 181; 408a1–3: 182; 408a21–5: 182, 185; 408b17–8: 70; 409a9–10: 108; 410b27–30:

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- Psellus = Michael Psellus  
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- Ptol. = Ptolemy = Claudius Ptolemaeus  
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- Sen. = Seneca (the Younger)  
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- SHA = Scriptorum Historiae Augustae  
*Gord.* = *Gordiani tres* 33.1–2: 310
- Simpl. = Simplicianus  
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- Soph. = Sophocles  
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- Theocr. = Theocritus  
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- Theon (Orator)  
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- Theon Sm. = Theon of Smyrna  
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- Theophilus Antiochensis  
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- Theophr. = Theophrastus  
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- [Ti. Locr.] = pseudo-Timaeus Locrus  
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- Valent. = Valentinus  
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