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Articles

Happiness and Homonymy of Life in Plotinus

Laimė ir gyvenimo homonimija Plotino filosofijoje

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Abstract: This article analyses the Plotinian reconsideration of the link between the definition of happiness and the homonymy of life. To safeguard Platonism, Plotinus inverts the Aristotelian discussions of homonymy and its metaphysical implications, and presents the prior-posterior relationship in terms of progressive degradation. Happiness does not consist of "life" in general (understood in a univocal sense) nor of the "rational life" (understood as the sum of genus and specific difference); rather, it consists of the life that is situated in the ontologically first and most perfect degree, which is the life that pertains to intelligence and is consubstantial with it, and of which the other lives are progressively degraded derivations. The man who possesses the first and perfect life of the intelligible in actuality, like the gods, can be considered happy.

Keywords: Happiness, Plotinus, homonymy, life, Neoplatonic ethics.

Summary: Straipsnyje analizuojamas Plotino atsigrįžimas į ryšį tarp laimės apibrėžimo ir gyvenimo homonimijos. Kad išsaugotų platonizmą, Plotinas apverčia aristoteliškąjį svarstymą apie homonimiją bei jos metafizines implikacijas ir teigia pirmesnio–paskesnio santykį, reiškiantį progresyvią degradaciją. Laimė jam nėra nei „gyvenimas" bendrąja prasme (suprantamas vienareikšmiškai), nei „racionalus gyvenimas" (suprantamas kaip giminės ir rūšinio skirtumo suma); veikiau laimė – tai gyvenimas, pasiekęs ontologiškai pirmą ir aukščiausią laipsnį, tai yra gyvenimas, derantis protui, konsubstantyvus jam, visi kiti gyvenimai yra tik progresyviai degraduojantys jo vediniai. Žmogus, gyvenantis pirmąjį – tobulą proto gyvenimą aktualybėje, gali būti laikomas laimingu, kaip dievai.

Keywords: laimė, Plotinas, homonimija, gyvenimas, neoplatoniška etika.

Introduction

Life, it is said, is homonymous, and Plotinus links the explanation of this homonymy to the presentation of his own thesis on happiness. This presentation also incorporates a critical examination of other theories, precisely in order to revisit the relationship between happiness and life within the framework of an ethical discussion that is both related and subordinate to the explanation of his own ontological thesis (Roux 2005: 222–225). According to Aristotle, two things are said to be "homonyms" when they share the same name but do not share the same essential definition (*Categories* 1, 1a1-15; see Aubenque 1962: 189; Owen 1978: 121; Irwin 1981: 526-530; Zingano 1997: 353-356; Stevens 2000: 62-76). In contrast, for Plotinus, homonymy also implies a hierarchical structure, given that the life of the descended soul and the life of the intelligible are not "lives" that occupy the same degree: the first is a

degraded life that is merely an imperfect and debilitated image of the second (*Ennead* I 4 [46] 3).

Plotinus critically examines the issue that arises when happiness (τὸ εὐδαιμονεῖν) is equated to a good life (τὸ εὖ ζῆν). Of these two terms, he explores the latter – that of the good life – first. The equation of happiness with the good life is presented by Aristotle as a means of referring to the prevailing opinion regarding happiness (εὐδαιμονία): an opinion held not only by people in general, but also by those who are more cultured (*Nicomachean Ethic* I 4.1095a16–20; I 8.1098b20–21; *Eudemian Ethic* II 1.1219b1–3) [1]. He is not alone: the Stoics and the Epicureans also base their definition of happiness on this same equivalence [2]. In the first three chapters of the treatise *On Happiness .Enn*. I 4 [46]) [3], Plotinus reflects on the possibility of developing a definition of happiness. These three chapters constitute the preface to the explanation of his particular theory of happiness. From the perspective of the systematic order drawn up by Porphyry, the treatise *On Happiness* completes the central propositions of the two treatises that precede it (*Enn.* I 2 [19] and I 3 [20]), thereby identifying the concept of a happy life with that of a life of perfect virtue. Plotinus divides the treatise into three sections: (1) a critical examination of other theories (chap. 1-2), (2) the position of his own thesis (chap. 3-4), and (3) objections and responses (chap. 5-16). We shall focus on Plotinus's demonstration of one definition of happiness, which is put forward in the second section, in connection to the reconsideration of the issue of the homonymy of life.

Happiness consists of the life of intelligence

For Plotinus, as well as for Aristotle, the term "life" is not univocal. Unlike terms such as "genus" and "species", it expresses a series of gradated degrees. All life is a form of intellection (νόησις). However, as in life, some forms of intellection are less clear than others (*Enn.* III 8 [30] 8.17–18). According to Plotinus, although "intellection" and "contemplation", like "life" and "activity", are not univocal terms, they are more than just equivocal; rather, they express a range of gradated degrees of reality (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 3.16–26). Consequently, there is a scale of intellection that runs from one to four, with each number on the scale corresponding to a degree of life. The first degree of intellection, which corresponds to the most perfect life of Intelligence, is intuitive intellection. This is followed by three progressively less clear degrees of intellection – dianoetic, sensible and vegetative – which correspond, respectively, to the three levels of the life of the soul – rational, sensible and vegetative (*Enn.* III 8 [30] 8). Igal (1982: 33) notes that although Plotinus's explanation of the gradation of the different degrees of life closely follows Aristotle (*On the Soul .DA*] II 3, 414b28-32), he interprets these gradated degrees of life as degrees of intellection.

Plotinus insists than in order to define happiness (τὸ εὐδαιμονεῖν)[4], one must start retrospectively, "from the beginning (ἐξ ἀρχῆς)" (*Enn.* I

4 [46] 3.1). As such, he begins his demonstration by indicating that we should consider happiness as consisting of a life (ζωή) (*Enn*. I 4 [46] 3.2). However, he says that happiness resides in life: this is not to say that happiness is comparable to life, as occurs with the two equivalences prior to happiness, in the case of "good life" or "living well" (τὸ εὖ ζῆν) (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 1.1), and of "end" (τέλος) (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 1.10). For this reason, life is a constitutive concept of happiness, although it is not comparable to it (Schniewind 2003: 76–77). This need for equivalence demands that he be more specific in the presentation of his own thesis, in order to avoid the same objections that he raised with regard to the work of his predecessors: specifically, the inclusion of all living beings in the definition of happiness (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 1[5].

As far as we know, thanks to the biography written by his disciple and editor Porphyry, in his classes Plotinus read commentaries by the Peripatetics that had come before him, such as Aspasius, Alexander of Aphrodisias and Adrastus, and used them as a springboard for exploring and rethinking problems in a manner that was entirely independent and original. Indeed, his explanations were said to channel "the mind of Ammonius" (Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus .VP*] 14.15–16). "His writings, however, are full of concealed (λανθάνοντα) Stoic and Peripatec doctrines. Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, in particular, is concentrated in them (trans. Armstrong 1966: 41)" (*VP* 14.4–7). It may be the case, as O'Meara (2012: 53) suggests, that in addition to *Metaphysics*, other works by Aristotle (such as the *Nicomachean Ethics*) were read and commented on by Plotinus at his school in Rome, as both Aspasius and Alexander had commented on this treatise.

Plotinus draws inspiration from Book I of the *NE* (I 6.11097b33–1098a7), in which Aristotle begins his explanation of the definition of happiness (εὐδαιμονία). Attempting to define it on the basis of man's "activity" (ἐνέργεια), Aristotle does not place happiness within the nutritive life, the life of growth, or the sensible life that is common to all animals; rather, he places it within "an active life of the element that has a rational principle (πρακτική τις τοῦ λόγον ἔχοντος)" (1098a3–4), or – as he specifies later – "an activity of soul in accordance with, or not without, rational principle (ψυχῆς ἐνέργεια κατὰ λόγον ἢ μὴ ἄνευ λόγου)" (1098a7–8). Taking this definition as his starting point, Plotinus constructs the following argument: (1) if we understand "life" univocally, and consider that happiness consists of it, then we must accept that all living beings are capable of happiness (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 3.3–9). (2) If happiness is reserved for man and consists of the "rational life" (λογικὴ ζωή), then one of two things must apply: either (.) the rational faculty is a quality, in which case happiness does not consist of life itself but is instead a quality of life (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 3.9–14); or (.) if the substance of happiness is comprised of the rational life, it therefore consists of "a different species of life (περὶ ἄλλο εἶδος ζωῆς)" (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 3.15–16). For this reason, as Plotinus continues, a happy life is not a species that is, in the strictest sense (rational life), "logically contradistinct" (ἀντιδιῃρημένον τῷ λόγῳ) (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 3.16–17) from other species in the same genus (irrational life), defined as

the sum of the univocal genus (life) and the specific difference (rational); rather, it is the first degree or supreme degree of life, which cannot be logically analysed by dividing it into two components (see Igal 1982: 244, n. 16). Thus, by referring to the "species of life", Plotinus rejects the notion that it occupies the same degree as others within the same common genus, i.e. life. Aristotle, in his *Topics* (142b7), uses the term ἀντιδιῃρημένον (contradistinction, or distinction in opposition) to refer to the species that originate from a division; that is to say, "from the same genus". Among these species there is no prior or posterior, only an exemplification of the category ἅμα (simultaneity) (*Categories* 13.14b33–15a1).

Plotinus maintains that the distinct species of life from which happiness originates must be understood in the sense in which "we say that one thing is prior (πρότερον) and another is posterior (ὕστερον)" (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 3.17–18)[6]. From this, he infers that "life is used in many different senses (πολλαχῶς)" (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 3.18) or that the term "life" is homonymous (ὁμωνύμως), in the sense of non-univocal, unlike the genus and the species; instead, it expresses a scale of different degrees of the same perfection, in which each degree of life is an image of the previous degree: the life of the plant, in one sense, and the life of the irrational being in the other (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 3.20–21; see Aristotle, *DA* II 2.413a23–25).

Life is used in many different senses

In the treatise *On the Soul* (II 2.413a22–25), Aristotle refers to homonyms as realities that, although they have different essences, nonetheless share the same name, which can be used in many ways (πλεοναχῶς λεγόμενον). However, Plotinus, applied to life, uses the notion of homonymy in a sense that is entirely different to that used by Aristotle. The latter employs homonymy as an argument against the theory of the participation of intelligible forms.

In *DA* (II 2.413a22–25), he discusses the homonymy of life: (1) the life of man, identified as such by the presence of intelligence; (2) animal life, identified as such by sensation, local motion and rest; and (3) vegetative life, which is restricted to motion (understood as nutrition) and the capacity to grow or diminish[7]. In the treatise *On Happiness*, Plotinus places Aristotle's senses (2) and (3) in reverse order: when referring to the animal life, he exclusively uses the term "irrational" (ἄλογος), and places it second on his list (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 3.21).

For Plotinus, the homonymy of life inevitably entails an ontological hierarchy among the different beings that are called by the same name. In order to transmute the Aristotelian meaning, Plotinus turns to the principle of the heterogeneity of the prior (πρότερον) and the posterior (ὕστερον) (*Enn.* III 8 [30] 8.17–20). In his exegesis, Plotinus once again takes as his basis the interpretation of a passage in *DA,* in which Aristotle exemplifies the way in which, within a series, the prior is potentially present in the posterior, "e.g. the square the triangle, the sensory faculty the self-nutritive (οἷον ἐν τετραγώνῳ μὲν τρίγωνον, ἐν αἰσθητικῷ δὲ τὸ

θρεπτιόν)" (II 3.414b31–32) [8]. The Aristotelian series is oriented from bottom to top, with the prior identified with the elemental: the square can be broken down into triangles, and the sensory faculty or life implies the self-nutritive faculty or life.

When interpreting the homonymy of life as a relationship between an image and its model, Plotinus inverts the orientation of Aristotle's series: "And if one thing is an image (εἴδωλον) of another, obviously its good life is the image of another good life (τὸ εὖ ὡς εἴδωλον αὖ τοῦ εὖ)" (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 3.23–24; trans. Armstrong 1966: 181). Regarding the Aristotelian examples of the prior and the posterior, the model of life, like the model of happiness, corresponds to someone living "fully" (ἄγαν) [9] (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 3.24); in other words, someone that possesses life in a manner that can be considered full or superabundant. Such an individual pertains to "the most excellent" (τὸ ἄριστον), in light of the fact that for living beings, the most excellent consists of "really living" (τὸ ὄντως ἐν ζωῇ); or in other words, living "the perfect life" (ἡ τέλειος ζωή) (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 3.26–28). Thus, while Plotinus uses the same terms that Aristotle does in *NE* (I 6.1097b22; see I 2.1094a22; I 7.1098a16), but he gives them an Neoplatonic interpretation (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 3.38–40).

Plotinus's interpretation of the prior-posterior relationship implies the inversion of the meaning of the Aristotelian doctrine of homonymy. In order to safeguard Plato's theory of participation, Plotinus conceives this relationship in terms of a progressive degradation, based on the relationship between the image and the model, thereby moving away from the Aristotelian definition of homonymy as a shared name pertaining to different essences (*Categories* 1.1a1–6) [10]. Consequently, there is no gradual increasing of complexity; rather, there is a continuous and progressive descent, in which each new term that is generated is always more inferior, more imperfect, than the term which generated it (*Enn.* V 5 [32] 13.37–38). To give an example of this progressive degradation, Plotinus uses the image of a central point, sometimes combined with that of a spotlight (*Enn.* IV 3 [27] 17.12–21), which expands in concentric circles of increasing instability until, with the final circle, it dissipates. In this progressive degradation the elements of the series maintain a relationship of non-reciprocal dependence upon one another: everything originates from the element that is ontologically first; however, this ontologically first element exists independently of what is generated from it [11].

Plotinus argues that happiness consists of the life of intelligence: in other words, (1) it does not consist of "life" in general (understood in a univocal sense), (2) nor of the "rational life" (understood as the sum of genus and specific difference) (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 3.1–16); rather, (3) it consists of a perfect life of the first degree, which is the life that pertains to intelligence and is consubstantial with it (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 3.16–24).

If the word "life" is a homonym inasmuch as it expresses different degrees of the same perfection (rather than different forms of perfection), as shown by the difference between the life of a plant and the life of an irrational being (which differ according to their respective clarity

[τρανότης] and obscurity [ἀμυδρότης] [*Enn.* I 4 [46] 3.21–22]) [12] , then the cognitive life of intelligence surpasses, in clarity, the psychic life of the soul without being surpassed itself. This distinction between different degrees adds an original focus to the Plotinian notion of homonymy. The series of lives unfolds through different degrees of clarity and obscurity. Each degree of life is a reflection (εἴδωλον) (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 3.23) of the one before it, the one that is ontologically first; consequently, each degree that is generated possesses an inferior degree of perfection. "The first and most perfect life (τὴν πρώτην ζωὴν καὶ τὴν τελειοτάτην)" (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 3.39–40), of which the others are progressively degraded derivations, is the life of intelligence (*Enn.* III 8 [30] 8.17–20).

The perfect and self-sufficient life

Within the framework of political philosophy, Aristotle explains that the expression "living well" (εὖ ζῆν) means to live a perfect and self-sufficient life (*Politics* III 9.1280b33–35; 1280b39–1281a1). Plotinus, when discussing the term "well" using the adverbial form of τὸ εὖ, appears to both revisit the Aristotelian expression and (to a certain extent) adopt an abstract view of the element of "life", in order to refer specifically to a "good condition", whether that of (for example) a body or that of intelligence (*Enn.* IV 8 [6] 2.24–25; III 9 [13] 7.5–6; I 4 [46] 3.23–24) [13] .

According to Plotinus, the perfect life must reside in intelligence, which constitutes the beginning of all psychic life. "If the man can have the perfect life (τὴν τελείαν ζωὴν ἔχειν), the man who has (ἔχων) this life is well off (εὐδαίμων)" (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 4.1–2; trans. Armstrong 1966: 181). Given that man, by virtue of being man, is equipped with intelligence, he is therefore happy in potentiality; however, only the wise man is happy in actuality, as only he possesses perfect intelligence (*Enn.* I 3 [20] 5.2–4). Therefore, in order to meet the requirement of living well, the "illuminated desire" (Kühn 1990: 37-39) will direct the activity of the soul towards the principle from which it originates, i.e. intelligence, as it is perfected by means of intellectual training (*Enn.* V 1 [10] 3.12–16). However, this desire cannot be appropriated from other external objects, as perfection does not admit restrictions, in light of the fact that, as Aristotle indicates, "for none of the attributes of happiness is incomplete (οὐδὲν γὰρ ἀτελές ἐστι τῶν τῆς εὐδαιμονίας)" (*NE* X 7.1177b25–26).

The true "I" is identified with intellective activity, which corresponds to the achievement of the following two objectives: (1) the perfecting of the discursive knowledge that pertains to the soul, and (2) the return to its origin and archetype, i.e. intuitive knowledge, as is the case within the absolute intelligence (*Enn.* V 1 [10] 7.36–46; VI 7 [38] 31.29–34). Following on from the identification of "I" with the intellective level, the two sub-intellective levels of the soul (the sensible and vegetative) thus become auxiliary, without even forming part of the soul, given that it 'wears' them "against its will (κατὰ βούλησιν)" (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 4.15–17). The life of the man who possesses this type of perfect life (in other words, the life of someone that has achieved absolute intelligence and has become

one with it) is self-sufficient (αὐτάρκης ὁ βίος) (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 4.23) [14], and also makes him self-sufficient in terms of achieving both happiness and goodness (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 4.24–25), as there is no kind of good that he does not possess (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 4.25–26).

Notwithstanding the above, "self-sufficiency" is interpreted in as many different ways as happiness. At the beginning of the *NE* (I 5), Aristotle considers self-sufficiency to be an attribute as common as happiness. In the *NE* (X 7.1177b1), he defines the wise man as "he who is most sufficient unto himself" (αὐταρκέστατος). According to Plotinus, the analysis of the self-sufficiency of the wise man is one of the various ways of fulfilling the purpose expressed in the Platonic formula of "assimilation to God" (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ), which is found in a passage in *Theaetetus* (176a–b). Effectively, if assimilation to God is the supreme objective of philosophy, then self-sufficiency is the outcome of this transformation [15]. The life of the happy man resembles that of the gods, as they both live a true life. According to Plotinus, resembling God means "fleeing" from the sensible world and from everything within man that is related to it. The perfect life resides in intelligence, which constitutes the beginning of all psychic life. In this ὁμοίωσις θεῷ, Plotinus considers that God is identified, first and foremost, with Intelligence [16]. However, he also explores the possibility that the soul aspires to overcome this noetic identification, meaning it no longer comprises intelligence and intelligible form but is instead fleeing "in solitude to the solitary (φυγὴ μόνου πρὸς μόνον)" (*Enn.* VI 9 [9] 11.51) along with the Good, or the One, in a henological ecstasy that goes beyond happiness [17].

However, in the treatise *On Happiness* Plotinus affirms that he is not seeking the cause (τὸ αἴτιον) of good; rather, he is seeking the good that is immanent (τὸ ἐνυπάρχον) in man (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 3.33). Taking into account the fact that good, like life, is interpreted in many different ways, within the context of Plotinus's theory of happiness we are not dealing with the first principle of Plotinian metaphysical architecture, i.e. the Good or the One, which is its cause; rather, we are dealing with the first ontological degree, this "first and most perfect life" (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 3.39–40), which corresponds to the life of intelligence and to which man must aspire in order to achieve happiness. The Plotinian wise man is entirely self-sufficient, as the life of Intelligence with which he is identified is itself perfect.

The happiness of the undescended part of the soul

All men have potential access to happiness, but only the man who possesses the perfect life "in actuality", i.e. he whose "I" is identified with the intellective level, is truly happy. The "I" of each man, not of man in general, is identified with the level that each man exercises and keeps active (*Enn.* VI 7 [38] 6.15–18). In accordance with this principle, the man who possesses life "in actuality (ἐνεργείᾳ)" is happy, while he who possesses life "in potentiality (δυνάμει)", possesses it as he

would any other "part" (μέρος τι) (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 4.12–15). Following on from the identification of the "I" with the intellective level, the subintellective levels become accessories; in other words, "everything else is just something he wears (περικεῖσθαι δ' αὐτῷ τὰ ἄλλα)" (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 4.15–16; trans. Armstrong 1966: 183; see Igal 1982: 246, n. 20). And so this man, who "already" (ἤδη) (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 4.14) possesses the perfect life, is a man who lives a happy life.

In Plotinian psychology the theory of the double "I" links to the doctrine of the "undescended" part of the soul [18] . Although each human soul may be "amphibious" (*Enn.* IV 8 [6] 4.31–35; 8.1–6) in the sense that it exists simultaneously in the sensible world and the intelligible world, the higher part of the individual soul, having "fallen" into this world of becoming, remains – in a perceptual sense – in the intelligible world, partaking of everything that comprises the contemplation of intelligible forms (*Enn*. IV 7 [2] 13.1–13; IV 8 [6] 8.1–6; see Dörrie, Baltes 2002: 32–35, 202–204). Although "we", the incarnate human beings, are very seldom aware of our "higher" intellective lives, this increased level of contemplation never comes to an end and continues to grant the most perfect happiness to our transcendent, intelligible "I".

To describe the life of Intelligence, in the treatise *On Intellect, the Forms, and Being .Enn.* V 9 [5]), Plotinus employs the analysis of Plato's *Cratylus* (396b–c), which links genealogy to etymology [19] . At the same time, he also forges a hermeneutic connection with the two references to Hesiod: (1) In *Theogony* (154–210; 453–506), Kronos is a god who devours his own newborn offspring, thereby exemplifying the theory of the interiority of the intelligibles in Intelligence, i.e. the second hypostasis that produces within it all intelligible forms and holds them within itself [20] . (2) *Works and Days* (109–126), in which a "golden race" arises under Kronos's reign [21] , illustrates the theory that perfect happiness corresponds to the tranquil contemplation of intelligible forms on the part of Intelligence, whose self-sufficient completeness provides the foundation for happiness. According to Plotinus, this corresponds precisely to the happiness of the undescended part of each soul: a part which remains above.

Happiness, time and eternity

The homonymy of life is also explored in the treatise *On Eternity and Time .Enn.* III 7 [45]), which immediately precedes the treatise *On Happiness .Enn.* I 4 [46]) in the chronological order. In this treatise Plotinus affirms that time is a form of life that has a homonymous relationship to the life of the intelligible: "then we must say that there is, instead of the life There, another life having, in a way of speking, the same name (ὥσπερ ὁμώνυμον)" (*Enn.* III 7 [45] 11.48–50; trans. Armstrong 1966: 341). Likewise, although the treatise *On Whether Happiness Increases with Time .Enn.* I 5 [36]) is chronologically prior to treatise *Enn.* I 4 [46], in terms of subject matter it is complementary.

Happiness is subtracted not only from the vicissitudes of the outside world, the mutability of the composite and conscious perception (thesis of *Enn.* I 4 [46]), but also from the passing of time itself. Happiness, living well, defined as the conformity of the life of the soul with the life of the intelligible and its actuality, are strangers to action, as this conformity implies the granting of an exclusive privilege to the present, to the moment, in all its indivisibility as an image of eternity (*Enn.* I 5 [36] 7.15–15). If happiness became entirely convergent with time, and thus an image of eternity (Plato, *Timaeus* 37d5), then it would become the *same* as time: a continuous and successive flow. For the soul, happiness consists of these moments of eternity, where the fleetingness of the moment imitates the "live" or undeferred nature of eternity. For the soul, the idea of the happy life, of living well (τὸ εὖ ζῆν), means overcoming the "interval" (διάστασις): in other words, to join together, to unite (Montet 2001: 25–29).

Happiness does not accrete over time, through the memory of having been happy in the past or in anticipation of happiness in the future. Rather, being happy depends on a present disposition (*Enn.* I 5 [36] 1.1–4). However, this disposition (διάθεσις), like the activity of life (ἡ ἐνέργεια τῆς ζωῆς), has its origins in the fact that it is present (ἐν τῷ παρεῖναι) (*Enn.* I 5 [36] 1.4–5). This is because happiness is not commensurate with time, but rather with eternity, due to the fact that, as a perfect life, it is the life that corresponds to the eternal being of the second hypostasis: Intelligence (*Enn.* I 5 [36] 7.1–30). Happiness "requires to persist (συμμεμενηκέναι ἀξιοῖ)" (*Enn.* I 5 [36] 7.12; trans. Armstrong 1966: 223): in other words, it demands togetherness, i.e, it cannot be broken down into successive parts, as time is (and whose prolongation results in the dispersal of a unit that exists in the present (*Enn.* I 5 [36] 7.14–15). Consequently, happiness, as a perfect life, corresponds to the life of the eternity of the Intelligence that transcends time; or which, in other words, has always existed "all together" (πᾶσα ὁμοῦ) (*Enn.* I 5 [36] 7.30).

Conclusion

The treatise *On Happines .Enn.* I 4 [46]) focuses its discussion on the happiness of the life of the intelligible. Consistently with his other writings, Plotinus argues here for the view that true happiness consists in the truly perfect life of the intellect – the life that is the paradigm and source of all other dependent forms of life which are homonymously related to this first life according to the relation of priority and posteriority. Plotinus explains the meaning of "another kind of life" (ἄλλο εἶδος ζωῆς) and its corresponding "wellness" (τὸ εὖ), by introducing a Platonic version of the concept of homonymy (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 3.16–24). In whatever way one might reconstruct the whole argument, its main point is entirely dialectical: Plotinus argues for his explanatory model of life as the best tool to repair inconsistencies in

those contemporary theories of happiness that attribute it exclusively to rational form of life.

For Plotinus, happiness is not a privilege reserved exclusively for the gods. The life that is enjoyed by the gods corresponds to that of the men who possess the "perfect life", which is of an intelligible nature and makes them happy (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 4.1–11). Therefore, according to Plotinus, happiness cannot be given an excessively broad definition, as it would encompass the gamut of all living beings; and nor can it be given an excessively restrictive definition that would reserve it solely for the gods. The originality of Plotinus's approach lies in the fact that he places Aristotle at the service of Platonism (Schroeder 1997). Happiness lies not in one's actions (πράξεις) (*Enn.* I 5 [36] 10.20), but in the internal good disposition (διάθεσις) and the internal activity (ἐνέργεια) that corresponds to the soul, and which consists of "thinking wisely and acting wisely within itself (ἐν τῷ φρονῆσαι καὶ ἐν ἑαυτῇ ὠδὶ ἐνεργῆσαι)" (*Enn.* I 5 [36] 10.22–23).

The notion of homonymy as applied to life – life which can be interpreted in many different ways – enables Plotinus to explore the different degrees, or images of the life of the intelligible that is ontologically first, which constitutes the cornerstone of happiness. Only those men who possess the perfect life in actuality are happy; and the lives of these men are identical to those of the gods, as both gods and men share the same genus of true life.

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Notes

1 Graeser (1972: 38) notes that here, Aristotle brings together a *consensus communis*. With regard to this identification, Plotinus avoids commenting on the Aristotelian notion of "acting well" (εὖ πράττειν), as it is not easy to explain its purpose. Schniewind (2003: 71) states that the absence of a commentary on this idea demonstrates that Plotinus does not intend to produce a precise and literal citation of Aristotle; rather, his intention is to explore the "equivalence" of happiness (τὸ εὐδαιμονεῖν) and the good life (τὸ εὖ ζῆν), and the implications thereof.

2 In his commentary on treatise *On Happines* .*Enn.* I 4 [46]), McGroarty (2006: 46) highlights the relevance of the background provided by Aristotelian ethics: "Plotinus was well versed in Aristotle's ethical works ([Porphyry], *VP* 13.13), and so must have been aware that Aristotle considered *eudaimonia* something only humanity could possess". See Aristotle, *EN* X 8.1178b24–25; on this topic, see Schroeder (1997); O'Meara (2012). Likewise, he demonstrates the numerous and illuminating connections between the central proposition of treatise *On Happines* and the ethical thesis of the Epicureans and (in particular) the Stoics. According to Graeser (1972: 82), Plotinus was extremely familiar with the works of Epictetus. Thus, in order to explain the beginning of *Enn.* I 4 [46] 2.1–12, which alludes to those who refuse to apply the concept of the good life to plants on the basis that plants lack feeling, McGroarty (2006: 60–61) argues that the text Plotinus uses as

reference for his interpretation is not the passage from the *NE* (X 8.1178b28), as the editors Henry and Schwyzer (1964-1982, vol. 1: 70) contend in their *editio minor*, but the *Discourses* (II 8.2–5), although Epictetus does not use the term αἴσθησις here.

3 This is the first treatise that Plotinus wrote after his disciple Porphyry departed for Sicily, having suffered from a deep depression that had brought him to the brink of suicide (Porphyry, *VP* 6.1–5; 11.11–15). On happiness in Plotinus, see Thedinga (1925); Himmerich (1959); Rist (1967: 139–152); McGroarty (1994); Schniewind (2003: 68–83); Song (2009: 61–76); Gerson (2012). Treatise *Enn.* I 4 [46] is translated and commented on by Igal (1982); Linguiti (2000), McGroarry (2006), and Vidart (2009).

4 In *Enn.* I 4 [46] Plotinus frequently uses the noun infinitive form (equivalent to "the happy being" [τὸ εὐδαιμονεῖν]) to make specific reference to the state of being happy, or the notion of happiness in actuality. Armstrong translates εὐδαιμονία with "well-being", but I prefer to keep the translation "happiness", understanding it has to do with ancient, not modern, concepts of happiness. See O'Meara (2012: 56).

5 If happiness is defined by living well, it cannot apply solely and exclusively to man; it must include all living things (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 1). Effectively, in the expression "living well" (τὸ εὖ ζῆν) there is an "amphibology" (Himmerich 1959: 21), as it could mean "living well" in a moral sense (which is the sense given to it by Aristotle in *NE* (I 7.1098a7–20; VII 1.1145a19–29), or its meaning could be related to a psychological state that depends, in many cases, on a fundamentally biological factor.

6 Plotinus maintains that the species of life must be interpreted as forming part of two distinct hierarchical levels, which are positioned according to the ordering of prior and posterior. On this issue, see O'Meara (1996).

7 These manifestations of life, which Aristotle proposes later on as a means of identifying the faculties of the soul, are placed in order, starting with intelligence. The most common is "nutritive" motion, which he previously used in order to define life. "By life we mean self-nutrition and growth and decay (ζωὴν δὲ λέγομεν τὴν δι' αὑτοῦ τροφήν τε καὶ αὔξησιν καὶ φθίσιν)" (*DA* II 1.412a14–15). See Bodéüs (1993: 141–142, n. 4–5), and see also Boeri (2009: 64, n. 165).

8 On this argument *ex gradibus vitae*, see Boeri (2009: xxxvi-xxxvii).

9 Plotinus refers to a life lived with great intensity (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 3.24). Unlike the other lives, this first life does not lack anything. In this passage the term ἄγαν should be interpreted as "great intensity", rather than "excess". See Rist (1967: 147); Schniewind (2003: 79).

10 The post-Plotinian Platonists considered Aristotle's work, particularly the written works on ethics that they read after his treatise of *Categories*, to have a propaedeutic function with regard to the study of philosophy.

11 On this issue, see O'Meara (1996: 68, 72–73).

12 The term ἀμυδρότης indicates "vagueness", "imprecision", a "lack of clarity". Its opposite is τρανότης, which means "clearness", "plainness". Sleeman and Pollet (1980: *s.v.*) maintains that the nouns "clarity" (τρανότης) and "obscurity" (ἀμυδρότης) are *hapax* in Plotinus's *Enneads*.

13 In *Enn.* II 3 [52] 3.24–25 τὸ εὖ connects with life (βίος).

14 For an analysis of "self-sufficient life" (αὐτάρκης ὁ βίος) in Plotinus, see Laurent (2006).

15 According to D'Ancona (2002: 560), the "assimilation to God" (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ) has two meanings: (1) a possession of the higher part of the soul, inalienable and eternal; and (2) the final objective that the human soul attains after a long ascent when it is conscious of the theoretical life that its higher intellective part enjoys. For the soul, to become good and beautiful is to "become like God" (ὁμοιωθῆναι εἶναι θεῷ) (*Enn.* I 6 [1] 6.20), see Zamora Calvo (2017: 134).

16 See *Enn.* I 6 [1] 6.13–21; I 2 [19] 1.1–10. On the "flight" and assimilation to God in Plotinus, see Aleknienė (2016: 279–285), and see also Vidart (2006).

17 In the prologue to his *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories* (6.6 Kalbfleisch), Simplicius adds the finishing touch to the Neoplatonist interpretation of the *NE* that Plotinus begins in his treatise *Enn.* I 4 [46]. Simplicius describes two interconnected levels: (1) the ethical perfecting of the soul, which is achieved by undergoing training in virtue; and (2) cognitive perfecting, which is achieved by ascending to the first principle. These two ends combine to produce a single shared aim: the most perfect form of happiness, which is identified with that of becoming divine. "The shared aim of these two ends is the most perfect happiness (ἡ τελεωτάτη εὐδαιμονία) that can be attained by man" (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 6.11–12). In fact, Simplicius alerts us to the fact that the man who has managed to ascend to this level of happiness should no longer be called a "man" (ἄνθρωπος); instead, he should be called a "god" (θεός) (6.13–15). See Hoffmann (1996: 299–300, 303–304).

18 Even though its ontological state may not be exactly the same as that of the intelligible forms, the undescended part of the soul that resides permanently in the intelligible realm is almost as divine as an intelligible being, as it contains the divine "part" of each soul.

19 See *Enn.* V 1 [10] 7.27–38; V 8 [31] 12.3–26; 13.1–11; III 5 [50] 2.19–21; 2.32–35. Plato (*Cratylus* 396b–c) provides a new meaning: κόρος, in its positive sense of "satiety" or "plenty". According to the etymology used by the Stoics, which Plotinus took from them, Kronos (Κρόνος) is the god of "satiety" (κόρος) and "intelligence" (νοῦς) (*Enn.* V 1 [10] 4.9–10). We can see that the Latin correspondence between *Saturnus* and *satur* coincides with the Greek relationship of Κρόνος and κόρος, just as Plotinus established. St Augustine in *Agreement among the Evangelists* (I 23. 35) also refers to the Stoic etymology, transmitted by Cicero: *Saturnus autem est appellatus quod saturetur*. *On the Nature of the Gods* II 25.64), precisely when he explains this passage from Plotinus. The Latin term *Saturnus*, as shown in the Augustinian interpretation, is a hybrid term, half Latin and half Greek, which corresponds perfectly to Plotinus' "saturated intelligence" if it is written *Satur-*νοῦς. See Courcelle (1948: 162–163); Pépin (1976: 126, n. 84; 204, n. 116).

20 The three gods that form a lineage (Ouranos, Kronos and Zeus) correspond to the three hierarchical structures of reality, i.e. the three principal hypostases: the One-Good, the Intelligence, and the Soul (*Enn.* V 8 [31] 10.1–43). On this topic, see Pépin (1955: 5–27; 1976: 190–209), and see also Hadot (1981).

21 For a re-examination of this subject from a philosophical perspective, see Hadot (2004: 154–157).