

Are There Qualities in Intelligible Being?

On Plotinus VI.2 [43] 14

Abstract

The present article provides a detailed commentary on Plotinus' VI.2 [43] 14. This chapter raises some difficult questions concerning the status of quality in Plotinus' metaphysics. Recent interpretations suggest that Plotinus here distinguishes two levels in intelligible *ousia* and that he expresses this distinction through a qualified use of the distinction between constituent and accidental qualities (see L. LAVAUD, *The Primary Substance in Plotinus' Metaphysics: A Little-Known Concept*, «Phronesis», 59, 2014, pp. 369-384). This distinction had been developed in the commentary tradition on Aristotle's *Categories* and Plotinus focuses on it in treatises II.6 [17] and VI.1 [42]. As a matter of fact, such a reading is unpersuasive. In VI.2 [43] 14 Plotinus does not transpose and adapt the classification of qualities into his account of intelligible being. Rather, he shows that quality is not one of the greatest genera or kinds that define the structure of the Intellect. So the greatest genera are neither accidental qualities nor constituent properties of intelligible being. Furthermore, Plotinus argues that the distinctive type of multiplicity in the Intellect cannot in any way be expressed through the distinction between subject and property, and this because at the level of intelligible being all multiplicity is substantial and completely internal.

1. Constituent and accidental qualities

The status of quality in Plotinus' metaphysics is a matter of discussion. Plotinus seems to be wavering on this issue and, more precisely, his views about the status of qualities in sensible particulars leave some questions open. In his early treatise II.6 [17] *On Substance, or on Quality*, he identifies substances with intelligible beings, and qualities with their sensible images (i.e. perceptible properties) (II.6 [17] 1.7-8; 1.13-15; 1.42-49)¹. So the distinction between substance and quality and that between intelligible principles and sensible properties come to coincide. *Grosso modo*, this stance can be traced back to Plato's views on sensible beings as entirely qualitative.² Yet in the same

¹ Plotinus' text is that of *Plotini opera*, ed. P. HENRY et H.-R. SCHWYZER, 3 vols., Clarendon Press, Oxford 1964-1982 (*editio minor*). A recent (but unfortunately outdated) commentary on II.6 [17] is P. KALLIGAS, *The Enneads of Plotinus: A Commentary*, vol. 1, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford 2014, pp. 336-345. In Plotinus, "quality" and "qualified" often refer to all of sensible properties, i.e. to both qualities and properties in other categories different from substance: see e.g. VI.3 [44] 8.20 and 29.

² See Plato, *Tim.*, 49 c. For further discussion, I would only refer to A. SILVERMAN, *The Dialectic of Essence. A Study of Plato's Metaphysics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2002, pp. 218-284 (*The*

treatise Plotinus opposes, *among perceptible qualities*, qualities that are constitutive of substance (ἔσσι λέγονται συμπληροῦν οὐσίας, II.6 [17] 2.20-21), – that is, qualities that go into the making of sensible particulars and make of them what they are: e.g. specific differentiae – and mere qualities that are outside all substance (II.6 [17] 1.15-16; 2.20-26). The distinction between constituent and merely accidental qualities comes from the commentary tradition on Aristotle’s *Categories*.³ Plotinus integrates the bipartition of qualities into his distinctive metaphysical view about causation and formal principles. So he claims that constituent qualities are actually activities that come from the formal principles and essential powers (II.5 [17] 2.20-22: ἐνέργεια [...] ἀπὸ τῶν λόγων καὶ τῶν δυνάμεων τῶν οὐσιωδῶν ἰοῦσαι)⁴.

This view raises a number of problems. If constituent qualities come from the intelligible formal principles, we could infer that accidental qualities come from matter; but Plotinus is silent on this issue and, indeed, the idea that matter as such could be

Nature of Material Particulars). More recently, see M. RASHED, *Il Timeo: negazione del principio di necessità condizionale, matematica e teodicea*, in R. CHIARADONNA, *Il platonismo e le scienze*, Carocci, Rome 2012, pp. 65-79.

³ In Aristotle’s *Categories*, differentiae are different from substances but, at the same time, they are said of substances as of a subject (see *Cat.*, 5, 3a21-28). So are differentiae substances or qualities? Such predicaments led to extensive discussions in the ancient commentary tradition: see C. LUNA, *Commentaire*, in *Simplicius. Commentaire sur les Catégories d’Aristote. Chapitres 2-4*, trad. par Ph. Hoffmann, avec la collaboration de I. et P. Hadot, commentaire par C.L., Les Belles Lettres, Paris 2001, pp. 67-874: 225-256; J. BARNES, *Porphyry. Introduction*, Translated, with a Commentary, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2003, pp. 350-356; R. SORABJI, *The Philosophy of the Commentators 200-600 AD: A Sourcebook*, vol. 3: *Logic and metaphysics*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 2005, pp. 111-120. Our information about the debates before Plotinus is incomplete, but what we know suffices to show that Plotinus was aware of the previous exegetical tradition. Certainly, the distinction between constituent (συμπληρωτικά) and external or accidental qualities was well known before him. The distinction already appears in a fragment from Lucius preserved in *Simp.*, *In Cat.*, 48, 2-11 Kalbfleisch = Lucius 2F. Gioè (Lucius is a mysterious critic of Aristotle’s *Categories* who possibly lived in I BCE: see the recent discussion in M.J. GRIFFIN, *Aristotle’s Categories in the Early Roman Empire*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2015, pp. 108-110). Alexander of Aphrodisias made use of it, although it is controversial that he took constituent qualities to be the same as specific differentiae (see M. RASHED, *Essentialisme: Alexandre d’Aphrodise entre logique, physique et cosmologie*, de Gruyter, Berlin-New York, 2007, pp. 307-308). The distinction between substantial and accidental qualities goes back to Arist., *Metaph.*, Δ 14, 1020a33-b21 (the differentia of substance is a distinct sense of «qualified», *to poion*). Here I will use ‘quality’ (ἡ ποιότης) and ‘qualified’ (τὸ ποιόν) interchangeably, for their distinction is not relevant to the present discussion. For further details, see now M. HAUER, *Simplicius on the Relation between Quality and Qualified*, «Méthexis», 28, 2016, pp. 111-140.

⁴ Further details in R. CHIARADONNA, *Plotinus on Sensible Particulars and Individual Essences*, in A. TORRANCE-J. ZACHUBER (eds.), *Individuality in Late Antiquity*, Ashgate, Farnham-Burlington, 2014, pp. 47-61. On Plotinus’ account of *logos*, see P. KALLIGAS, *The Structure of Appearances: Plotinus on the Constitution of Sensible Objects*, «Philosophical Quarterly», 61, 2011, pp. 762-782: 770-771: *logos* «appears basically to operate like a productive and organizing force transmitting the structural principles, embedded within every soul as a result of its contemplative activity directed towards their intelligible archetypes in Nous, and then imposing them on matter in the form of “commands” or “mandates” that bring together or alternatively keep apart the various parts of the material substrate so as to inform it into distinct unitary and structured bodily entities».

causally responsible for some sensible properties is problematic (Plotinus usually conceives of matter as causally inert, although this view is sometimes qualified)⁵. So the origin of mere qualities remains unexplained. Plotinus' account of constituent qualities is controversial too. To make a long story short, the view that all sensible properties are qualities and as such are distinct from substance (i.e. from intelligible and extra-physical essential principles), appears to be in tension with the distinction between constituent and merely accidental qualities, and this because constituent qualities seem to be too close to substance, so to speak, or rather internal to it: they actually make of a sensible particular what it essentially or properly is. As Porphyry was to put it, «the constituents of substances are substances (τὰ συμπληρωτικά [...] τῶν οὐσιῶν οὐσίαι)» (*In Cat.*, 95, 33 Busse).

Plotinus does not go as far as Porphyry: he never claims that constituent qualities are *ousiai*. Yet in II.6 [17] 2.21-22 he says that constituent qualities come from formal principles or substantial powers. In the later treatise VI.1 [42] (the first section of Plotinus' tripartite treatise *On the Genera of Being*) Plotinus argues that specific differentiae can only be regarded as qualities equivocally (i.e. homonymously: see Arist., *Cat.*, 1a1-6) and that they are rather activities or *logoi*, or parts of *logoi* (VI.1 [42] 10.20-24). Differentiae show what a thing is, even if they seem to express a qualified substance⁶. Despite some minor differences, this passage is consistent with II.6 [17] 2. Both passages suggest that the notion of 'quality' or 'qualified' can be taken in both a wide and a narrow sense.⁷ In a broad sense, all properties of sensible particulars are qualities (and differ, as such, from intelligible essences). In a narrow sense, however, only accidental properties can be regarded as qualities, since they are «outside all substance» (II.6 [17] 2.23). Constituents are, instead, not really qualities at all, but activities that come from the formal principles and they indicate what a thing

⁵ See A. LINGUITI, *La materia dei corpi: sullo pseudoilomorfismo plotiniano*, «Quaestio», 7, 2007, pp. 105-122.

⁶ At VI.1 [42] 10.23-24 the verbs δηλοῦσαι and λέγειν take a non-linguistic subject and should be rendered as «show» or «indicate»: for a famous parallel in Aristotle, see *Cat.* 5, 3b10 with the remarks in T. BUTLER, *The Homonymy of Signification in Aristotle*, in R. SORABJI, *Aristotle and After*, Institute of Classical Studies, London 1997, pp. 117-126.

⁷ Here I follow G. KARAMANOLIS, *Plotinus on Quality and Immanent Form*, in R. CHIARADONNA-F. TRABATTONI (eds), *Physics and Philosophy of Nature in Greek Neoplatonism*, Brill, Leiden, 2009, pp. 79-100: p. 97: «Plotinus appears to operate with a narrow and wide sense of quality. In a wide sense all features of a sensible x are qualities. In a narrow and strict sense, however, only accidental features are qualities, while immanent Forms, as the results of the activity of λόγοι, contribute to the coming to being of something [...]».

really is. This view seems to entail that constituent qualities are essential properties of sensible particulars (and they are taken to be such in the commentary tradition on Aristotle's *Categories*). Yet in some interesting passages Plotinus rules out the idea that essence can be counted among the properties of an object: sensible particulars are not endowed with essences. What, e.g., Socrates properly is, is neither one of his properties nor a conjunction of properties, but a forming principle that is different from the whole structure of the corporeal being (see VI.3 [44] 15.24-38; VI.7 [38] 4.16-30). If this is true, no quality is essential.⁸ But, then, the status of constituent qualities remains problematic: they can be neither essential (for sensible particulars are not endowed with essences) nor accidental (for constituent qualities are different from merely accidental ones). So in the third part of the treatise *On the Genera of Being* (VI.3 [44]) Plotinus further develops the enquiry on sensible substance and stresses its non-essential character⁹. He thus argues that sensible particulars should be regarded as mere conglomerations of matter and qualities (συμφορησίς τις ποιότητων καὶ ὕλης: VI.3 [44] 8.20) and seems to reject the view that some qualities are constituent ones, and hence different from merely accidental qualities. In VI.3 [44] Plotinus conceives of sensible particulars as wholes that are made up of non-substantial features that occur in matter. Sensible particulars are thus made up of non-essential components; they lack

⁸ In the case of human beings, the specific differentia *rational* entails further problems, since it is not a perceptible property such as *biped*. Plotinus tackles this issue in VI.7 [38] 4, where he argues that the definition of human being as rational animal does not grasp the real principle that makes up human beings (what Plotinus calls [...] τὸν λόγον αὐτὸν τὸν πεποιηκότα, οἷον τὸν ἄνθρωπον: VI.7 [38] 4.25-26). This definition does not in fact show what the human being really is (i.e. his essence or nature), but simply describes the factual structure of concrete beings composed of body and soul. Plotinus' polemical reference to Aristotle's view of definition is evident (see the parallel in II.7 [37] 3.8-10): for Plotinus argues that even if we grant that we should focus on forms in matter (i.e. even if we provisionally accept Aristotle's position), this kind of definition is nonetheless insufficient, since it accounts for beings composed of matter and form (τόδ' ἐν τῷδε, VI.7 [38] 4.22-23, see Arist., *Metaph.*, Z 5.1030b18), whereas it is incapable of grasping form alone. So Plotinus suggests that, insofar as *rational* is a property of corporeal human beings, it cannot be identical to their essence, since the essence is not what makes the nature of already existing things composed of form and matter clear (see II.7 [37] 3.8-9: ὀρισμὸς δηλωτικὸς τοῦ τί ἐστὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα), but what produces things by giving form to matter. To sum up: according to Plotinus essence cannot be any of the properties of corporeal beings, and this holds for both perceptible and primary properties (for example, the essence of gold would neither be identical to its perceptible properties nor to its atomic number: it is rather an incorporeal formal principle which produces the yellow of gold, along with all its other properties.). Plotinus' point is that if we classify essence among the properties of a thing, then we must provide a criterion sufficient to isolate these properties as being essential and pertaining to form alone rather than to the composite of matter and form. But, on his view, such a criterion is impossible to provide: we cannot isolate formal or primary properties and essential Form is not among the properties of any given thing.

⁹ On this K. WURM, *Substanz und Qualität. Ein Beitrag zur Interpretation der plotinischen Traktate VI 1, 2 und 3*, de Gruyter, Berlin-New York 1973 is still fundamental.

substance and are mere conglomerations with no substantial unity. This view is central to Plotinus' critical rejection of Aristotle's hylomorphism¹⁰.

This situation seems to reveal an internal tension in Plotinus' account. Either he conceives of sensible particulars as endowed with an internal structure, which corresponds to a hierarchical order among their properties (but this is too close to the notion of 'essential property', and according to Plotinus sensible particulars are not endowed with essences), or he conceives of sensible particulars as entirely qualitative wholes, where constituent and extrinsic properties cannot be opposed (but this apparently jeopardises an adequate account of sensible particulars, where some properties are more 'important' – i.e. more essential or explanatory – than others).

2. *Qualities and the greatest kinds: VI.2 [43] 14*

At least one thing seems to be reasonably clear: according to Plotinus there are no qualities at the level of intelligible principles. In II.7 [37] 3.7 he claims that the *logos* includes and contains all qualities, but this statement does not really entail that intelligible *logoi* are qualitative. Rather, Plotinus suggests that *logoi* contain in themselves all features that appear as qualities in bodies (see II.6 [17] 1.13-15). Bodies are composed of all the qualities plus matter, but qualities are 'pre-contained' in formative principles according to their distinctive mode of being, which is essential rather than qualitative (see VI.3 [44] 15.24-31). There is, however, a puzzling section of VI.2 [43] which has drawn scholars' attention: this section apparently suggests that Plotinus makes use of the bipartition between constituent and accidental qualities in his account of intelligible beings and adapts it by introducing some alterations. VI.2 [43] is the second part of Plotinus' tripartite treatise *On the Genera of Being*. Here Plotinus develops a highly original interpretation of Plato's *Sophist* and outlines the great genera or kinds (being, movement, rest, identity and difference), which, on his view, define the basic structure of the Intellect. These are the genera of intelligible being. Plotinus makes it clear from the outset that he will not focus on sensible beings (VI.2 [43] 1.30-33). So he argues that there is a set of *items* (I refrain from using the word 'concept', because these items are both mental and ontic), such as *substance* and *life* (VI.2 [43] 7.2), which we discover in our soul and grasp appropriately when we turn our cognitive power away

¹⁰ See R. CHIARADONNA, *Hylémorphisme et causalité des intelligibles. Plotin et Alexandre d'Aphrodise*. «Les études philosophiques», 86, 2008, pp. 379-397.

from bodies. These items primarily pertain to intelligible being. Hence, they are not properties of the sensible world, which we apply analogically to the intelligible one; rather, they are aspects that characterise intelligible being in itself and are only derivatively (i.e. homonymously) applied to the sensible world (VI.3 [44] 2.2). It is by reflecting on these *items* proper to the intelligible that we discover the five greatest genera that, as noted by P. Remes, are «the necessary condition of Intellect’s life and act of thinking»¹¹. The five genera thus define the structure of the Intellect itself, with no reference to that of bodies. This account of intelligible substance seems to be *toto caelo* different from that which the Peripatetics refer to bodies and their constituent features.

In VI.2 [43], 14, however, the distinction between constituent and accidental qualities comes up in Plotinus’ account of intelligible substance. In a recent and remarkable article, Laurent Lavaud has suggested that here Plotinus makes a distinction between two levels of intelligible substance and that he conveys this view by transposing the distinction between constituent or constitutive feature (τὰ συμπληρωτικά) and mere qualities from the sensible to the intelligible world. The first level is that of primary or universal intelligible substance (14.3), whereas the second is that of particular or qualified intelligible substance (14.11-12). As Lavaud puts it: «the ‘primary substance’ is the original form of being, before the specific differentiations come into play. It is built upon the five ‘greatest kinds’ of the *Sophist*, which constitute its ‘completives’»¹². So Plotinus conceives of the greatest kinds of Plato’s *Sophist* as completives (or constituent features) of the Intellect at its primary or universal level. The second level is that of intelligible qualified and particular substance (e.g. the Form of human being). According to Lavaud, in VI.2 [43]:

«‘Qualified substance’ is not sensible substance, but an intelligible substance which has added a difference that is subsequent to the primary substance constituted from the great kinds. ‘Quality’ in Treatise 43 (6.2) is not in fact sensible determination, but all that comes to specify and differentiate the original *ousia* in the intelligible (thus Plotinus specifies that that quality is ‘the accompaniment of *ousia* that is primary’, 14.3, namely the *ousia* made from the genera analyzed in the *Sophist*). It is therefore the entire system

¹¹ See P. REMES, *Plotinus on Self. The Philosophy of the “We”*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007, p. 145.

¹² L. LAVAUD, *The Primary Substance in Plotinus’ Metaphysics: A Little-Known Concept*, «Phronesis», 59, 2014, pp. 369-384: 372-373.

of ‘completive of substance’ vs. quality that is transposed from the sensible (Treatise 17 (2.6)) to the intelligible (Treatise 43 (6.2))¹³.

In what follows I aim to show that this ingenious reading is unpersuasive. First further clarification is required. Lavaud equates ‘quality’ in the intelligible world with some analogue of the differentia (e.g. the differentia *rational*) that specifies the primary or universal *ousia*. This raises some problems, for at the level of sensible beings differentiae are rather connected to constituent qualities (those which are qualities only homonymously), whereas qualities as such are external or accidental properties (they are «outside all substance», II.6 [17] 2.23). Lavaud is perfectly aware of this difficulty, and he suggests that quality at the level of intelligible being «is no longer limited to an accidental role. Rather, it covers all of the determinations that make up particular substances, including specific differences»¹⁴. To sum up: the greatest kinds are constituents (συμπληρωτικά) of the intelligible universal or primary substance. Through their combination, the greatest kinds constitute the «common, basic structure of all of the *ousiai*»¹⁵. In other words, «all of the *ousiai*, including particular *ousiai*, have the combination of rest, movement, identity and alterity as a common basis»¹⁶. Qualities further specify this substantial core of intelligible realities and make up particular or determined intelligible Forms. For example, the Form of human being is made such by the differentia *rational* that further determines the genus *animal* which, in turn, is already a determination and particularisation of the general *substance*¹⁷.

Plotinus’ chapter VI.2 [43] 14 runs as follows:

(a) But as for the qualified, why is it not among the primary genera? It is because this also is posterior and comes after substance. **(b)** [Primary substance must have these as concomitants, and not have its existence from them or be completed by them; for then it would be posterior to quality and quantity]. **(c)** In composite substances, then, which are made up of many elements, and in which numbers and quantities produce their differentiation, there might also be qualities, and a certain common feature will be discerned in them; but in the primary genera the distinction which must be made is not between simples and composites but between simples and those which make an essential completion to substance, not to a particular substance. **(d)** [That a particular substance should gain its completion even from a quality is perhaps not absurd,

¹³ L. LAVAUD, *The Primary Substance in Plotinus’ Metaphysics* cit., p. 373 n. 7.

¹⁴ L. LAVAUD, *The Primary Substance in Plotinus’ Metaphysics* cit., p. 373.

¹⁵ L. LAVAUD, *The Primary Substance in Plotinus’ Metaphysics* cit., p. 384.

¹⁶ L. LAVAUD, *The Primary Substance in Plotinus’ Metaphysics* cit., p. 384.

¹⁷ See L. LAVAUD, *The Primary Substance in Plotinus’ Metaphysics* cit., p. 377.

although it has its substance before it has quality; anything qualitative comes from outside, while the substance itself has what it has as something substantial]. (e) All the same, we did think it right to say elsewhere that the completions of substance were qualities only equivocally, but those which came from outside subsequent to substance were qualities, and that those things which were in substances were their activities, but those which came after them were already passive affections. (f) But now we are saying that the properties of particular substance are no completions of substance as such; for there is no essential supplement to substance for man, insofar as he is man; but he is substance at a higher level, before coming to the differentiation, as he is also living being before coming to the rational¹⁸.

3. Commentary part 1 – Sections (a)-(d): The greatest kinds as non-qualitative constituents of intelligible substance

I have divided this difficult chapter into six sections marked with letters (a)-(f). Section (a) (14.1-2) opens the discussion. As is often the case in the *Enneads*, Plotinus raises a question, possibly coming from the debate in his school or from the previous commentary tradition on Aristotle's *Categories*, i.e. why quality (more precisely, the qualified, *to poion*) is not among the greatest genera. The same issue is discussed in Simp., *In Cat.*, 242, 15-22 Kalbfleisch, a passage which presents some literal correspondences with Plotinus' chapter, although Plotinus is not mentioned¹⁹. The reply is immediate: this thing (i.e. the qualified) is posterior and comes after substance

¹⁸ Περὶ δὲ τοῦ ποιοῦ, διὰ τί οὐκ ἐν τοῖς πρώτοις; Ἡ ὅτι καὶ τοῦτο ὕστερον καὶ μετὰ τὴν οὐσίαν. [Δεῖ δὲ τὴν οὐσίαν παρακολουθοῦντα ταῦτα ἔχειν τὴν πρώτην, μὴ ἐκ τούτων δὲ τὴν σύστασιν ἔχειν μηδὲ διὰ τούτων συμπληροῦσθαι· ἢ εἴη ἂν ὕστερα ποιότητος καὶ ποσότητος.] Ἐν μὲν οὖν ταῖς συνθέταις οὐσίαις καὶ ἐκ πολλῶν, ἐν αἷς καὶ ἀριθμοὶ καὶ ποσότητες διαλλαγὴν ἐποίησαν αὐτῶν, καὶ ποιότητες εἶεν ἂν καὶ κοινότης τις ἐν αὐταῖς θεωρηθήσεται· ἐν δὲ τοῖς πρώτοις γένεσι τὴν διαίρεσιν οὐχ ἀπλῶν καὶ συνθέτων δεῖ ποιεῖσθαι, ἀλλ' ἀπλῶν καὶ τῶν τὴν οὐσίαν συμπληροῦντων, οὐ τὴν τινὰ οὐσίαν. [Τὴν μὲν γὰρ τινὰ οὐσίαν συμπληροῦσθαι καὶ ἐκ ποιότητος οὐδὲν ἴσως ἀτοπον, ἐχούσης ἤδη τὴν οὐσίαν πρὸ τῆς ποιότητος, τὸ δὲ τοιόνδε ἔξωθεν, αὐτὴν δὲ τὴν οὐσίαν ἃ ἔχει οὐσιώδη ἔχειν.] Καίτοι ἐν ἄλλοις ἠξιοῦμεν τὰ μὲν τῆς οὐσίας συμπληρωτικά ὁμωνύμως ποιά εἶναι, τὰ δ' ἔξωθεν μετὰ τὴν οὐσίαν ὑπάρχοντα ποιά, καὶ τὰ μὲν ἐν ταῖς οὐσίαις ἐνεργείας αὐτῶν, τὰ δὲ μετ' αὐτὰς ἤδη πάθη. Νῦν δὲ λέγομεν οὐκ οὐσίας ὅλως εἶναι συμπληρωτικά τὰ τῆς τινὸς οὐσίας· οὐ γὰρ οὐσίας προσθήκη γίνεται τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ καθὼ ἀνθρώπος εἰς οὐσίαν· ἀλλ' ἔστιν οὐσία ἄνωθεν, πρὶν ἐπὶ τὴν διαφορὰν ἐλθεῖν, ὡσπερ καὶ ζῶον ἤδη, πρὶν ἐπὶ τὸ λογικὸν ἦκειν. I follow the translation by A.H. Armstrong, *Plotinus*, with an English translation, vol. VI, Harvard University Press-William Heinemann LTD, Cambridge MA-London, 1988, p. 155, with a number of changes. In their *editio minor*, Henry and Schwyzer delete ll. 14.2-5 and 14.11-14, which they regard as a later insertion from Simpl., *In Cat.*, p. 241, 17-20 and 20-22 Kalbfleisch: see *Plotini opera*, ed. P. HENRY et H.-R. SCHWYZER, t. III, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1982, *ad loc.*; more details can be found in H.-R. SCHWYZER, *Nachlese zur indirekten Überlieferung des Plotin-Textes*, «Museum Helveticum», 26, 1969, pp. 252-270: 264-265. Therefore, Armstrong does not include in his translation these lines, which I have instead translated and put in square brackets. For an English translation of Simplicius, see B. FLEET, *Simplicius. On Aristotle's "Categories 7-8"*, trans. by B. F., Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 2002, p. 100. I will come back to this issue below.

¹⁹ See above, note 18. Simplicius' text runs as follows: οὐ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς πρώτοις γένεσιν ἐν τῷ ὅπερ ὄντι ὑφέστηκεν ἢ ποιότης οὐδέ ἐστιν καὶ αὐτὴ ὅπερ ὄν ὡσπερ καὶ τὰ ἄλλα νοητὰ γένη, ἀλλ' ὕστερα καὶ μετὰ τὴν οὐσίαν ὑφέστηκεν. δεῖ δὲ τὴν ὄντως οὐσίαν παρακολουθοῦντα ταῦτα ἔχειν ὡσπερ πρώτην αὐτῶν, μὴ ἐκ τούτων δὲ τὴν σύστασιν ἔχειν μηδὲ διὰ τούτων συμπληροῦσθαι· εἴη γὰρ ἂν ὕστερα τῆς ποιότητος, τὴν μὲν γὰρ τινὰ οὐσίαν συμπληροῦσθαι καὶ ἐκ (20) ποιότητος οὐδὲν ἴσως ἀτοπον, ἐχούσης ἤδη τὴν οὐσίαν πρὸ τῆς ποιότητος, τὸ δὲ τοιόνδε ἔξωθεν, αὐτὴν δὲ τὴν οὐσίαν ἃ ἔχει οὐσιώδη ἔχειν.

(*ousia*). As noted earlier, according to Plotinus *ousia* is one of the items that we discover in our soul when we turn our cognitive power away from bodies. So when Plotinus claims that quality or qualified comes after *ousia*, he is implying that quality comes after intelligible being. As noted above, however, Lavaud challenges this conclusion and argues that Plotinus distinguishes two levels in intelligible *ousia*, i.e. that of primary and universal *ousia* (the universal intelligible structure jointly constituted by the greatest kinds) and that of qualified and particular intelligible *ousia*.

It is important to note from the outset that VI.2 [43] 14-15 is part of a larger section (this is unfortunately overlooked by Lavaud). After outlining his account of the five greatest genera or kinds, Plotinus raises the following objection: «[...] how could one be confident that there are only these [primary genera] and not others in addition to them?» (VI.2 [43] 9.2-3 trans. Armstrong). Possible candidates are the one, the qualified, the quantified, the relative and «the others, which other philosophers have already counted up» (9.3-5, trans. Armstrong): the obvious reference is to Aristotle's categories. This objection sets out the agenda for the following chapters: in VI.2 [43] 9-12 Plotinus explains why the one is not among the primary genera; in VI.2 [43] 12 he focuses on the quantified; in VI.2 [43] 14-15 he deals with the qualified; in VI.2 [43] 16 he discusses relation, where, when, acting, being affected, having, and position; in VI.2 [43] 17-18 he focuses on the beautiful and the good, on virtues, on knowledge and on intellect. At VI.2 [43] 19 another section begins, where Plotinus explains how the hierarchy of genera and species can be applied to intelligible being. So the two chapters on quality (according to Ficinus' *divisio textus*) are part of a larger section where Plotinus explains why a number of items cannot be counted among the greatest kinds. For some of these items, Plotinus offers a quite straightforward solution: they are not among the greatest kinds for the very simple reason that they are not part of the intelligible world. This is the case with place (where), «for there is not any place in the intelligible world» (VI.2 [43] 16.5, trans. Armstrong). The situation is much more difficult with other items – particularly the one. Yet, even though Plotinus obviously recognises that the one applies to (intelligible) being (VI.2 [43] 9.9), he does his best to explain that it does not have the same status as the greatest kinds.

When it comes to the qualified, we can indeed ask ourselves whether Plotinus distinguishes it from the greatest kinds because it simply is not part of intelligible being,

or whether he does so because he acknowledges that quality can indeed exist at the level of the Intellect, but not as one of the greatest kinds. As a matter of fact, there are two questions here, which should be kept separate – as they indeed are in Simplicius’ discussion of the issue²⁰. The first is whether quality belongs to the greatest kinds. I suggest that it is this question which Plotinus tackles in VI.2.14-15; and his answer is obviously “no”: quality is *not* one of the greatest kinds. The other question is whether there are qualities in the intelligible world. As noted earlier, Plotinus usually relegates quality to the level of bodies and separates it from *ousia* (i.e. from intelligible being): qualities are identical to the perceptible images of essential Forms. Yet he is also inclined to include quality, with quantity and even shapes such as squares and circles, in the Intellect, insofar as the Intellect pre-contains everything in itself in the manner proper to it (VI.2 [43] 21.28). This is not an unusual move, if we consider that in VI.7 [38] 9.43-44 Plotinus suggests that even nails, crooked talons, jagged teeth and horns (VI.7 [38] 9.42-46) emerge here below because these extended parts of the animals are pre-contained in the intelligible Forms! Needless to say, the claim that qualities are in the Intellect in the manner proper to it can mean either [i] that there are qualitative features in the Intellect, or [ii] that although qualities are pre-contained in the Intellect, they are not qualitative at all, but are rather substances (in other words: the Intellect pre-contains in itself as substances what appears to be qualitative at a lower ontic level). As suggested earlier, I would definitely opt for the second hypothesis [ii], which is further confirmed by what Plotinus says at VI.1 [42] 12.44-51 and Simplicius paraphrases at *In Cat.*, 241, 24-25 Kalbfleisch (qualities exist in intelligible being as substances). I would also add that this hypothesis is consistent with Plotinus’ account of causation, according to which intelligible causes produce properties that they do not have in themselves²¹. This explains why Plotinus can hold that quality is both posterior to *ousia* (i.e. intelligible *ousia*) and somehow included in the Intellect: what this means is that quality as such (i.e. as something qualitative) comes after real being, but is nonetheless pre-contained in the Intellect (as all things are) according to its distinctive and essential manner of being. In my view, neither in VI.2 [43] 14-15 nor elsewhere does Plotinus distinguish between a primary and a qualified level of intelligible *ousia* (*contra*

²⁰ See Simp., *In Cat.*, 241, 15-22 and 241, 23-35 Kalbfleisch.

²¹ See C. D’ANCONA, *Modèles de causalité chez Plotin*, «Les Études philosophiques», 90, 2009, pp. 361-385.

Lavaud). Indeed, Plotinus is perfectly happy to talk about particular or partial Intellects or intelligible beings (see VI.2 [43] 20.1-3; 21.1), but keeps the process by which particular beings emerge from the Intellect – which is all things (see VI.2 [43] 21.4-6) – carefully distinct from any process of qualification (more on this below).

Section **(b)** (14.2-5) separates qualities from the primary *ousia* and finds a very close (but not quite literal) parallel in Simp., *In Cat.*, p. 241, 17-20 Kalbfleisch. This parallel and the one between 14.11-14 **(d)** and Simp., *In Cat.*, p. 241, 20-22 Kalbfleisch led Henry and Schwyzer to regard these lines of VI.2 [43] 14 as a later interpolation. These are H.-R. Schwyzer's reasons in support of their choice²². There are three options: (1) either Simplicius is quoting Plotinus, (2) or these lines in Plotinus are a later interpolation, (3) or both Plotinus and Simplicius are quoting from an earlier source. According to Schwyzer, (1) is unlikely for two reasons. First, Simplicius never quotes VI.2 [43], but only VI.1 [42] and VI.3 [44]. Second, Simplicius usually makes it clear that he is quoting Plotinus, either by naming his source, or by at least introducing his quotations through expressions such as φησίν, φασίν, λέγεται, ὡς δοκεῖ τισιν, and εἰ λέγοι τις. At Simp., *In Cat.*, 241, 15-22 Kalbfleisch instead, Plotinus' comments are simply incorporated with nothing to indicate that they are quotations. According to Schwyzer, (3) must be rejected too. He argues that it is unlikely that both Plotinus and Simplicius may have quoted the same source without providing any indication that they were doing so, thereby making the same quotation impossible to detect. Therefore only hypothesis (2) remains and Schwyzer accepts it, especially because in his view Plotinus' chapter flows well even if we delete the lines that might come from Simplicius. Yet Schwyzer admits that he cannot see why lines from Simplicius should have been inserted in Plotinus' chapter. He further notes that, were it not for the parallel in Simplicius, there would be no reason at all to excise these lines from Plotinus' text. More recently, this question has been tackled again by M. Isnardi Parente, who does not really discuss Schwyzer's arguments, but observes that these lines merely repeat something which Plotinus states a number of times, namely that qualities do not constitute primary and intelligible *ousia*. So there is no reason to rule out that Simplicius is following Plotinus²³. In his article, Lavaud endorses Isnardi Parente's

²² See H.-R. SCHWYZER, *Nachlese zur indirekten Überlieferung des Plotin-Textes* cit., pp. 264-265.

²³ See M. ISNARDI PARENTE, *Plotino. Enneadi VI 1-3. Trattati Sui generi dell'essere*, Introduzione, testo greco, traduzione, commento, Loffredo, Napoli, 1994, p. 381.

view²⁴. I too am inclined to regard these lines as genuine. Actually, we find a very similar situation in the following paragraph, when Simplicius moves on to the question as to whether qualities here below and qualities in intelligible being fall under the same genus (the answer is obviously no, because qualities in intelligible being are actually substances). We here find a close parallel between VI.1 [43] 12.44-45 (Ζητητέον δὲ καὶ ἔνταῦθα καὶ εἰ αἰ τῆδε ποιότητες καὶ αἰ ἐκεῖ ὑφ' ἑν) and Simpl. *In Cat.* p. 241, 23-24 Kalbfleisch (Οὐκ ὀρθῶς οὖν ἐπιζητοῦσιν τινες, εἰ αἰ ἐνθάδε ποιότητες καὶ ἐκεῖ ὑφ' ἑν γένος), whereas Simpl., *In Cat.*, p. 241, 26-27 Kalbfleisch is a paraphrase of VI.1 [43] 12.45-47, as Schwyzer recognises²⁵. Once again, nothing in Simplicius makes it clear that he is following Plotinus. Indeed, both Plotinus and Simplicius could be incorporating the same material, but the hypothesis that Simplicius' discussion on quality and intelligible substance at *In Cat.*, p. 241 is entirely based on Plotinus (either directly or, as is more likely, via an intermediate source such as Porphyry's or Iamblichus' lost commentaries) is not as implausible as Schwyzer suggests.

As noted earlier, section **(b)** separates quality from primary *ousia*. Plotinus' argument deserves closer scrutiny. He adopts the distinction between accidents or concomitants (παρακολουθοῦντα, 14.3) and completions of substance, thereby making the point that primary *ousia* has qualities (ταῦτα, 14.3, i.e. τὰ ποιὰ) as mere concomitants and not as completions, since otherwise primary *ousia* would be posterior to quality and quantity. This statement may suggest that Plotinus adopts the distinction between accidents and completions of substances in his account of intelligible being: he states that all qualities are accidental to primary *ousia*, whereas there are indeed constituents at the level of the Intellect, but these are not qualities, but the greatest kinds. This interpretation is further supported by Plotinus' usage of συμπληρούντων at 14.11, where he is referring to the greatest kinds. So the greatest kinds would be the analogue of constituent or completive properties at the level of primary *ousia* and, as noted earlier, this is indeed Lavaud's interpretation (the level of primary or universal *ousia* is that in which the greatest kinds have the position of completives). In my view this reading is unpersuasive, because it takes Plotinus' *initial* statement as his final word on this issue. I would instead suggest that here as elsewhere Plotinus initially frames his discussion according to the perspective furnished by the theory he is currently

²⁴ See L. LAVAUD, *The Primary Substance in Plotinus' Metaphysics* cit., p. 374 n. 9.

²⁵ See H.-R. SCHWYZER, *Nachlese zur indirekten Überlieferung des Plotin-Textes* cit., p. 262.

discussing: in this case, the theory of qualities, which entails a bipartition between constituent properties (those which can only homonymously be called qualities: see II.6 [17] 2.20-21 and VI.1 [42] 10.21) and mere qualities (i.e. accidents)²⁶. So Plotinus first argues that qualities cannot in any way be regarded as constituents of the primary *ousia*, and suggests that this position is instead to be assigned to the greatest kinds. It is only in VI.2 [43] 15 that he fully expounds his view, for when he asks how the greatest kinds actually complete intelligible substance, he finally comes to the conclusion that they too cannot be regarded as constituents (συμπληρωτικόν: VI.2 [43] 15.9), because they are completely identical to *ousia* (VI.2 [43] 15.10: more on this below). So, as I take it, Plotinus' statements suggesting that the greatest kinds are constituents of the primary *ousia* are only the first step in his argument, which actually aims to show that neither accidental qualities nor constituent properties, nor some analogue of them, can be counted among the greatest kinds. The reason for this is that the distinctive structure of intelligible being – where the whole and its parts are fully interpenetrated and all distinction is internal – cannot in any way be grasped through the distinction between substance and quality: neither the distinction between substance and accidental qualities nor the one between substances and their essential complements.

If the observations just made are correct, section (c) (14.5-11) becomes reasonably clear. Plotinus has just said that qualities cannot be seen as constituents of the primary *ousia*. Now he develops this view and opposes the status of composite substances, where there are indeed qualities, to that of primary genera. As to composite substances, Plotinus describes them as being «made up of many elements» (14.6); he says that numbers and quantities make them different and that qualities belong to them²⁷. Then Plotinus adds that «a certain common feature» or commonality (κοινότης) can be discerned in them. All of these features point to sensible substances, which are indeed composite (they are composed of matter and form, but also composite bodies made up of the simple bodies), quantitative, multiple and qualitative and are classified not on the basis of real genera, but on the basis of some common features that may be

²⁶ For parallel cases, see the first part of Plotinus' discussion of motion in VI.1 [42] 15 and the first part of his account of sensible substance in VI.3 [44] 4-5. In all of these cases, Plotinus starts his discussion by incorporating terms and distinctions which he will later show to be inadequate. For further details, see R. CHIARADONNA, *Sostanza movimento analogia. Plotino critico di Aristotele*, Bibliopolis, Naples 2002, p. 158 and R. CHIARADONNA, *Hylémorphisme et causalité des intelligibles* cit., pp. 380-392.

²⁷ At 14.7 ποιότητες (MSS) should be replaced with ποσότητες, as suggested by Rieth (see H.-S. *in app.*).

discerned in them and have no genuine ontic foundation (see VI.3 [44] 10 and for this usage of κοινότης, VI.1 [42] 6.1 and VI.3 [44] 10.35). It is to these sensible and composite substances that Plotinus opposes here the primary genera by saying that at their level the division must not be made between simples and composites (we might think here of the division between simple and composite bodies, which Plotinus mentions e.g. at VI.3 [44] 10.20-21) but rather between simples and those which complete the substance (i.e., I would suggest, between genera as simple Forms and genera insofar as they jointly constitute intelligible being, with the qualification specified above). Finally, Plotinus remarks that what the greatest kinds make up is not a particular substance (οὐ τήν τινὰ οὐσίαν, VI.2 [43] 14.11): it is natural to take this expression as referring to sensible (particular and qualified) substance.

This reading has been challenged by Lavaud, who instead reads these lines as evidence in favour of his view that there are qualified and particular substances at the level of intelligible being. In order to support this interpretation, he has to take “composite” as referring not to composite and sensible substances, but to intelligible substances insofar as they are essences made from a combination of genera and differentiae: as parallels, Lavaud mentions V.5 [32] 13.30 and treatise VI.8 [39] 12.7²⁸. Now it is certainly true that in these passages Plotinus makes use of the word “composite” when referring to the composition of genus and differentia, but nothing suggests that the same happens in **(b)**, for the very simple reason that here Plotinus mentions neither genera nor differentiae in relation to composite substances. Instead he associates composition with quantity, quality and numerical distinction. Indeed, Plotinus refers to primary genera in **(b)**, but there is simply no hint that he is here distinguishing the combination of the greatest kinds from that between genera and differentiae. Instead Plotinus is clearly (according to his own standards of clarity, of course) pointing to another distinction, i.e. that between sensible composite substances, which receive qualities, quantities and numerical distinction, and substance placed at the level of the primary genera, where no such composition occurs and all is simple (at least by comparison to sensible and bodily composition).

Lavaud’s main argument in support of his hypothesis is that here Plotinus cannot be referring to sensible substances, because in VI.2 [43] 1 he has stated that his

²⁸ See L. LAVAUD, *The Primary Substance in Plotinus’ Metaphysics* cit., p. 373 n. 8.

investigation will merely focus on intelligible realities²⁹. This argument is unpersuasive. It is indeed perfectly true that Plotinus opens VI.2 [43] with the remark that he is enquiring about intelligible being and not about becoming (VI.2 [43] 1.16-21; 1.30-33), but this does not in any way entail that no passage in VI.2 [43] refers to bodies and their immanent features. Plotinus refers to bodies when he contrasts their mode of being to that of intelligible substance (VI.2 [43] 4). As to VI.2 [43] 14, we must once again recall the crucial and often overlooked fact that this chapter is part of a larger section about items that *cannot* be regarded as the greatest kinds. As noted earlier, Plotinus discards some of those items for the very simple reason that they cannot belong to intelligible being (this is the case with place at VI.2 [43] 16.3-5). So it is completely unsurprising that Plotinus refers to sensible substances in his discussion of quality. In **(b)** Plotinus quite simply emphasises the difference between the status of composite and sensible substances, which can be the subject of qualities, and that of intelligible *ousia*.

In **(c)** and in VI.2 [43] 15.2, I take the expression *tis ousia* to refer to sensible and particular substance: the substance of Aristotle's *Categories* 5, whose status Plotinus contrasts to that of intelligible substance. Lavaud challenges this view. He sets the expression *tis ousia* in parallel with the expression *tis nous* at VI.2 [43] 20.2: both would designate particular and intelligible substances, whose structure entails a quasi-qualitative specification of primary *ousia*³⁰. Now, it is true that in VI.2 [43] Plotinus is perfectly happy to talk about particular and intelligible substances and this for the very simple reason that the distinction between intelligible and particular substances does not coincide with that between universal and particular substances. This is no news by the way: the point was very clearly made by K. Wurm in his classic book *Substanz und Qualität* (1973)³¹. As a matter of fact, general and particular items are present at both the intelligible and the sensible level: what changes is their mutual relation³². At the level of intelligible being, universal and particular items are fully interpenetrated. So in VI.7 [38] Plotinus can say that if one unfolds (ἀναπτύττοις) or unrolls each single Form in Intellect «into itself (πρὸς αὐτό)» (VI.7 [38] 2.18), one will find its cause in it.

²⁹ See L. LAVAUD, *The Primary Substance in Plotinus' Metaphysics* cit., p. 373: «[...] here Plotinus contents himself with intelligible realities, as he announced in the beginning of the treatise».

³⁰ See L. LAVAUD, *The Primary Substance in Plotinus' Metaphysics* cit., p. 372 n. 7 and 383.

³¹ See K. WURM, *Substanz und Qualität*.cit., p. 238.

³² See CH. TORNAU, *Qu'est-ce qu'un individu ? Unité, individualité et conscience de soi dans la métaphysique plotinienne de l'âme*, «Les études philosophiques», 90, 2009, pp. 333-360.

This means that by unfolding each Form one will find within it nothing less than the whole of the Intellect in which that Form is contained and which encloses the cause of its reality (VI.7 [38] 2.24-27). In fact Plotinus repeatedly claims that Intellect is a perfect living being in which each part is perfectly interpenetrated with the others (see III.8 [30] 8.40-45; V.8 [31] 4.1-9; 9.16). While the extensional mode of being of bodies can aptly be characterised by the formula *partes extra partes*, that of the intelligible and incorporeal world entails that the various parts are internal to each other: they are *partes intra partes*, so to speak³³. By the verb ἀναπτύττοις (VI.7 [38] 2.18) Plotinus actually denotes the unrolling or unfolding of this peculiarly interpenetrated structure, in virtue of which we can find in each Form the whole of *Nous*, i.e. the “reason why” of that Form.³⁴ It is to this distinctly interpenetrated structure that Plotinus aims to adapt, in VI.2 [43] 19-22, the distinction between genera and species. So he adopts Aristotle’s terminology with some crucial alterations: for example, Plotinus argues that the universal Intellect is all things at once in actuality (20.21-22), something which could hardly apply to an Aristotelian genus. Plotinus does his best to show that Intellect produces particular items within itself (VI.2 [43] 21.1-2) while remaining nonetheless one and the same. At the level of intelligible being all processes of particularisation and differentiation take place internally, so to speak, and not through the addition of external differentiae. Therefore, the Intellect possesses everything within it (even quantities, qualities and shapes, as noted earlier) in the manner proper to it, i.e. as completely interpenetrated substances (VI.2 [43] 21.26-27). The situation is completely different with bodily and extensional items. Here identity and otherness apply separately, so that each particular being is, so to speak, dispersed and the commonality existing within a plurality is only extrinsic. Plotinus makes an interesting distinction between genera and categories (VI.1 [42] 1.15-18; 4.51-52; 9.25-32; 10.41). Categories are mere factual collections of items bereft of any internal unifying principle. A genus, by contrast, should collect the multiple items under it in a properly unified way; but according to Plotinus only real intelligible and paradigmatic genera can ground this kind of unity,

³³ Such expressions were frequently used to convey the difference between extensive and intensive magnitudes: see e.g. Leibniz’s summary of E. Weigel’s *Universum corpus pansophicum* (probably to be dated to 1683): G.W. LEIBNIZ, *Universum corpus pansophicum* (237₄) in *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, Reihe VI, *Philosophische Schriften*, Bd. 4: 1677-Juni 1690. Teil A, hrsg. von der Leibniz-Forschungsstelle der Universität Münster, Akademie, Berlin 1990, p. 1174.

³⁴ Here as elsewhere, Plotinus uses the verb ἀναπτύσσω to denote the “unrolling” of intelligible Forms that makes their internal essential content evident. See, in particular, IV.3 [27] 30.9.

since they are both genera and principles (see VI.2 [43] 2.10-14). What we find at the level of bodies, if we leave their essential causes aside, are mere collections of particulars.

Given this background, we can now address the question of whether the *tis ousia* in VI.2 [43] 14-15 is the sensible and particular *ousia* or rather the intelligible and particular Intellect mentioned in VI.2 [43] 20.2. The discussion in VI.2 [43] 14-15 is framed through the vocabulary of Aristotle's *Categories* and of the commentary tradition on this treatise. In this specific context, it is quite natural to take *tis ousia* to refer to particular sensible substance. Plotinus tackles the issue of particular and partial beings at the level of Intellect only in the next section, starting at VI.2 [43] 19, whereas VI.2 [43] 14-15 merely explains why quality, while certainly being a category that applies to sensible beings, is not one of the greatest kinds. In a passage where Plotinus operates with concepts drawn from Aristotle's *Categories* and contrasts intelligible genera to composite, quantitative, numerically distinct and qualitative substances, it is simply obvious that *tis ousia* refers to sensible particulars. Ingenious as it is, Lavaud's hypothesis is unpersuasive.

The next section **(d)** (14.11-17) is closely connected to the previous lines: Lavaud is right in saying that this fact provides further evidence against Henry's and Schwyzer's deletion of this passage³⁵. After contrasting particular composite and qualified *ousiai* with the greatest kinds, Plotinus expounds in some more detail his view about constituent qualities at the level of particular and sensible *ousia*. I will be cursory on these lines, since I have already tackled this issue above. Again, *tis ousia* (14.11-12) refers to sensible and particular substances. Plotinus argues that nothing prevents these substances from being completed or essentially constituted by qualities, and this even though substance is prior to quality. As noted earlier, there is nothing strange in the fact that Plotinus here may wish to devote some lines to sensible and qualified substances, since this chapter aims precisely to show that quality is not among the greatest kinds by *contrasting* the status of intelligible *ousia* to that of qualified and particular substances. So whereas at the level of particular *ousiai* qualities can have a constituent position, the same does not hold for intelligible beings: and if we take it – as Plotinus provisionally

³⁵ See L. LAVAUD, *The Primary Substance in Plotinus' Metaphysics* cit., p. 374 n. 9.

does in VI.2 [43] 14 – that the greatest kinds are constituents of intelligible *ousia*, they cannot be qualities³⁶.

5. *Commentary part 2 – Sections (e)-(f): There are no constituents at the level of intelligible being*

Section (e) (14.14-18) follows naturally from the previous discussion. Thus far, Plotinus has somewhat too simply and schematically contrasted the status of sensible and particular *ousiai*, which can gain completion from qualities, to that of intelligible *ousia*, where the greatest kinds are complete but not qualitative at all. In (e) Plotinus mentions one possible objection to this distinction: the fact that even constituent qualities (i.e. in corporeal substances) are not qualities in the strict sense of the term, but only homonymously so. As Plotinus admits, this is what he himself has argued «elsewhere» (ἐν ἄλλοις VI.2 [43] 14.15), i.e. in VI.1 [43] 10 and II.6 [17] 2, passages which form the obvious background to these lines (see above for more details). In sum: saying that the greatest kinds are constituent but not qualitative at all – as Plotinus has done thus far in this chapter – does not seem sufficient to distinguish their status from that of constituent qualities that exist at the level of particular and qualitative *ousiai*. As Plotinus has said elsewhere, constituent qualities are not actually qualities in a full sense, but only homonymously so (they are activities that depend on essential formative principles). If this is true, is there any difference between the status of constituent qualities in particular *ousiai* and that of the greatest kinds in intelligible being? After all, could we not argue that quality applies to the greatest kinds too, if we take quality not in the sense of “mere quality” but in that of “constituent quality”, according to the distinction drawn by Plotinus himself elsewhere?

It is this objection that section (f) (14.18-22) is intended to answer. Plotinus aims to show that no property of particular substances (i.e. neither constituent nor merely qualitative properties) can actually count among the greatest kinds that make up intelligible *ousia*. At VI.2 [43] 14.18 Plotinus contrasts what he says now (νῦν δὲ λέγομεν) with what he has said elsewhere (ἐν ἄλλοις). Contrary to what I previously

³⁶ Lavaud rightly draws attention to the adverbial καί at 14. 12 to be translated as «also»: «If the primary substance has primary genera as completives, the particular substance «also» has completives of substance, but in this case they are qualities» (L. LAVAUD, *The Primary Substance in Plotinus' Metaphysics* cit., p. 374 n. 10). I agree completely with these remarks, but unlike Lavaud I take «particular substance» as referring to sensible *ousia*.

suggested³⁷, I do not believe that Plotinus here is claiming that he has changed his mind about constituent qualities at the level of sensible *ousiai*. I would now interpret these lines in the following way: Plotinus explains that elsewhere he has indeed said that there are constituent and accidental qualities at the level of particular *ousiai*, but here, as he specifies, he is making a different point, namely that none of the properties of the sensible and particular *ousia* (i.e. neither constituent nor merely qualitative properties) are constituent of substance as such³⁸. Once we come to focus on substance as such (i.e. on intelligible substance), the distinction between constituent and merely qualitative properties of sensible and particular substance is no longer significant.

At VI.2.14.18 ὅλως goes with οὐσίας³⁹. As I have just noted, Plotinus is in fact suggesting that the properties of a particular (sensible and qualified) substance are not constituent of substance as such (οὐσίας ὅλως), i.e. of real, intelligible substance⁴⁰. What does this mean? A minimalist interpretation would suggest that while no properties of particular and sensible *ousia* are constituent of substance as such, other qualities or properties exercise this function at the level of intelligible being. However, what follows suggests a different reading. For what Plotinus seems to argue, both in the desperately difficult lines that close this chapter and in VI.2 [43] 15, is rather that the subject/property distinction is in itself incapable of accounting for how intelligible beings are structured. From this perspective, the very distinction between constituent and accidental properties is irrelevant, and this point is developed in VI.2 [43] 15, where Plotinus argues that greatest kinds cannot in any way be seen as properties of intelligible being. They are neither accidental nor constituent properties. So, as Plotinus explains, motion is neither something accidental to substance nor something that contributes to its completion: rather, it is «substance itself» (VI.2 [43] 15.10). As Plotinus further clarifies in VI.2 [43] 20-22, difference and particularity come from within the Intellect and there is no need for outside properties in order to produce differentiation.

³⁷ See R. CHIARADONNA, *Sostanza movimento analogia* cit., pp. 137-142.

³⁸ τὰ τῆς τινὸς οὐσίας at 14.19 refers to all properties that belong to particular substances. This use of the genitive is frequent in Plotinus: see Ch. TORNAU, *Plotin. Enneaden VI 4–5 [22-23]. Ein Kommentar*, Teubner, Stuttgart-Leipzig 1998, p. 28 (*ad* VI.4 [22] 1.21). On ὅλως as meaning “really”, “as such”, see e.g. I.2 [19] 2.17; VI.9 [9] 2.17, etc.

³⁹ I would like to thank Stephen Menn for drawing my attention to this point.

⁴⁰ I agree with the interpretation developed in C. HELMIG, *Die atmende Form in der Materie – Einige Überlegungen zum ἔνυλον εἶδος in der Philosophie des Proklos*, in M. PERKAMS-R.M. PICCIONE (Hrsgg.), *Proklos: Methode, Seelenlehre, Metaphysik*. Brill, Leiden 2006, pp. 259-278: 265-266.

In (f) Plotinus sets out to present this view by taking as his starting point the definition of human being as “rational living being”. We could suppose that the species human being is made up by a differentia (*rational*), which specifies the underlying genus *living being* which is, in turn, a specification of the summum genus *substance*. This is *grosso modo* the structure of Porphyry’s tree and Alexander of Aphrodisias too held much the same view, only with the crucial proviso that the specific differentia is certainly external to the genus it determines (so for example the differentia *rational* is external to the genus *living being*), but is nonetheless placed under the same *summum genus*. So for example the specific differentia of the genus *living being* is not an animal, but is nonetheless a substance⁴¹. Plotinus was probably aware of Alexander’s theory of differentia (see his remarks in VI.3 [44] 5.24-29, which are similar to Alex. Aphr., *In Top.*, 365, 4-21 Wallies and *De Diff. II* [6’ !] Rashed); if this is the case, we can better grasp what he says in (f). Here as elsewhere, it is as though Plotinus were inviting his Peripatetic counterpart to take his/her own statements seriously⁴². Do the Peripatetics claim that the specific differentia of substantial genera is itself a substance? If so, they should draw the necessary consequences from this view and accept what Plotinus suggests here, i.e. that we come to *rational living being* through an internal specification of the genus *substance* and not through the addition of something external to underlying genera.

This is probably the sense of Plotinus’ obscure final lines in the chapter: «there is no essential supplement to substance for man, insofar as he is man; but he is substance at a higher level, before coming to the differentiation, as he is also living being before coming to the rational» (14.19-22). At 14.19-21 *ousia* occurs three times within the space of few words and this redundancy is probably intentional: οὐ γὰρ οὐσίας προσθήκη γίνεται τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ καθὸ ἄνθρωπος εἰς οὐσίαν· ἀλλ’ ἔστιν οὐσία ἄνωθεν, πρὶν ἐπὶ τὴν διαφορὰν ἐλθεῖν κτλ Plotinus wishes to stress that we do not come to the species *human being* via substantial or essential additions such as those that could take place via constituent properties or specific differentiae which specify an

⁴¹ This view is developed in Alexander’s treatise *On the Specific Differentia* (surviving in two different Arabic versions), see Alex. Aphr., *De Diff. II* [11/11’] Rashed. On Alexander’s essay, see M. RASHED, *Essentialisme* cit., 53–79 (*La Quaestio De la différence II*, with translation and commentary), esp. p. 75; also, see J. BARNES, *Porphyry. Introduction* cit., p. 352.

⁴² This approach emerges e.g. in Plotinus’ discussion of formal cause in VI.7 [38] 2: see R. CHIARADONNA, *Intelligibles as Causes in Plotinus’ Metaphysics* (Enn. VI 7 [38]), in C. NATALI-C. VIANO (eds.), *Aitia II. Avec ou sans Aristote. Le débat sur les causes à l’âge hellénistique et impérial*, Peeters, Leuven, 2014, pp. 185-213.

underlying genus. To this horizontal specification (i.e. the one occurring via the addition of a constituent property to an underlying genus) Plotinus opposes the internal or vertical (to borrow Plotinus' metaphor: see ἄνωθεν at 14.21) specification of a higher genus from within⁴³. So the species *human being* is not made up via any addition or supplement of substance (there is no constituent property that makes it up). It is, instead, substance «at a higher level» (14.21), i.e. at a superior level of intelligible generality, before this higher level attains differentiation. The same holds for the relation between *living being* and *rational* in *human being*: *human being* is also *living being* before coming to the differentia *rational* (14.22). So it is as though *human being* were produced through an internal specification of the great kind *ousia*. Nothing external (be it a constituent or an accidental property) contributes to this process: for it is completely internal to intelligible *ousia*, which in itself is both one and many, as Plotinus states in VI.2 [43] 15.13-14 («[...] it did not become many afterwards, but was what it was, one-many», trans. Armstrong).

We can now sum up the main conclusions of this article. Chapter VI.2 [43] 14 is part of a larger section where Plotinus discusses and discards potential candidates to the status of greatest kinds. Quality is one of these candidates. During his discussion, Plotinus adopts the distinction between constituent properties and mere accidental qualities, which holds at the level of sensible and particular *ousiai*. This distinction comes from the commentary tradition on Aristotle's *Categories* and elsewhere Plotinus incorporates it into his account of sensible beings. In the first part of his discussion, Plotinus suggests that qualities can only be applied to sensible, composite and particular *ousiai*, whereas at the level of intelligible being we have genera (the greatest kinds) that are not qualitative and are the constituents of substance. At this point, however, Plotinus specifies his position further: elsewhere he had argued that even at the level of sensible substances constituent qualities are not qualities in the genuine sense of the term, but only homonymously so. So what is the difference between constituent properties at the level of sensible substances and the greatest kinds, which constitute the intelligible

⁴³ C. LUNA, *Commentaire cit.*, p. 254 offers an excellent paraphrase of Plotinus' argument: «[...] l'essence est ce qu'elle est ἄνωθεν, c'est-à-dire grâce à un genre supérieur, et non pas grâce à des propriétés qui sont au même niveau ontologique que l'essence qu'elles sont censées constituer. Par exemple, l'essence de l'homme n'est pas constituée par la différence "raisonnable", parce qu'elle est une essence grâce au genre "animal", avant de parvenir à la différence "raisonnable". Plotin tranchait ainsi décidément la question des propriétés constitutives de l'essence en niant purement et simplement leur existence, car l'essence ne saurait être constituée par des propriétés, si essentielles soient-elles».

ousia and are not qualitative? As I would suggest, it is this problem which leads Plotinus to make the additional point that none of the properties of the particular *ousia* can be constituent of substance as such (i.e. of intelligible substance). At the level of intelligible being, the process of specification takes place not through the addition of something external to an underlying genus, but through the internal specification and differentiation of a substance which is both one and many. This process cannot in any way be expressed through the distinction between subject and property, because at the level of intelligible being all multiplicity is substantial and completely internal. From this perspective, even the distinction between accidental and constituent properties is no longer significant. So there is no sense in which quality (be it accidental or substantial/constituent) can be ranked among the greatest kinds.