

PLOTINUS ON CONSCIOUSNESS

Plotinus is the first Greek philosopher to hold a systematic theory of consciousness. The key feature of his theory is that it involves multiple layers of experience: different layers of consciousness occur in different levels of self. This layering of higher modes of consciousness on lower ones provides human beings with a rich experiential world and enables them to draw on their own experience to investigate their true self and the nature of reality. This involves a robust notion of subjectivity. However, it is a notion of subjectivity that is unique to Plotinus, and remarkably different from the post-Cartesian tradition. Behind the plurality of terms Plotinus uses to express consciousness, and behind the plurality of entities to which Plotinus attributes consciousness (such as the divine souls and the hypostases), lies a theory of human consciousness. It is a Platonist theory shaped by engagement with rival schools of ancient thought.

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Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-42476-9 — Plotinus on Consciousness
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D. M. HUTCHINSON

St. Olaf College



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University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India
 79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

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 education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108424769
 DOI: 10.1017/9781108344104

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First published 2018

Printed in the United Kingdom by Clays, St Ives plc

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Hutchinson, D. M., 1978- author.

TITLE: Plotinus on consciousness / D.M. Hutchinson, St Olaf College, Minnesota.

DESCRIPTION: 1 [edition]. | New York : Cambridge University Press, 2018. |

Includes bibliographical references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2017057574 | ISBN 9781108424769 (Hardback : alk. paper) |

ISBN 9781108440912 (pbk. : alk. paper)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Plotinus. | Consciousness.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC B693.Z7 H88 2018 | DDC 186/.4—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2017057574>

ISBN 978-1-108-42476-9 Hardback

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To Charles H. Kahn

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Acknowledgments

This book began as a doctoral thesis written under the supervision of Charles H. Kahn at the University of Pennsylvania. In writing the book, I decided not to revise my thesis but to restructure and rewrite it altogether. Although this has delayed its completion, I believe it has resulted in a better book.

I owe gratitude to many people, societies, and institutions for supporting me since I began working on the original manuscript. First and foremost, I would like to thank Charles H. Kahn for suggesting the topic of consciousness in Plotinus to me, and guiding my doctoral research. He was an excellent advisor, and he remains an excellent mentor. I would like to thank Pavlos Kalligas for co-advising my thesis and spending countless hours discussing Plotinus with me during a research trip to Athens. I would also like to thank Susan Sauvé-Meyer and James Ross for serving on my committee, as well as Peter Struck for being an outside reader. The present book owes a great deal to their helpful comments, especially those of Susan Sauvé-Meyer. I would like to thank several Plotinus scholars in particular, whose scholarship has been very influential on my book: Pavlos Kalligas, Eyjólfur Emilsson, Riccardo Chiaradonna, John Dillon, Lloyd Gerson, Pauliina Remes, James Wilberding, Damian Caluori, Gary Gurtler, and Suzanne Stern-Gillet. I would also like to thank my editor, Michael Sharp, for his patience and guidance throughout the lengthy editorial process.

Since my time at Penn, I have presented several sections of this book at the annual conference of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies. I am thankful to audience members in Atlanta, Cagliari, Cardiff, Lisbon, Buenos Aires, Washington, DC, and Seattle for their stimulating feedback and ongoing scholarly exchanges. I am thankful to my colleagues Gary Gabor and Sarah Jansen for their helpful comments on drafts of several chapters. I am thankful to my colleagues in the philosophy department at St. Olaf College for their friendship and support. I am thankful to my

students at St. Olaf College, whose enthusiasm for ancient philosophy and love of philosophical conversation has deepened my passion for teaching and scholarship. Last but not least, I am thankful to my wife, Kate, for her patience with me in writing this book and to my daughter, Penelope, for being a continual source of joy.

Notes on the Text

We are fortunate today to have a variety of excellent translations into English of Plotinus' *Enneads*. In addition to A.H. Armstrong's uniform translation in the Loeb Classical Library, Hackett Publishing Company has produced a fine volume containing selections from the *Enneads*, and Parmenides Publishing is in the lengthy process of producing superb translations and commentaries on individual treatises of the *Enneads*. So, rather than translating all Greek passages myself, I have made use of these existing translations. I have adopted the following policy concerning translations. I have made A.H. Armstrong's translation the default translation for all intra-paragraph quotations, where I am quoting the text to support my claims. I have made my own translations the default translation for all inter-paragraph block quotations, where I am analyzing passages that are crucial for my argument. In the instances where I deviate from this policy, I flag clearly the translators who are responsible for the translations.

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Translations of *Enneads* IV.8.3.13–20, IV.4.19.1–5, IV.4.2.26–34, IV.4.19.23–29 originally published in *The Enneads of Plotinus* series volumes: Barrie Fleet, *Ennead* IV.8 On the Descent of the Soul into Bodies, and John Dillon and H.J. Blumenthal, *Ennead* IV.3–4.29 Problems Concerning the Soul. Permission to reprint these translations by arrangement with Parmenides Publishing. Copyright © Parmenides Publishing. All rights reserved.

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