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Desire in *Ennead IV. 3–4*

Introduction

Despite the fact that our first thought about Plotinus might not be that he was deeply interested in questions closely related to physiological issues, he dealt with several problems of the incarnated soul. In this paper I would like to discuss an example of this kind of problems, namely how Plotinus explains the desire which originates from the body. I will concentrate only on *Ennead IV. 3–4* that represents Plotinus' view about this topic in his so-called middle period. My aim is twofold. On the one hand, I would like to show that Plotinus describes desire by the terms of sense-perception. Although this terminology has been observed and mentioned briefly by Emilsson,¹ I intend to offer a more elaborated account, which not only shows the well-known Plotinian duality between affection and judgement that Emilsson has observed but also expounds how an external object cause this affection in the proper part of the body. I am going to connect two texts in this treatise, namely *Ennead IV. 3. 28* and *IV. 4. 20*, and interpret them in light of each other. I suppose the first one describes the external object's causal effect on the desiring part, while the other one tells us what judgement means in the case of desire. On the other hand, in the second part of my chapter I would like to present the crucial role that nature (*physis*) plays in Plotinus' analysis of desire.

To make my further points more understandable, it is worth giving a non-detailed overview of Plotinus' theory of sense-perception first. The account of sense-perception means a serious philosophical challenge for Plotinus due to his strong metaphysical convictions concerning the soul. Plotinus has to bridge the ontological gap between the immaterial soul and the sensible world in order that the incarnated soul become able to acquire knowledge about the sensible world. Moreover, what makes this issue more problematic is that the soul's immateriality also involves impassibility for Plotinus, in other words, the soul cannot be the subject of any affection or change in any way including sensory affection. In a nutshell, Plotinus' theory is that the sense organ occupies an ontologically intermediary position: as it is body, the sense organ is capable of being affected by external objects. This process, on the other hand, can be also regarded as the internalization of the form originated from the external object

1 Emilsson 1998, 344–45.

thanks to which the soul is able to know the sensible object.² Hence, Plotinus argues that two acts must be strictly distinguished in sense-perception, namely the sensory affection of the sense organ (*pathos*), and the judgment formed by the soul (*krisis*), which is based on this sensory affection.³ The former is a physical change caused by the external object, while the latter is a propositional activity concerning the external object.⁴ In addition, as opposed to mere affection, the judgment also has the essential character that it is conscious. Although the sense organ is continually affected by different external objects, we are conscious only of those about which the soul forms a judgment. Plotinus insists on that just the act of judgement or, at least, the combination of affection and judgment can be called sense perception, but not the bodily affection in itself.⁵ After this short introduction, let us turn to the texts.

1. The analysis of the *Ennead* IV. 3. 28: affection in desire

The first chapter in the treatises *Ennead* IV. 3 – IV. 5 that mentions the incarnated soul's desire and anger are *Ennead* IV. 3. 28. This chapter belongs to a longer section (*Enn.* IV. 3. 25–31) in which Plotinus examines mainly the question what the subject of memory (*to mnēmoneuon*) is supposed to be. Therefore, Plotinus does not focus specifically on desire and anger here but rather their relationship with memory. In spite of this fact, as I will argue, this section will have importance in Plotinus' theory of desire if we analyse it carefully.⁶

The first option, which is provided by Plotinus for the original question, is that memory is not a unitary function of a power of the soul, but it must be given to every power and the different sorts of memories are individuated by the object of the given power (lines 1–3). However, Plotinus restricts his inquiry to the question about the memory of the desiring and spirited parts; and though the former seems to be the primary subject of his interest, the changes without any reflection in the discussion make it clear that the same explanatory model has to be applicable to the case of the latter as well. Plotinus, starting from the above hypothesis, argues for the memory of the desiring part as follows:

2 *Enn.* IV. 4. 23. See Emilsson 1988, 67–73.

3 That the judgement is formed on the basis of the sensory affection it should be understood that the judgment is not about the sensory affection but about the external object. See: Emilsson 1988, 75 fn. 28; Fleet 1995, 73–74 about this.

4 The most relevant text for this dichotomy: *Enn.* III. 6. 1. See also Emilsson 1988, 126–33.

5 For this, besides the first chapter of *Enn.* III. 6, see *Enn.* IV. 6. 1.

6 Besides Blumenthal's short analysis, to my knowledge, King offers the only extended interpretation about this chapter most of points of which I do not accept. See: Blumenthal 1971b, 86–87; King 2009, 165–169.

For someone will say, there will not be one thing which enjoys [the desired objects] and another which remembers the object enjoyed by the first. On this assumption the desiring power is moved by what it enjoyed when desired object appears again, obviously by means of the memory. For why [otherwise] should it not be moved when something else is seen, or seen in a different way?⁷

Since the argumentation presented here is quite succinct, I think the explication of its premises helps us to understand Plotinus' point more clearly.

- (1) The desiring power has enjoyed a kind of things earlier.
- (2) Such a thing appears to the desiring power that belongs to this kind (*palin ophthentos tou epithymētou*).
- (3) The earlier enjoyments excite the desire power (*hōn apelause toutois kineitai*) to desire the appearing thing.

According to these premises, Plotinus outlines a theory operating with *double causation* in desire. The actual object of desire in itself is not able to cause desire in the desiring power, but the earlier pleasurable experiences need to be supposed for this as well. Hence, a satisfying account is required for explaining how these earlier experiences and the actual object are related to each other. The most obvious solution of this problem, which is also the conclusion debated by Plotinus, is that this connection between experiences at different times comes about by the help of memory.

Conclusively, the earlier pleasurable experiences are clearly able to contribute to the actual desire by memory (*dēlonoti tē mnēnē*).⁸

This conclusion is supported by the further argument that if we do not refer to the earlier experiences in the case of desire, we are unable to answer why a certain thing possesses causal effect and not another, or the same in a different condition. Yet, this conclusion also compels us to accept the rather controversial consequence that whenever we desire a present thing, we have to be conscious of the present thing and the memory or memories of the earlier experiences at the same time. Although no doubt a state in which we are conscious of these two can happen often, supposing this common occurrence as necessary for an actual desire is more than superfluous: in

7 *Enn.* IV. 3. 28. 4–6: “Ὁ γὰρ ἄλλο μὲν ἀπολαύσει, φήσει τις, ἄλλο δὲ μνημονεύσει τῶν ἐκείνου. Τὸ γοῦν ἐπιθυμητικὸν ὧν ἀπέλαυσε τούτοις κινεῖται πάλιν ὀφθέντος τοῦ ἐπιθυμητοῦ δηλονότι τῆ μνήμῃ. Ἐπεὶ διὰ τί οὐκ ἄλλου, ἢ οὐχ οὕτως.”

8 Plato has already ascribed a role to memory in desire, as we can read in the *Philebus* 35a–d. In this passage, Socrates argues that the soul creates connection between the actual state and the desired opposite and clearly does this *by memory* that directs us towards the objects of desire. Therefore, as Socrates finally concludes, impulse and desire belong to the soul and it is not the body that has hunger or thirst. Plotinus, even though tacitly, absolutely does not want to follow his master in this line of thought.

my present desire for an apple, I do not need to be conscious of the fact that I enjoyed eating an apple yesterday.

First Plotinus expands the scope of the original presumption, which claims various memories attach to various powers of the soul: let us attribute every power to the other powers as well, but there is a dominant one in each of them, and this gives the name to them (lines 7–9). This an interesting intermediary step by Plotinus, since, on the one hand, it will not be accepted as his own view, but on the other hand, this idea opens the way for his own solution.⁹

Now perception can be attributed to each power in a different way. Sight, for instance, sees, not the subject of desire, but the subject of desire is moved by a sort of transmission from the perception, not so that it can say what sort of perception it is, but so that it is unconsciously affected by it. And in the case of anger, [sight] sees the wrongdoer and the anger arises; it is like when the shepherd sees the wolf by the flock and the sheepdog is excited by the scent or the noise, though he has not himself seen the wolf with his eyes.¹⁰

What offers the key for understanding this elliptical passage is to elucidate what Plotinus means here by the expression of *aisthēsis*. Bearing in mind Plotinus' basic considerations I summarized in the introduction, in this text we read a surprisingly different approach to the *aisthēsis* of the desiring power. According to the present text, the desiring power does not tell what kind of perception it has, which comes through seeing, but the desiring power only becomes affected by it unconsciously (*aparakolouthētōs pathein*). By this differentiation, the above-mentioned fundamental dichotomy between affection and judgement appears again together with the characteristics of the two sides, i.e. the propositional character of the judgement and the affection which does not involve consciousness. What I called surprisingly different in this passage is that perception of the desiring part does not include judgement but only affection. In any case, if we notice these clues, we are able to point out an implicit change which has occurred in the course of Plotinus' inquiry. As the subject of affection can be exclusively a bodily being, when Plotinus mentions *to epithymoun* here, it is nearly impossible that he refers to the desiring power of the soul. Rather, it must denote that part of the body which is able to

9 To notice that here we have two different positions and only the latter one will be accepted is essential in order to understand the following. King misses distinguishing the two positions and their status, which influences his interpretation later as well. See King 2009, 166.

10 *Enn.* IV. 3. 28. 9–16: “Ἡ αἴσθησιν ἄλλως ἐκάστω· οἷον εἶδε μὲν ἢ ὄρασις, οὐ τὸ ἐπιθυμοῦν, ἐκινήθη δὲ παρὰ τῆς αἰσθήσεως τὸ ἐπιθυμοῦν οἷον διαδόσει, οὐχ ὥστε εἰπεῖν τὴν αἴσθησιν οἶα, ἀλλ’ ὥστε ἀπαρakoλouthētōs παθεῖν. Καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ θυμοῦ εἶδε τὸν ἀδικήσαντα, ὁ δὲ θυμὸς ἀνέστη, οἷον εἰ ποιμένος ἰδόντος ἐπὶ ποιμνῇ λύκον ὁ σκύλαξ τῇ ὁδμῇ ἢ τῷ κτύπῳ αὐτὸς οὐκ ἰδὼν δμμασιν ὀρίνοιτο.”

participate in a given power of the soul, and this is the liver in the case of desire.¹¹ The text on the other hand tells us much less about how sight can cause an effect on this desiring part of the body. This question is closely related to another one, namely how the sense-perception of sight should be understood. In my opinion, we can distinguish two different approaches, and, although they can answer this question to some extent, they also pose problems.

The first option is that here, sight involves sensory affection and judgement: first I have to identify the external object by forming a basic proposition (e.g. “it is an apple”) and only after that I become able to desire it. Accepting this interpretation, what causes the modification in the desiring part of the body is the representation of a thing. Nevertheless, by the acceptance of this position, we are supposed to reconstruct a theory that explains how a representation of the soul is able to cause a bodily modification, but we cannot find such a theory in *Enneads* even in a preliminary form.¹² Moreover, this interpretation must maintain that the representation, which is provided by sight, must not contain the proposition that “this thing is desirable”, otherwise the affection of the desiring part is not unconscious anymore.

The second option is that the whole process in the text is interpreted as exclusively physical. This viewpoint is mostly supported by the expression of “sort of transmission” (*hoion diadosei*), which describes how the perception of seeing moves the desiring part. First of all, it should be mentioned that the word of *diadosis* does not have an innocent meaning in the *Enneads*. This expression occurs mostly in the kind of explanations Plotinus intends to refute. We can meet the most important occurrences in the passages of two early treatises,¹³ where Plotinus criticizes a theory about the sensation of the soul. According to the transmission theory, the soul which is body can sense affection by transmitting it from one part to another one, up to the commanding-faculty. Another noteworthy occurrence is found in *Enn.* IV. 5.¹⁴ Here Plotinus attacks a certain Peripatetic theory in that air as medium must be affected first by the sense-object and the eye is affected only by the medium having been affected. This whole process happens as if the medium transmitted (*hoion diadosei*) the form of the sense-object to the eye.¹⁵ For our further inquiry, it will be unnecessary to show how Plotinus rejects these explanations; the relevant point is how he understands them. What unifies the different approaches is that the transmission signifies an entirely bodily process:

11 About connections of the soul's different powers with the given parts of the body, see: *Enn.* IV. 3. 23, on desire lines 35–42, on anger lines 43–45.

12 I think that the theory found in III. 6. 4 is not able to offer a solution to this question, because its aim is to explain those bodily affections which originate in the rational soul and here the case of desire that concerns Plotinus is caused by sensible objects.

13 *Enn.* IV. 7. 7; IV. 2. 2. 11–39.

14 *Enn.* IV. 5. 3. 3.

15 On *Enn.* IV. 5 see: Blumenthal 1971b, 77–78; Emilsson 1988, 36–62; Gurtler 2015.

the transmission-theory of sensation is rooted in the corporeal concept of the soul, and the air's affection by the sense object had to come about like an impression in the wax. Plotinus therefore does not think that these theories which operate with materialistic terms could provide satisfactory explanations for how the sensation of the soul occurs or how we acquire an adequate representation about the original object in seeing. Despite his hostile attitude towards these theories, we do not need to think that Plotinus would dismiss this physical transmission, as it is just that he looks on it as that which is unable to give an adequate explanation for a certain group of phenomena. Thus, taking into consideration these passages, it is already more plausible to think that the transmission mentioned here is also a bodily process, namely the transmission of the sense-organ's affection to the desiring part of the body, although Plotinus indeed leaves the details of this transmission obscure.

In any case, what definitely turns out in this text is that the perception of the desiring part is not an independent function *per se* but depends on sense-perception, due to which I will call the perception of the desiring part *secondary perception*, as contrasted to primary perceptions i.e. sense-perception. The secondary perception of the desiring part, even though presupposes sense-perception to be the primary one and thus a preceding sensory affection, cannot be simply reduced to these. Plotinus makes it clear in this passage that he uses sight just as an example (*hoion*)¹⁶ of the indication that we can optionally substitute sight for other kinds of sense-perception, which are also able to move the desiring part in the body: the desiring part can be affected, for instance, by hearing or touching as well. Due to this fact, we should suppose that there is a specific sensible object of desire which is also perceived by primary perceptions but is not their primary object; and it has autonomy from sense-perceptions.

Supposing this secondary kind of perception, we are able to shed more light on the simile by which Plotinus intends to describe how to relate sense-perception and spirited part to the sense object. Despite the fact that the subject of the simile is not the desiring part but the spirited one, this change in the current examination does not involve a new approach. The previous solution is also applicable to the spirited part and the simile illustrates what was told about the desiring part. The shepherd and the sheepdog have the same object (the wolf), but they perceive it in a different way suitably to their own perception: while the shepherd sees, the sheepdog smells or hears the wolf. However, we also come to know something more specific about the affection of the spirited part. In the simile, the shepherd only sees the wolf (which is, by the way, not quite lifelike), while the sheepdog perceives it and because of its perception can be arisen against the

¹⁶ Plotinus apparently attributes a special position to sight in his explanation of sense-perception, which can be the reason why he uses sight as an example here. Moreover, elsewhere dealing with sense-perception he says that first we should establish "what happens in the case of the 'clearest sense'" and its results can be transferred to the other sense (*Enn.* IV. 6. 1. 11–14). See also Emilsson 1988, 63–64.

wolf. Nevertheless, we may not find that the simile would be able to cover every aspect of Plotinus' view. The simile illustrates the different kind of perception of the spirited part well, and, of course, the desiring part, but at the same time it misses the point that in each case a primary perception has to precede their perceptions. The perception of the shepherd and that of the sheepdog are completely independent of each other: the sheepdog is excited by its perception and not because the shepherd has seen the wolf, or, what is a rather possible situation, the sheepdog is excited by its perception, although the shepherd does not see the wolf.¹⁷

After all of this, Plotinus arrived at the final conclusion which, I assume, is the answer to the question about how earlier experiences influences desire.

And the desiring part, certainly enjoyed and has a trace of what happened implanted in it, not like memory, but like a disposition or affection; but it is another power which has seen the enjoyment and of its own motion retain the memory what happened. It is evidence of this that the memory of the desiring part's experiences is often not pleasant, though it had been in it, it would have been.¹⁸

The desiring part does possess a “trace” in itself originated by an earlier experience, however, it is not like a memory-image, but a disposition or, in other words, affection. This way of expression once again confirms that this section discusses bodily and not psychic processes. Even though the “disposition” would allow that its subject could be the soul, the “affection” read as a further explication makes it improbable, because otherwise, we must suppose that the soul being an incorporeal entity is affected.¹⁹ This distinction made by Plotinus between memory and disposition is remarkable: as we will be told later, in order to have a memory of a thing, we have to acquire a representation (*phantasia*) of it, which is the result of judgement in sense-perception.²⁰ In contrast, the desiring part does not need representation in order to be moved again and again

17 According to King, the point of the simile is that the dog, like desire, is excited, but it cannot say what perception it has heard; nevertheless, in his view, the simile is imperfect, because the dog actually perceives, see King 2009, 166–167. In contrast to King, I think it is more plausible that what Plotinus wants to emphasize pre-eminently with the simile is the different perceptions of seeing and the desiring / spirited part, but it is indeed imperfect, although in a different respect.

18 *Enn.* IV. 3. 28. 16–21: “Καὶ τοίνυν ἀπέλαυσε μὲν τὸ ἐπιθυμοῦν, καὶ ἔχει ἔχνος τοῦ γενομένου ἐντεθὲν οὐχ ὡς μνήμην, ἀλλ’ ὡς διάθεσιν καὶ πάθος· ἄλλο δὲ τὸ ἐωρακὸς τὴν ἀπόλαυσιν καὶ παρ’ αὐτοῦ ἔχον τὴν μνήμην τοῦ γεγενημένου. Τεκμήριον δὲ τὸ μὴ ἠδέϊαν εἶναι τὴν μνήμην πολλακίς ὄν μετέσχε τὸ ἐπιθυμοῦν, καίτοι, εἰ ἐν αὐτῷ, ἦν ἄν.”

19 As for Plotinus' conclusion, King speaks about unconscious “modification of the desire” that I cannot see how we should understand. See King 2009, 167–169. In any case, what is quite clear from his interpretation is that King thinks that the disposition in the text is the disposition of *the soul*. King comes to this conclusion without taking into consideration the expressions in the text which are in connection with the affection or being affected.

20 *Enn.* IV. 3. 29. 22–27. See Emilsson 1988, 111–112.

by the same object of desire, since this process occurs automatically without involving a conscious state thanks to the disposition of the assigned part. So, Plotinus suggests a theory in which the desiring and spirited parts have causal connections with earlier experiences, but these are rooted not in memory but in a disposition of the body.

To sum up, although the first chapter in *Enn.* IV. 3–4 which deals with desire and anger is primarily related to the questions of memory, it does not simply reject the hypothesis according to which the desiring and the spirited power remember their object but, in quite an obscure way, offers an alternative theory as well. The passage is not about the desiring and spirited power of the soul but about bodily dispositions, otherwise we would be unable to reconcile this interpretation with Plotinus' theory of the soul's impassibility. However, even if all this is so, the question may arise why Plotinus does not pay attention to the fact that the subject of inquiry has been changed from the soul's powers to the bodily parts during the argumentation. I think the lack of explication can be explained by the fact that here Plotinus is interested chiefly in the questions of memory, which does not necessarily concern the distinction between the role of the soul and the body in desire and anger. Nevertheless, this distinction becomes of crucial importance when later in the treatise Plotinus analyses desire and anger in a detailed manner. Now let us turn to these passages.

2. The triadic model of desire in *Ennead* IV. 4. 18–21

In order to see in which theoretical framework Plotinus uses his analysis of desire in *Enn.* IV. 4. 20–21, we should summarize his earlier results. From the chapter 18 of *Enn.* IV. 4, Plotinus begins to examine a new topic: those activities of the incarnated soul in which the body is also involved. This new viewpoint demands the clarification about what it means that a body is a living body, in Plotinus' words, whether this kind of body has something of its own from the soul or what appears to be that is only the inferior soul, i.e. nature. Plotinus accepts the former position,²¹ and argues that the living body possesses a trace²² (*ikhnos*) as its own and this trace enables the body to be in such states in which the soulless bodies are unable to be, therefore it should be called so-qualified body (*to toionde sōma*). According to Plotinus, the body receives this trace from nature, or to be more precise, the trace is the second activity of nature, which means that the body is alive only when the soul is present. If the living body is affected, it will have an additional state the soulless body does not have. When a soulless body is cut, as Plotinus explains, what is affected in it is only its unity, but the living body being

21 On Plotinus' argument here, see Noble 2013, 252–56.

22 It should be noted that this trace cannot be the same as what was mentioned in the conclusion of *Enn.* IV. 3. 28.

cut also has a distress (*aganaktēsis*). The supposition of this special kind of body helps Plotinus to give an account for pain without giving up the impassibility of the soul.

Plotinus starts to analyse bodily desire with the help of this framework in chapter 22; his most relevant passage as follows.

But just as in the case of pain it was from the pain that the knowledge came, and the soul, wishing to take the body away from that which produced the affection, brought about flight – and the part which was primarily affected taught it this by taking flight itself in a way by its contraction – so in this case too it is a sense-perception which acquires knowledge and the soul near, which we call nature, which gives the soul-trace to the body; nature makes the desire explicit which is the final stage of that which begins in the body and sense-perception forms the representation and the soul starts from the representation, and either provides what is desired – it is its function to do so – or resists and holds out and pays no attention either to what started the desire or to that which desired afterwards.²³

First of all, I should make a short note about the Greek text. Against Henry and Schwyzer, Armstrong and most of the editors, it seems to me that *pathousa* cannot be the predicate along the second half of the sentence, but, in agreement with Theiler, I think that the text should be completed with such a verb which describes not a *knowing* act but a *producing* one.²⁴ The reason for this insertion is simply that without it, the philosophical content of the text becomes rather inconsistent. If nature just knows desire as explicit, we will not ascertain the reason why desire has become explicit (*tranēs*) and what the connection is between this condition and the earlier mentioned knowing act. As for sense-perception, accepting *mathousa* as the predicate, another and more serious problem emerges, namely what perception knows is the bodily affection; representation is the result of this knowing act and not its object. Thus, it offers a more plausible reading that, to paraphrase the text, nature makes the desire explicit and sense-perception forms representation by coming to know the affection of the so-qualified body.²⁵

23 *Enn.* IV. 4. 20. 10–20: “Ὡσπερ δὲ ἐκεῖ ἐκ τῆς ὀδύνης ἐγένετο ἡ γνῶσις, καὶ ἀπάγειν ἐκ τοῦ ποιοῦντος τὸ πάθος ἡ ψυχὴ βουλομένη ἐποίησεν τὴν φυγὴν, καὶ τοῦ πρώτου παθόντος διδάσκοντος τοῦτο φεῦγοντός πως καὶ αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ συστολῇ, οὕτω καὶ ἐνταῦθα ἡ μὲν αἴσθησις μαθοῦσα καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ ἡ ἐγγύς, ἦν δὴ φύσιν φαιμέν τὴν δοῦσαν τὸ ἔχνος, ἡ μὲν φύσις τὴν τρανὴν ἐπιθυμίαν <τελειοί > {add. Theiler} τέλος οὖσαν τῆς ἀρξάμενης ἐν ἐκείνῳ, ἡ δ’ αἴσθησις τὴν φαντασίαν, ἀφ’ ἧς ἡδὴ ἡ πορίζει ἡ ψυχὴ, ἧς τὸ πορίζειν, ἡ ἀντιτείνει καὶ καρτερεῖ καὶ οὐ προσέχει οὔτε τῷ ἀρξάντι τῆς ἐπιθυμίας, οὔτε τῷ μετὰ ταῦτα ἐπιτεθυμηκότι.”

24 Beutler – Theiler 1962, 518. The insistence on a certain solution would be unreasonable: as even Theiler’s remark suggests, he regards his own insertion just as an option. Moreover, since Plotinus’ extremely elliptical style allows it, also needless to suppose that any given word should have been present in the text.

25 I suppose, already Ficino was annoyed by this lack in the text when he completed his translation with the harmless verb of *reportat*: “Igitur naturam quidem concupiscentiam *reportat* iam adultam, velut finem concupiscentiae in tali corpore iam exorsae: sensus autem imaginationem [...]”; see Plotinus 1580,

Following this interpretation of the passage, at first appearance, four different steps can be distinguished in desire: (1) the so-qualified body becomes affected so that I partly have already discussed; (2) nature makes the desire explicit which has begun in the body; (3) sense-perception forms representation about the affection; (4) starting from representation, the soul decides whether she pays attention to the origin of the desire and to what it has desired afterwards. Supposedly, the first one refers to the condition of the so-qualified body, while the second one to the state of nature. While (1) and (4) are quite unproblematic, (2) and (3) are rather obscure, therefore I am concentrating primarily on these two. Although I will examine them separately, I am going to argue that in fact these two steps are just two simultaneously occurring aspects of the same process that a bodily affection becomes conscious, and, in addition, they belong to the same entity, namely nature.²⁶

As far as (3) is concerned, Plotinus makes his point clearer a little bit later in this chapter. However, before the analysis of this passage, we should mention something which is quite relevant to understand what the articulated desire means. According to Plotinus, the body being in flux always has different states, and, therefore, a selection needs to be supposed among affections. Examining the memory of the heavenly bodies, Plotinus explains that although the heavenly bodies are affected by the external object as everything else, their soul does not receive them into itself (*Enn. IV. 4. 8. 8–16*). What stands behind this idea is that the affection must reach a certain degree, which is already relevant from the angle of sustaining the relationship between the body and the soul in order that the soul has representation²⁷ – and this problem does not occur in the case of heavenly bodies. So, the articulation of desire which was mentioned as the last step of desire beginning in the body (*telos ousan tēs arxamenēs en ekeinō*) in the above quoted text, it should also refer to the point when affection becomes conscious and at the same time it means that not every affection of the body becomes articulated by nature.²⁸

412–413. Another supposition of mine is that the parallel text Ficino based this insertion on might be *Enn. IV. 4. 17. 11–14*, although in this passage representation is that which reports and not that which is reported. Ficino's insertion, however, just shifts the above-mentioned problems to another level.

26 Although Emilsson also establishes these four steps, my distinction concerning what these four steps want to mean is absolutely different. Emilsson assumes that (2) describes the awareness of nature, while (3) is about the awareness of sense-perception, and this supposition forces him to deal with the question, I think unsuccessfully, how these two kinds of awareness can be explained. In my opinion, there are several problematic points in this approach. Emilsson takes it for granted that the main point in (2) is that nature has representation, although the text does not mention it. Moreover, Emilsson misses giving account for the impulses formed by nature which is, as I will argue, actually Plotinus' point in (2). See Emilsson 1998, 346–347.

27 Cf. *Enn. IV. 4. 18. 25–36*.

28 Cf. *Enn. IV. 4. 21. 7–9*.

Later in this chapter, after asking why two desires should be supposed (one of the so-qualified body and one of nature), Plotinus explains the difference between the two kinds of desire in the following way.

[T]hen it is necessary that nature should not begin desire; but it must be the so-qualified body which is affected in particular way and feels pain in desiring the opposite of what it experiences, pleasure instead of suffering and sufficiency instead of want; but nature is like a mother, trying to make out the wishes of the sufferer, and the consummation of the desire passes from the body to nature. So one might say, perhaps, that desiring comes from the body itself – one might call it proto-desire and pro-desire – but that nature desires from and through something else, and it is another soul which provides what is desired or does not.²⁹

In its metaphorical way, the passage spells out that the so-qualified body desires another state than what it actually has, and nature's desire has the very same aim, namely that the body acquires the other state. Yet, there are significant differences as well, and these differences answer the question about the two desires. First, the desire of nature has an active aspect the body misses: it articulates the starting impulse in the body by searching how it could satisfy the body's need. If the body is in lack of sweet, and this lack becomes conscious, it spontaneously involves not only that one would like to acquire something sweet, but also that this person begins searching the possible modes of accessing something sweet. Second, the desire of the so-qualified body only has general character: even if a concrete object caused the change in the bodily part (as we could see in the *Enn.* IV. 3. 28), the body does not have a relation with the given object but only with the desired opposite state. For instance, it intends to have sweet in general but not to have certain sweets. Nature is able to create the connection between the general desire of the body and a certain object outside which the body wanted to acquire. Thus, we need to suppose two desires, because the bodily change in itself is a necessary but not a sufficient cause of desire: in Plotinus' view, only state which is conscious and accompanied with an impulse (*orexis*) can be regarded as desire. And this is also the reason why Plotinus allows an alternative use of terminology concerning the bodily state: it is not desire (*epithymia*), but only a "proto-desire" (*proepithymia* or

29 *Enn.* IV. 4. 20. 25–36: “[...] ἀνάγκη μῆτε ἄρχειν αὐτὴν τῆς ἐπιθυμίας, ἀλλὰ τὸ τοιοῦδε σῶμα τὸ πεπονθὸς ταδί καὶ ἀλγυνόμενον τῶν ἐναντίων ἢ πάσχει [*Phil.* 35a3–4] ἐφιέμενον, ἡδονῆς ἐκ τοῦ πονεῖν καὶ πληρώσεως ἐκ τῆς ἐνδείας· τὴν δὲ φύσιν ὡς μητέρα, ὥσπερ στοχαζομένην τῶν τοῦ πεπονθότος βουλημάτων, διορθοῦν τε πειρᾶσθαι καὶ ἐπανάγειν εἰς αὐτὴν καὶ ζήτησιν τοῦ ἀκεσομένου ποιουμένην συνάψασθαι τῇ ζητήσει τῆ τοῦ πεπονθότος ἐπιθυμία καὶ τὴν περάτωσιν ἀπ’ ἐκείνου πρὸς αὐτὴν ἤκειν. Ὡστε τὸ μὲν ἐπιθυμεῖν ἐξ αὐτοῦ – εἴποι ἂν τις προεπιθυμίαν ἴσως καὶ προθυμίαν – τὴν δὲ ἐξ ἄλλου καὶ δι’ ἄλλου ἐπιθυμεῖν, τὴν δὲ ποριζομένην ἢ μὴ ἄλλην εἶναι.”

prothymia); the prefix of “pro-” in this expression signifies a temporal relationship, i.e. what is before desire.

Turning to the perception in the text, it requires more argumentation in order to prove that perception here should be regarded as the function of nature. In chapter 19, we read that the knowledge about the affection belongs to the perceptive soul in the neighbourhood³⁰ to complete the description, of the so-qualified body. Due to the soul-trace, the so-qualified body is able to be the subject of a special kind of affection, i.e. pain, but it is not clarified in this passage *why* the perceptive soul is in the neighbourhood. We saw earlier the similar expression of “the soul near” (*hē psychē hē engys*) which Plotinus identified with nature. Moreover, I think the reason for this name is that nature gives the soul-trace to the body, and so in a metaphysical sense, it is the closest to the so-qualified body, it is in the neighbourhood of the body.

Even if we accept that perception in the text belongs to nature, it might be regarded as a problem that representation must be attributed to nature. In other words, the vegetative power of the soul, although this objection can work only in case we allow that Plotinus uses a strict faculty-psychology. Examining the concept of nature in *Enneads*, we can find that one of nature’s most general characteristic is that it comes immediately from the World Soul. Although Plotinus heavily argues that the human individual soul is independent of the World Soul, at the same time he presupposes that the inferior part of the human soul has a direct connection with the World Soul that he often also calls nature.³¹ Moreover, Plotinus holds that nature is also a constituent of our self that relates generally to earthly life (e.g. *Enn.* IV. 3. 27. 7–10). This broader meaning turns up in the earlier section of the examination of memory that is quite relevant from the point of view of our present topic, namely the relationship between representation and the inferior soul. In *Enn.* IV. 3. 27, Plotinus asks whether memories belong to the divine soul (i.e. our rational individual soul) or to the other one which comes from the Whole (*tēs de allēs tēs para tou holou*), which description makes clear that this other soul should be identified with what is called nature in other passages. Plotinus keeps in mind the two kinds of soul along the whole examination and, attributing memory to the soul’s representing power, he supposes that both types of the soul have representing power. The detailed reconstruction of Plotinus’ theory of the double representing power would exceed the aim of the present paper,³² but what appears clearly in the

30 The affection, then, is there, in the so-qualified body, but the knowledge belongs to the perceptive soul which perceives *in the neighbourhood* of the affection and reports to that in which the sense-perceptions terminate: “Εκεῖ [i.e. ἐν τῷ τοιοῦτῳ σώματι] μὲν οὖν τὸ πάθος, ἡ δὲ γνώσις τῆς αἰσθητικῆς ψυχῆς ἐν τῇ γειτονίᾳ αἰσθανομένης καὶ ἀπαγγεῖλάσσης τῷ εἰς ὃ λήγουσιν αἱ αἰσθήσεις.” (*Enn.* IV. 4. 19. 4–7.)

31 On this, see especially *Enn.* IV. 3. 1–8. This interpretation about the relations among the different kinds of souls and the identification of nature with the soul originated from the World Soul was elaborated and proved first by Blumenthal 1971b.

32 On the theory of the double representation, see Blumenthal 1971a, 89–91.

text is that he wants to avoid the potential conclusion that the two representing powers could be defined by their objects, i.e. the superior soul's representations relate only to intelligible objects while the inferior soul's representations to sensible ones' reason for doing so is that otherwise, the living being would not be unitary, but we would have two living beings which do not have connection with each other (*Enn.* IV. 3. 31. 1–8). Thus, we can draw two conclusions from this examination of representing power: first, Plotinus assumes that nature *qua* part of the World Soul in a living being does have representations, and second, the superior and the inferior souls have common access to the representations of each other.

Returning to the *Enn.* IV. 4. 20. 10–20, the inferior soul's judgement about the affection involves representation, but I do not think that it would be Plotinus' main point here. Rather, he wants to describe how the rational soul comes into contact with the state of the body. As we have seen in the case of double representing powers, when nature, which is in primary connection with the body has a representation about the state of body the superior soul also will possess the same representation. However, unlike nature, the superior soul will become conscious of *two* states: the need of the body, on the one hand, and the impulse of nature, on the other. The most important difference between the superior soul and nature is that while nature *automatically* starts to desire something, the superior soul, which governs the human being, has in its power to take a decision whether consents nature's impulse or not.³³

To conclude, although in *Enn.* IV. 4. 20. 10–20, which is the most important text, it seems to be four different steps made by four distinct entities, I tried to argue that Plotinus uses a triadic model consisting of three members, the so-qualified body, nature and individual soul. Following this scheme, we can claim that the four steps in the text do not indicate a simple temporal relationship: steps (2) and (3) in desire occur simultaneously, since they are just the different aspects of the same process, when the affection of the so-qualified body becomes conscious in nature.³⁴ What may be the most peculiar feature of this scheme is that nature has an essential intermediate position and, thanks to this position, it has also an intermediate function between the so-qualified body and the rational soul. So, in Plotinus' view about desire, we can find that not only the theory of the so-qualified body is a philosophical innovation, but this extended role of nature as well. Plotinus does not restrict the field of nature's function to the narrow traditional view of vegetative faculty, although his concept of

33 In Plotinus' view, nature, due to being the part of the World Soul, is subjected to the necessity in the world; as we are told later in this treatise, only those acts can be regarded as free which can be changed by the rational soul. For example, the Wise can become ill by magic, but cannot fall in love, because it must be preceded by the decision of the rational soul, see *Enn.* IV. 4. 43.

34 *Pace* Noble, who supposes that the desire in the so-qualified body and the desire of nature must be simultaneous, while forming a representation happens only after that, see Noble 2009, 116–119.

nature comprises also this function.³⁵ According to the examined texts, one of the most important differences between nature and the human rational soul is rooted in the possibility of being indeterminate. Thus, the *Enneads* outlines such a complex concept of nature on the level of the individual that exceeds the framework of an Aristotelian faculty-psychology or the earlier Stoic notion.

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35 Besides desire, Plotinus attributes representing power and, later, also anger to nature (*Enn.* IV. 4. 28).