

The Concepts of Space in Plotinus

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resumo O objetivo deste artigo é recolher passagens das *Enéadas* que contêm informação relevante para a investigação dos conceitos de espaço/lugar em Plotino. Espero poder indicar, depois disso, que pelo menos três noções de espaço/lugar coexistem na filosofia de Plotino: i) Plotino distingue espaço e matéria, mas dessa distinção não fica claro a) se o espaço subsiste à parte dos corpos, ou b) se ele é apenas um relativo, ou c) se ele é uma das propriedades dos corpos e, neste caso, se ele tem algum tipo de modelo inteligível; iii) e, em várias passagens, Plotino formula uma versão platônica e imaterial do conceito estoico de espaço, afirmando que entes imateriais não estão num lugar, de modo que o corpo não é o lugar da alma, mas antes é a alma o lugar do corpo.

palavras-chave Plotino (c. 205-270); neoplatonismo; filosofia antiga; espaço; lugar; matéria

I

When a philosopher devotes his genius and a considerable amount of his energy to meditating on the question of time, one expects him to dedicate a similar effort to that of space or place too.¹ Not only Aristotle, Leibniz, Newton, and Kant have done that in a paradigmatic way: within the Neoplatonic tradition, Iamblichus, Syrianus, Proclus, Damascius, Simplicius, and Philoponus may be said to have felt that a theory of space is as essential as a theory of time.

This is not Plotinus' case, however. He wrote an entire treatise to elucidate the natures of eternity and time (III. 7 [45]), in which he

presents one of the most original and influential theories in the Western tradition. The theory exposed in that treatise is not only vigorous; it is also coherent with the entirety of the Plotinian metaphysics and does not differ significantly from other brief accounts of eternity and time given by Plotinus in other treatises.²

On the other hand, if we try to unearth what Plotinus thought about space, we find serious difficulties. For he has not written any substantial exposition of his concept of space, but only terse incidental remarks elicited by the speculation about other themes such as the soul's progression, matter, bodies, and the sensible world. Of course these themes would be the perfect occasion to discuss the concept of space, but Plotinus never actually develops one.

Besides being terse and incidental, Plotinus' remarks on space do not seem to form a coherent line of thought or to suggest a harmonic whole at first sight, so that we would at least be able, after gathering them, to catch a glimpse of a theory. As a matter of fact, passages of treatises II. 4 [12], III. 6 [26], IV. 3 [27], and VI. 3 [44], for instance, seem to conflict with each other.

The absence of a substantial discussion of the concept of space may be a strong indication that Plotinus did not regard it an important, urgent issue. Only such possible unimportance, more than the lack of material, would justify the inexistence – to my knowledge – of scholarly analyses of Plotinus' concept of space. The few considerations I am aware of are almost as terse and incidental as Plotinus' statements; and they do not take into account the conflicting passages, but usually stick to a few harmonic passages, thus giving us the misleading impression that Plotinus did have a theory of space – and only one theory.

As we will see, at least three notions of space can be detected in the *Enneads*. i) In II. 4 [12] and VI. 6 [36], Plotinus clearly distinguishes space and matter; from this distinction, however, it does not become clear a) whether space has some degree of subsistence apart from bodies; or b) whether it is nothing but a relative, some sort of mental category we employ to analyze the sensible world; or c) whether it is one of the properties of bodies and, in this case, whether it has an intelligible model or counterpart, as time is an “image of eternity” ii) In III. 6 [26], on the other hand, we find elements to think that Plotinus identified

space with matter in a certain sense. iii) And we find still another sense of space in the *Enneads*: in numerous passages (e.g. in IV. 3 [27] and III. 7 [45]), Plotinus formulates an immaterial, Platonic, version of the Stoic concept of space, asserting that immaterial beings are not in place, so that body is not the soul's place, but rather soul is the place of body – and, consequently, the intellect is the place the soul, while the place of intellect is “something else”

The aim of this article, therefore, is to collect passages from the *Enneads* that contain relevant information for the investigation of the concept (or rather concepts) of space in Plotinus. I hope this paper can indicate, after collating such passages, that the three senses of space mentioned above can coexist in Plotinus' metaphysics. I believe Plotinus holds that space is and is not matter. Named *hypodokhē*, *khōra*, and also *tópos*, matter is space in the sense of being an “absolute” space, the space where bodies and the sensible world can gain existence. This sense does not preclude the second one: *tópos* –but never *khōra* – is something different from matter, although it is impossible to determine whether it subsists, whether it is a relative, or a quality of bodies. The third sense could be regarded as metaphorical, but it should not be dismissed for this reason; soul as a place for body – i.e. the corporeal being *in* the incorporeal – is an important and recurrent notion in Plotinus, and it seems to be a rework of the Stoic concept of space and a direct response to it as well.

II

In an article of mine about time I wrote: “time and space (the sensible realm) were produced by soul at the same moment and by the same activity.”³ Paraphrasing Plotinus (III. 7 [45] 1. 3–12), I had the confidence of the ignorant who thinks he knows something until he is asked about it. I was sure that reflecting on space in more or less the same terms of reflecting on time would be fruitful. Since the sensible world is in space and in time, and the sensible world is produced by soul, and time is an activity of soul, it seemed a logical consequence that space too is some sort of product of soul and that it comes into existence together with time and the sensible world.

When I considered some my questions about Plotinus' concept of time to be solved, I thought I should turn to the concept of space. This was the exact moment I realized that I knew absolutely nothing about it and that the topic is actually far more complex than I believed. As we all, including Plotinus, usually do, I began to gather what great scholars had said about the topic, and discovered that they had not said much.

The obvious works to start with are Max Jammer's *Concepts of Space*, Richard Sorabji's *Matter, Space and Motion*, and Shmuel Sambursky's *The Concept of Place in Late Neoplatonism*.⁴ The first says absolutely nothing about Plotinus; the second mentions *en passant* that Plotinus reverts the expected relation of soul and body by making body to be in soul, soul in intellect, and intellect in something else (p. 206). Sambursky, for his turn, says a little more, but here is exactly where some of our problems begin:

"The asymmetry in the levels of reality of space and time, mentioned above [on p. 13] in connection with Plato's cosmology, was finally *eliminated* by Plotinus. He *expressly* distinguished between physical space, which is *the receptacle of matter* and thus has *a lower rank than the matter* and bodies in it, and intelligible space, which is the very principle and source of the Soul and the Intellect. Thus a hypostatic equality was established between intelligible space and *intelligible time*... Since every hypostatic level participates to some extent in that above it, it follows that physical space is endowed with some of the properties of the intelligible space, though to a restricted degree only" (1982, p. 15-16, italics mine).

The asymmetry mentioned by Sambursky is that, for Plato, space (here *khôra*) and time rank on different levels of reality; time is the "moving image of eternity", and thus belongs to the sensible realm, the domain of becoming; space, for its turn, is "the nurse of all becoming", being an intermediary between being and becoming, therefore above time; time is generated, space is eternal (*Timaeus*, 47e-52d)⁵. Sambursky quotes (p. 38) only two passages to illustrate Plotinus' concept of space and to show how he has eliminated Plato's asymmetry:

1) II. 4 [12] 12. 11-13: "but place is posterior to matter and bodies, so that bodies would need matter before they need place" (ὁ δὲ τόπος ὕστερος τῆς ὕλης καὶ τῶν σωμάτων, ὥστε πρότερον ἂν δέοιτο τὰ σώματα ὕλης).^{6,7}

2) II. 5 [25] 3. 39-40: “the place there [i.e. in the intelligible world], then, is a place of life and the origin and spring of true soul and intellect” (ὁ τόπος ὁ ἐκεῖ τόπος ἐστὶ ζωῆς καὶ ἀρχὴ καὶ πηγὴ ἀληθοῦς ψυχῆς τε καὶ νοῦ).

From the first passage Sambursky concludes that space is different from and posterior to matter, what makes space inferior to matter in a Plotinian frame of mind. From the second passage he understands that Plotinus literally states the existence of an intelligible space⁸ which is not a mental reality, but an intelligible principle prior to the soul and to the intellect.⁹ But can it be concluded from them that Plotinus has expressly eliminated the asymmetry that existed in Plato? I do not think so.

Firstly, it seems to me that Plotinus is not as coherent as it Sambursky makes us believe when he does not take into account important passages of IV. 3 [27] and VI. 3 [44] that I will explore later. Secondly, things become really confusing when he says that space has a lower rank than matter, and that it is the “receptacle of matter”. If matter for Plotinus is the very last level of reality, lacking being and all determination implied by it – for matter is deprived of thought, of virtue, of beauty, of strength, of shape, of form, of quality (II. 4 [12] 16. 21-23), and deprived of course of size (*mégethos*; II. 4 [12] 8. 11) –, how can something be even lower than it? “Receptacle of matter” therefore is an expression wholly deprived of sense in Plotinus’ metaphysics. Sambursky says that because he interprets the *hýsteron* (“posterior”) of passage the first passage as “inferior”. The word usually does have this sense in Plotinus’ metaphysics, but it cannot be its meaning here: bodies also are logically posterior to matter, since they are the composite of matter and form, but they are not ontologically inferior to it, since they have some intelligibility and determination (II. 4 [12] 12. 34-35; II. 7 [37] 3).¹⁰

Plotinus holds that matter does exist, even though it is absolute “non-being” (II. 4 [12] 16. 1-4; III. 6 [26] 7. 12-13; III. 6 [26] 13. 21-29). So, if space exists at all, it cannot be inferior to matter as Sambursky thinks. It can be “posterior” and “later” in the timeless order of production, but it cannot be inferior in the same sense that, for instance, the soul is posterior, later, and also inferior to the intellect, its principle; and the reason for this is that there is nothing below matter, so that the minimum for space to be is at least equal to matter. There is a very interesting passage in VI. 6 [34] which suggests that space is posterior to matter in the sense of being a by-product of the production of bodies by the soul:

3) VI. 6 [34] 3. 16–18: “it [this infinity, i.e. matter] does not run away [from the idea of limit] from one place to another: for it does not even have any place; but when it is caught, place comes into existence” (φεύγει δὲ οὐκ εἰς τόπον ἄλλον ἐξ ἑτέρου· οὐ γὰρ οὐδ’ ἔχει τόπον· ἀλλ’ ὅταν ἀλῶ, ὑπέστη τόπος).

Space is posterior to matter and comes into existence when the limit of an intelligible form “catches”, delimits the limitless, absolutely unqualified matter. Matter was already there, so to speak, so that space is *hýsteron* to matter in the order of production; but, as space implies some determination and limit imposed by a form, space is ontologically superior to matter. The curious idea here is that we are led to conclude that the reality of space – its *hýparxis* and *hypóstasis*, as Plotinus refers to the reality of time in III. 7 [45] 13. 49 – is a kind of parasite of the body; that is, space exists only as the result of the information of matter by the sensible along with the other qualities, specially magnitude or extension. Contrarily to time, which depends directly on the soul’s activity, space depends primarily on bodies, and only secondarily on soul. Space thus can be regarded as a unique property of bodies: while all qualities of bodies are reflections of intelligible forms – the sensible man is the image of the intelligible form of man –, space’s intelligible model is not intelligible space, but perhaps the form of extension and magnitude. Could it then be said that the soul does not apprehend space, but only bodies and their extension, *imagining* space with them? Would space be the totality of bodies’ extensions?

Let us return to Sambursky. As we see, Plotinus does not distinguish things so expressly; and I think that he has not eliminated Plato’s asymmetry mentioned by Sambursky: rather, what he actually does is to invert the asymmetry, so that space is less important for and more distant from the soul and the intellect. Definitely there is no symmetry of time and space in Plotinus, beginning with the very fact that the perfectly symmetric couples mentioned by Sambursky do not exist; as I have already said, there is not the intelligible-sensible space couple, and there is not the intelligible-sensible time couple as well. An intelligible time cannot be tracked in Plotinus as it can be in Iamblichus and Damascius for instance; the Plotinian intelligible counterpart of the physical or sensible time is eternity, not an intelligible time.¹¹

I am not drawing any conclusions from this discussion, but only showing that Plotinus' conception of space is very far from being clear. The first and the third passages quoted above do seem to state that space is something different from matter –it is not important right now whether space exists as something in itself or does not, but only that it is something that can be distinguished from matter. And Sambursky is not alone in thinking that Plotinus holds that space is different from matter – Narbonne endorses his opinion (see note 7 above). But one passage – and other scholars – seems, on the other hand, to state that space is to be identified with matter:

4) III. 6 [26] 18. 38-43: “it [matter] must then, since it is *the place for all things*, come to all of them itself and meet them and be sufficient for every dimension, because *it is not itself captured by dimension* but lies open to that which is going to come to it. How, then, when one particular form enters it, does it not hinder the others, which cannot be [present in it] one upon another? The answer is that there is no first form, unless perhaps it is the form of the universe” (δεῖ τοίνυν πᾶσι τόπον οὔσαν ἐπὶ πάντα αὐτὴν ἐλθεῖν καὶ πᾶσιν ἀπαντῆσαι καὶ πρὸς πᾶν διάστημα ἀρκέσαι, ὅτι μὴ κατείληπται διαστήματι αὐτῇ, ἀλλ’ ἦν ἐκκειμένη τῷ μέλλοντι. Πῶς οὖν οὐκ εἰσελθὼν ἓν τι ἐκώλυσε τὰ ἄλλα, ἃ οὐχ οἷόν τε ἦν ἐπ’ ἀλλήλοις εἶναι; Ἥ οὐκ ἦν οὐδὲν πρῶτον· εἰ δ’ ἄρα, τὸ τοῦ παντός εἶδος).

Calling matter “the place for all things” would be as metaphorical as calling the intelligible “the place for all ideas”, if we picture matter as somehow sustaining all sensible things, as something below everything else which functions as a kind of support for them. This passage, nonetheless, suggests that matter is the undefined possibility of bodies’ extension, extension itself being one of the intelligible determinations that constitute bodies. Here, even though the verbs are not the same, there occurs the same image of matter’s capture by form that we read in the third passage. But in this fourth passage, differently, the notion of space as originated with or after the delimitation of matter by a form disappears: Plotinus now states that matter is not captured by dimension (maybe “extension” would be a better translation to *diástēma*), while in the third passage the limit catches matter and from that space comes to be. Since we no more have three elements: matter, form, and space, but only two: matter and form, we are led to think that space coincides with

matter. There is no first form, says Plotinus, because everything that exists in the sensible has been produced and came into existence at the same metaphysical, atemporal moment; so if there is a very first form, it is the form of all that exists, which would coincide with the totality of space.

But what could we make out of the following curious passage?

5)II. 2 [14] 1. 27-31: “It [the heaven] seeks to go on in a straight line, but has no longer any place to go to, so it glides round, we may say, and curves back in the regions where it can; for it has no place beyond itself; this is the last. So it runs in the space it occupies and is its own place...” (Ἡ ἐφιέμενον τοῦ εὐθέος οὐκ ἔχον οὐκέτι τόπον ὥσπερ περιολισθάνον ἀνακάμπει ἐν οἷς τόποις δύνатаι· οὐ γὰρ ἔχει τόπον μεθ’ ἑαυτοῦ· οὗτος γὰρ ἔσχατος. Θεὶ οὖν ἐν ᾧ ἔχει καὶ αὐτὸς αὐτοῦ τόπος...).

One has to acknowledge that this passage alone is a weak evidence for the identification of space and matter; yet, it seems to obliquely corroborate it. The heavens are the encompassing limits of the sensible world, as it seems; therefore they represent the sensible totality that has been given form, the other element being matter, which in this case seems to be space. This phrase echoes two other phrases in chapter III. 6 [26] 13, a chapter full of references to Plato’s *Timaeus* and in which Plotinus, under Plato’s influence¹², seems to identify *hýlē*, *hypodokhḗ*, and *khóra*, apparently taking the latter as a synonym for *tópos*: “space of the forms” (τόπον εἰδῶν), in line 19, a quotation from Plato’s *Timaeus* 52b 4-5; and “place of all things” (χώρα πάντων), in line 29.¹³ It is not easy to detect some difference (if there is any) in Plotinus’ use of *khóra* and of *tópos*, which can occur together in the same phrase, be it literally or metaphorically.¹⁴ Even though it seems textually weak, the identification of space and matter is endorsed by L. P. Gerson (1994, p. 99), for instance, who says that “this [condition for the existence of images of intelligible forms] is the so-called receptacle or matter or space”.¹⁵

So matter is space and space is other than matter? Yes: if we read carefully passages 1), 3) and 4), we will find that Plotinus traces a slight distinction between the *tópos* of 1) and 3), on the one hand, and the *tópos* of 4), on the other. It seems that matter is the space of the possibility of bodies, while *tópos* is space’s intelligible or sensible dimensionality. This would be an interesting and important distinction, and I believe it can be held. It should be noticed that Plotinus terminology regarding matter is lax: he calls it is

khōra and “*tópos*” as well; the “relative” space, on the other hand, is never called *khōra*, but only *tópos*. We have therefore two different concepts of space until now: an “absolute” space and a “relative” space.

By labeling space “absolute” or “relative”, I am not affirming that Plotinus’ notions of space can be unqualifiedly compared with the standard concepts of absolute and relative space of Newton¹⁶ and Leibniz¹⁷, for instance. Yet these standard conceptions may give us a clue to Plotinus’. Matter is “absolute” space in the sense of being independent of soul. Let me correct myself: the truth is that matter in Plotinian metaphysics is not independent of soul, just as no lower levels of reality are independent of higher ones, and no effect independent of its cause. Yet matter is absolute because it is always itself, impassible, unchangeable; it is the space for the sensible realm’s emergence, and it is necessary for such emergence. Here is another passage in which matter is termed *khōra* and that seems to endorse its sense of “absolute” space:

6) III. 6 [26] 17. 27-30: “individual things acquire magnitude by being drawn out by the power of the forms which are visible in matter and make a place for themselves, and they are drawn out to everything without violence because the universe exists by matter” (μεγεθύνεται δὲ ἕκαστα ἐλκόμενα τῇ δυνάμει τῶν ἐνορωμένων καὶ χώραν ἑαυτοῖς ποιοῦντων, ἔλκεται δὲ ἐπὶ πάντα οὐ βίᾳ τῷ ὕλῃ τὸ πᾶν εἶναι).

This passage should be read together with II. 4 [12] 11, in which Plotinus says that matter, though without size, is receptive of all size and of all extension. It is the matter of mass that, “so to speak, runs through the whole range of mass”; but it is itself nothing but a “phantom of mass”. So matter is the “absolute”, changeless space underneath all size-determinations. Such illusion of size and extension might be the space perceived by soul or by the senses, which is something different from matter itself. This other, “relative”, space thus is relative in the sense of being relative to or one of the determinations of bodies. The status of “relative” space in Plotinus’ thought is not clear, though. Passages 1) and 3) above are not enough to state whether space subsists by itself and, if it does, whether its subsistence is similar to time’s subsistence, which is not a reality in itself but is real for the soul’s products, which are said to be “in time”. The sensible is also said to be “in space”, but I am not sure whether this could also be interpreted as “in matter” or not.

III

If we had any certainty about Plotinus' concept (or concepts) of space, it ends here. We can conclude with moderate assurance, therefore, that there is one notion of space in Plotinus' philosophy that coincides with matter, and that there is other notion of space that does not coincides with matter, but seems to be some sort of by-product of the information of matter by the soul. What this second notion exactly is, I think it difficult to be sure. Let us read, from now on, several passages from the *Enneads* that contain assertions regarding space as apparently different from matter that are difficult to assess:

7) IV.4 [28] 15. 17-20: "For the souls are eternal, and time is posterior to them, and that which is in time is less than time; for time must encompass what is in time, as is the case, Aristotle says [*Physics*, 4. 12, 221a18 and 28-30], with what is in place and number" (Αἰδίοι γὰρ αἱ ψυχαί, καὶ ὁ χρόνος ὕστερος, καὶ τὸ ἐν χρόνῳ ἔλαττον χρόνου· περιέχειν γὰρ δεῖ τὸν χρόνον τὸ ἐν χρόνῳ, ὥσπερ, φησί, τὸ ἐν τόπῳ καὶ ἐν ἀριθμῷ). Cf. VI. 1 [42] 14. 19-20.

This passage introduces the somewhat natural, but in Plotinus puzzling, comparison between time and space: that which is in time and in space is not only posterior to time and to space, but it is also "less" than them. In time's case, this statement is not surprising, for time is the soul's activity, so that the sensible, which is the product of soul, has necessarily to be posterior and inferior to the soul's activity. But what sense does it make to say that the sensible is posterior *and* inferior to space?

The sensible may be said posterior to space if we take space to be the same as matter. In this case, the sensible may be said to be posterior to matter, because it originates from form and matter, which comes logically before the body. But can the sensible be said to be ontologically inferior to space? As we have seen when considering the space as something other than matter, space comes into existence after bodies, and its reality, if it has any, seems to depend upon bodies, so that if there were not bodies, and no form ruling over matter, there would not be space. The way Plotinus speaks of space in the this seventh passage makes us think of space as one of the frames of the sensible, along with time, both pertaining and proceeding more properly from the soul's activity.

It not unusual that Plotinus speaks of space in Aristotelian terms as that which encompasses bodies, suggesting that it is superior to and different from them. The following three passages, in which Plotinus speaks of space only incidentally when discussing related topics, exhibit signs implying that space has a certain kind of reality and that it can be thought of as parallel to time. The context of passage 8) is the soul's immateriality and, consequently, that it is not in the body as in a place. Plotinus clearly reveals there that he conceives space (one space, at least) as not related to body, apparently in the sense that it is not delimited by a form or that it is not a compound of form and matter. It is not easy to understand what the difference between matter and space is in this passage, though; a body is a compound of form and matter, and space encompasses the body, not taking part in its composition: but, being bodiless, what would then be nature of space's reality? Would it be intelligible? Passages 9) and 10) concern Plotinus' criticism of the Aristotelian and Stoic categories (as he understands them), and the formulation of Plotinus' own categories for the sensible world. They apparently deny the idea of a space endowed with defined magnitude and direction; the position occupied by a body, therefore, can be described only in relation to other bodies and in relation to the observer; so space itself seems to have nothing to do with position, coming close to the modern notion of a homogeneous space (I italicize the important phrases):

8) IV. 3. [27] 20. 12-14 and 19-20: "*For place is something encompassing, and encompassing body, and where each divided part is, there it is [and nowhere else] so that the whole is not [as a whole] in any place ... But place in the strict and proper sense is bodiless and not a body: so what need would it have of soul? (περιεκτικὸν μὲν γὰρ ὁ τόπος καὶ περιεκτικὸν σώματος, καὶ οὐ ἕκαστον μερισθὲν ἔστιν, ἔστιν ἐκεῖ, ὡς μὴ ὅλον ἐν ὁπωοῦν εἶναι... Ὁ δὲ τόπος ὁ κυρίως ἀσώματος καὶ οὐ σῶμα· ὥστε τί ἂν δέοιτο ψυχῆς;)*."

9) VI. 3 [44] 12. 19-25: "In these respects [i.e. that the *póson* can indicate more or less of the same *poíon*, so that one thing can be, for instance, hotter than the other], then, there is an opposition in the quantitative; for *there is no longer one [i.e. opposition] in place, because place does not belong to the quantitative; since, even if place did belong to the quantitative, 'up' would not be opposite to anything, since there is no 'down' in the All.* But when 'up' and 'down' are spoken of in the parts, they could not mean anything else

but ‘higher up’ and ‘lower down’ and are like ‘right’ and ‘left’; and these belong to the relatives” (Εναντιότης τοίνυν κατὰ ταῦτα περὶ τὸ ποσόν· κατὰ γὰρ τὸν τόπον οὐκέτι, ὅτι μὴ τοῦ ποσοῦ· ἐπεὶ καί, εἰ τοῦ ποσοῦ ἦν ὁ τόπος, οὐκ ἦν ἐναντίον τὸ ἄνω τινὶ μὴ ὄντος τοῦ κάτω ἐν τῷ παντί. Ἐν δὲ τοῖς μέρεσι τὸ ἄνω καὶ κάτω λεγόμενον ἄλλο οὐδὲν ἂν σημαῖνοι ἢ ἀνωτέρω καὶ κατωτέρω καὶ ὅμοιον τῷ «δεξιόν» καὶ «ἀριστερόν»· ταῦτα δὲ τῶν πρὸς τι).

10) VI. 1 [42] 4. 11–17: “But a line and a surface and a body are not even called quanta, but are called magnitudes but not quanta, granted that they receive the additional appellation of quanta when they are brought to a number, two cubits or three cubits: since the natural body also becomes a quantum when it is measured, *and place is so incidentally, not in so far it is place*. But one must not take what is incidentally a quantum, but the quantitative in itself, like quantity” (ἀλλὰ γραμμὴ γε καὶ ἐπίπεδον καὶ σῶμα οὐδὲ λέγεται, ἀλλὰ μεγέθη μὲν λέγεται, ποσὰ δὲ οὐ λέγεται, εἴπερ τότε προσλαμβάνει τὸ ποσὸν λέγεσθαι, ὅταν εἰς ἀριθμὸν ἀχθῇ δίπηχυ ἢ τρίπηχυ· ἐπεὶ καὶ τὸ σῶμα τὸ φυσικὸν μετρηθὲν γίγνεται ποσόν τι, καὶ ὁ τόπος κατὰ συμβεβηκός, οὐχ ἡ τόπος. Δεῖ δὲ μὴ τὸ κατὰ συμβεβηκός ποσὸν λαμβάνειν, ἀλλὰ τὸ καθ’ αὐτό, οἷον ποσότητα)¹⁸.

Sometimes, however, “relative” space (i.e. the space that is not matter) seems to have a dubious reality, being only a category for the analysis of the sensible or a kind of delirium of soul. Plotinus is never clear as Theophrastus¹⁹ in stating that space is unreal, but these texts are very suggestive:

11) VI. 3 [44] 5. 29–35: [Opposing to Aristotle’s statement that “not being in a substrate is proper to all that is substance” (*Categories* 5. 3a7–8)]: “But *time is not in a substrate either, nor is place*. But if “the measure of movement” is understood as applying to what is measured, the measure will exist in the movement as in a substrate, and the movement in what is moved; but if it is taken as referring to the measurer, then the measure will be in the measurer. *And place, being the ‘boundary of that which encompasses’, is in it*” (Ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ ὁ χρόνος ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ, οὐδ’ ὁ τόπος. Ἀλλ’ εἰ μὲν τὸ μέτρον λαμβάνεται κινήσεως κατὰ τὸ μεμετρημένον, τὸ μέτρον ἐν τῇ κινήσει ὑπάρξει ὡς ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ, ἢ τε κινήσις ἐν τῷ κινουμένῳ· εἰ δὲ κατὰ τὸ μετροῦν λαμβάνεται, ἐν τῷ μετροῦντι ἔσται τὸ μέτρον. Ὁ δὲ τόπος, πέρας τοῦ περιέχοντος ὢν, ἐν ἐκείνῳ).

12) VI. 1 [42] 28. 6–13: “For they [the Stoics] considered that bodies were the real beings, and, since they were afraid of their transformation into each other, they thought that what persisted under them was reality,

as if someone thought that place rather than bodies was real being, considering that place does not perish. Yet place also does persist for them, but they ought not to have considered that what persists in any kind of way was real being, but to see first what characteristics must belong to what is truly real, on the existence of which persistence for ever depends” (Τὰ γὰρ σώματα νομίσαντες εἶναι τὰ ὄντα, εἴτα αὐτῶν τὴν μεταβολὴν εἰς ἄλληλα φοβηθέντες τὸ μένον ὑπ’ αὐτὰ τοῦτο ὤηθησαν τὸ ὄν εἶναι, ὥσπερ ἂν εἴ τις μᾶλλον τὸν τόπον ἢ τὰ σώματα νομίσειεν εἶναι τὸ ὄν, ὅτι οὐ φθείρεται ὁ τόπος νομίσας. Καίτοι καὶ οὗτος αὐτοῖς μένει, ἔδει δὲ οὐ τὸ ὅπως οὖν μένον νομίσαι τὸ ὄν, ἀλλὰ ἰδεῖν πρότερον, τίνα δεῖ προσεῖναι τῷ ἀληθῶς ὄντι, οἷς οὖσιν ὑπάρχειν καὶ τὸ αἰεὶ μένειν).

None of the passages states that space is unreal, this is certain. But their denial is very telling; maybe not “very”, but moderately telling. Passage 11) is extremely cryptic, yet it somehow may be interpreted as follows: time and space are not in a substrate (this phrase probably is a kind of intervention of Plotinus’ mental interlocutor, but it is not an objection); Plotinus replies that it depends on whether we attribute the measure to what is measuring or to what is being measure; as it seems, time and space can be used as measures (though we know from III. 7 [45], especially chapter 9, that time itself is not a measure, so that we deduce space is not either). So far, so good. But the phrase “ὁ δὲ τόπος, πέρας τοῦ περιέχοντος ὧν, ἐν ἐκείνῳ” messes up the reasoning: Plotinus explains that time and space are not in a substrate, and yet are not *ousiai*; the “measure of movement” is Aristotle’s definition of time, and it is not in the movement as in a substrate; knowing Plotinus’ theory of time, we could say that time is in the soul, that is, if it has to be somewhere, it is more in the measurer (apparently not as in a substrate) than in the measured. Space, however, assuming that it is the limit of that which encompasses the body, and assuming that it not an essence, is in it: but what is “it”? If “it” refers to the body, it could be said that space is in body as a substrate, but this would be false for Plotinus. Would “it” be the contour of body? I am not sure; wouldn’t this mean that space still has body as a kind of substrate? Or would Plotinus be misquoting Aristotle here, so that, if we understand the participle *τὸ περιέχον* as properly active and transitive, we would take it to refer to the being that encompasses bodies, i.e. soul? Could “in it” also mean “in the measurer”, not in it as in a substrate, but in it as an active capacity of measuring? Then space

would, just as time, have a certain kind of reality (*hýparxis* and *hypóstasis* in Plotinus' words), without being an essence.

In passage 12), Plotinus criticizes the Stoics because they thought that what persists is that which is real, and gives the example of space. He thinks that the Stoics held that bodies are the real being, but, seeing that they change and perish, they concluded that the underlying subsistent is what is real, *just as if* someone were to say that space is the real being because it does not perish – i.e. although space does not perish, it is not real being. Then comes the remarkable adversative clause: “Yet place also does persist for them, but they ought not to have considered that what persists in any kind of way was real being”. This sounds almost like “but those maniacs even thought that space persist; they should not think that any miserable thing that persists in any kind of way is real”. Following Plotinus' argument here, the single fact that something persists does not necessarily makes it a real being; space may even persist in a way, but not as *tò ón*. This, the real being, for Plotinus, is the intelligible, the forms; and, the passage suggests, space is not an intelligible. His argumentation, however, suggests that he does not agree with anything the Stoics said, for he makes it sound absurd that someone can think that space is more real than bodies, even though it somehow subsists, while bodies do not. As it seems, Plotinus thinks that bodies are more real than space, or at least that space's subsistence is dependent on bodies somehow.

IV

Plotinus' notions of space we have seen until now are related to the sensible world; whether we take space as matter, or as something related to bodies, or the (corporeal) form of the universe, space is time's counterpart as the encompassing determinations of the sensible realm.

The third notion of space in Plotinus, however, can be seen as the dematerialization of space's concept. The importance of the encompassing character of space is amplified to its ultimate metaphysical consequences: since the corporeal is the degraded image of the incorporeal, the sensible world must be dependent on the real, primordial, causes of reality. The idea that space encompasses the body gives place to the idea that soul

encompasses body in an immaterial way. And it does not stop there: each level of reality is encompassed by the level “above” it: body by soul, soul by intellect, intellect by the one.

Plotinus is not the first thinker to propose such an idea.²⁰ The conception comes from the Stoic philosophers who considered space to be the limit of the totality of bodies, the material universe.²¹ Along with this notion, some Stoics, namely Chrysippus, said the universe is God.²² Space, i.e. God, and the universe, therefore, are the same material encompassing reality. This concept was certainly known to Plotinus, who also certainly despised it. This very idea is not absent from Plotinus, as we can see in passages 4) and 5) above, in which Plotinus speaks of a form of the universe and of the heaven as not having other (physical) space beyond itself.

The notion of space as the whole material universe can also be tracked in the Neopythagorean philosopher Pseudo-Archytas,²³ whose opinions Plotinus perhaps also knew, with the important addition of the fundamental priority of space to all other things.²⁴ Another important stage of this concept of space are the Jewish and Christian exegetical writers, who interpreted passages from the Old and New Testaments which described God as space in an spiritual way. Philo’s summary of the three senses of space is paradigmatic, the third of them being: “God Himself is called place, for He encompasses all things, but is not encompassed by anything.”²⁵

With the exception of this impressing passage (which must not be taken literally as stating that body is soul’s place, since Plotinus warns us some lines earlier that he is employing improper terms “for the sake of clear exposition”) –

13) IV. 3 [27] 9. 20–23: “For the truth is as follows. If body did not exist, soul would not go forth, since there is no place other than body where it is natural for it to be. But if it intends to go forth, it will produce a place for itself, and so a body” (Ἐπεὶ τό γε ἀληθές ὥδε ἔχει· σώματος μὲν μὴ ὄντος οὐδ’ ἂν προέλθοι ψυχὴ, ἐπεὶ οὐδὲ τόπος ἄλλος ἐστίν, ὅπου πέφυκεν εἶναι. Προιέναι δὲ εἰ μέλλοι, γεννήσει ἑαυτῇ τόπον, ὥστε καὶ σῶμα).

– there are numerous others that present the clear statement that soul is not in body, and that the immaterial is not in the material, but rather the opposite. Let us read three passages:

14) III. 7 [45] 11. 33-35: “For since the world of sense moves in Soul – there is no place for it than Soul – it moves also in the time of Soul.” (ἐν ἐκείνῃ γὰρ κινούμενος – οὐ γὰρ τις αὐτοῦ τόπος ἢ ψυχὴ – καὶ ἐν τῷ ἐκείνης αὐτὸ ἐκινεῖτο χρόνῳ).

15) IV. 3 [27] 20. 10-15: “Now we must say in general that neither any of the parts of the soul nor the whole soul are in body as a place. For place is something encompassing, and encompassing body, and where each divided part is, there it [soul] is, so that the whole is not in any place; but soul is not in a body, and is no more encompassed than encompassing” (Ὅλως μὲν οὖν οὐδὲν τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς μερῶν οὐδὲ πᾶσαν φατέον ὥς ἐν τόπῳ εἶναι τῷ σώματι· περιεκτικὸν μὲν γὰρ ὁ τόπος καὶ περιεκτικὸν σώματος, καὶ οὐ ἕκαστον μερισθέν ἐστιν, ἔστιν ἐκεῖ, ὥς μὴ ὅλον ἐν ὀπωοῦν εἶναι· ἡ δὲ ψυχὴ οὐ σῶμα, καὶ οὐ περιεχόμενον μᾶλλον ἢ περιέχον).

16) V. 5 [32] 9. 26-35: “Observe the universe also, that, since there is no universe before it, it is not itself in a universe, nor again in place: for what place could there be before a universe existed? But its parts are dependent on it and in it. But Soul is not in the universe, but the universe in it: for body is not the soul’s place, but Soul is in Intellect and body in Soul, and Intellect in something else; but there is nothing other than this [i.e. the One] for it to be in: it is not, then, in anything; in this way therefore, it is nowhere. Where then are the other things? In it. It has not, then, gone away from all other things, nor is God himself with them, but it possesses everything” (Ὅρα δὲ καὶ τὸν κόσμον, ὅτι, ἐπεὶ μηδεὶς κόσμος πρὸ αὐτοῦ, οὐκ ἐν κόσμῳ αὐτὸς οὐδ’ αὐτὸ ἐν τόπῳ· τίς γὰρ τόπος πρὶν κόσμον εἶναι; Τὰ δὲ μέρη ἀνηρημένα εἰς αὐτὸν καὶ ἐν ἐκείνῳ. Ψυχὴ δὲ οὐκ ἐν ἐκείνῳ, ἀλλ’ ἐκεῖνος ἐν αὐτῇ· οὐδὲ γὰρ τόπος τὸ σῶμα τῇ ψυχῇ, ἀλλὰ ψυχὴ μὲν ἐν νῷ, σῶμα δὲ ἐν ψυχῇ, νοῦς δὲ ἐν ἄλλῳ· τούτου δὲ οὐκέτι ἄλλο, ἢν’ ἂν ἦν ἐν αὐτῷ· οὐκ ἐν ὀπωοῦν ἄρα· ταύτῃ οὖν οὐδαμῇ. Ποῦ οὖν τὰ ἄλλα; ἐν αὐτῷ. Οὔτε ἄρα ἀφέστηκε τῶν ἄλλων οὔτε αὐτὸς ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐστιν οὐδὲ ἔστιν οὐδὲν ἔχον αὐτό, ἀλλ’ αὐτὸ ἔχει τὰ πάντα).

V

Our objective in this article was to collect and present relevant passages from Plotinus’ *Enneads* regarding the concepts of space that figure in

them. By way of conclusion, we may say that – although I acknowledge that further commentary on the passages here presented would still be required, in order to substantiate mythesis – there are three notions of space in Plotinus's writings: i) matter is *tópos* and *khóra*, the underlying ground for the apparition of bodies and the sensible realm; ii) *tópos*, but never *khóra*, is the space in connection to bodies and the sensible universe; iii) the principle is the place for that which comes from it. Notions i) and iii) are fairly clear and adjusted to Plotinus' philosophy. Notion ii), however, is not; Plotinus does not seem to hold only one, and coherent, notion for this concept of space: it appears in the *Enneads* as inferior to bodies and also as superior to them, as real and also as unreal, as dependent on bodies and also as independent from them, as the totality of the sensible universe and also as the projection of extension which soul creates when perceiving bodies.

Notion i) seems to rely on Plato's *Timaeus*, being original in so far as Plotinus' concept of matter is original, but not for the concept of space itself. Notion ii) seems related to Aristotle, Theophrastus, and the Stoics, presenting little originality in its possibilities. Notion iii) seems influenced by the Stoics and Neopythagoreans, but in a dematerialized version; it is impossible to decide whether Plotinus knew Philo's text, but the latter's interpretation of God as space is strikingly similar to Plotinus' third notion of space; it is original to the extent that it is perfectly reworked and adjusted to Plotinus' own hypostatic scheme.

As we have also seen, scholars' opinions differ as to which of these three is Plotinus' concept of space; and they usually present only one of these three notions, neglecting the concurrence of the others.

There is one fundamental question to be put after this somewhat frustrating investigation of the concept of space in Plotinus' philosophy: why Plotinus does not give to space the same attention he gives to time? Why is time more important than space for Plotinus? I do not have an answer for it yet, nor will try to speculate now.

Anyway, if we understand space as notions i) and iii), this question does not make sense; for, as much as he could, Plotinus has meditated upon matter and upon the hypostatic relations. But if we understand space as notion ii), we are perplexed. One cannot cease to wonder why so profound a philosopher as Plotinus has not investigated one of the fundamental

aspects of the sensible reality, especially when he has investigated time, space's customary philosophical partner. It may be said that the sensible did not concern Plotinus very much, but that is not wholly true either.

¹ Though there may be differences between the concepts of "place" and "space", for brevity's sake I will be frequently using only the word "space" instead of repeating each time "space or place", "space and place". The Greek word I primarily have in mind when discussing concepts of space is *tópos*; when *khōra* is the term discussed, I will make it clear.

² Cf. V. 1 [10] 4 and IV. 4 [28] 15–16.

³ BARACAT, 2013, p. 34.

⁴ JAMMER, 1993; SORABJI, 1988; SAMBURSKY, 1982. INGE (1918, volume I, p. 163–164) has written some of the most interesting pages on concept of space in Plotinus, but I am not quite sure whether all that he says can be found in the Plotinus' texts. He seems to understand *tópos* primarily as "extension", rather than as "space" or "place", and, as far as I can see, he makes no distinction between these concepts. He says, for instance, that "the ground-form of all appearance is Extension (*tópos*)"; that "if Space were real, externality would be an ultimate fact, for space is the form of externality"; and that "the space which we think of as containing the physical order is conceptual, not perceptual" – and quotes only IV. 2 [4] in order to substantiate it. I wish I had found such assertions there, but unfortunately I have not.

⁵ For a more detailed analysis of the concept of space in Plato, cf. ALGRA, 1995, p. 72–120, and the references there given.

⁶ All translations of the *Enneads* are ARMSTRONG's (1966–1988), sometimes slightly modified; the Greek text is that of the *editio minor* of HENRY and SCHWYZER (1964–1982).

⁷ Cf. NARBONNE (1993, p. 334–5), who thinks that such doctrine, which is the beginning of a progressive "de-realization" of place that is important in the post-Plotinian Neoplatonism, is of capital importance for Plotinus' metaphysics, being a novelty in relation both to Plato and to Aristotle.

⁸ Cf. CASEY (1998, p. 88–89, 91, 288, 333), who relies on Sambursky's selection and sees Plotinus as the founder of a non-sensible notion of space, the "intelligible place". Strictly speaking, however, "there is not any place in the intelligible world" (VI. 2 [43] 16. 4).

⁹ This place could be interpreted as the very intelligible totality, but I think Plotinus uses the word metaphorically here and elsewhere, when applied to the noetic world. I cannot see how this and other passages can be read as to suggest that such intelligible place is some sort of model for the sensible place. Cf.: I. 3 [20] 1. 16; I. 6 [1] 9. 41; IV. 3 [27] 32. 26; V. 9 [5] 2. 1 – see SLEEMAN and POLLET, 1980, *sub voc.* b).

¹⁰ The adjective *hýsteron* seems to have confused some other great scholars too: HELM (1981, p. 237), for instance, despite his profound analysis of the concept of time in Plotinus, believes that "Plotinus makes four main points in dealing with time in relation to space", three of

which seem hard to sustain for me. The second point is that space is “dependent and subservient to time”, that “space is after everything else [Helm here refers to INGE, volume I, 1918, p. 163–14, who says only that space is “later” than matter; see note 4 above]”, and that “space is brought under time and is inferior to time”. Statements like these do not find fundament in Plotinus’ texts.

¹¹ Cf. GERSON (1994, pp. 233–234, n. 58), who also asserts that there is in Plotinus a priority of time to space; Gerson also objects to the idea of an “atemporal duration” in Plotinus’ thought formulated by STUMP and KRETZMANN (1981, pp. 444–445), which would be similar to the idea of an “intelligible time”.

¹² I am not concerned with the question whether Plato himself made such identification or not, but only with the fact that Plotinus seems to do and that he very probably believes that Plato did it; Plotinus is not fully aware, as we are nowadays, that Aristotle (*Physics*, IV, 2, 209b 11–16) ascribes this theory to Plato’s unwritten doctrines, and that the concept of “matter” is much more Aristotelian than Platonic.

¹³ Cf. also III. 6 [26] 17. 13, where Plotinus says that the forms entering matter make a *khôra* for things.

¹⁴ Cf. IV. 5 [29] 2. 13; V. 8 [31] 3. 36; VI. 5 [23] 3. 14; VI. 8 [39] 11. 15.

¹⁵ Gerson does not quote any passage to illustrate it in the context, but a few pages earlier (p. 96) he had referred to III. 6 [26] 13. 19, and in note 16 (which is on p. 230), he says: “in III.6.13.19 Plotinus quotes *Timaeus* 52a8–b1, where Plato identifies the receptacle as *khôra*. So, when Plotinus further identifies the receptacle as matter, he seems to be endorsing Aristotle’s interpretation of matter as space”.

¹⁶ *Principia*, *Scholium* V: “Spatium absolutum natura sua absque relatione ad externum quoduis semper manet simile & immobile”.

¹⁷ *Third Letter to Clarke*, 4: “As for my own opinion, I have said more than once that I hold space to be something purely relative, as time is – that I hold it to be an order of coexistences, as time is an order of successions. For space denotes, in terms of possibility, an order of things that exist at the same time, considered as existing together, without entering into their particular manners of existing. And when many things are seen together, one consciously perceives this order of things among themselves.”

¹⁸ Cf. VI. 1 [42] 14. 2–3: “Now Academy and Lyceum are in every senses places, and parts of place, just as the “above” and the “here” are species or parts of place” (Ἡ μὲν οὖν Ἀκαδημία καὶ τὸ Λύκειον πάντως τόποι καὶ μέρη τόπου, ὥσπερ τὸ ἄνω καὶ τὸ κάτω καὶ τὸ ὧδι εἶδη ἢ μέρη).

¹⁹ Theophrastus (Simplicius, *In. Phys.*, 639, 15–22 Diels, quoted and translated by SAMBURSKY, 1982, p. 32–33): “Perhaps place is not a reality in itself, but is defined by the arrangement and position of bodies in respect to their natures and powers, as is the case with animals and plants and in general with those non homogeneous bodies which, whether animate or inanimate, have a nature endowed with form. For in these bodies there is a certain arrangement and position of the parts in respect of the substance as a whole. Thus each is said to be in its own place through the existence of the proper arrangement, especially as every part of a body is desirous of, and strives after, occupying its own place and position” (“μήποτε

οὐκ ἔστι καθ'αὐτὸν οὐσία τις τόπος, ἀλλὰ τῇ τάξει καὶ θέσει τῶν σωμάτων λέγεται κατὰ τὰς φύσεις καὶ δυνάμεις, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ζῶων καὶ φυτῶν καὶ ὅλων τῶν ἀνομοιομερῶν εἴτε ἐμφύχων εἴτε ἀψύχων, ἐμμορφον δὲ τὴν φύσιν ἐχόντων. καὶ γὰρ τούτων τάξις τις καὶ θέσις τῶν μερῶν ἐστὶ πρὸς τὴν ὅλην οὐσίαν. διὸ καὶ ἕκαστον ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ χώρᾳ λέγεται τῷ ἔχειν τὴν οἰκείαν τάξιν, ἐπεὶ καὶ τῶν τοῦ σώματος μερῶν ἕκαστον ἐπιποθήσειεν ἂν καὶ ἀπαιτήσῃε τὴν ἑαυτοῦ χώραν καὶ θέσιν”).

²⁰ The evolution and dematerialization of this notion of space is well and briefly presented by SAMBURSKY (1982, p. 13-15).

²¹ Cf. e.g. *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, vol. II, 504, 505, 507.

²² S. *VF.*, vol. II, 527.

²³ PSEUDO-ARCHYTAS (= SIMPLICIUS, *In Categ.* 363, 22-27 Kalbfleisch, quoted and translated by SAMBURSKY, 1982, pp. 36-37): “It is peculiar to place that while other things are in it, place is in nothing. For if it were in some place, this place again will be in another place, and this will go on without end. For this very reason it is necessary for other things to be in place, but for place to be in nothing. And so for the things that exist there always holds the relation of the limits to the things limited, for the place of the whole cosmos is the limit of all existing things” (“τῷ δὲ τόπῳ ἰδίον ἐστὶν τὸ τὰ μὲν ἄλλα ἐν αὐτῷ ἡμεν, αὐτὸν δὲ ἐν μηδενί. εἰ γὰρ ἔν τινι τόπῳ, ἔσται καὶ ὁ τόπος πάλιν αὐτὸς ἐν ἐτέρῳ, καὶ τοῦτο μέχρι ἀπείρου συμβασιταί. ἀνάγκη τοιγαροῦν τὰ μὲν ἄλλα ἐν τόπῳ ἡμεν, τὸν δὲ τόπον ἐν μηδενί, ἀλλ’ οὕτως ἔχεν πρὸς τὰ ὄντα ὥσπερ καὶ τὰ πέρατα πρὸς τὰ περατούμενα· ὁ γὰρ τῷ παντός κόσμῳ τόπος πέρας ἀπάντων τῶν ὄντων ἐστίν”).

²⁴ PSEUDO-ARCHYTAS (= SIMPLICIUS, *In Categ.* 361, 21-24 Kalbfleisch, quoted and translated by SAMBURSKY, 1982, pp. 36-37): “Since everything that is in motion is moved in some place, it is obvious that one has to grant priority to place, in which that which causes motion or is acted upon will be. Perhaps thus it is the first of all things, since all existing things are either in place or not without place” (“ἐπεὶ γὰρ πᾶν τὸ κινεούμενον ἐν τόπῳ τινὶ κινεῖται, φανερόν ὅτι τόπον ὑπῆμεν δεῖ πρότερον, ἐν ᾧ περ ἐσσεῖται τὸ κινεῖον ἢ τὸ πάσχον. ἴσως δὲ τὰ καὶ πρῶτον τοῦτο ἀπάντων, ἐπειδὴ περ τὰ ὄντα πάντα ἦτοι ἐν τόπῳ ἐντὶ ἢ οὐκ ἄνευ τόπου”).

²⁵ PHILO, *On Dreams*, 1. 61. 3-64.4 (translated by COLSON and WHITAKER, 1934, p. 329): “Now ‘place’ has a threefold meaning, firstly that of a space filled by a material form, secondly that of the Divine Word, which God Himself has completely filled throughout with incorporeal potencies ; for ‘they saw,’ says Moses, ‘the place where the God of Israel stood’ (Ex. xxiv. 10) Only in this place did he permit them to sacrifice, forbidding them to do so elsewhere: for they were expressly bidden to go up ‘to the place which the Lord God shall choose’ (Deut. xii. 5), and there to sacrifice ‘the whole burnt offerings and the peace offerings’ (Ex. xx. 24) and to offer the other pure sacrifices. There is a third signification, in keeping with which God Himself is called a place, by reason of His containing things, and being contained by nothing whatever, and being a place for all to flee into, and because He is Himself the space which holds Him; for He is that which He Himself has occupied, and naught encloses Him but Himself. I, mark you, am not a place, but in a place; and each thing likewise that exists ; for that which is contained is different from that which contains it, and the Deity, being contained by nothing, is of necessity Its own place” (λέγεται γάρ, ὅτι “ἀπήνησε τόπον” (Gen. 28, 11). τριχῶς δὲ ἐπινοεῖται τόπος, ἅπας μὲν χώρα ὑπὸ σώματος πεπληρωμένη, κατὰ δεύτερον δὲ τρόπον ὁ θεοῦ λόγος, ὃν ἐκπεπλήρωκεν ὅλον δι’ ὅλων ἀσωμάτοις δυνάμεσιν αὐτός ὁ θεός. “εἶδον” γὰρ φησὶ “τὸν τόπον οὗ εἰστήκει ὁ θεός τοῦ Ἰσραήλ” (Exod. 1.62.5 24, 10), ἐν ᾧ μόνῳ καὶ ἱεουργεῖν

ἐφήκεν ἀλλαχόθι κωλύσας· διείρηται γὰρ ἀναβαίνειν εἰς τὸν τόπον, ὃν ἂν ἐκλέξηται κύριος ὁ θεός, κάκει ῥύειν τὰ ὀλοκαυτώματα καὶ τὰ σωτήρια καὶ τὰς ἄλλας ἀμώμους θυσίας ἀνάγειν (Deut. 12, 5 ss.). κατὰ δὲ τρίτον σημαινόμενον αὐτὸς ὁ θεός καλεῖται τόπος τῷ περιέχειν μὲν τὰ ὅλα, περιέχεσθαι δὲ πρὸς μηδενὸς ἀπλῶς, καὶ τῷ καταφυγῇ τῶν συμπάντων αὐτὸν εἶναι, καὶ ἐπειδὴ περ αὐτὸς ἐστὶ χώρα ἑαυτοῦ, κεχωρηκώς ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἐμφερόμενος μόνῳ ἑαυτῷ. ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν οὐκ εἰμι τόπος, ἀλλ' ἐν τόπῳ, καὶ ἕκαστον τῶν ὄντων ὁμοίως· τὸ γὰρ περιεχόμενον διαφέρει τοῦ περιέχοντος, τὸ δὲ θεῖον ὑπ' οὐδενὸς περιεχόμενον ἀναγκαίως ἐστὶν αὐτὸ τόπος ἑαυτοῦ.

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