

Plotinus – the Author of the Notion of Development?¹

Abstract: While investigating the origin of the notion of development in Greek, I came across some inconsistent information in dictionaries. The putative Plotinus' authorship of the term of development as we know it seemed implausible because of a fifteen-century gap between the attestations, so I decided to look at Plotinus' own text and see for myself how he used the questionable verb ἐξελίσσω.

After conducting a thorough analysis of Plotinus language on a philological level, I came to the conclusion that Plotinus' usage of the verb ἐξελίσσω is certainly original, but quite different from the modern one. Besides this one, there are a few more verbs in a similar semantic field that Plotinus uses rather differently, as it is shown in the present contribution. The subtlety of the original text was unfortunately lost in translation and the technical term ἐξελίσσω was not only left unrecognized as such, but it also suffered an insertion of unrelated and even anachronistic ideas later.

Keywords: Plotinus, philosophical terminology, translation, ἐξελίσσω, ἀναπτύσσω, ἀνελίσσω, the notion of development.

Introduction

The Modern Greek language uses three nouns (ἀνέλιξη, ἐξέλιξη, ἀνάπτυξη) and two verbs (ἀναπτύσσω, ἐξελίσσω) to express the notion of *development*. Interestingly enough, all these words have the same idea of *unrolling* or *unfolding* in the background. While investigating the origin of this notion in Greek, I came across some inconsistent information: at the same time the notion of development was, on the one hand, borrowed recently from French (Μπαμπινιώτης s.vv. ἀνάπτυξη, ἀναπτύσσω, ἀνέλιξη, ἐξέλιξη), and, on the other, originally Greek – first recorded in Plotinus *Enn.* 1.4: καὶ ζωῆν ἐξελιττομένην εἰς τέλος ἔχουσι (Μπαμπινιώτης s.v. ἐξελίσσω). This would make Plotinus the author of the notion of development since he was the first one who was recorded as using it, but this seemed implausible. What I was concerned with was the gap between the attestations: was it possible

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that the verb was recorded in a certain sense almost fifteen centuries before the noun, as it was stated in Μπαμπινιώτης? Thus I decided to investigate this matter some further. Starting from the Brill dictionary, I found that it confirmed the fact that Plotinus had used the verb ἐξελίσσω in the sense of development with the same instance which I had found in Μπαμπινιώτης (MONTANARI 2018², 721). I also consulted TGL and I found little information on Plotinus' use of these words, so I decided to look at the very source and see for myself how Plotinus used this verb.

The conviction that certain issues may be going unnoticed was the initial incentive for the present contribution. One of these certainly is the putative Plotinus' authorship of the term of development as we know it.

1. Analysis

The data I will be discussing in this article are nineteen passages in which Plotinus uses the following verbs: ἐξελίσσω, ἀνελίσσω, or ἀναπτύσσω.² According to the data, Plotinus used the verb ἀνελίσσω only once (Plot. *Enn.* 1.1.8), the verb ἀναπτύσσω four times (Op. cit. 4.3.30; 4.4.1; 6.7.1; 6.7.2), and the verb ἐξελίσσω seventeen times (Op. cit. 1.4.1; 2.4.9; 3.7.6; 3.7.11; 3.8.8 bis; 4.3.5; 4.8.6; 5.3.3; 5.3.10; 5.7.3; 5.8.6; 6.6.9; 6.7.9; and 6.8.18 tris).

2.1. ἐξελίσσω

Let me begin this analysis with the most frequent of these verbs – ἐξελίσσω. The primary meaning of this verb is 'to unfold'. For only three out of seventeen times it is used in the active form, having as objects: *matter* (ὕλην, 2.4.9), *eternity* (τόν i.e. αἰῶνα, 3.7.6), and *form* (μορφήν, 5.3.3). All other forms are part of passive or reflexive constructions, having as subjects: *ratio* (λόγος, 3.7.11; 4.3.5; 5.7.3), *circle* (κύκλος, 3.8.8; 6.8.18), *life* (ζωή, 1.4.1), *nature* (φύσις, 4.8.6), *image* (εἶδωλον, 5.8.6), *number* (ἀριθμός, 6.6.9), *powers* (δυνάμεις, 6.7.9), and *mind* (νοῦς, 6.8.18). From the fact that the majority of these are abstract nouns, it can be deduced that Plotinus used this verb in a shifted meaning, but is it the same as modern 'to develop'?

Sometimes this verb comes in a juxtaposition with other verbs meaning 'to set apart, separate', 'to extend',³ 'to stretch out' (οὐδ' ἄρα διαστήσεις, οὐδ' ἐξελίξεις, οὐδὲ προάξεις, οὐδὲ παρατενεῖς, 3.7.6) and 'to pour out' (καὶ οἶον ἐκχυθὲν καὶ ἐξελιχθὲν, 6.8.18). In the first instance, Plotinus speaks about

² For the *Enneads*, I have used the digitized Greek text of HENRY / SCHWYZER 1951–1973 edition.

³ Likewise in Plut. *Caes.* 23.2: προήγαγεν ἔξω τῆς οἰκουμένης τὴν Ρωμαίων ἡγεμονίαν, "he extended the power of Rome beyond the limits of the inhabited world" (MONTANARI 2018², 1744).

eternity as a sole and indivisible entity which cannot “be separated or *unrolled*⁴ or extended or stretched out”. It is clear that Plotinus uses tautology here (compare *προάγω* and *παρατείνω*), which leads to the conclusion that the meaning of *ἐξελίσσω*, in this case, must be similar to *δίωστημι*. In the other instance, Plotinus explains the origin of the mind, saying that it was “as poured out and *unrolled*”⁵ from Him (God). Again, the situation is analogous: the effect of the action denoted by *ἐξελίσσω* here has to be similar to the effect of *ἐκχέω*.

In the context of this verb we can often find other verbs or phrases which denote such changes of state like *motion* (1.4.1; 3.8.8; 4.8.6; 5.3.10; 6.7.9), or *division* (3.7.6; 3.7.11; 3.8.8; 4.3.5; 5.3.3; 5.3.10; 6.6.9), or *creation* (3.7.11; 3.8.8; 4.8.6; 6.8.18). Also, the notion behind the verb *ἐξελίσσω* is usually contrasted with *unity* or *simplicity* (3.7.11; 6.6.9) and *inaction* (5.3.10).

Besides, the most common outcome of the action denoted with this verb is *the increase in number of entities*, as it is explicitly stated in the following excerpts: *ἐξελίττω* αὐτὸν ὁ λόγος *διέξοδον εἰς πολὺ* ... *ποιεῖ* (3.7.11); [νοῦς] *πολὺς γινόμενος*, οἷον βεβαρημένος, καὶ ἐξελίξεν αὐτὸν πάντα ἔχειν θέλων (3.8.8); [ψυχαί] λόγοι νῶν οὔσαι καὶ ἐξειλιγμένα μάλλον ἢ ἐκείνοι, οἷον *πολὺ ἐξ ὀλίγου γινόμεναι* (4.3.5); [τοῦτο] ὁ δ’ ἐξελίττει ἑαυτό, *καὶ πολλὰ ἂν εἴη* (5.3.10).

I would like to dwell on this idea of multitude slightly since I find it crucial for understanding the notion behind this verb. This multitude, which occurs in Plotinus’ writings as a result of the action of *ἐξελίσσω*, is not an ordinary multitude, but a *multiplex unity* made by a division that doesn’t divide the entity. It is difficult to see how that is possible, so, in order to comprehend this, we must take into account Plotinus’ ontological discussion. In a way, beings created by the division of an entity retain essential characteristics of that entity, which makes them one with the original entity, but at the same time, they are also separate, individual beings. This is clearly seen in 4.3.5 where Plotinus explains the relation of the soul (*ψυχή*) and mind (*νοῦς*): “they (souls) tend to divide, but they are unable to reach full division, so they preserve both sameness and diversity, and each of them remains one whole and all of them together are one whole”.⁶ Furthermore, he uses the formulation “divided, but not divided” (*μερισθεῖσαι καὶ οὐ μερισθεῖσαι*) to finish his

⁴ I will use the primary meaning of the term *ἐξελίσσω* until I propose a better solution.

⁵ Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are the author’s own.

⁶ *Μερίζεσθαι ἢ ἡθελήσασθαι καὶ οὐ δυνάμεναι εἰς πᾶν μερισμοῦ ἰέναι, τὸ ταῦτόν καὶ ἕτερον σφίζουσαι, μένει τε ἑκάστη ἐν καὶ ὁμοῦ ἐν πάσαι.*

explanation. There is a stunning similarity between this and another section (6.8.18), in which Plotinus expounds on the relation between mind (νοῦς) and Him (αὐτός / ἐκεῖνος⁷), utilizing a circle (κύκλος) as a metaphor, describing it as οἷον ἐξελιχθὲν οὐκ ἐξεληλιγμένον regarding its parts. Of the utmost significance is this instance, in which Plotinus uses the verb ἐξελίσσω almost the same as he used μερίζω above, also denoting the division that doesn't divide the entity, which proves that the special meaning of Plotinus' ἐξελίσσω must be close to μερίζω. Religious considerations probably didn't let Plotinus use a common verb in the description of His (God's) nature, therefore he crafted this special term. Noticeably, he even avoids application of this special term to God, whereas he chooses the passive form: οὕτω τοι καὶ τὸν νοῦν καὶ τὸ ὄν χρὴ λαμβάνειν, γενόμενον ἐξ ἐκείνου καὶ οἷον ἐκχυθὲν καὶ ἐξελιχθὲν.⁸

In support of the advanced interpretation, I am calling the reader's attention to another instance (6.6.9), where Plotinus uses the passive perfect participle of the verb ἐξελίσσω as an attribute to the noun *number*, which is contrasted with another participle meaning *united* or *singular*: τὸ μὲν ὄν ἀριθμὸς ἡνωμένος, τὰ δὲ ὄντα ἐξεληλιγμένους ἀριθμὸς. Here ἐξεληλιγμένους must mean 'multiplied' or 'plural'.

There is one other notable instance that should be discussed. In 5.7.3 Plotinus uses two verbal nouns, derivatives of two verbs of the very close primary meaning. The first one is, naturally, ἐξελίσσω, and the other one is a rare ἀναπλώω 'to unfold, open'.⁹ In this passage, Plotinus lectures on the (in)finiteness of the world, saying: "if it has been measured how many of what (things) will appear, surely the quantity and abundance are determined (by) τῆ τῶν λόγων ἀπάντων ἐξελίξει καὶ ἀναπλώσει".¹⁰ Since Plotinus explicitly states that the *quantity* is determined by denoted actions, there can be no other conclusion than that those actions include some sort of division or multiplication. Following this, I propose the interpretation "by the *multiplication* and *resolution* of all the ratios" even though in the Brill dictionary *evolution* is

⁷ In the Greek text there is only a pronoun, but the noun *Deus* is used in the Latin translation by FICINO 1580².

⁸ "In the same manner, we have to comprehend both mind and being, originating from Him as effused and *unrolled*."

⁹ This is the only time this verb or its derivatives appear in the *Enneads*.

¹⁰ Plotinus explains further: "How big the world should be, or how many lives should exist in it, from the beginning is given in the one who possesses the ratios", and gives an example that in the case of other animals who have a numerous progeny there surely are so many ratios as many offspring an animal has, concluding that the number of ratios must be countless.

given as a translation of ἀνάπλωσις (MONTANARI 2018², 149).¹¹ It is clear that *evolution* cannot be the right translation in this case, since it denotes the action which results in a qualitative and not quantitative change. I have to point out that the interpretation I propose is not groundbreaking, and that similar translations of the verb ἀναπλώω, compatible to the one suggested here, were already given in the dictionaries ('to be resolved into simple elements' LSJ s.v. ἀναπλώω; 'to be simplified or reduced to basic elements' MONTANARI 2018², 149).

Taking all this into account, we must think of the meaning of this verb as describing an action of *movement* which induces a *change of state* which results in some kind of *proliferation*. Naturally associated with this idea is also the idea of *expansion*, especially in the aforementioned section 5.7.3, as well as in 3.8.8, where talking about the intellect (νοῦς) Plotinus states: "And starting as one it did not remain what it was, but it secretly became multiple, as if it was pregnant, and it *unrolled* itself, wanting to own everything".¹² A similar idea is present also in 2.4.9 where the verb ἐξελίσσω is used in the active form as a causative: Προσελθοῦσα οὖν ἡ πηλικότης ἐξελίττει εἰς μέγεθος τὴν ὕλην; in the interpretation: "Does the quantity, joining to it, cause the matter to *unroll* into the magnitude?". In this case, the idea of expansion is prevailing, so the verb ἐξελίσσω here should be comprehended as close to 'to expand' or 'to spread'.

Furthermore, there is also the idea of *progress* associated with the verb ἐξελίσσω, in particular in 4.8.6 where Plotinus discusses the natural law by which "everything creates something which comes after it and *unfolds* as a seed, going from an indivisible principle to the perceptible end ... advancing always till the last end as far as possible".¹³ Here Plotinus' ἐξελίσσω comes very close to the modern notion of development, I would say, closer than in any other section.¹⁴ But if we look at the other section where the same idea of progress is present (6.7.9), we will see that this progress does not lead to a better, but a worse position, cf. καὶ ἡ ἔληξε προῖων ἀεὶ εἰς ἐλάττω ζώην, ἵππον εἶναι, ἄλλον δὲ κατωτέρω λήξαι. Ἐξελιπτόμεναι γὰρ αἱ δυνάμεις

¹¹ Besides, in the *Lexicon Plotinianum* 'unfolding' is given as the only translation of Gk. ἀνάπλωσις (SLEEMAN/POLLETTI 1980: 90).

¹² Ἀλλὰ ἀρξάμενος ὡς ἐν οὐχ ὡς ἦρξατο ἔμεινεν, ἀλλ' ἔλαθεν ἑαυτὸν πολὺς γενόμενος, οἶον βεβαρημένος, καὶ ἐξείλιξεν αὐτὸν πάντα ἔχειν θέλων.

¹³ Εἴπερ ἐκάστη φύσει τοῦτο ἔνεστι τὸ μετ' αὐτὴν ποιεῖν καὶ ἐξελίττεσθαι οἶον σπέρματος ἕκτινος ἀμεροῦς ἀρχῆς εἰς τέλος τὸ αἰσθητὸν ἰούσης ... χωρεῖν δὲ αἰεὶ, ἕως εἰς ἔσχατον μέχρη τοῦ δυνατοῦ

¹⁴ Curiously enough, in chronological order, this is the first *Ennead* where this term was used.

καταλείπουσιν ἀεὶ εἰς τὸ ἄνω.¹⁵ Moreover, a similar statement is repeated in 3.8.8: βελτίω μὲν ὄθεν, χείρω δὲ εἰς ὅ, which means “whence is better and whereto is worse”.

Admittedly, the use of comparison with the growth of the seed along with the verb ἐξελίσσω (3.7.11; 4.8.6) on the first sight is more suitable to the modern notion of development than to what I am describing here, but let us consider it from another perspective: if we take into account that one seed becomes one stem from which many branches and twigs grow as if it had divided itself into them, this picture may be found illustrative of the idea of proliferation as well.

An additional support to this point of view could be obtained by ARMSTRONG 1940, 61-64, who, interpreting the metaphor of the seed in the light of Plotinus’ theory of emanation, concluded: “the idea obviously, if pressed too far, would invert the whole system and transform it from an Aristotelian–Platonic metaphysic in which Act precedes potency into an evolutionary system of the type of the earlier Stoicism”, making a final remark that Plotinus’ system was “teleological, rather than evolutionary”. Moreover, in the translation of the excerpt from 4.8.6 which he provided there, Armstrong avoided using the verb *to develop*, choosing *to unroll* instead.

The teleological orientation of Plotinus’ thought, which Armstrong was pointing out, can be clearly seen in Plotinus’ dissertation on happiness (εὐδαιμονία) where he first embarked upon determining the range of beings that have the privilege of achieving it (1.4.1). Designating purpose (τέλος) as the criterion of a fulfilled life, Plotinus concluded that “a share of happiness should be given to every creature who reaches the last, even to the lowliest of the creatures – to the plants, for nature is established in them, having led their life and having become fulfilled from the beginning to an end”.¹⁶ Therefore the excerpt cited in the dictionaries, given in a slightly wider context here: μεταδώσειν δὲ καὶ τοῖς φυτοῖς ζωσι καὶ αὐτοῖς καὶ ζωὴν ἐξελιττομένην εἰς

¹⁵ “And it stopped progressing always into a worse animal, for instance, a horse, and something else if it had stopped somewhere lower, for the powers, while *unfolding*, always leave behind (something) above.”

¹⁶ This is a paraphrase of 1.4.1 Καὶ τοίνυν καὶ εἰ τέλος τι τὸ εὐδαιμονεῖν τιθέμεθα, ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἔσχατον τῆς ἐν φύσει ὀρέξεως, καὶ ταύτη ἂν αὐτοῖς μεταδοίμεν τοῦ εὐδαιμονεῖν εἰς ἔσχατον ἀφικνουμένων, εἰς ὃ ἐλθοῦσιν ἴσταται ἢ ἐν αὐτοῖς φύσις πᾶσαν ζωὴν αὐτοῖς διεξελθοῦσα καὶ πληρώσασα ἐξ ἀρχῆς εἰς τέλος. Εἰ δὲ τις δυσχεραίνει τὸ τῆς εὐδαιμονίας καταφέρειν εἰς τὰ ζῶα τὰ ἄλλα - οὕτω γὰρ ἂν καὶ τοῖς ἀτιμοτάτοις αὐτῶν μεταδώσειν· μεταδώσειν δὲ καὶ τοῖς φυτοῖς ζωσι καὶ αὐτοῖς καὶ ζωὴν ἐξελιττομένην εἰς τέλος ἔχουσι.

τέλος ἔχουσι should be translated as follows: “a share should be given even to the plants because they live too and they have a life which *unfolds* to an end / purpose”, as it is rendered both in Latin (FICINO 1580², 29): “... *conveniat, et plantis insuper, ipsis quoque viventibus, vitamque ad finem proprium perducentibus*”, and in English (MACKENNA / PAGE 1956², 40): “... *and not withholding it even from the plants, living they too and having a life unfolding to a Term*”.

It is surprising that lexicographers have chosen this very instance to describe the meaning of Plotinus’ ἐξελίσσω,¹⁷ when Ficino had already translated it differently compared to the other instances. Namely, in the interpretation of all other passages, Ficino used only two Latin verbs: prevailing *explicare* (2.4.9; 3.7.6; 3.7.11; 3.8.8; 4.3.5; 4.8.6; 6.6.9; 6.7.9; 6.8.18), along with *evolvere* (3.8.8; 5.7.3; 5.8.6; 6.8.18 bis), or even both of them together (5.3.3; 5.3.10). From the fact that there is hardly any difference in their meaning in the context can be deduced that Ficino uses these two verbs interchangeably. Moreover, in passages where Plotinus uses the verb ἐξελίσσω more than once (3.8.8 and 6.8.18), Ficino uses those two alternately, presumably only for the sake of stylistic variation.¹⁸ Nevertheless, as already mentioned, there are a few occasions where Ficino uses both of them even though there is only one verb (ἐξελίσσω) in the Greek original. In my opinion, such iterated use could be explained as an aspiration for emphasis.

Let me provide a short overview of MacKenna’s English translation as well. The prevailing translation of the verb ἐξελίσσω is *to unfold* (1.4.1; 3.7.6; 4.3.5; 4.8.6; 6.6.9; 6.7.9), and similar ones such as *to unroll* (5.7.3), *to uncoil* (3.7.11), *to fling outward* (3.8.8), while he only uses *to develop* in two sections (5.3.3, and 6.8.18 tris). Moreover, there are two sections where he uses the words which connote separation or resolution: *to analyze* (5.3.10), and a paraphrase “*less compact*” (5.8.6), pertaining to an image.

In conclusion to this part, having considered all aspects of this notion, I strongly believe that I have proved that the notion behind Plotinus’ ἐξελίσσω is quite different from modern notion of *development* (and *evolution*), and as such should not be translated similarly, although this is the only option offered by the *Lexicon Plotinianum* (SLEEMAN / POLLET 1980: 392).

Is it a mistake that the meaning of *development* (and *evolution*) is attached

¹⁷ Besides Μπαμπινιώτης and Montanari, as it was mentioned in the introduction, even ΔΗΜΗΤΡΑΚΟΣ 1, 2638 cites only this instance from Plotinus, giving the poorly informative definition “γίνομαι συνθετικώτερος”. (The other instance cited in Op. cit. 1,2637 s.v. ἐξελιξις was 5.3.7 marked only as metaphorical with no definition given.)

¹⁸ For similar conclusions see CORRIAS 2019, 259.

to Plotinus' ἐξελίσσω in modern lexicography? From a modern perspective, it surely is. Moreover, MacKenna has already admonished the readers of Plotinus to avoid such a mistake: "... the terminology, simple enough in itself, becomes dishearteningly mysterious or gravely misleading. A serious misapprehension may be caused, to take one instance among several, by incautiously reading into terms used by Plotinus meanings and suggestions commonly conveyed by those words in the language of modern philosophy or religion; on the other hand, there is in places almost a certainty of missing these same religious or philosophical implications or connotations where to the initiate the phrase of Plotinus conveys them intensely" (from the *Extracts from the explanatory matter in the first edition* in MACKENNA / PAGE, 1956², XXIII).¹⁹ Furthermore, since the verbs *to unfold* or *to unroll* are now also inevitably intertwined with the modern concept of development, it may seem that there is no appropriate translation for Plotinus' ἐξελίσσω. Consequently, the translator should be very cautious when interpreting Plotinus' writings.²⁰

The insertion of unrelated and even anachronistic ideas into Plotinus' thoughts, which can be found in the modern translations²¹ and dictionaries, was probably propelled by the false interpretation of the Latin translation. The verbs *evolvere* (primary meaning 'to roll out, roll forth; to unroll, unfold' L&S s.v. **evolvo**) and *explicare* (primary meaning 'to unfold, uncoil, unroll, unfurl, spread out, loosen, undo' L&S s.v. **explico**) in Ficino's translation were presumably later understood to be containing the modern notion of development, which officially appeared in French only in the 18th century and ex-

¹⁹ For a different kind of mistake that also causes misinterpretation see CATANA 2013 on how the historically incorrect assumption of a "system of philosophy" erroneously guided interpretations of Plotinus from the 18th century onwards.

²⁰ An anecdote transmitted by Porphyry (*Life of Plotinus* §§19-20, in MACKENNA / PAGE 1956², 13) testifies how difficult it is to accurately comprehend Plotinus' writings: Longinus, one of the most learned philologists of his time and a contemporary of Plotinus, in his letter asked Porphyry to send him a new copy of Plotinus' works, for the manuscript he had was "exceeding faulty". And Porphyry commented on that: "his notion, by the way, that the transcripts he acquired from Amelius were faulty sprang from his misunderstanding of Plotinus' style and phraseology; if there were ever any accurate copies, these were they, faithful reproductions from the author's own manuscript".

²¹ For instance, in the French translation BOUILLET 1857–1861 used the verb *développer* or its derivatives as translations of Plotinus' ἐξελίσσω every time, except in 2.4.9 which he translated as follows: "En entrant dans la matière, la quantité l'étend-elle pour lui donner la grandeur?" Moreover, in 5.7.3 he even used *evolution* in the translation "la quantité se trouvera limitée par l'évolution et le développement de toutes les raisons".

panded to other languages.²²

2.2. ἀναπτύσσω

The second verb which will be discussed here is ἀναπτύσσω. It has a similar primary meaning to the previous one. As mentioned before, this verb is used four times in the *Enneads*, three times in active forms, and once in the passive participle form. It applies to *shape* or *figure* (εἶδος, 6.7.2), *word* (λόγος, 4.3.30), *something one* (ἓν τι, 4.4.1), and *the only, one and simple* (τὸ μόνον καὶ ἓν καὶ ἀπλῶς, 6.7.1). Again we have the selection of objects narrowed to the abstract ones, which indicates that this verb also has a shifted meaning in regard to the primary one.

There are no comments on Plotinus' usage of this verb in the dictionaries, except from the Thesaurus (TGL 523G) which only comments on the form Plotinus used, indicating that all the writers use this verb with σσ, even those who never say πρᾶσσειν, and concluding that Plotinus' forms with ττ are wrong (whereas they are in fact hypercorrect), while leaving the sense of Plotinus' verb absolutely neglected in the comment.

I chose the most straightforward of instances to begin with: in 6.7.2 Plotinus explains that the *mind* (νοῦς) contains the *cause of being* (τὸ διὰ τι), consequently "if you ἀναπτύττοις πρὸς αὐτὸ whatsoever shape [which has a mind], you will find in it the cause of being".²³ In my opinion, the meaning of ἀναπτύσσω here is 'to open' rather than 'to develop' or even 'to unfold' as it is suggested in the *Lexicon Plotinianum* (SLEEMAN / POLLET, 1980: 90, 45). The situation is the same in 6.7.1 where Plotinus discusses anticipation and deliberation which are conducted by the soul (for self-preservation purpose), asking a question: "Why deliberate if there is only one?", and clarifying: Πῶς οὖν τὸ μόνον καὶ ἓν καὶ ἀπλῶς ἔχει ἀναπτυττόμενον τὸ τοῦτο, ἵνα μὴ τοῦτο; to which I propose the interpretation: "How is it possible that something which is the only, one and simple, **being open**, has not shown the same thing inside?".²⁴

A similar interpretation also suits another instance we have (4.3.30), in

²² French *développer* 'to develop' (primary meaning 'to unfold': "Ôter l'enveloppe qui contient quelque chose. Développer un paquet." LITTRÉ s.v.) was borrowed into English as *develop*, and translated into Italian as *sviluppare*, Spanish as *desarrollar* and German as *entwickeln* (according to FEW 3.402, endnote 22), as well as in Modern Greek, as it was noted in the introduction.

²³ Εἰ καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ εἶδος ἕκαστον πρὸς αὐτὸ ἀναπτύττοις, εὐρήσεις ἓν αὐτῷ τὸ διὰ τί.

²⁴ I couldn't translate this one word by word, due to the ellipticity of expression in Greek. Compare also Latin (FICINO 1580², 693): "Quomodo igitur illud quod est solum, et unum, et omnino se sim-

which Plotinus exposes his doctrine about the thinking ability and remembrance (memory), arguing that thoughts are latent and that words are their manifest representation, the only thing which we are able to perceive and comprehend, saying “the word **revealing** and bringing from thought to representation, has shown the thought as in a mirror”.²⁵

What remains disputable is the meaning of the fourth instance, due to the notion of division which frames it (Ἀλλ’ ὅταν ἐν τι διαίρη καὶ ἀναπτύσση; Ἡ ἐν τῷ νῷ διήρηται 4.4.1). In fact, in the context both meanings ‘to open, reveal’ and ‘to resolve, separate’ could apply. The argument in support of the second interpretation could be drawn from the context, which focuses on the division. In that case, the meaning of the verb ἀναπτύσσω in this instance might remain very close to the meaning of ἐξελίσσω as well. The adoption of this interpretation opens a dispute as to why Plotinus didn’t use the verb ἐξελίσσω instead, and it might also call into question the reading of the Greek text.²⁶ To avoid unnecessary complications, I am inclined to apply Occam’s razor and to adopt the meaning ‘to open, reveal’ in this case, for it can also be consistent with the interpretation.

It should be noted that such a semantic shift is regular and abundantly attested even before Plotinus’ time, as recorded in the Brill dictionary (figuratively ‘to display, reveal’ MONTANARI 2018², 151), hence we can conclude that Plotinus’ use this time falls within standard usage in Greek. Moreover, this meaning was also recorded in dictionaries of the medieval period (LBG 1, 1, 89; Κριαράς 125), which suggests that it was in continual use. Even though the verb ἀναπτύσσω clearly has a different meaning from ἐξελίσσω, in the interpretations we can find very similar translations to those of ἐξελίσσω. Ficino uses *evolvere* (4.4.1; 6.7.2), *explicare* (4.3.30), and *revolvere* (6.7.1), while MacKenna has a different solution on each occasion: *to unfold* (6.7.2), *to involve* (6.7.1), a paraphrase “*treated as a thing of grades*” (4.4.1), and he even uses *to reveal* in one instance (4.3.30).

pliciter habet, revolutionem in se admittit eiusmodi: in qua hoc aliquid statuatur, ne forsitan eveniat aliud?”

²⁵ Ὁ δὲ λόγος ἀναπτύξας καὶ ἐπάγων ἐκ τοῦ νοήματος εἰς τὸ φανταστικὸν ἔδειξε τὸ νόημα οἷον ἐν κατόπτρῳ.

²⁶ It is notable that in this section, unlike all others, our verb comes in the σσ form, which also implies that the form used here may require further examination. For instance, all the compounds of this verb in Plotinus’ text should be located and analyzed.

2.3. ἀνελίσσω

Let me now turn to the third Greek verb operating in a similar semantic field – ἀνελίσσω, which has the same root as the first one discussed here. It is the least frequent, used only once in the *Enneads* (6.7.2). If we examine the contexts, we will hardly find any difference between the one of ἀνελίσσω and the one of ἐξελίσσω. Not only is the verb ἀνελίσσω combined with another verb denoting separation, but there is also an abstract object – an idea (εἶδος): Ἐχομεν οὖν καὶ τὰ εἶδη διχῶς, ἐν μὲν ψυχῇ οἷον ἀνελιγμένα καὶ οἷον κεχωρισμένα, ἐν δὲ νῶ ὁμοῦ τὰ πάντα. Even so, Plotinus did use a different verb, and he must have had his reason to do so. It seems to me that this verb is used here in a contextual meaning very close to its normal sense, hence I propose this interpretation: “so we have the ideas in two ways: as if they were *unrolled* and separate (meaning: individually arranged) in the soul, and in the mind all together / at once”. This is exactly how this excerpt was translated by MacKenna (MACKENNA / PAGE, 1956², 16) *unrolled and separate*, as well as by Ficino 1580², 11: *explicatas atque segregatas*.

This section can be compared to another one from Plato (*Phileb.* 15e) where he uses the same verb in a very similar way, also placing it next to a verb of division, speaking of the straightforward speech as opposed to the vague expression.²⁷ Plato metaphorically employs all the verbs in the statement literally saying, on the one hand, “rolling in and kneading together” (ἐπὶ θάτερα κυκλῶν καὶ συμφύρων εἰς ἓν), while meaning “implying and mixing all in one” thus using ambiguous statements, and, on the other, “rolling out and dividing” (ἀνελιττων καὶ διαμερίζων), which imports “distinguishing and separating mixed things” thus making the expression clear and explicit.

Taking all this into account, we can infer that ἀνελίσσω is an option which Plotinus uses when he aims at the normal or primary meaning, while ἀναπτύσσω and ἐξελίσσω are used in their different transferred meanings. In the case of ἀναπτύσσω the same secondary sense employed by Plotinus had also been used elsewhere, while ἐξελίσσω was used in this occasional meaning only by Plotinus.

Overall, in this contribution, it was proven that Plotinus used these three

²⁷ Plat. *Phileb.* 15e: καὶ πάντα κινεῖ λόγον ἄσμενος, τοτὲ μὲν ἐπὶ θάτερα κυκλῶν καὶ συμφύρων εἰς ἓν, τοτὲ δὲ πάλιν ἀνελιττων καὶ διαμερίζων, εἰς ἀπορίαν αὐτὸν μὲν πρῶτον καὶ μάλιστα καταβάλλων, δεύτερον δ' αἰεὶ τὸν ἐχόμενον, ἄντε νεώτερος ἄντε πρεσβύτερος ἄντε ἡλιξ ὢν τυγχάνη, “always readily starts a conversation, alternately speaking vaguely and openly / straightly, putting himself in trouble first, and then all others who happen to be there: the younger, the older, or the peers”.

verbs differently. Nevertheless, the Latin translation in particular, but also the English and French²⁸ translations used the same words to translate all of them.

In conclusion, it is clear now that Plotinus differently nuanced three (or even four, if we count in ἀναπλόω) verbs with the similar primary meaning ‘to unroll, unfold’, but the subtlety of the original text was unfortunately lost in translation. Ficino’s tendency to deliver both a faithful translation and a clear and elegant text in Latin at the same time led to the retention of the metaphors similar to the ones Plotinus used and avoidance of word repetitions, which has conditioned his lexical choices. The result of this process, in regards to the verbs examined here, was a rather literal translation which did not reflect the nuances of Plotinus’ terminology.²⁹ This may have influenced other translators to use similar solutions.³⁰ Consequently, the technical term ἐξελίσσω was left undistinguished as such.

3. Was Plotinus the author of the notion of development?

I still find it difficult to answer the question of whether Plotinus was the author of the notion of development or not. Plotinus’ usage of the verb ἐξελίσσω is certainly original, but quite different from the modern notion of development, even though they both connote a kind of growth, expansion, and progress. However, some definitions of the modern term of development may suit Plotinus’ ἐξελίσσω as well: ‘to bring out the capabilities or possibilities of; to cause to grow or expand’, ‘to bring into being or activity; generate’, ‘to come into existence or operation’ (WEUD s.v. **de·ve·lop**). Even so, Plotinus’ notion does not connote the idea of gradual improvement or change into a more advanced form, which is inherent to the modern notion, but a change of state induced by the movement which usually results in proliferation or multiplication.

Taking this into account, the credit for the modern term of development should, in my opinion, not be given to Plotinus, since there is a considerable semantic difference between Plotinus’ use of the verb ἐξελίσσω and the mod-

²⁸ BOUILLET 1857–1861 consistently used *développer* or its derivatives in the translation of all the verbs examined here (nineteen times in total) save the aforementioned exception 2.4.9 (fn. 21) along with two more instances (6.7.1 and 6.7.2).

²⁹ While Plotinus had used four verbs, Ficino used only two. Moreover, Ficino alternated his two options in the instances where Plotinus repeated the same verb.

³⁰ As we have seen, the French translation uses only one main translation for all Plotinus’ verbs, while the English translation has a variety of verbs (four or five verbs if we count in *to develop*) of similar primary meaning.

ern meaning of development. However, Plotinus could have directly or rather indirectly impacted other writers to use the idea of unrolling as a metaphor. The main question we have to answer is: was there continuity or discontinuity of use of this notion in a transferred meaning of this kind? Presumably, there is no continuity of such a use in Greek³¹ (there are only a few sporadic attestations of the derivatives of the verb ἀνελίσσω supposedly in a meaning of development³²), however, further examination is required to confirm this. Conversely, in the West, there might be some kind of continuity. If we consider that Plotinus' writings were unknown in their full length to the Western part of Europe until Ficino translated the *Enneads* into Latin in Florence at the end of the fifteenth century (SAFFREY 1996, 488) and that Ficino's writings and translations were very influential in the Renaissance, directly (HOWLETT 2016, 165–199; cf. also FORSHAW 2011) or indirectly (JAYNE 1952), it is not difficult to imagine that the newly acquired connotations of the verb *evolvere* from Ficino's translation might have been adopted for the language of philosophy and science of that age and that the meaning of this verb evolved in order to encompass the new ideas. The answer to this question requires an examination of the Greek and Latin medieval and renaissance philosophical and scientific tradition in search for the use of the verbs in question, which clearly surpasses the limits of this article.

After all, the modern (French) semantic shift 'to unfold, unroll' > 'to develop' could also be (and probably is) independent from Greek (Plotinus') semantic shift. One thing is certain, the semantics of the Modern Greek attestations isn't the product of domestic (Greek) development, but a consequence of interlingual borrowing (from French) in the form of semantic calque (or semantic loan). For this reason, it is better not to include the forms from Plotinus and, in particular, their meaning as regards the etymology of their Modern Greek counterparts.

4. Conclusions

After conducting a thorough analysis of Plotinus' language on a philological level, I came to the conclusion that Plotinus' usage of the verb ἐξελίσσω is certainly original, but quite different from the modern one. I believe that I have convincingly shown that there is a terminological discrepancy between, on the one hand, Plotinus' usage of the verb ἐξελίσσω and, on the other, an

³¹ The verb ἐξελίσσω or its derivatives were not recorded in the meaning of development in the dictionaries dealing with the earlier periods in regard to the modern one (in LBG 1.3.535 the noun ἐξελιξις was recorded only as a military term; in Κριαράς it was not recorded at all).

³² LBG 1.1.100 ἀνελιγμός 'Aufrollen, Entwickeln' and ἀνελευκτικός 'entwickelnd, entfaltend'.

interpretation of it that can be found in modern dictionaries and some modern translations. This discrepancy rests on reading the modern notion of development into Plotinus' terminology, from which this notion is absent.

Curiously enough, this phenomenon is recent and probably caused by a false interpretation of Ficino's terminology used in the Latin translation, which was presumably later understood to be containing the modern notion of development. Still, there is a possibility that Plotinus' thought influenced the formation of the modern notion of development indirectly through Ficino's translation, but this has not been confirmed. Anyway, the meaning of Plotinus' ἐξελίσσω is clearly different from the meaning of modern notion of *development* (and *evolution*) and, in order to avoid misapprehension, it should not be translated in that way.

It is a separate problem that the special philosophical meaning of Plotinus' terminology is not appropriately registered in the dictionaries. This certainly can have negative implications for interpretation, since anachronisms, calques, and literal translation may occur in interpretation if the translators are left to themselves or misled by the dictionaries. Finally, the matter of accuracy and completeness of dictionary information is equally important to linguistic fields that traditionally base their conclusions on the dictionary information, for instance, etymology.

Note: I came into possession of the newest interpretation of the *Enneads* (GERSON ET AL. 2018) only after writing this article. Since I didn't have enough time to incorporate it in this text, I chose to write a review of it in this note. What follows is a short overview of the options used in the translation of the verbs analyzed here. The main translation in the case of ἐξελίσσω is *to unfold* (1.4.1.19; 2.4.9.14; 3.8.8.35; 4.8.6.9; 6.6.9.30; 6.7.9.39), as well as in the cases of ἀνελίσσω (1.1.8.8) and ἀναπλώω (5.7.3.16). In the other instances, in addition to the verbs *to unroll* (5.7.3.15), *to unravel* (3.7.6.17), *to unfurl* (3.7.11.24), which are all synonymous to *to unfold*, there are also *to analyse* (5.3.3.5; 5.3.10.53), and *to diffuse* (4.3.5.11), and even *to deploy* (3.8.8.37), while *to develop* is used only three times in 6.8.18.18,20, always preceded by the reservation *in a way*. There is also a paraphrase "*in another form*" (5.8.6.11), the only contestable translation because the verb ἐξελίσσω is not clearly translated here. I don't see the reason why the translator(s) didn't at least employ a paraphrase like "*in the expanded form*". The case of ἀναπτύσσω is almost the same: along with the expected *to unfold* (4.3.30.9) and *to unravel* (6.7.2.18), other options are *to unpack* (4.4.1.27), and a junction "*extended and, in a way, developed*" (6.7.1.56). It is clear that the scholars who interpreted the *Enneads* attempted to avoid the verb *to develop* in

this translation, most likely having in mind the semantic difference that I was trying to explain here. The only objection I could make is that all the analyzed Greek verbs have similar translations in this interpretation as well, which I find inadequate. Despite this, I have an exceptionally good impression of the new interpretation regarding the sections which I dealt with, and I consider it very accurate and faithful.

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Плотин – творац појма развој?

Апстракт: Истражујући порекло појма развоја у грчком, наишла сам на неке недоследне информације у речницима. Навод да је Плотин први употребио појам развоја какав ми знамо изгледао ми је невероватан због размака од готово петнаест векова између потврда, па сам одлучила да погледам сам Платинов текст и да се уверим како је он користио упитни глагол ἐξελίσσω.

Након темељне анализе Платиновог језика на филолошком нивоу, дошла сам до закључка да је Платинова употреба глагола ἐξελίσσω свакако оригинална, али да се прилично разликује од савремене. Поред овог постоји још неколико глагола у сличном семантичком пољу које Плотин користи прилично различито, као што је приказано у овом прилогу. Суптилност оригиналног текста временом се, нажалост, изгубила у преводу, а технички израз ἐξελίσσω не само да је остао непрепознат као такав, већ је касније претрпео и уметање неповезаних, па чак и анахроних идеја.

Кључне речи: Плотин, филозофска терминологија, превод, ἐξελίσσω, ἀναπτύσσω, ἀνελίσσω, појам развоја.