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Ennead II.4: On Matter by Plotinus (review)

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at stake in this (very long) discussion. It seemed to me that the discussion was disconnected from the interpretation of the rest of the passage that naturally appears to be pertinent.

Chapter 7 is about the return to Socrates's defense of the desire to die (80d–84d). Ebrey presents an interesting interpretation of the *Phaedo's* ethics, arguing that courage and temperance purify the soul of the body's desires: courage is defined as resistance against the body's desires, whereas temperance is defined as the disdain for and avoidance of bodily pleasures (178–79). Chapter 8 discusses the misology passage (84c–86e) and Simmias's *harmonia* objection (88c–95a). Here, Ebrey interprets the misology passage in light of his view of the dialogue as a tragedy: the characters were becoming increasingly convinced that Socrates was right, but now there is a “tragic reversal,” in which progress is reversed, and nobody is sure what to believe (185). The threat of misology is understood as coming from an “alternating pattern of conviction and doubt” that causes a person to come to hate *logoi* altogether (185).

The remaining chapters concern the rest of the *Phaedo*. Overall, Ebrey's book will be read by scholars as a commentary on the entire dialogue, since no passage is left unanalyzed. In this spirit, I enthusiastically recommend the book to anyone interested in the *Phaedo*.

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Plotinus. *Ennead II.4: On Matter*. Translation with an introduction and commentary by A. A. Long. The *Enneads* of Plotinus. Series editors, John M. Dillon and Andrew Smith. Parmenides Publishing, 2022. Pp. 239. Paperback, \$42.00.

Plotinus developed his theory of matter primarily from Plato and Aristotle and in opposition to the Stoics. A. A. Long's introduction and commentary to Plotinus's treatise on matter fill in the background for some of the refinements and changes that Plotinus makes both to these earlier positions and to the technical vocabulary used to express them. At the beginning of the introduction, Long presents a collection of twelve texts that he sees as sources for Plotinus's project. All these passages assume the necessity of matter for their respective cosmologies, as some illustrate the position of the Stoics and their sympathizers, who take matter as corporeal, while others present the position of most Platonists and Aristotelians, who take it as incorporeal (18–23). Others mention the influence of the Pythagorean indefinite dyad and the great and small—which needs a bit of unravelling (86–87)—and the identification of privation and evil, with the middle Platonist, Moderatus, foreshadowing developments in Plotinus (108, 198). Scattered throughout the commentary are challenges to current interpretations (103, 109, 111, 133, 139) and precise analyses of Plotinus's argument (170, 180).

Long seems to read the changes Plotinus brings to matter as eliminating any of the underlying Aristotelian assumptions in favor of a Platonic interpretation of matter. Matter as substrate, for example (a conception Long considers common to all the ancient thinkers), originally accounts for change among bodies, but Plotinus revises it to include the changeless realm of intellect. While giving precise details for Plotinus's radical reworking of privation, Long is not always as careful about “absolute” and “relative” matter, his terms for “prime” and “proximate” matter. Long notes that Plotinus describes absolute matter as common substrate (99–100) and precondition (141), analogous to Aristotle's prime matter as causal principle and pure possibility. But ‘matter’ for Plotinus also describes any lower entity in relation to what is higher—a Platonic extension of its proximate or relative meaning that Plotinus uses to include intelligible beings and the sensible world as deriving from Intellect and the One. This redefinition, however, does not exclude the role of proximate matter in corporeal change, as we shall see.

To elucidate the distinction between the absolute and relative meanings of ‘matter,’ let me suggest an alternative interpretation of a key passage (II 4[12] 3, lines 4–14) to Long's.

At line 4, Soul is described as matter relative to Intellect and productive reason, shaped by them and “brought to better form.” The composites resulting from the combination of Soul and Intellect are not akin to bodies, but are substances (as stated at 5, lines 20–24; see 56 and 105). At line 6, Plotinus turns abruptly to (seminal) reasons as themselves composites that cause another composite (a body), by actualizing nature to form. These reasons are not productive agents acting transcendentally; rather they generate bodies from within nature as the principle of life and as the seminal reasons within particular living things. Matter in this case is not “brought to form,” but is merely receptive of a form. The distinction between matter as brought to form and matter as merely receptive is corroborated in the subsequent discussion, where the matter of generated things is receptive of one form after another and is only one thing at a time, while the matter of eternal things is always the same and has the same form.

Curiously, the identification of Hypostasis Soul with intelligible matter escapes Long’s analysis. He states that “intelligible matter . . . is not a metaphysically distinct entity” (32). Both in the passage quoted above and in V 1[10] 3, 20–25, however, Plotinus clearly identifies Soul as the matter of the intelligible world. This means that Soul is not merely matter in the relative sense Long recognizes (i.e. matter as what is lower in relation to what is higher), but it is the matter of the Intellect in the absolute sense of common substrate holding all intelligible things together (3, 13). Both Soul and the matter of the sensible world thus function as the common substrates that all beings share in the intelligible realm and that all bodies share in the sensible realm. This view is original to Plotinus, with no parallel in the source texts Long provides.

A further clarification is needed about the nature (and translation) of *logos*. Long purports to translate *logos* in Plotinus exclusively as “formative principle” (186), but this univocal use misses the different senses that Plotinus employs in different contexts. “Formative principle” captures the transcendent causality at the heart of Plotinian metaphysics, but such causality is not always in play. For example, in II 4[12] 3, lines 4–14 (the passage I have referred to above), this transcendent causality is in play where Intellect and *logos* are described as the transcendent causes for Soul. In the same passage, however, the *logoi* in line 6 are plural and operating in the context of nature, namely the generation of living things on earth. In a later treatise, IV 4[28], chapters 11–16, Plotinus traces out how nature as a whole and each living thing have *logoi* within them, in contrast to art, where the *logos* is in the maker and is extrinsic to the thing made. These immanent *logoi* are clearly modeled on Stoic seminal reasons and cannot be “formative principles” in the sense that Long assumes. While these *logoi* derive from a transcendent *logos*, they function in nature and bodies like Stoic seminal reasons or Aristotelian forms. There are other usages for *logos* as well. At II 4[12] 15, lines 3 and 7, Long translates *logos* as “formative principle,” but the mathematical context is better served by “proportion” or “ratio,” as other translators have recognized. Indeed, Long’s discussion of 15, lines 4–12 as a syllogism (180) seems to count against considering a “formative principle” as a transcendent cause, because Plotinus holds that arguments, by their very nature, are excluded from the nondiscursive character of the intelligible. In sum, Long’s assumption that Plotinus uses terms univocally at times prevents him from considering textual hints that suggest a more coherent account of Plotinus’s thought.

While Plotinus, at II 4[12] 3, lines 4–14, clearly distinguishes the meanings of ‘matter’ as a substrate for intelligible beings and as a substrate for sensible beings, a further clarification of what matter is can be made in relation to the “indefinite dyad,” alluded to in 5, lines 29–39, and the “great and small,” referred to in 11, lines 34–35. The “indefinite dyad,” identified with primary otherness and motion, is correctly taken as inchoate intellect. But like many other commentators, Long confuses inchoate intellect and intelligible matter. If inchoate intellect is what first emerges from the One, it cannot be intelligible matter—it is not the substrate of the intelligible world, although it is matter in the redefined sense of “lower in relation to higher.” The “great and small” presents a different puzzle. Although Plotinus pairs the “great and small” with the indefinite dyad, he clearly identifies it in II

4[12] 11, lines 34–35, with the matter of the sensible world. Thus Long rightly affirms that the “great and small” is Plato’s equivalent to Aristotle’s matter (148). More to the point, however, Plotinus has effectively split the “indefinite dyad” and the “great and small,” giving the “indefinite dyad” the Platonic role as the first instance of matter relative to the highest cause, while the “great and small” plays the Aristotelian role of the matter of the sensible world, with emphasis on its absolute indefiniteness as the last instance.

Long also assumes that Plotinus holds to “an uncompromising monism” (28, 32) but nowhere defines what he means by this. If he means that there is really one reality that only appears diverse, this is at best misleading. If he means that all things derive from the same first principle, I would not call it ‘monism’—perhaps ‘mon-archism’ would be a better label. Long’s assumptions that Plotinus uses terms in a univocal way and that he subscribes to monism reveal a tension in his commentary. These assumptions keep him from following his instincts in deciding how to interpret the text in the case of intelligible matter, or from allowing the text to determine the argument rather than having an interpretation determine the meaning of the text.

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Julie Brumberg-Chaumont and Dominique Poirel, editors. *Adam of Bockenfield and His Circle on Aristotle’s “De memoria et reminiscentia.”* *Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi* 37. Oxford University Press for The British Academy, 2022. Pp. xii + 423. Hardback, \$130.00.

Julie Brumberg-Chaumont and Dominique Poirel make a groundbreaking contribution to our understanding of the reception of Aristotle in thirteenth-century Oxford with their critical edition of three medieval commentaries on the Greek-Latin version of Aristotle’s *De memoria et reminiscentia*. This edition, published in the prestigious collection *Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi*, is enriched by valuable introductory material. The edition and English translation of Adam of Bockenfield’s commentary *In precedenti libro*, dating from the early 1240s, is followed by the (untranslated) edition of two other later commentaries, the anonymous *Quibusdam naturalis philosophie* and the work *Quoniam ut complete*, written probably by a Scottish student, confusingly called “Adam the Englishman,” in the early 1250s.

A noteworthy contribution of the volume consists in demonstrating the important role played by a work not edited here, the *Sententia de memoria et reminiscentia*, whose definitive draft is probably due to still another Adam (the third one after Adam of Bockenfield and Adam the Englishman), Adam of Wytheby. Adam of Wytheby’s *Sententia* predates, in its primitive version, Adam of Bockenfield’s commentary edited here. The philosophical positions adopted by Adam of Wytheby in his *Sententia* are remarkably different from those of Bockenfield, and had an influence on later works, possibly including Robert Kilwardby’s *De ortu scientiarum*, the commentaries *Quibusdam naturalis philosophie* and *Quoniam ut complete* edited here, as well as the Oxford glosses on the *De memoria et reminiscentia* dating from the 1250s, of which the editors give, p. 51, n. 160, a list of the manuscripts they have been able to check (Cambridge, Gonville & Caius Coll. 506/384; Durham, Cathedral Libr. C. III 17 et C IV 18; London, Royal Libr. 12 G III et 12 G V; London, BL, Harley 3487; Oxford, Corpus Christi Coll. 1111 et 1114; Milano, Ambrosiana F 146 sup.). In their introduction, the editors provide a helpful diagram to illustrate the complexity of these cross-influences (168). This diagram is just one among the many indications of their untiring efforts to reconstruct the important but hitherto little-known period predating the Parisian 1255 curriculum (edited in *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis* I, p. 277–79, n. 246) as well as Albert the Great’s commentary on the *De memoria et reminiscentia*, whose references to its “Latin predecessors”—the English masters edited and studied in the present work—are well known to scholars (see Albert the Great, *Alberti Magni* [. . .] *De nutrimento et nutrito, De sensu et sensato cuius secundus liber est De memoria et reminiscentia, Opera omnia*, t. VII, pars II