

## Eleni Perdikouri

*Plotin Traité 12 II 4*. Les Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 2014, Euros 30.

The present translation and commentary of Plotinus' treatise II 4 is the seventeenth volume<sup>1</sup> in the series first established under the direction of Pierre Hadot and currently directed by Jean-François Balaudé, Dominic J. O'Meara and Gwenaëlle Aubry. The collection follows a tendency established in the last decades in Plotinian scholarship to devote a whole volume to a single Plotinian treatise by an author specialized in the topics addressed in that work. As the directors of the collection point out,<sup>2</sup> this tendency is the result of progress and growth achieved in the study of Plotinus' thought in the past five decades. However, considering that the series began almost three decades ago, it would be desirable, I believe, to speed up the publication rate. If seventeen volumes are to be published every three decades, the collection will end spanning almost a century.

The book opens with the acknowledgements of the translator, followed by the useful *Table de correspondance*, where the systematic and chronological orders of Plotinus' treatises are addressed. The next pages are dedicated to the *Avant-Propos*, written by the directors of the collection, where they specify that the Greek text translated, not included in the volume, corresponds to the *Editio Minor* published by P. Henry and H. R. Schwyzer (Clarendon Press, 1964).

Perdikouri's own contribution consists in an introduction (pp. 19-37), a translation (pp. 51-80) and a commentary (pp. 83-204). Several useful indices, to which I shall refer below, follow the bibliography. In the Introduction, divided into two sections—*Structure* and *Thèmes du traité*—Perdikouri (hereafter EP) examines, firstly, the place of the treatise in the *Enneads* as a whole and the methodological reasons that could have incited Plotinus to arrange the treatise in the way he did. Secondly, she analyses the notions of intelligible matter and sensible matter. The Introduction, in general, is a well-balanced approach to the treatise and does not delve into technical disquisitions or a detailed scrutiny of any problem raised in the treatise. A detailed scholarly analysis of the text is carried out in the commentary, which is more than four times longer than the translation. In this first section, the treatise is presented

1 In page 6 of the volume there is a list of the treatises already published in the collection but the treatise I 3 translated by Jankélévitch and published in 1998 is missing. This might be the reason why Dufour, in his review of the book (*Laval théologique et philosophique*, vol. 71, n. 1, 2015, pp. 179), asserts that it is the sixteenth title. The list also presents an error regarding treatise 3 (2006) since it says III 3 when it should say III 1.

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as atypical, not only due to its technical character but also to its metaphysical content. EP stresses that determining the nature of matter constitutes a crucial step in the development of Plotinus' metaphysics since the monism of the system depends on it. She also defends the innovative nature of Plotinus' conception of matter, which differs not only from Aristotle's *hylē*, but also from Plato's *hypodokhē*, while pointing out that the treatment Plotinus gives to the issue in this early work is still preliminary and essentially negative. In her presentation of the themes of the treatise, EP alludes to the relative absence of the phrase "intelligible matter" in the rest of the *corpus*, and raises pertinent questions about such relative absence, asking whether the disappearance of the term entails that the notion itself has also disappeared. The issue is re-addressed in the commentary, where EP discusses the relation of the notions of relative matter and matter itself (*matière en soi*) to intelligible and sensible matter respectively.

The second part of the study opens with a list of the families of manuscripts, followed by an account of the editions and translations of the treatise and a list of other instruments for the study of Plotinus' and Ancient Greek thought and language. In eleven instances, EP departs from the text provided in Henry-Schwytzer's *Maior* (1951) and *Minor* (1964) editions.<sup>3</sup> A *Plan du Traité* follows, in which the structure of the treatise is outlined. The translation renders in transparent French the frequently opaque Greek of Plotinus. As a non-native French reader, I find the prose fluid, diaphanous and close to the text, avoiding the baroque elegance of MacKenna's renderings, for example.

The body of the translation contains titles and subtitles introduced with the purpose of orienting the reader, as required by the directors of the collection,<sup>4</sup> who aim at making the volumes accessible to different levels of readership. Such reader-friendly, over-guided rendering of Plotinus' text and of the different stages in his argumentation, contrasts with the technical character of the comprehensive exegetical and historiographical commentary that follows the translation. The accompanying footnotes in this section, on the other hand, are a concise complement to the text. Several notes refer to other passages in the same treatise or elsewhere in the *Enneads*, where Plotinus addresses similar ideas. Notes are also provided to link Plotinus' text to

3 Nine of the eleven different readings, nonetheless, are also provided by Henry and Schwytzer in their *Addenda ad textum* (Clarendon Press, 1982) or in the *Corrigenda ad Plotini textum* of 1987 by Schwytzer. In the other two cases Perdikouri follows Kalligas (1997) and R. G. Bury "Notes on Plotinus, Enn. I-III", in *The Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 1/2 pp. 41. This last work seems to be missing in the bibliography.

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