

Plotinus

Ennead IV.3-4.29: Problems Concerning the Soul. Translation with an Introduction and Commentary by John M. Dillon and H. J. Blumenthal. Parmenides. Las Vegas, Zürich and Athens. 2015. \$47.00.

In all likelihood, Plotinus wrote a long tractate on several problems which concern the soul. In order to give a telling arrangement to the whole oeuvre Porphyry cut it into three pieces which are now forming *Ennead IV* 3-5. The whole treatise was translated by Henry Blumenthal whose untimely death, alas, prohibited him to complete all the notes necessary for making our way through the subtleties of Plotinus' arguments. It was John Dillon who took over the task of completing them and brushing up some points in the translation. Their work has resulted in a fine volume, containing the first half of the original treatise.¹ The reason for dividing it at 4.29 is that an ancient note in many manuscripts (family w, as well as mss R, J and C) mentions that Eustochius, Porphyry's colleague and predecessor as editor of Plotinus' works, ended the second book of his division of the text here.

In the introduction Dillon discusses briefly the characteristics of Plotinus' theory of the soul in the treatise. He suggests that the treatise was composed not too long after the first of Porphyry's arrival since it answers the second and third questions Porphyry asked then (see *Vita Plotini*, ch. 13). The argument divides into five sections. The first (IV 3.1.11-8.60) is concerned with the relations between World Soul and individual souls and aims at refuting those who derive our souls from the soul of the universe. The second (chs. 9-18) follows upon the first since it asks about the embodiment of the individual soul, a mark which distinguishes it from the World Soul. The third (chs. 19-23) is an appendix to the second and deals with the way of its presence in the body, culminating in the suggestion that soul is in the body as light is in air, although the body is better considered as being in the soul. The fourth (24-4.17) turns to the question of what individuating marks the soul is able to retain after its departure of a particular body, which also invites the question of the persistence of memory after the separation from the body. The fifth (4.18-29) deals with the genuine subject of sense-perception and emotions, regarded as the "trace" of the soul which combines with the life-principle coming from the World Soul to comprise the living and perceiving body.

1 The second half has been published in *Plotinus. Ennead IV 4.30-45 & IV 5. Problems Concerning the Soul.* Translation with an Introduction and Commentary by G. M. Gurtler. SJ. Las Vegas – Zürich – Athens: Parmenides Publishers, 2015.

Among the elements of Plotinus' doctrine of the soul Dillon emphasizes that the soul as hypostasis generates time, but it is not in time. Rather, it comprehends it holistically. Consequently, it has no memory either. Moreover, drawing on Blumenthal's remark he also notes that in some respect the borderline between the lowest aspect of Intellect and the highest aspect of Soul is blurred (Zeus may represent both in IV 4.9-10). On the other hand, we find a new distinction between the Soul hypostasis and the World Soul and can trace its development from III 9 [13] to IV 3-4 [27-28]. As for the individual soul, Plotinus had a view, much disputed by later Neoplatonists, according to which a part of each of our souls remains above, in the intelligible realm, implying that there is a Form for each of us. This Form inhabits a single person now, but was and will be dwelling in an infinite number of persons one after another. For this reason, the famous theory on the Forms of individuals is to be regarded, not as a Platonic theory about the presence of Form in many particular objects simultaneously, but as a theory saying that there is a Form that instantiates itself through an infinite series of consecutively existing objects. The structure of the individual soul follows Plato's description with a strong emphasis on the soul's freedom of passions (*πάθη*), which means that it cannot be affected in any of the ways to which a body would subject. But it raises the question of the subject of such phenomena. Dillon stresses that Plotinus' solution involves a creative appropriation of Aristotle's doctrine of the soul as primal actualization of a physical body which possesses life (*De anima* II 1, 412a28-29). Aristotle's thesis was taken to refer to a sort of preliminary ensouling of the body by the World Soul, into which the individual soul can insert itself. This is the bearer of affections. Similar distinction has been made between what is 'us' and what is merely 'ours', the former being the soul, the latter the ensouled body. The soul concerns for the opposite, although the concern involves a dispassionate cognition since passions belong to the ensouled body. The lower aspect of the soul, the so-called *αἰσθητικὴ ψυχή*, detects the passions cognitively, without being subjected to them. One, of course, may add that since sense-perception turns out to be a judgement (*κρίσις*) it is not quite clear how to make a difference—if there is any—between sense-perception and *φαντασία*, the latter being also a kind of judgement. Dillon also mentions two specific issues. Concerning astral bodies he points out that they are not to be equated with the pneumatic vehicles, whereas in the discussion of *φαντασία* and memory the emphasis is on their double aspect, both the descended and the undescended part of the individual soul contain them, which is an important characteristic tied to the continuity of personality as well.

The translation is accurate and reads well—qualities that do not necessarily coincide in many Plotinus translations. The notes are detailed and informative.