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**D. O'Meara: *Plotin: Traité 51, Introduction, traduction, commentaire et notes*. Pp. 191. Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1999. Paper, frs. 145. ISBN: 2-204-05956-0.**

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D. O'MEARA: *Plotin: Traité 51, Introduction, traduction, commentaire et notes*. Pp. 191. Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1999. Paper, frs. 145. ISBN: 2-204-05956-0.

Plotinus' treatise on the nature and origin of evils, which in Porphyry's thematic arrangement is the eighth treatise of the first Ennead, was among the last that he wrote. In it he argues for the identification of absolute evil with matter; other evils, such as the nature of body and vice in the soul, are secondary and derivative.

Dominic O'Meara's translation and commentary is the fifth to appear in a series, under the general editorship of Pierre Hadot, which will become standard for all who refer to Plotinus' works. In it Plotinus' works are referred to by their chronological order of composition rather than by Porphyry's thematic arrangement. Recent research on Plotinus makes new commentaries all the more necessary; and the continued growth of interest in the philosophy of later antiquity, in which Plotinus played an important if in some ways idiosyncratic part, will ensure that the series is consulted by a wide range of readers. O'M. presents Plotinus' argument in a clearly articulated form, introducing sub-headings, identifying sequences of objections and responses, and making clear the contribution of each part to the whole. Plotinus' discussion consequently appears more structured than in some other versions; and indeed, while Porphyry says that Plotinus' poor eyesight prevented him re-reading what he had written (*Life of Plotinus*, 8), he also says that Plotinus worked out his whole argument in his mind before he started writing.

O'M. lists twenty-three places where his translation presupposes a reading different from that found in either the *editio major* or the *editio minor* of Henry and Schwyzer. In many cases, however, it is a matter of following one of these rather than the other. There are only four places where O'M. adopts a reading not accepted by Henry and Schwyzer anywhere at all (including the

addenda in the third volume of each of their editions). At 5.12 O'M. proposes reading, for τὸ μὴ ἀγαθὸν εἶναι, either τὸ μὴ τἀγαθὸν εἶναι or τὸ ἀγαθὸν μὴ εἶναι, in order to remove the implication that deficiency involves not being good at all. At 6.53–4 he follows Igal in deleting the first ἐναντίον and transposing καὶ ἐνταῦθα to follow the second. He transposes 8.16–18 to follow 8.12, improving the sequence of the argument and explaining the error through homoioteleuton; and at 15.26 he proposes <παρ>οὔσα, on the basis of parallels in Chapter XIV. Other, more tentative suggestions are made in the notes (e.g. to delete τὴν κακίαν—ἄπασιν at 5.31–2 as a gloss) and suggestions by others for the text or for its interpretation are rightly rejected (e.g. τὸ <μὴ> κατ' οὐσίαν at 6.46 from Henry and Schwyzer's addenda). The complications of 14.39–40 are convincingly resolved.

At 3.8 O'M.'s translation ('comme autour de l'être') seems to presuppose ὡς περὶ τὸ ὄν, rather than ἡ περὶ τὸ ὄν. At 5.32–3 the repetition of κρατεῖν is not reproduced in the translation. In the translation of 11.4 'ainsi il n'existera pas' would have removed a potential ambiguity in the French which is not present in the Greek.

Plotinus is not a dualist; matter is the last stage in the process of emanation from the One, and is always illuminated by the intelligible (D. O'Brien, cited by O'M. p. 164 in the context of the striking image of the prisoners hidden by chains of gold with which the treatise ends). Plotinus' identification of matter as absolute evil was nevertheless attacked by Proclus, for whom, as O'M. explains (p. 40), evils were privations and there is no real and absolute evil. O'M., who discusses Proclus' criticisms of the present treatise at length (pp. 30–6, cf. pp. 132–3), agrees that Plotinus cannot consistently maintain both the identification of matter with absolute evil and the doctrine of emanation (pp. 34–5). Plotinus is, however, more true to Plato than is Proclus in his readings both of *Theaetetus* 176a (pp. 96–7) and of the *Timaeus* (pp. 130–1). As for the source of evil in the soul, O'M. notes O'Brien's view that matter is a necessary but not a sufficient cause, but remarks that the present treatise puts particular emphasis on the rôle of matter, in accordance with its aim of establishing it as primary evil: 'treatise 51 cannot therefore be considered a comprehensive and balanced study of all aspects of evil' (pp. 38–9).

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