

Matter and Time in Plotinus

John Simons

The systematic character of Plotinus's philosophy is not always evident. Because it is his habit to treat special problems in thematic and occasional treatises, his thought contains implicit tensions as well as tacit connections which Plotinus himself often fails to pursue, and even, in some cases, to suspect.

The discussion of matter is a case in point. Plotinus holds that there are two matters. Sensible matter is the substratum of bodies, and, intelligible matter underlies the εἶδη and incorporeal substances of the intelligible realm.¹ That matter is of such diverse kinds is an extraordinary claim, requiring, one would expect, some clarification of its logical structure and coherence. But in the one treatise devoted exclusively to a discussion of matter,² polemical considerations seem to have prevented Plotinus from addressing this prior exigency. Apart from a few puzzling remarks he tells us nothing about the relation of the two material principles³ — a fact which is the more regrettable since he evidently assigned the two matters important constitutive roles in the realization of the two worlds, the intelligible and the sensible. Hence, if Plotinus does have an internally consistent theory of matter, it must be reconstructed from the various statements he makes in different places about each of the two matters.

In this essay I cannot defend my judgement that there is implicit in Plotinus's speculative achievement a coherent doctrine of matter — one, moreover, which when elaborated brings to light the simplicity and elegance of the Plotinian conception of the derivation of all things from the One. What I propose to do, instead, is to

The author wishes to thank Professors John Dillon and Thomas McTighe for their advice and encouragement in the preparation of this essay, and, the members of the Department of Classics, Dalhousie University for their criticisms of an earlier version of the paper presented to them in the form of a lecture.

1. II.4.1.

2. II.4., entitled by Porphyry, ΠΕΡΙ ΤΩΝ ΔΥΟ ΥΛΩΝ.

3. It is, rather, the contrast between the two matters which is consistently emphasized. Each of the distinguishing predicates of matter, its character (1) as substratum, (2) as indeterminate, and, (3) as principle of compound entity, means something different according as it applies either to intelligible matter or to sensible matter. Cf. II.4.3.1-16, and, II.4.15.21-27. It seems reasonable to conclude, however, that Plotinus understands sensible matter to be related to intelligible matter as image or original. Cf. II.4.5.18-20, and, II.4.15.21-27.

resolve a preliminary and subsidiary difficulty, namely, that of the coherence of Plotinus's concept of sensible matter.

The difficulty emerges in two sets of texts. Sensible matter, according to Plotinus, is (1) the cause of Becoming (αἰτία γενέσεως),⁴ a principle of the phenomenal realm.⁵ But it is also (2) the source of evil for the soul, and, the prime and absolute evil (κάκον πρῶτον καὶ καθ'αὐτὸ κακόν).⁶ What is the connection between these two functions of matter? Can the apparent duality of the concept of matter — its metaphysical import on the one hand, and, its ethical and religious relevance on the other — be comprehended in a unity which preserves the integrity of the concept?⁷ In answer to this

4. III.6.14.34-35. According to Plotinus, the non-being of the corporeal consists in its γένεσις, ῥοή, and, φθορά (III.6.6.76-77). Hence, when I use the term "Becoming" I do not mean "change" or "motion" in an Aristotelian sense; rather I mean the corporeal and sensible insofar as it is other than the intelligible, the realm of Being. In citing the Greek text of the *Enneads*, I have used the critical edition of Henry and Schwyzer published in *Plotini Opera*, 3 vols., ed. Paul Henry and Hans-Rudolf Schwyzer (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer and Cie., 1951-73). The English translation of quotations from the *Enneads* is taken from *Plotinus*, 7 vols., trans. A. H. Armstrong (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966-84), and, where indicated, from *Plotinus: The Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna, 4th ed. revised B.S. Page (London: Faber and Faber, 1969).

5. The principal sources of Plotinus's doctrine of matter as a constitutive principle of body and of the sensible realm are: II.4.6-16; 11.5.1-5; III.6.7-19.

6. I.8.3.39-40. The principal source of Plotinus's doctrine of matter as evil is I.8.

7. Contemporary French interpreters of Plotinus tend to emphasize the ethical and religious aspects of the concept of matter. Emile Bréhier, e.g., in his "Notice" to II.4 holds that Plotinian matter is essentially a principle relevant to the moral and spiritual life of the soul. See *Plotin: Ennéades*, 6 vols. in 7, ed. and trans. Emile Bréhier (Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1924-38) 2:47. Cf. his *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, trans. J. Thomas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958) pp. 173-81. More recently, Jean Trouillard has defended "une interprétation spirituelle de la matière". See his *La Procession Plotinienne*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955) pp. 14-20; and, *La Purification Plotinienne*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955) pp. 139-43; and, "La médiation du verbe selon Plotin," *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger* 81 (1956):65-73. It seems to me, however, that Trouillard's understanding of matter as "la puissance d'altération ou la loi d'aliénation", while correct, is not sufficiently developed to demonstrate the internal connection which the concept of matter effects between the metaphysical and ethical themes in Plotinus's thought. J. M. Rist, "Plotinus on Matter and Evil," *Phronesis* 6 (1961): 154-66, directly addresses the question of the relation between the metaphysical and ethical functions of the concept of matter, but his conclusion, viz. that matter accounts for both Becoming and evil insofar as it is non-being, though correct, only seems to raise anew the philosophical question as to the precise sense in which matter (non-being) is understood to exercise its dual function.

difficulty I will argue that Plotinus's concept of sensible matter is indeed coherent, but that we cannot grasp it in its wholeness until we see that its metaphysical and ethical aspects are in fact united in what seems, *prima facie*, to be another and unrelated concept, namely, that of time. Although Plotinus himself does not seem to have noticed it, the realities which he designated respectively by the expressions "sensible matter" and "time" account for the same things — Becoming and evil — in the same respect, namely, as principle of non-being. My thesis, then, is that the logical structure of Plotinus's thought requires that "matter" and "time" be understood as different expressions for the same principle.⁸

To the reader familiar with the *Enneads* this thesis might seem highly improbable. Plotinus himself does not make a connection between the two concepts, and otherwise he appears to think matter and time are different in important respects. For example, in regard to their respective positions in the hierarchy of reality, matter is said to be the last thing in the process of emanation from the Good (I.8.7.17-22); it is not even an image of Being, but something still more non-existent (ἔτι μᾶλλον μὴ ὄν). (I.8.3.9) Time, on the other hand, is said to be the life of the soul (III.7.11.43-45) and the image of eternity (III.7.11.47-48). Again, matter and time seem to have different attributes. Matter is privation (II.4.16.3-4) which is not an obvious description of time, and, time is ever moving (III.7.11.16-18) which is not an obvious description of matter. But are these apparent differences as sharp as they can be made out to be by a superficial synopsis of texts? Indeed, one can attenuate the differences simply by adducing further textual evidence. For example, even if Plotinus believes matter is the last thing in the process of emanation, this does not prevent him from speaking of it (in III.6.13.13-15) as *prior* to the realm of Becoming. Similarly, although he defines time as the life of the soul, he goes on to say that "life" is predicated *equivocally* of eternity and time (III.7.11.45-51), and, while time is said to be an image of eternity, it is clear from III.7.11 and 1.5.7 that what it means for time to be an image of eternity is something very different from what it means for the sensible to be an image of the intelligible. Time, precisely as

8. It should be noted that the identity of matter and time is not a logical identity in the sense that the equation "matter=time" is true simply in virtue of the meanings of the terms. It is a logical identity in the sense that the truth of "matter=time" is established by drawing out certain logical consequences of Plotinus's doctrines of the sensible world, evil, and, the soul. In this paper I have limited the discussion of the coherence of the concept of matter to those texts which deal with matter's *function*. Space does not permit me to show that Plotinus's conflicting accounts of the *origin* of matter are also resolved if "matter=time" is true.

image of eternity, is the antithesis of eternity (III.7.11.48-56), and seeks to efface what is permanent in eternity (I.5.7.17-20). Evidently, something more than a mere synopsis of texts is called for, and indeed my purpose in this paper is not just to register a comparison of what Plotinus says about matter with what he says about time, but to establish the identity of matter and time.

My procedure will be to analyze what Plotinus says about matter, first, as cause of Becoming, then, as the primary evil. In each case I hope to show that what Plotinus means by "matter" is reasonably understood as "time". My aim, moreover, is not simply to offer a possible interpretation of the text, but to suggest that if matter is the same as time then the metaphysical and ethical aspects of the Plotinian concept of matter are integrated in a way they could not be if matter were construed, let us say, as extension. In other words, the logical coherence of Plotinus's thought requires, as I have said, that "matter" and "time" be taken as different expressions for the same principle. That I am indeed speaking of time as it functions in Plotinus's philosophy is proven by analyzing the parallel texts which have to do with time's relation to the soul's well-being (I.5.), and, its metaphysical role (III.7.11.). On the basis of these texts I conclude that time, as Plotinus understands it, accounts for Becoming and evil in the same respect as does matter, and hence that my interpretation of matter as time finds an independent textual corroboration. The two concepts are different names for the same principle.

Sensible matter is a principle of change. In fact, Plotinus uses the Aristotelian term *ὑποκείμενον* to refer to matter,⁹ and, like Aristotle, proves its existence by arguing that there must be a substratum for the elementary qualitative changes in the physical world.¹⁰ But the substratum, in Plotinus's view, functions in a radically different manner from that in which Aristotle conceived it. For, unlike Aristotle, Plotinus wishes to maintain that matter is unaffected by the changes for which it provides the substratum.¹¹ In effect, Plotinus expunges the predicate *τὸ πάσχον*, "that which is acted upon", from the Aristotelian definition of the substratum. This peculiar evisceration of Aristotle's definition is possible, however, only because Plotinus's understanding of change represents a fundamental rejection of the Aristotelian account. Change, as conceived by Plotinus, is not the action of contraries

9. See, e.g., II.4.1.1-2.

10. II.4.6.2-8. Cf. Bréhier, *Plotin: Ennéades*, 2:49.

11. This is the burden of Plotinus's argument in III.6.8-10. For Aristotle's account of the role of the substratum in change, see *Physics* I,6, 189a22-26. Cf. also 189b19, 190a15.

upon a third thing, but their action upon one another.¹² Change, accordingly, does not consist in the acquisition or loss of form on the part of a perduring substratum, but in the succession of contrary qualities. Correspondingly, the substratum has become, in Plotinus's mind, something other than the subject which is changed as one form succeeds another. If something is acted upon, it is not the substratum, but a conjunction or collection of attributes admitting contraries.¹³ Since matter has no contrary, and, change is effected through the action of contraries upon one another, the material substratum of change is necessarily outside the domain of change. How, then, are we to conceive of the substratum's role in accounting for change? Evidently, it must be thought of at least as a principle of the successiveness of sensible forms. But in what sense does it contribute to the succession and flow of phenomena?

In III.6.10., Plotinus argues that if matter were acted upon, the receptacle (δεχόμενον) would no longer be matter, but qualified matter (ποιὰ ὕλη).¹⁴ With the influx of additional qualities, the substratum (ὑποκείμενον) would become something multiform. In this event, Plotinus says, matter would no longer be all-receptive (πανδεχές) and the entry of many new forms would be prevented.¹⁵

12. III.6.9.33. Bréhier claims (*Plotin: Enneades*, 3:106 n.1) that Plotinus's theory of change in III.6.8-9 is based on Aristotle's discussion of action and passion in *On Coming-to-Be and Passing-Away* I,7, and, especially on Aristotle's statement that "only those things which either involve a 'contrariety' or are 'contraries' — and not any things selected at random — are such as to suffer action and to act" (323b31-32) trans. H. H. Joachim. But if Bréhier's claim is correct, then Plotinus has failed to grasp the import of Aristotle's thought in the text in question. For, Aristotle's purpose is to *criticize* the traditional theories of action and passion, which he divides into two classes: (1) the theory that "differents" are by nature such as to act and suffer action reciprocally; and, (2) the theory that agent and patient are "like". Aristotle's conclusion is that advocates of both views "although their theories are not the same, are yet in contact with the nature of the facts. For sometimes we speak of the *substratum* as suffering action (e.g. of 'the man' as being healed, being warmed and chilled, and similarly in all other cases), but at other times we say 'what is cold is being warmed', 'what is sick is being healed': and in both these ways of speaking we express the truth, since in one sense it is the 'matter', while in another sense it is the 'contrary', which suffers action. . . . Now the one group of thinkers supposed that agent and patient must possess something identical, because they fastened their attention on the *substratum*: while the other group maintained the opposite because their attention was concentrated on the 'contraries.'" (324a15-24). Plotinus's theory of change, clearly, represents a reversion to a pre-Aristotelian analysis of change.

13. (Ἀνάγκη τοίνυν, εἰ τι πάσχει, μὴ ὕλην, ἀλλὰ τι συναμφοτέρον ἢ ὅλως πολλὰ ὁμοῦ εἶναι). (III.6.9.35-7).

14. III.6.10.1-5.

15. III.6.10.7-10.

If we interpret this argument for the impassibility of matter in light of the analysis of change as succession in III.6.9., then it would seem the substratum or receptacle (Plotinus uses the terms interchangeably) is to be conceived as principle of the universal flux of phenomena. For, the argument here in III.6.10. derives its force from the assumption that if something has a determinate character, the new forms which may succeed its actual forms are limited. That is, it may receive only a limited range of possible properties. Plotinus's point, however, is that matter is πανδεχές, that is, it allows for the succession of all possible sensible forms. Therefore, matter cannot become anything of definite character.

On the basis of this objection to attributing passibility to matter, it is clear that the substratum, as Plotinus conceives it, is the enduring receptacle for the coming-to-be and passing-away of all possible phenomena. The substratum allows ever different phenomena to succeed those already present. As such, matter is the condition for the very possibility of change, and not a participant in change. The concept of matter functions, so to speak, at a metaphysical level of explanation, for it is designed to account for that universe which is characterized by Becoming rather than by Being.

That this is the direction of Plotinus's revision of the Aristotelian substratum is confirmed in III.6.13-14. Plato's description of matter as the receptacle (ὑποδοχή) and nurse of all Becoming is invoked to justify the conclusion that matter is prior to Becoming, and hence prior to all change.¹⁶ Matter serves as the receptacle of the "ceaseless coming into it and going out from it" of form.¹⁷ Indeed, matter is like a mirror in whose absence there would be no reflection. That is, without matter, the realm of changing phenomena would not exist.¹⁸

Clearly, Plotinus reinterprets the function of the Aristotelian substratum such that it assumes the role of the Platonic receptacle. The substratum is no longer the perduring, determinable factor immanent in each instance of change; instead, it is now meant to account for the very existence of the realm of change, and, it accounts for that realm by being the receptacle and cause of the universal flux observable in phenomena. Matter is evidently meant to explain the succession and flux of phenomena. But in what sense does matter cause Becoming? The manner in which Plotinus has reinterpreted the role of the Aristotelian substratum might well lead us to ask whether matter does not cause Becoming precisely

16. III.6.13.13-15.

17. III.6.13.29-31.

18. III.6.13.49-14.2.

by contributing the temporal successiveness within which phenomena come and go. In fact, Plotinus does furnish us with additional information from which we may deduce more precisely the sense in which matter exercises its proper causality as αἰτία γενέσεως.

In II.5., Plotinus identifies the substratum of change with potential being (τὸ δυνάμει). The potency of potential being consists in a relation to possible being. Hence, to say that something is a potential being is to say that because of it, something else can be actualized; it allows for the advent of states and shapes and forms which are not already realized.¹⁹

[W]e must not speak of potential existence [τὸ δυνάμει] simply; for it is not possible to exist potentially without being potentially anything. For instance, "the bronze is potentially statue"; for if nothing was going to come out of a thing or come upon it, and it was not going to be anything subsequent to what it was and there was no possibility of its becoming anything, it would be what it was alone. . . . It would not be potential at all. (II.5.1.10-16)

Sometimes potential being will persist after the actualization of the possible being — as in the case of the bronze statue — and, sometimes it will perish when the new actuality appears — as in the case of air changing into fire.²⁰ But in either case, potential being possesses potency precisely insofar as it allows for the actualization of possible being.

Does this mean, then, that potential being is brought to actuality by the form for which it furnishes the substratum?²¹ Plotinus's answer to this question is emphatically negative. He claims that potential being does not become actual being for the reason that actual being (τὸ ἐνεργεῖν) is predicable not of the matter, but only of the composite or of the form.²² After the bronze has been cast into the form of a statue, we cannot say that the bronze is actually a statue because that which is actually a statue includes the statue's form. Hence, the subject of actual being (the bronze statue) is distinct from the subject of potential being (the bronze). This distinction, Plotinus points out, is obvious in those cases where the potential being does not persist in the actual being.²³ Given this distinction between the subject of potential being and the subject of actual being, it is clear that Plotinus's theory of change does not allow

19. II.5.1.29-31.

20. II.5.1.18-21.

21. Cf. II.5.2.3-4.

22. II.5.2.10-12.

23. II.5.2.14-15.

for the actualization of a substratum by the form it receives. It is never the case that potential being *becomes* actual being, but only that it is *succeeded* by actual being.

[T]he predicate “actual” will not be applied to that of which the term “potential statue” was used. If this is so, it is not that which exists potentially which comes to exist actually [οὐ τὸ δυνάμει γίνεται ἐνεργείᾳ], but the subsequent actually existing thing comes into being out of the prior potentially existing thing [ἐκ τοῦ δυνάμει ὄντος πρότερον ἐγένετο τὸ ἐνεργείᾳ ὕστερον]. (II.5.2.8-10)

According to Plotinus’s revision of Aristotle’s concepts, the substratum of change is not intrinsically receptive to actualization. The potency of potential being, therefore, is not a capacity for actualization.²⁴ Instead, potential being allows for the actualization of being only by providing the prior occasion (πρότερον) for the later appearance (ὕστερον) of an actual being. The advent of actual being merely replaces or supervenes upon potential being; it does not bring the latter to actuality.

Now matter is the potentiality of all things (τὸ πάντα δυνάμει). As such it falls outside the order of εἶδος, and, equally, outside the trace of that order in phenomena.²⁵ It is the negation both of intelligible act and of the sensibly actual. For this reason, matter is entirely non-being (πλειόνως μὴ ὄν).²⁶ Hence, in the case of matter, potency is not already present as something actual. The potential statue, for example, is already present as bronze or some other such material. The potency of matter, in contrast, is present as sheer possibility: Οὐκοῦν, ὅτι ἤδη δυνάμει, ἤδη οὖν ἔστι καθὼ μέλλει; (II.5.5.2-3) This does not mean, however, that the potency of matter is the possibility of an as yet unrealized actuality. The potential statue is precisely an unrealized *statue*. In the case of matter, however, its potency is not for anything determinate nor for any limited range of possibilities. Instead, Plotinus says, its being (one might even translate “its essence”) is only the *promise* of future being: ‘Ἄλλὰ τὸ εἶναι αὐτῇ μόνον τὸ μέλλον ἐπαγγελλούμενον. (II.5.5.3-4)

Let us note Plotinus’s tactic in getting at the nature of matter. A two-fold negation reveals the sense in which matter is the potency of beings. First, τὸ δυνάμει is abstracted from its association with a present actuality furnishing the potency. Matter is not the potency of something actually present. Secondly, τὸ δυνάμει is abstracted from its reference to a future actuality. Matter is not the potency for something which may yet come to be. However, at the end

24. Contrast Aristotle’s position in *Metaphysics* V, 12, 1019a20-23.

25. II.5.4.10-14.

26. II.5.4.14.

of this two-fold negation, we are left not simply with the concept of the negation of all sensible form (present and possible), but with the concept of a negation understood as *temporal projection*. Matter's so-called being, Plotinus says, is a "thrust forward" into the future: οἶον τὸ εἶναι αὐτῇ εἰς ἐκεῖνο ἀναβάλλεται, ὃ ἔσται. (II.5.5.4-5)²⁷ Evidently, we are to interpret the potency of matter not just as the absence of being, but as an impetus into the future — an impetus in virtue of which the achieved present is negated. Matter is the absence of being (non-being) which *makes* being absent. Yet, by the same token, it allows for the appearance of new sensible forms. Even so, these new sensible forms, as they come to be, are in turn subject to the negativity of matter. As the potency of all things, matter's presence is the paradoxical presence of the perpetual negation of the present. And, as the promise of future being, matter is the perpetual deferment into the future of the actualization of all things.²⁸

Here, then, in II.5. Plotinus speaks of matter in unmistakably temporal terms. He does not explicitly identify matter and time, but the so-called being of matter, indeed its essence is described as a continuous negation of the present and projection into the future. This description of matter is remarkably similar to Plotinus's description of time in III.7.11. There, time is said to consist in a perpetual projection into the next moment; it is the moving negation of identity and the establishment of ever new difference.²⁹ We shall have to examine this latter text more carefully, but in the meantime let us note that Plotinus's description of matter as the cause of Becoming strongly suggests that we may not be mistaken in thinking of the substratum and receptacle of the sensible world as time. However, if time is the ultimate subject of sensible entities should we not expect these entities to be characterized as processes, let us say, rather than as bodies? An analysis of Plotinus's understanding of the constitution of the sensible through the participation of matter in form would seem to suggest that while Plotinus does speak of the sensible world being filled with bodies, insofar as they are images of the intelligible, these bodies are indeed to be understood as processes.

27. The verb ἀναβάλλεται seems to have the sense both of projection (into the future) and of deferment (into the future). MacKenna-Page's translation ("its existence is . . . a thrust forward to what is to come into existence") brings out the first aspect, while Armstrong's ("it is as if being for it was adjourned to that which it will be") brings out the second aspect.

28. Cf. II.5.5.11-17.

29. III.7.11.17-19. Cf. III.7.11.51-53.

According to Plotinus, Plato held that participation does not imply that an εἶδος comes-to-be in a substratum so as to give it form.³⁰ It is not the case that the two principles (matter and form) συντραπέντων, συγκραθέντων, συμπαθόντων, comprise one composite entity.³¹ Platonic participation is not an “informing” (τὸ μεμορφῶσθαι) of matter,³² it is something rather different. But what, exactly, is participation in Plotinus’s view? In denying that the constitutive principles of sensibles combine to produce a composite entity, Plotinus is able to maintain that (1) matter is impassible; it is not intrinsically constitutive of bodies, and, (2) εἶδος is not located at the level of sensibles. Yet, to maintain these assertions is not to state positively how participation accounts for the status of sensibles as images of the intelligible.

An important affirmative statement about participation is made at the beginning of III.6.11.

This I think was Plato’s opinion, which led him to say, correctly, “The things that enter and leave it are copies of the real things”; he spoke of entering and leaving with deliberate purpose, wishing us to understand and apply our minds to the manner of the participation; and it seems that the well-known difficulty about how matter participates in forms is not what most of our predecessors thought it was, how the forms come into matter, but rather how they are in matter. (III.6.11.1-8)

The import of this text is that matter’s participation in εἶδος accounts for the “coming and going” (εἰσιέναι και ἐξιέναι) which characterizes sensible form. But this “coming and going” is not to be understood as the coming-to-be and passing-away of εἶδος in a material substratum. The difficulty to be explained is not that of the entry of εἶδος into a corruptible substance. In fact, Plotinus consistently denies that εἶδος is present in sensible substances. Hence, we should expect that for Plotinus matter’s role in the constitution of sensible beings would be very different from what it might be for an Aristotelian. We might expect, for example, that for Plotinus matter will not be construed as a principle of the individuation of εἶδος in sensible being. Plotinian matter is not designed to account for the presence of authentic Being in sensibles. To the contrary, it is designed to justify the antithesis, namely, that the sensible realm is not the locus of εἶδος. Thus matter is explanatory, not of the structure of sensible entity, but of the difference of the sensible in regard to the intelligible.³³ Matter’s constitution of the sensible

30. III.6.12.2-3.

31. III.6.12.1-4.

32. III.6.12.35-36.

33. II.4.16.1-3.

is meant to explain the Platonic thesis that "all appearing to the senses is void of substantial existence."³⁴ To say that matter is constitutive of sensibles is tantamount to denying that the sensible is a realm of true Being.³⁵ When, therefore, Plotinus says that "coming and going" describes the precise nature of matter's participation in form, "coming and going" is to be understood as the mode in which the transcendent εἶδος is present in matter. That is to say, εἶδος is imaged in matter in the guise of "coming and going". Hence, sensible form is not just characterized by "coming and going"; its very reality, its constitution as image-being, consists in coming and going.³⁶

Negatively, Plotinus makes it clear that participation is not the composing of matter and form. Positively, it is suggested that participation is the translation of εἶδος into the mode of coming and going, appearing and disappearing. In short, the image-being of the sensible consists in "coming and going". Matter, in other words, differentiates the sensible from its intelligible essence by causing the ceaseless coming and going of sensibles. Consistent with this conclusion would be Plotinus's earlier statement (in III.6.6.76-77) that it is the γένεσις, ῥοή, and φθορά of bodies which testifies to their non-being. What, then, are bodies and sensible forms? They are images of true Being, and, they differ from true Being precisely in their becoming, that is, in their coming and going, their coming-to-be, flux, and passing-away. Could it be stated any more clearly that sensible forms are what we might reasonably call "processes"? And, if they are processes, is this not what we should expect if time is the ultimate subject of sensibles? It is hard to avoid the conclusion that matter differentiates the sensible from

34. III.6.12.10-11. trans. MacKenna-Page.

35. While I find much of value in Kevin Corrigan's article, "The Internal Dimensions of the Sensible Object in the Thought of Plotinus and Aristotle," *Dionysius* 5 (1981): 98-126, I cannot agree with him when he says that Plotinus and Aristotle hold the same view of the relation of matter and form, e.g.: "Not only, then, does Plotinus unite the efficient and final causes in the formal, *he also brings the material cause within the intelligibility of the form.*" (p. 121, my emphasis), and; "The essence in the matter *makes* the sensible object. This is Aristotle's view of sensible substance. It is also that of Plotinus." (p. 120, n.83). Plotinus, however, seems to say that because matter is constitutive of the phenomenal realm, the presence of sensible form is the false presence of εἶδος. See, e.g., III.6.13.31-36, 17.25-27.

36. Cf. III.6.12.35-36 where Plotinus insists that matter's reception of sensible form does not entail the formation of the substratum. Instead, it is the advent (εἰσῆλθον) of a sensible form. Matter is not itself subject to formation, but it allows for the appearance and disappearance of forms.

the intelligible precisely by dispersing the unity and permanence of the latter in a temporal flux.³⁷

Now, matter is not only constitutive of the sensible; it is also a principle of evil, and, the absolute evil. If we can discern a logical link between Plotinus's concept of evil and the notion of temporal

37. An alternative thesis — that matter is non-being insofar as it is indeterminate extension — has been advanced by Joseph Moreau in *Réalisme et Idéalisme chez Platon* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1951) pp. 119–35. I cannot here give a detailed account as to why Moreau's interpretation is untenable. Briefly, my reason for rejecting Moreau's position is that it is incompatible with Plotinus's doctrine of magnitude. Moreau acknowledges that, according to Plotinus, magnitude (μέγεθος) is a sensible accident of the material substratum, and that the substratum is distinct from the magnitude it exhibits. See II.4.8.11–12. Moreover, inasmuch as sensible magnitude consists in determinate dimensions it reflects a prior εἶδος. Moreau argues, however, that if intelligible magnitude is to appear in sensible form, then we must invoke a principle of local dispersion to allow for the corporeal realization of that εἶδος. Thus Moreau is able to agree with Plotinus that matter is unextended (ἀμέγεθες) since it is not a determinate magnitude. But as the substratum of all determinate magnitude, it is that indeterminate exteriority in which sensible magnitude is realized. In other words, Moreau's thesis would require us to think away the determinate magnitude of a body from its realization in spatially extended parts, and, to see the residuum as a sort of empty extension identical with matter. On Plotinian premisses, however, if we were to think away the determinate magnitudes of sensible things from their physical extension, we would not be left with matter, but with a sensible image of *intelligible* magnitude as such. In III.6.17.12–16, Plotinus distinguishes two sorts of intelligible magnitude (τὸ μέγα), namely, that of the λόγος of something determinately extended, like a horse or some other animal, and that of magnitude itself (τὸ μέγα αὐτό). It is the concurrence of the magnitude of the λόγος with magnitude itself, as these are realized in matter, which gives matter the appearance of extension. See III.6.17.14–21. Now, we should expect that the λόγος of a specific being would confer the determinate magnitude of that being. But how does Plotinus understand the function of τὸ μέγα αὐτό? In III.6.18.1–14 he asks us to think of an intelligible magnitude which is not the magnitude of a specific entity (and which is, therefore, almost certainly to be identified with τὸ μέγα αὐτό) and inquires into the character of its sensible appearance. He suggests that since the image in matter of this intelligible magnitude cannot be a determinate magnitude, it must exhibit magnitude in some other way. The only possibility, Plotinus concludes, is that it constitute the spatial continuum with which determinate sensible magnitudes concurrently appear. Clearly, the import of Plotinus's doctrine of the sensible realization of magnitude is that εἶδος confers both the determination of specific magnitudes, and, the spatial continuum in which determinate magnitudes appear. Hence, Moreau's claim that the exteriority of sensible magnitude is conferred by matter is untenable. Cf. F. R. Jevons, "Dequantitation in Plotinus's Cosmology," *Phronesis* 9 (1964):64–71. "Plotinus denied to matter not merely a definite magnitude, but magnitude and extension altogether." (p. 66 n.12).

flux, then we shall surely have strong evidence that the Plotinian doctrine of matter is not only internally consistent, but that its consistency derives from the fact that “matter” and “time” name the same principle of non-being.

Evil does not affect the One, and it is absent from the realm of authentic Being.³⁸ The concrete realization of evil is interior to the individual, embodied soul. In its pursuit of perishable things, in internal discord, fear, envy, and pettiness, the soul is beset by evil. For it is in these psychological experiences, and not in external ills, that there resides the radical expression of evil, namely, the dissociation of the soul from itself, its mingling with non-being.³⁹ Indeed, these psychological experiences manifest the soul’s distraction from its authentic life — a distraction which amounts to the soul’s ignorance of itself and God.⁴⁰

In identifying the sources of this evil, Plotinus names at least five factors. Four are mentioned at V.1.1.4-5:

The evil that has overtaken them [souls] has its source in self-will, in the entry into the sphere of process [γένεσις], and in the primal differentiation [πρώτη ἑτερότης] with the desire for self-ownership. (MacKenna-Page translation)

Of these, self-will and the desire for self-ownership are clearly psychological in character; they are initiatives of the soul. On the other hand, γένεσις is proper to sensibles and attests to the non-being of bodies. The primal differentiation (πρώτη ἑτερότης) is probably to be identified with that Otherness which produces intelligible matter,⁴¹ and should perhaps be interpreted as the source of the soul’s *intelligible* materiality (i.e. its spirituality) in virtue of which the soul constitutes itself in a corporeal existence independently of νοῦς.⁴² Finally, in his treatise *On What Are And Whence Come Evils* (I.8), Plotinus calls sensible matter, too, a principle and cause of evil for the soul, and, he gives matter the primacy in the order of evil.⁴³ It would seem, then, that the sources of the embodied soul’s fall into evil can be reduced to two sets of factors: those intrinsic to the soul (its otherness, wilfulness, and desire for self-ownership) and those extrinsic to the soul (Becoming and matter). Thus evil befalls the soul precisely in the nexus of

38. See I.8.2.21-27.

39. I.8.3.35-40.; 4.28-32. Cf. III.9.3.7-14.

40. I.8.14.1-7. Cf. V.1.1.5-21.

41. II.4.5.28-29.

42. It is clear that soul, like νοῦς, has an indeterminate, material dimension. See, e.g., II.4.3.4-5; II.5.3.13-14; III.9.5.; V.1.3.23; V.1.7.36-41. To argue the thesis that psychic matter is identical with the matter intrinsic to and constitutive of νοῦς would take us well beyond the limits of this paper.

43. See, e.g., I.8.3.39-40, and, 4.6-14.

a psychological desire for independence and an extra-psychological horizon within which that desire may express itself. Indeed, when the soul identifies itself with the body (a thing of γένεσις made of matter) and so seeks to define itself by means of the body and in pursuit of things homogeneous with the body, its will to realize its independence is brought to effect.⁴⁴ The harmful consequences of this mixture (μίξις) or confusion (κρῆσις)⁴⁵ of the soul with the body extend even to the soul's reasoning power. For, in identifying itself with the body, the soul enters into collusion with the body's way of sensing and judging.⁴⁶ It takes the body as the centre of its perspective and thus allows itself to be dictated a set of opinions, judging things good or evil on the basis of the body's inclinations.⁴⁷ The soul wed to the body's passions, its desires and its fears, is divorced from its proper activity. And this is its forgetfulness of itself and of God.

The body, however, is not the ultimate cause of evil. The body is evil only insofar as it is associated with matter. And evil befalls the soul because in its liaison with the body, it too comes to be associated with matter.⁴⁸ Now matter is evil because it is non-being. It is non-being, moreover, not merely in the sense that it is the absence of Being, but in the sense that it is the nihilating principle which assimilates to itself (ἐξομοιοῖ ἑαυτῆ) that which participates in it or has the least contact with it.⁴⁹ Matter "infects with its own evil [ἀναπαμπλάναι κακοῦ ἑαυτῆς] that which is not in it but only directs its gaze to it [as does the soul]." (I.8.4.20-22) Hence evil is located primarily in matter because matter is not only an extra-psychological condition of the soul's decline, but the very dislocation interior to the fallen soul. The soul's decline into evil is the same as its assimilation to matter.

In what sense does the soul become like matter? Let us recall that the soul's decline into matter is mediated through its self-identification with the body. Therefore, if we would gain a more precise understanding of matter as the cause of evil, we should determine the sense in which matter affects the body and makes it the medium of the soul's self-alienation.

In IV.8.2. Plotinus contrasts the body of the World Soul with that which is administered by our human souls. The World Soul, Plotinus reasons, knows neither desire nor distress, since its body — the physical universe — admits neither addition nor loss. The

44. See, e.g., IV.8.4.1-27.

45. I.6.5.48-49.

46. I.2.3.10-15.

47. I.8.4.6-12.

48. I.8.7.12-14.

49. See I.8.4.24; 3.18-19.

individual body, on the other hand, has a tenuous hold on existence. Because it is frequently caught in adverse conditions, it requires much anxious forethought, and, its needs demand constant attention. As might be expected, the soul which cares for such a body and becomes identified with it is easily the victim of desire and fear. Evidently, then, it is the precarious circumstance of the body which threatens the soul charged with its care. Similarly, in I.8.4., the body's threat to the soul is described in terms of the body's lack of self-possession and its dispersion through time. Admittedly, Plotinus does not mention time explicitly, but he does suggest that the body never attains the self-possessed totality of substance precisely because it is in flux (φεύγει τε οὐσίαν ἀεὶ ῥέοντα).

Consequently, the soul which adopts the perspective of its corporeal existence becomes mingled with non-being. It lives at the level of desire (ἐπιθυμία), sorrow (λύπη), anger (θυμός), and fear (φόβος).⁵⁰ These passions, it is clear, follow from the soul's investment of itself in the body's temporally determined existence. For fear is the soul's dread of the dissolution of its union with the body, and sorrow is the sense of grief which accompanies the dissolution. The soul knows desire in seeking deliverance from troubling circumstances, or in providing against the threat of future trouble. The soul's cognitive life, moreover, is reduced to imagination and false opinion because it has come to define what is good and true according to the body's changing fortunes.⁵¹

It should be emphasized that the soul's enslavement to these passions is not the consequence of its confusing itself with the body's spatial magnitude. If matter were construed as indeterminate extension underlying bodies (determinate magnitudes), it is difficult to see how matter could be considered so extensively evil as Plotinus apparently believes it to be. First, it is not clear how the spatial dimensions of body could induce the passions of desire, sorrow, etc. in the soul. Secondly, it is not clear what sense could be given to Plotinus's contention that matter makes the soul to be like itself. Perhaps it could be said that as indeterminate extension matter makes the soul like itself insofar as the soul becomes unmeasured and indefinite. But in what sense, then, could the spatial dimensions of body be thought to evince this unmeasuredness and indefiniteness in the soul? Is it not rather the case that the passions of desire, fear, etc., which constitute the soul's disorder, are induced in the soul specifically in virtue of the jeopardy and finitude of the corporeal? The soul experiences these passions when it mistakes a transitory existence for its own life. Consequently, the soul is

50. I.8.15.14-15.

51. I.8.15.13-21. Cf. IV.4.17.

mingled with non-being when it adopts the temporally finite career of the body as its own authentic life. The direction of Plotinus's thought is unmistakable. It is the temporal process (γένεσις, ροή, and φθορά) constitutive of the body which represents the basic threat to the soul. As Plotinus says, the soul's decline into matter, that is, into non-being, is effected by its decline into γένεσις.⁵²

The soul which has blended itself or confused itself with its corporeal existence is not fully itself because it has become dissociated from itself, not spatially, but in the only way possible for a spiritual being, namely, temporally. The soul which is wed to the body must necessarily project itself into a future which is not yet, remember itself in a past which is no longer, and, lose itself in a present which is never at rest. Although Plotinus himself does not make it explicit, it should now be clear precisely in what sense the soul becomes like matter. Evil for the soul, its assimilation to matter, its mingling with non-being, coincides with its temporal distension.

If this interpretation of Plotinus's view of the soul's decline into evil is correct, then we must conclude that the concept of temporal flux logically coincides with the concept of matter understood as the source of evil. Our conclusion must be that time is the principle of non-being, and hence of evil, for the embodied soul. But can we find an independent corroboration of this conclusion? Does Plotinus ever indicate that time functions as the principle of non-being in regard to the life of the soul?

Nowhere does Plotinus explicitly identify time (χρόνος) and evil (κακόν). But there is at least one text in which time is described in terms of non-being, and, it is clearly suggested that the effect of time on the soul is evil.

In considering the relation between happiness or well-being and time,⁵³ Plotinus insists that well-being is intensive in character. It is present all at once in the present, so that the experience of its duration through time does not increase well-being.⁵⁴ The reason why well-being does not increase with duration through time is that time is non-being. Any time, apart from the present is non-existent.⁵⁵ Hence, while one may value the well-being which one has known in the past, insofar as it is past it no longer exists.

52. I.8.14.42, 49-54.

53. I.5., *On Whether Well-Being Increases with Time*.

54. The timelessness of well-being, in Plotinus's view, is akin to the timelessness which Aristotle ascribes to that unhindered activity (ἐνεργεία ἀνεμπόδιστος) which is pleasure, and, like seeing, is complete at any moment. See I.5.3-4, esp. 4.3-4, and cf. *Nicomachean Ethics*, VII, 13, 1153b10ff.; X, 4, 1174a13ff.

55. I.5.7.13.

Similarly, future happiness, insofar as it is future, is simply non-existent.⁵⁶ Because the future is not yet, and, the past is no longer, the flow of time can add nothing to the experience of well-being.

Plotinus carries this line of thought one step further, suggesting that temporal flux not only does not add to well-being, but that it is inimical to well-being. Insofar as it is successive, time dissipates the unity of the present.⁵⁷ Evidently, Plotinus thinks that the non-being of time consists not merely in the non-existence of the past and the future. Time is non-being because it is an addition to the unity of Being.⁵⁸ The addition of time, Plotinus says, means the dispersal of a unity which subsists in the present. In its dispersive activity, time seeks to efface (*ἀφανίζειν*) the permanence of the eternal.⁵⁹

That is why it [time] is properly called “the image of eternity,” since it intends to bring about the disappearance of what is permanent in eternity by its own dispersion. So if it takes from eternity what would be permanent in it and makes it its own, it destroys it — it is preserved, up to a point, by eternity, in one way, but destroyed if it passes altogether into temporal dispersion. (I.5.7.16-20)

56. I.5.2.11-13.

57. I.5.7.14-15.

58. I.5.7.12-17. Bréhier (*Plotin: Ennéades*, 1:xxiv, 90n.2) says that this passage is an interpolation by Porphyry. He bases his claim on the grounds that (1) the passage, in which the dispersive effect of time is evinced, represents a digression which interrupts the sequence of ideas, and, (2) the subject of *βούλεται* (line 14) can only be the author of the treatise, that is, Plotinus, who is spoken of here in the third person. Against Bréhier's claim we bring the following considerations: In regard to the second point, it is not at all clear that the subject of *βούλεται* must be the author. Armstrong, MacKenna-Page, and V. Cilento [*Plotino: Enneadi*, 3 vols. in 4 trans. V. Cilento (Bari: G. Laterza and Figli, 1947)] take *τὸ πλεόν* to be the subject of *βούλεται*. Perhaps Bréhier thinks that the subject of *βούλεται* must be a personal agent. But if we follow Henry-Schwyzler's text, *βουλομένη* (line 16) must modify *εἰκῶν* (line 15) which stands, not for a personal agent, but for time. As to the first point, it does not seem that a case can be made for the claim that the passage in question interrupts the development of the argument in the treatise. To the contrary, the passage is clearly integral to the line of thought elaborated here by Plotinus. The thesis that Plotinus advances is that well-being does not increase with its duration through time. The passage supports this thesis by arguing that time is non-being. That this metaphysical evaluation of time is consistent with Plotinian doctrine is corroborated by Plotinus's description of the genesis of time in III.7.11. There, time is said to arise through the addition (*τὸ πλεόν*) of the before and after to the timeless self-sufficiency of Being.

59. I.5.7.15-17.

Here, Plotinus ascribes to time exactly the same power of annihilation which, we have seen, he ascribes elsewhere to matter. Just as matter destroys whatever is associated with it,⁶⁰ so time effaces and destroys what is integral and abiding in the eternal. And just as matter is the primary evil because it is the nihilating principle of all that participates in it,⁶¹ so time, insofar as it too disperses the self-possessed unity of Being, must be regarded as evil.

When Plotinus speaks of time dispersing what is permanent in eternity we are perhaps to think of the lower soul, which cares for the body, losing its awareness of its higher self as it mistakes its life with the temporal career of the body. Plotinus often speaks of the self existing at different levels of self-possession or unity:⁶² our higher self is located at the level of *voũç* which is co-extensive with Being and is eternal. It is at the level of the lower soul that we exist in the realm of Becoming and in time. These two levels of selfhood must be distinguished from an intermediate self, a floating ego, which determines the level at which we choose to live. Plotinus's point in I.5. is that happiness does not increase with temporal duration because the well-being of the soul consists precisely in the soul's transcendence of time.⁶³ Hence, it is absurd to suppose that by adding time to well-being the latter is increased. Well-being belongs to the order of Being, but time is non-being. Happiness is that perfect self-possession characteristic of the life of Being. Time, however, is the principle of the dispersion of Being and the dissipation of self-possessed life. The addition of non-being to Being does not increase Being; instead, it disperses and diminishes Being. "So one must not join being to non-being or time or everlastingness of time to eternity . . ." (I.5.7.25-26)⁶⁴

Plotinus's thought is clear. Time, like matter, is non-being, and, inimical to the soul's well-being. The soul's well-being consists in

60. I.8.4.20-22; 8.18-20.

61. I.8.3.6-9; 4.22-24.

62. See, e.g., I.1.7.13-8.8; I.1.11.1-8; V.3.3.34-39; VI.4.14. For a discussion of Plotinus's understanding of the kinds of awareness characteristic of these different levels and of the connections between them, see Andrew Smith, "Unconsciousness and Quasiconsciousness in Plotinus," *Phronesis* 23 (1978): 292-301.

63. I.5.7.20-24. Cf. Richard Sorabji, *Time, Creation and the Continuum*, (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co. Ltd., 1983) pp. 157-63, for a discussion of Plotinus's understanding of the sense in which the soul transcends time.

64. Cf. VI.5.12.19-23.

its recollection of its higher self which is eternal.⁶⁵ Here, then, is evidence to support our claim that the soul's assimilation to matter, that is, its mingling with non-being, coincides with its temporal distension. But what is time's role in the constitution of the sensible? If time functions in the same way as does matter in regard to the soul's well-being, does it also exercise a material function in regard to the production of sensible entities?

In III.7.11. we learn that time is produced by the soul, and, that its production is coincident with the production of the sensible realm. In lines 20-35, Plotinus speaks of an unquiet power of the soul which wishes to translate what it sees "there" in the intelligible realm into something else. It does not want the whole to be present to it all together, and so,

. . . Soul, making the world of sense in imitation of that other world, moving with a motion which is not that which exists There, but like it, and intending to be an image of it, first of all put itself into time, which it made instead of eternity, and then handed over that which came into being as a slave to time, by making the whole of it exist in time and encompassing all its ways with time. (III.7.11.27-34)

The clear sense of these lines is that the soul constitutes the sensible realm through the addition (τὸ πλεόν — line 15) of time to plenary Being. Time, therefore, is produced both as the means by which the intelligible is translated into the sensible, and as the means by which the soul projects itself into the sensible.⁶⁶ Time, on this account, apparently functions as that principle of difference in virtue

65. Cf. Sorabji, *Time, Creation and the Continuum*, pp. 160-1, and, see Smith, "Unconsciousness and Quasiconsciousness in Plotinus," *Phronesis* 23 (1978):293: ". . . true well-being consists . . . in the identity of subject (floating *ego*) and object (higher self) within *nous*."

66. The realization of the sensible cosmos implies the self-temporalization of the soul: πρῶτον . . . ἐαυτὴν ἐχρόνωσεν. III.7.11.29-30. The sensible realm must be understood to be at once an objective order (of sensible things) and the correlative subjective stance in which that objective order is apprehended precisely as sensible. The sensible is concretely realized only in the bipolarity of an embodied self and an external world, i.e., the sensible world cannot have an objective, transcendent character — it cannot appear as a world — except for a correlative subjectivity. Therefore, if the soul produces the sensible world as an image of the intelligible, it must also constitute itself so as to allow the sensible cosmos to appear *qua* universe of sensible items. In other words, the concrete realization of the sensible requires both the materialization of the intelligible universe and the self-materialization of the soul. Peter Manchester, "Time and the Soul in Plotinus, III 7 [45], 11," *Dionysius* 2 (1978):101-36, claims that III.7.11 speaks of a double derivation of time. Lines 11-19 recount the emergence of the soul's own natural time (psychic time), and, lines 20-33, the emergence

of which the sensible is constituted other than the intelligible.

That time is indeed a principle of difference becomes clear when we examine the properties which Plotinus predicates of it. When the restless nature, seeking to realize itself, moves, it generates another motion: . . . ἐκινήθη μὲν αὐτή ἐκινήθη δὲ καὶ αὐτός . . . , namely, that of time.⁶⁷ But, curiously, time is not a motion which appears in a substratum. Matter, according to Plotinus, is the ὑποκείμενον of motion. Yet in III.7.11 we are given no hint as to how temporal motion might be related to the substratum. We are given no hint except that time is described in this context in terms strongly reminiscent of Plotinus's account of matter's role as ὑποκείμενον of change. The motion instituted by the restless nature consists in perpetual and successive projection into a next moment: εἰς τὸ ἔπειτα αἰεὶ καὶ τὸ ὕστερον. This motion, moreover, is intrinsically nihilating, for it is the moving negation of identity, "one thing after another": . . . οὐ ταυτόν, ἀλλ' ἕτερον εἶθ' ἕτερον κινούμενοι . . . (III.7.11.17-19).

If, because it is an addition to Being, time is non-being, its non-being evidently does not consist in its having the status of a sensible image of an intelligible εἶδος. It is the image of eternity, which, strictly speaking, is not one εἶδος among others, but the life of

of time in the nature "soul has power over" (physical time). According to Manchester, then, "Time is the life of the soul in a movement of transition from one Time (psychic time) into another (physical, sensible time)." (p. 130). But would it not be simpler, perhaps, to read lines 11-33 as recounting the production of one time — a time which is constitutive both of the sensible realm and of the soul which enters the sensible realm, thereby allowing it to be experienced precisely as a sensible universe?

67. III.7.11.17-20. Plotinus is as imprecise about the level of psychic life which produces time as he is about that part of the soul which produces matter. According to III.7.11.17-20 it is *we* who produce time (εἰργάσμεθα), while, according to IV.4.15.12-13, it is the World Soul which generates time. In a note to his translation of εἰργάσμεθα, Armstrong says: "We," because it is soul which moves and produces time, and we are souls, parts of universal soul and already present in it as it moves out from eternity." *Plotinus*, 3:338. Monique Lassègue, "Le temps, image de l'éternité, chez Plotin," *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger*, 107 (1982): 405-18, suggests that there are two times, an "experienced" time (un temps vécu) produced by us, and, an objective time (un temps cosmique) related to the movement of the heavens and produced by the World Soul. On Lassègue's account, the soul which generates time is the individual soul "en tant qu'elle est capable de retrouver sa parenté avec l'âme universelle, d'où vient le mouvement du ciel," (p. 414). There are two difficulties with Lassègue's proposed solution to the problem of time's origin: (1) it is not entirely clear in what sense the two times are related, and, (2) it seems to suggest that time is produced as a function of, or in relation to the celestial motion — a thesis Plotinus is at pains to deny. See III.7.12.15-13.8.

the divine νοῦς — that life, namely, which is the substratum (ὑποκείμενον) carrying the εἶδος in manifestation.⁶⁸ Hence, time does not exhibit the identity of form. Instead, it is that which is never in the same state, but always effecting another: . . . τὸ μὴ μένον ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ ἄλλο δὲ καὶ ἄλλο ἐνεργοῦν. (III.7.11.52). Nor again does time possess the unity of determinate structure. Instead, its unity is that of continuous duration: . . . τὸ ἐν συνεχείᾳ ἐν . . . εἰς ἄπειρον πρὸς τὸ ἐφεξῆς αἰεὶ. (III.7.11.53-55). Its infinity, likewise, is not that of the self-differentiating universal life of νοῦς, but of perpetual futurity. Since time is the motion which disperses identity and effects ever new difference, it has the character of an intractable source of otherness, and not that of phenomenal structure and regularity. Although Plotinus likens its status as an image to the image-status of the sensible cosmos,⁶⁹ he seems to have in mind only an inexact parallel.

The inexactitude of the parallel becomes evident when Plotinus articulates some of the consequences of calling time an image of eternity. For the manner in which time imitates eternity is described in a series of contrasts, each of which is introduced by the preposition ἀντί.⁷⁰ Time, which has been defined as the life of the soul in motion⁷¹ is now described as another life (ἄλλην ζωὴν) over against (ἀντί) the life of the intelligible realm.⁷² Hence, the sense in which time is life is not the same as, or even analogous to, the sense in which νοῦς or soul is life. In fact, Plotinus admits that time is called life by homonymy!⁷³ The motion of time is contrasted to the motion of the intellectual soul. In comparison with the identity, uniformity and stability of the intelligible, time is identical and uniform only insofar as it perpetually effects instability and difference. In place of the indivisibility of Being, time is an image of unity only in its unintermitting succession. In contrast to that which is infinite in the sense of being complete, there is the infinity of temporal succession, and, over against that which is whole and self-gathered, there is time, “a whole which is, and always will be, going to come into being part by part.”⁷⁴ Given this peculiar sort of imitation by antithesis, time can hardly be thought to exhibit the intelligibility of Being. It imitates eternity not by way of representation but by

68. See III.7.5.16-22.

69. III.7.11.46-48.

70. III.7.11.48-56. Cf. G. H. Clark, “The Theory of Time in Plotinus,” *Philosophical Review* 53 (1944):353. For the parallel relationship of the two matters, cf. above, footnote 3.

71. III.7.11.43-45.

72. *Ibid.*, line 48.

73. *Ibid.*, lines 48-50.

74. *Ibid.*, lines 50-6.

way of mimicry or dissimulation. Let us note, moreover, that this description of time as image of eternity is entirely consistent with what Plotinus says about time as the image of eternity in I.5.7.16-20. In light of these texts, it is surely not rhetorical exaggeration to say that time is, as it were, the negation of eternity. Time is the very antithesis of the life, motion and infinity of the eternal. And, in comparison with sensible things, time does not even possess the form of sensible entity, but, as the nihilating activity continually effecting otherness, escapes all intrinsic determination. It would seem there is little room for doubt regarding time's materiality. Insofar as it enters into the creation of the sensible, time functions in a manner which is logically equivalent to matter's function. It is the principle of non-being.

At the beginning of this paper it was noted that Plotinus's concept of sensible matter is complex. Matter is both (1) a metaphysical principle accounting for Becoming and for the otherness of the sensible vis-a-vis the intelligible, and, (2) a principle relevant to the moral and spiritual life of the soul, accounting for the evil which affects the soul. *Prima facie* it is difficult to discern a connection between these two accounts of matter. To determine whether indeed there is a logical connection between them, we have examined separately each aspect of the concept of matter. The results have disclosed a surprising convergence. Our analysis of the metaphysical role of matter has strongly suggested that the material principle of the sensible world is to be identified with temporal flux. And, our analysis of matter as evil has led inexorably to the same conclusion, namely, that the material principle of the soul's decline is to be identified with temporal flux. Hence, our conclusion: the logical consistency of Plotinus's concept of sensible matter derives from the coincidence, in his thought, of the concepts of matter and time.

Trinity College
University of Toronto