

Intelligible Matter in Plotinus

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The problem of matter is one of the central issues in Plotinus, because matter is intimately present in all the other constituents of his philosophy. Due to its unique nature matter appears in various guises on various hypostatic levels. In the present paper I intend to show: first, that not only in Plotinus' earlier reflections but throughout the whole of his work the notion of intelligible matter plays an important role and thus constitutes one of the fundamental components of his whole philosophy; second, that bodily matter and intelligible matter are necessarily connected as different but at the same time as inseparable, i.e. that the notion of matter, if thoroughly analyzed, necessarily entails the notion of ὕλη νοητή; and third, that intelligible matter is tightly connected not only with the indefinite dyad, but also with the imagination; I trace then implications and consequences of such a connection.¹

I

In depicting the main features of matter in general as primarily matter of physical bodies Plotinus mainly follows Plato and to some extent Aristotle.² In his account matter (1) is said to be non-being (μη ὄν; II.5.5.9 sqq.; cp. Plato, *RP* 382a; *Soph.* 254d), darkness and absolutely different from form which represents being, for matter is imagined as something formless (ἀνείδεόν τι φανταζομένη; II.5.4.10-18). Matter "as such" may then be

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2. Thus Plotinus describes matter as receptacle and nurse (III.6.13.12), as space and seat (III.6.13.19; cp. III.6.7.1-3; III.6.10.8 *et al.*). Cp. Plato, *Tim.* 49a: matter is ὑποδοχή, τιθήνη; 51a: μήτηρ, πανδεχές; 52a: χώρα; 50c: ἐκμαγεῖον. Matter as substrate, ὑποκείμενον: see II.4.1.1 sqq.; II.4.11.22-23; cp. Aristotle. *Phys.* 192a 31 and also H.-R. Schwyzer. "Plotinos," *RE* Bd. XXI.1, col. 471-592, col. 568. According to Narbonne, new features of matter introduced by Plotinus are impassibility and inalterability. J.-M. Narbonne, *La métaphysique de Plotin* (Paris, 1994), 41-42. For my present purpose the distinction of prime and proximate matter is not crucial. Cp. the discussion in D. O'Meara, *Structures hiérarchiques dans la pensée de Plotin* (Leiden, 1975), 71 sqq.

rather vaguely represented as “a kind of unmeasuredness in relation to measure, and unboundedness in relation to limit, and formlessness in relation to formative principle, and perpetual neediness in relation to what is self-sufficient; always undefined, nowhere stable, subject to every sort of influence, insatiate, complete poverty ...” (I.8.3.12–16). Strictly speaking, there is nothing in matter to be described adequately—as such it is not describable. That is why, since matter is indeterminate, it cannot really be known. We conceive matter only by a “spurious reasoning,” *λογισμὸς νόθος* (II.4.10.11; cp. II.4.12.27–33; III.6.13.46; cp. Plato, *Tim.* 52b), as if in a dream.³ The “knowledge” of matter is negative *par excellence* (*ἀφαιρέσει*, I.8.9.1 sqq.; cp. VI.6.3.26 sqq.) only by removing all form.⁴ This “knowledge” of matter is like seeing darkness (I.8.4.31): we see it, but not as anything positive, therefore, we see darkness not by seeing but by certain “unusual” kind of reasoning. But if we remove or abstract all the “predicates” of matter what is left then? Not a subject, for matter is not anything definite but is only negativity.

Consequently, the negativity of the non-being of matter is (2) itself necessary and cannot be taken away from the structure of the all. In the later treatise “On what are and whence come evils” (I.8 [51]), Plotinus finds it appropriate to speak about the necessary existence (*ὑπόστασις*) of matter (I.8.15.1–3; cp. I.8.7.2–4). Hence the mere negativity of matter may be rethought as not only a lack of all definiteness but rather as a negative potency which is then describable even as radical evil (I.8.5).⁵ And even when Plotinus presents matter as privation in terms of mere negation (*ἄρσις... ἢ στέρησις*, II.4.13.22–23), he borrows Aristotle’s terminology (*Phys.* 192a 4 sqq.) but radically redefines the whole concept (II.4.14; cp. I.8.11.1 sqq.). As J.–M. Narbonne notices, privation in Aristotle is *nihil privativum*, is always in relation to something else (to being), because it is privation of something (therefore, according to Aristotle, there always should be something

3. Cp. C. Baeumker, *Das Problem der Materie in der griechischen Philosophie. Eine historische-kritische Untersuchung* (Münster, 1890 [repr. Frankfurt a. Main, 1963]); L.J. Eslick, “The Material Substrate in Plato,” in *The Concept of Matter in Greek and Medieval Philosophy*, E. McMullin, ed. (Notre Dame, IA, 1963), 39–54, 45–46.

4. Cp. H. Happ, *Hyle. Studien zum Aristotelischen Materie-Begriff* (Berlin-New York, 1971), 661–67, 683, 674–75: “Dieses ‘Nicht-Denken’ des Unbestimmten ist kein absolutes Nicht-Wesen, sondern die Seele tastet sich gleichsam zum Unbestimmten vor Die Seele nimmt die Bestimmtheiten weg und denkt die übrigbleibende Unbestimmtheit auf dunkle Weise für sich, ja verschmilzt sogar wie bei der *νόησις* der Formen irgendwie mit ihrem Gegenstand.” Cp. Aristotle, *Met* 1029a 11 sqq.; Simplicius, *In Phys.* 225.22 sqq.

5. Cp. H.-R. Schwyzer, “Zur Plotins Deutung der sogenannten Platonischen Materie,” *Zetesis. Festschrift E. de Strijcker* (Antwerp, 1973), 266–80, 277; J.M. Rist, “Plotinus on Matter and Evil,” *Phronesis* 6 (1961):160; H. Benz, *‘Materie’ und Wahrnehmung in der Philosophie Plotins* (Würzburg, 1990), 125, 147; J.-M. Narbonne (*Op. cit.*), 125.

contrary to privation, while there is nothing is contrary to matter).⁶ However, since matter represents for Plotinus negativity "charged" with the possibility to embody and represent something definite (but matter as such is not the source of such an embodiment or definiteness), then, in contrast to Aristotle, he characterizes matter as privation in terms of *nihil negativum* (II.4.16).⁷

Matter is therefore (3) indefinite and unlimited (*τὸ ἀπειρον*, II.4.15.17, 33–34; II.4.16.9–10; cp. I.8.3.13; VI.6.3.3 sqq.).⁸ "[M]atter is indefinite and not yet stable by itself, and is carried about here and there into every form, and since it is altogether adaptable becomes many by being brought into everything and becoming everything" (II.4.11.40–42). That is why matter may be properly characterized only in negative terms: it is without quality (*ἀποιος*), is not body (*σώματος*; cp. II.4.12.34–38), has no size (or magnitude, *μέγεθος*), without quantity (*ἀποσσειν*), and shapeless (II.4.8.1 sqq.).

Since (4) matter has nothing of itself, everything is brought by form-*εἶδος*, for matter needs form (*ἐνδεής*) and is pure receptivity (II.4.8.23–24, III.5.9.54–56; VI.5.8.15–22).⁹ It also has "no resistance (*τὸ ἀντικείμενον*; cp. *ἀντερείδων*, III.6.7.31) for it has no activity, but is a shadow, waits passively to endure whatever that which acts upon it wishes" (III.6.18.29–31).

Matter (5) cannot be affected and therefore is unalterable (III.6.9.34; III.6.10.22; III.6.11.18). I cannot discuss here in detail the question whether matter is originated or not. Since matter, as it will be shown, is inherently paradoxical, it may be said to be both, in a sense.¹⁰

6. Cp. Plotin, *Sochineniya*, Yu. Shichalin and M. Solopova, eds. (Petersburg, 1995), 610.

7. J.-M. Narbonne (*Op. cit.*), 43–49 brings this issue as discussed in the German tradition of "scholastic metaphysics" of the XVIIIth century as presented in: J.-F. Courtine, *Suarez et le système de la métaphysique* (Paris, 1990), 248–56. In Baumgarten the notion of being is introduced in ontology as derived from the basic concept of *nihil negativum*, absolute, simple, impossible and irrepresentable (cp. A.G. Baumgarten, *Metaphysica* [Halle-Salle, 1779 (repr. Hildesheim, 1963)], 3). Then the negation of nothing, *non-nihil* brings something, *aliquid* (not yet definite or defined). As taken actually, it is determined object or *ens*; as not determined, it is *non-ens*, or *nihil privativum* which represents mere possibility.

8. E. Bréhier, *La philosophie de Plotin* (Paris, 1982 [repr. from the 3rd ed. of 1961; 1st ed. Paris, 1928]), 206.

9. In contrast to matter, intellect is unreceptive (*ἀδεκτον* - III. 6. 6. 20). Cp. the discussion in: J.S. Lee, "The Doctrine of Reception According to the Capacity of the Recipient vi.4–5," *Dionysius* 3 (1979): 79–97 and M.W. Wagner, "Plotinus' Idealism and the Problem of Matter in *Enneads* vi.4 & 5," *Dionysius* 10 (1986): 57–83, 64 sqq.

10. See the whole discussion in: H.-R. Schwyzer, "Zu Plotins Deutung der sogenannten Platonischen Materie," *Zetesis* (Antwerp-Utrecht, 1973), 266–80; D. O'Brien, "Plotinus and the Gnostics on the Generation of Matter," *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought. Essays in honour of A.H. Armstrong*, H.J. Blumenthal and R.A. Markus, eds. (London, 1981), 114–15;

Matter (6), then cannot have any inner structure. For that reason matter cannot also be destroyed (*ἀνώλεθρον*, III.6.8.8; cp. IV.7.9.11; *Tim.* 52a), for there is simply nothing in it to pass away. It may be said, therefore, to endure (*μένει*), not as anything concrete or definite (III.6.19.14).

It is important in Plotinus that matter (7) is only potentiality which never becomes actuality: it is always only an “announcement,” a “promise” of being (*ἐπαγγελλόμενοι*), but not being itself (II.5.4.3; II.5.5.1–9), i.e. potentiality never actualized (cp. Aristotle, *Met.* 1088b 1, 1045a 23, 1045b 18–19).¹¹ This potentiality is negative and not only privative. Moreover, as I will argue, on the one hand, it is not only bodily matter that is mere potentiality—this is also true of intelligible matter (for it is potentially [*δυνάμει*] all “real things” [II.5.5.36])—and, on the other hand, the negative potentiality matter is not the same as the potentiality of the One.

II

In II.4.2–5 Plotinus gives us an account of intelligible matter.¹² The very notion of intelligible matter he borrows from Aristotle. Some philosophers maintain, says Plotinus, that “there is another, prior, kind [of matter] in the intelligible world (*ἐν τοῖς νοητοῖς*) which underlies the forms there and the incorporeal substances” (II.4.1.14–18). The notion of *ἄλη νοητή* appears three times in the *Metaphysics* (*Met.* Z 10, 1035a 9 sqq., Z 11, 1036b 35–1037a 4 and H 6, 1045a 34–36). In Z 11, 1036b 35–1037a 4 and H 6, 1045a 34 Aristotle opposes sensual (bodily) matter to intelligible matter (*ἔστι γὰρ ἡ ἄλη ἢ μὲν αἰσθητή ἢ δὲ νοητή*) and in Z 10, 1035a 9 sqq. he stresses the unknowability of matter as such (*ἄγνωστος*) and refers intelligible matter as present “in sensible things not *qua* sensible, e.g. the objects of mathematics” (*νοητή δε [scil. ἄλη] ἢ ἐν τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς ὑπάρχουσα μὴ ἢ αἰσθητά, οἷον τὰ μ αθημ ατικὰ*). In *Met.* 1045a 36 intelligible matter is presented as the generic constituent of a geometrical

K. Corrigan, “Is There More Than One Generation of Matter in the Enneads?” *Phronesis* 2 (1986): 167–81; J.-M. Narbonne, “Plotin et le problème de la génération de la matière; à propos d’un article récent,” *Dionysius* 11 (1987): 3–31; D. O’Brien, “J.-M. Narbonne on Plotinus and the Generation of Matter: Two Corrections,” *Dionysius* 12 (1988): 25–26. D. O’Brien, *Plotinus on the Origin of Matter: An Exercise in the Interpretation of the Enneads* (Naples, 1991); J.-M. Narbonne (*Op. cit.*), 133 sqq.

11. J.-M. Narbonne (*Op. cit.*), 8: “Or la matière est un être en puissance, un *δυνάμει ὄν*, c’est-à-dire quelque chose dont la structure ontologique n’est pas achevée, d’emblée fixée, et qui appelle donc le changement.”

12. In the edition of “Enneads” II. 4 appears under the title “On Matter”; the other title “On the Two Kinds of Matter” we find in Porphyry’s *Vita Plotini* 4. 45; 24, 46; however, both titles do not belong to Plotinus himself and reflect the school’s usage: cp. H.-R. Schwyzler, *Plotinos*, Col. 487.

figure ("plane figure" in: "circle is a plane figure"). Still, from those three brief descriptions it is not immediately clear what is the intelligible matter. Alexander understands ἕλη νοητή as extension (διάστασις; In *Met.* 510.3 Hayduck). This is also the understanding of H. Happ.¹³ However, Rist challenges this interpretation and agrees with Ross that intelligible matter is the generic element in both species and individuals and concludes that Plotinus appropriates the Aristotelian notion of intelligible matter which is found in the relation between genus and species and turns it into the relation between "the first effluence from the One [which is] the base of form and form itself."¹⁴

It is important to notice that in his examples Aristotle refers to the geometrical figures which instantiate intelligible matter. More precisely, intelligible matter is associated with the following features: 1. irrationality (there is something in it which cannot be apprehended), 2. mathematical (geometrical) objects, 3. certain extension. If, as I will argue, intelligible matter is also connected with imagination, then, although Ross-Rist hypothesis still remains valid, the hypothesis of Alexander-Happ cannot be rejected, because imagination may be considered as *plenum* of geometrical figures (of a circle, e.g.). Moreover, both accounts are not incompatible insofar as intelligible matter may be understood as the generic element of geometrical (mathematical) species as existing in the geometrical extension (but then, of course, "genus" in the Ross-Rist hypothesis should be restricted mainly to geometrical objects). If this is the case, then Plotinus' interpretation, however original in many points, is not as far from that of Aristotle as it may seem.

Why does Plotinus need the notion of intelligible matter at all? A plausible answer is that he just tries to incorporate Aristotelian notion (never found in Plato) in his own philosophy. Plotinus discusses ἕλη νοητή mainly in the early II.4 [12]. In the treatises of the middle period II.5 [25] "On What Exists Potentially and What Actually" and III.6 [26] "On the Impassibility of Things Without Body" there are few occasional cases of mentioning ἕλη νοητή and no mentioning at all in the late I.8 [51] "On What Are and Whence Come Evils." However, in the immediately precedent III.5 [50] "On Love" intelligible matter reappears (ch. 6) to characterize an important distinction and difference between *daimones* (spirits) as intermediary between gods and humans. Still, as I will try to show, the notion of intelligible matter is not likely to be introduced by Plotinus only for reconciling Pla-

13. Happ (*Op. cit.*), 581 sqq. interprets ἕλη νοητή as "reine Ausdehnung," διάστασις or διάστημα.

14. W.D. Ross, *A Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* (Oxford, 1953 [2nd ed.]), 199; J. Rist. "The Indefinite Dyad and intelligible matter in Plotinus," *Classical Quarterly*, new series, 12 (1962): 99-107, 106-07.

tonic and Aristotelian views, i.e. for merely exegetic purposes, but represents an important constituent element in Plotinus' philosophy.

What is the role of intelligible matter in the *Enneads*? In II.4.2.1–2 Plotinus sketches the program of investigation of intelligible matter: we have to find out whether intelligible matter (a) exists (*εἶ ἔστι*), (b) what it is (*τίς οὐσα*) and (c) how it exists (*πῶς ἔστι*). All the three points should be mutually connected, for the question of existence entails the question of essence and the question of essence presupposes the discussion of the question of the mode of existence—the way essence is represented in being. Plotinus presents several arguments in support of his view that intelligible matter is a necessary constituent of everything which is.

(a). Does intelligible matter exist (*εἶ ἔστι*)? It should exist, for (1) the *mimetic* argument (II.4.4.8–11) supports this claim. If there is intelligible order or cosmos “there”, in the intelligible (*κόσμος νοητός*) and this bodily cosmos is an imitation (*μίμημα*) of the intelligible cosmos and physical cosmos has matter, then there should be matter “there” too as a paradigm of this matter. Moreover, form cannot really be form without being imposed on something different from it.

This brings us next (2) to the argument of *substrate* or *ὑποκείμενον* (cp. Aristotle, *Phys.* 192a 31). Intelligible matter should also exist (II.4.4.2–8) because we assume that the forms (*εἶδη*) exist (cp. V.9.3–4). Further, if the forms exist, there should be something common to all of them, but also something individual, by which the forms differ from each other. This individual difference is shape in every form (*μορφῆ*); if there is shape, there should be that which is shaped as the forms. Therefore, there should be matter which receives this shape and this is intelligible matter. From this point of view intelligible matter is substrate, *ὑποκείμενον* (cp. Aristotle, *Phys.* 192a 31; *Met.* 1024b 8–9) of the forms. In other words, shape is a peculiar characteristic in and of the forms, the source of individuation, while intelligible matter is that which is *common* to all of them as the undifferentiated substrate of the intelligible, representing the aspect of *unity* of and within the forms.¹⁵ However, although this substrate is *in* the intelligible, it is *not* being as such, for being is the synthetic unity which comes as the result of the turning of the not yet differentiated thinking of the intellect to its source, to the superabundant unity (which is not even really a unity) of the One.

(3) Next is the argument from *parts* (II.4.4.11–20). “There,” in the intelligible, everything is partless (*ἀμέρῆς*), but, in a way, the forms still have parts. In bodies parts can be separated and then matter is “cut” (*τμηθεῖσα*).

15. Cp. A.H. Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Cambridge, 1940), 67–68; J.M. Rist (*Op. cit.*), 104–05.

But the intellect, one-many as one-being (cp. the second hypothesis of *Parm.* 144b sqq.) has the structure of all-unity, where every form is single and individual but at the same time actually contains all the other forms.¹⁶ Intelligible matter is then to be understood as that *one single shapeless plenum* where many shapes (*μορφαί*) of the forms are embodied: "But if intelligible reality is at once many and partless, then the many existing in one are in matter which is that one, and they are its shapes; conceive this unity as varied and of many shapes" (II.4.4.14–16). Intelligible matter is then an indefinite and undefined source of unity in the forms, a potentiality of being. However, intelligible matter is still not the One, but matter is "one" in a certain sense, where "one" does not really mean one as anything definite and unique, since there is no identity yet—but the matter as only the basis for duality, itself non-dual.

(4) Matter appears also as a "ladder." That which is hypostatically and hierarchically "higher" may be considered as form of the "lower" which then makes "matter" to that "higher" (this whole structure reminds a ladder). Intelligible matter is closer to being (for it constitutes a moment *in* being), therefore, it should be in a "higher" position to the "lower" or bodily matter. This structure is commonly present in Plotinus, namely, that which is more potential is matter to what is more actual (III.9.5.3). The undefined and formless should not necessarily be despised then, for it offers itself to that which is before it and better: such is soul to the intellect and *λόγος*, the rational formative principle (II.4.3.1–4). Likewise, soul may be considered as a matter to the intellect (V.1.3.12–14, 21–23; cp. I.2.2.21–23; V.8.3.9; VI.3.16.14–15). "[W]e must assume that soul is matter to the first reality [i.e., to the intellect] which makes it and is afterwards given shape and perfected" (V. 9. 4. 10–12). At this point it is important for us to note that intelligible matter may be associated not only with the intellect but also with soul; this will be crucial in the discussion of the relation between intelligible matter and imagination.

(b). Consideration of *ἕλη νοητή* as a shapeless unity embracing many shapes brings us to the answer to the question of what the intelligible matter is (*τίς οὖσα*).

Intelligible matter may then be presented (5) as the *indefinite dyad*, *ἀόριστος δυάς*. The dyad is the primary source and potentiality of multiplicity (and of receiving opposites), not the multiplicity as such (cp. VI.3.12.2–6; VI.6.3.29; Aristotle, *Phys.* 203a 15–16, *Met.* 987b 26). It plays an important role in the (logical, not temporal) "process" of constituting the

16. Cp. E.R. Dodds, "The *Parmenides* of Plato and the Origin of the Neoplatonic 'One,'" *Classical Quarterly* 22 (1928): 129–42; B. Darrell Jackson, "Plotinus and the *Parmenides*," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* Vol. 5, no. 4 (1967): 315–27.

intellect *νοῦς*. The dyad which represents not yet definite and not defined thinking, *νόησις* of the second hypostasis, tends to “offer itself” back to its source, the One which is beyond being and any determination (III.8.11).¹⁷ Therefore the dyad (which is itself *not* multitude but the potentiality of multitude) necessarily “misses” the One and can only grasp it as multiplicity and plurality. Then the dyad in “looking” towards that which cannot be seen (that is why it is like “seeing in the darkness,” cp. I.8.4.31) and thus returning back to the One engenders the whole multiplicity of the forms.¹⁸

The primary (intelligible) indefiniteness of “seeing”—thinking is informed through this arisen multitude of the forms. That is why intelligible matter is not different from the indefinite *νόησις* as mere capacity of seeing (or, rather, intention of seeing) that which as such cannot be seen.¹⁹ That is why the dyad represents the material aspect of the intellect and thus may be considered intelligible matter, for before the act of turning back and “looking” to the One and the subsequent (again: not temporal) definition by the noetic forms, it is indefinite.²⁰ Therefore the dyad as intelligible matter (strictly speaking, it may be considered as matter only at the second step, after the rise of noetic objects, of which it may really be said to be matter) should be associated with a certain contemplative capacity (which is unconscious, for there is no determination of conscious reflective thinking yet). This contemplative ability to stare at the complete darkness will be later presented, as I intend to show, through the irrational construction of imagination.

Intelligible matter as the dyad is then also a substrate: the indefinite dyad is not being, neither is it non-being (as bodily matter “is” non-being)—for it is different from the One which alone is beyond being—but is a necessary “substrate” for the forms in being which is “prior” to being.

17. Cp. Iamblichus, *Theol. arithm.*, 7.19 de Falco; A.H. Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus*, 66; J. Rist (*Op. cit.*), 104; *The Cambridge History of the Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, A.H. Armstrong, ed. (Cambridge, 1967), 241. According to Rist, Plotinus simply associates Aristotelian intelligible matter with the Platonic indefinite dyad.

18. Cp. Ph. Merlan, “Aristotle, *Met.* 987 b 20–25 and Plotinus, *Enn.* V 4, 2, 8–9,” *Phronesis* 9 (1964): 45–47, 45.

19. J. Rist (*Op. cit.*), 100–02: “The Dyad or matter then is potentiality and, as 5. 3. 11 puts it, an *ἐφείσις* or proclivity. This proclivity may, I believe, be compared with what Plotinus elsewhere describes as unconscious contemplation. ... Matter, even Intelligible Matter, in its simple state, is endowed with some sort of contemplative force. ... this is indeed the only kind of distinguished feature we can find for it ...” Cp. W. Theiler, “Einheit und unbegrenzte Zweiheit von Plato bis Plotin,” *Isonomia*. (Berlin, 1964): 89–109.

20. V. 1. 7; V. 3. 11; V. 4. 2. Cp. *Phil.* 23c ff., *Met.* 987b 20 ff.; *Diog. Laert.* VIII 25. Cp. also: Ph. Merlan (*Op. cit.*), 45: “Why must there be a principle above the *νοῦς*, Plotinus asks in *Enn.* V 4, 2, 8–9? Because the activity of *νοῦς*, i.e. *νόησις*, is *ἀόριστος* and receives its determination only from its object (the intelligible);” A.H. Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus*, 65–68.

Thus the intellect as the simplex of *νόησις/νοητά* is constituted as unity of thinking which engenders but is also in turn itself defined by the objects of thought.²¹ However, it should be noted that when the dyad turns towards the One it receives, as if, a double definition: both from the One and from the multitude of the forms which form the structure of all-unity.²²

At last (6), intelligible matter is to be considered as the *potentiality* of being. Intelligible matter then, by the very way Plotinus presents or introduces it as the first after and next to the One which is really the first, implies that intelligible matter must be considered as potentiality of being (defined both by the One and by the forms), exactly as matter in general (bodily matter), as it has been said, is mere potentiality.

Consideration of intelligible matter as dyad (as potentiality of multiplicity, in fact answers the last question of Plotinus, namely, (c) how does intelligible matter exist (*πῶς ἐστίν*)? For the very way of introducing the dyad—as being closer to the One than anything else and as thus intimately related to the ultimate source of all—presents intelligible matter as the potentiality of and for real being(s)-*εἶδη*, as possibility of their subsistence and embodiment as the real forms.

III

An important aspect of intelligible matter which has not been analyzed so far is the affinity of *ἕλη νοητή* with the imagination. What is imagination and what role does it play in Plotinus? First of all, (1) imagination can be broadly understood as the ability to produce psychic images.²³ In other words, a distinctive feature of imagination is that it is *creative* or *productive*. In criticizing the Gnostics, Plotinus says that the soul may create “through imagination (*διὰ φαντασίας*) and, still more, through rational activity (*τοῦ λογίζεσθαι*)” (II.9.11.22). The notion of *φαντασία* is used in the *Enneads* rather broadly as an ability to represent things as mental or psychic images.²⁴ However, imagination as a capacity of representation is not simply a passive reflecting or mirroring, for imagination forms its images (*φαντασίαι*) *not* like impressions on wax which receive them (II.6.3.29). Imagination

21. Cp. D. O'Meara, *Plotinus. An Introduction to the Enneads* (Oxford, 1995), 62–65.

22. J. Rist (*Op. cit.*), 103: “*νοῦς* sees the One as the Forms, but the intelligibility of those Forms is supplied by the One.”

23. Cp. Plotinus, *Ennead III. 6. On the Impassivity of the Bodiless*, B. Fleet, trans. and comm. (Oxford, 1995), 73.

24. Cp. B. Fleet (*Op. cit.*), 266: “[I]t is important to remember that the image in no way affects its origin,” cp. 248. See also: E. Moutsopoulos, “Dynamic Structuralism in the Plotinian Theory of the Imaginary,” *Diotima* 4 (1976): 11–22; G. Watson, *Phantasia in Classical Thought* (Galway, 1988); I. Chitchaline, “L'imagination chez Proclus, Porphyre et Erigène,” *Sepanata* 12 (Moscow, 1993).

therefore should possess (or, rather, itself be) certain active potency, but potency of a peculiar kind: it should ever distort and necessarily misrepresent its object.

(2) This brings us to the next distinctive aspect of imagination—its connection with the irrational, i.e. with the necessary distortion of *logos* in its embodiment. This appears in Plotinus' definition of the imagination: "Imagination is from a stroke of something irrational from outside (*φαντασία δὲ πληγῆ ἀλόγου ἔξωθεν*)" (I.8.15.18).²⁵ Images of imagination are themselves described as vague and unclear, as *ἀμυδραὶ φαντασίαι* (I.8.14.5)—exactly in the same terms as Plato characterizes matter (*χαλεπὸν καὶ ἀμυδρὸν εἶδος*, *Tim.* 49a).

But consideration of imagination as only distorting entails a difficulty. Indeed, if all the images—*φαντασίαι* as both content and product of imagination—are necessarily unclear and distorted, how can the soul know any of its images for sure? It may well be that images of sense-perception are vague. However, they should be interpreted by judgement already in the sense-perception itself and subsequently be completed by the soul.²⁶ But what if the images of imagination come from the soul and not from senses? If this is the case, the distortion in soul which enters forming the mental images may be understood as the uncertainty of knowledge which is opinion, *δόξα*. There should then be two different aspects of psychic (mental) representation which implies the (not very elaborated but distinct) teaching of two imaginations. In fact, we find the confirmation of such a distinction in Plotinus: he places imagination in soul, both the primary imagination called opinion-*δόξα* and the secondary, "uncriticized, indeterminate, indistinct" (*ἀνεπίκριτος*) "mental-picture" (*φαντασία*, III.6.4.19–21).

(3) In his analysis of sense-perception E. Emilsson stresses the connection of the sensual perception and imagination in Plotinus.²⁷ The main point of his argument is that imagination is a *faculty* which is the terminating point of perceptions (cp. IV.3.29, 25; IV.3.30; IV.8.8; IV.4.20.17–18) or *φαντάσματα*, "unextended entities" which arise in the soul as the result of sense-perception.²⁸ In this respect imagination and perception appear to be necessarily connected, although they have different objects. As his final con-

25. Another reading adopted by H-S: imagination *is* itself a stroke (*πληγῆ*).

26. This is exactly the case in Plotinus for whom perceptions are judgements (*ρίσεις*): E.K. Emilsson, *Plotinus on Sense-Perception: a Philosophical Study* (Cambridge, 1988), 121–25.

27. E.K. Emilsson (*Op. cit.*), 107–12.

28. In this respect the position of Plotinus appears to be close to that of Aristotle in "De anima." Cp. M. Schofield, "Aristotle on the Imagination," in *Aristotle on Mind and the Senses*, G.E.R. Lloyd and G.E.L. Owen, eds. (Cambridge, 1978), 101; Aristotle, *De Motu Animalium*, text with translation, commentary, and interpretive essay by M. Nussbaum (Princeton, 1978); M. Wedin, *Mind and Imagination in Aristotle* (New Haven-London, 1995).

clusion Emilsson raises the hypothesis that "there is no sharp distinction between sense-perception and representation [i.e. imagination]: sense-perception is directed towards the external, but it apprehends its object by means of a judgement that itself is simultaneously apprehended by the faculty of representation."²⁹ That is to say, sense-perception and imagination always meet in the act of perception but should be essentially different. Their difference lies in that the imagination, unlike perception, does not have to do directly with physical objects. Imagination in creating its objects-*φαντάσματα* starts with the sensual data as already interpreted and judged by senses and not with the physical objects themselves. The faculty of imagination therefore should be a faculty "higher" than that of the sense-perception, i.e. closer to the dianoetic interpretative discursive reasoning of the soul.

Since imagination represents its objects in quasi-bodily or quasi-extended images, it appears to be very close to the bodily (cp. IV.4.17.9, 12). Nevertheless, imagination cannot be reduced to the bodily only; it has certain features in common with the intelligible which physical bodily things do not have—for instance, imagination may represent something always equal to itself (e.g., a circle) and thus not the object of becoming and change. That is why when Plotinus describes inner detachment, exhortation of the higher part of the soul to the state of pure being and thinking, he says that it should not only be detached from everything bodily, but from the imagination as well (V.1.10.24—27; cp. V.3.3.5—6.).³⁰ One has to bring forward another hypothesis that the other function of the imagination is a kind of conscious awareness, as in case of the awareness of the fact of reading when actually reading (cp. I.4.10.19—22; II.9.1.34—36).³¹ The imagination on its "upper side" meets the discursive reasoning of dianoia and is thus reflective and on its "lower side" it meets sense-perception.

It is reasonable to suppose in view of these considerations that the imagination occupies an intermediary position between sensual (bodily) and thinkable (discursive).³² I have already cited II.9.11.22 which supports this claim. Also in IV.4.13.11—13 Plotinus describes the imagination as positioned between the impression of nature (those images that imagination shares with

29. "The most important function of phantasia is to be the 'locus' of these unextended entities that are involved in memory and reasoning, and it is clear that these entities are in some sense representations of things": E.K. Emilsson (*Op. cit.*), 109; cp. 111, 121–25.

30. Cp.: "he who wishes to contemplate the intelligible nature will contemplate what is beyond the perceptible if he has no mental image (*φαντασία*) of the perceptible," V.5.6.17–19.

31. E.W. Warren, "Imagination in Plotinus," *Classical Quarterly* 16 (1966): 277–85, 277–78; E. Emilsson (*Op. cit.*), 112; cp.: "there are passages where phantasia seems to cover all kinds of apprehension below the level of intellection," 108.

32. Cp. Proclus, *In Eucl.*, 51–52, Friedlein.

sense-perception) and the thinking of intellect.³³ Thus the claim of Plotinus that “the imaging part [of the soul] has a sort of intelligence (*φανταστικὸν οἶον νοερόν*)” (IV.3.23.33) may be fully justified.

Another argument in favor of the situating imagination as an intermediary faculty may be recovered from VI.8.2.17 where imagination, linked here with the experiences of body, is said to be compelling (VI.8.3.7–16), and the compelling force is primarily associated with the necessity of matter. Since freedom is determined by closeness to the One and thus emerges through ascension to the Good (VI.8.4.4 sqq.), it is the intellect that is mostly free. Now, the intellect is really free “when it does not have it in its power not to act” (VI.8.4.6–7). However compelling it may seem, freedom consists in the voluntary act of pursuing the good (the best) and therefore in the free accepting of the necessity not to act (against the noetic representations of the Good which are not different from the intellect). This “not able not to” is very much different from the simple necessity of the “not able” of the matter.

Now, in the imagination there are traces not only of rude compelling but also of freedom insofar as it can voluntarily construct (imagine) its object. Although this “freedom” of imagination differs both from the compelling necessity of matter and from the freedom of the intellect and at the same time has a certain similarity with both of them. Imagination may also be considered free in that it can put its images in free associations, to connect, to disconnect and to distort them. That is to say, in respect of the (relative) voluntary freedom of its operation the imagination has certain traits of the intelligible. The difference is that the intelligible, unlike the imaginary, cannot be presented as a kind of visual image and thus there is a fundamental ontological distinction between them (cp. I.4.10.12–21). Imagination is compelling and compelled in that it receives and gets the shape of and for its images from something else—from physical bodies, on the one hand (head of a man, tail of a horse in the image of centaur) and from the intelligibles, on the other (form of a circle as present in the imagination). As for all kind of “phantastic” images which can never be seen in (physical and intelligible) reality, the shape of their appearance still should be borrowed from the intelligible forms, since everything which is shaped is finally determined by the measure of the participation of every thing in the ideal paradigm, for it is only bodily matter that does not absolutely have no form. But then it follows then that the imagination should have certain features of both intellect and matter but also be different from both of them since it has certain traits which are altogether alien to the intellect and matter.

33. *φαντασία δὲ μεταξύ φύσεως τύπου καὶ νοήσεως*, IV.4.13.13.

(4) Finally, imagination represents that *plenum* where psychic images are present as embodied and in this sense as quasi-extended. Intelligible matter is introduced primarily, as it has been said, as the indefinite dyad, as not yet formed intellection which, in its attempt of grasping the One, (mis)represents it as a multitude of forms. In this way the One which is beyond being, can only be imagined but not really thought. That is why when Plotinus speaks about the One in VI.8 he makes a sort of imaginary experiment. In thinking about the One, "we first assume a space and place (*χώραν καὶ τόπον*), a kind of vast emptiness (*χάος*), and then, when the space is already there we bring this nature into that place which has come to be or is in our imagination, and bringing it into this kind of place we inquire in this way as if into whence and how it came here, and as if it was a stranger we have asked about its [One's] presence and, in a way, its substance, really just as if we thought that it had been thrown up from some depth or down from some height" (VI.8.11.15–22).

We may now draw certain conclusions about the relation of intelligible matter to the imagination. (a) The desperate but inevitable attempt to think the unthinkable principle of all leads to the representation of that principle as not-One, provides it with imaginary traits. At the same time the structure of being is constituted, since the noetic realm of the ideal forms or real objects of thinking is produced by turning to the One. When we think the One we cannot think it otherwise than by putting it into a certain place which is not real, but imaginary. Once again, we see that the imagination is connected both with non-being (the beyond-being) and being (as thinking), i.e. it has a special "location" between existing and non-existing. All the things other than the Good—primarily the intelligible objects, *τὰ νοητά*—"are satisfied with themselves by their participation in or imagination of the Good" (VI.8.13.46). In other words, participation, *μετουσία*, provides (noetic) things with form while imagination, *φαντασία*, provides them with matter.

(b) We are able to think "about the One" (not "to think the One") then, only as located or abiding in certain place which is not real (for it is not yet defined) but also not altogether unreal (for as the indefinite dyad it represents the first stage of the intellect). It can therefore be only an *imaginary* place, "as-if" place (this "as-ifness" is also an important trait of intelligible matter).

(c) In this respect imagination corresponds to *χώρα* which is not anything defined but is close to non-being, a mere possibility of embodiment or accepting something (cp. *Tim.* 52a). But this "plenum" is not merely a privative non-being, mere nothingness, but represents being as well, since it is present primarily not in physical or bodily things but in the noetic objects. It is, therefore a certain potency and also a paradigm for the bodily.

Further, (d) this “place” of the above-being (of the One) is itself non-existent but *imaginary*, while the “place” of things is “real.” This *plenum* may be taken then (in fact, imagined) as quasi-spatial, especially because there is no distinct teaching, neither in Plotinus nor even in Plato, of space as geometrical, i.e. as already measured. It is that place where images are embodied and may be apprehended as extended while not being really extended. In general, space or spatiality cannot be taken as primary phenomenon or anything characteristic for the distinction of physical and mental in Plotinus.³⁴ For spatiality is not anything positive or something which could have an essence. It is just a potential capacity to acquire form which, however different, is both present in bodily spatiality and in imaginary quasi-spatiality. A.H. Armstrong notes that Plotinus understands chaos “as Aristotle does (*Phys.* 208b 31–33) as the empty space or place which things occupy.”³⁵ If we take into account Alexander’s interpretation of intelligible matter as extension—*διάστασις*, we will again find a striking similarity of imagination and *ἄλη νοητή*. Of course, empty space is not extension neither should it necessarily be extended but the extended may be put into space as empty receptacle.

As a cognitive faculty, (e) imagination exists “in between” and turns out to be ambiguous. This leads Plotinus to a distinction between two *phantasias*, the higher and the lower imagination which parallels the distinction between intelligible and bodily matter. At last, (f) the ability to retain the images as if in a certain *plenum* is connected with the faculty of memory.³⁶ Perception which is not immediately present is contained within the imagination by and as memory which represents that very perception as remembrance or retained image (IV.3.25 sqq; esp. IV. 3.29.26–28). But it is both memory and discursive reasoning as apprehension of perception that involve an image, since the faculty of imagination is at work in the operation of discursive reasoning.

This preliminary analysis of the four traits of imagination: its creativity, its inalienable irrationality present to imagination, its intermediate position between sensual and thinkable and its quasi-spatial character of a *plenum*, is undertaken in order to show the relation of intelligible matter to imagination. Indeed, all these four features of imagination are equally applicable to intelligible matter as well.

34. That is why I cannot agree with K. Emilsson’s claim that in Plotinus “spatiality is really the formal distinguishing feature; the sensible can be identified with spatial, the intelligible with non-spatial” (*Op. cit.*), 18.

35. Plotinus, *Enneads* VI. 6–9. Vol. VII (Cambridge, MA-London, 1988), 262–63. Cp. Hesiod, *Theog.*, 116.

36. Cp. J. Dillon, “Plotinus on the transcendental imagination,” *Religious Imagination*, J.P. Mackey, ed. (Edinburgh, 1986), 55–64.

First of all, intelligible matter may be said to be creative in a way, insofar as in its striving towards the One it brings forth the multitude of forms (finite, according to Plotinus). But the true source of creativity is the One. However, since it is beyond being and all possible representation and the dyad is mere potentiality of being and as such is undefined, creativity can be ascribed only to the intellect as embracing the cosmos of being, i.e. of the definite forms, the objects of thinking. Strictly speaking, the creativity of intelligible matter is then only illusory. The same may be said about the imagination which creates its objects only *as if*; for it simply makes visible, in the form of an image, that which already *is* as the objects of thinking. Intelligible matter can be considered creative as a paradigm or "form" of bodily matter which is non-being. Second, irrationality is also to be found in intelligible matter, since, as the primary indefinite potency it is alogical before, as it has been said, it is (in various aspects) determined by the One and the forms. Third, intelligible matter is intermediary as well. One should notice that this intermediateness is itself double. On the one hand, intelligible matter is "between" the One and the forms-*νοητά*; on the other hand, it is also "between" pure being (ideal forms) and mere non-being (bodily matter). Lastly, fourth, intelligible matter is a "plenum" and *χώρα* as empty, not a definite "place" for embodiment of intelligible objects, or forms-*νοητά* and of geometrical figures.

It is important to note at this point that geometrical figures are to be considered as tightly connected with the imagination. Plotinus regards geometrical objects as representing intelligible objects (the forms for geometrical objects). Geometrical figures belong therefore to the intelligible world (*γεωμετρία δὲ νοητῶν οὐσα τακτέα ἐκεῖ*, V.9.11.24–25). Further, since τὰ νοητά are necessarily connected with intelligible matter, geometrical figures should also participate in it. Therefore, geometricals should be connected with imagination. Indeed, we see all the four properties present in the geometrical figures. First, they may be considered as produced in imagination by the act of contemplation, as in the famous soliloquy of nature: "and my act of contemplation makes what it contemplates, as the geometers draw their figures while they contemplate. But I do not draw, but as I contemplate, the lines which bound the bodies come to be as if they fell from my contemplation" (III.8.4.7–10; cp. *Tim.* 53c–55c). Second, geometrical objects participate not only in the eternal intelligible (as representing indivisible form) but also in the irrational, because they also present otherness (as being divisible—at least, in the imagination, IV.7.8.42; cp. VI.3.16.14–15). Third, geometrical figures have an intermediary position, they both belong here and there, in the imaginable (of the soul) and in the intelligible (of the intellect, VI.3.16. 20–23; cp. Plato, *Phil.* 16c–17a, 56a–

57d; *RP* 525a–530d). Geometrical figures are objects of discursive analysis: “[T]he knower in knowing [one part] brings in all the others by a kind of sequence (*ἀκολουθία*); and the geometer in his analysis makes clear that the one proposition contains all the prior propositions by means of which the analysis is made and the subsequent propositions which are generated from it” (IV.9.5.23). On the one hand, geometricals are like intelligibles, for they all are mutually connected and interrelated (in this respect they represent the structure of the all-unity in the intelligible), on the other hand, they should be presented and analyzed consecutively, one after another (and in this respect they can only be understood as associated with intelligible matter which implies discursiveness in the world of geometrical objects).

One could however make an important distinction here, for it is easy to see that discursiveness in the *analysis* of geometrical objects (which are considered then as already given) is not the same thing as discursiveness in the *construction* of figures (which are considered then in *process* of their production). In the first case geometrical figures are taken as whole, as already existing, while in the second case—as being produced by a movement (cp. Proclus, *In Eucl.* 185.9–12, Friedlein). Such a distinction uncovers a fundamental ambiguity of the geometrical as connected with imagination and as having an intermediary position between the pure intelligible and the bodily. Plotinus does not make any clear distinction between those two aspects, nor does he present any explicit description of the construction of geometrical object.

Lastly, fourth, geometrical figures are characterized primarily not by its size or magnitude but by its shape (*μορφῆ*) of a certain quality (circular, triangular etc.) but still cannot absolutely be considered without and outside of extension or magnitude (VI.3.14.20–24), i.e. should be connected with quasi-spatial extension.

Therefore, we now have to conclude that the imagination and intelligible matter are not really different in those four main constitutive points where imagination represents a cognitive (epistemological) aspect and intelligible matter represents indefiniteness as dyad (i.e. ontological aspect).

This conclusion is supported by a passage from III. 6 where Plotinus speaks about imagination as matter to the soul: “in the soul the mental picture [image-*εἰδωλον*] is a phantasm [or imagination, *φαντασία*], while the nature of the soul is not phantasmal [not of nature of an image, *οὐκειδωλον*]; and although the imagination³⁷ in many ways seems to lead the soul and

37. In A.H. Armstrong’s translation: “the mental picture.” Nevertheless, “imagination” in this sentence seems to be more appropriate, since, first, Plotinus has just said that in the soul image and imagination are the same and, second, in the Greek text of this sentence the subject is missing (III.6.15.17–18). In B. Fleet’s interpretation the subject of the last sentence (lines 18–19) is *φαντασία*, as it is in H-S reading and therefore the claim is that the soul is a kind of

take it wherever it wants to, the soul none the less uses it as if it [the imagination] was matter or something like it (*ἀνάλογοι*)” (III. 6. 15. 16–22). That is to say, imagination which is located between intelligible and bodily acquires and implements images, exactly as intelligible matter does.

IV

The intermediary position of the imagination secures its “access” both to the sensible and to the thinkable (noetic).³⁸ At the same time in IV.3.31.1 sqq. we find an important doctrine of two *φαντασίαι* belonging to two souls which are in hierarchical relation: the one is higher, the other is the lower soul.³⁹ Does it then mean that the two imaginations are separate and perform different functions, namely, one phantasia operates only in the intelligible, the other in the sensual? No, Plotinus argues that it cannot be the case, “for in this way there will be two living things with nothing at all in common with each other” (IV.3.31.6–8). That is to say, there would be two different and separate souls which would have nothing to do with each other, whereas they should be “in tune,” harmonized with each other (*συμφωνῆ*) and the higher should rule, define the lower, “for both have come together into one and the better soul is on top of the other. This other soul, then, sees everything, and takes some things with it which belong to the other when it goes out but rejects others” (IV.3.31.15–18).

That is to say, the difference between the two imaginations is brought not by the difference of their objects but by the hierarchical and ontological difference in the structure of the whole (which in the last instance comes back to the henological difference between the superabundant One and the undefined dyad [matter]). The “intermediary” status of imagination, then, is not in that it is “between” the intelligible and the sensual but that it is both “here” and “there” as two different, however not really separable imaginations. There is an insurmountable ambiguity in the imagination, both in regard to its object (intelligible and sensual)⁴⁰ and in regard to that ontologi-

matter to the imagination (*Op. cit.*), 248. Taking into consideration what has been said about the imagination, this seems to be incorrect. I support A.H. Armstrong who supposes that the subject of the sentence is *ψυχή* (Plotinus. *Ennead III*. Vol. III. Cambridge, 1967, 273.) and therefore disagree with both H-S and Fleët. The sentence then should be understood that it is imagination that is the (intelligible) matter to and of the soul.

38. However as such imagination is neither sense-perception nor thinking (both discursive and intellectual). Cp. Aristotle, *De an.* 427b 14 sqq.

39. Armstrong notes: “In his earlier discussion of imagination and memory in his great work on the soul, IV.3–5 (27–29), Plotinus comes to the conclusion that there are two *φαντασίαι*, one belonging to the higher and one to the lower soul (IV.3.31)”: Plotinus, *Enneads VI*. 6–9. Vol. VII (Cambridge, MA-London, 1988), 234–35.

40. Cp. E.W. Warren (*Op. cit.*), 277–85. In his article Warren argues that the faculty of imagination is double: “When the sensitive and rational functions are combined into one soul,

cal reality with which it is associated (the higher soul which belongs to the thinking of intellect and the lower soul).⁴¹ We may then understand the whole passage from IV.3.31 so that the higher imagination of the two, which is the image-making potentiality or power of the higher soul and thus belongs to the intellectual, is not different from the primary indefiniteness of thinking which is *ἀόριστος δυνάς*. Moreover, if we take into consideration that the imagination is that ability or capacity in the soul which not only produces but also retains memories and images as a material substrate, we may conclude that there is no real difference between intelligible matter and the higher imagination. The dyad and the imagination may be said to be the same, for they both represent "the same" intelligible matter, but they differ only insofar as the objects of intellect are intelligible noetic forms which are only thinkable, while the objects of imagination are primarily intermediary entities of mixed—both sensual and intelligible origin (e.g., geometrical objects). However, if we confine the comparison only to the higher imagination which is in the intellectual, then intelligible matter as dyad and as (higher) imagination may be said to be identical.

But if two imaginations—the higher and the lower—are not the same and still are not really separate, can this also be said about two matters? In the late I.8 we can hardly find any traces of intelligible matter, in any case all attempts of "reading it out" of the text will be interpretative, even if justified. Does Plotinus, in considering the problem of evil, omit the notion of the *ἕλλη νοητή* which otherwise fits his philosophical reasoning very well? It seems that in Plotinus one cannot speak about *two different* matters. For, first, matter is not any definite subject with a number of distinctive predicates by which it differs from another subject or entity. Intelligible matter is not a form (for, as dyad and as the higher imagination it still has to be shaped by being which is different from itself) and bodily matter is not mere nothing as "zero" potentiality but is certain negative capacity as the source of evil. And second, before the multiple structure of the all-unity of intelligible objects—*τὰ νοητά* arise, there is no principle of distinction, so that we cannot distinguish anything. Therefore, intelligible matter cannot be different from bodily matter at this stage. Perhaps, then, they become distinct later, when the intelligible noetic being arises? But the appearance of *τὰ νοητά*

a new conceptual imagination performs a function analogous to that of sensible imagination" (278).

41. Blumenthal suggests that the two kinds of imagination corresponding to two different levels of soul are: the one between sense-perception and reason and the other subsensitive: H.J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology. His Doctrines of the Embodied Soul* (The Hague, 1971), 89–95; and "Plotinus' Adaptation of Aristotle's Psychology," *The Significance of the Neoplatonism*, R. Baine Harris, ed. (Norfolk, VA, 1976), 51–55. See, however, convincing criticism of E. Emilsson (*Op. cit.*), 108.

does not change anything in nature of matter nor in the relation of the intelligible to the bodily matter. Subsequently, they cannot be said to be really different. That is why in II.4.8.13–14 Plotinus have to state that matter “must not be composite, but simple and one thing in its nature.” Matter “keeps (*φυλάττει*) its own nature” (III.6.18.19; cp. III.6.10.18 and 11.36). Does it mean that there is no distinction between the two matters?

The two matters cannot be considered as identically the same. For, first, again, unless the ideal forms appear, there is no way to judge about the sameness—there is no principle of sameness neither in the not yet formed matter, nor even in the One which is beyond sameness and otherness. It is possible to speak about the nature of matter, but this nature is the principle (*ἀρχή*) of becoming which is evil and “infects with its own evil that which is not in it but only directs its gaze to it” (I.8.4.20–22). That is, the “nature” of matter does not express any identity. Quite to the contrary, its identity is in being always non-identical. And second, in II.4.3.5–13 Plotinus explains the non-identity of the two matters insofar as “in the intelligible world the composite being (*σύνθετον*) is differently constituted, not like bodies: since forming principles, too, are composite, and by their actuality make composite the nature which is active toward the production of a form. The matter, too, of the things that came into being is always receiving different forms, but the matter of eternal things is always the same and always has the same form. With matter here, it is pretty well exactly the other way round; for here it is all things in turn and only one thing at each particular time; so nothing lasts because one thing pushes out another; so it is not the same for ever.” The composition in the intelligible may be understood as the composite of peculiarity (shape) and universality (intelligible matter) which is different from bodies, since intelligible matter may be understood as the same (*ταυτόν*) in the sense that it is identical as receiving the same form. In other words, it is the defined form which is the source of identity in *ἄλη νοητή*, while the bodily matter is impotent to retain anything constantly.

The two matters are rather in a proportion to each other: the relation of intelligible matter as an ‘*as if*’ form of the bodily matter corresponds to the relation (or proportion) of the form (*εἶδος*) to the bodily matter as *χώρα*. However, intelligible matter is not a form in proper sense, for it is only the potentiality of all the forms.

Therefore, we have to conclude somewhat paradoxically that we cannot treat matter as one single subject, but we also cannot say that it really differs from itself in the distinction between intelligible and bodily matter. Thus matter should be recognized as fundamentally ambiguous. Moreover, ambiguity may be even found in intelligible matter, for it is represented not only as the indefinite dyad but also as imagination. And the imagination is itself double as directed toward both intelligible and sensual.

V

Thus matter may be characterized in the opposite terms. It may be said to be both the same and not the same (cp. III.6.14.29, 35), both one (in its nature) and double (as two matters); it seems to violate the law of contradiction.⁴² However, this is not really the case, because, first, there is no unity of subject in matter (for matter is not a subject). Second, there is no unity of relation (matter is one and double, same and different in different respects, for, again, there is nothing in matter about which something could be predicated "in one and the same respect"). Third, there is not necessarily a unity of "togetherness" (*ἅμα* if "at once" it is understood in temporal sense then matter is not in time; and if togetherness is understood as simultaneousness by nature,⁴³ then it does not apply as well, for the "nature" of matter is to accept opposites (cp. I.8.8.18 sqq.) but itself it is not anything defined).

In III.6.10.22 Plotinus argues that matter is unchangeable. Indeed, there is nothing definite in matter which could be subject to change. Moreover, in matter there is no "self." And since unalterability does not mean that matter is identically the same, it is not even altogether true to claim that matter is unchangeable.

Matter may be described then in mutually exclusive terms without violating the principle of contradiction. In III.6.10.25 Plotinus says that "existing, for matter, is existing precisely as matter" (*τὸ εἶναι τῆ ὕλη ἐστὶ τὸ εἶναι ἢ ὕλη*). But this "existing as matter" is deeply paradoxical. Obviously, "existing as matter" means "being different from anything else" which is not matter, especially, being different and other than being. Still this "being matter" is nothing else than "truly not being."⁴⁴ Since matter's "being" consists in non-being, this non-being should be taken as being, which is again non-being etc. So there is a resemblance of reflexivity in matter (a kind of empty mirroring, by a mirror which does not properly exist), which is not really a reflexivity, for, unlike the intellect which reflects itself *qua* being, matter does not turn upon itself, for, again, there is no identical "self" in it.

Thus paradox is deeply inherent in matter. It is not by chance that in III.6 matter is repeatedly characterized in paradoxical mutually exclusive terms: it "possesses without really possessing" (III.6.1.36), "appears to be filled, but contains nothing" (III.6.7.26). In matter there is "the apparent presence of a kind of image which is not really present" (III.6.12.27), "fol-

42. *τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ ἅμα ὑπάρχειν τε καὶ μὴ ὑπάρχειν ἀδύνατον τῷ αὐτῷ καὶ κατὰ τὸ αὐτό*, Aristotle, *Met.* 1005b 20–22.

43. Cp. P. Vincent Spade, "Quasi-Aristotelianism," *Infinity and Continuity in Ancient and Medieval Thought*, N. Kretzmann, ed. (Ithaca-London, 1982), 297–307 and N. Kretzmann, "Continuity, Contrariety, Contradiction, and Change," *ibid.*, 270–96.

44. Cp. B. Fleet (*Op. cit.*), 199–200.

lows ... while not really following" (III.6.15.31) and is "static without being stable (III.6.7.14).⁴⁵ Matter may be even said to be both generated and not generated.⁴⁶ However, such descriptions of matter are not senseless, since, as it has been said, matter is not subject to the law of contradiction. Therefore, matter always presents opposite appearances (*τὰ ἐναντία... φανταζόμενοι*) on its surface (III.6.7.14 sqq.; cp. VI.3.12.2–6) but is not affected by those opposites, for they are not really present in matter. Matter may be then described as great and small (*μέγα καὶ μικρόν*, VI.6.3.29; cp. *Met.* 987b 20–26, 1089a 35; *Phys.* 203a 15–16), less and more, deficient and superabundant.

To III.6.10.19 B. Fleet comments that "matter has no accidental properties."⁴⁷ But when matter is said "not to have accidental properties," this itself is not an accidental property. What, then? Is it essential property (like that of unlimitedness, inalterability etc.)? Obviously, not, for matter has no particular essence. Matter cannot simply be characterized in terms of accidental / essential properties. In fact, every judgment "misses" matter as its object (as matter itself "misses" its object, first as the dyad turning back to the One and then also missing the embodied intelligible and bodily things), since matter is not any particular defined object at all. Matter is paradoxical.

It is proper then to speak of matter in terms of otherness: the distinctive characteristic (*ιδιότης*) of matter "is not something other than what it is; it is not an addition to it but rather consists in its relationship to other things, its being other than they" (*πρὸς τὰ ἄλλα, ὅτι ἄλλο αὐτῶν*). Other things are not only other (*τὰ... ἄλλα οὐ μόνον ἄλλα*) but each of them is something as form, but this [matter] would appropriately be called nothing but other, or perhaps others (*μόνον ἄλλο-τάχα δὲ ἄλλα*), so as not to define it as a unity by the term "other" but to show its indefiniteness by calling it "others" (II.4.13.24–31). That is why when Plotinus introduces the notion of separateness (*τὸ χωρίς*) which characterizes not the particular individuality of the forms but rather the fact that they are all distinct (which is their common feature), he says that this separateness consists in otherness (*ἐτερότητι*, IV.4.16.10–11). We have to state that otherness as such is nothing else than the dyad or intelligible matter, for it is the first produced other to the One. The One is not other to itself. Therefore, the dyad and imagination

45. Trans. B. Fleet (*Op. cit.*), 249.

46. *Plotinus Schriften*, Übersetzt von R. Harder, Band I b (Hamburg, 1956). Commentary to II. 4 [12]: P. 516: "Die intelligible Materie ist entstanden und zugleich unentstanden. Im vollen Sinne ewig ist sie deshalb nicht, weil sie von den übergeordneten Prinzipien abhängt. Aber sie entstand nicht in der Zeit, sondern ist ewig bedingt von der intelligiblen Andersheit." Cp. note 10 above.

47. B. Fleet (*Op. cit.*), 199.

as otherness should necessarily be present in thinking about the Good: “[W]hen what is other than the Good thinks it, it does so by being “like the Good” (cp. Plato, *RP* 509a) and having a resemblance to the Good, and it thinks it as Good and as desired by itself, and as if it had a mental image (*φαντασία*) of the Good” (V.6.5.12–15).

In III.6.17.35–37 we find a rather enigmatic phrase: “for what is nothing of itself can become the opposite, too, by means of something else, and when it has become the opposite is not that either, for if it was it would be static.” Taking into account everything which has just been said, we may understand this claim as meaning the following: matter, which is nothing, always becomes, through something other than itself, other to itself and then again other to that other to itself etc., unceasingly, without stop; which means that in matter there is no real reflexivity, no sameness, even as sameness of otherness.

Physical matter is always (*ἀεί*) not the same (II.4.3.13). This statement obviously contradicts the previously made claim about matter’s inalterability. However, if we take into account that what has been said about the principle of contradiction as applied to matter, being always other to everything and to itself (for matter is not anything definite) is compatible with the unchangeability of matter. Being-other is matter’s mode of eternity: bodily matter is always not the same. But this not being the same is paradoxically itself a kind of sameness. Intelligible matter is always the same and always has the same form implemented in it, i.e. intelligible matter is always identical but in its identity it, as the dyad, is the basis of otherness, of multiplicity. Moreover, one cannot say that intelligible matter knows itself, therefore, it is non-identical. Again paradoxically, bodily matter is otherness which is always the same to itself, while intelligible matter is sameness which is always other to itself.

Thus, since matter is not a substance and has no essence, its “non-essential essence” is to be other to everything else, other to the other, other even to itself (since there is no any definite “self” in matter). That is why matter is always only a relation, or, rather, is *in* relation to everything else, other than it is. However it is not absolute, radical otherness. Matter as otherness is just “the part of otherness which is opposed to the things which in the full and proper sense exist, that is to say rational principles (*λόγοι*)” (II.4.6.2–3). Even if radically other to the existent matter is not anything definite, it is defined by the other to itself. As *ἀόριστος δυάς* before the act of double definition by the One (the One is then the primary, not yet defined, other to intelligible matter and matter as the dyad is also other to the One) and by the forms, noetic objects (which are then other to the otherness of matter), it is still not yet definite and defined.

So we see that the nature of matter is elusive, for if matter may be characterized in terms of nature at all, its nature is only to accept opposite contraries. This difference, again, is expressed in terms of paradox, for, on the one hand, intelligible matter as the dyad may be recognized as principle (of multitude, but not the multitude itself) but on the other hand matter is not the difference as such but is different to everything else since it is incompatible with any sort of edge (*πέρας*). Therefore, the "nature" of matter is qualified by Plotinus in terms of radical difference, "otherness" to everything else, as *ἕτερα φύσις* (III.6.19.24) and *ἑτερότης φύσεως* (III.6.15.6–8).⁴⁸

But "everything else" is somehow limited—except for the One which is infinite as thus not definite and not defined. Both matter and the One do not tolerate definiteness, but what is the difference between them if there such a difference at all? There is a number of "predicates" which both the One and matter have in common (if, again, it is possible to ascribe any predicates to them at all). They can be both properly characterized negatively, by *via negativa* (cp. III.6.7.7 sq.): both the One (VI.7.33.21) and the matter (II.5.4.12) are said to be *ἀνείδεον*; both are *ἄπειρον* (the One, VI.7.32.15; the matter, II.4.15.10); both cannot be spoken of (the One, VI.7.38.11; the matter, III.6.15.28); both are mere potentiality.

It is remarkable however that when we enter the shaky ground of considering of non-being, even then we cannot completely fail to discern the One and the matter. If there is a fundamental difference between them, it cannot be brought in by matter, for, as it has been stated, the difference of matter is constituted only negatively (i.e. to everything else) and it is only the One which may be the cause of such difference, since it is the One that ultimately determines the noetic objects when the indefinite thinking of intellect tries to grasp it.

Throughout the *Enneads* Plotinus goes back to depict the difference between the One and matter. Primarily, (1) the difference is already in terms of difference itself. Matter is different to everything: "Non-being [in matter] does not mean absolute non-being but only something other than being (*μη ὄν δὲ οὔτι τὸ παντελῶς μὴ ὄν ἀλλ' ἕτερον μόνον τοῦ ὄντος*),... like an image (*εἰκῶν*) of being or something still more non-existent" (I.8.3.6–9). Whereas the One "is not other than itself" (*οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν ἄλλο αὐτοῦ*, V.6.5.11–12).

Also (2) the One is the first, while intelligible matter is intermediary and bodily matter is ultimate and the last (cp. V.8.7.22: matter is called *ἰδός τι ἔσχατον*), that after which nothing else may be. Matter is the ultimate, the

48. An important question which I cannot discuss here because of the lack of room is whether the dyad and the otherness are mutually substitutive or one of them is logically prior to the other.

very end (*τὸ ἔσχατον*) of the procession from the One or the Good: "Since not only the Good [is present], there must be the last end (*τῆ παρ' αὐτό*) in the process of going out past it, or if one prefers to put it like this, going down or going away Now it is necessary that what comes after the First should exist, and therefore that the last should exist; and this is matter, which possesses nothing at all of the Good" (I.8.7.17–23). So the argument is this: I. the One a). is above being (=does not exist) and b). is different from what comes after it; therefore, that which comes after the One, should be either i). being or ii). somehow participate in being, and thus is said to exist in a way; II. matter comes after the One (it is the last and the least after the First); therefore, matter should be existing in certain sense, however, it does not properly exist. However, it is to be noticed that the same points a). and b). are applicable to matter as well. The main difference between the One and matter is then that matter comes second (that is why it is the dyad), but the One does not come or proceed and thus is the first of all, both as logically the first in the order of hypostases and as the principle of all.

(3) This brings us to the third point of difference: the One is the Good (VI.8.8.9), the source of light, while matter is evil (I.8.7.12) and darkness as privation of light (II.4.5.7–9). Matter is merely lack of goodness, "a sort of sediment [dregs] of the prior realities, bitter and embittering" (II.3.17.24).⁴⁹ The distinction between matter (as evil) and the One lies in that there is no evil either in that which is above being, or in the intellect. And if evil exists, it exists among non-existent things, in matter as a sort of form of non-existence (*εἰδός τι τοῦ μὴ ὄντος*; I.8.3.1–6).

Finally, (4), as it has been stated, potentiality of matter is not the same as the potentiality of the One. The One is the infinite, "unspeakably great" potency of all, *δύναμις πάντων* (III.8.10.1, IV.8.6.11, V.1.7.10, VI.8.20.38 *et al.*) which never becomes that all, i.e. is ever absent from anything other than itself (only certain "trace" of the One is in every thing as the uniqueness of its individuality). The One is thus always absent in its presence. Quite to the contrary, matter as negative potency which is never actualized (II.5.4.3 sqq.), only a "promise," is always present to everything, for all things, even the intelligible objects, are associated with certain matter. Matter is then present through its absence.

49. The term Plotinus uses to characterize matter here (*πικρός*, bitter) appears to be a Chaldean reminiscence. Cp.: J. Dillon, "Plotinus and the Chaldean Oracles," *Platonism in Late Antiquity*, S. Gersh and Ch. Kannengiesser, eds. (Notre Dame, IA, 1992), 131–40, 139–40.

VI

In conclusion, we have to discuss how otherness is present in intelligible matter under the form of movement. Is intelligible matter produced? Due to its inherent paradoxality, it may be considered as produced (insofar as it comes next to the One) but also, in a sense, as not produced (insofar as it comes not in time). Remarkably, the same may be said about the forms: the noetic objects

are originated in so far as they have a beginning, but not originated because they have not a beginning in time; they always proceed from something else,⁵⁰ not as always coming into being, like the universe, but as always existing, like the universe there. For otherness there exists always (ἡ ἑτερότης ἢ ἐκεῖ αἰεί), which produces intelligible matter;⁵¹ for this is the principle of matter, this and the primary movement (ἡ κίνησις ἢ πρώτη). For this reason movement, too, was called otherness, because movement and otherness sprang forth (ἐξέφυσαν) together.⁵² The movement and the otherness which came from the first are undefined, and need the first to define them; and they are defined when they are turned to it (ἐπιστραφή). But before the turning, matter, too, was undefined and the other and not yet good, but unilluminated from the first. For if light comes from the first, then that which receives the light, before it receives it has everlastingly no light; but it has light as other than itself, since the light comes to it from something else. (II.4.5.24–37)

This description, first, fits the previous discussion of intelligible matter as the dyad perfectly well: before turning back to the One matter is indefinite, i.e. not yet defined and therefore non resisting. Matter receives definition only through its epistrophic relation, through turning back to what is prior and better than it. Second, matter is in fact nothing else but radical otherness: it is other to everything, even to itself. That is also the reason why matter is not defined. At this point Plotinus brings a new component in his presentation, namely, what he calls primary movement. But what it is and how does it relate to the otherness? It may be the case that Plotinus is simply referring to Plato's account of five μέγιστᾶ γένη (being, motion, rest, sameness and otherness) in *Soph.* 254d sqq.⁵³ This seems to be quite probable, since both otherness and movement represent non-identity and non-rest which consti-

50. αἰεί παρ' ἄλλου. The translation of Narbonne is more precise: "elles dependent toujours d'un autre," *Plotin. Les deux matières. [Ennéades II, 4 (12)]* (Paris, 1993), 281.

51. In the text: "produces matter," τὴν ἄλην ποιεῖ. Again, Narbonne's translation follows closer to the text: "l'altérité là-bas existe toujours, qui produit la matière," *La métaphysique de Plotin.*, 281. However, taking into consideration what has been said on the unity of matter, Armstrong's translation does also make sense.

52. Cp. Aristotle, *Phys.* 201b 16–26 = Test, *Plat.*, 55A Gaiser.

53. Plotinus often refers to this place in "Sophist" throughout the *Enneads* (III.7.3.9–11; V.1.4.35–36; V.3.15.40; VI.2.7.30; VI.7.39.4–6 *et al.*); H-S editio minor, T.III, p. 359. Cp. D. O'Brien, *Plotinus on the Origin of Matter*, 24–25.

tute the most peculiar trait of matter as lack of definiteness and stability. In *Soph.* 255a–b Plato argues that movement and otherness are irreducible to each other, because movement participates both in sameness and in otherness (cp. 256a; in the “Sophist” motion and otherness are two different categories). For if movement were change in a broader sense, it would also change otherness into sameness, i.e. into other than otherness itself, for otherness necessarily presupposes sameness: there is no otherness without sameness and vice versa.⁵⁴ In the very similar way, there is no movement without rest and no rest without movement: they mutually presuppose each other (VI.6.3.26–43). And this is an easily recognizable “work” of matter. When the One produces the dyad-intelligible matter, it has already produced both otherness and sameness which cannot really be separated from each other. However, this pair of mutually inseparable initial “principles” (for, strictly speaking, only the One is *the* principle, but it cannot be expressed) is not yet defined as sameness and otherness unless there is this first “movement” of the intellect (which at this stage is not different from intelligible matter) back to the One which is in “rest.” Therefore, on the one hand, otherness and movement are not identical, for first, there is no sameness yet, and second, they express different moments of the relation of the (intelligible) matter to the One: otherness is constituted in *πρόδος*, while primary movement is constituted in *ἐπιστροφή* (although movement is always present in the otherness and otherness is present in movement). On the other hand, otherness and primary movement are not really different, for both present mere change into something else, both do not have their clear identity, and this, paradoxically, constitutes certain “identity” of their nature. (Obviously, the similar type of relation is between sameness and rest.) That is why Plotinus brings both otherness and primary movement to characterize matter.

However, in intelligible matter as the potentiality of indefiniteness there is no real separation of otherness / movement from sameness / rest. Plotinus puts their remarkable connection this way. Since the first after the One is indefinitely infinite, it embraces the opposites and “it could be imagined as either. . . . But if you approach any of it as one, it will appear many; and if you say that it is many, you will be wrong again: for each [part] of it is not one, all of them cannot be many. And this nature of it according to one and the other of your imaginations is movement, and, according as imagination has arrived at it, rest. And the impossibility of seeing it by itself is movement from intellect and slipping away; but that it cannot run away but is held fast from outside and all around and is not able to go on, this would be its rest; so that it is only in motion” (VI.6.3.33–43).

54. Cp. L. Brisson, *Le Même et l'Autre dans la structure ontologique du Timée de Platon* (Paris, 1974).

That is to say, intelligible matter is necessarily connected with motion in the intelligible world.⁵⁵ And this motion is ambiguous, since it embraces opposites. Movement leads to movement which does not “stand still” (VI.6.3.23) but immediately resolves into to rest, which again turns back into movement etc.—a kind of identical non-identity which is not identity either.

Thus the primary movement has to be connected with intelligible matter and imagination.⁵⁶ In III.6.4.44–46 Plotinus says that imagination is able to originate movement: “[T]he movement starts from it, from the mental picture produced by sense-impressions, or even without a mental picture.”⁵⁷ Here Plotinus mentions first the lower, sensual imagination. But what does “without a mental picture” mean? In his commentary to III.6 Fleet suggests that in the second part of the phrase *ἄνευ φαντασίας* “must mean ‘without any such (externally produced) impression’.”⁵⁸ It means that Plotinus recognizes that *both* imaginations (that which has to do with the sensual and that which operates in the intelligible) produce movement.

Once again the link between intelligible matter and imagination is established, this time through mediation of primary movement. For if intelligible matter is inseparable from primary movement and primary movement is inseparable from imagination, then imagination-*φαντασία* cannot itself be separated from movement.

We may expect that Plotinus should describe movement of a non-physical entity (i.e. of that which does not belong to the realm of becoming). And in fact he does it in III.6.18.24–37 in depicting movement of logos in the imagination-*φαντασία*:

[T]he soul which holds the forms of real beings, and is itself, too, a form, holds them all gathered together, and each individual form is gathered together in itself and when it sees the forms of things perceived by the senses as it were turning back towards it and approaching it, it does not endure to receive them with their multiplicity, but sees them stripped of their mass; for it cannot become anything else than what it is So therefore both that which proceeds from the rational principle in the higher world has already a trace (*ἵχνος*) of what is going to come into being, for *when the rational principle is moved in a sort of picture-making imagination* (*ἐν φαντασίᾳ εἰκονικῇ κινούμενος ὁ λόγος*), either the movement which comes from it is a division (*μερισμός*), or if it did remain the same, it would not be moved, but stay as it was; and matter, too, is not able

55. Cp. Aristotle, *De an.* 428b 11 sqq.; esp. 429a 1–2.

56. Cp. Aristotle, *Met.* 1069b 25–27: “All things that change have matter, but different things have different kinds; and of eternal things such as are not generable but are movable by locomotion have matter, matter, however, which admits not of generation, but of motion from one place to another.”

57. *κίνημα ἐκ τῆς φαντασίας τῆς αἰσθητικῆς ἢ καὶ ἄνευ φαντασίας.*

58. B. Fleet (*Op. cit.*), 132.

to harbour all things gathered together; as soul is; if it could, it would belong to the higher world; it must certainly receive all things, but not receive them undivided (*μη ἀμερῶς*).

That is to say, movement in matter represents, as it were, appearance of an object "part by part," i.e. in certain sequential order. What is remarkable, this "part by part" embodiment of a thing may take place not only in the bodily matter but in the intelligible matter as well. And this other kind of movement in ἄλη νοήτη takes place not in the physical cosmos but in soul. Therefore, it is not a physical body but λόγος, the rational formative principle which should be moved, which means: logos should be embodied. Why? Because in the order of hypostases soul is the weaker and dimmer representation of νοῦς, for in the soul the simultaneous whole of the complete communication-κοινωνία of ideas of the intellect in split and resolved into the separateness the discursive. Therefore (1) soul, itself form (εἶδος) also has all the forms all together (ὁμοῦ πάντα, III.6.18.25), like the intellect has all the forms *already* there (ἤδη; this already-being is one of the most peculiar characteristics of the intellect). That is why soul cannot become anything but that what it already is. (Note this structure "nothing else than" which reflects the work of otherness of matter in the soul.) (2) Since soul as hypostasis is different from the intellect and is next to the intellect and the intellect is associated with intelligible matter, the soul still more should be associated with some matter which is nothing else but the intelligible matter. (3) Therefore, movement of the rational formative principle or logos is to take place in the *plenum* of imagination which in this respect is not different from intelligible matter, tracing "what is going to come into being."

The "all-togetherness" is still there in the soul, however not like in intellect where there is real all-unity (all is in all and everything is by itself). In the soul this all-unity is weakened (in soul it can be imagined, while in the intellect—only thought). The formative principle, λόγος is moved (pass., κινούμενος) then in imagination and in its very movement the formative principle brings division and distinction in the previously undivided and undistinguished dyad of the intellect and in the *plenum* of imagination in soul (III.6.18.33–37).⁵⁹ It is only in intellect that form is always what it is; object in soul (e.g., geometrical figure) may be considered as one single whole—but also as *produced* or *constructed* by the primary movement in imagination which is not different in this construction from the intelligible matter. In other words, the formative principle may be considered as moving and thus "cutting" its object in intelligible matter (imagination) only

59. In this way geometrical figures may be considered constructed. Cp. Proclus, *In Eucl.* 141; 185–186, Friedlein.

because it represents not only sameness but also otherness (I.8.3.6–9; III.6.7.11).⁶⁰ Otherwise, if there were only sameness in soul, geometrical figures could not have been constructed and even the non-existing things (centaur, tragelaphos) could not have been imagined. This interpretation of Plotinus does not exactly follow Aristotle who stresses exclusively the sameness and non-materiality of every image of imagination (*φάντασμα*), while for Plotinus *φάντασμα*, on the one hand, also participates in the otherness (may be constructed by movement in imagination) and, on the other hand, necessarily participates in the (intelligible) matter.⁶¹

Plotinus is thus remarkably consistent not only in II.4 but throughout the whole corpus of his writings in maintaining that in its all-pervasiveness matter is present not only in the physical objects but also in the geometrical figures and even in the noetic realm; intelligible matter is connected then with the higher imagination, both implying the primary movement as constituted by the inseparable conjunction of sameness and otherness.

60. Cp. the discussion in B. Fleet (*Op. cit.*), 170–71.

61. "[W]hen we contemplate, we must contemplate the image (*φάντασμα*) as one (or: at the same time, *ἅμα*), for images are like objects of perception except that they lack matter." Aristotle, *De an.* 432a 8–10.