

CARTESIAN DUALISM AND PLOTINUS' PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

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Abstract: *In this paper my intention is to tackle a few issues concerning some interpretations of Plotinus' "philosophy of mind". Firstly, I will address the validity of the idea that Plotinus was "the first Cartesian", advocated by John Dillon and E.K. Emilsson. The idea has been mostly defended on the assumption that Plotinus had anticipated the substance dualism. However, the mind-body dualism evident in Plotinus' philosophy is in no way identical or similar to the Cartesian, since the basic premises of Plotinus' metaphysics do not make room for such notions. Another argument is the philosophical use of introspection by both Plotinus and Descartes. However, I would argue that it is exactly the way of employing the method of introspection what introduces a big difference between the two philosophers.*

Secondly, I will address the idea of Plotinus as a herald of post-Cartesian non-reductionist notions on the mind-body relationship. I argue that Plotinus and his theory of consciousness cannot be interpreted as a variation of the non-reductionist theories, since Plotinus' "philosophy of mind" in a way transcends the scope of the reductionists vs non-reductionists debates. In fact, non-reductionists share more similarities to Cartesian views, than Plotinus'. Hence comparing Plotinus' philosophy to post-Cartesian non-reductionism does not differ much from comparing it to Cartesian dualism. The conclusion of the paper is that philosophy of mind can find studying Plotinus' philosophy very rewarding. However, in paying attention to Plotinus and ancient philosophers in general, we should not miss to pay attention to the scientific and philosophical paradigms of our time that condition the way we approach a problem and anticipate a possible solution to it.

Key words: dualism, epistemology, matter, metaphysics, non-physical, non-reductionism, physical, reductionism.

1. Introduction

Despite their differences, it seems that philosophers of mind do generally agree on the origin of the philosophy of mind and its ever pertaining issue – *the mind-body dualism*, which makes Cartesian

dualism to appear as *arche* of the problems philosophy of mind is dealing with to this day [Griffin, 1998: 67, 46; Searle, 1992: 5-6; Westphal, 2016: 1-52]. What the various theories have in common is the basic metaphysical assumption derived from the scientific view on the body, matter and nature; it is no issue that

body is corporeal in accordance to the way biology and physics understand body, matter and corporeality [Broad, 1925: 56-76, 118-131; Griffin, 1998: 5-7; Kim, 2010: 18]. Since the corporeal body and the incorporeal mind are two distinct substances, the issue naturally arises when we try to reconcile the conscious experience and consciousness with “res extensa”; it is exactly how we arrive to *the easy problems and the hard problem* of consciousness [Chalmers, 1996: 24-25]. In regards to that, we can see why Descartes’ dualism is still a provocative and interesting topic.

There are some scholars whose studies have proven the theories of the ancient philosophers valuable to the contemporary philosophy of mind and particularly the mind-body problem [Dillon, 1990: 19-31; Furley, 1993: 72-94; Hutchinson, 2018: 1-5, 176-192; Inwood, 1993: 150-183; Rappe, 1996: 250-274; Елер, 2002: 7-87]. However, not everyone agrees on the value of and the way to employ these insights; some scholars tend to appreciate some theories only to the extent those are seen as contributing to and anticipating the contemporary notions and problems [Dillon, 1990: 19-31; Emilsson, 1988: 1-35; Hutchinson, 2018: 1-5]. Others, however, are pretty critical towards such notions, suggesting a different interpretative approach [Ross, 2000: 153-167; Елер, 2002: 45-46].

The aforementioned tendencies, especially the former, indeed deserve more attention and appreciation, since ancient philosophy has much to offer to the contemporary discourses. Such an endeavor certainly can spark critical reflections on contemporary notions [Hutchinson, 2018: 1-5, 38-39, 176-192; Ross, 2000: 153-167; Елер, 2002: 45-46]. However it is not uncommon for some of these scholars to share the same assumptions with the very concepts and interpretations they criticize. This is probably the reason why many prominent ancient philosophers are usually seen as mere “fore-runners” and “anticipators”, having “interesting” theories that may “elucidate” or even “enrich” the contemporary theories and notions [Елер, 2002: 45-46].

The ideas that may appear similar to some modern notions have had their special

place and role within a radically different ontological map of reality than our own. It is why we cannot assume some ancient “philosophy of mind” that only differs from the contemporary one by the number of scientific insights we have at our disposal today. It would be hard to deliver an account of, in this case, Plotinus’ philosophy of mind, if our framework is the issues we are dealing with. Hence it is hard to read, for example, the mind-body dualism of Cartesian type or some post-Cartesian “nonreductive” theory into Plotinus’ views, simply because what appears to be the mind-body dualism issue had a completely different meaning to him. So instead of looking for prefigurations and anticipations, maybe we should pay attention to what Plotinus has to say on the nature of consciousness, the metaphysical structure of body and matter, and how these concepts fit within the ontological frame of being they refer to. This may lead us to appreciate and recognize not only the vast number of interesting theories that may contribute to the contemporary discourses, but also help us see and suggest different ontological and epistemological paradigms in approaching and dealing with our own subject matter.

In what follows I will address some interpretations of Plotinus’ philosophy I find problematic. I will first address the notion of Plotinus as the first Cartesian, mostly advocated by Dillon (1990) and Emilsson (2017). In addressing the notion, I will try to show that this kind of comparison is misleading and hermeneutically unjustified. After that, I will address some views of D. M. Hutchinson, presented in his book *Plotinus on Consciousness* (2018). Hutchinson does not see Plotinus as the first Cartesian, but he does make some attempts to construct anti-materialist arguments based on his interpretations of Plotinus.

2. Plotinus as a herald of Cartesian philosophy?

The idea of Plotinus being the first Cartesian is not a new one. In fact, it has some pretty strong advocates and intellectual support among great scholars, like John Dillon and Eyjólfur Kjalar Emilsson [Dillon, 1990:

19–31; Emilsson, 2017: 176–179, 228–295; Hart, 1994: 265–269; Ross, 2000: 153–167]. It seems that the idea rests on at least two assumptions: the recognition of the substance dualism [Dillon, 1990: 23] and the use of introspection [Emilsson, 1988: 145]. The bottom line is that Plotinus and Descartes share the same preoccupation with the problem of the substance dualism, and use the same or similar approach to the problem, “pineal gland or no pineal gland” [Dillon, 1990: 23].

I would first like to address Dillon’s views concerning Plotinus being the herald of Cartesian dualism and the concept of the pineal gland, by pointing out the problem of metaphysical incompatibility between the works of the two philosophers. The incompatibility is reflected foremost in the concepts of body and matter. After that, I would like briefly to make a few observations regarding Cartesian dualism in general, comparing it to Plotinus’ thought. My view is that not only these two types of “dualism” differ in both form and content, as Ross holds [Ross, 2000: 167], but bringing Plotinus’ “dualism” in connection to the Cartesian is hard to maintain since Cartesian dualism in a way stands closer to a materialist and reductionist position, as we will discuss later.

With respect to the metaphysical incompatibility between Plotinus’ and Descartes’ thought, it seems that Dillon’s starting point in bringing Plotinus closer to Descartes is an observation that certain passages from the *Enneads* methodologically and conceptually have a lot in common to Descartes’ reflections in *The Passions* [Descartes, 1911b: 330; Dillon, 1990: 20; Enn.III.6[26]; IV.3-4[27-28]], which might be an indicator of a stronger similarity between the two philosophers, than previously assumed. The conclusion is that Plotinus made a new approach to the mind-body problem, having developed some significant notions in regards to the substance dualism, a problem unrecognized by both his predecessors and successors [Dillon, 1990: 23]. Among the most important notions Plotinus had developed (at least in a rudiment form), Dillon singles out the distinction between *res extensa* and *res cogitans* [Dillon, 1990: 31; Emilsson, 2017: 176–179] Namely, Plotinus

was the first philosopher to seriously tackle the issue of how two fundamentally and radically different substances can interact [Dillon, 1990: 23]. In addition, Plotinus was a serious candidate to (almost) postulate the idea of the pineal gland prior to Descartes, only in a more rudiment form and using different and somewhat vague terminology [Dillon, 1990: 22–29].

That Plotinus had been reflecting on the differences between the physical and the non-physical prior to Descartes is no issue. However, to claim that Plotinus had anticipated or recognized the problem of the mind-body dualism requires a closer examination of the concepts of mind and body in his philosophy, since it is quite questionable whether he really understood body as a *substance* in the likeness of the Cartesian *res extensa*. Concerning Plotinus’ view on body, he indeed holds that spatiality is its basic attribute [II.4.12.14; III.6.12.53; Dillon, 1990: 22–24; Emilsson, 2017: 178–179]. However, that does not make body an independent substance, since body without its form is nothing (I.8.4.16 – 17; VI.3.2.1 – 2; 4.3.38 – 39). In fact, a body is not to be understood in the terms of *being*, but rather of *becoming* (VI.3.2.1 – 2).

Now, the reason why we observe bodies like that and in general the sensible world is an epistemological question (which, in my view, brings Plotinus closer to Leibniz, than Descartes). It is hence necessary to approach Plotinus’ reflections on this issue from a different perspective, foremost the epistemological one [Ross, 2000: 163–164]. This is further supported by Plotinus’ ontological distinctions between *matter* and the *corporeal body*, for he says that *hyle* is *incorporeal* (II.4.9.4 – 5). The distinction seems to be very important in regards to the concepts of body and the mind-body relationship. That *hyle* is *incorporeal* implies that a body, which is *corporeal* and *material* (I.8.4.16 – 17; II.4.12.13 – 14; III.6.6.33 – 34) has to acquire its attribute of extension elsewhere, and not from *matter* alone (I.6.1.12 – 13; III.8.2.25). The only option we have is to conclude that the corporeality of a body, as an attribute or quality is of *intelligible* origin, that is to say, it is foremost about how we observe and

reflect on the sensible objects. This view is further supported by Plotinus' claims that body is an obstacle ("is detrimental") to any thinking (IV.3.19.26 – 27; 8.2.44 – 45).

Despite some possible similarities in approaches and methodology, we still do not have a strong ground to claim that Plotinus had anticipated Cartesian dualism or is in any other way a Cartesian before Cartesius himself. Following Dillon's example, we can randomly cut out any piece of a philosopher's thought, and use the piece to interpret it in any way we want. For example, we may claim that Plato was the first Cartesian, because Plato was "first" to formulate the Cartesian *cogito*, and in a pretty much Cartesian fashion too. I particularly refer to *Phil.37a-b*, where Plato points out the ontological sufficiency of the very act of thinking, regardless of the content of a thought. However, given the rest of Plato's philosophy we can hardly propose such a notion.

The same, of course, goes for Plotinus. Finding a few passages that bear some similarities to Cartesian thought is not enough to claim that Plotinus is dealing with "the same problem Descartes is later faced with", which, in fact, Dillon literally claims, saying that Plotinus is:

"[...] faced with the same problem Descartes is later faced with, pineal gland or no pineal gland, but which Plotinus' predecessors do not seem to have appreciated the enormity of, that of deciding, or trying to express, how two entities of such radically different sorts as the soul and the body can act on each other". [Dillon, 1990: 23]

Following this statement, it appears that Plotinus had been discussing the same issue Descartes was occupied with, only using different terminology. To make such a conclusion is even more tempting if we bear in mind that the presence or absence of the concept of the pineal gland is, in Dillon's view, more to be regarded as an *accidental*, rather than a *substantial* difference between the two philosophers [Dillon, 1990: 23]. Plotinus, however, does not see body only as *res extensa*; it is at the same time something more and something less; body is something that *is*, and anything that is participates to some extent in the intelligible (I.6.1.12 – 13). The

problem of reading Descartes' dualism into Plotinus' views is especially striking when we take into consideration that Plotinus holds that it is not soul that resides in body, but rather body is in the soul [III.4.3.3 – 4; Emilsson, 2017: 179]! This actually introduces quite a different view in the mind-body debates, and it surely marks a strong distinction between Plotinus' and (post) Cartesian metaphysics of mind and body.

While criticizing Dillon's (and Emilsson's) views, Donald Ross (2000) is pointing out exactly the same problem! Plotinus' metaphysics and hence any account of mind-body relationship is simply incompatible with any of the Cartesian notions [Ross, 2000: 159]. The important thing to notice is that Ross too accentuates probably the most critical point of divergence between Descartes' and Plotinus' philosophy, namely, the concepts of body and matter [Ross, 2000: 159, 167]. Even if we suppose that Plotinus' account of awareness and passions is somehow quite reminiscent of Cartesian work, the fact that the concepts of body differ so radically is hard to ignore. The differences in understanding the metaphysical structure of matter and body are far more important indicators of the differences between the two philosophers, than any other possible conceptual or methodological similarity [Griffin, 1998: 7–8; Searle, 1992: 5–25].

It seems that Dillon evaluates Plotinus' ideas in the light of some more contemporary concepts of matter and mind, and at the same time criticizing Plotinus' predecessors for not being cunning enough to address "the same" philosophical issues. In light of that, Dillon is focusing on Plotinus' terminology. While analyzing the passages from the *Enneads*, Dillon is constantly suggesting that Plotinus was an important anticipator of the idea of the pineal gland, too [Dillon, 1990: 21–25]. In fact, Dillon is holding to this view with such a strong grip, that throughout his paper one may get the impression that the author is continuously suggesting that Plotinus was either the anticipator of the idea of the pineal gland, or had some other terminological alternatives that may be affiliated with the idea [Dillon, 1990: 29].

The effort to affiliate various Greek concepts to the concept of the pineal gland is more than evident; and even though Dillon admits that Plotinus ultimately failed to deliver such a concept, he still insists that Plotinus had at least anticipated the notion and continues on saying: “and for that he should be celebrated” [Dillon, 1990: 29]. However, the reason why Plotinus had not taken the path of unequivocally formulating the idea of the pineal gland is probably that such an endeavor was impossible (and frankly, unnecessary) within the basic settings of his metaphysical system. Hence I find it difficult to make some close comparisons between Plotinus’ and Descartes’ philosophy, while stating: “pineal gland or no pineal gland” [Dillon, 1990: 23], as if it were an insignificant difference. Cartesian dualism appears as a problem of Descartes’ theory of knowledge, while Plotinus’ as a moment within his epistemology and metaphysics of the three hypostases.

As regards to Cartesian dualism I do not see it as an attempt to defend or justify the concept of the immaterial *res cogitans* [Hart, 1994: 265–269] in the light of the scientific views on body and matter of the time. On the contrary, Descartes’ dualism appears to be an unwanted consequence of his gnoseological inquiries; a problem to be solved, not a position to be advocated [Risteski, 2017: 332–346]. It is exactly what the concept of *the pineal gland* is a good example of [Descartes, 1911c: 345–347]. The search for such a concept indicates that Descartes wanted to overcome his dualistic stance, not to stick to it. The fact, however, that Descartes came up with the pineal gland shows his primary theoretical inclination or commitment, which, I would argue, has a lot in common with materialism and reductionism in philosophy of mind [Guttenplan, 1994: 535–536].

Descartes’ dualism is a consequence of his reductionist theory of knowledge [Risteski, 2017: 332–346], and the fact that he sees matter as a substance is a clear indica-

tor that he gave some ontological sufficiency to it. Descartes is the one trying to depict how the two *substances* can interact, making it clear that *res extensa*, if not ontologically superior, then at least stands ontologically independent from and shoulder to shoulder with *the other substance*, a fact which is known *clara et distincta* [Descartes, 1911b: 140]. Concerning this, I would have to slightly disagree with Ross’ views on Descartes’ dualism, for it is not primarily *metaphysical* dualism, but *epistemological* [Descartes, 1911b: 238; Risteski, 2017: 334–342]!

Descartes did not claim that the whole of reality consists of two radically different substances [Kenny, 2006: 212–216]¹. *Res extensa* and *res cogitans* are not to be observed as two metaphysical principles that make the building blocks of reality. Descartes did claim, however, that mind and body *may exist* independently [Descartes, 1911a: 101], but the problem is – he does not know whether they really do, for it seems that there is some interaction, but the interaction cannot be known *clara et distincta* [Cottingham, 2006: 181–183; Risteski, 2017: 333]. The criteria *clara et distincta* is the *hypokeimenon* of Descartes’ reductionist theory of knowledge, since anything that cannot be epistemologically covered with the criteria appears to be an unsolvable problem. And *this is why* the pineal gland “must be postulated”². We can hardly maintain the view that Plotinus and Descartes shared the same notions concerning the substance dualism. So, if an apparent substance dualism does not make Plotinus a Cartesian, what does?

According to Emilsson it is the philosophical use of introspection and the ability to rethink the mind-body relationship through the prism of the conceptual pair *internal-external* [Emilsson, 1988: 145]. Emilsson claims that among the ancient philosophers Plotinus’ views were the closest to the modern theories of mind and the Cartesian substance dualism [Emilsson, 1988: 141–145]. Namely, Plotinus has made distinctions between mind and

¹ Actually, in *Prin.LI* [Descartes, 1911b: 238] he claims that there is *only one substance* in the true meaning of the sense (namely – God), which makes us question the metaphysical character of Cartesian dualism, and to approach it in a more epistemological sense.

² See Dillon, 1990, p. 22.

body, seeing the latter as something external and ontologically different from the former, hence the ontological gap between the two, where body has extension as its basic feature [Emilsson, 1988: 145].

These arguments indeed depict Plotinus as a proto-Cartesian thinker. Still, Plotinus uses introspection as a mean of marking a start point for a philosophical endeavor, claiming, much like Aristotle (*Phys.*184a15-20), that we should begin with something immediate and then to move onward (IV.3.1.1-10). In the *Enn.*IV that start point appears to be *ourselves* and what we perceive (IV.3.1.10-15). While doing that, the “ontological gap” between body and soul appears only as a moment in a philosophical reflection, especially on the level of *sense perception* (VI.3.8.19-20; 6.13.36 – 37), which Emilsson, undoubtedly stresses out [Emilsson, 1988: 141–148]. Bodies indeed appear as something external (III.6.6.75; 6.12.53; VI.4.15.20-21; 9.8.29-30). However, as the philosophical reflection progresses, it becomes more and more evident that the very distinction between the external and internal is a consequence of an uneducated and unenlightened mind, so no real “ontological gap” can be posed at that level (VI.6.13.36 – 37); the gap can only be notified as something that *appears to be* a part of a certain type of cognition (VI.1.2.3 – 4). This is best shown in *Against the Gnostics* (II.9), where Plotinus argues that we are all parts of a higher unity (II.9.5.1-30). Hence Plotinus’ differentiation between the external and internal is not a founding ground of his metaphysics or epistemology, but it only appears as *a moment* within them [Rappe, 2000: 67–78].

One may argue that Descartes too uses introspection as a ladder to strive further in developing a metaphysical account of the world, especially in the part of *Meditations* where he discusses the existence of the external world and introduces the notion of God (Med.3, 5-6). However, even though Descartes invokes the notion of God in his *Meditations* in order to justify the existence of the “external” world, he still remains within the conceptual framework of the “internal” and “external”, having the “ontological gap”

cemented. Given that, I would argue that it is exactly the use of introspection an example of how Plotinus radically differs from Descartes, not the other way round [Rappe, 1996: 253, 263; Rappe, 2000: 67–90].

Concerning the above mentioned, we can make the following conclusions. Since the basic operating concepts of matter in Plotinus’ and Descartes’ philosophy ontologically differ to such extent, no apparent resemblance can introduce and justify the hypothesis of Plotinus being “the first Cartesian”. This also includes the types of dualism developed by the two philosophers; not only they differ in regards to the content and form, and hence the task and the role, but it appears that Descartes’ ontological commitment would have been so alien to Plotinus’ that the latter would never develop and accept any concept similar to that of the pineal gland, for instance. Through the use of introspection, Plotinus did acknowledge the differences between the physical and non-physical, external and internal. However, given that he did not recognize body as an external substance, the distinction between the external and internal is as substantial as the body itself is a substance. Hence not only that Plotinus differs from Descartes in regards to the substance dualism, but the use of introspection as well.

3. The materialism of the nonreductive theories of mind

Aside of the above discussed tendencies to bring Plotinus closer to Descartes, there are other scholars, like Mr. Hutchinson, who goes a step further claiming that Plotinus’ theory of consciousness goes outside the Cartesian scope, and as such, if not completely, then to some extent stands closer to the contemporary nonreductive theories in philosophy of mind [Hutchinson, 2018: 57]. Given that, Hutchinson tends to “piece together” some anti-materialist arguments based on Plotinus’ insights [Hutchinson, 2018: 57]. A recently published book by D.M. Hutchinson *Plotinus on Consciousness* (2018) is a work that elaborates Plotinus’ philosophy and theory of consciousness in a pretty clear and concise manner. It is a valuable piece of work

for those who want to study Plotinus and his theory of consciousness.

In this chapter of the paper, however, I would like to address the notion of employing Plotinus' theory of consciousness in order to tackle the problems of materialism in contemporary philosophy of mind. Still, before I proceed with my critical assessment of Hutchinson's views, I would first like to express my sympathies for such a notion. Given the problem of materialism or physicalism in philosophy of mind, it is necessary to tackle the problem by the means of introducing radical philosophical reflections that may help us reevaluate and rethink the basic metaphysical and epistemological assumptions of reductive materialism. Reflecting on Plotinus' philosophy can certainly prove to be a valuable asset to the task of such proportions. It is for that reason that I find it necessary to discuss some attempts in that regard, in order to carry out the task, hopefully, more efficiently.

Similarly to Dillon, Hutchinson states that philosophy and philosophy of mind especially did not pay much deserved attention to Plotinus' philosophy and his theory of consciousness [Hutchinson, 2018: 1–4]. Yet Hutchinson, much like Klaus Oelher [Елер, 2002: 45–46], is very critical of the views that Descartes' philosophy is the only framework to study different concepts of consciousness throughout the history of philosophy [Hutchinson, 2018: 1–4]. Adequately Hutchinson dubs the views as a *dogma in philosophy of mind* [Hutchinson, 2018: 1]. Still, we have to ask: what exactly this dogma encompasses and what it means? I will try to articulate the answer in what follows.

Despite his critical tone, at the very beginning of his book Hutchinson seems to enclose *his own* position that may seem to share a lot with the very dogma he is about to criticize. This is best shown in the introductory part of his book, where he states:

“My concern is to show that Plotinus prefigures Descartes in developing a theory of consciousness. Recognition of this permits us to analyze the phenomenon of consciousness from a perspective outside the Cartesian framework and enables us to clarify the concept of consciousness we have

inherited from the post-Cartesian tradition” [Hutchinson, 2018: 2].

I would like to focus on the words I have underlined above: “prefigures”, “permits”, “clarify” and “the post-Cartesian tradition”. These are, in my opinion, the keywords to understand the leading intentions of the author, or at least of the above quoted passage. In regards to the last three (“permits”, “clarify”, and finally the “post-Cartesian”), we will see later what Hutchinson has in mind. The word “prefigures” may seem to give a wrong impression about the author's intentions. If by it Hutchinson means that Plotinus had developed a theory of consciousness that is, of course, older than the Cartesian theory, and as such it provides us with an interesting and unique conceptual framework that go “outside Cartesian” thought, I can only agree with the view. However, if the word “prefigures” contains some other notions, like predating or *anticipating* then I think that the statement is a bit problematic. Plotinus may have influenced some later notions in the history of philosophy (and he surely did!) but it is hard to maintain that he had developed the rudiment versions of something that was discussed and developed by the Early Modern philosophers. Let us assume that by “prefiguring” Hutchinson takes the first route.

He indeed develops a good critic of philosophers that have failed to appreciate the theories of consciousness prior to Descartes' philosophy. Aside of that, the author also does not miss to critically assess some interpretations of Plotinus he finds questionable [Hutchinson, 2018: 38–39]! However, when he starts to develop his critique of “the dogma”, it seems that he completely ignores the headline of the paper he firstly criticizes, which may lead us think that he believes that *the scientific/systematic approach* to consciousness somehow predates Descartes and can even be traced back to Plotinus.

It is one thing to claim that Plotinus had developed a philosophical theory of consciousness before Descartes, and undoubtedly *a different theory*. It is, however, a completely another thing to claim that by “prefiguring” Descartes, Plotinus is also a philosopher from whom a study of the

history of the scientific approaches to consciousness should have begun. This may be the case, but I believe it is necessary first to clarify what is meant by “scientific”, and thus “systematic”. In order to tackle the “dogma” concerning the overrated appreciation of Cartesianism, Hutchinson quotes the first line of the aforementioned criticized paper [Hutchinson, 2018: 1]³. What seems to be the problem is that the headline of the paper is *A Brief History of the Scientific Approach to the Study of Consciousness* [Frith, Rees, 2007: 9–22]. Why does this seem to be problematic and why I would argue that Hutchinson basically fails in his attempts to criticize the work⁴?

Firstly, based on the content of the paper criticized, the paper clearly suggests that by “the scientific approach” it aims at the conceptual affinity between the Early Modern and contemporary philosophico-scientific approaches, which actually is correct and which is only confirmed by the paper, concerning the beginnings of, at least the *scientific approaches* to consciousness [Frith, Rees, 2007: 9–22]. If some reflections concerning the history of a scientific approach start from Early Modern philosophers, it is clear that the words “science” and “scientific”, and following that *systematic* are certainly not taken in a sense of Greek επιστήμη [Kenny, 2006: 40]. If the very appreciation of Descartes’ philosophy is the problem here, and if this is being understood as a form of ignoring the philosophers before him, then it is evident that the critic believes, like Dillon, that the subject matter of the philosophers before and after Descartes is *the same subject matter*, but of different levels of development. However, I beg to differ.

Descartes indeed is the founder or at least one of the forerunners of that which is now

known as a *scientific/systematic approach* to the problem of consciousness; despite the reactions to the Cartesian problems and solutions, Descartes’ philosophy still resonates more with the scientific thinking today, than of any other philosopher before him [Griffin, 1998: 6]. This is reflected too in the fact that modern science understands *matter* and *body* (and, not less important – *the concept of science*) in a way more close to Descartes’ understanding, than Plotinus’. It is probably why most of the literature concerning the historical overview of the problems philosophy of mind is dealing with start from the Early Modern, especially Descartes’ philosophy onward [Broad, 1925: 20–99; Kim, 1998: 15–38; Westphal, 2016: 12–23]⁵.

Plotinus really had developed an important account of consciousness, but he in no way had anticipated the notions present in (post)Cartesian philosophy, and an apparent similarity between Plotinus’ and (post)Cartesian philosophy still refer to radically different mindsets and ontological frames of reality. As we have seen, unlike Dillon and Emilsson, Hutchinson does not actually claim that Plotinus had anticipated some Cartesian problems or concepts. Still, there is the other part of the puzzle that seems to make up the complete picture of Hutchinson’s intentions, and it is what I find problematic, namely, the idea of Plotinus being related to the (or “prefiguring”) “nonreductive” theories of consciousness in the contemporary philosophy of mind. My view is that comparing Plotinus to the non-reductionists does not differ much from comparing his philosophy to Cartesius’.

If we have determined Descartes to be a reductionist in a way, and if Hutchinson claims that Plotinus’ theory of consciousness goes beyond the Cartesian framework,

³ „The attempt to develop a systematic approach to the study of consciousness begins with Rene Descartes (1559 – 1650) and his ideas still have a major influence today” [Frith, Rees, 2007: 9].

⁴ Which at first may not seem to be an important part of the book’s content, but as an announcement of the forthcoming discussions is still an important conceptual elucidation of what the underlying intention of the book is.

⁵ We should also point out that the mind-body dualism of Cartesian (or any other kind) is basically a view derived from materialism and mechanistic view of nature. While a dualist allows and recognizes the existence of mind as a separate substance, he still finds it difficult *to fit that view* with the materialistic view of body and nature. This clearly refers to the fact that a dualist gives ontological primacy to the mechanistic view of matter, nature and body.

then wouldn't be a natural conclusion to say that Plotinus' theory of consciousness stands closer to the nonreductive theories? To answer that question, we have to briefly examine the very idea of reductionism. Roughly speaking, reductionism is a theoretical endeavor that aims towards bringing down any possible system of ideas to a small set of propositions that serve as an interpretative parameter [Guttenplan, 1994: 535–536; van Riel, Van Gulick, 2019]. That way, a reductionist may ascribe values of a physicist's view of the world to the interpretative parameters. Consequently, anything interpreted on the base of the aforementioned parameters will ultimately be explained by the language of natural sciences, including the social phenomena [van Riel, Van Gulick, 2019]. Hence, a materialist in philosophy of mind brings down all notions of mind and consciousness to that which can be explained on the base of the so called *physical information* [Guttenplan, 1994: 535–536; Jackson, 2006: 102–112]. Contrary to that, a non-reductionist would not accept such an approach, denying that consciousness can be explained that way alone [Chalmers, 1996: 94–98; Guttenplan, 1994: 536].

What Hutchinson sees as common to Plotinus and the modern nonreductive theories of consciousness is the fact that both hold the view that consciousness cannot be explained by or reduced to “physical or bodily states” [Hutchinson, 2018: 57]. While it is possible to make similar comparisons, what is important to bear in mind here is the fact that “Post-Cartesians” still inherit some notions of Cartesian philosophy [Griffin, 1998: 6]. It is hence hard to “reconstruct” the pieces of Plotinus' theories, as Hutchinson proposes to do so [Hutchinson, 2018: 57–58], in order to provide an argument that might address some contemporary issues. Plotinus' approach may indeed look similar to that of non-reductionists, but these theories still do not hold body ontologically inferior to mind; they are only looking for uncovering a better explanatory framework other than the language of physicalism. The existence of body and matter has not been brought into question at all [Griffin, 1998: 6–7, 46; Westphal, 2016: 1–52]: The reason why Plo-

tinus may hold the view that consciousness cannot be explained on the basis of physical information is certainly not because he had uncovered an explanatory framework that overcomes the problems of materialism, explaining thus how *two radically different substances can interact* (III.6.6.31–32). He is not looking elsewhere in order to avoid reducing psychical activities to matter. What these nonreductive theories, on the other hand, hold is that the so called *physical information* are not sufficient to explain certain phenomena. Given that, it seems that we are facing here some kind of a blurry hermeneutical endeavor; an interpretation without taking into account all the necessary details that might eventually lead to the *Horizontverschmelzung*.

The nonreductive theories aim to explain the meaningful content of the states of consciousness that clearly transcend all bodily states [Chalmers, 1996: 94–98]. However, when Plotinus “claims” that consciousness or *psyche* generally cannot be explained by the language of physicalism, it means that we can only *explain* the consequences by *contemplating the cause(s)* (III.4.3.3–4; 9.8.3–4). In other words, we cannot explain form on the grounds of matter or body, but the other way round. Non-reductionists, on the other hand, claim only that consciousness cannot be explained solely on the grounds of physicalism; they do not shift their metaphysical views on the body and the physical [Griffin, 1998: 6–7, 46; Westphal, 2016: 1–52], but barely point out the fallacies of reductionism.

Reductionists and non-reductionists share pretty much the same ontological standpoint when it comes to the concepts of nature, matter, body and being. According to Plotinus, not only that the “non-physical” cannot be explained by body, but the body itself exists on the grounds of it participating in the realm of the *intelligible* or *that-which-is-non-physical* (I.6.1.12 – 13) (a view rather alien to both Cartesian and post-Cartesian). And that's another interesting thing; the *intelligible* of Plotinus' is not exactly the same as the “non-physical” we are talking about today, since our concept of it is mostly based on the negation of the concept of the *physi-*

cal we have at our disposal. The *non-physical* of ancient philosophers differ from “our” “non-physical” as much as the concepts of the “physical” differ; a difference, one may agree, of no small significance.

There is no reason hence to try to “prove” that Plotinus holds that awareness is a “purely psychic activity” [Hutchinson, 2018: 57–58]; we can simply observe the main premises of his metaphysics to conclude that it would be impossible to claim otherwise. Matter (*hyle*) itself is unintelligible; it is thus impossible to explain any state of consciousness on the grounds of matter and “body” alone. This view however is in no way comparable to any of the modern theories. They may share some common notions, but these are derived from and based upon completely different ontological footings (that have more in common with Descartes’ theories, than Plotinus’).

It is exactly why I first chose to compare Plotinus and Descartes, given that the Descartes’ reductionism still echoes in contemporary theories [Griffin, 1998: 6–7, 46; Ryle, 2002: 34–36]. Non-reductionism is, in my view, but a dialectical counterpart of reductionism, not a radical shift from its scientific and philosophical paradigms (an endeavor presumably intended by Hutchinson). An attempt to (re)construct some kind of Plotinus’ philosophy of mind would, however, require such a shift. Comparing Plotinus’ notions to some contemporary theories of mind and mind-body relationship may tell us something about Plotinus; it may even suggest some constructive, creative and interesting solutions to contemporary conundrums, but it cannot provide us knowledge of the underlying intentions and hence the intrinsic value of his thought to contemporary scholars.

The reason lies, I believe, in the inconsistent application of philosophical methodology. It seems that many contemporary approaches usually ignore dialectics, as something obsolete and non-comparable to the analytic and scientific method. Plotinus, however, firmly insists that the only appropriate method to inquire the intelligible world is *dialectics* (I.3.4.2 – 6). It is from the reflections on the dialectics of matter and form that we draw conclusions regarding

the “physical” and “non-physical”, not from the “non-reductionist” or “reductionist” perspectives that evidently abstract the subject matter from the method, or from its “soul”, as Hegel would put it [Гадамер, 2003: 7–38; Хегел, 1987: 233–251].

4. Concluding remarks

In this paper I intended to tackle some, in my view, questionable interpretations of Plotinus’ philosophy in the light of the contemporary theories in philosophy of mind. While assessing the views of Plotinus as the first Cartesian, or as an anticipator of the post-Cartesian non-reductionist views, I was pointing out why I find these views questionable. There are many reasons we cannot claim with certainty that Plotinus was *the first Cartesian*, or that he had anticipated some contemporary theories of consciousness. Still, there are many reasons not to discard Plotinus’ philosophy and theory of consciousness as an ancient relic of a secondary historic importance to us.

My intention was to suggest a different interpretative approach to Plotinus’ “philosophy of mind”. We should not make attempts to “reconstruct” Plotinus’ arguments for the sake of dealing with contemporary issues only, since such a reconstruction may be but a *wishful thinking*, and may as well be guided by and imbued with the conceptual framework determined by the scientific and philosophical paradigms of our time [Griffin, 1998: 11–15]. The value of Plotinus’ and the theories of ancient philosophers in general should not be assessed only from the perspective of looking for “contributions”, “anticipations” etc., but instead should be viewed and appreciated as a whole. The resemblances ancient theories bear with contemporary theories are dialectical counterparts of the theories that radically differ from the contemporary ones. So maybe we should approach this matter too in a way preferred by Plotinus – *dialectically*. Maybe this kind of approach would make a good use of Plotinus’ views so to challenge the contemporary paradigms in philosophy of mind, creating a fertile ground for many discussions and notions to arise and develop.

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КАРТЕЗИЙСКИЙ ДУАЛИЗМ И ФИЛОСОФИЯ РАЗУМА ПЛОТИНУСА

Александр Д. Ристецки

Аннотация: В этой статье я намерен решить несколько вопросов, касающихся некоторых толкований «философии разума» Плотина:

– во-первых, я остановился на обосновании идеи о том, что Плотин был «первым картезианцем», за что выступали Джон Диллон и Э. К. Эмильссон. Идея была в основном защищена как предположение, что Плотин предвосхитил субстанциональный дуализм. Однако дуализм разум-тело, очевидный в философии Плотина, ни в коей мере не идентичен и не похож на картезианский, поскольку основные предпосылки метафизики Плотина не оставляют места для таких понятий. Другим аргументом является философское использование интроспекции как Платином, так и Декартом. Тем не менее, я бы сказал, что именно метод использования интроспекции вносит большую разницу между двумя философами;

– во-вторых, я остановился на идее Плотина как вестника посткартезианских нередукционистских представлений об отношениях между разумом и телом. Я утверждаю, что Плотин и его теория сознания не могут быть истолкованы как разновидность теорий, не приводящих к сокращению, поскольку «философия разума» Плотина в некотором смысле выходит за рамки редукционистских и ненаправленных дискуссий. На самом деле, не редукционисты больше похожи на картезианские взгляды, чем Плотин. Следовательно, сравне-

ние философии Плотина с посткартезианским невосстановлением мало чем отличается от сравнения с картезианским дуализмом.

Заключение статьи состоит в том, что философия ума может найти изучение философии Плотина очень полезным. Однако, обращая внимание на Плотина и древних философов в целом, мы не должны упускать из нашего внимания научные и философские парадигмы нашего времени, которые обуславливают наши подходы к проблемам и философии разума Плотинуса, многие из которых ещё только ожидают возможного решения.

Ключевые слова: дуализм, гносеология, материя, метафизика, не физические, нередуционизма, физического редуционизма.

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