The book under review belongs to the series directed by John Dillon and Andrew Smith, the aim of which is to make Plotinus accessible to the Greekless reader in the form of reliable translations accompanied with philosophical commentaries. Gerson chose a text that is highly demanding even by Plotinian standards, for some of the arguments are fairly compressed and the Greek syntax is not without flaws either. It starts with a problem of interpreting an important passage in the *Timaeus* and then discusses the structure of the Intellect and its relation to the One.

The short introduction gives a useful overview on the structure of the treatise and its affiliations. It divides into two parts. The first (chs. 1-3) exposes a problem in the interpretation of *Timaeus* 39e6-9. Plato delineates the work of the Demiurge in imposing arrangement and intelligibility on the pre-cosmic chaos and determining that ‘this world should contain the same kind and number of things that intellect sees are contained in the Living Animal’ (39e8-9). It is unclear how Plato conceived of the relation between the Intellect/Demiurge and the Living Animal. Are they the same or not? As is well known, Plotinus opts for their identity. Gerson sketches the historical development leading to Plotinus’ position and points out the principal reason for holding that the intelligibles are not external to the Intellect; the Intellect’s thinking must be infallible. It is supported by two arguments, that if there is no infallible thinking truth will not exist and that if infallible thinking does not exist our thinking will not be possible either. The second part (chs. 4-13) is given over to the One and the Intellect’s relation to it. The One is necessary to explain the existence of Intellect and intelligible beings. Gerson points out that the perfect simplicity of the One follows from its explanatory primacy. If it is above οὐσία (with reference to *Republic* 509b8), it lacks even the basic distinction between existence and οὐσία. Furthermore, because it is above οὐσία, it is not limited in any way. For this reason, it is everywhere and there is nothing which does not partake in it in some way or another.

The short synopsis guides the reader through the main stages of Plotinus’ argumentation. The translation is accurate and reads well. It differs from Armstrong’s and McKenna’s translations not only in wording but also in constructing the sentences. Gerson takes issue with them and the new French
translation by Dufour repeatedly and explicitly in the commentary. Usually, the translation of the key terms follows well-established patterns. The most important exception is the way Gerson renders εἴδωλα; it is translated as ‘reflected representations’, which in my view appropriately renders the meaning of this difficult term.

On certain points we might raise some questions on the way Gerson translates certain sentences and terms, and suggest alternative renderings. The first and perhaps the most important is the translation of οὕσια by ‘essence’. It is clear that in some passages the term can be translated in that way, whereas elsewhere it is not so obvious. In 6.5-6 we read that τόδε γάρ τι δεῖ τὴν οὐσίαν εἶναι (‘For the essence must be “this something” ’). The sentence may reflect on Aristotelian notions, which may justify translating οὕσια as ‘substance’ (admitting of course that it is not always the most fortunate translation of the Greek term, to say the least). In 5.13-4, discussing the nature of a kind of Platonic ideal numbers, Plotinus uses the term twice. These numbers seem to be, not only the essences of the other type of numbers, but also their paradigms. In both cases, the emphasis is on the independent existence of οὕσια (see also in 4.33). Moreover, the expression ἐνέργειαν εἰς ὑπόστασιν οὐσίας in 3.23-4 may also refer to an activity towards the existence of substance, that is, towards an independent, higher order, existence. Another important point is the translation of terms signifying the processes of cognition. In 1.19 we read that οὐκ αὐτὸ τὸ πρᾶγμα ἡ αἴσθησις λαμβάνει (‘not the thing itself that sense-perception receives’). The verb λαμβάνει may not necessarily refer to a reception, but to a kind of activity. For Plotinus, sense-perception is an emphatically active phenomenon; it is a κρίσις, as he says elsewhere (e.g., IV 6. 2, 17). Here, too, he may want to express that the sense does not grasp the thing itself in the process of sense-perception. Similarly, the translation of ἀθρόᾳ προσβολῇ in 7.8 as ‘in an instant impression’ may suggest that προσβολή is a receptive process, which may not be the case. Plotinus uses the term elsewhere, too. Most importantly for present purposes, we find it in two treatises chronologically quite close to V 5 [32]. In 11 8 [30] he closes the discussion of the activity of the Intellect with the words ‘συννόει μᾶλλον τῇ προσβολῇ συνείς’ (10.33-4), referring to a direct intuition. In 11 9 [33], 1.35 he also uses the term to describe the activity of the Intellect. On the other hand, the translation of προσβάλλεις μὲν ἀθρόως ὁ προσβάλλων in 10.7-8 as ‘who are approaching it, approach it comprehensively’,

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