Plotinus is a notoriously difficult philosopher whose eclectic and elliptical style generates numerous problems for the interpreter. Intent upon establishing the consistency and uniqueness of Plotinus' views about sense perception, the young Icelandic scholar Eyólfur Emilsson boldly sets sail on this rough sea. Directing our attention to specific texts where perception is discussed, he considers these passages in detail and examines them within the context provided by earlier Greek philosophy. This approach forces the reader to reflect on Plotinus' contributions to the philosophy of perception and to see that philosophy in a new light. Emilsson argues that Plotinus is a direct realist whose theory, nevertheless, embraces a distinction between sensory affections and perceptions.

After introducing several central doctrines of Plotinus' metaphysics and psychology in the first two chapters, Emilsson turns to the topic of sensory affection in the third and fourth chapters. Examining *Enneads* IV.5.1-4.8, Emilsson, contrary to other interpreters, argues that Plotinus discusses a medium in vision, light, only to reject it as the vehicle for visual transmission. The organ is affected not by the medium but through *sympatheia* between the object and the eye due to the "nonphysical omnipresence of form" in the medium (p. 57). In the fourth chapter, Emilsson develops the notion of sensory affection as an assimilation of the organ to the object and he argues that this assimilation is not merely a physical change in the organ. In vision, the organ is assimilated to the form (color) which possesses extensionality and spatiality but not mass and so is intermediate between the sensible and the intelligible.

The next three chapters deal with perception. Here Emilsson broaches a number of important topics including the unity of perception, the relation between perception and the faculty of representation, perception as a form

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of judgment and activity, realism and representationalism. The unity of perception is due to the omnipresence in the percipient's body of perceptive soul. The faculties of perception and representation “meet in the act of perception” which terminates in a judgment that is simultaneously apprehended by both faculties (pp. 111-12). Notwithstanding, the object of perception is not a representation but the external object causing the perception. The realism attributed to Plotinus throughout seems to be inconsistent with a passage in *Enneads* I.1.7 where Plotinus remarks that the perceptual power is apprehensive of representations not sensibles. Emilsson considers this troublesome text in the sixth chapter where he invokes a distinction between the soul’s power of perception and acts of perception to resolve the conflict. The next chapter argues that perceptions (as distinguished from sensory affections) employ concepts that exist in the soul as “unfolded forms” prior to their use.

The concluding chapter where Emilsson looks at Plotinus’ theory of perception as a whole is lamentably short. Here the opportunity to explore the various themes of the book in relation to each other and with an eye to the question of the cogency of the whole is dimly recognized but not seized. This is particularly problematic in that several of the positions Emilsson attributes to Plotinus do not fit together very well – at least not at first glance. For instance, we are told both that the medium is physically unaffected and that the affection of the sense organ caused by the non-physical presence of form in the medium is not “a mere physical change”. If, however, a sensory affection is any sort of physical change, then the claim that its cause is nonphysical becomes rather baffling.

More should have been said about the relation between the sensory affection and the perception of the external object and about the tenability of a realist interpretation that assigns both sensations and representations involving mental concepts a role in perception. The sensory affection belongs to the body, is the passive reception of form through psychic means, and has no conceptual content. The perception is the activation of unfolded forms in the soul, a judgment involving representation and a direct apprehension of an external object. In light of these fundamental differences, the question arises, what is the relation between perception and sensory affection? Emilsson rejects one way of understanding the relation, namely, that the soul takes the sensory affection as its object in the act of perception, but he has little to offer by way of a constructive account of the relation between the two.

More precision with respect to this relation might have shed some light on the other puzzle, in what sense is Plotinus’ theory of perception as present-