

## A NEOPLATONIST READER

DILLON (J.), GERSON (L.P.) *Neoplatonic Philosophy. Introductory Readings*. Pp. xxiv + 373. Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2004. Paper, £14.95 (Cased, £35). ISBN: 0-87220-707-2 (0-87220-708-0 hbk).

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Fifteen years after John Gregory published a short Neoplatonic Reader (*The Neoplatonists: a Reader* [London and New York, 1991; 1999<sup>2</sup>]), this new anthology finally provides what has been a *desideratum* for a long time: a collection of major philosophical texts in translation of the Neoplatonic tradition from Plotinus to Proclus. Intended as ‘a sort of companion to R.T. Wallis’ monograph *Neoplatonism* (1972. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition with updated bibliography, Hackett, 1992)’ (p. ix), the collection presents the reader with a short introduction that outlines the essential characteristics of Neoplatonic philosophy (pp. xiii–xxii), followed by translations with notes of select passages of Plotinus (pp. 1–177), Porphyry (pp. 178–220), Iamblichus (pp. 221–63) and Proclus (pp. 264–359). The arrangement of the texts is not guided by a thematic system as in Gregory’s *Reader*, but presents either entire works (Plotinus 1.1, 1.6, 3.8, 4.8, 5.1, 5.2) or substantial extracts thereof. Thus the reader is able to appreciate the significance of philosophical arguments in their original context and to discern the differences that do exist both in doctrine and style between the individual Neoplatonic authors. The translations – Plotinus by Gerson, the rest by Dillon – are clear and accurate, without slipping into paraphrase. Naturally, Plotinus receives ample space with a good choice of texts from all periods of his writing, which allows for a use of the book in classes dedicated to Plotinus’ philosophy only. Porphyry and Iamblichus are represented with excerpts from their extant works, i.e. the *Sententiae* and *De mysteriis* respectively, as well as with fragments of, among others, their commentaries on Plato. Iamblichus’ *Letter to Macedonius*, *On Fate* is, so far as I know, translated here for the first time into English. Of Proclus, the Editors have included a number of propositions from the *Elements of Theology*, as well as the opening of the *Platonic Theology*, together with some passages from the commentaries on Plato’s *Parmenides* and *Timaeus* and from *De malorum subsistentia*. The broad range of texts provides insight into central philosophical issues in Neoplatonism as reflected in these four representatives and invites comparative readings on such topics as e.g. the nature of the soul or the problem of evil, which are supported by numerous cross-references in the notes. Those who read Greek will welcome the frequent references to textual problems, but may also notice occasional misprints of Greek words. The volume is completed by a very useful glossary of philosophical terms (English, with transcription and original Greek) and an index of names and terms. There is no bibliography, as the authors refrain from overloading the notes with discussions of or references to secondary literature, but there is a list of ‘Principal Texts Used in This Anthology’ (pp. xxiii–xxiv). This book, prepared by two experts in the field, will be welcome to all who do not settle for reading about Neoplatonism, but prefer to study the sources, and especially for those who dreamt of teaching a graduate course on Neoplatonism, but had no textbook available. Here it is.

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