

## 16. Review of Prometheus Trust's Thomas Taylor Series, by Farasha Euker

It may reasonably be questioned why *Luvah* would decide to publish a review of a group of writings that are anything but new (Taylor's books were published starting in the late eighteenth century). Our response would be that:

1. Taylor's writings are woefully neglected, with seemingly only a handful of scholars willing to pay homage to his massive labor of love.
2. Prometheus Trust's recently completed thirty-three volume series finally, more than two-hundred and fifty years after Taylor's birth, grants all of his invaluable texts the presentation they deserve.

In this age of gizmos, gadgets, iThis, and iThat, we seem to have collectively lost our fascination with the printed word. When the Kindle — *the next big thing* — came out onto the market, it compelled many people to falsely believe that this new toy fulfilled a need they had—one that never actually existed in the first place. The consumer who purchases an iPad or Kindle forgets that those devices are made with countless toxic chemicals, in factories that exploit workers, and produced by companies that use ruthless monopolistic tactics to strong-arm small publishers out of business. In this hostile atmosphere, it is refreshing to know that an organization such as the Prometheus Trust is devoted to promulgating traditional wisdom through the medium of the traditionally printed word. Everything about every word, every volume, and the series as a whole, shows the care and dedication that the Prometheus Trust put into producing the *Thomas Taylor Series*. Though almost all of Taylor's texts are freely available online, the quality of the text and the horrors of staring at a computer screen make that an inhospitable environment for reading Taylor's sacred texts of Platonism. Thankfully, the *Thomas Taylor Series* is being sold at a very reasonable price, both per volume and for the series as a whole. The quality of each volume of the *Thomas Taylor Series* is exceptionally good, including the heavy paper, sturdy hardcover binding, and especially the crisp and clear typeface. Added to each volume are supplementary materials from the Trust, such as short introductions, which help the amateur Platonist to get started. Of course, the best bound, most perfectly presented book would be worthless without superb content, and few things are as worth reading as the original writings and translations of Thomas Taylor.

So, why have the writings of Taylor been neglected so long? Firstly, Taylor's writings, until very recently, were hard to come by. Secondly, Taylor was ridiculed for his Pagan belief system. Finally, even the most sympathetic critics, such as Kathleen Raine, have criticized Taylor's style. With the current accessibility of Taylor's writings, only the latter two issues could raise problems

for the prospective reader. It is the belief of *Luvah's* editors that Taylor's belief system is precisely one of the most important facets that lend his writings credibility. When one reads a text or translation from Taylor, they know that they are not just reading about Platonism, but are reading the direct words of the greatest Platonist since Damascius, a man who drank deeply from the wells of wisdom. It was first institutionalized Christianity, followed by institutionalized materialism, that prevented a serious (re)appraisal of Taylor's writings, but Christianity's spiritual materialism and modernity's nihilism have only led to the destruction of everything beautiful about life on Earth. For humanity to collectively revel in Truth, Beauty, and Goodness once again, we need to revert to ancient beliefs—a project as dear to Thomas Taylor as it was to the Emperor Julian. Regarding Taylor's style, there is no doubt that it needs a bit of getting used to, but that is less Taylor's fault than the fault of the English language. English simply is not as well suited as 'Arabic, German, or Greek to metaphysical discourse, but Taylor, through his herculean labors, managed to present accurate translations in beautiful English. Some of the texts translated by Taylor are among the most profound produced by humans; texts that push the boundaries of what is possible to express in any language, so, naturally, a text such as Proclus' *Platonic Theology* is a difficult read, but any educated reader who works their way from the base (*Alcibiades I*), to the peak of the Platonic mountain (the *Platonic Theology*), should have no trouble at all. If a reader does find Taylor's eloquent style awkward or perturbing, it is not the fault of Taylor, but the fault of modern educational systems. Many of Taylor's translations continue to be the only ones available in English, and even for the texts that have been re-translated, Taylor's versions are often far superior. Despite the intervening centuries, Taylor's Plato translations are still, by far, the best available. If one were to find one fault with the Taylor translations, it would be that some of the manuscripts he worked from were defective, so the serious scholar may occasionally wish to reference the standard editions of the Greek texts. The Prometheus Trust's *Thomas Taylor Series* could provide an impetus to a Thomas Taylor renaissance and a revival of ancient wisdom—something that is ever so desperately needed.

Let the Muses sing freely once again, banishing the clanging of the machines to the realms of *once was*.