

Socrates' supercelestial triad



Commentary by Thomas Taylor

IN THE NEXT PLACE, LET US CONSIDER THE TRIAD which is celebrated by Socrates as presubstisting in the supercelestial place, *viz. the plain of truth, the meadow, and the aliment of the Gods*. The *plain of truth*, therefore, is intellectually expanded to intelligible light, and is illuminated with the splendours which thence proceed. But *the meadow* is the prolific power of life, and of all-various reasons, and is the comprehension of the primary causes of life, and the cause of the variety and the procreation of forms. For meadows in this sensible region are fertile with forms and productive powers, and contain water, which is a symbol of vivific energy. But the nourishing cause of the gods is a certain intelligible union, comprehending in itself the whole perfection of the Gods, and filling them with vigour and power, that they may provide for secondary natures, and possess an immutable intelligence of such as are first. The Gods, however, participate of these uniformly on high, but with separation in their progressions. Of the aliment, also, one kind is called by Plato ambrosia, and the other nectar. Here, too, we may observe, that the charioteer who is nourished with intelligibles participates of the perfection illuminated from the Gods unically, but the horses divisibly; first of ambrosia, and afterwards of nectar. For it is necessary that they should remain firmly and immovably in more excellent natures, from ambrosia; but that they should immutably provide for secondary natures, through nectar; since they say that ambrosia is a solid, but nectar a liquid nutriment. Hence, the nutriment of nectar signifies that in providence which is unrestrained, indissoluble, and which proceeds to all things with perfect purity. But the nutriment of ambrosia signifies that which is permanent, and which is firmly established in more excellent natures. But from both it is implied, that the Gods are permanent, and at the same time proceed unconverted to subordinate natures, is unprolific, nor their prolific power and progression, without stability: but, being permanent, they proceed, and, being established in prior natures, provide for things secondary with consummate purity.¹



¹ Taylor T. (*Tr. & Annot.*). *The Works of Plato*. (Vol. III of a set of five volumes & Vol. XI of "The Thomas Taylor Series") Frome: The Prometheus Trust, 1996. Excerpt from endnote 14, pp. 412-13, being Taylor's Additional Notes on Plato's *Phædrus*. [Westerink line 246e, p. 358: "*Likewise Jupiter the mighty leader, etc.*"]