

# On the God\* of Socrates

Apuleius

Thomas Taylor (tr.)<sup>†</sup>

Plato gives a triple division to the whole nature of things, and especially to that part of it which pertains to animals; and he likewise is of opinion, that there are Gods in the highest, in the middle, and in the lowest place of the universe. Understand, however, that this division is not only derived from local separation, but also from dignity of nature, which is itself distinguished not by one or two, but by many modes. Nevertheless, it will be more manifest to begin from the distribution of place;<sup>1</sup> for this order assigns the heavens to the immortal Gods, conformably to what their majesty demands. And

---

\*In many places, Plato calls the participants of the divinities Gods. Thus in the *Laws* a divine soul is called a God; and in the *Phædrus* it is said, "That all the horses and charioteers of the Gods are good, and consist of things that are good." And when he says this, he is speaking of divine souls. After this also, in the same dialogue, he still more clearly says, "And this is the life of the Gods." What however is still more admirable is this, that he denominates those beings Gods, who are always united to the Gods, and who, together with them, give completion to one series. For in the *Phædrus*, *Timæus*, and other dialogues, he extends the appellation of the Gods as far as to dæmons, though the latter are essentially posterior to, and subsist about the Gods. But what is still more paradoxical, he does not refuse to call certain men Gods: for in the *Sophista* he thus denominates the Elean guest or stranger.

According to Plato, therefore, one thing is a God simply, another on account of union, another through participation, another through contact, and another through similitude. For of super-essential natures, each is primarily a God; of intellectual natures, each is a God according to union; and of divine souls, each is a God according to participation. But divine dæmons are Gods according to contact with the Gods; and the souls of men are allotted this appellation through similitude.

As the dæmon of Socrates, therefore, was doubtless one of the highest order, as may be inferred from the intellectual superiority of Socrates to most other men, Apuleius is justified in calling this dæmon a God. And that the dæmon of Socrates indeed was divine, is evident from the testimony of Socrates himself in the *First Alcibiades*: for in the course of that dialogue he clearly says, "I have long been of opinion that *the God* did not as yet direct me to hold any conversation with you." And in the *Apology* he most unequivocally evinces that this dæmon is allotted a divine transcendency, considered as ranking in the order of dæmons.

The ignorance of this distinction has been the source of infinite confusion and absurd hypotheses, to the modern writers on the mythology and theology of the Greeks.

<sup>†</sup>Taylor, T. *The Metamorphosis, or Golden Ass, and Philosophical Works of Apuleius*. R. Triphook and T. Rodd, 1822.

<sup>1</sup>It is here requisite to observe, that divine natures are not in bodies, but externally rule over them.

of these celestial Gods, some we apprehend by the sight, but others we investigate by intellect; and by the sight, indeed, we perceive—

—Ye, the world's most refulgent lights,  
Who through the heavens conduct the gliding year.<sup>2</sup>

We do not, however, only perceive by the eyes those principal Gods, the Sun the artificer of the day, and the Moon the emulator of the Sun, and the ornament of night; whether she is cornicular, or divided<sup>3</sup>, or gibbous, or full; exhibiting a various ignited torch; being more largely illuminated the farther she departs from the Sun; and, by an equal augment both of her path and her light, defining the month through her increments, and afterwards by her equal decrements; [for this must be admitted] whether, as the Chaldeans think, she possesses a proper and permanent light of her own, being in one part of herself endued with light, but in another part deprived of splendour, and possessing a manifold convolution of her various-coloured face, and thus changes her form; or whether, being wholly deprived of a peculiar light, and requiring extraneous splendour, with a dense body, or with a body polished like a mirror, she receives either the oblique or direct rays of the Sun, and, that I may use the words of Lucretius, [in lib. v.]

—throws from her orb a spurious light.

Whichever of these opinions is true, for this I shall afterwards consider, there is not any Greek, or any barbarian, who will not easily conjecture that the Sun and Moon are Gods; and not these only, as I have said, but also the five stars, which are commonly called by the unlearned erratic, though, by their undeviating, certain, and established motions, they produce by their divine revolutions the most orderly and eternal transitions; by a various form of convolution indeed, but with a celerity perpetually equable and the same, representing, through an admirable vicissitude, at one time progressions, and at another regressions, according to the position, curvature, and obliquity of their circles, which he will know in the best manner, who is skilled in the risings and settings of the stars.

---

Hence they impart from themselves to bodies every good they are able to receive, but they themselves receive nothing from bodies; so that neither will they derive from them certain peculiarities. By no means, therefore, must it be admitted (as Iamblichus well observes), that the cause of the distinction of the divine genera is an arrangement with reference to bodies; as of Gods to ethereal bodies, but of dæmons to ærial bodies, and of souls to such as are terrene. See sect. i. chap. viii. of my translation of Iamblichus on the Mysteries.

<sup>2</sup>These lines are taken from book i. of the Georgics of Virgil.

<sup>3</sup>In the original, *dividua*; and the moon is *dividua* when she is a quarter old.

You who accord with Plato must also rank in the same number of visible Gods those other stars,

The rainy Hyades, Arcturus, both the Bears:<sup>4</sup>

and likewise other radiant Gods, by whom we perceive, in a serene sky, the celestial choir adorned and crowned, when the nights are painted with a severe grace and a stern beauty; beholding, as Ennius says, in this most perfect shield of the world, engravings diversified with admirable splendours. There is another species of Gods, which nature has denied us the power of seeing, and yet we may with astonishment contemplate them through intellect, acutely surveying them with the eye of the mind. In the number of these are those twelve Gods<sup>5</sup> which are comprehended by Ennius, with an appropriate arrangement of their names, in two verses:

Juno, Vesta, Minerva, Ceres, Diana, Venus, Mars,  
Mercurius, Jovi, Neptunus, Vulcanus, Apollo;

and others of the like kind, whose names indeed have been for a long time known by our ears, but whose powers are conjectured by our minds, being perceived through the various benefits which they impart to us in the affairs of life, in those things over which they severally preside. The crowd, however, of the ignorant, who are rejected by Philosophy as profane, whose sanctity is vain, who are deprived of right reason, destitute of religion, and incapable of obtaining truth, dishonour the Gods, either by a most scrupulous worship or a most insolent disdain of them; one part being timid through superstition, but another tumid through contempt. Many venerate all these Gods, who are established on the lofty summit of ether, far removed from human contagion; but they venerate them improperly. For all fear them, but ignorantly; and a few deny their existence, but impiously. Plato thought these Gods to be incorporeal<sup>6</sup> and animated natures, without any end or beginning, but eternal both with reference to the time past and the time to come; spontaneously separated from the contagion of body; through

---

<sup>4</sup>This verse is taken from book iii. of the *Aeneid*.

<sup>5</sup>These Gods form, in the Platonic theology, the super-celestial, or liberated order, being immediately proximate to the mundane order of Gods. Concerning these divinities, see book vi. of my translation of Proclus on the Theology of Plato.

<sup>6</sup>The Delphin editor of this treatise, who appears to have been perfectly ignorant of the philosophy of Plato, says, that Plato is of an opinion contrary to what is here asserted by Apuleius, in the *Epinomis* and in the *Timæus*, because, in the former dialogue, he gives to the celestial Gods *a most beautiful*, and in the latter an *igneous* body. But if rational souls are incorporeal, according to Plato, though connected with bodies, much more must this be the case with the Gods.

a perfect intellect possessing supreme beatitude; good, not through the participation of any extraneous good, but from themselves; and able to procure for themselves every thing which is requisite, with prompt facility, with simple, unrestrained, and absolute power. But of the father of these, who is the lord and author of all things, and who is liberated from all necessity of acting or suffering, not being bound by any duty to the performance of any offices, why should I now begin to speak? Since Plato, who was endued with celestial eloquence, when employing language worthy of the immortal Gods, frequently proclaims that this cause of all things, on account of his incredible and ineffable transcendency, cannot be even moderately comprehended by any definition, through the poverty of human speech; and that the intellectual apprehension of this God can scarcely be obtained by wise men, when they have separated themselves from body, as much as possible, through the vigorous energies of the mind. *He also adds, that this knowledge sometimes shines forth with a most rapid coruscation, like a bright and clear light in the most profound darkness.*<sup>7</sup> I will therefore omit the discussion of this, in which all words adequate to the amplitude of the thing are not only wanting to me, but could not even be found by my master Plato. Hence, I shall now sound a retreat, in things which far surpass my mediocrity, and at length bring down my discourse from heaven to earth, in which we men are the principal animal, though most of us, through the neglect of good discipline, are so depraved by all errors, so imbued with the most atrocious crimes, and have become so excessively ferocious, through having nearly destroyed the mildness of our nature, that it may seem there is not any animal on the earth viler than man. Our discussion, however, at present is not concerning errors, but concerning the natural distribution of things.

Men, therefore, dwell on the earth, being endued with reason, possessing the power of speech, having immortal souls, but mortal members, light and anxious minds, brutal and infirm bodies, dissimilar manners, but similar errors, pervicacious audacity, pertinacious hope, vain labour, and decaying fortune, severally mortal, yet all of them eternal in their whole species, and mutable in this, that they alternately leave offspring to supply their place; [and besides all this] are conversant with fleeting time, slow wisdom, a rapid death, and a querulous life. In the meanwhile you will have two kinds of animals, Gods very much differing from men, in sublimity of place, in perpetuity of life, in perfection of nature, and having no proximate communication with them;<sup>8</sup> since those supreme

---

<sup>7</sup>This is a very remarkable passage, but is not to be found in any of the writings of Plato that are now extant. Something similar to this is said by Plato, in his seventh epistle, respecting the intuition of *idea*, or *intellectual form*; viz. “that from long converse with the thing itself, accompanied by a life in conformity to it, on a sudden, a light, as if from a leaping fire, will be enkindled in the soul, and will there itself nourish itself.”

<sup>8</sup>A divine nature is *immediately* present with all things, but all things are not immediately present

are separated from the lowest habitations by such an interval of altitude; and the life there is eternal and never-failing, but is here decaying and interrupted; and the natures there are elevated to beatitude, but those that are here are depressed to calamity. What then? Does nature connect itself by no bond, but leave itself separated into the divine and human part, and suffer itself to be interrupted, and as it were debile? For, as the same Plato says, *no God is mingled with men*. But this is a principal indication of the sublimity of the Gods, that they are not contaminated by any contact with us.<sup>9</sup> One part of them is only to be seen by us with debilitated vision; as the stars, about whose magnitude and colour men are still ambiguous. But the rest are only known by intellect, and not by this with a prompt perception. This, however, must not be considered as an admirable circumstance in the immortal Gods, since even among men, who are elevated by the opulent gifts of Fortune to the tottering throne and pendulous tribunal of a kingdom, the access is rare, in consequence of their living remote from witnesses, in certain penetralia of their dignity: for familiarity produces contempt, but infrequency conciliates admiration.

What, therefore, shall I do (some orator may object) after this decision of yours, which is indeed celestial, but inhuman [or foreign from human nature]? If men are entirely removed far from the immortal Gods, and are so banished into these Tartarean realms of earth that all communication with the celestial Gods is denied to them, nor any one of the number of the celestials occasionally visits them, in the same manner as a shepherd visits his flocks of sheep, or an equerry his horses, or a herdsman his lowing cattle, in order that he may repress the more ferocious, heal the morbid, and assist those that are in want? You say that no God intervenes in human affairs. To whom, therefore, shall I pray? To whom shall I make vows? To whom shall I immolate victims? Whom shall I invoke through the whole of my life, as my helper in misery, as the favourer of the good, and the adversary of the evil? And lastly (which is a thing that most frequently occurs), whom shall I adduce as a witness to my oath? Shall I say, as the Virgilian Ascanius,<sup>10</sup>

Now by this head I swear, by which before  
My father used to swear.

But, O Iulus, your father might employ this oath among the Trojans, who were allied to him by their origin, and also perhaps among the Greeks, who were known to him in battle; but among the Rutuli, who were recently known by you, if no one believed in

---

with it; because aptitude in the participant is here requisite to an union with that which is participable.

<sup>9</sup>*i. e.* By any habitude or alliance to our nature.

<sup>10</sup>See book xi. of the *Æneid*.

this head, what God would be a surety for you? Would your right hand and your dart, as they were to the most ferocious Mezentius? For these only, by which he defended himself, he adjured:

To me my right hand and the missile dart,  
Which now well-poised I hurl, are each a God.<sup>11</sup>

Take away, I beseech you, such sanguinary Gods; a right hand weary with slaughter, and a dart rusty with gore. It is not fit that you should invoke either of these, nor that you should swear by them, since this is an honour peculiar to the highest of the Gods. For a solemn oath, as Ennius says, is also called *Jovisjurandum*, as pertaining to Jupiter, by whom alone it is proper to swear. What, therefore, do you think? Shall I swear by Jupiter, holding a stone in my hand, after the most ancient manner of the Romans? But if the opinion of Plato is true, that God never mingles himself with man, a stone will hear me more easily than Jupiter. This, however, is not true: for Plato will answer for his opinion by my voice. I do not, says he, assert that the Gods are separated and alienated from us, so as to think that not even our prayers reach them; for I do not remove them from an attention to, but only from a contact with, human affairs.

Moreover, there are certain divine middle powers, situated in this interval of the air, between the highest ether and earth, which is in the lowest place, through whom our desires and our deserts pass to the Gods. These are called by a Greek name *dæmons*, who, being placed between the terrestrial and celestial inhabitants, transmit prayers from the one, and gifts from the other. They likewise carry supplications from the one, and auxiliaries from the other, as certain interpreters and saluters of both. Through these same *dæmons*, as Plato says in the Banquet, all denunciations, the various miracles of enchanters, and all the species of presages, are directed. Prefects, from among the number of these, providentially attend to every thing, according to the province assigned to each; either by the formation of dreams, or causing the fissures in entrails, or governing the flights of some birds, and instructing the songs of others, or by inspiring prophets, or hurling thunder, or producing the coruscations of lightning in the clouds, or causing other things to take place, by which we obtain a knowledge of future events.<sup>12</sup> And it is requisite to think that all these particulars are effected by the will, the power, and authority of the celestial Gods, but by the compliance, operations, and ministrant offices of *dæmons*; for it was through the employment, the operations, and the providential attention of these, that dreams predicted to Hannibal the loss of one of his eyes; that

---

<sup>11</sup>See book x. of the *Æneid*.

<sup>12</sup>For a copious account of *dæmons*, their nature, and different orders, see the notes on the First Alcibiades, in vol. i. of my Plato, and also my translation of Iamblichus on the Mysteries.

the inspection of the viscera previously announced to Flaminius the danger of a great slaughter; and that auguries granted to Accius Navius the miracle of the whetstone. It is also through these that forerunning indications of future empire are imparted to certain persons; as that an eagle covered the head of Tarquinius Priscus, and that a flame illuminated the head of Servius Tullius. And lastly, to these are owing all the presages of diviners, the expiations of the Hetruscans, the enclosure of places struck by lightning, and the verses of the Sibyls; all which, as I have said, are effected by certain powers that are media between men and Gods. For it would not be conformable to the majesty of the celestial Gods, that any one of them should either devise a dream for Hannibal, or snatch the victim from Flaminius, or direct the flight of the bird to Accius Navius, or versify the predictions of the Sibyl, or be willing to snatch the hat from the head of Tarquin, and immediately restore it, or produce a splendid flame from the head of Servius, but not such as would burn him. It is not fit that the supernal Gods should descend to things of this kind. This is the province of the intermediate Gods, who dwell in the regions of the air, which border on the earth, and yet are no less conversant with the confines of the heavens; just as in every part of the world there are animals adapted to the several parts, the volant living in the air, and the gradient on the earth. For since there are four most known elements, nature being as it were quadrifariously separated into large parts, and there are animals appropriate to earth and fire; since Aristotle asserts, that certain peculiar animals, furnished with wings, fly in burning furnaces, and pass the whole of their life in fire,<sup>13</sup> rise into existence with it, and together with it are extinguished; and, besides this, since, as we have before said, so many various stars are beheld supernally in ether, *i. e.* in the most clear flagrancy of fire<sup>14</sup>—since this is the case, why should nature alone suffer this fourth element, the air, which is so widely extended, to be void of every thing, and destitute of [proper] inhabitants? Are not animals, however, generated in the air, in the same manner as flame-coloured animals are generated in fire, such as are unstable in water, and such as are glebous in earth? For you may most justly say, that his opinion is false, who attributes birds to the air; since no one of them is elevated above the summit of mount Olympus, which, though it is said to be the highest of all mountains, yet the perpendicular altitude of its summit is not equal, according to geometricians, to ten stadia; but there is an immense mass of air, which extends as far as to the nearest spiral gyrations of the moon, from which ether supernally commences. What, therefore, shall we say of such a great abundance of air, which is expanded from the lowest revolutions of the moon, as far as to the highest summit of mount Olympus? Will it be destitute of its

<sup>13</sup>This is asserted by Aristotle, in book v. chap. xix. of his History of Animals.

<sup>14</sup>It must be observed, however, that the fire of which ether consists, and also the stars, for the most part, is, according to Plato, vivific and unburning. See book iii. of my translation of Proclus on the Timæus.

appropriate animals, and will this part of nature be without life, and debile? But, if you diligently observe, birds themselves may, with greater rectitude, be said to be terrestrial than aërial animals; for the whole of their life is always on the earth; there they procure food, and there they rest; and they only pass through that portion of the air in flying which is proximate to the earth. But, when they are weary with the rowing of their wings, the earth is to them as a port. If, therefore, reason evidently requires that proper animals must also be admitted to exist in the air, it remains that we should consider what they are, and what the species is to which they belong.

They are then by no means terrene animals; for these verge downwards by their gravity. But neither are they of a fiery nature, lest they should be hastily raised on high by their heat. A certain middle nature, therefore must be fashioned for us, of a temperature adapted to the middle condition of the place, so that the disposition of the inhabitants may be conformable to the quality of the region. Let us then form in our mind and generate bodies, so constituted as neither to be so heavy as terrene, nor so light as ethereal bodies, but after a manner separated from both, or mingled from both, whether they are removed from, or are modified by, the participation of each. They will, however, be more easily conceived, if they are admitted to be mingled from both, than if they are said to be mingled with neither. These bodies of dæmons, therefore, will have a little weight, in order that they may not proceed to supernal natures; and they will also have something of levity, in order that they may not be precipitated to the realms beneath. And, that I may not seem to you to devise incredible things, after the manner of the poets, I will give you, in the first place, an example of this equiponderant mediocrity. For we see that the clouds coalesce, in a way not much different from this tenuity of body; and if these were equally as light as those bodies which are entirely without weight, they would never crown the summit of a lofty mountain with, as it were, certain bent chains, being depressed beneath its vertex, as we frequently perceive they do. Moreover, if they were naturally so dense and ponderous that no admixture, of a more active levity, could elevate them, they would certainly strike against the earth, by their own effort, no otherwise than a rude mass of lead and a stone. Now, however, being pendulous and moveable, they are governed in different directions by the winds in the sea of air, in the same manner as ships, suffering some little variation by their proximity and remoteness; for, if they are prolific with the moisture of water, they are depressed downward, as if delivering a foetus into light. And on this account clouds that are more moist descend lower, in a black troop, and with a slower motion; but those that are serene ascend higher, like fleeces of wool, in a white troop, and with a more rapid flight; or have you not heard what Lucretius most eloquently sings concerning thunder [in his sixth book]:

The azure heavens by thunders dire are shook,



Because th' ethereal clouds, ascending high,  
Dash on each other, driven by adverse winds.

But if the clouds fly loftily, all of which originate from, and again flow downward to, the earth, what should you at length think of the bodies of dæmons, which are much less dense, and therefore so much more attenuated than clouds? For they are not conglobed from a feculent nebula and a tumid darkness, as the clouds are, but they consist of that most pure, liquid, and serene element of air, and on this account are not easily visible to the human eye, unless they exhibit an image of themselves by divine command. For no terrene solidity occupies in them the place of light, so as to resist our perception, since the energies of our sight, when opposed by opaque solidity, are necessarily retarded; but the frame of their bodies is rare, splendid, and attenuated, so that they pass through the rays of the whole of our sight by their rarity, reverberate them by their splendour, and escape them by their subtlety. From hence is that Homeric Minerva, who was present in the midst of the assembly of the Greeks, for the purpose of repressing the anger of Achilles. If you wait a little, I will enunciate to you, in Latin, the Greek verse [in which this is mentioned by Homer], or rather let it be now given. Minerva, therefore, as I have said, by the command of Juno, was present, in order to restrain the rage of Achilles,

Seen by him only, by the rest unseen.<sup>15</sup>

From hence also is that Juturna in Virgil, who had intercourse with many thousands of men, for the purpose of giving assistance to her brother,

With soldiers mingled, but by none perceived.<sup>16</sup>

Entirely accomplishing that which the soldier of Plautus<sup>17</sup> boasted of having effected by his shield,

Which dazzled by its light the vision of his foes.

And that I may not proluxly discuss what remains, poets, from this multitude of dæmons, are accustomed, in a way by no means remote from truth, to feign the Gods to be haters and lovers of certain men; and to give prosperity and elevation to these; but on the

---

<sup>15</sup>Iliad, I. v. 198.

<sup>16</sup>Æneid, lib. xii.

<sup>17</sup>In the original, *prorsus quod Plautinus miles*, &c.; but Lipsius and the Delphin editor, for *prorsus quod*, read *prorsus quam*. It does not, however, appear to me that any emendation is requisite; or that their alteration is an amendment.

contrary, to be averse from and afflict those. Hence, they are influenced by pity, are indignant, solicitous, and delighted, and suffer all the mutations of the human soul; and are agitated by all the ebullitions of human thought, with a similar motion of the heart, and tempest of the mind.<sup>18</sup> All which storms and tempests are far exiled from the tranquillity of the celestial Gods. For all the celestials always enjoy the same state of mind, with an eternal equability: which in them is never driven from its proper seat, either towards pleasure or pain. Nor are they removed by any thing, from their own perpetual energy, to any sudden habitude; neither by any foreign force, because nothing is more powerful than deity; nor of their own accord, because nothing is more perfect than themselves.

Moreover, how can he appear to have been perfect, who migrates from a former condition of being to another which is better? Especially since no one spontaneously embraces any thing new, except he despises what he possessed before. For that altered mode of acting cannot take place, without the debilitation of the preceding modes. Hence, it is requisite that God should neither be employed in giving temporal assistance, or be impelled to love; and, therefore, he is neither influenced by indignation nor by pity, nor is disquieted by any anxiety, nor elated by any hilarity; but is liberated from all the passions of the mind, so that he never either grieves or rejoices, nor wills, nor is averse to any thing subitaneous.<sup>19</sup> But all these, and other things of the like kind, properly accord with the middle nature of dæmons.<sup>20</sup> For as they are media between us and the Gods, in the place of their habitation, so likewise is the nature of their mind; having immortality in common with the Gods, and passion in common with the beings subordinate to themselves. For they are capable, in the same manner as we are, of suffering all the mitigations or incitements of souls; so as to be stimulated by anger, made to incline

---

<sup>18</sup> According to the ancient theology, the lowest orders of those powers that are the perpetual attendants of the Gods, preserve the characteristics of their leaders, though in a partial and multiplied manner, and are called by their names. Hence, the passions of the subjects of their government are, in fables, proximately referred to these. See the Introduction to the second and third books of the Republic, in vol. i. of my Plato.

<sup>19</sup> "Divinity," says Sallust (in chap. xiv. of his treatise On the Gods and the World) "neither rejoices; for that which rejoices is also influenced by sorrow: nor is angry; for anger is a passion: nor is appeased by gifts; for then he would be influenced by delight. Nor is it lawful that a divine nature should be well or ill affected from human concerns: for the divinities are perpetually good and profitable, but are never noxious, and ever subsist in the same uniform mode of being. But we, when we are virtuous, are conjoined to the Gods through similitude: but when vicious, we are separated from them through dissimilitude. And while we live according to virtue, we partake of the Gods, but when we become evil, we cause them to become our enemies; not that they are angry, but because guilt prevents us from receiving the illuminations of the Gods, and subjects us to the power of avenging dæmons."

<sup>20</sup> This, however, applies only to the lowest order of dæmons.

by pity, allured by gifts, appeased by prayers, exasperated by contumely, soothed by honours, and changed by all other things, in the same way that we are. Indeed, that I may comprehend the nature of them by a definition, dæmons are in their genus animals, in their species rational, in mind passive, in body ærial, and in time perpetual. Of these five characteristics which I have mentioned, the three first are the same as those which we possess, the fourth is peculiar to them, and the last is common to them with the immortal Gods, from whom they differ in being obnoxious to passion. Hence, as I think, dæmons are not absurdly denominated passive, because they are subject to the same perturbations that we are. On which account, also, it is requisite to believe in the different observances of religions, and the various supplications employed in sacred rites. There are, likewise, some among this number of Gods who rejoice in victims, or ceremonies or rites, which are nocturnal or diurnal, obvious or occult, more joyful or more sad. Thus the Egyptian deities are almost all of them delighted with lamentations, the Grecian for the most part with choirs, but the Barbarian with the sound produced by cymbals, drums, and pipes. In like manner, other things pertaining to sacred rites differ by a great variety, according to different regions; as, for instance, the crowds of sacred processions, the arcana of mysteries, the offices of priests, and the compliances of those that sacrifice; and farther still, the effigies of the Gods, and the spoils dedicated to them, the religions and situations of temples, and the variety of blood and colour in victims. All which particulars are rightly accomplished, and after the accustomed manner, if they are effected appropriately to the regions to which they belong. Thus from dreams, predictions, and oracles, we have for the most part found that the divinities have been indignant, if any thing in their sacred rites has been neglected through indolence or pride; of which kind of things I have an abundance of examples. They are, however, so celebrated, and so generally known, that no one would attempt to relate them, without omitting much more than he narrated. On this account, I shall desist at present from speaking about these particulars, which if they are not believed by all men, yet certainly a promiscuous knowledge of them is universal. It will be better, therefore, to discuss this in the Latin tongue, viz. that various species of dæmons are enumerated by philosophers, in order that you may more clearly and fully understand the nature of the presage of Socrates, and of his familiar dæmon.

The human soul, therefore, even when situated in the present body, is called, according to a certain signification, a dæmon.

O say, Euryalus, do Gods inspire  
 In minds this ardour, or does fierce desire  
 Rule as a God in its possessor's breast?<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup>These verses are taken from book ix. of the Æneid.

For if this be the case, the upright desire of the soul is a good dæmon. Hence, some persons think, as we have before observed, that the blessed are called *eudæmones*, the *dæmon* of whom is good, *i. e.* whose mind is perfect in virtue. You may call this dæmon in our tongue, according to my interpretation, a *Genius*, I know not whether rightly, but certainly at my peril; because this God [or dæmon], who is the mind of every one,<sup>22</sup> though it is immortal, nevertheless, is after a certain manner generated with man; so that those prayers by which we implore the *Genius*, and which we employ when we embrace the *knees* [genua] of those whom we supplicate, appear to me to testify our connexion and union; since they comprehend in two words the body and mind; through the communion and copulation of which we exist. There is also another species of dæmons, according to a second signification, and this is a human soul, which, after its departure from the present life, does not enter into another body. I find that souls of this kind are called in the ancient Latin tongue *Lemures*. Of these *Lemures*, therefore, he who, being allotted the guardianship of his posterity, dwells in a house with an appeased and tranquil power, is called a familiar [or domestic] *Lar*. But those are for the most part called *Larvæ*, who, having no proper habitation, are punished with an uncertain wandering, as with a certain exile, on account of the evil deeds of their life, and become a vain terror to good, and are noxious to bad men. And when it is uncertain what the allotted condition is of any one of these, they call the God by the name of *Manes*; the name of God being added for the sake of honour. For they alone call those Gods, who being of the same number of *Lemures*, and having governed the course of their life justly and prudently, have afterwards been celebrated by men as divinities, and are every where worshipped in temples, and honoured by religious rites; such for instance as Amphiaraus in Boeotia, Mopsus in Africa, Osiris in Egypt, and some other in other nations, but Esculapius every where. All this distribution, however, was of those dæmons, who once existed in a human body.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup>“The soul,” says Proclus in his Commentary on the First Alcibiades, “that, through its similitude to the dæmoniacal genus, produces energies more wonderful than those which belong to human nature, and which suspends the whole of its life from dæmons, is a dæmon according to habitude (*i. e.* proximity or alliance). But an *essential* dæmon is neither called a dæmon through habitude to secondary natures, nor through an assimilation to something different from himself; but is allotted this peculiarity from himself, and is defined by a certain summit, or flower of essence, by appropriate powers, and by different modes of energies.”

<sup>23</sup>Those human souls that descend into the regions of mortality with impassivity and purity, were called by the ancients *heroes*, on account of their great proximity and alliance to such as are *essentially* heroes, and are the *perpetual* attendants of the Gods. These heroes called themselves by the names of the divinities from whom they descended, and by whose peculiarities their energies were characterised. When, however, through the corruption of the heathen religion, these heroes were no longer revered in an *appropriate* manner, but the worship of the Gods was transferred to them, the proper distinction between

But there is another species of dæmons, more sublime and venerable, not less numerous, but far superior in dignity, who, being always liberated from the bonds and conjunction of the body, preside over certain powers. In the number of these are Sleep and Love, who possess powers of a different nature; Love, of exciting to wakefulness, but Sleep of lulling to rest. From this more sublime order of dæmons, Plato asserts that a peculiar dæmon is allotted to every man, who is a witness and a guardian<sup>24</sup> of his conduct in life, who, without being visible to any one, is always present, and who is an arbitrator not only of his deeds, but also of his thoughts. But when, life being finished, the soul returns [to the judges of its conduct], then the dæmon who presided over it immediately seizes, and leads it as his charge to judgement and is there present with it while it pleads its cause. Hence, this dæmon reprehends it, if it has acted on any false pretence; solemnly confirms what it says, if it asserts any thing that is true; and conformably to its testimony passes sentence. All you, therefore, who hear this divine opinion of Plato, as interpreted by me, so form your minds to whatever you may do, or to whatever may be the subject of your meditation, that you may know there is nothing concealed, from those guardians either within the mind, or external to it; but that the dæmon who presides over you inquisitively participates of all that concerns you, sees all things, understands all things, and *in the place of conscience dwells in the most profound recesses of the mind*.<sup>25</sup> For he of whom I speak is a perfect guardian, a singular

---

their essence and that of the divinities was confounded; and from this that most dire opinion that the Gods of the ancients were nothing more than men who once existed on the earth, derived its origin. See more on this subject in the Introduction to my translation of Proclus on the Theology of Plato.

<sup>24</sup>According to Plato, our guardian dæmons belong to that order of dæmons, which is arranged under the Gods that preside over the ascent and descent of souls. Olympiodorus in his Commentary on the Phædo of Plato observes, “that there is one dæmon who leads the soul to its judges from the present life; another who is ministrant to the judges, giving completion, as it were, to the sentence which is passed; and a third, who is again allotted the guardianship of life.”

<sup>25</sup>In the original, *in ipsis peritissimis mentibus vice conscientie diversetur*. This is a most remarkable passage, since it perfectly accords with what Olympiodorus says of our allotted dæmon, in his Scholia on the First Alcibiades of Plato, and contains a dogma concerning this dæmon, which is only to be found explicitly maintained in these Scholia. But the words of Olympiodorus are as follow: “This is what is said by the interpreters [of Plato] concerning dæmons, and those which are allotted to us. We, however, shall endeavour to discuss these particulars in such a way as to reconcile them with what is at present said by Plato; for Socrates was condemned to take poison, in consequence of introducing to young men novel dæmoniacal powers, and for thinking those to be Gods which were not admitted to be so by the city. It must be said, therefore, that the allotted dæmon is *conscience*, which is *the supreme flower of the soul*, is guiltless in us, is an inflexible judge, and a witness to Minos and Rhadamanthus of the transactions of the present life. This also becomes the cause to us of our salvation, as always remaining in us without guilt, and not assenting to the errors of the soul, but disdaining them, and converting the soul to what is proper. You will not err, therefore, in calling the allotted dæmon conscience. But it is requisite to know that, of conscience, one kind pertains to our gnostic powers, and which is denominated *conscience* (*co-intelligence*)

prefect, a domestic speculator, a proper curator, an intimate inspector, an assiduous observer, an inseparable arbiter, a reprobater of what is evil, an approver of what is good; and if he is legitimately attended to, sedulously known, and religiously worshipped, in the way in which he was revered by Socrates with justice and innocence, will be a predictor in things uncertain, a premonitor in things dubious, a defender in things dangerous, and an assistant in want. He will also be able, by dreams, by tokens, and perhaps also manifestly, when the occasion demands it, to avert from you evil, increase your good, raise your depressed, support your falling, illuminate your obscure, govern your prosperous, and correct your adverse circumstances. It is not therefore wonderful, if Socrates, who was a man exceedingly perfect, and also wise by the testimony of Apollo, should know and worship this his God; and that hence, this his keeper, and nearly, as I may say, his equal, his associate and domestic, should repel from him every thing which ought to be repelled, foresee what ought to be noticed, and pre-admonish him of what ought to be foreknown by him, in those cases in which, human wisdom being no longer

---

homonymously with the genus.” In this passage, as Creuzer, the editor of these Scholia, well observes, something is wanting at the end; and a part of what is deficient, I conceive to be the words, *but another kind to our vital powers*; for the great division of the powers of the soul is into the gnostic and vital.

The singularity in this dogma of Olympiodorus, respecting our *allotted dæmon*, is, that in making it to be the same with *conscience*, if conscience is admitted to be a part of the soul, the dogma of Plotinus must also be admitted, “that the whole of our soul does not enter into the body, but that something belonging to it always abides in the intelligible world.” But this dogma appears to have been opposed by all the Platonists posterior to Plotinus; and Proclus has confuted it in the last proposition of his *Elements Of Theology*; for he there demonstrates, “that every partial soul, in descending into generation [or the sublunary realms], descends wholly; nor does one part of it remain on high, and another part descend.” But his demonstration of this is as follows: “For if something pertaining to the soul remained on high, in the intelligible world, it will always perceive intellectually, without transition, or transitively. But if without transition, it will be intellect, and not a part of the soul, and this partial soul will proximately participate of intellect [*i. e.* not through the medium of dæmoniacal and divine souls]. This, however, is impossible. But if it perceives intellectually with transition, from that which always, and from that which sometimes, energizes intellectually, one essence will be formed. This, however, also is impossible; for these always differ, as has been demonstrated. To which may be added, the absurdity resulting from supposing that the summit of the soul is always perfect, and yet does not rule over the other powers, and cause them to be perfect. Every partial soul, therefore, wholly descends.” Hence, if Olympiodorus was likewise hostile to this dogma of Plotinus, it must follow, according to him, that *conscience* is not a part of the soul, but something superior to it, and dwelling in its summit. Perhaps, therefore, Olympiodorus on this account calls the allotted dæmon, *the supreme flower of the soul*. For the summit, or *the one* of the soul, is frequently called by Platonic writers, *the flower*, but not *the supreme flower*; so that the addition of *supreme* will distinguish the presiding dæmon from the summit of the soul. The place in which this dogma of Plotinus is to be found, is at the end of his treatise *On the Descent of the Soul*.

I only add, that the celebrated poet Menander appears to have been the source of this dogma, that conscience is our allotted dæmon; for one of the *Excerptæ* from his fragments is, “To ev’ry mortal conscience is a God.”

of any use, he was in want, not of counsel, but of presage; in order that when he was vacillating through doubt, he might be rendered firm through divination. For there are many things, concerning the development of which even wise men betake themselves to diviners and oracles. Or do you not more clearly perceive in Homer, as in a certain large mirror, these two offices of divination and wisdom distributed apart from each other? For when those two pillars of the whole army were discordant, Agamemnon powerful in empire, and Achilles invincible in battle, a man praised for his eloquence and renowned for his skill was wanting, who might humble the pride of the son of Atreus, and repress the rage of Pelides, and who might engage their attention by his authority, admonish them by examples, and allure them by his words. Who, therefore, at such a time undertook to speak? The Pylian orator, who was courteous in his eloquence, cautious through experience, and venerable by his age; who was known by all to have a body debilitated by time, but a mind flourishing in wisdom, and words abounding with sweetness.

In like manner, when in dubious and adverse circumstances, spies are to be chosen, who may penetrate into the camps of the enemy at midnight, are not Ulysses and Diomed selected for this purpose, as counsel and aid, mind and hand, spirit and sword? But when the Greeks, ceasing from hostilities through weariness, and being detained in Aulis, applied themselves to explore the difficulty of the war, the facility of the journey, the tranquillity of the sea, and the clemency of the winds, through the indications of fibres, the food administered by birds, and the paths of serpents;<sup>26</sup> then those two supreme summits of Grecian wisdom, Ulysses and Nestor, were mutually silent; but Calchas, who was far more skilful in divination, as soon as he had surveyed the birds, and the altars, and the tree, immediately by his divination appeased the tempests, brought the fleet into the sea, and predicted the ten years' war. No otherwise also in the Trojan army, when the affairs require divination, that wise senate is silent, nor either Hicetaon, or Lampus, or Clytius, dares to assert any thing; but all of them listen in silence, either to the odious auguries of Helenus, or to the never-to-be-believed predictions of Cassandra. After the same manner Socrates, if at any time consultation foreign from the province of wisdom was requisite, was then governed by the prophetic power of his dæmon. But he was sedulously obedient to his admonitions, and on that account was far more acceptable to his God.

The reason, however, has been after a manner already assigned, why the dæmon of Socrates was nearly accustomed to prohibit him from what he was going to undertake,

---

<sup>26</sup>Apuleius here alludes to the serpent which at Aulis, in the presence of the Greeks, ascended into a plane tree, and devoured eight little sparrows together with their mother. Whence Calchas prophesied that the Trojan war would last nine years, but that the city would be captured in the tenth year. See the *Iliad*, lib. ii. v. 300.

but never exhorted him to the performance of any deed. For Socrates, as being a man of himself exceedingly perfect, and prompt to the performance of all the duties pertaining to him, never was in want of any exhorter; but sometimes required a prohibiter, if danger happened to be latent in any of his undertakings; in order that, being admonished, he might be cautious, and omit for the present his attempt, which he might either more safely resume afterwards, or enter upon in some other way. In things of this kind, he said, "That he heard a certain voice which originated from divinity." For thus it is narrated by Plato; lest any one should think that Socrates assumed omens from the conversation of men in common. For once also, when he was with Phædrus, beyond the precinct of the town, under the covering of a certain umbrageous tree, and without any witnesses, he perceived that sign which announced to him that he should not pass over the small current of the river Ilissus, till he had appeased Love, who was indignant at his reprehension of him, by a recantation.<sup>27</sup> To which may be added, that, if he had observed omens, he would sometimes also have received some exhortations from them, as we see frequently happens to many of those, who, through a too superstitious observance of omens, are not directed by their own mind, but by the words of others; and in wandering through the streets, gather counsel from what is said by passengers, and, as I may say, do not think with the understanding, but with the ears.

Nevertheless, in whatever manner these things may take place, it is certain that those who hear the words of diviners, frequently receive a voice through their ears, concerning the meaning of which they are not at all dubious; and which they know proceeds from a human mouth. But Socrates did not simply say that he heard a voice, but a *certain voice*, divinely transmitted to him. By which addition, you must understand, that neither a usual nor a human voice is signified; for if it had been a thing of this kind he would not have said *a certain voice*, but rather either merely *a voice*, or *the voice of some one*, as the harlot in Terence says,

I seemed just now to hear a soldier's voice.<sup>28</sup>

But he who says that he hears *a certain voice*, is either ignorant from whence that voice originated, or is somewhat dubious concerning it, or shows that it contained something unusual and arcane, as Socrates did in that voice, which he said was transmitted to him opportunely and divinely. And, indeed, I think that he perceived the indication of his dæmon, not only with his ears, but also with his eyes; for he frequently asserted that not a voice, but a divine sign, was exhibited to him. That sign might also have been the resemblance of his dæmon, which Socrates alone beheld, in the same manner as the

---

<sup>27</sup>See my translation of the Phædrus of Plato.

<sup>28</sup>This verse is from the Eunuch of Terence.



Homeric Achilles beheld Minerva. I am of opinion, that the greatest part of you will with difficulty believe what I have now said, and will wonder in the extreme at the form of the dæmon which was seen by Socrates alone. But Aristotle, whose authority is, I think, sufficient, asserts, that it was usual with the Pythagoreans very much to admire, if any one denied that he had ever seen a dæmon. If, therefore, the power of beholding a divine resemblance may be possessed by any one, why might it not, in an eminent degree, befall Socrates, whom the dignity of wisdom rendered similar to the most excellent divinity? For nothing is more similar and more acceptable to God, than a man intellectually good in perfection, who as much excels other men as he himself is surpassed by the immortal Gods. Should not we also rather elevate ourselves by the example and remembrance of Socrates? And should we not deliver ourselves to the felicitous study of a similar philosophy, and pay attention to similar divinities? From which study we are drawn away, though I know not for what reason. Nor is there any thing which excites in me so much wonder, as that all men should desire to live most happily, and should know that they cannot so live in any other way than by cultivating the mind, and yet leave the mind uncultivated. If, however, any one wishes to see acutely, it is requisite that he should pay attention to his eyes through which he sees; if you desire to run with celerity, attention must be paid to the feet, by which you run; and thus also, if you wish to be a powerful pugilist, your arms must be strengthened, through which you engage in this exercise. In a similar manner, in all the other members, attention to each must be paid in the place of study. And, as all men may easily see that this is true, I cannot sufficiently think with myself, and admire, in such a way as the thing deserves to be admired, why they do not also cultivate their mind by [right] reason: for this art of living [*i. e.* according to right reason] is equally necessary to all men; but this is not the case with the art of painting, nor with the art of singing, which any worthy man may despise, without any mental vituperation, without turpitude, and without a blemish [in his reputation]. I know not how to play on the flute like Ismenias, yet I feel no shame that I am not a piper: I know not how to paint in colours like Apelles, nor to carve like Lysippus, but I am not ashamed that I am neither a painter nor a statuary. But say, my friend, I know not how to live with rectitude, as Socrates, as Plato, as Pythagoras lived, and yet I feel no shame that I know not how to live rightly. You will never dare to say this.

It is, however, especially admirable in the multitude, that they should neglect to learn those things of which they are by no means desirous of appearing to be ignorant, and reject, at one and the same time, both the discipline and ignorance of the same art. Hence, if you examine their daily conduct, you will find that they are prodigally profuse in other things, but bestow nothing on themselves, I mean, in a proper attention to their dæmon, which proper attention is nothing else than the sacrament of philosophy. They build, indeed, magnificent villas, most sumptuously adorn their houses, and procure

numerous servants; but in all these, and amidst such great affluence, there is nothing to be ashamed of but the master of this abundance: and deservedly; for they have an accumulation of things to which they are devoted, but they themselves wander about them, unpolished, uncultivated, and ignorant. Hence you will find the forms of those buildings, in which they idly waste their patrimony, to be most pleasing to the view, most exquisitely built, and most elegantly adorned. You will also see villas raised, which emulate cities, houses decorated like temples, most numerous servants, and those with curled locks, costly furniture, every thing exhibiting affluence, opulence, every where, and every thing ornamented, except the master himself, who alone, like Tantalus, being needy and poor in the midst of his riches, does not indeed pant after that fugitive river, nor endeavour to quench his thirst with fallacious water, but hungers and thirsts after true beatitude, *i. e.* after a genuine,<sup>29</sup> prudent, and most fortunate life. For he does not perceive that it is usual to consider rich men in the same way that we do horses when we buy them; for in purchasing these we do not look to the trappings, nor the decorations of the belt, nor do we contemplate the riches of the most ornamented neck, and examine whether variegated chains, consisting of silver, gold, or gems, depend from it; whether ornaments full of art surround the head and neck; and whether the bridles are carved, the saddles are painted, and the girths are gilt; but, all these spoils being removed, we survey the naked horse itself, and alone direct our attention to his body and his soul, in order that we may be able to ascertain whether his form is good, and whether he is likely to be vigorous in the race, and strong for carriage. And in the first place we consider whether there is in his body,

A head that's slender, and a belly small,  
A back obese, and animated breast  
In brawny flesh luxuriant.<sup>30</sup>

And, besides this, whether a twofold spine passes through his loins; for I wish that he may not only carry me swiftly, but also gently.

In a similar manner therefore, in surveying men, do not estimate those foreign particulars, but intimately consider the man himself, and behold him poor, as was my Socrates. But I call those things foreign which parents have procreated, and which Fortune has bestowed, none of which do I mingle with the praises of my Socrates; no nobility, no pedigree, no long series of ancestors, no envied riches; for all these, as I say, are foreign. When you say, O son of Prothanius, the glory of him who was this son is this, that he was not a disgrace to his grandson, in like manner you may enumerate every

---

<sup>29</sup>In the original, *secundæ vitæ*; but I read, with the Roman edition, *sincere vitæ*.

<sup>30</sup>These verses are taken from book iii. of the Georgics of Virgil.

thing of a foreign nature. Is he of noble birth? You praise his parents. Is he rich? I do not trust in Fortune; nor do I rank these, more [than their contraries], among things really good. Is he strong? He will be debilitated by disease. Is he swift in the race? He will arrive at old age. Is he beautiful? Wait a little, and he will not be so. But is he instructed, and very learned in excellent disciplines, and also wise, and skilled in the knowledge of good, as much as it is possible for man to be? Now at length you praise the man himself; for this is neither an hereditary possession from his father, nor depends on Fortune, nor on the annual suffrages of the people, nor is it decaying through body, nor mutable by age. All these my Socrates possessed, and therefore despised the possession of other things. Why therefore do not you apply yourself to the study of wisdom? Or at least you should earnestly endeavour that you may hear nothing of a foreign nature in your praise; but that he who wishes to ennoble you, may praise you in the same manner as Accius praises Ulysses, in his *Philoctetes*, in the beginning of that tragedy:

Fam'd hero, in a little island born,  
Of celebrated name and powerful mind,  
Once to the Grecian ships war's leading cause,  
And to the Dardan race th' avenger dire,  
Son of Laertes.

He mentions his father in the last place. Moreover, you have heard all the praises of that man; but Laertes, Anticlea, and Acrisius, vindicate to themselves nothing from thence; for the whole of this praise, as you see, is a possession peculiarly pertaining to Ulysses. Nor does Homer teach you any thing else in the same Ulysses, by always giving him Wisdom as a companion, whom he poetically calls Minerva. Hence, attended by this, he encounters all horrible dangers, and vanquishes all adverse circumstances. For, assisted by her, he entered the cavern of the Cyclops, but escaped from it; saw the oxen of the Sun, but abstained from them; and descended to the realms beneath, but emerged from them. With the same Wisdom also for his companion, he passed by Scylla, and was not seized by her; was enclosed by Charybdis, yet was not retained by it; drank the cup of Circe, and was not transformed; came to the Lotophagi, yet did not remain with them; and heard the Sirens, yet did not approach to them.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup>The concluding part of this treatise on the God of Socrates has a great resemblance to the conclusion of the dissertation of Maximus Tyrius, entitled, Whether there is a Sect in Philosophy, according to Homer? and which is as follows: "And with respect to Ulysses himself, do you not see how virtue, and the confidence which he acquires through her aid, preserve him, while he opposes art to all-various calamities? This is the *moly* in the island of Circe, this is the fillet in the sea, this delivered him from the hands of Polyphemus, this led him up from Hades, this constructed for him a raft, this persuaded Alcinous, this

---

enabled him to endure the blows of the suitors, the wrestling with Irus, and the insolences of Melanthius. This liberated his palace, this avenged the injuries of his wife, this made the man a descendant of Jupiter, like the Gods, and such a one as the happy man is according to Plato.” See my translation of Maximus Tyrius, vol. i.