**Thomas Taylor 1758-1835**

**http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas\_Taylor\_%28neoplatonist%29**



Portrait of Thomas Taylor by [Sir Thomas Lawrence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sir_Thomas_Lawrence), about 1812, from the [National Gallery of Canada](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Gallery_of_Canada), Ottawa. In the background the [Acropolis of Athens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acropolis_of_Athens) is silhouetted against a fiery sky, and by Taylor's left hand is a copy of his translation of the works of Plato. [[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Taylor_%28neoplatonist%29#cite_note-0)

**Thomas Taylor** (15 May 1758 - 1 November 1835) was an [English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/England) translator and [Neoplatonist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoplatonist), the first to translate into [English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_language) the complete works of [Aristotle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristotle) and of [Plato](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plato), as well as the [Orphic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orphic) fragments.

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**Biography**

Born in [London](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London), Taylor was educated at [St. Paul's School, London](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Paul%27s_School_%28London%29), and devoted himself to the study of the classics and of mathematics. After being a bank clerk, he was appointed Assistant Secretary to the Society for the Encouragement of Art (precursor to the [Royal Society of Arts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Society_of_Arts)), in which capacity he made many influential friends, who furnished the means for publishing his various translations, which besides [Plato](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plato) and [Aristotle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristotle), include [Proclus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proclus), [Porphyry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Porphyry_%28philosopher%29), [Apuleius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apuleius), [Ocellus Lucanus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ocellus_Lucanus) and other [Neoplatonists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoplatonist) and [Pythagoreans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pythagoreans). His aim was the translation of all the untranslated writings of the ancient Greek philosophers.

Taylor was an admirer of [Hellenism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_religion), most especially in the philosophical framework furnished by Plato and the Neoplatonists Proclus and the "most divine" [Iamblichus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iamblichus_of_Chalcis), whose works he translated into English. So enamoured was he of the ancients, that he and his wife talked to one another only in classical Greek.

He was also an outspoken voice against corruption in the [Christianity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity) of his day, and its shallowness. Taylor was ridiculed and acquired many enemies, but in other quarters he was well received. Among his friends was the eccentric traveller and philosopher [John "Walking" Stewart](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_%22Walking%22_Stewart), whose gatherings Taylor was in the habit of attending.

Taylor married his childhood sweetheart Mary Morton in 1777, and they had four sons George Burrow Taylor, John Buller Taylor, William Grainger Taylor and Thomas Taylor, and a daughter Mary Meredith Taylor. His wife died in 1809. He married again, and his second wife Susannah died in 1823. From his second marriage he had one son, Thomas Proclus Taylor.

**Influence**

The texts that he used had been edited since the 16th century, but were interrupted by [lacunae](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lacuna_%28manuscripts%29); Taylor's understanding of the Platonists informed his suggested emendations. His translations were influential on [William Blake](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Blake), [Percy Bysshe Shelley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Percy_Bysshe_Shelley) and [William Wordsworth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Wordsworth). In American editions they were read by [Ralph Waldo Emerson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ralph_Waldo_Emerson), [Bronson Alcott](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bronson_Alcott), and [G. R. S. Mead](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G._R._S._Mead), secretary of [Mme Blavatsky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mme_Blavatsky) the founder of [Theosophy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theosophy).

He and his wife took [Mary Wollstonecraft](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Wollstonecraft) into their home when she was an unhappy teenager, and thus influenced the future author of [*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Vindication_of_the_Rights_of_Woman). Wollstonecraft's book inspired him to write his *Vindication of the Rights of Brutes*.

Taylor also published several original works on philosophy (in particular, the Neoplatonism of Proclus and [Iamblichus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iamblichus_of_Chalcis)) and mathematics. These works are now published (some for the first time since Taylor's lifetime) by [Prometheus Trust](http://www.prometheustrust.co.uk/).

**List of works**

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| Search Wikisource | [Wikisource](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikisource) has original works written by or about: [***Thomas Taylor***](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Author%3AThomas_Taylor) |

Among his translations are:

* [*The Mystical Hymns of Orpheus*](http://books.google.com/books?id=IHk1AAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover) (1787)
* *Plato* (1804)
* *Aristotle* (1806-12)
* *Life of Pythagoras* by Iamblichus (1818)
* *Apuleius; Celsus; Iamblichus; Julian; Maximus Tyrius; Pausanias; Plotinus; Porphyry;* and *Proclus*

Among his miscellanies are:

* *Vindication of the Rights of Brutes* (1792)
* [*The Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries: a dissertation*](http://books.google.com/books?id=NihNAAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover) (c.1790). Amsterdam [i.e. London]; later editions, edited, and reprinted variously. ([Fourth Edition, 1891](http://sacred-texts.com/cla/ebm/index.htm))
* *Theoretic Arithmetic* (1816)

**References**

* W. E. A. Axon, *Thomas Taylor, The Platonist* (London, 1890)
* [Kathleen Raine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kathleen_Raine), *Thomas Taylor the Platonist; Selected Writings*, 1969.
* *This article incorporates* [*public domain*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_domain) *text from :* Cousin, John William (1910). [*A Short Biographical Dictionary of English Literature*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Short_Biographical_Dictionary_of_English_Literature)*.* London, [J. M. Dent & Sons](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._M._Dent_%26_Sons); New York, E. P. Dutton.
1. [**^**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Taylor_%28neoplatonist%29#cite_ref-0) [Artwork Page: Thomas Taylor](http://cybermuse.gallery.ca/cybermuse/search/artwork_e.jsp?mkey=10389) Lawrence's painting of Taylor is described

**External links**

* [Works by Thomas Taylor](http://www.gutenberg.org/author/Thomas%2BTaylor%2B%281758-1835%29) at [Project Gutenberg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project_Gutenberg)
* [Complete list of original works and translations by Thomas Taylor](http://books.google.com/books?printsec=frontcover&id=7nBbAAAAMAAJ#v=onepage&q=&f=false), compiled by Ruth Balch
* [*Hymns of Orpheus*, translated by Thomas Taylor, 1792](http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/hoo/)
* [*On the Mysteries* by Iamblichus, translated by Thomas Taylor](http://theurgia.org/taylor_on_the_mysteries.html)
* [Thomas Taylor, *The Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries*, 1791](http://sacred-texts.com/cla/ebm/index.htm)
* [Thomas Taylor, *A Vindication of the Rights of Brutes*, 1792](http://www.animalrightshistory.org/library/tay-thomas-taylor/vindication-of-brutes.htm) [Animal Rights](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animal_Rights) History
* [The Prometheus Trust](http://www.prometheustrust.co.uk/index.html)
* [The Prometheus Trust: "Thomas Taylor, the English Platonist"](http://www.prometheustrust.co.uk/Thomas_Taylor/thomas_taylor.html)
* [Criticism of Taylor's translations of Platonicism](http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0030-8129%28193606%2951%3A2%3C502%3ASATT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-G)
* [Thomas Taylor, a great English Platonist](http://www.btinternet.com/~southcote/SoW25.htm) Short biography and bibliography: The Shrine of Wisdom
* [The Thomas Taylor Series](http://www.prometheustrust.co.uk/TTS_Catalogue/tts_catalogue.html) Main Catalogue from the Prometheus Trust

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