

**OCELLUS LUCANUS ON THE NATURE OF
THE UNIVERSE. TAURUS, THE PLATONIC
PHILOSOPHER, ON THE ETERNITY OF THE
WORLD. JULIUS FIRMICUS MATERNUS OF
THE THEMA MUNDI; SELECT THEOREMS ON
THE PERPETUITY OF TIME, BY PROCLUS**

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Ocellus Lucanus on the Nature of the Universe. Taurus, the Platonic Philosopher, on the Eternity of the World. Julius Firmicus Maternus of the Thema Mundi; Select Theorems on the Perpetuity of Time, by Proclus by Thomas Taylor

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THOMAS TAYLOR

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JULIUS FIRMICUS MATERNUS
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IN WHICH THE POSITIONS OF THE STARS AT THE
COMMENCEMENT OF THE SEVERAL MUNDANE
PERIODS IS GIVEN.

SELECT THEOREMS
ON THE PERPETUITY OF TIME, BY PROCLUS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINALS BY
THOMAS TAYLOR.

Αρχή και αιτία και νόμος επί της ανθρωπίνης ευδαιμονίας η τέλη και επιφανέστατος επιγίγνησις.

i. e. The knowledge of divine and the most honourable things,
is the principle and cause and rule of human felicity.—ARCHYTAS.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE Tracts contained in this small volume will, I trust, be perused with considerable interest by every English reader who is a lover of ancient lore; and whatever innovations may have been made in the philosophical theories of the ancients by the accumulated experiments of the moderns, yet the scientific deductions of the former will, I am persuaded, ultimately predominate over the futile and ever-varying conclusions of the latter. For science, truly so called, is, as Aristotle accurately defines it to be, the knowledge of things eternal, and which have a necessary existence. Hence it has for its basis *universals*, and not *particulars*; since the former are *definite*, *immutable*, and *real*; but the latter are *indefinite*, are so incessantly changing, that they are not for a moment the same, and are so destitute of reality, that, in the language of the great Plotinus, they may be

said to be "shadows falling upon shadow*, like images in water, or in a mirror, or a dream."

With respect to Ocellus Lucanus, the author of the first of these Tracts, though it is unknown at what *precise* period he lived, yet as Archytas, in his epistle to Plato (apud Diog. Laert. viii. 80.), says "that he conversed with the descendants of Ocellus, and received from them the treatises of this philosopher On Laws, On Government, Piety, and the Generation of the Universe‡," "we cannot be a great way off the truth," as my worthy and very intelligent friend Mr. J. J. Welsh, in a letter to me, observes, "if we say that he lived about the time Pythagoras first opened his school in Italy, B. C. 500; which would give him for contemporaries in the *political* world, Phalaris, Pisistratus, Croesus, Polycrates, and Tarquin the Proud; and in the *philosophical* world, the seven sages of Greece, Heraclitus of Ephesus, Democritus of Abdera, &c. &c."

All that is extant of his works is the treatise On the Universe‡, and a Fragment preserved by

* viz. falling on *matter*, or the general receptacle of all sensible forms. See my Translation of the admirable treatise of Plotinus "On the Impassivity of Incorporeal Natures."

† Περὶ νόμου, περὶ βασιλείας καὶ ἰευστικῆς, καὶ τῆς τοῦ παντός γενέσεως.

‡ It is rightly observed by Fabricius, "that this work of Ocellus was originally written in the Doric dialect, but was afterwards

Stobæus of his treatise On Laws. And in such estimation was the former of these works held by Plato and Aristotle, that the latter, as Syrianus observes (in Aristot. *Metaphys.*), “has nearly taken the whole of his two books on Generation and Corruption from this work;” and that the former anxiously desired to see it, is evident from his Epistle to Archytas, of which the following is a translation :

“ Plato to Archytas the Tarentine, prosperity.

“ It is wonderful with what pleasure we received the Commentaries which came from you, and how very much we were delighted with the genius of their author. To us, indeed, he appeared to be a man worthy of his ancient progenitors. For these men are said to have been *ten thousand** in number; and, according to report, were the best of all those Trojans that migrated under Laomedon.

translated by some grammarian into the common dialect, in order that it might be more easily understood by the reader.”—Vid. *Biblioth. Græc.* tom. i. p. 510.

* In all the editions of Plato, *μυρῶν*, conformably to the above translation; but from Diogenes Laertius, who, in his *Life of Archytas*, gives this epistle of Plato, it appears that the true reading is *Μυρῶν*, i. e. Myrenees, so called from Myra, a city of Lycia in Asia Minor, (see Pliny, v. 27. Strabo xiv. 666.) This 12th epistle of Plato, though ascribed by Thrasyllus and Diogenes Laertius to Plato, yet is marked in the Greek manuscripts of it as spurious.

“ With respect to the Commentaries by me about which you write, they are not yet finished. However, such as they are, I have sent them to you. As to guardianship, we both accord in our sentiments, so that in this particular there is no need of exhortation.”

“ In the Preface to the Marquis d’Argens’ French translation of this Tract, he says: ‘ I have often thought that it would be much more advantageous to read what some of the Greek authors have said of the philosophy of the ancients, in order to obtain a knowledge of it, than to consult modern writers, who, though they may perhaps write well, are in general too prolix*.’

“ In 1762 the Marquis d’Argens published *Ocellus Lucanus*, and afterwards *Timæus Locrus*, both writers, who according to Chalmers’ *Biography* had been neglected by universal consent. To show, however, the glaring absurdity and outrageous injustice of what Chalmers says of this Tract of *Ocellus*, it is necessary to observe, that independently of the approbation of this work by those two great luminaries of philosophy, Plato and Aristotle, an enumeration of the various

* Of the Philosophy of Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle, very few of the moderns have any accurate knowledge, and therefore on this subject they may be prolix, but they cannot write well. See this largely and incontrovertibly proved in the Third and Fourth Books of my *Dissertation on the Philosophy of Aristotle*.

editions of it will be sufficient. Ocellus was first printed in Greek at Paris 1539, and afterwards with a Latin version by Chretien 1541; by Bosch 1554 and 1556; by Nogarola, Ven. 1559; by Commelin 1596; at Heidelberg 1598; Bologna, 1646, and revised by Vizanius 1661; and lastly, by Gale, Cambridge, 1671. Here are ten editions, the last of which is only 49 years prior to the year 1700; so that the universal consent had not yet been given to neglect this work. Let us see when it could have taken place afterwards. D'Argens' translation appeared in 1762. A new French translation by the Abbé Batteux was printed in 1768; and he made it without knowing of the other. D'Argens' version was reprinted in 1794; and an amended Greek and Latin text by Rudolph was printed at Leipsic in 1801; so that there are in all fourteen known editions, of which Gale's is the best. This book has certainly been read in Greek, Latin, and French, and it most certainly will be read in English, if any competent translator will favour us with a good version.

“ In addition to the testimonies of Plato and Aristotle in favour of this work, Philo, the platonizing Jew, says: ‘ Some are of opinion, that it was not Aristotle, but certain Pythagoreans, who first maintained the eternity of the world; but I have seen a treatise of Ocellus, in which he says, the