

Demiurge Transformed: Calcidius on God

Mutsuhiro TSUCHIYA

The *Timaeus* has long been considered important in Plato's dialogues from antiquity. Especially in the Middle Ages, until the 12th century, the Latin translation of *Timaeus* by Calcidius was almost only one work by Plato that was available to read in the West. The *Commentary* that Calcidius added to this translation is very important material to tell us aspects of Platonism in late antiquity. In this article, I would like to explore how Calcidius' *Commentary* interpreted God as Creator of the world in the *Timaeus*.

In chapters 23 and 26, Calcidius clearly presents interpretation that in the *Timaeus*, God's creation of the world was not described as a historical fact, but as an expedient fiction that is used to explain people the fact that the world owe its existence to God. Chapters 176, 177, 188 explain the hierarchical structure of divine principles that govern the world. The highest God is described as highest Good, the next eminence is Providence, which is described as $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$, God's will, second god. Following Providence is Fate, and it is identified with the World Soul in substance (chs. 144, 152). It has often been pointed out that this kind of thought agrees to the interpretation of God by Middle Platonists and by Numenius. Whereas in Alcinoüs' *Didaskalikos* and Numenius, the primal God is also called as intellect ($\nu\omicron\upsilon\delta\varsigma$), but no such description was made by Calcidius. Waszink considered this hierarchy to be the same as Numenius' interpretation. However, whereas Numenius considered the Demiurge to be the second god, distinguishing from the primal God, Calcidius put the Demiurge to be the same position as the highest God (chs. 137, 201). In the *Commentary*, form is described as God's *intellectus*, and *intellectus* in this case is the translation for $\nu\omicron\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$. In conclusion, Calcidius presented God as the first principle and cosmological Intellect as God's providence, and form as God's intellection, interpreting Intellect and form subordinated to God.

Traditional studies on Calcidius focused on finding the sources of his *Commentary*. Porphyrius was long considered to be his main source, but today his *Commentary* is thought to be under the influence of Middle Platonism tradition. Although Platonism after the rise of Neoplatonism is often considered to be all under Neoplatonic influence, Calcidius' *Commentary* suggests various kinds of Platonism existed in late antiquity. Moreover, his *Commentary* is not a mere collection of existing writings as often thought, it should be considered that Calcidius had his own interpretation of Plato's works, and the *Commentary* was written based that interpretation and his own intention. Up until now, little efforts were given to reconstruct thoughts and philosophy of Calcidius from the description on his *Commentary*. In this article, I propose that the interpretation of God by Calcidius is the consistent position of his thoughts and it is not a mere copy of thoughts by his predecessors.