



Critias

Plato , Benjamin Jowett (Translator)

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Plato (428/427 BC-348/347 BC), whose original name was Aristocles, was an ancient Greek philosopher, the second of the great trio of ancient Greeks - succeeding Socrates and preceding Aristotle - who between them laid the philosophical foundations of Western culture. Plato was also a mathematician, writer of philosophical dialogues, and founder of the Academy in Athens, the first institution of higher learning in the western world. Plato is widely believed to have been a student of Socrates and to have been deeply influenced by his teacher's unjust death. Plato's brilliance as a writer and thinker can be witnessed by reading his Socratic dialogues. Some of the dialogues, letters, and other works that are ascribed to him are considered spurious. Plato is thought to have lectured at the Academy, although the pedagogical function of his dialogues, if any, is not known with certainty. They have historically been used to teach philosophy, logic, rhetoric, mathematics, and other subjects about which he wrote.

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From Reader Review Critias for online ebook

Maan Kawas says

A very interesting fragment of a dialogue that gives an introductory description of the lost Atlantis, its origin, geography, and the inhabitants! Unfortunately, this enchanting dialogue was interrupted. Moreover, it is interesting how this dialogue, along with “Timaeus” left a long lasting sensation throughout history about Atlantis and its existence (whether it is fictional or factual place). I found it fascinating from the first lines.

Tyler says

Really only worth it for the end. To think a society like Atlantis existed, even in a rough approximation to what was described, is an exciting prospect, theologically. Much like the Tower of Babel, this civilization was punished for their pride and extravagance. And many could learn from this.

David Sarkies says

Welcome to Atlantis

15 January 2019

This incomplete ancient book has certainly triggered quite a stir over the centuries, particularly in the modern age. In fact, from all of my readings of historical and early literature, it really only seems that the whole Atlantis fad is a recent phenomena, which is quite odd because it isn't as if this book is a recent discovery – people have known about it for donkey's years. Okay, there are countless numbers of science-fiction shows, with a number of them starring Jason Moma, about this mythical lost continent, and let us not even go down the road of those new age philosophies.

So, the question is what do we make of it. Well, one of the issues I have with it is that Plato is not an historian. In fact, he doesn't even touch on history in any of his other texts, so why, all of the sudden, is he talking about an ancient empire now? Then again, Plato doesn't touch science either, but we have the Timaeus, which is clearly him attempting to explore the world in a scientific manner. Well, at least as far as the ancients did.

The other odd thing is that this is the only text in which Atlantis is mentioned – nowhere else do they talk about this particular place. Well, there are a number of theories, with the general consensus (at least as far as my Classics Lecturer was concerned) was that Plato is actually talking about the Minoan Empire, and its destruction came about due to the eruption of the island of Santorini – but why then did he refer to it as Atlantis, when the legends of Theseus didn't refer to it as such? Another idea, is that it could actually be referring to the Antediluvian world, you know, that world that existed before Noah and all that. In fact, there are actually quite a few theories floating around, and theories that come out of academia, that have proposed some ideas regarding Noah's flood (one of them involving the Black Sea).

Interestingly, a Youtuber has posted a number of videos speculating that the empire could have been located in the middle of the Sahara desert at a place known as the Richat Structure, a structure that has only recently

been discovered (thanks to satellites, and aeroplanes, of course). He might have a point, but he lost me when he started making statements about conspiracy theories and cover ups, such as the fact that there is no mention of it on Wikipedia, and whenever somebody attempts to make that connection the moderators promptly remove it.

Honestly, I'm not at all surprised, and I actually wonder whether he has done some more thorough research as to why the moderators remove these comments. In fact, the reasons are actually quite easy to find, and the major one is that a Youtuber isn't sufficient grounds to make mention of something on a Wikipedia page, particularly when you are dealing with something as controversial as Atlantis. The thing is that a youtube video simply cannot be considered to be a peer reviewed work of academia. Sure, there have been academics that have rocked the community with new ideas – Einstein and Newton come to mind – but the thing is that sometimes these ideas take time to become accepted. Oh, and there is also the comparison with Troy, but the thing with Troy is that this particular city so permeates Greek culture that it is hard to miss, whereas there is only one mention of Atlantis – Plato.

So, what is the point of this particular piece of work. Well, I'm not actually sure. In fact, it seems as if Plato started writing it, but then decided to leave it and to move onto something a bit more substantial. This is one of the problems that Plato was struggling with, and that is seeing the ideal and the actual work together. He theorised his ideal government in The Republic, but when he attempted to actually set something up, it simply didn't work (the whole Sicilian experiment was a complete disaster). The other thing that I suspect is that as he was writing, and thinking about this work, he realised that no, this wasn't an example of his ideal government, and there was no way he could see that it would work out this way.

Maybe, he also realised that it was just a load of rubbish, and decided that he had better things to waste his time on, such as running an Academy.

Julesmarie says

An unfinished continuation of Timaeus. An intriguing assertion by Critias that the ideal city Socrates described in the Republic actually existed 9000 years before.

Some Favorite Quotes:

faint heart never yet raised a trophy.

for mythology and the enquiry into antiquity are first introduced into cities when they begin to have leisure, and when they see that the necessities of life have already been provided, but not before.

For friends should not keep their stories to themselves, but have them in common.

uniting gentleness with wisdom in the various chances of life.

Glenn Russell says

Critias is a short Platonic dialogue. Actually, only the beginning portion of the dialogue survives - the dialogue breaks off at the point where Critias, the main speaker, describes in more depth ancient Athens and the lost island of Atlantis.

Nothing like a lost, ancient civilization to spark the creative imagination – scores of books have been written and films made of the lost world of Atlantis. I find this dialogue particularly enjoyable since Plato could really set his imagination free, embellishing on a topic near and dear to his heart: the ideal city. Below are several direct quotes from the dialogue along with my comments:

Here is a snippet of the description given by Critias of "the good old days," that is, of ancient Athenian society, many generations prior to the age of Plato: "On the north side they had dwellings in common and had erected halls for dining in winter, and had all the buildings which they needed for their common life, besides temples, but there was no adorning of them with gold and silver, for they made no use of these for any purpose; they took a middle course between meanness and ostentation, and built modest houses in which they and their children's children grew old, and they handed them down to others who were like themselves, always the same." ----- The prototypical conservative world-view: once society attains a prosperous equilibrium and citizens reach a point of living the ideal life of moderation and reason, no one is allowed to rock the boat. Society must remain forever the same. Any poets or visionary artists who would like to shake things up are welcome to leave.

A bit further on in the dialogue Critias notes: "Such were the ancient Athenians, and after this manner they righteously administered their own land and the rest of Hellas; they were renowned all over Europe and Asia for the beauty of their persons and for the many virtues of their souls, and of all men who lived in those days they were the most illustrious." ----- So, in addition to spiritual virtues, Plato values a certain kind of beauty - not the beauty of fine cloths, jewelry and luxury, but what we can take to mean physical health and well-proportioned harmony, a physical bearing radiating tranquility and joy. So sorry Madison Avenue with all your glitz and glamor, according to Plato, you just don't cut it.

Turning to Atlantis, Critias says: "Some of their buildings were simple, but in others they put together different stones, varying the color to please the eye, and to be a natural source of delight." ----- Plato emphasizes how the architecture and physical appearance of the ideal city is one of beauty. And with all the beautiful buildings, people will naturally be delighted and will take pride and experience joy in the attractiveness of their city. Darn, this could serve as a lesson for city planners and land developers so focused on "usefulness" and the supreme priority of making a profit. As contemporary philosopher Roger Scruton noted, no buildings become useless more quickly than those built to be merely useful.

As part of the detail of Atlantis, Critias notes: "Of the water which ran off they carried some to the grove of Poseidon, where were growing all manner of trees of wonderful height and beauty, owing to the excellence of the soil, while the remainder was conveyed by aqueducts along the bridges to the outer circles; and there were many temples built and dedicated to many gods; also gardens and places of exercise . " ----- Ah, the land of milk and honey. Critias goes on to describe the city as having many planted trees and surrounded by mountains celebrated for their number and size and beauty. Such an emphasis on people living surrounded by natural beauty. Again, a lesson for city and suburban planners: there are severe consequences if every tree in sight is cut down. Additionally, treed parks are a great place to exercise.

We are told the population of Atlantis were descendants of the god Poseidon. And toward the end of the surviving portion of dialogue, Critias observes: "But when the divine portion began to fade away, and became diluted too often and too much with the mortal admixture, and the human nature got the upper hand, they then, being unable to bear their fortune, behaved unseemly, and to him who had an eye to see grew

visibly debased, for they were losing the fairest of their precious gifts; but to those who had no eye to see the true happiness, they appeared glorious and blessed at the very time when they were full of avarice and unrighteous power. ----- Here is yet again another lesson for our modern world: when our divine nature begins to fade and our "human" nature takes over, watch out. In other words, using our twenty-first century language, when we no longer draw strength from our spiritual and creative depths but live exclusively on the superficial surface, our desires and ceaseless cravings can quickly spiral out of control.

Brian says

There is way more to Plato than just ethereal forms: he seems to have had quite a poetic talent and here he was just getting quite good when he didn't finish and suddenly

Kerri F says

PERSONS OF THE DIALOGUE: Critias, Hermocrates, Timaeus, Socrates.

Information on Atlantis Retrieved from Egytian Translations by Solon...

"Solon, who was intending to use the tale for his poem, enquired into the meaning of the names, and found that the early Egyptians in writing them down had translated them into their own language, and he recovered the meaning of the several names and when copying them out again translated them into our language. My great-grandfather, Dropides, had the original writing, which is still in my possession, and was carefully studied by me when I was a child. Therefore if you hear names such as are used in this country, you must not be surprised, for I have told how they came to be introduced. The tale, which was of great length, began as follows:"

Creation of Atlantis...

"And Poseidon, receiving for his lot the island of Atlantis, begat children by a mortal woman, and settled them in a part of the island, which I will describe. Looking towards the sea, but in the centre of the whole island, there was a plain which is said to have been the fairest of all plains and very fertile. Near the plain again, and also in the centre of the island at a distance of about fifty stadia, there was a mountain not very "high on any side. In this mountain there dwelt one of the earth-born primeval men of that country, whose name was Evenor, and he had a wife named Leucippe, and they had an only daughter who was called Cleito. The maiden had already reached womanhood, when her father and mother died; Poseidon fell in love with her and had intercourse with her, and breaking the ground, inclosed the hill in which she dwelt all round, making alternate zones of sea and land larger and smaller, encircling one another; there were two of land and three of water, which he turned as with a lathe, each having its circumference equidistant every way from the centre, so that no man could get to the island,"

King of Atlantis...

"He also begat and brought up five pairs of twin male children; and dividing the island of Atlantis into ten portions, he gave to the first-born of the eldest pair his mother's dwelling and the surrounding allotment, which was the largest and best, and made him king over the rest; the others he made princes, and gave them rule over many men, and a large territory. And he named them all; the eldest, who was the first king, he

named Atlas, and after him the whole island and the ocean were called Atlantic. ”

Atlantis Mountains...

“This part of the island looked towards the south, and was sheltered from the north. The surrounding mountains were celebrated for their number and size and beauty, far beyond any which still exist,”

Approaching the End of Atlantis...

“Such was the vast power which the god settled in the lost island of Atlantis; and this he afterwards directed against our land for the following reasons, as tradition tells: For many generations, as long as the divine nature lasted in them, they were obedient to the laws, and well-affectioned towards the god, whose seed they were; for they possessed true and in every way great spirits, uniting gentleness with wisdom in the various chances of life, and in their intercourse with one another. They despised everything but virtue, caring little for their present state of life, and thinking lightly of the possession of gold and other property, which seemed only a burden to them; neither were they intoxicated by luxury; nor did wealth deprive them of their self-control; but they were sober, and saw clearly that all these goods are increased by virtue and friendship with one another, whereas by too great regard and respect for them, they are lost and friendship with them. By such reflections and by the continuance in them of a divine nature, the qualities which we have described “grew and increased among them; but when the divine portion began to fade away, and became diluted too often and too much with the mortal admixture, and the human nature got the upper hand, they then, being unable to bear their fortune, behaved unseemly, and to him who had an eye to see grew visibly debased, for they were losing the fairest of their precious gifts; but to those who had no eye to see the true happiness, they appeared glorious and blessed at the very time when they were full of avarice and unrighteous power. Zeus, the god of gods, who rules according to law, and is able to see into such things, perceiving that an honourable race was in a woeful plight, and wanting to inflict punishment on them, that they might be chastened and improve, collected all the gods into their most holy habitation, which, being placed in the centre of the world, beholds all created things. And when he had called them together, he spake as follows—”

Unfortunately :(...

The rest of the Dialogue of Critias has been lost.

Alex says

This is world building through and through, but unfortunately it doesn't seem to go anywhere.

Plato describes Atlantis: it's layout, and even its government. He describes it as a well run society, but there is nowhere near the level of detail as you find in *The Republic*. I did not get the advanced technological utopian impression of Atlantis that has been diffused throughout popular culture, and honestly their fate just seems to end up making Athens look better in comparison.

It's a short work and it literally ends in a frustrating cliff hanger.

Garrett Cash says

Basically a description of Atlantis and then it cuts out. Not much to see here, folks.

PSXtreme says

This was a VERY difficult audiobook to listen to...the narrator had a very droning mono-tonistic voice (Bueller...Bueller...) and most of the names of the characters sounded extremely similar. The truly worst thing was that just when the story started rolling, it ends. I mean, Holy Premature Ejaculation Batman, the story just stops mid-paragraph. If Plato wasn't already dead, I would have killed him. Now, I'll never know how the damn story ends. Very Disappointing.

Hussain Ali says

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[illegible]

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Jairo Fraga says

Um diálogo pequeno e sem graça, sobre a suposta guerra entre Atenas e Atlântida, que pode ser simplesmente invenção de Platão. Não acrescenta nada de útil, só diversos detalhes de algo aparentemente fictício e irrelevante

Foad says

[illegible]

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tyranus says

Plato'nun, Kay?p k?ta Atlantis ve eski yunan kentlerinin ya?amlar?n? anlatan okunas? ve maalesef yar?m kalm?? eseri. (Bu noktadan sonra spoiler var) Plato'na g?re, Atlantis k?tas? Deniz Tanr?s? Poseidon'un 10 erkek çocu?una hediyesidir. ?yle ki, Poseidon her bir çocu?u i?in bir ?lke yaratm??t?r bu k?tada. On krall??n ba??na da en b?y?k o?lu Atlas? getirmi?tir. Uzun bir s?re Poseidon'a ve onun emirlerine sad?k kalarak bilgeli, erdemli, adil ve al?akg?n?ll? bir ya?am s?ren krallar?n soyu, ?l?ml? insanlarla evlendik?e bozulmaya ba?lar. En nihayetinde, nesilden nesile ba?a ge?en krallar, ?l?ml? kad?nlarla evlendik?e, do?an yeni krallar?n ruhlar?ndaki insan ?z? tanr? ?z?n? ge?er. B?ylece, yeni krallar a? g?zl?, erdem ve adaletten yoksun birer "insan" olurlar. Ve bu trajik d?n? ??me daha fazla tepkisiz kalamayan Zeus, k?tay? yerle yeksan ederek cezalar?n? verir.

Bu eser de, Platonun di?er eserlerindeki aciz insan ?z? ile tanr?sal ?z aras?ndaki fark? ortaya koymaya ?al??m???. En adil, erdemli, bilge ruh olarak yine Tanr?sal ruh ?n plana ??km???. Plato, ula?mak istedi?i, hatta t?m insanlara nihai hedef olarak g?sterdi?i Tanr?sal olana ula?ma (idea d?nyas?) amac?n? ve bunun neden gerekli oldu?unu anlatmaya ?al??m??, ama maalesef eser yar?m kalm???. Okuman?z? tavsiye ederim. ?yi okumalar...

Kyle van Oosterum says

Few people are aware of the fact that the mythical city of Atlantis was invented by Plato. In this dialogue, he explores this utopia in ridiculously annoying detail with excessive technological jargon. What we have now is a "skeleton whose bones are all that remain." The dialogue also cuts off mid-sentence, meaning that the dialogue was either lost or unfinished, which really makes it an opaque pebble among the gemstones of Plato's dialogues.
