THE ATLANTIS MYTH: AN INTRODUCTION TO PLATO'S LATER PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

GERARD NADDAF

IN THE HISTORY OF LITERATURE, few stories have received as much attention as the astonishing story of Atlantis. Books on the subject run well into the thousands.[1] Since Plato explicitly tells us the Atlantis story is "true,"[2] the "general reader" assumes it to be so. On the other hand, the vast majority of classical scholars take the story to be what Plato explicitly denies it to be: invented myth.[3] There have been, of course, attempts to describe the character of the story as "intermediate" between the first two, i.e., a "likely story,"[4] or as a "synthesis" of them, i.e., a myth written in the form of a history.[5]

Like the vast majority of classical scholars, I take the Atlantis story to be purely Plato's invention (and hence a myth in Plato's sense of the word).[6] But also, as some among them have pointed out, it is, I maintain,

The following works will be cited using author's name alone, or author's name and year of publication: L. Brisson, "De la philosophie politique à l'épopée. Le *Critias* de Platon," *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 75 (1970) 402–438; *idem*, *Platon: Les Mots et les mythes*[2] (Paris 1994); P. Forsyth, *Atlantis: The Making of a Myth* (Montreal 1980); C. Gill, "The Genre of the Atlantis Story," *CP* 72 (1977) 287–304; J. V. Luce, *The End of Atlantis* (London 1969); G. Morrow, *Plato's Cretan City* (Princeton 1960); G. Naddaf, *L'Origine et l'évolution du concept grec de "phusis"* (Lewiston, N.Y. 1992); N. Platon, *Zakros* (New York 1971); P. Vidal-Naquet, "Athènes et l'Atlantide," *REG* 77 (1964) 420–444.

[1]Desmond Lee (*Plato:* Timaeus *and* Critias [Harmondsworth 1971] 136) says the figure has been estimated at 5,000. No doubt, dozens more could be added to this list every year. For a list of current scholarly works on the subject, see Luc Brisson's quinquennial Platonic bibliographies (*Lustrum* 20 [1977]; 25 [1983]; 30 [1988]; 35 [1993]). Two other bibliographies, by H. Cherniss, appeared in *Lustrum* 4 (1959) and 5 (1960). Not all those who write on the subject are equally familiar with what Plato had to say, or even know that Plato is our *only* source. For instance, generations of writers have taken Atlantis as Paradise or Utopia, whereas Plato portrays Atlantis as a belligerent power.

[2]See below, 194–197.

[3]The serious exceptions to this rule are writers who adhere to the Thera-Cretan hypothesis (discussed below).

[4]That is, consistent with certain physical events of the past. Cf., in particular, H. Cherniss, "Some War-Time Publications Concerning Plato, 2," *American Journal of Philosophy* 68 (1947) 225–265, at 252, n. 97.

[5]R. Weil, *L'"Archéologie" de Platon* (Paris 1959) 18–33.

[6]For the most complete treatment of the question of myth in Plato, see Brisson (1994).

a pastiche of history,[7] that is, constructed, at least in part, out of historical ingredients. The story thus becomes a sort of politico-philosophical myth with an important moral dimension. But the Atlantis story also plays a central role in Plato's *historia peri phuseos*, the trilogy: *Timaeus*, *Critias*, *Hermocrates* (= *Laws*). The aim of the trilogy, which is closely linked to Plato's new theory of contemplation,[8] is to give a history of humanity, beginning with the history of the universe, then prehistoric legend and the whole of historic time, leading on to a new project for future reform. This is what I believe one is to understand by a *historia peri phuseos*, i.e., an inquiry into the origin and evolution of the present order of things.[9]

The most convincing exposition, in my view, of the Atlantis story is by the French scholar Pierre Vidal-Naquet.[10] This thesis brings to the fore not only the relation between the two cities (Atlantis and Primeval Athens) and the physics of the *Timaeus*, but equally that between the two cities and the Athens of Plato's time. However, at the end of his analysis,

[7]Cf. Gill and Vidal-Naquet. Gill's thesis is also developed in his *Plato: The Atlantis Story.* Timaeus *17–27.* Critias (Bristol 1980). The view is also defended by Brisson (1994) and in his *Platon:* Timée/Critias (Paris 1992).

[8]See below, 195–196.

[9]I have developed this in detail in my book (Naddaf 1992). More precisely, I argue that Plato's trilogy is the first *historia peri phuseos* of the teleological type, as opposed to the evolutionary type, which was common to most, if not all, of the Presocratic philosophers and which originated in the old cosmological myths whose aim was likewise to explain the origin and evolution of the present order of things. The substitution by the Presocratics of rational (i.e., natural) for supernatural causes to explain this order reinforced, as Plato was well aware, the sophistic contention that law, morality, and even the gods were not absolute entities. The aim of Plato's *historia* is to refute those predecessors and to show that law, morality, and the gods (i.e., heavenly bodies) exist by nature (*phusei*) and not by convention (*nomoi*).

[10]Gill's interpretation reinforces much of what Vidal-Naquet has to say on the subject. Gill concentrates on the kind of story we are dealing with. He, like many others, sees the story as a correlation between theory and fact (302). If, meanwhile, according to Gill, Plato finally abandoned his original project, i.e., a real *mimesis* of *ta anthropina* as the *ariste politeia* of the *Republic* willed it, it is because Plato wanted the Stranger of the *Laws* to do rather straightforwardly what Critias was doing through the indirect medium of his story, that is, instead of creating a myth that would be faithful to the political idealism of the *Republic* and connecting it with the world of mundane politics, to search for the best state (or the "second best," to use Plato's words) through the observation and survey of historical facts. This explains why *Laws* Book 3 deals explicitly with many events alluded to in the Atlantis story, notably those associated with Athens and Persia (301). Of course, not all of those interpreting the Atlantis story as a synthesis of fact and fiction with a moral dimension take the association of Athens and Persia as Plato's main, or complete, historical focal point. Nonetheless, from the moment one sees a relation between the *Timaeus*, the *Critias*, and the *Laws*, the Athens-Persia connection appears more likely. I believe that my interpretation both completes and clarifies what others have had to say on the connection between the *Timaeus*, the *Critias*, and the *Laws*—albeit independent of the other expositions on the subject.

Vidal-Naquet compares Plato's story to a game—a game that was not "serious" because for Plato history always and inevitably takes the form of a progressive degeneration, so that humanity cannot escape its destiny.

This paper aims to show that, contrary to what Vidal-Naquet believes, Plato intends the Atlantis story to be taken quite seriously. Indeed the story may be considered a sort of preamble to the foundation of a new constitution (the one proposed for the future city of Magnesia in the *Laws*). This constitution, although "second best" (*timia deuteros*, *Laws* 5.739d–e[11]), if one were to compare it to the *ariste politeia* of the *Republic* (or to the constitution of Primeval Athens which amounts to the same thing), is nevertheless the best possible constitution when one takes into consideration the conditions of existence here on earth. In sum, I hope to demonstrate that Plato's philosophy of history is not negative but positive, for it contains the solution to humanity's future well-being both on earth and in the afterlife.

I shall begin—to avoid bias—by presenting the main argument of those who uphold the historical existence of Atlantis, i.e., the Thera-Crete correlation.[12] Second, I shall explain how, where, and why the Atlantis story is introduced, as well as discussing its relation to the *Republic*. Third, I shall expound Vidal-Naquet's thesis, which, in my opinion, is the most convincing interpretation to date and accords with much of what I have to say on the subject. Fourth, I shall endeavour to show, after expressing a certain number of reservations, how all this fits in with Plato's new philosophy of history—a philosophy closely connected with his own *historia peri phuseos*. Finally, I shall give a brief analysis of Plato's theory of the mixed constitution, the *timia deuteros*, and how such a constitution would prevent the destruction of contemporary Athens or any other state.

Since, according to Plato, Atlantis was swallowed up by earthquakes and floods in a single day and night, interest in its historical existence has been freshly stimulated by the recent discovery of Bronze Age remains on the volcanic island of Santorini, destroyed around 1500 B.C. by an enormous eruption.[13] Thus the Greek seismologist Galanopoulos believes that the metropolis of Atlantis was on Thera itself (the ancient name for Santorini).[14] On the other hand, according to the Greek archaeologist Spyridon Mari-

[11]This is a conjectural reading accepted in the Budé edition (Paris 1951).

[12]For alternative sites which their proponents hold to be historically valid, cf. Forsyth chap. 6. These alternative sites do not have the historical backing that one finds with the Thera-Cretan hypothesis. It is important to note (see below, 199–200) that I do not deny that Plato used historical ingredients or even historical contexts to make his point. In any case, as I hope to show, none of this is fundamental to my own thesis.

[13]On this point cf. Luce chap. 3.

[14]A. G. Galanopoulos and E. Bacon, *Atlantis: the Truth behind the Legend* (London 1969). It should be noted that while Galanopoulos sees the once round island of Thera as the original core of Atlantis, he sees Crete as being the site of Atlantis' vast plain (170).

natos, Plato's Atlantis is to be identified not with Thera itself but with Minoan Crete.[15]

It is no coincidence, he points out, that the violent volcanic eruption which annihilated Thera (situated 100 kilometers north of Crete) in the first half of the 15th century B.C. corresponds more or less to the sudden disappearance of the highly sophisticated Minoan civilisation on Crete. Nicolas Platon has been led by his recent excavations at Zakros to hold a similar position. They have revealed a number of impressive historical coincidences between Plato's description of Atlantis and the physical equipment, layout, and institutions of Minoan Crete.[16]

However, although this thesis is grounded in precise archaeological data, it raises a number of questions. For instance, why did Plato place Atlantis in the Atlantic Ocean? Why did he describe Atlantis as so much larger than Crete? Why did he describe it as much older than Crete? Or then again, how did Plato get access to information concerning Minoan Crete that his contemporaries seem to ignore?

According to Luce (10), the difference between Plato's account and the reality to which he refers is explained by the fact that Plato's source (as he himself claims for Solon) is Egypt:

> I follow the view that genuine tradition of the sudden destruction of Minoan power was preserved in Egypt, and that this tradition was brought back to Greece by Solon about 590 B.C., but in a garbled and misunderstood form which he [Plato] imposed upon Solon's account.[17]

But if Luce's hypothesis is correct, why is there no trace of the story among Plato's contemporaries (or even in the collective memory of the Greeks)? Furthermore, the exact correlation between Thera and Crete is not without controversy, for the archaeological evidence discovered at Thera situates

[15]See S. Marinatos, *Excavations at Thera* 1–8 (Athens 1968–76). Marinatos had anticipated this as early as 1939 ("The Volcanic Destruction of Minoan Crete," *Antiquity* 13 [1939] 425–439), that is, well before his extensive excavations on Thera. According to Luce (47), the credit for this theory goes to K. T. Frost, who published it anonymously in an article entitled "The Lost Continent" (*The Times*, 19 February 1909). Frost, however, did not explain the sudden collapse of the Minoan empire. For an instructive summary, see Forsyth 143–158.

[16]See Platon (303–304), who is convinced that the story of the struggle between Atlantis and Primeval Athens is in fact an account of the conflict between the Minoans and the Mycenaeans, or more precisely between Attica and Crete and their respective allies. Platon also draws a number of interesting parallels between Plato's description of Atlantis and what we know of Minoan Crete: for example, the worship of the god Poseidon to whom bulls were sacrificed; the importance of bulls in general; engraved stelai; golden ceremonial cups; a theocratic political organisation; sources of wealth; enclosed harbours; several kings.

[17]Platon (320) holds the same view. I assume that anyone who strongly supports this thesis would agree with Luce on this point.

the volcanic eruption around 1500 B.C. (if not 1600 B.C. or earlier), whereas the Cretan evidence situates the destruction of Minoan cities around 1450 B.C.[18]

Of course, Plato stated to begin with that the destruction of Atlantis had taken place not 900 years before (i.e., around 1500 B.C.), as the archaeologists propose, but 9,000 years before (*Ti.* 23 d–e).[19] And to argue that this is so because the Greeks had a poor notion of time is hardly serious. What error could have led Plato to multiply by ten the original number, which, with the proper correction, would bring us back to 1500 B.C. Let us remember that in the account in question the number 9,000 is mentioned not by the Athenian Solon but by the Egyptian priest. And if the priest did not have 9,000 years of written documents at his disposal, he did have at least 3,000.[20]

As for the hypothesis based on the historical coincidences between Plato's Atlantis and the material evidence of Minoan cities—and there are many—, it is just as plausible (if not more so) that Plato drew his inspiration (at least in part) from the descriptions that Herodotus gives of Ecbatana (1.98) and Babylon (1.180–190).[21] But, as Phyllis Forsyth has so convincingly shown, it would be just as indefensible to hold that there is one and only

[18]See M. Popham's review (*Antiquity* 53 [1979] 57–59) of C. Doumas (ed.), *Thera and the Aegean World* 2 (London 1978) and S. Sherratt's review (*Antiquity* 62 [1991] 998–1001) of D. A. Hardy and A. C. Renfrew (eds.), *Thera and the Aegean World* 3 (London 1989–91). One point that is now clear is that the Thera eruption was *not* responsible for the destruction of the Minoan civilisation on Crete, as Marinatos, Galanopoulos, Luce, and Platon held. In fact, half the participants in the third Congress believe that the eruption occurred in the mid- or later seventeenth century B.C. rather than the late sixteenth century B.C. L. Pomerance ("Improbability of a Theran Collapse during the New Kingdom," *Thera* 2.797–803) convincingly shows that the Egyptian evidence renders untenable Marinatos's idea that Thera collapsed ca 1500, for the graphic presence of Aegean Keftiu during the co-regency of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III (1503–1447 B.C.) clearly shows that it was "business as usual" (799). Furthermore, it appears that whether Thera did indeed have a circular shape like the metropolis of Plato's Atlantis, as T. H. Druitt and V. Francaviglia (*Thera* 3.2.368) maintain, now "excites little interest" (Sherratt 1000). It is worth noting in passing that I found few references to Plato's Atlantis story in the volumes mentioned above. This leads me to conclude that the historical correlation between Plato's Atlantis and Minoan Crete is now difficult if not impossible to defend.

[19]For an interesting discussion on this point, see Brisson (1994) chap. 2.

[20]This longer period is corroborated in Book 2 of the *Laws* where, after speaking of Egyptian painting and sculpture as not having changed for thousands of years, Plato adds, "and I'm not speaking loosely: I mean literally ten thousand" (οὐχ, ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν, μυρίστων ἀλλ' ὄντως, 656e; Saunders's translation). But note that even if μυρίστων is translated "thousands," the point is the same.

[21]For the parallel with Atlantis, cf. *Critias* 115c ff. and 118c ff. For an interesting discussion of this parallel, cf. P. Friedländer, *Plato 1: An Introduction* (New York 1958) 314–322, who goes all the way and so claims that Atlantis represents for Plato an "ideated" Orient which he contrasts with an "ideated" Athens. Thus what Plato is

one source for Plato's story.[22] Concerning the parallel nature and cause of the disappearances of Atlantis and Minoan Crete, it should be remembered that ancient Greece was always plagued with catastrophes of this nature (although perhaps not of the scope in question).[23]

So why have so many spent so much time and effort trying to prove the existence of Atlantis? Or better yet, why have so many taken its existence for granted and striven to find its geographical location? Plato himself is responsible for much of the confusion; for he explicitly tells us in two passages in the preamble to the *Timaeus*, where the Atlantis story is first introduced and outlined (its unfinished sequel is narrated in the *Critias*), that it is a true, even "absolutely true story" (λόγου ... παντάπασι ... ἀληθοῦς, *Ti.* 20d7–8, cf. 21a4–6).[24] This brings us to how, where, and why the Atlantis story is introduced.

In the preamble to the *Timaeus* (17b–19a), Socrates first gives a brief summary of what appears to be the ideal city of the *Republic*.[25] Then, after assuring the others that the summary is complete, he says he would now like to hear the story of the "real" city corresponding to the theoretical description (*Ti.* 19b–c), that is, a city so conceived, brought to life, and shown in action as fitting into the "concrete" world of war and negotiations (19b–c). To this effect, Critias evokes a story which, although appropriate to Socrates' request (21a1 and 26a5), is said to be "absolutely true" (20d9 and 26e1).

The story, "a memorized report of factual information" (Gill 290), was recounted to Critias by his grandfather, who heard it in his boyhood from Solon, the famous Athenian lawgiver. Solon, for his part, heard it from a priest of Sais in Egypt, where it was preserved thanks to the tradition of the sacred Egyptian writings (*Ti.* 27b5).

The story relates an extraordinary event, *viz.*, a war fought 9,000 years before by an earlier Athens (from now on, Primeval Athens) against a great and aggressive power based on an island called Atlantis, in the Atlantic (*Ti.* 24e).[26] Socrates' ideal city will be shown to exist in the Primeval

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contrasting, according to him, are the two basic constitutions: monarchy and democracy (203).

[22]Forsyth chap. 10.

[23]For excellent examples contemporary with Plato, cf. Thuc. 2.32, 3.89; Strabo 1.3.20; Diod. Sic. 15.48.

[24]The truthfulness appears associated with the narrator's discourse being faithful to the *ariste politeia* of the *Republic* which Socrates would now like to see enacted in "real life." In sum, it is a question of the true *mimesis* of the Ideal Form (see Brisson [1994] chap. 6 and Gill). This also follows from my own analysis (below, 195–196).

[25]I hold that the summary in question refers to the whole of the *Republic*. Some of the reasons for this will be developed here. For a more detailed account, see Naddaf 351–360.

[26]The island is said to have been larger than Libya (i.e., Africa) and Asia combined.

Athens, which, by providential coincidence, has a socio-political structure and institutions similar to those of the ideal state. Primeval Athens will defeat the Atlanteans, at that time the lords of Libya (i.e., Africa) up to the borders of Egypt and of Europe to the borders of Tyrrhenia (i.e., Italy; *Ti.* 25a). Primeval Athens will restore freedom to the Mediterranean, but will subsequently be destroyed in a great natural catastrophe, which will also engulf Atlantis (25c–d).[27]

So if one were to ask why Plato introduces the so-called Atlantis story (which incidentally will be recounted in more detail by Critias, in the dialogue which carries the latter's name), one would have to say that it is because Socrates wants to see the ideal city, that is, the intelligible model, in action in the sensible world (19b), and Critias is aware of a "true story" of a city which existed in time and space and whose traits perfectly resemble the model described by Socrates. In sum, Critias appears to be saying, "Socrates, it so happens that the ideal city that you believe to have existed only as an intelligible form, and that you would now like to see in action (i.e., in the conduct of war and inter-state relations), did in fact truly exist in time and space: it is Primeval Athens. Furthermore, it is true that their citizens were engaged in a war, a glorious war, such as you would like to see the citizens of your ideal state conduct."

It is agreed that Critias will relate the whole story, but not immediately. Indeed, before proceeding, one must know the origin of these well-bred men, these Athenians of old, in order to determine why they behaved in such a distinguished manner in the past.

It should be noted here, to make clearer what is to follow, that in the sequence *Timaeus*, *Critias*, *Laws*, Plato proposes a new theory of contemplation, which, in sharp contrast to the one found in the *Republic*, takes into account the "concrete reality," that is, the sensible world. As Festugière[28] has so well remarked, when Plato wrote the *Republic*, the "concrete reality" appeared to him to be without any value because it was in a state of *ataxia* (disorder). The sensible world was not yet integrated with the intelligible world. This explains why the training of the philosopher (and, with him, the ideal city) was entirely dependent upon the theory of Forms and the Form of the Good. On the other hand, after the failure of the Sicilian adventures of 367–366 and 361–360 B.C.,[29] the aging Plato wanted to make a final attempt to realize his dream of an ideal city. But this time he took into account the "concrete reality."

In order to succeed, Plato necessarily had to offer a "new" training to the philosopher-legislator—a training which would take into account the

[27]Cf. Arist. *Mete.* 354a22.

[28]A. J. Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste 2: Le Dieu cosmique* (Paris 1949) 98.

[29]On the Sicilian adventures, see below, n. 46.

conditions of existence here on earth. This education had to comprise first of all a deep knowledge of human behavior. This brings us back to the origin of the Primeval Athenians and why they behaved in such an admirable way.

Since one cannot conceive of the true behavior of man in the city without knowing, first, the nature (*phusis*) of man, and since the latter is dependent on the nature (*phusis*) of the universe, one must inevitably begin at this point. This explains why the real aim of the *Timaeus* is not physical but ethical, that is, the *phusis* of the universe must lead to the *phusis* of man, which will permit one to know exactly the appropriate type of human behavior. If there is thus a parallelism between microcosm and macrocosm running through the whole discourse of the *Timaeus*, it is because human behavior must be founded on cosmic order, which is dependent upon divine intention. It is not surprising, then, that after his discourse on the physical constitution of man, which follows that of the universe, Plato explains the general principles of education (*Ti.* 86b–90d).[30] This education ought to be directed at the harmony of the human soul and the world soul; hence the new theory of contemplation. The fundamental difference between the theory of contemplation found in the *Republic* and the one expounded in the *Timaeus* (and taken up again in Book 10 of the *Laws*) is that the physical universe is no longer an obstacle in the ascent toward the Good. On the contrary, it is now the *sine qua non* of the possibility of attaining it.[31]

The socio-political structure of Primeval Athens, however, remains still a perfect copy of the model expounded in the *Republic*.[32] What is notably different is that the philosopher-kings—or, king-priests, if one prefers—in accordance with the new theory of contemplation expounded in the *Timaeus*, would have undergone a training not exactly the same as the one described in the *Republic*. But what is important here, that is, what makes the citizens and, notably, the warriors behave in such an admirable way in the war conducted against the Atlantis invaders, is that they act in conformity with the orders from the philosopher-kings, who alone have access, thanks to their education, to the intelligible model.

Let us go back now to what may be considered the real motive for Critias' Atlantis story. The fact that Plato tells us that the Atlantis story is "absolutely true" (and the precise detail in the story has convinced many readers that it must be) explains why the "general reader" has admitted the historical reality of the account. However, if one considers the role of the story in Plato's *historia peri phuseos*, the veracity of the account from an historical perspective is difficult to sustain. This conclusion is corroborated, I believe,

[30]Nor is it perhaps surprising to learn that all psychological disorders have a physical origin.

[31]Although the body is still subordinate to the soul, it is neither loathed nor rejected: cf. in particular *Ti.* 87e f.

[32]For the details on this point, see Naddaf 363–364.

albeit in a different way (a way which makes more sense of its historical references) by Pierre Vidal-Naquet.[33] According to this extremely attractive thesis, Plato, by way of Critias' narrative, expounds his conception of the city where he lives (i.e., Classical Athens) and contrasts, by way of the Atlantis illustration, the maritime aspect of this city with its terrestrial aspect, of which Primeval Athens is the perfect example.

This thesis has the virtue of bringing out not only the relation between the two cities and the physics of the *Timaeus*, but also that between the two cities and the Athens of Plato's time. Furthermore, it shows why the Atlantis story, like the *Timaeus* itself, may be considered a "likely story,"[34] albeit an invention of Plato's. Let us look at the salient features of Vidal-Naquet's thesis.

First, Vidal-Naquet justly remarks (348) that Primeval Athens is a terrestrial city and is hence stable in the same way as the element earth in the *Timaeus* is the only element which cannot be altered. This stability, which goes hand in hand with the element Earth, is everywhere manifest in Primeval Athens: at the level of its socio-political organization, its topography (the territory is perfectly demarcated and will not be altered during the narrative), its riches, its population, even the whole of its civic space, etc. In sum, the terrestrial city is the political expression of the "same" in the sense that it remains completely in conformity with its intelligible model until the end of the story (347).[35] Indeed, it is only after the catastrophe that Primeval Athens is deprived of the major part of the earth which symbolizes its totality.

Second, Vidal-Naquet emphasizes (352–353) that Atlantis is a maritime city, and hence unstable in the same way as the element water, in the *Timaeus*, is always changing. However, if Primeval Athens may be considered the political expression of the "same," Atlantis cannot, for all that, be considered the expression of the "other," for the other, as the political reflection of an intelligible model, cannot exist. In brief, there is only one

[33]Vidal-Naquet's interpretation is a brilliant piece of detective work. It is certainly not beyond someone like Plato to have so constructed his story. This does not diminish in any way, as far as I can see, the historical connection that Plato appears to allude to.

[34]A "likely story" (εἰκὼς μῦθος or εἰκὼς λόγος) in the sense that in both cases the narrator purports to have access to information that will enable him to give a *mimesis* of what would probably have occurred had the demiurge created the universe or had the ideal city of the *Republic* existed in time and space. For a more detailed account of what Plato understands by a "likely story," see Naddaf 370–374. On the role of *mimesis*, cf. P. Hadot, "Physique et poésie dans le *Timée* de Platon," *Revue de théologie et de philosophie* 115 (1983) 113–133 and above, n. 10.

[35]It is true that in the *Timaeus* the notions of "same" and "other" are employed as metaphysical and epistemological equivalents. But nothing prevents Plato from using them in the way mentioned by Vidal-Naquet. In this respect, see, for example, the discourse about the World Soul in *Ti.* 37a–c.

political model: that of the same—although, as we shall see, Atlantis can be considered "other" in a special sense. The fundamental difference between the structure of Primeval Athens and that of Atlantis resides then in the fact that the former is given once for all while the latter is a continual creation (352). This explains why Poseidon, master of the island of Atlantis, is a terrestrial divinity before becoming a maritime divinity; why, in the beginning, there is on the island a fertile plain like that of Athens and close to the sea; why the first inhabitants of Atlantis are earth-born like the inhabitants of Attica (*Critias* 113b–d).

At what moment did this continental creation begin? From the time when Poseidon took a mortal for a wife, Cleito, daughter of Evenor and Leucippe, who, for their part, were among the original earth-born inhabitants (*Critias* 113d). To protect his love affairs with Cleito, Poseidon constructs two circular enclosures of earth and three of sea around the hill where she lives. This earth/water alternation becomes, from then on, a fundamental trait of the structure of Atlantis.[36] The problem for Atlantis, a city composed of a stable and an unstable element, was to find a balance, a definite mixture. And so Plato delights in stressing that in Atlantis, unlike Primeval Athens where there is only one spring of water usable in all seasons (*Critias* 112c), Poseidon makes two springs of water flow from the soil—one hot, the other cold (113e).[37] If Plato speaks of two springs instead of one, it is to underline that, in contrast to Athena and Hephaestus, Poseidon cannot obtain a definite mixture.[38] This explains why Vidal-Naquet (350) refers us to the famous passage in Plato's *Philebus* (24b–c) on the *apeiron*. In this text it is precisely a question of the opposition between the hottest and the coldest—an opposition which ceases to be one at the moment that there is a definitive mixture between the *peras* (limited) and the *apeiron* (unlimited). It is only once the definitive mixture is reached that "a cessation of all progress" supervenes.

Vidal-Naquet demonstrates extremely well that "otherness" is omnipresent in Plato's description of the city of Atlantis. But it is an otherness which does not stop progressing. And this is just as much in its structure as in its history (353–357). Of course, at least in the beginning, Poseidon succeeds in obtaining a mixture, thanks to a legislative control on the one

[36]Vidal-Naquet 352. As I mentioned (above, n. 16), there has been much speculation as to the origin of Plato's inspiration for the layout of Atlantis. Forsyth (172–173) makes a strong case for Syracuse. However, whatever the source or sources for Plato's model, I see no reason why Plato could not have incorporated them all together with the earth-water analogy from the *Timaeus*.

[37]Forsyth's contention (170–171) that the hot and cold springs may refer to similar ones existing at Selinus in Sicily would not, I believe, invalidate Vidal-Naquet's philosophical interpretation of them, even if Plato had them in mind.

[38]See Brisson (1970) 428–429.

hand and a mathematical network on the other. But this mixture slips toward the *apeiron*—the threat of which Plato seems to describe by insisting on the aspect of abundance which is associated with the material power of Atlantis. And from where does this abundance come if not from the water? If the land of Atlantis is rich in every possible and imaginable kind of metals, it is because metals, as Plato indicates in the *Timaeus* (58b f.), are varieties of water.

In conformity with what we have seen until now, it is not surprising that with the opening of Atlantis to foreign trade through its ports comes that last fatal drop of water. Until then, the Atlantean kings, the descendants of Poseidon and Cleito, happened to bear the enormous burden of their wealth, thanks to a respect for the institutions which assured harmonious relations between them. But, with the imperialism which goes hand-in-hand with their new maritime power, the inevitable takes place. The leaders embark on the maritime adventure and the clash with Primeval Athens, a disaster comparable to the one suffered by historical Athens in Sicily.[39] That is why Plato tells us that the decline intervenes when the "divine" element

[39]Vidal-Naquet 358. It can hardly be coincidental, as a number of commentators have already noted, that the chief architect of the defeat of the Athenian invasion of 415 B.C., the Syracusan general Hermocrates, is present during the narration (*Ti.* 26c). In fact Thucydides tells us that Hermocrates accused Athens of becoming the new Persia after the Persian Wars, a tyrant that had to be defeated at any cost (6.74). This may also help to explain the number of Persian elements in the story. Indeed, Critias describes the events in such a way that the audience would certainly be reminded of Athens' repulsion of Persia in the Persian Wars. This has led Friedländer to maintain (203) that the mythical contrast between Athens and Atlantis corresponds to the historical contrast between Athens and Persia. But, as Vidal-Naquet is quick to point out (358), if Plato admired the behavior of the Athenians at Marathon during the First Persian War (cf. *Ti.* 25b–c), he condemned it at Artemisium and at Salamis during the Second precisely because it was marred by naval engagements (*Laws* 707b–c). In sum, the Athenians were already on their way to becoming the "New Persia." This explains why Vidal-Naquet sees Plato contrasting the Athens of Marathon (with the stable hoplite democracy composed of farmers) with that of Artemisium (which had already turned to the sea)—whence references to both the Persian and the Peloponnesian Wars. Gill (295) sees a similar reference but holds that Sparta is more persuasive than Marathonian Athens and so feels that the unwritten sequel might have been built on the Peloponnesian Wars with a Spartanized Athens defeating an Athenian Atlantis. But Spartan behavior was no less deplorable than that of Athens during the Peloponnesian Wars (see in particular the Spartan treatment of the Plataeans as recorded by Thuc. 3.52–68, a fact that could hardly have escaped Plato, not to mention that like the Athenians they had a powerful navy). Forsyth (172–173) argues that the Atlantis story is Plato's final attempt to set Syracuse and its tyrant, Dionysius II, on the right path (on this point see also W. Welliver, *Character, Plot and Thought in Plato's "Timaeus-Critias"* [Leiden 1977] 41–43). It is therefore not surprising that she finds a number of analogies between Plato's Atlantis and the Sicily of his time (Forsyth 183–185). But as mentioned earlier, Plato's inspirations may indeed have been numerous.

diminishes in the leaders as the human element grows within them, the element which is closely related to the thirst for power and greed.[40]

Vidal-Naquet demonstrates throughout his article that if the Primeval Athens described by Plato is completely different from the one which he inhabited and knew, a number of striking similarities between Atlantis and historical Athens suggest that Plato intended to identify the two.[41] If such is the case, why would there be a war between Primeval Athens and the Athens of Plato's time? The answer, beyond a doubt, is to show what happens when a city ceases to look toward the intelligible model.

However, for Vidal-Naquet, the moral of the story is much more complex. Athens triumphs and the united city is victorious over the city that let itself be overcome by disunion and dissimilarity. Water engulfs Atlantis, thus putting an end to the progress of otherness by its total triumph. Athens, meanwhile, loses its terrestrial substance and becomes Atlantis.[42]

Vidal-Naquet's analysis and conclusion of the Atlantis myth appear to me very convincing. I have, nonetheless, an important reservation about his comparison of this myth to a game—a game which is not "serious."[43] If I understand him correctly, Vidal-Naquet thinks that such is the case because for Plato "history" (as the myth indicates rather well) always and inevitably takes the form of a progressive degeneration—such as the one expounded in Books 8 and 9 of the *Republic* or again in the *Statesman* (269c–274e), where it is associated with the ideal of cyclical repetition (349). In other words, for Vidal-Naquet, the end of the story is always "foreseeable." He also appears to believe that since the description of the evolution of man and society given in Book 3 of the *Laws* "offers striking analogues with the Atlantis story" (359), one may conclude that "the myth and the story, like anything that comes under imitation (*mimesis*), are among these games" (360)—games, it is well understood, which are not very serious, according to Vidal-Naquet, since humanity cannot escape its destiny.[44]

[40] *Critias* 121. This seems to be anticipated by Plato since he makes the Atlantean kings descendants of both a mortal and an immortal, *viz.*, Poseidon and Cleito.

[41] In fact, as Gill states (296), Atlantis is "the dream or ideal Periclean Athens had about itself." Thucydides tells us that Pericles wanted the Athenians to consider Athens in war to be (like Atlantis) an island (1.143). The analogies between the two are indeed numerous: cf. Gill 296–298.

[42] Vidal-Naquet 360. See above, n. 39.

[43] Vidal-Naquet 360. He does not believe that the game is worth playing.

[44] And so it is not surprising that Vidal-Naquet quotes *Laws* 1.644d which tells us that man is nothing but a puppet in the hands of God, a plaything made by God for his own pleasure. The problem with this interpretation (see also below, n. 46) is that it not only leaves no room for free will (a position Plato would flatly deny—indeed it is one of the tenets of his philosophy: cf. in particular *Laws* 10.904b–d) but it entails that "reason" has entirely come to terms with "necessity" (something Plato would just as flatly deny).

I do not believe that there is such a "fatalism" inherent in Plato's philosophy of history. And, if there is a degeneration, this degeneration is not irremediable. Indeed, when in the *Republic* Plato compared the diverse imperfect constitutions in order of value (*viz.*, timocracy, oligarchy, democracy and tyranny),[45] he did not doubt that the ideal city was achievable.[46]

In other words, Plato did not believe that the history of humanity was *written once for all.* Furthermore, the golden age under the rule of Cronus, as it is described to us in the *Statesman* "myth," can hardly be considered as a departure point for the degeneration of humanity, for the simple reason that humanity at that time did not live at all in our world (i.e., our world in the *Statesman*, like the *Timaeus*, is a synthesis of reason and necessity, while in the age of Cronus *nous* has no obstacle whatsoever).[47] And in any case, the golden age of the *Statesman* myth is much more an animal paradise (perhaps because one is separated from the *polis*) than a paradise worthy of a philosopher. Of course, if the *Statesman* demonstrates the possibility for one man (instead of several as in the *Republic*) to coordinate all the activities within a society, Plato tells us that people would refuse "to believe that anyone could ever be worthy of such authority, to desire and be able to govern with virtue and science . . . ."[48] However, Plato considers

[45] *Republic* 8 and 9. The order of succession that Plato describes is not at any rate historical but logical and *a priori*. Plato is only inversing the order of the genesis of the State described in *Republic* 2. In the *Statesman*, Plato takes a much more reconcilable view of democracy (that is, a democracy where the rule of law is in force as opposed to a democracy where it is not) and places it ahead of oligarchy (302d–303c; see also *Laws* 4.710e for a similar listing). In the *Laws*, he goes further again, as we shall see, and considers that most successful constitution would be a mixture of monarchy and democracy (his so called "second best" State).

[46] See in particular *Letter* 7.326b f., but also *Republic* 540d–541b. Why would Plato have travelled to Sicily in the first place if he was convinced that the course of history was fixed once and for all? Of course, it was the Pythagorean Archytas, the philosopher-ruler of Tarentum, who was undoubtedly the inspiration behind the composition of the *Republic* (written between 385 and 370 B.C.). Since the *Republic* was composed after Plato's first trip to Sicily (387 B.C.), it is possible that its aim, at least in part, was to convince Dionysius I, the most powerful figure in the Greek world at the time, to follow suit. Plato probably completed the *Republic* shortly before the death of Dionysius I (367 B.C.). And if Plato had given up hope of influencing Dionysius I, he nonetheless agreed to Dion's request to come and train Dionysius II because the latter was kept out of politics by his father and, therefore, appeared to be a likely candidate. It was Plato's subsequent experience with autocrats, and not only with Dionysius II (cf. *Letters* 7 and 8), that convinced him to abandon the all-powerful philosopher-king for something more tenable—a code of laws. An ambiguity nonetheless persisted: cf. below, n. 66.

[47] Cf. L. Brisson, *Le Même et l'Autre dans la structure ontologique du "Timée" de Platon* (Paris 1974) 492.

[48] *Statesman* 301d. This is reiterated at *Laws* 4.713c. Plato's position on the statesman's and/or legislator's right to curative violence at *Statesman* 293a f. (a position still present but softened in the *Laws*; cf. *Laws* 5.735a f.) makes one wonder if he would trust

that, in the absence of such a man, an excellent code of laws would suffice,[49] that is, that human society is not necessarily condemned to collapse into degeneracy.

The *Laws* has the precise aim of providing us with such a code of laws, although Plato still considers that pure *nous* is superior to law.[50] Now, if the *Laws* really replaces the *Hermocrates*, as I mentioned before, one may regard this dialogue as the last in the sequence *Timaeus*, *Critias*, *Laws*. True, the *Timaeus* and the *Critias* already form a whole in the sense that, taken together, they provide us with a *historia peri phuseos*, but it is a *historia* which took place entirely in the past. However, although for Plato the physical universe (as opposed to the intelligible universe) had a beginning in time,[51] it remains forever after indestructible,[52] whereas humanity, for its part, almost dissipates periodically, following a "natural" catastrophe. This explains why Book 3 of the *Laws* can begin with a new description of the evolution of humanity without the need for a cosmogony or anthropogony.

However, contrary to the Atlantis myth Plato does not believe that the Athens of his time is condemned to an irreversible degeneration owing to

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even himself with absolute power. *Letters* 6, 7 (336e–337d), and 8 appear to reflect Plato's opposition to and frustration with any type of autocratic power. That said, one must ask if the true statesman is the incarnation of the legislator of the *Laws* or if the statesman is for Plato as for Aristotle inferior to the legislator—the latter laying down the main principles, which the former only applies in detail (cf. *Eth. Nic.* 6.1141b24; 2.1103b2). If Plato really intended to write a dialogue called the *Philosopher* (cf. *Soph.* 253e), it would appear that he would follow Aristotle.

[49] *Statesman* 301a. Plato's order of preference in the *Statesman* has been excellently summed up by J. B. Skemp: "Thus a free operation of the art of government is best; legal prescription by the expert statesman, variable at his discretion, is admirable; but where there is no such statesman, the best legal codes are those which preserve the 'traces' (*Statesman* 301e) of a philosophical statesman's insight, and any established code is to be upheld as giving a better hope of sound government than no code at all" (*Plato's* Statesman [London 1952] 49). In the *Laws*, the original legislator will focus essentially on a general code of laws (using absolute moral norms as models) and will then abdicate (although available for consultation as long as he is alive). The future administrators of the laws will then work out the details through "experience." After every detail is thought to have been worked out, the laws must become immutable (*akineta*, 772a5).

[50] *Laws* 9.875c. The importance of pure *nous* is ironically connected with the fact that it is flexible; that is, a ruler with knowledge of moral principles can react to all possible contingencies—something no law or code of laws can do. Of course for Plato the laws are an expression of *nous* (cf. 713a, 714a, 890d). On the rule of law in Plato's *Laws*, cf. Morrow chap. 11. For Aristotle's interesting analysis of the relation between law and reason, see *Pol.* 3.14–18.

[51] Of course, the question of the universe having or not having a beginning in time for Plato is the object of a lively and complex debate. My own feeling is that a certain conclusion is impossible. See Naddaf 391–413.

[52] For the demiurge would not destroy his own creation: cf. *Ti.* 41a–d.

its maritime adventure. Nor does he think the *sine qua non* of its salvation would be to remodel it on the model of Primeval Athens, that is, the *ariste politeia* of the *Republic*. If indeed Primeval Athens is "a city defying history,"[53] it is because it was a perfect reflection of the intelligible model just as the World Soul, for its part, is "a moving likeness of eternity" (*Ti.* 37d).

Although the city of the *Laws* is only, to use Plato's words, "second best" (*timia deuteros*) in respect to Primeval Athens and the *Republic*, what is important is that Plato believes that it can be attained and that it is capable of putting an end (leaving aside a possible natural catastrophe) to the degeneration of historical Athens.[54] This is clear from Plato's reflections on history in *Laws* 3.[55] Indeed, Plato proposes as a model for his "second best" constitution the same principle of *metriotes*, moderation, that he demonstrates to have been behind the success of Sparta (*Laws* 3.691c–692a), Persia (*Laws* 3.694a–b), and Athens (*Laws* 3.698b f.) at diverse moments of their histories.[56] But this principle of *metriotes* can only be maintained in the context of a mixed constitution, that is, a constitution where there is a judicious balance between the warp and the woof, between the authority of the ruler and the liberty of the subjects: in sum, a combination of what Plato calls the two mother-constitutions of monarchy and democracy, of which Persia and Athens were the best examples (*Laws* 3.693d–e).[57]

How Plato combines these elements in the context of the future state of the *Laws* is a combination of tradition and novelty. While the vast major-

[53]Brisson (1970) 438.

[54]Although it is fair to say that the reformation of Athens was Plato's primary concern, the Academy was a training ground for the whole Greek world.

[55]Plato's aim in *Laws* 3 is to discover what conditions tend to preserve or destroy a constitution and this entails a "politogony," an analysis of the origin and evolution of society.

[56]In conjunction with this, it is perhaps no surprise that the highly regarded states of the *Laws* are also the ones alluded to in the Atlantis story (see in particular Gill 301–320). Vidal-Naquet also sees the connection but associates it with the inevitable decline of humanity. My own view (Naddaf 1992) is that most of the Greek thinkers, including Hesiod and Plato, held that human progress was indeed possible—albeit not infinite progress.

[57]Cf. also *Laws* 756e and 759b. Aristotle, for his part, sees no monarchical element at all and believes that the features of the mixed constitution are to be taken from oligarchy and democracy (cf. *Pol.* 2.1265b28 f. and 1266a2 f.). The clue to what Plato means by monarchy seems to be in the weaving analogy at *Laws* 5.734e f. Just as a web must be woven together out of two different materials, the firm material of the warp and the soft material of the woof, so the state must be woven together of rulers and ruled, magistrates and citizens. In sum, the monarchical element can be seen as the permament source of authority in the state: the magistrates. But the real sovereign in the state is of course *nomos* or the *nous* of which *nomos* is an expression. So the monarchical element, in the end, is the rule of intelligence, represented, it would appear, by the magistrates.

ity of state officials are elected by the whole citizen body, the general lines of policy are laid down by the higher authorities of the state.[58] The first magistrates to be elected are thirty-seven guardians of the laws (*nomophulakes*). They are elected by the entire body of citizens, the assembly.[59] The citizens are arranged in four classes[60] according to the amount of property they possess. This does not mean that Plato wishes to exclude the poor from office. Indeed, there is no property qualification for attending the assembly or for holding any offices.[61] Plato does assume, however, that the wealthier will be wiser and abler (*Laws* 6.757b; 12.953d), not because they are wealthier, but because they will have more leisure time to cultivate their minds and bodies. Nor are the wealthy in Plato's Magnesia the oligarchs of old, for no citizen can own more than four times the value of the initial holding, nor less than the initial holding (5.744d f.). Extreme poverty and wealth are thus eliminated and class mobility permitted, if not encouraged (744d f.).[62] But it is competence that will determine, in the long term,

[58]Initially and ideally, however, the future colonists should be educated from childhood in the spirit of the new laws (by the initiating legislators themselves) until they can take part in the election of the future magistrates of the state (*Laws* 6.752c). First, because a "well-framed legal code" is useless without competent officials to administer it (751b), and second, because new laws are not readily acceptable (752b). Another suggestion is a purge of sorts. On this point, cf. *Laws* 5.735a–736c where Plato discusses the selection of the initial citizens. This was also discussed in the *Statesman* (above, n. 48). This shows, in my view, to what degree Plato is serious about this fiction (*muthos*, *Laws* 6.752a3).

[59]It is normally assumed that there will be only 5,040 citizens because there will be precisely 5,040 lots of land. But the qualification is more complex. For an excellent discussion cf. Morrow 112 ff.

[60]In the *Laws* the citizens are no longer divided by classes corresponding to different functions, as in the *Republic*. Consequently, the principle on which justice resided in the *Republic*—the differentiation of function, the norm of excellence which regulates the life of the State—is no longer valid. Indeed all citizens now have the same political rights (cf. 744b–745b). Although at *Laws* 8.846d–847b Plato still defends the principle that one should not exercise more than one function—the essence of justice in the *Republic*—, all citizens in fact have the same function, "the cultivation of virtue" (847a); the other functions essential to city life are exercised by foreigners. This, of course, is contingent on the fact that in the *Republic* it is pure reason not obstructed by law that is the supreme guardian of the State, whereas in the *Laws* it is a code of laws.

[61]On this point, cf. Morrow 528–529.

[62]Note that the only reason that Plato gives for property classes in the first place is that it is preposterous to think that all the colonists would arrive with an equal fortune (744b). And even now, every owner must feel that his lot is a common possession of the whole state (5.740a). (Or, as Aristotle would say: "privately owned but put to common use" [*Pol.* 2.1263a38].) But Plato insists that equality is proportional equality and not absolute or arithmetical equality (although political equality is a mixture of the two [6.757a–3]). This is because Plato believes that all men are not "by nature" equally endowed and this explains why the awards of true equality must be proportional to the nature of the recipients. Competence, not wealth, will be the true guide. This is the

the most important offices of the state, the primary objects of proportional equality. Indeed, performance is fundamental to retaining any office vital to the well-being of the state.[63]

To avoid the tyranny of any individual or group, checks and balances are everywhere to be seen. The powerful guardians of the laws are kept in line by the *euthunoi* or straighteners[64] who in turn can be hauled before the select judges (*Laws* 12.946e f.; 947e f.) and they before the guardians of the laws (6.767e). The minister or director of education (ὁ τῆς παιδείας ἐπιμελητής),[65] the supreme office in the state (6.765e), must be replaced, by election, every five years although he becomes a permanent member of the nocturnal council, the "think-tank" of the state.[66] He is chosen from the guardians of the laws but elected, by secret ballot, by all the magistrates except the council and the members of the executive. This is probably the best example of the elite choosing the elite in the *Laws*.[67]

This is how the executive provides control and guidance without threatening the freedom of the subjects. Indeed, the so called "mixed constitution" is not good simply because it is mixed. To be good is to be mixed properly and for this to occur, the constituent parts of the polis, the rulers and subjects, must attain the political *metrion* or *summetria*, the balance between authority and freedom that will ensure their unity and friendship.[68] Since both parties must see the *metrion* as distinct from their personal wishes, the *nomoi* or laws will be the real sovereign of such a

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type of equality (*isotes*) that will produce friendship (*philotes*, 757a) in Magnesia. Thus it is not surprising that property classes play only a minor role in filling the offices that are the primary objects of equitable distribution.

[63]A state education, compulsory for all, will enable all to judge who excels in virtue, both moral and to a certain degree, intellectual. Otherwise, the most competent will choose, as in the case with the Nocturnal Council (*Laws* 12.961 f.).

[64]Plato considers this group "the single most crucial factor determining whether a state survives or disintegrates" (12.945b f.). For a detailed discussion of the euthunoi and the other groups of magistrates, cf. Morrow.

[65]*Laws* 765, 936a, 951e, 953d. Why this function is called supreme can only be understood in the context of the role of education (see below, 206–207).

[66]Cf. *Laws* 951e. The nocturnal council, for its part, is the true organ for apprehending and declaring the higher principles on which right law must depend. In fact, at *Laws* 12.966b–d, we are told that a true guardian of the laws must be among this intellectual elite for only they really know the true nature of virtue and the source of law. Indeed, only they can demonstrate with arguments (*logoi*) that the universe is governed by a universal *nous*, the movements of which our own souls (the immortality of which they can also demonstrate) must imitate (*Laws* 12.966b f.). For a detailed analysis of these arguments, see Naddaf 493–522.

[67]It should be noted once again, however, that class, strictly speaking, plays no role. The officials may represent all the classes or even theoretically come mainly from the lower classes for their representatives may indeed be the most competent.

[68]What makes any mixture good is due measure and proportion among its ingredients (*Phil.* 64d–e).

polis for they express the conditions of the common good. "The subjects then will be obeying not the rulers, but the laws they guard and administer; and the rulers will not be executing their personal wishes, but guarding and administering laws sovereign over themselves as well as over their subjects."[69]

But how does a legislator convince the citizens to accept the rule of law? Essentially through education (*paideia*), but to understand what Plato understands by education, something must be said about his new conception of human nature (*phusei anthropeion*). Throughout the *Laws*, Plato maintains the same position that originated in the *Timaeus*, namely that human nature (*phusei anthropeion*) consists essentially of pleasures (*hedonai*) and pains (*lupai*).[70] Indeed, to think otherwise, he says, is to be talking out of "ignorance and inexperience of life" (732e f.).[71] That's why education (*paideia*) entails above all that each of us succeed in mastering his pleasures and pains from infancy because it is in the form of pleasures and pains that virtue and vice appear in the soul.[72] This explains Plato's remark that when men consider legislation, practically the whole investigation focuses on the pleasures and pains that affect both society and private individuals (*Laws* 1.636d).

Since the noblest life is said to consist of a predominance of pleasures over pains (*Laws* 5.733a), it is not surprising that "self-control" (*sophrosune, to sophron*) now becomes the virtue par excellence, the *sine qua non* of the future city of the *Laws* or any other city that wishes to live in peace and prosperity. This, of course, was the primary lesson to be learned from

[69]Morrow 537. This explains why education (*paideia*) is defined at *Laws* 1.643e as "a training which produces a keen desire to become a perfect citizen who knows how to rule and be ruled as justice demands."

[70]*Laws* 7.732e f. At *Ti.* 64b f., we are told that pain is due to a sudden and violent disturbance of the normal state of the body and pleasure to the "sudden" restoration of that normal state (and so pleasure and pain are always indissociable). It should be noted that although pleasures and pains are said to be physical in origin, there are pleasures and pains associated with each of the three different parts of the soul: the appetitive, the spirited, and the intellectual. Cf. *Ti.* 69c. The *Philebus*, of course, gives a more detailed account of Plato's conception of pleasure and pain.

[71]*Laws* 732e f. In sum, all human life is bound up in these two feelings (733d). The same theme is found at *Laws* 1.644c–645c; 4.714a f.; 6.732d; 8.804a–b. The theme originated, as we saw, in the *Timaeus* where Plato holds that all psychological disorders have a physical origin (*Ti.* 43a–44b; 69c–d; 86b–90d). In fact, at *Ti.* 73b–d even the residence of the immortal soul is said to be in the marrow and it is only when the triangles of which the marrow is composed break down that the immortal soul is free to depart (81d).

[72]*Laws* 2.653a; 5.732e f.; 6.783e f. At *Laws* 6.766a we are told that the education of children should not be treated as a secondary matter because man is capable of becoming either the most gentle and godlike of animals or the most savage depending on how he is educated and naturally disposed. This explains why the function of the Minister of Education is said to be supreme.

Plato's analysis of Persian and Athenian history and indeed the major factor behind the theory of the mixed constitution.[73] In fact, without *sophrosune*, which must be instilled from birth, the other virtues would not take root in the soul or then again, the individual would not be capable of choosing rationally and abiding by what he or she has rationally chosen (cf. 733d f.).

What determines moderation is of course the *metrion* for it determines what constitutes too much and too little. The *metrion*, as we saw, is also what regulates *nomos*.[74] But, reason (*nous*) or God (*theos*), in turn, is the source of both.[75] That is why the wise legislator, described as the one who has *nous* (νοῦν ἔχων, 742d), and thus the one who knows *to metrion* (719e) and what constitutes moderation (*sophrosune*), must persuade the mortal element in man to accept the common good or *koinos nomos*, if the city is to live in peace and happiness. To achieve this each individual law and indeed the laws as a whole must be prefaced by preambles (*prooimia*) or exhortations (*paramuthia*) in order that the citizens will both understand the purpose of the law and become more disposed to recognize its authority. According to this novel conception, every law will thus consist of two parts: the statement of rule or prohibition—itself based on the legislator's experience and conception of *to metrion*—, with the penalities such as fines, imprisonment and even death, for violating it;[76] the introductory preamble stating the good the law intends to procure and the reasons why the citizens should conform to it (*Laws* 4.718a–723d).

In this respect, the "true legislator" (ὁ ὀρθῶς νομοθετῶν), the one who has *nous* and the *techne* to apply it, plays a role similar to that of the demiurge in the *Timaeus*. Indeed both the legislator-demiurge and the cosmic-demiurge must be attentive not only to the design they wish to realize, but also to their materials. In both cases persuasion plays a fundamental role. Just as reason is seen persuading necessity in the *Timaeus* (48a) to conform to what is best, so the legislator-demiurge must persuade his raw materials, the new colonists, who have a wide variety of social, political, and religious beliefs, to conform to what is best under the circumstances.

[73] *Laws* 3.694a–698a. Cf. also, 710a f. Of course, this is what the drinking parties in *Laws* 1 and 2 are all about: self-control.

[74] See above, 206. Cf. also *Laws* 4.719d–e.

[75] On the relations between *nous*, *nomos*, and *metrion*, cf. the legend of Cronus in *Laws* 4.713e–714e. We find a similar relation in *Laws* 1.644d–645b where Plato compares man to a puppet of the gods.

[76] The purpose of the penalties, according to Plato, is to cure the offender, to make him better, and deter others from similar offences. Cf. *Laws* 9.862d–e and *Gorgias* 525b. At *Laws* 880d–e, we are told that the primary purpose of law is to instruct good men. Plato's general theory of punishment, found in *Laws* 9.860c–864c, is closely associated with his account in the *Timaeus* 86d f. The famous Socratic dictum, "No one willingly does wrong," is at the centre of both. Man's relation with the physical universe explains all.

Of course, the relation between the *Timaeus* and the *Laws* is much more profound. We have already seen that the reason for the parallelism between microcosm and macrocosm that runs through the whole *Timaeus* is to show that human behavior must be modeled on cosmic order. In this regard, it is interesting to note that the legislator-demiurge of the *Laws* organizes the spatial milieu of the city so that it reflects the map of the universe.[77] This explains why in *Laws* 12 Plato tells us that thanks to an alliance between *nous* and the *aistheseis* (961d f.; 964e f.), not only will the members of the nocturnal council[78] be able to contemplate the order of the universe and the unity of virtue, but they will also ensure the organisation and safety of the whole state.[79] In sum—and this in conformity with the position expounded in the *Timaeus*—, the philosopher-legislator wishes that every citizen come to imitate, as much as his means allow, the movements of the World Soul, whose imitation constitutes the real salvation of the state.

Although *theos*, *nomos*, and *nous* play a determining role in what Plato calls the "second best" constitution, the lessons of history and experience are nonetheless the primary factors behind its conception.[80] This in itself is a clear indication that Plato meant the project to be taken seriously, i.e., to be a wholly realizable solution to what he saw as the continuing deterioration of contemporary Athens.[81] Therefore, although according to the natural cycle of things, Athens may indeed be condemned, like its primitive counterpart in the Atlantis myth, to disappear, if contemporary Athens were to subscribe to his conception of a mixed constitution, then the "golden age" for Plato would be something not found in bygone days and lost forever, but located in the future, and it is for this reason that, if there is a "game," this game

[77] On this interesting aspect, cf. P. Lévêque and P. Vidal-Naquet, *Clisthène l'athénien* (Paris 1964) 139–146.

[78] At *Laws* 12.964e f., the senses, coupled with a powerful memory, are said to be the guardians of *nous*. On the nocturnal council, cf. above, n. 66. The members of this council will obviously be themselves "true legislators."

[79] If the autobiographical *Letter* 7 is genuine, as I believe it is, one may conclude that the sensible world never ceased to be ontologically secondary. The Forms, however, play only a minor role in the *Laws*. Indeed the argument (*logos*) that Plato gives for the existence of God or the gods (i.e., the celestial bodies) in Book 10 of the *Laws*, an argument which he believes to be verifiable, is closely connected with his description of the universe, that is, the sensible world. Furthermore, this proof would not have been possible, according to Plato, without an alliance between the senses (notably sight) and the intellect (*Laws* 12.961d–e). Plato's thesis is closely connected with contemporary theories. For the details on this point, see Naddaf 370–374; 507–522.

[80] In fact, Plato tells us that a state that insists on keeping to itself, refusing any contact with others, will never attain an advanced level of civilisation. On the importance of observers or reporters (*theoroi*) in this context, cf. *Laws* 12.951b.

[81] However, I would like to insist once again that the mixed constitution is a solution to the woes of any state.

can only be "serious." This, it seems to me, is the *raison d'être* behind Plato's *historia peri phuseos*, behind the famous trilogy which included the *Timaeus*, the *Critias*, the *Laws*.

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
YORK UNIVERSITY
NORTH YORK, ONTARIO
M3J 1P3