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Rereading Plato's Timaeus-Critias Politically

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First Philosophy, Political Theory, Politics

Does first philosophy have a place in political theory? Understood as Stuart Hampshire's "metaphysics"—the "attempt to present a coherent picture of reality as a whole, including a speculative account of the origin of things and of the place of human beings within the imagined scheme"—the modern consensus answers no.[1] John Rawls rejects attempts to establish liberalism's normative authority on any comprehensive philosophical or religious doctrine, instead proposing a "political, not metaphysical" justification.[2] Since comprehensive groundings are controversial and unprovable, their introduction into political theory would, it is argued, spawn irresolvable conflicts and succeed only through deception or coercion. Rawls is not alone. From varying perspectives Seyla Benhabib, Bonnie Honig, William Connolly, Jürgen Habermas, and Mark Warren offer democratic theories designated as post-metaphysical or anti-foundational.[3]

But what does a *political* justification involve? Addressing constitutional democracies, Rawls offers a liberal theory of justice consistent with their principles and acceptable to their citizens. For sceptics, however, Rawls's politics do not go far enough. Agonistic democratic critics, including Connolly and Honig, fault him for

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substituting civilized conversations more appropriate to seminars for the conflictual dynamics of real politics.[4] Their proposals are, if anything, more resistant to first philosophy's having any political purchase, seeing any introduction of such considerations as a politicized attempt at domination. Yet such criticisms can end up offering both not enough and too much. Why isn't Rawls's *political* theory of justice just another *politicization*, an assertion of, not a justification for, political liberalism's normative authority? And are agonistic criticisms of Rawls anything more than politicizations of their own? Ceasing to be applied metaphysics, political theory becomes indistinguishable from a series of power moves.

Might we see these problems and alternatives differently? This essay argues that Plato's dialogues *Timaeus* and *Critias* can be useful resources as we try to do so. This case can be made only through the interpretation that follows. At the outset, however, the very choice of these texts requires explanation, perhaps even defense. Many students of Plato's political philosophy have only a glancing acquaintance with these dialogues and for understandable reasons. Are they even really dialogues? Each revolves around the title character's extended monologue. Timaeus/*Timaeus* theorizes the structure of the cosmos and the origins of humanity, seemingly a textbook example of Hampshire's metaphysics.[5] Critias both introduces (in *Timaeus*) and follows (in *Critias*) Timaeus by narrating an ancient Athenian triumph over the predatory island of Atlantis. Plato's most dialogic character, Socrates, speaks at length only initially and, after that, very occasionally. And beyond their textual status, how politically relevant are their themes? Even if we recognize the politicality of the dialogues' dramatic circumstances, we confront the apparent apoliticality of their content, *Timaeus* because of cosmological sweep, *Critias* because of ancient remoteness.[6] Sarah Broadie thus reads their speeches as deliberately separated from the practical world.[7]

Differing, I argue here that *Timaeus-Critias* is political in several relevant registers, encouraging readers of Plato to include these dialogues within their study of his political theory and perhaps helping us to see the relation between first philosophy,

political theory, and politics in more nuanced ways. Conflictual political circumstances do more than contextualize *Timaeus-Critias*' two monologues; they inform both the substance of the speeches and the interactions of the interlocutors. Whatever else it may be, Timaeus' cosmological narrative is a political and social practice that challenges Critias' efforts to subordinate natural philosophy and philosophical anthropology to his own political agenda. To this extent, the dialogues' internal pragmatics reflect a struggle for discursive control. This does not signal a reductive politicization of first philosophy, however, for these seemingly distant narratives can function politically in a different way, prompting scrutiny of their originating historical conditions and cultural templates, the kind of discursive politics represented in Socratic questioning. Consequently, these texts represent first philosophy's political significance as neither an applied metaphysics that threatens to displace the world nor a surreptitious power assertion that aims to dominate it. Instead, they acknowledge that concerns about the nature of the world and the place of human beings within it are inevitably significant for political theory. Yet I also argue here that while political power is implicitly interrogated within the drama of the two dialogues, their conclusion signals its persistence. Conversations that should happen will not because of power's distorting influence. I can only anticipate these conclusions here, and I now turn to the dialogues themselves.

Reassembling

When *Timaeus* begins, Socrates meets three (counted) individuals with whom he has conversed "yesterday," the Athenian Critias, the Locrian Timaeus, and the Syracusan Hermocrates, noting an absent fourth partner. Scholars differ over that missing person's identity, the reason for his absence,[8] and the significance of enumeration.[9] (Note that Socrates does not count himself.) Next, Socrates summarizes a regime (*politeia*) that he had more fully described earlier; many of its features resemble those of the *Republic*'s city in speech. He then says that this city, said to be at rest, needs an account (*logos*) of its motion as it confronts other

cities in war.[10] Critias responds by proposing, not a theoretical (*Ti.* 19b) or mythical (*Ti.* 26c) imaginary of a nameless, timeless regime, but the truthful story of an ancient Athens whose virtues were most spectacularly displayed against Atlantis (*Ti.* 24d–25a, 26c–d). This narrative descended to Critias in layers of hearsay, from his grandfather (also named Critias), passed down from great-grandfather Dropides, as heard from the Athenian statesman Solon, recalling his conversation with an Egyptian priest (*Ti.* 21b–d). The fuller narrative to come is to be preceded by Timaeus' account of the origin of the *cosmos*, ending with the nature of human beings (*anthrōpōn phusin*) (*Ti.* 27a). Timaeus' subsequent "likely story" (*eikota mython*) traces the world's beginnings to the work of a divine craftsman (*dēmiourgos*) guided by a mathematical/geometrical paradigm, concluding with the generation of humans (*Ti.* 90e). Critias/*Critias* resumes the war narrative by analyzing the regimes of the two combatants (*Ti.* 108e) when the dialogue abruptly ends (*Ti.* 121c).

Some general interpretive premises: First, I read Plato's dialogues as philosophical dramas and not (simply) as philosophical arguments dramatically adorned.[11] No character, including Socrates, speaks straightforwardly for Plato.[12] Second, the date of any dialogue's composition is secondary to interpretations of its meaning.[13] Third, the dialogues do not simply respond to external historical influences; they inscribe relevant events within their dramatic representations.[14] Often, these events are those of the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BCE) and the parallel—and escalating—domestic confrontations between Athenian democracy and its oligarchic enemies.[15]

Five particular hypotheses about *Timaeus-Critias* therefore emerge. First, although the texts are closely linked intellectually, they are separated dramatically, prompting questions about this connection/differentiation. Second, my readings do not hinge on these works representing Plato's chronologically later thought.[16] Third, *Critias*' abrupt ending *may* be an authorial choice. Fourth, these dialogues' circumstances/participants call attention to Athens's failed imperial adventure in Sicily (415–413 BCE)—noting

the presence of Hermocrates singled out by Thucydides for his leadership in defeating/destroying the invaders—its eventual defeat in the war (404 BCE), and the subsequent (404–403 BCE) subversion of its democracy by an oligarchy known as the Thirty, led by someone named Critias.[17] Finally, although the dialogues' central *logoi* are given by the title characters, their dramatic texture draws attention to Socratic speech and practice, starting with *Timaeus*' regime summary.

Socrates Recalling

Socrates asks his interlocutors if they remember "the chief part of the speeches recounted yesterday . . . about what sort of regime . . . would come to be best and of what sort of men it would be made" (*Ti.* 17c). After being assured that his summary is complete, he asks for a (new) *logos* adequately praising this city in war (*Ti.* 19d). He says he cannot do this himself and rejects appeals to the poets (too close to their cultures) or the sophists (too distant). He asks his three interlocutors to help. Considering parallels between this summary and *Republic*, readers are drawn to three relevant features.

First, conversational structures and pragmatic contexts differ. Dialogic appearances notwithstanding, *Republic* is one long narrative of Socrates. *Timaeus-Critias*' monologues are embedded within performed dialogues directly presented to readers. In these texts, the relation between monologue and dialogue becomes a question, here implying that the central monologues of *Timaeus-Critias* should receive the kind of scrutiny applied in dialogue. We do not know the particular circumstances of *Republic*'s framing narration, though it occurs sometime within the war and the fates of some characters anticipate the defeat and the Thirty.[18] Thematically, the investigation of justice and injustice occupying most of the participants' attention is intended to encourage Socrates' young interlocutor Glaucon to choose justice.[19] The pragmatics of *Timaeus-Critias* are vaguer. While we know most of the prior day's participants and infer a surrounding context of the Greater Panathenaea (*Ti.* 21a), we don't know why yesterday's

conversation concentrated on this (best) regime and why it should be repeated to these people now.[20] Broadie's context of leisured hospitality (*Ti.* 17a, 20c–d, 21a, 26d–e) is surely disrupted by reminders of the war and its aftermath.[21] Socrates' interest in war may be traceable not just to its being the greatest political motion but to more immediate anxieties.[22]

Second, there are important and provocative differences between the two allegedly best regimes. As others note, *Timaeus* omits the philosophical education that becomes the centerpiece of *Republic* V through VII.[23] In one way, this makes *Timaeus*' regime more political. Yet philosophy is not absent, for its role (as in *Republic*) is to develop warriors harsh toward enemies but gentle to their own (*Ti.* 17d–18a; *Rep.* 375e–376b). While *Timaeus* does not say why this intensified patriotism requires philosophy, *Republic* claims that philosophy's love of the known and hatred of the unknown (*Rep.* 376b) reinforces love of the city and hostility to outsiders. Later (*Rep.* 475c), however, those who are philosophical by nature love *all* learning, implicitly embracing the unknown or the other and eventually moving beyond familial and civic attachments (*Rep.* 540a–541b).

Although express complications are absent from *Timaeus*, there are parallel ambiguities. While *Timaeus*' citizens are friends by nature (*phusei*) and references to nature permeate the summary (*Ti.* 17c–d, 18a–d), the expectation that the guardians will be correctly (*orthōs*) (*Ti.* 18a) gentle or harsh underscores cultural orthodoxy. As in *Republic* (*Rep.* 423e–424a), *Timaeus* emphasizes (*Ti.* 18c) uniform training of male and female guardians and common marriages and childrearing. In *Republic*, this proposal prompts reconsideration of what nature means (*Rep.* 454b), and the best city's political program is eventually scrutinized by, not controlling of, philosophy. Although *Timaeus* does not employ *Republic*'s noble lie (*Rep.* 414b–e), it, too, isolates the guardians from the rest of the citizens (*Ti.* 18b), implicitly acknowledging orthodoxy's flaws. *Timaeus*' apparently sharper politics is blurred by the uncertain relation between nature and culture, reliance on a problematic education, and a treatment of philosophy signaled as incomplete.

Third, and most provocatively, *Republic*'s Socrates considers wars three times, dramatically suggesting that war's place within politics is a challenging problem with multiple ambiguities.[24] The first presentation traces war's origin to the city's transformation from sustenance (*Rep.* 369d) to luxury (*Rep.* 372e). Progress engenders conflict. While the lines of dispute are clear to Socrates and his interlocutors, the reality on the ground blurs. Because the now-luxurious city's territory is no longer adequate, "we must [now] cut off a piece of our neighbor's land, if we are going to have enough for grazing and growing, and they in turn from ours, if they give in to the acquisition of money, overstepping the boundary of the necessary" (*Rep.* 373d).[25] This collision between aggression and defense might parallel heroic Athens's resisting imperial Atlantis. Yet why should this best city's need for resources not be seen as aggression by its neighbors? And why is the neighbors' alleged overstepping of necessity not also a response to need? Does condemnation of the neighbors' greed reflexively indict the Socratic city's luxury, or does it reveal the contestable justice of all resource conflicts?

The second war narrative both tracks and diverges from Thucydides. Socrates tells Adeimantus that their moderate city can defeat wealthier opponents by reinforcing the divisions between rich and poor afflicting all other cities (*Rep.* 422e–423b). The Thucydidean parallel is Book III's (*Thuc.* 3.82–84) narrative of the *stasis* in Corcyra. Yet while Thucydides condemns *stasis*' devastating consequences, Socrates treats the best city's competitors as internal battlegrounds to be exploited when necessary. Once wars start, for whatever reasons, does the imperative of victory obscure everything else?

The third war speech begins after Socrates reveals how the city's rulers must arrange for the best male and female guardians to mate without alienating their more ordinary colleagues (*Rep.* 466e). A parallel manipulation in *Timaeus* concludes the summary of the regime at rest, with Socrates asking others for the *logos* of its warlike motion that is needed to complete his account. In *Republic* he provides this himself. What does this difference mean?

Two possible answers overlap, one substantive, the other dramatic. *Republic*'s third war speech is notable for both its content and its dialogic trajectory. Against the clinical lethality of his second speech, Socrates envisages moderating wars fought both among Greeks and between Greeks and barbarians, making rest politically prior to motion (*Rep.* 471a–b), apparently reversing if not contradicting the direction of his request in *Timaeus*. By offering two potentially very different versions of the relation between war and peace within seemingly parallel best regimes, described by the same man, Plato implies that this question of priority is not settled. Yet any potential for a deeper inquiry in the *Republic* is overtaken dramatically by Glaucon's insistence that Socrates say how this city can be realized (*Rep.* 471e), a demand paralleling Critias' recasting another Socratic best city as truthful history in *Timaeus*. Does introducing these best regimes' wars provoke or test Socrates' different interlocutors?

Critias Presiding

Although Glaucon and Critias look for the best political reality in opposite directions—Glaucon, ahead toward the possible; Critias, back to the achieved—there are parallels. Neither project simply moves from theory (*logos*) to practice (*ergon*). Each embraces a *logos* able to direct *erga*, transforming *logos* from reflective consideration (*theōria*) into active construction (*poiēsis*) (*Ti.* 27b). Dramatically, these opposite time horizons overlap within a turbulent present, extending over many years but represented by Thucydides (*Thuc.* 5.26) as a single political phenomenon, eventually leading to an oligarchic coup that will be led by Glaucon's—and Plato's—uncle Critias.[26] But is *that* Critias *this* Critias?

Scholars disagree for good reason.[27] While there are dramatic benefits to equating the two figures, chronology is a problem. How could a sequence of three, at most four, generations beginning with Solon (ca. 630–560) end with the Thirty's Critias (ca. 460–403)? Laurence Lampert and Christopher Planeaux emphasize that there are too many intervening years to be accommodated and argue instead that the Critias of *Timaeus-Critias* is the tyrant's

grandfather, making the remembered grandfather the tyrant's great-great-grandfather.[28] Alternatives proposed by those retaining the interpretive benefits of seeing this Critias as the Thirty's seem forced if we take the dialogues' conceit seriously, that, in Warman Welliver's formulation, "the author of the thought which Critias recites is, according to Plato, not Critias but Solon."[29]

But should we accept this conceit? A different perspective opens if we interpret Critias' speech, not as originating from Solon, but as his own authorial fiction, signaled as such by Plato's fiction and redirecting our interpretive attention from concerns about historical accuracy to awareness of pragmatic interaction. From this adjusted perspective, recognizing chronological impossibilities would not prevent our interpreting the Critias of these dialogues as the leader of the Thirty. This becomes an intriguing *possibility* if we interpret Critias' speeches in *Timaeus-Critias* in light of what we can infer about his speech acts.

Although initially deferring to ancestral remembrance (*Ti.* 21a–b, 26b), Critias introduces his speech as a diligently prepared and rehearsed performance, implying not respectful memory but strategic memorization (*Ti.* 26b–c).[30] Later, after Timaeus finishes his supposedly introductory account, Critias privileges his own forthcoming effort because of its allegedly greater difficulty (*Criti.* 106b–108a).[31] Competitive impulses should not surprise us. Within *Timaeus-Critias*, Critias continually appropriates others' discourses for his own purposes (*Ti.* 27a–b). He begins by transforming Socrates' thought experiment of the best city into truthful reality. More ambitions follow as he confronts the most notable voices within classical Greek historical literature. His ancient hearsay revises Herodotus, treating the Egyptians not as originators of Greek religious forms but as memorializers of ancient Athens (*Ti.* 22e–23a, 23e–24a).[32] His unfulfilled intent is to position his account of the Atlantean war within a broader representation of the whole range of barbarian ethnicities and Greek peoples (*Criti.* 109a), an expanded world history (noting *Hdt.* 1.1; *Thuc.* 1.1). Extending Herodotean geography, an Atlantis "larger than Libya and Asia together" (*Ti.* 24e; *Criti.* 108c; *Hdt.* 2.16) is

discovered/imagined. Challenging Thucydides (*Thuc.* 1.1, 23), the Atlantean war becomes the greatest war (*Ti.* 24d–e).[33]

In retelling the story of Athens's triumph, Critias also reworks judgments about Solon, potentially elevating his own competitive standing. In passing through Egypt, Solon put "questions about old things to the priests who were most experienced in them" (*Ti.* 22a). Here, Solon sounds almost Socratic, discovering that in (grandfather) Critias' words, "neither he himself nor any other Greek hardly knew anything at all . . . about such things," though this insight stems from accepting, not refuting, his Egyptian sources. These incipiently philosophical insights do not lead to *Republic*'s (*Rep.* 607b) quarrel between philosophy and poetry (cf. *Ti.* 19d). Any philosophical impulses are folded into a Solonic poetry celebrating Athenian excellence. Yet, again according to grandfather Critias, poetic promise was aborted by political necessities, "factions and other evils" to which Solon turned his attention, misusing and neglecting his poetry. Had he not done so, "neither Hesiod nor Homer nor any other poet would have become more highly thought of than he" (*Ti.* 21d). The real quarrel is between poetry and politics, with Solon faulted for his lack of poetic seriousness after returning from Egypt, not praised for his civic responsibility before departing (*Hdt.* 2.177).[34]

Yet if this narrative is Critias' fiction (his "grandfather," his "Solon," his "Egyptian priest"), offered within contemporary political disorder, we might reinterpret it as criticizing Solon, not for neglecting poetry for politics, but for failing to recognize poetry's intense politicality. Confronting a failing war and an impending defeat, perhaps a superior poetry could, in the right hands, energize a renewed Athens. If successful, Critias would, as poet, surpass Solon and, therefore, also Hesiod and Homer. Unlike these rivals, he would not be vulnerable to Socrates' critique of poetry's political irrelevance (*Rep.* 599d–e). From this perspective, Critias' joining voices that often diverge (epic, tragic, historical) would represent not simply a creative literary achievement[35] but a daring political projection, making his political time not a storehouse of ancestral memory[36] but a pragmatic construction subject to reconstruction,

signaled by the supposedly truthful historian's disregard of historical constraints.[37]

We find parallel aspirations displayed by the Critias who is unquestionably the Thirty's leader in *Protagoras* and *Charmides*. *Protagoras* is situated in 434 BCE, on the brink of the war. Its examination of the teachability of good citizenship ironically involves a gallery of bad Athenian citizens, with the violent Critias and the treasonous Alcibiades (*Thuc*. 6.61, 89) particularly striking.[38] Their speech acts within the dialogue anticipate disturbing political ambitions. Alcibiades treats the exchange between Socrates and Protagoras as a contest and sides with Socrates (*Prt.* 336b–d). Critias attempts to establish control over the outcome (*Prt.* 336d–e; cf. *Ti.* 26d), absorbing his rivalry with Alcibiades (always a lover of victory) within a hegemonic reconstruction of the discursive community.

Dramatically, *Charmides* follows the extended Athenian siege of Potidaea (432–429 BCE), one trigger of the broader war (*Thuc*. 1.57, 2.70). The presence of Critias and his cousin Charmides points toward the democracy's subversion by the oligarchy in which both will play major roles. During the conversation's attempts to identify the virtue of *sōphrosynē*, Critias' proposals are all refuted.[39] He responds with an ever-ambitious sequence of definitions that absorb and supersede those previously given.[40] The dialogue ends as he attempts to coerce Socrates into educating the auxiliary Charmides, dramatizing a normative reversal of the *Republic*'s political hierarchies, with the tyrant exercising rule and the philosopher demoted to craftsman.[41] In *Timaeus-Critias* both Socrates' best regime and Timaeus' cosmology will serve Critias' central war narrative, with Hermocrates' spiritedness (*Ti.* 20c) assigned to the auxiliary's speaking in the later rank (*Criti.* 108c).[42] Although Socrates has asked all his interlocutors to represent this best city's motion, Critias takes charge (*Ti.* 19e–20c). If we ask why, perhaps the dramatic answer is that political tyranny is presaged by attempted intellectual domination.[43]

Predictably, Critias not only positions Timaeus' natural philosophy as preliminary to his own account (*Ti.* 23a, 27a–b) but also

directs its content. Although Critias casually mentions the gods as cultural images (*Ti.* 21e, 23d), his Egyptian priest's ontology replaces them with natural necessity; "[m]any destructions of mankind in many ways have come to be and will be—the greatest by fire and water, but different and lesser ones by thousands of other means" (*Ti.* 22c). The story of how Phaethon's out-of-control chariot burned much of the earth is recast in "its truth [as] a shifting of the bodies that move around the earth and along the heavens, and the destruction that comes about on the earth by a great deal of fire at long stretches of time." Looking to water, what might first be interpreted as the gods' purification of the earth by flood may in reality be a periodic sweeping down of a heavenly stream "like a plague" (*Ti.* 23a). Memories of ancient Athens's excellence survived only because of Egypt's location in a region spared from the inundations (*Ti.* 23a) that periodically obliterated records of "anything that is beautiful or great or has something distinctive [that] has come to pass somewhere" (cf. *Hdt.* 2.5, 10, 19–26). This nature is oblivious to moral differences. Although the Athenians were nurslings of the gods (*Ti.* 24d) and Zeus' punishment of Atlantis was intended as improving correction (*Criti.* 121b–c), both heroic Athenians and hubristic Atlanteans were destroyed "when monstrous earthquakes and floods came about, and one grievous day and night assaulted them, then the entire assembly of warriors among you [Athenians] sank beneath earth and the island of Atlantis sank beneath the sea and disappeared" (*Ti.* 25d).

Such sweeping destructiveness may make obsessions with political excellence seem pathetic.[44] Yet it may also confer singular nobility on achievements standing out against pitiless nature. There are intriguing parallels between Critias' ancient narrative and Pericles' promissory encomium in the last speech given to him by Thucydides. "Athens has the greatest name . . . because of not yielding to misfortune but expending the most lives and labor on war and has acquired certainly the greatest power known up to this time, of which it will be forever remembered [*aieimnēstos*] . . ., even if we now give way somewhere (for it is in the nature of all things to be diminished too), that we as Hellenes ruled over the most Hellenes,

sustained the greatest wars against them . . ., and lived in a city that was in all ways the best provided for and greatest" (*Thuc.* 2.64).[45] Critias' recalling the "many and great deeds [of Athens] that are written down [and that] strike people with amazement [particularly] the one that rises above them all in greatness and virtue [*megethei kai aretē*]" (*Ti.* 24d–e) seems even more defiant. The frightening narrative of fire and flood goes beyond Pericles' vague concession that everything is eventually diminished. None of Critias' sources (characters) envisage their remembrances enduring "forever." Critias' projected program of speeches thus aspires to control, if not to construct, natural philosophy for its own pragmatic purposes, subordinating truth to effectuality.[46] Yet some deference to truth remains. If valorizing the greatest war presumes recognition of nature's violence, the lover of war is also a lover of wisdom (*Ti.* 24d).

Timaeus' Likely Story

Timaeus' subsequent contribution is often interpreted as Plato's cosmology.[47] Although I eventually question this characterization, I primarily focus on how Plato's character Timaeus confronts Critias politically, within a narrative whose drama elides a kind of metaphysics and a kind of politics.[48] I note five intersecting features.

First, Timaeus' understanding of *poiēsis* challenges Critias' in a politically provocative way. Representing the cosmos as originating in the *dēmiourgos*' craftsmanship implies that *poiēsis* is a divine, not just a human, activity. In forging cosmic order out of disorder (*Ti.* 30a, 53b, 69b), the *dēmiourgos* looked toward a model exhibiting supreme goodness and beauty (*Ti.* 29a–b). Although this model is ontologically ambiguous (is it another divine production or something prior? See *Ti.* 30a–b, 41a–b), demiourgic *poiēsis* is not willful defiance of natural indifference but imitative respect for natural order.[49] Time is not a political construction subject to reinventions and upheavals but cosmic order's stable partner (*Ti.* 37d–e, 47a). The *dēmiourgos* becomes political when it supervises its subordinate deities' contributions to cosmic order (*Ti.* 41a–d), a hierarchical politics without ambiguity or conflict. So far, Timaeus' alternative *poiēsis* seems to assert one side of a binary against another, divine

over human, stability over turbulence. Yet this impression is itself unsettled by Timaeus' human poem (*Criti.* 108b). At one level, it is similarly respectful of the divine makings that it narrates, a kind of *theōria*. Yet, as only a "likely story" (*Ti.* 29c–d, 48d–e, 72d), it is also a creative imaginary (*Ti.* 40e–41a), with elements of provisionality, questioning, and disagreement (*Ti.,* 29c–d; *Criti.* 106b), implying a political *poiēsis* different from both Critias' polemical assertiveness and the *dēmiourgos*' hierarchical oversight.

Second, Timaeus replaces the Egyptian priest's process-physiology of nature with a teleological narrative weaving intended purpose (a divinely crafted cosmos, *Ti.* 28a–b, 47a, 68e–69a, 78e, 80e) with immanent perfection (a cosmos beautiful and best, *Ti.* 29a, 30b, 53b, 92c).[50] This teleology informs—and complicates—the deep structure of Timaeus' cosmos in numerous ways unexplored here. However, two challenges to Critias stand out. First, nature is not a force indifferent to human practice but a standard for judging it (*Ti.* 41c), though one that is provocatively ambiguous. Representing human virtue and vice as health and disease (*Ti.* 82a–83a) implies nature as normality, while identifying mathematical science as the highest human excellence (*Ti.* 47b–c, 68e, 88c–d, 90d) emphasizes exceptionality (*Ti.* 51e). Also, Timaeus' teleology depends on the significance of soul (*psuchē*) as both overarching cosmic presence (*Ti.* 34b–c, 37a) and individual human identity (*Ti.* 46d, 41d, 42e, 69d–e). Because the cosmos is teleologically perfect, it must be endowed with intelligence, therefore with soul, for "nothing unintelligent will ever be a more beautiful work than what has intellect . . . [and] it's impossible for intellect apart from soul to become present in anything" (*Ti.* 30b). Whatever its deeper ontological implications—the cosmos is alive; *psuchē* is intelligent life, not simply life; the cosmic soul is constructed as harmonic proportion through a process that still relies on force (*Ti.* 35c, 36b); individual souls are born from the stars (*Ti.* 41d–e)—the soul's pervasiveness here contrasts with its virtual absence from Critias' poetic history.

Third, Timaeus rejects Critias' embrace of manly nobility as the pinnacle of human excellence. Implicitly revising the Homeric

Achilles' choice of a shorter but more glorious life in the *Iliad*, Timaeus' cosmic craftsmen gave humans a shorter but better life by making their heads more fragile, yet "more sensitive and prudent" (*Ti.* 75c) and doing this for "every man" (*pantos andros*).[51] While agreeing with Achilles in choosing quality or nobility over longevity, Timaeus disagrees about nobility's content and scope. Achilles disregarded survival in favor of deathless fame, dependent on recognition; Timaeus valorizes love of thinking, good and beautiful in itself (*Ti.* 47a–b, 68e, 88c–d, 90d).[52] Achilles ennobled the best, standing apart from the all; Timaeus appreciates the all, reflecting the possibilities of the best.

Fourth, human politics is not defiance of indifferent nature but supportive aide to natural ordering. Because bodily passions distort (*Ti.* 42a–b), humans need "some correct nurture [to] assist in education [so that] one becomes perfectly sound and healthy, having escaped the greatest disease" (*Ti.* 44c). While such nurturing does not privilege any particular theoretical or historical regime, it identifies education as the central political function and implicitly rejects Critias' privileging the greatest war as the decisive political narrative.[53] How would Timaeus judge Socrates' request that his summary of the best regime be completed with a *logos* of its wars?

Fifth, Timaeus' account of human origins challenges Critias' politicization of human excellence with a very strange alternative anthropology. Allegedly, humans and the other animals emerged from sequential devolutions. Males who were cowardly or unjust, failing in recognizably political virtues, were reborn as women (*Ti.* 91a). Subsequent declines generated nonhuman animals, descending through those flying the air, walking or crawling the earth, and swimming the water (*Ti.* 91d–92c). On its own, this sequence seems incoherent. How can males exist, taxonomically or ontogenetically, without females?[54] Earlier, Timaeus noted that "human nature [*tēs anthrōpinēs phuseōs*] being twofold, the superior part [*to kreitton*] would be a kind that would later be called a man [*ho kai epeita keklēsoito anēr*]" (*Ti.* 41e–42a). But how can this natural duality be prior to the separation and joining of the sexes (*Ti.* 69e–70a, 90e–91d)? Can there be a superior absent an inferior,

a decline already begun or anticipated (*Ti.* 70a, 76d–e)? Or was another superiority envisaged?

Internal difficulties aside, the narrative's implications complicate Broadie's judgment that Timaeus' human story (*Ti.* 89b–90d) emphasizes autonomy.[55] The strictly *human* condition now appears to be, in a different tradition's language, one of fallenness.[56] Yet failure of the best is not reversion to the worst.[57] Although justly punished (92b–c), devolutionary offenses cluster around foolishness and stupidity (cf. *Ti.* 86b). Humans who become birds are, while light minded, harmless. Beasts of the earth are those who neglected philosophy. Life in the water awaits "the absolutely most thoughtless and most ignorant." There are no shocking crimes demanding gruesome punishments (*Rep.* 615c–616a) and no great criminals whose sufferings must set examples (*Gorgias* 525c-e).[58] The lower animals' natural motions seem penalties enough (42b–c), with no indication that such motions (and their study) might be beautiful in themselves.[59]

Consequently, Timaeus does not construct a platform for Critias' encomium to Athenian heroism. If the war between Atlantis and Athens was a struggle between water and earth,[60] the greatest war displaying the greatest excellence (*Ti.* 25b–c) involved inferior combatants differing only in degree.[61] Does this mean, as Zuckert suggests, that Timaeus' story is apolitical?[62] Yes and no. Yes, if we consider much of the speech's express content, especially its obscuring regime differences that both Socrates and Critias treat as decisive. No, if we recognize its challenges to Critias, exhibiting a kind of resistance. Instead of introducing a cosmos and species subordinate to a narrative of political brilliance, Timaeus gives pride of place to the god who has come into being by speech—though in fact he appeared "before long ago" (*Criti.* 106a)—and diminishes political males whose greatest reward is transcending maleness (*Ti.* 42b). Critias may have planned to enlist him as accomplice within a project of intellectual control, but Timaeus has not stayed on message.[63] Yet this is not just resistance; a more dialogic politics is invited when Timaeus hands the speech over to Critias, "according to agreement"

(*kata tas homologias*), appealing to the equality of voices suppressed by Critias' attempted control.

Critias Reasserting

This invitation is immediately rejected with Critias' reply. Haughty and aggressive, he privileges his own impending speech over Timaeus' (now competition) because his will be "more difficult" (*chalepōtera*). "About the gods, Timaeus, speaking of them to human beings seems easier than it is to speak to us about mortals" (*Criti.* 107a–b). Being completely ignorant of gods but always at home with mortals, we insist that accounts of humans be as accurate as representations of our own intimately known bodies. But just as we do not interrogate vague and deceptive shadow sketches of nature and the universe, we easily accept stories about the heavenly and divine that have even little likelihood of being true, thus giving multiple opportunities to their originators (*Criti.* 107d–e). Timaeus' speech is marginalized and suspected.[64]

Two aspects of this are notable. First, in implying that he will address familiar themes, Critias potentially connects his strange (*atopos*) (*Ti.* 20d) story of ancient things to more contemporary events. Although there are no express comparisons of the Atlantean and Peloponnesian wars, readers are encouraged to make such comparisons by, if nothing else, the presence of Hermocrates. Further political parallels and elisions are plausible: between ancient Atlantis and contemporary Athens, both defeated aggressors; between ancient Athens and contemporary Syracuse, both victorious defenders; between ancient and contemporary Athens, mutually combative selves, inextricably linked.[65]

Second, Critias immediately disregards his own boundaries. While Timaeus has allegedly spoken vaguely about distant gods, Critias will (presumably) speak accurately about familiar human things. This ignores Timaeus' extensive (though strange) focus on humans, particularly on their bodies' organs and functions (*Ti.* 69c ff.). Critias' subsequent narrative will hardly ignore the gods, and his accounts of ancient Athens and Atlantis include numerous unprovable claims (*Criti.* 111b–112a, 114d–118a). What

do such crossings signify? Do they imply the impossibility of separating precision about the human and the present from speculation about the divine and the ancient? Or does the aspirant to control go out of control?[66] Although he begins with deference to Athena, Hephaestus, and Poseidon, he ends by presuming to speak for Zeus.

Having already disclosed the Atlantean war's outcome, Critias now interprets the origins and ways of the two combatants as prequel, revealing the ultimate reasons for the war (cf. *Hdt.* 1.1–5; *Thuc.* 1.23). Three features emerge.

First, Critias continues the transformative appropriation of his interlocutors' speeches. Its demotion notwithstanding, Timaeus' narrative is not ignored. The earthly home of fallen humans becomes the site of the most memorable political deeds. Departing from the violent and theologically subversive narrative of his Egyptian priest, Critias begins with the Olympic gods' peaceful division of the earth (*Criti.* 109b, 113b–c; cf. *Hdt.* 8.55), with Athena and Hephaestus supervising Athens and Poseidon founding Atlantis. For Timaeus, these gods and their forebears were the least significant of his likely story's divinities (*Ti.* 40e–41a). Critias' restoration might reflect deference to conventional piety, but it could also be interpreted as another creation.[67] Our extreme ignorance about the gods does not mean that we do not know where we stand regarding them (*Criti.* 107b; cf. *Hdt.* 2.3).[68] Earlier, according to the priest (*Ti.* 22c–d), and now reiterated by Critias (*Criti.* 109c–d), the gods have been replaced by turbulent nature. The recuperated Olympians may be Critias' characters, playing assigned roles.

Ancient Athens gets first attention within Critias' summaries of the powers (*dynameis*, placed first) and regimes (*politeias*) of the Atlantean war's adversaries (*Criti.* 109a). He reinforces the separation/privileging of this city's war-making class (*Criti.* 110c) but eliminates even the constrained philosophy mentioned by Socrates (*Ti.* 18a). The leisure enabled by the city's material progress and military security was occupied with myths and ancient stories (*Criti.* 110a). Power was vested in guardians whose principal occupation was fighting (*Criti.* 112d); the ruling structure of the regime seems

parallel to *Republic*'s timarchy (*Rep.* 550c–d). The rest of the citizens were craftsmen and farmers (*Rep.* 110c, 111e). Although they provided the warriors with sustenance in exchange for protection, exploitation was muted by both the guardians' moderation (*Rep.* 110c–d) and nature's abundance (*Rep.* 111c–112a).

Reflecting a broader competition with Socrates, Critias' Athenian narrative also implicitly revises the trajectory of *Republic*'s best regime. While Socrates' city began in human need, Critias' Athens originated with the gods' lottery. In Socrates' city, expanding needs revealed the origin of war and clarified why a separate military class might be internally threatening (*Rep.* 375b). Critias' Athens was a happy partnership of the followers of Athena and Hephaestus (*Criti.* 109c; cf. *Ti.* 24d), refining Socrates' city of "utmost necessity" without (immediately) falling victim to luxury.[69] Its citizens were able to control their population, producing enough children to sustain an effective military (*Criti.* 112d).[70] While these demographic challenges were quantitative and successfully overcome, those facing *Republic*'s best city were qualitative and fatally confounding. Begetting children out of season made the young unmusical, initiating the psychic conflict between intelligence and *thumos* that began the civic deteriorations tracked in Books VIII and IX (*Rep.* 546a ff.). Critias' ancient Athens succeeded as a regime where *Republic*'s best *politeia* failed, eventually overcome only by external necessity.

Second, the narrative of the Atlantean regime is more appreciative than expected.[71] While Atlantis's geographical integrity originated in the gods' agreement, its politics arose from another boundary crossing; its rulers descended from the mating of Poseidon and the mortal woman Kleito. In one sense, the regime was an oligarchy of ten kings, yet primary kingship was vested in the descendants of Poseidon's firstborn (*Criti.* 113e–114d).[72] Over time, the city was notable for both wealth—enabled by rich natural resources (*Criti.* 114e–115c) and perfected by spectacular construction projects that reconfigured nature's boundaries (*Criti.* 115c–116c; cf. *Ti.* 63c–d)—and what Critias calls virtue. Atlantis turned away from Timaeus' paradigmatic cosmic circles (*Ti.* 36c–d) toward

human-made (*Ti.* 118c) circles of earth and water (*Ti.* 115e) and away from his illuminating fire within (*Ti.* 45b–c) toward the sparkling brilliance (like fire: *purōdes*) of orichalkom extracted from the earth and shaped by hand (*Ti.* 116b–c). Such imposing material transformations must have demanded highly coordinated physical exertions. Slavery is not mentioned, but its presence is easily imagined (cf. *Hdt.* 2.108–9). Externally, the kings' imperial rule (*archē*) gave the city unlimited access to imported goods (*Criti.* 114d–e; cf. *Thuc.* 2.38). Although internal relations among the kings were governed by laws, within their own realms they "punished and executed whomever they might have wished" (*Criti.* 119c). When assembled, they hunted wild bulls, made sacrifices, and, at night, imposed further punishments (*Criti.* 120b–c). There was no philosophy; any wisdom resided in the *technai* enabling the regime's material achievements.[73]

Nonetheless, this exemplary regime deteriorated into *pleonexia* (*Criti.* 121b), prompting the greatest war. By attributing this deterioration to the erosion of Poseidon's divine legacy through gradual exposures to the mortal, Critias implies that *pleonexia* is simply part of humanness, offering a more tragic and more violent version of Timaeus' devolutions. Yet if the influence of the mortal is also traceable to descent from the woman (*Criti.* 112c, 121a), moral deterioration can be resisted by restoring the manliness diminished by Timaeus, introducing the third aspect of this ancient narrative's immediacy.

If Critias' history anticipates a future, we might detect an impulse toward creating a better Athens. Isabel-Dorothea Otto finds parallels between *Critias* and the imagined history of classical Athens offered by Socrates/Aspasia in *Menexenus*. Yet the differences between these projects are also significant. In orchestrating an Athenian battle with itself, Critias does not enhance the city's democratic legacies, as does *Menexenus*, but instead implies the need for a more radical transformation, drawing on Athenian and Atlantean pasts.[74] Each ancient city was ruled by the few, able to impose their will through a severity imaged by punishments inflicted by the Atlantean kings. Just as the Atlanteans' descent into

pleonexia was punished by ancient Athens and Zeus, will the contemporary deterioration of Athens be punished, first by Syracuse and Hermocrates and then by the Thirty and Critias?[75]

Yet Critias only begins his punishment narrative when the monologue abruptly stops. The termination may reflect textual incompleteness, requiring the reader to infer what a Platonically consistent Critias would say.[76] Yet it could also prompt a critical rereading of *Timaeus-Critias* in a spirit that Critias himself inadvertently encourages. If the most difficult speeches engage the familiar (*Criti.* 107e–108a), we are drawn to the elenctic practices of Socrates, always questioning the close at hand (*Grg.* 491a).[77] Here, we might imagine Socratic examinations that Plato does not represent but nonetheless encourages.

Socratics

Dialogue is implied as the conclusion of Timaeus' speech spans the end of *Timaeus* and the beginning of *Critias*, interrupting metaphysical monologue with conversational pragmatics and directing us, as readers, back toward politics.[78] Multivocality is reinforced by Socrates' hinting (*Criti.* 108a) the future, indefinite, contribution of Hermocrates and by our recalling the absent fourth member (*Ti.* 17a). Possible threads of this dialogic questioning can only be sketched here.

Identifying this Critias with the Critias of *Charmides*, we should remember that the latter ignores the soul, as both focus and site of self-examination (cf. *Ap.* 29d–e).[79] In *Timaeus-Critias*, this character mentions souls three times. The first (at *Ti.* 22b) is in reporting the Egyptian priest's comment that the Greeks have young souls, reflecting an ignorance of ancient things caused by nature's periodic destruction of cultural memories. Consistent with substituting nature's blind power for the gods' care, the priest traces the character of souls, not to divine demiourgy or intelligence, but to contingencies susceptible to natural disruption and cultural fragility (cf. *Hdt.* 2.77).

Critias himself refers to souls twice in the eponymous dialogue. At 109c, he says that the Olympic gods followed their peaceful

division of the earth with a supervision of mortals that rejected physical coercion, favoring the easier persuasion of souls. He images the soul as a ship's rudder, implying material composition and external agency. Although souls are allegedly guided by their own intelligence (*tēn autōn dianoian*), all mortals are really steered (*ekuberōn*) by the gods. Persuasion becomes equivalent to control. Thus understood, however, is it really easier to persuade souls than to coerce bodies?[80] Socrates' frustrations with interlocutors throughout the dialogues suggest otherwise, implying that distinctions between soul and body and therefore between persuasion and force are fluid.[81] Puzzles are, however, ignored at 112e when Critias proclaims that the ancient Athenians were renowned for both the beauty of their bodies and the all-encompassing virtue of their souls (*tēn tōn psuchōn pantoian aretēn*), staying within conventional categories of praise, not suspecting them as incomplete or misleading (*Chrm.* 157d) and within conventional distinctions between soul and body, not seeing their relation as puzzling or problematic (contrasting *Ti.* 34b–c, 87c–d). In both formulations, souls are synoptically described (*Criti.* 110b–c) from distances spanning millennia, frustrating critical attention, introduced only to be set aside.

Why will these perfectly virtuous ancient Athenians deteriorate into pleonectic imperialists? Assuming a parallel with Atlantis, perhaps divine influences diminished over time—possibly an erosion of the control exerted by the best (*Criti.* 119c–d)—calling not for self-examination between dialogically situated individuals but for a punishment of collectivities that will reinvigorate virtue. Yet if such a correction is to endure, any restored (or new), virtuous timarchy must avoid degeneration into the fatal greed of oligarchy (*Criti.* 120e–121a). In the regime comparisons of *Republic* VIII, timarchy descends rapidly into oligarchy because its deficient education depended on force more than persuasion, spawning a secret honoring of money (*Ti.* 548a–c).[82] Critias' parallel indictment of the ancient Atlanteans' worship of money emphasizes, with an irony that must be (on his part) unintentional, their eventual failure at self-rule (*Criti.* 121a). In Athens's more proximate political

future, Critias' valorized timarchy will become a violent oligarchy, an outcome that cannot be countered without the thoughtful consideration of, and by, the soul that he has doggedly avoided.

Although Timaeus' narrative continually challenges Critias' attempts to orchestrate its content, its place within the drama also invites Socratic questioning. In each dialogue, he begins (*Ti.* 27c; *Criti.* 106a) by addressing Socrates, inviting us to listen to what he says Socratically, implying a political interaction different from Critias' combativeness. Three interrogative foci stand out, though they can only be sketched. Two puzzle over the cornerstones of Timaeus' cosmology, its perfected teleology and its divine *dēmiourgos.* The third complicates its implications for practice. The overlap of these concerns itself implies a continuity between first philosophy and politics that can be explored and critiqued by dialogue.[83]

Timaeus/*Timaeus* concludes: "And so, let us now declare that our *logos* of the all has now reached an end [*telos*]. For having acquired animals mortal and immortal and having been all filled up, this cosmos has thus come to be—a visible animal embracing visible animals, a likeness of the god, a likeness of the intelligible, a sensed god; greatest and best, most beautiful and most perfect in its coming to be, the one heaven alone of its kind that it is" (*Ti.* 92c). On the surface, this statement offers what Thomas Johansen calls the entwined comprehensiveness of single cosmos and single speech.[84] Yet there are fault lines that elicit reservations about comprehensiveness in either sphere.[85] Teleologically, both the human species and the entire range of nonhuman animals are necessary for the cosmos to be similar, "that to which it was likened" (*Ti.* 39e). Yet this completeness requires the devolutionary crimes and punishments described just before Timaeus' summation. Necessity's pathologies are conditions for, not simply limitations on, the *cosmos*'s perfection (*Ti.* 70d); the success of the whole depends on the failures of some of the parts (*Ti.* 42a–b, 86b).[86]

Yet Timaeus' monologue does not simply transform naive impressions of failure into a philosophical narrative of perfection. Metaphysical *and* political languages awkwardly persist. The

extended treatment of disease (*Ti.* 81e–89d) is illustrative. Given the dialogue's historical and dramatic circumstances and the characterization of disease as bodily stasis (*Ti.* 82a, 85b) or war (*Ti.* 83a), the sequence invites comparison with Thucydides' plague narrative (*Thuc.* 2.47–54).[87] Timaeus' diagnostic is bracketed by references to the cosmic triangles (*Ti.* 82d, 89c) whose structures and motions account for the functions of the human body (*Ti.* 73b–c, cf. 53e, 57c–d, 58e) and whose deteriorations trigger illness (*Ti.* 81c–d). Yet while these framings respect Timaeus' mathematical paradigm, they relate disjunctively to the physiological pathologies forming the core of the narrative (*Ti.* 82a). Images of stasis and war reinforce the terrifying experience of disease (*Ti.* 81d) and preserve more familiar human and political categories of description (healthy, diseased) and judgment (virtue, vice) as complicating presences within the mathematical narrative of ordered perfection.[88]

Parallel ambiguities surround the contributions and status of the *dēmiourgos*. Broadie notes that the disorder initially confronted by this figure is not a formless chaos devoid of characteristic affections (*pathē*) (*Ti.* 48b), even potentials (*Ti.* 52d–e).[89] Perhaps cosmic disorder and order differ mainly in degree. The latter is better (*ameinon*) (*Ti.* 30a) than, thus comparable to, the former (cf. *Ti.* 53a–b, 69b–d). Even after the ordering of the *dēmiourgos*, the cosmic bodies constantly move and interpenetrate (*Ti.* 58b–c), battling (*Ti.* 57a–d) one another.[90] Inquiring further, are what Johansen calls pre-cosmic and cosmic motions,[91] different motions or the same motions seen from different points of view (*Ti.* 68e)?[92] The orderings of the *dēmiourgos* are guided by geometrical patterns and motions allegedly already there (*Ti.* 31c–32a, 39 b–c, 54d), but the bases of mathematics are recognized as human inventions (*Ti.* 47a; *Hdt.* 2.109). The identity of the *dēmiourgos* itself ends up blurred. Although it has generated subordinate deities with their own hierarchical functions (*Ti.* 40c, 41a, 69c), their sequential contributions to the ordered cosmos are eventually elided (*Ti.* 73e–74a), all of them becoming, first, *dēmiourgoi* (*Ti.* 75b) and then simply superiors (*hoi kreittous*) (*Ti.* 77c). Most radically, might the intelligibility and goodness of the cosmos reside in

an intelligence other than that of a *dēmiourgos* separate from and prior to human beings?[93] Might the activity of the *dēmiourgos* be divine because it represents the highest human possibilities (*Ti.* 41c–d, 46d–e, 53d–e, 90a–c)? When the devolutionary narrative reveals the origins of human fallenness, does it also reveal the conditions for understanding?[94] Perhaps this poetic representation of the *dēmiourgos* is neither (simply) foundational grounding for natural teleology nor (simply) reassuring story for pious gentlemen but (also) stimulating problematization of the meaning of the world's order.[95]

Finally, how might we connect Timaean cosmology and Socratic ethics? In *Gorgias* Socrates tells his antagonist Callicles that he falls into greedy overreaching because he neglects geometry (*Grg.* 507e–508a). Timaeus, too, argues (*Ti.* 32b–c) that just practice follows from actively theorizing the geometrical world order, apparently giving Socrates' aporetic dialogues foundational authority.[96] Sounding vaguely Socratic, Timaeus concludes (*Ti.* 86d–e), "[N]o one is bad voluntarily; it is either through a vicious condition of the body or a nurturing without education that the bad becomes bad," eventually exhorting us to "rectify the revolutions in our head that were distorted at birth, learning the harmonies and revolutions of the all, thereby making that which thinks alike to that which is thought" (*Ti.* 90d). Geometry becomes the *technē* of excellence (*Ti.* 89a, 90a).[97]

Yet comparing Timaean with Socratic ethics may reveal not an integrative need for geometrical grounding but an overlapping consensus (channeling Rawls) that (unlike Rawls's) highlights persisting differences.[98] Timaeus' denial that badness is voluntary targets physiological disorders or political cultural deficiencies as the causes of involuntary evil, claiming that while "each one must make every effort to flee the bad and seize its contrary in whatever way one is able . . . that of course goes with another way of speech" (*tropos allos logōn*) (*Ti.* 87 b). This other way may include the physical and psychic therapies that follow. Yet since Timaeus' narrative is a poetic imaginary that may be partially out of tune (*Criti.* 106b), it invites both appreciation and criticism.

Criticisms are prompted not only by fault lines within his cosmological story but also by what is omitted from his human story. Although he has earlier (*Ti.* 75c) noted that the shorter but better life should be chosen by all (*pantōs aireteon*), his concentration on the physiological and cultural sources of evil marginalizes the good and bad choices that are *Republic*'s ongoing concerns, potentially depriving Broadie's autonomy of its most essential, yet most fragile, psychological resource.[99] The urgent choices of the *Republic*'s concluding myth carry no guarantees (contrasting *Ti.* 42b), representing instead "the whole risk for a human being" exercised under multiple contingencies and requiring ceaseless attention and care (*Rep.* 618b–619b).[100] Such risks may be magnified by the problematic foundations of Timaean cosmology. While the divine craftsmen confidently reconstructed Achilles' shorter but better life (*Ti.* 75c), Socrates will transform another Achillean example (*Il.* 18.94–104) into a philosophic courage confronting a range of uncertainties (*Ap.* 28b–d). Perhaps Socrates' commitment to philosophy without cosmological assurance is the most significant human risk. Does the absence of a Socratic "account of the rational order of nature" stem simply from his inability to give one?[101]

Linking responsible autonomy to good choice directs us to the origins of bad choice, where we might reconnect *Timaeus* with *Gorgias* differently. In *Gorgias* Socrates traces his failure to persuade Callicles about the evils of doing injustice to the power of *erōs* (*Grg.* 513c–d), a passion that Timaeus underplays. Although he has earlier (*Ti.* 69c–d) pointed to all-venturing love (*epicheirētē pantos erōti*) as one of the terrible and necessary *pathēmata* (cf. *Ti.* 42a), his conclusion considers only *erōs*'s place in human generation. Human sexual *erōs* is clinically physiological (*Ti.* 90e–91a) with no acknowledgment of the *erōs* toward wholeness ennobled by Aristophanes or to the *erōs* for immortality driving Diotima's philosophy in the *Symposium*.[102] In one way, this sequence is comedic,[103] responding to Critias' request for a narrative of human origins with a crude description of where babies come from.[104] Yet there is also tragedy; manly *erōs* "attempts to

master all through its stinging desires" (*Ti.* 91b–c, cf. 86c). Stinging erotic longing (*Rep.* 573a–b) drives a tyrannical criminality absent from Timaeus' devolutions.

How might Timaeus confront such threats? Insofar as his speech marginalizes disturbing elements of the real world, he implicitly concedes the need to return to that world if we are to flee the bad and seize its contrary.[105] The "other way of speech" suitable for this task may be hinted in *Gorgias*' conclusion. Although all of the conversation's preceding *logoi* have been inadequate, the one exception is the *logos* that doing injustice is the greatest evil, preserved because no one has been able to refute it (*Grg.* 527a–b). The call is not for a comprehensive geometrical teleology but for conversations within an examined life, proportionality as conversation.[106] Could the numerical complexities of self-examination be one reason why Socrates hasn't numbered himself as one of *Timaeus-Critias*' participants?[107] In the *Republic*'s myth, failure to examine one's life—"practicing virtue by habit without philosophy" (*Rep.* 619c–d)—ends with tyranny, and readers should remember the dismissal of both soul and self-examination that continually marks Critias' presence in the dialogues.[108] Perhaps nodding to conversations in *Charmides*, Timaeus reiterates the ancient saying that "to act and to know one's own action only belongs appropriately to the soundminded [*sōphroni*]" (*Ti.* 72a–b).

Linking disregard for self-examination with political tyranny reinforces Jill Frank's judgments that Socrates treats soul justice as indispensable for civic justice and that the practice of Socratic philosophy is indispensable for soul justice.[109] Yet *Timaeus-Critias* may also show the political limits of Socratic philosophy. If erotic passions, drives toward preeminence, wars, and factions block the guidance of intelligence (*Ti.* 47e–48a, 69d), recourse to punishment returns. Although Critias' founding gods avoided force, that is what his Zeus envisages when he assembles the gods as *Critias* shuts down (*Criti.* 121b–c).[110] If there are parallels between Zeus' ancient punishment of Atlantis and Critias' impending punishment of Athens, could the abrupt conclusion of *Critias*' text continue this

trajectory, as a Platonic punishment of the character Critias that dramatically signals the limits of dialogue?[111]

Politics, Political Theory, First Philosophy

In dramatizing a "metaphysics" embedded in multiple political networks, *Timaeus-Critias* acknowledges the intellectual and pragmatic difficulties of isolating political theory from first philosophy. Recognizing this difficulty does not lead either to foundational consolidation or to deconstructive unmasking. The dialogues neither reduce political theory to applied metaphysics nor reduce first philosophy to a power move. Instead, they provide opportunities to think about these inherently puzzling relationships in more tangible and, perhaps, more articulate ways.

Timaeus-Critias' stories of cosmic origins and human generations are not narrated from a vantage point outside or insulated from the practical world but originate within a particular, controversial, historical time and political space. Monologic appearance and cosmic content notwithstanding, Timaeus' first philosophy is a social and contested practice, political as well as metaphysical. Yet though this first philosophy is politically relevant, it is not politically determined. Its themes and concerns allow (though they do not require) these interlocutors to move critically beyond their own historical circumstances and cultural templates toward a serious reflection on the character of the world and the place of human beings within it. Such movements may be prompted by wonder, an appreciation of the mathematical beauty of the cosmos, but they can also reflect unease about political cultural privileging, a need to go beyond valorizing one's own to thoughtfully reflecting on what's good, reversing Critias' transformation of Socrates' best city into his own allegedly truthful Athens. Philosophical curiosity and political anxiety may coalesce within another overlapping consensus.

That such movements are inevitably political is reinforced by their risks and fragilities. Timaeus continually reminds us of the vocabularies we would need to surrender if his geometrical representation were to be read as a complete account of the whole.

While our perceptions of what's above and below may be philosophically incorrect (*Ti.* 62c), don't we always need to know which way is up? Theorizing the cosmos can take us too far from where we are. In contrast, while Socrates may not "do" natural philosophy, once he asks what its questions mean for our practical lives, he engages first philosophy politically.

Conversely, appeals to natural or divine imperatives may too easily be placed in service to where we think we are or where we strive to go, validating aggressions and dominations in the name of nature or the gods (thinking of some of Thucydides' Syracusan and Athenian characters, *Thuc.* 4.61, 5.105). Here, we might second Rawls's call to disconnect political theory from comprehensive foundations. Yet freestanding political vocabularies may only be apparently so. While obviously differing from Rawls in substance, Critias affirms a political, not metaphysical, perspective when he recasts Socrates' theoretical best city as a historical achievement. Yet in assuming its own natural philosophy and philosophical anthropology, this narrative politicizes metaphysics while pretending to discount it. Critias' valorized past is as practically and intellectually oppressive as any comprehensive philosophical or religious doctrine, a powerful instance of what Paul Ricoeur characterizes as the abusive manipulation of memory.[112] Does the same hazard accompany allegedly nonmetaphysical political theories aspiring to map progressive futures?

In critically confronting such dangers, first philosophy may be political theory's friend, not its enemy. Perhaps what Rawls calls metaphysics is only one narrow way of characterizing first philosophy's inquiries. In *Timaeus-Critias*, an attempted intellectual tyranny is confronted by a performed philosophy with no pretensions to closure (it is only a likely story) or comprehensiveness (how one flees the bad and seizes its contrary requires another way of speech). Timaeus' narrative about the cosmos politically resists Critias' threatening visions even as it politically invites Socrates' critical examinations. Here, at least, political thinking and practice are enriched and continued, not threatened or displaced, by the questions and the activity of first philosophy.

Notes

1. Stuart Hampshire, introduction to *Ethics*, trans. E. M. Curley (London: Penguin Books, 1994), xv.
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3. Seyla Benhabib, *The Rights of Others* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 129–32; William Connolly, "Identity and Difference in Liberalism," in *Liberalism and the Good*, ed. R. Bruce Douglass, Gerald Mara, and Henry Richardson (New York: Routledge, 1990), 62; Jürgen Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, trans. William Mark Hohengarten (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 34–39; Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 208; Mark Warren, "Non-Foundationalism and Democratic Judgment," *Current Perspectives in Social Theory* 14 (1994): 153.
4. Connolly, "Identity and Difference in Liberalism," 66; Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, 31.
5. Gabriela Roxana Carone, *Plato's Cosmology and Its Ethical Dimensions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 8–9.
6. Peter Kalkavage, "Essay," in *Timaeus*, trans. Peter Kalkavage (Indianapolis: Focus, 2016), 100; Catherine Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 429.
7. Sarah Broadie, *Nature and Divinity in Plato's "Timaeus"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 42–43, 116, 120, 127–28, 131, 133–34, 151–53, 179.
8. John Sallis, *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's "Timaeus"* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1999), 167; Warman Welliver, *Character, Plot and Thought in Plato's "Timaeus-Critias"* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 44; Laurence Lampert and Christopher Planeaux, "Who's Who in Plato's *Timaeus-Critias* and Why," *Review of Metaphysics* 52, no. 1 (1998): 87–88, 107.
9. Jacob Howland, "Partisanship and the Work of Philosophy in Plato's *Timaeus*," *Review of Politics* 69, no. 1 (2007): 9; Kalkavage, "Essay," 101n13, 136–37; Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, 423–24.
10. Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. Peter Kalkavage (Indianapolis, IN: Focus, 2016), 19c (hereafter cited in-text as *Ti.*). All Greek texts consulted for this essay are those in the Loeb series.
11. J. Peter Euben, *The Tragedy of Political Theory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991); Jill Frank, *Poetic Justice: Rereading Plato's Republic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018); Gerald

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12. Christopher Gill, *Plato's Atlantis Story: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2017), 11; Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964), 50–51.
13. Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, 2–5.
14. Josiah Ober, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 4.
15. Seth Bernardete, *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 7; Frank, *Poetic Justice*, 31; Arlene Saxonhouse, "An Unspoken Theme in Plato's *Gorgias*: War," *Interpretation* 11, no. 2 (1983): 144, 167–69; Gerald Mara, *Between Specters of War and Visions of Peace: Dialogic Political Theory and the Challenges of Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 118.
16. Differing from Broadie, *Nature and Divinity in Plato's "Timaeus,"* 127–28; Carone, *Plato's Cosmology and Its Ethical Dimensions*, 3, 7; Thomas Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy: A Study of "Timaeus-Critias"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 181–82; Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *The Black Hunter: Forms of Thought and Forms of Society in the Greek World*, trans. Andrew Szegedy-Maszak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 283.
17. Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, trans. Steven Lattimore (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 6.72, 6.76–80, 7.73 (hereafter cited in-text as *Thuc.*); Gill, *Plato's Atlantis Story*, 6, 28; Lampert and Planeaux, "Who's Who in Plato's *Timaeus-Critias*," 91, 100–103.
18. Frank, *Poetic Justice*, 13.
19. Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 347e, 618c (hereafter cited in-text as *Rep*.).
20. See translator's note in *Ti.* 5n4; Diskin Clay, "Plato's Atlantis," in *Four Island Utopias*, ed. Diskin Clay and Andrea Purvis (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 1999), 60n18. Internal evidence suggests that the beginning of *Timaeus* cannot recall *Republic*'s meta-narration, let alone its narrated trajectory. See F. M. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology* (New York: Humanities Press 1952), 4; Gill, *Plato's Atlantis Story*, 11n28, 89; Howland, "Partisanship and the Work of Philosophy in Plato's *Timaeus*," 10; Christopher Planeaux, "Socrates, Bendis and Cephalus: Does Plato's *Republic* Have a Historical Setting?" (2020). https://cambridge.academia.edu/ChristopherPlaneaux (accessed May 22, 2021). Socrates' comments

in the *Republic* also blur the dialogue's own time horizons (cf. *Rep.* 327a with *Rep.* 350d).

21. Proposals for the dramatic date of *Timaeus-Critias* vary. Zuckert and Kalkavage situate the conversations relatively late (ca. 411 BCE) in the war, after the Sicilian disaster and foreshadowing the oligarchic conspiracy following the defeat of Athens (Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, 429; Kalkavage, "Essay," 100). Welliver positions them much earlier, in 429 BCE, speculating that they coincide with the onset of the plague (see *Thuc*. 2.47–49) and that the absent fourth party is an already ill Pericles (Welliver. *Character, Plot and Thought in Plato's "Timaeus-Critias,"* 44). Brisson is vaguer, proposing a dramatic date between 430 and 425 BCE (Luc Brisson, *Plato the Myth Maker*, trans. Gerard Naddaf [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000], 30). Taylor posits 421 BCE, reflecting the leisure beginning with the Peace of Nicias (A. E. Taylor, *A Commentary of Plato's "Timaeus"* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928], 15–17). Lampert and Planeaux also accept 421 BCE but note that it foreshadows the launching of the Sicilian campaign and argue that the absent character is Alcibiades, the invasion's most vigorous champion (see *Thuc.* 6.15) and the politician most in need of the dialogues' warnings against imperial aggression (Lampert and Planeaux, "Who's Who in Plato's *Timaeus-Critias*," 102, 121).
22. Sallis, *Chorology*, 27–28.
23. Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, 425; Kalkavage, "Essay,"102; Clay and Purvis, *Four Island Utopias*, 38; Gill, *Plato's Atlantis Story*, 9; Lampert and Planeaux, "Who's Who in Plato's *Timaeus-Critias*," 88–89; Howland, "Partisanship and the Work of Philosophy in Plato's *Timaeus*," 12–13; differing from Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, 9, 24–25, and Vidal-Naquet, *The Black Hunter*, 263.
24. Lampert and Planeaux, "Who's Who in Plato's *Timaeus-Critias*," 88–89. See also Jill Frank, "Wages of War: On Judgment in Plato's *Republic*," *Political Theory* 35, no. 4 (2007): 443–67; Michael Kochin, "War, Class and Justice in Plato's *Republic*," *Review of Metaphysics* 53, no. 2 (1999): 403–23.
25. Bloom translation slightly altered.
26. Plato, *Timaeus*, *Critias*, *Cleitophon*, *Menexenus*, *Epistles*, trans. R. G. Bury, Loeb Classical Library 234 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), *Seventh Letter* 324d.
27. Eva Brann, *The Music of the Republic* (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2004); Diskin Clay "The Plan of Plato's *Critias*," in *Interpreting the "Timaeus-Critias,"* ed. Tomás Calvo and Luc Brisson (Sankt Augustin,

Germany: Academia Verlag, 1997); Clay, "Plato's Atlantis"; Kalkavage, "Essay"; and Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, all believe that the Critias of *Timaeus-Critias* is the Thirty's leader. Lampert and Planeaux, "Who's Who in Plato's *Timaeus-Critias*"; Taylor, *A Commentary on Plato's "Timaeus"*; and Welliver, *Character, Plot and Thought in Plato's "Timaeus,"* are sure he is the oligarch's grandfather.

28. Lampert and Planeaux, "Who's Who in Plato's *Timaeus-Critias*," 96; Planeaux, "Socrates, Bendis, and Cephalus," 14–15; Christopher Planeaux, "Dramatic Dates of Plato's Dialogues (The Biographical History of Socrates)" (2021), 31–33. https://cambridge.academia.edu/ChristopherPlaneaux (accessed May 22, 2021).
29. Brisson, *Plato the Myth Maker*, 27n15, 29; Clay, "Plato's Atlantis," 58n15; Gill, *Plato's Atlantis Story*, 6, 19, 29, 31, 101, 105; Kalkavage, "Essay," 100; Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, 429–30n24); Welliver, *Character, Plot and Thought in Plato's "Timaeus,"* 46.
30. Plato, *Timaeus*, *Critias*, *Cleitophon*, *Menexenus*, *Epistles*, trans. R. G. Bury, Loeb Classical Library 234 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 108c (hereafter cited in-text as *Criti.*); Brisson, *Plato the Myth Maker*, 23, 56; Broadie, *Nature and Divinity in Plato's "Timaeus,"* 147, 164–65; Clay and Purvis, *Four Island Utopias*, 39; Kalkavage, "Essay," 105–6; Leo Strauss, *On Tyranny, Revised and Expanded Edition*, ed. Victor Gourevitch and Michael S. Roth (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 293; Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, 431, 470. Noting also Gill, *Plato's Atlantis Story*, 133, on Critias' claim to be improvising at *Criti.* 107e.
31. Welliver, *Character, Plot and Thought in Plato's "Timaeus,"* 36; Howland, "Partisanship and the Work of Philosophy in Plato's *Timaeus*," 19.
32. Cf. Herodotus, *The Persian Wars*, vol. 1, books 1–2, trans. A. D. Godley. Loeb Classical Library 117 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920), 2.43, 50, 58, 164–67. Hereafter cited in-text as *Hdt.*
33. Neither Thucydides nor Critias (cf. Broadie, *Nature and Divinity in Plato's "Timaeus,"* 131; Gill, *Plato's Atlantis Story*, 7, 17, 27) awards this distinction to the Persian wars. Only Thucydides (*Thuc.* 1.23) explains why. On Critias' treatment of Herodotus and Thucydides generally, see Broadie, *Nature and Divinity in Plato's "Timaeus,"* 150; Michael Erler, "Ideal und Geschichte. Die Rahmengespräche des *Timaios* und *Kritias* und Aristoteles' *Poetik*," in *Interpreting the "Timaeus-Critias,"* ed. Tomás Calvo and Luc Brisson (Sankt Augustin, Germany: Academia Verlag: 1997), 85, 93–94, 96; Christopher Gill "Plato's Atlantis Story and the Birth of Fiction," *Philosophy and Literature* 3, no. 1 (1979): 75; Gill,

Plato's Atlantis Story, 23, 105, 108, 113, 137, 159, 169; Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, 11, 39; Isabel-Dorothea Otto, "*Der Kritias* vor dem Hintergrund des *Menexenos*," in *Interpreting the "Timaeus-Critias,"* ed. Tomás Calvo and Luc Brisson (Sankt Augustin, Germany: Academia Verlag, 1997), 80–81; Vidal-Naquet, *The Black Hunter*, 267.

34. Contrasting Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution*, *Eudemian Ethics*, *Virtues and Vices*, trans. H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library 285 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), *Athenian Constitution* 11.
35. Otto, "*Der Kritias* vor dem Hintergrund des *Menexenos*," 80–81; Erler, "Ideal und Geschichte," 92; Christopher Gill, "Plato's Atlantis Story and the Birth of Fiction," *Philosophy and Literature* 3, no. 1 (1979): 76–77.
36. As for Brisson, *Plato the Myth Maker*, 23, 56; Broadie, *Nature and Divinity in Plato's "Timaeus,"* 147, 164–65; Clay and Purvis, *Four Island Utopias*, 39; Kalkavage, "Essay," 105–6; Lampert and Planeaux, "Who's Who in Plato's *Timaeus-Critias*," 97; Strauss, *On Tyranny*, 293; Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, 431, 470.
37. Noting other anomalies identified by Gill, *Plato's Atlantis Story*, 16n38, 133–34.
38. Plato, *Laches*, *Protagoras*, *Meno*, *Euthydemus*, trans. W. R. M. Lamb, Loeb Classical Library 165 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924), 319a (hereafter cited in-text as *Prt.*); Xenophon, *Hellenica*, vol. 1, books 1–4, trans. Carleton L. Brownson, Loeb Classical Library 88 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1918), 2.3.15; David Wolfsdorf, "The Historical Reader of Plato's *Protagoras*," *Classical Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (1998): 127–30.
39. Often translated as "moderation" but perhaps West and West's "soundmindedness" is better. See Plato, *Charmides*, trans. Thomas West and Grace Starry West (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1986). Hereafter cited in-text as *Chrm*.
40. Discussed at greater length in Gerald Mara, *The Civic Conversations of Thucydides and Plato* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2008).
41. Mara, *Socrates' Discursive Democracy*, 100–101.
42. Noting the different reading of Lampert and Planeaux, "Who's Who in Plato's *Timaeus-Critias*," 106.
43. Brann, *The Music of the Republic*.
44. The apparent judgment of Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, trans. W. H. D. Rouse, Loeb Classical Library 181 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924), 5. 311–29.
45. Lattimore translated adjusted.
46. Noting Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 15.

47. Broadie, *Nature and Divinity in Plato's "Timaeus,"* 47, 261–62; Carone, *Plato's Cosmology and Its Ethical Dimensions*, 3, 12, 188; Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 3; Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, 17. However, Brann, *The Music of the Republic*, 274; Kalkavage, "Essay," 96–97; and Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, disagree for dramatic reasons. Taylor, *A Commentary of Plato's "Timaeus,"* disagrees for historical ones.
48. Timaeus is called (*Ti.* 20a–b) a respected political figure who has reached the pinnacle of philosophy. There is no evidence either for his actual existence (Kathleen Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984], 81; Gill, *Plato's Atlantis Story*, 5, 101; Kalkavage, "Essay," 99) or against it (Lampert and Planeaux, "Who's Who in Plato's *Timaeus-Critias*," 92).
49. Kalkavage, "Essay," 114.
50. Carone, *Plato's Cosmology and Its Ethical Dimensions*, 4, 191, 193; Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, 2. Gill, *Plato's Atlantis Story*, 13, 24, sees more parallels.
51. Homer, *Iliad*, vol. 1, books 1–12, trans. A. T. Murray, Loeb Classical Library 170 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924), 9.410–16. Hereafter cited in-text as *Il.*
52. Homer, *Odyssey*, vol. 2, books 13–24, trans. A. T. Murray, Loeb Classical Library 105 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919), 24. 93–94. Hereafter cited in-text as *Od.*
53. For Kalkavage, "Essay," 113, Timaeus aims to produce good cosmopolitans.
54. Shouldn't the first humans in the devolutionary chain be sexless (Strauss, *The City and Man*, 111) or androgynous?
55. Broadie, *Nature and Divinity in Plato's "Timaeus,"* 19, 102, 112, 123, 280, 282; Carone, *Plato's Cosmology and Its Ethical Dimensions*, 6, 13, 22, 60. Agreeing more with Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, 429.
56. Kalkavage, "Essay," 135–36.
57. Differing from Kalkavage, "Essay," 135; Taylor, *A Commentary of Plato's "Timaeus,"* 644.
58. Plato, *Lysis*, *Symposium*, *Gorgias*, trans. W. R. M. Lamb, Loeb Classical Library 166 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), *Gorgias* 525c–e. Hereafter cited in-text as *Grg.*
59. Contrasting Aristotle, *Parts of Animals*, *Movement of Animals*, *Progression of Animals*, trans. A. L. Peck and E. S. Forster, Loeb Classical Library 323 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), 645a19–24.
60. Although who's who is disputed. Cf. Sallis, *Chorology*, 143; Gill, *Plato's Atlantis Story*, 28; Otto, "*Der Kritias* vor dem Hintergrund des

Menexenos," 75; Clay and Purvis, *Four Island Utopias*, 39; Vidal-Naquet, *The Black Hunter*, 273; Welliver, *Character, Plot and Thought in Plato's "Timaeus-Critias,"* 41–43. Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, 472, disagrees with the division.

61. Departing from Gill, *Plato's Atlantis Story*, 149, 157; Otto, "*Der Kritias* vor dem Hintergrund des *Menexenos*," 75–76.
62. Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, 462–68.
63. Kalkavage, "Essay," 138.
64. Differing from Gill, *Plato's Atlantis Story*, 31, 37, 136, 143, 153.
65. Clay, "The Plan of Plato's *Critias*," 54; Clay and Purvis, *Four Island Utopias*, 39; Gill, *Plato's Atlantis Story*, 29, 159, 167; Kalkavage, "Essay," 101; Otto, "*Der Kritias* vor dem Hintergrund des *Menexenos*," 79; Vidal-Naquet, *The Black Hunter*, 268; Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, 472.
66. Plato, *Laches. Protagoras*, *Meno*, *Euthydemus*, *Meno* 86d–e.
67. Strauss, *On Tyranny*, 293; Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, 471.
68. See translator's note in Plato, *Timaeus*, *Critias*, *Cleitophon*, *Menexenus*, *Epistles*, 260n1.
69. Vidal-Naquet, *The Black Hunter*, 269.
70. Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, 472.
71. Agreeing with Brann, *The Music of the Republic*, 70–71; Vidal-Naquet, *The Black Hunter*, 274; Welliver, *Plot, Character and Thought in Plato's "Timaeus-Critias,"* 42; Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, 473. Differing from Gill, *Plato's Atlantis Story*, 163, 166, 169, 171; Otto, "*Der Kritias* vor dem Hintergrund des *Menexenos*," 76; Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, 21–22.
72. Gill, *Plato's Atlantis Story*, 153; Vidal-Naquet, *The Black Hunter*, 277.
73. Seeing differences with Plato, *Laws*, vol. 2, books 7–12, trans. R. G. Bury, Loeb Classical Library 192 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 963c–d, unlike Vidal-Naquet, *The Black Hunter*, 275–76.
74. Plato, *Timaeus*, *Critias*, *Cleitophon*, *Menexenus*, *Epistles*, *Menexenus* 238c–d; Otto, "*Der Kritias* vor dem Hintergrund des *Menexenos*," 78–79; cf. Broadie, *Nature and Divinity in Plato's "Timaeus,"* 141, 143–44; Gill, *Plato's Atlantis Story*, 29, 159. cf. Clay and Purvis, *Four Island Utopias*, 39; Otto, "*Der Kritias* vor dem Hintergrund des *Menexenos*," 78; Vidal-Naquet, *The Black Hunter*, 274–75. Clay, "Plato's Atlantis," n58, comments: "The nine kings appointed *archontes* by the principal king of Atlantis correspond to the nine archons of Athens."
75. Where are the Spartans (Welliver, *Character, Plot and Thought in Plato's "Timaeus-Critias,"* 43)? The absence of Spartan voices in these dialogues is consistent with the regime's historical character. More speculatively,

this absence may image the oligarchs' refusal to acknowledge dependence on Spartan power (*Hellenica* 2.3).

76. Clay and Purvis, *Four Island Utopias*, 39-40; Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, 46; Gill, "Plato's Atlantis Story and the Birth of Fiction," 74; Gill, Plato's *Atlantis Story*, 37, 136; Lampert and Planeaux, "Who's Who in Plato's Timaeus-Critias," 99; Otto, "*Der Kritias* vor dem Hintergrund des *Menexenos*," 77; Erler, "Ideal und Geschichte," 92; Vidal-Naquet, *The Black Hunter*, 264.
77. Plato, *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, trans. Harold North Fowler, Loeb Classical Library 36 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), 29d–30a (hereafter cited in-text as *Ap.*); Plato, *Lysis*, *Symposium*, *Gorgias*, 221e–222a.
78. Differing from Michael Haslam, "A Note on Plato's Unfinished Dialogues," *American Journal of Philology* 97 (1976): 336–39.
79. Brann, *The Music of the Republic*, 80; *Chrm.* 40–41.
80. Plato, *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, *Phaedo* 98c–99b.
81. Comparing Howland, "Partisanship and the Work of Philosophy in Plato's *Timaeus*," 9, with Broadie, *Nature and Divinity in Plato's Timaeus*, 183, 234; Carone, *Plato's Cosmology and Its Ethical Dimensions*, 36, 194; Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, 99–100. References to persuasion at *Ti.* 48a and 56c are followed by intimations of force.
82. Just after disclosing timarchy's origin, Socrates comments that its "men . . . will desire money just as those in oligarchies do, and under cover of darkness pay savage honor (*timōntes agriōs*) to gold and silver" (*Rep.* 548a; Bloom translation slightly altered). The "treasure house full of gold which each man has destroys the regime" (*Rep.* 550d). Although the culture valorizes itself as timarchy because of its love of victory and honor (*Rep.* 548c), like the "Laconian regime" perhaps oligarchy is its reality (*Rep.* 545a; cf. Brasidas' speech in *Thuc.* 4.126). Note Mara, *Socrates' Discursive Democracy*, 138–40.
83. Reading the sequence of the dialogues as less dialectically progressive than Gill, *Plato's Atlantis Story*, 8, 16–17; 30, 38, 122–23. Agreeing, to a point, with Lampert and Planeaux, "Who's Who in Plato's *Timaeus-Critias*," 120–23, but going in some different directions.
84. Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, 197.
85. Cf. Sallis, *Chorology*, 137–38.
86. Kalkavage, "Essay," 137: the cosmos is "made better for having been made worse."
87. Noting differences. Unlike Thucydides (*Thuc.* 2.48), Timaeus offers an etiology of diseases within individual bodies. But there are no references

to infectious diseases across populations; strictly speaking, there are no plagues. And while cultures may educate badly (86e), their vulnerability to breakdown (*Thuc.* 2.53) goes unmentioned. Given the framing geometrical paradigm, the near-dismissal of curative medicine (*Ti.* 89b–d) is both unsurprising and disturbing. For Thucydides, care of the sick under such conditions is heroic (*Thuc.* 2.51).

88. In retaining the language of ordinary moral agents Timaeus thus rejects the approaches of Heraclitus (fr. 102 in Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, 31) and, further forward, of Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. Edwin Curley (London: Penguin Books, 1994), pt. 4, prop. 37, schol. 2, who exclude such immature responses from natural philosophy.
89. Broadie, *Nature and Divinity in Plato's "Timaeus,"* 182, 195, 234; differing from Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, 96–97.
90. Cf. with Heraclitus, fr. 76 in Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, 30.
91. Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, 97–98.
92. Kalkavage, "Essay," 129; Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, 124. Agreeing with Broadie, *Nature and Divinity in Plato's "Timaeus,"* 58, but seeing more potentials for disruption.
93. Sallis, *Chorology*, 52; cf. Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, 466.
94. While Kant's *Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History* construes fallenness as the condition for freedom.
95. Broadie, *Nature and Divinity in Plato's "Timaeus,"* 8–9; Kalkavage, "Essay," 139.
96. Suggested by Broadie, *Nature and Divinity in Plato's "Timaeus,"* 122, 177–78; Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, 14, 17.
97. Carone, *Plato's Cosmology and Its Ethical Dimensions*, 27.
98. Agreeing with Kalkavage, "Essay," 134, and Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, generally.
99. The *demiourgos* calls the crafted mortal animal the most beautiful and best unless it is the cause of its own evils emerging within itself (*ho ti mē kakōn auto eautō gignoito aition*) (*Ti.* 42e). Is this internal cause the vicious condition of the body that makes evils involuntary, *aition* as cause? Or is the *demiourgos* engaging in critical judgment, *aition* as accusation (*Ti.* 92b)? Another fault line?
100. Noting Mara, *Socrates' Discursive Democracy*, 74–82.
101. Noting Catherine Zuckert, "Partial Answers to Persistent Problems," *Perspectives on Political Science* 40, no. 4 (2011): 211.
102. Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, 422; Kalkavage, "Essay," 135.

103. Cf. Sallis, *Chorology*, 137–38.
104. Not reading this as (with Broadie, *Nature and Divinity in Plato's "Timaeus,"* 267–71) explanatory failure.
105. Differing from Broadie, *Nature and Divinity in Plato's "Timaeus,"* 123, and Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, 476.
106. Thanks to the provocative suggestion of Jill Frank.
107. Plato, *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, 230a (hereafter cited in-text as *Phdr.*); Noting Jacob Klein, *Greek Mathematical Thought and the Origin of Algebra*, trans. Eva Brann (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1968), 52, on Greek mathematical theory: "To determine a number means to count off in sequence the given single units, be they single objects of sense, single events within the soul or single 'pure' units." How Socrates could number himself is uncertain; cf. *Phdr.* 230a.
108. Brann, *The Music of the Republic*, 79–81.
109. Frank, *Poetic Justice*, 224.
110. Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, 44, and Clay, "Plato's Atlantis," 89–90, note the parallel with *Od.* 26–31.
111. Clay, "Plato's Atlantis," 60n18, suggests that the dialogue's abrupt ending is cued by Solon's unfinished poetry (*Ti.* 21c). If "Solon" is Critias' character, Plato punishes Critias by turning his own inventiveness against him.
112. Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 82.