

Most of the first book of Proclus *In Timaeum* is devoted to a discussion of Plato's treatment of the Atlantis story and its setting (including the Phaethon myth). It is also the key source of earlier treatments, going back through Porphyry's circle to Numenius and even Crantor. In Proclus' own treatment the story is viewed as historical, indeed as evidence of Egyptian enthusiasm for *recollecting* history in order to establish the universal patterns, or *periodoi*, that determine past, present, and future. However, in spite of a willingness to accept literal truth in the story, Proclus cannot discard the findings of earlier Platonists who accepted only an underlying truth, reflecting 'wars' that constantly occur between souls, *daemones*, or a combination of the two. The story is indeed an account of an actual occurrence, but that occurrence's conformity with a paradigm of 'conflict' within the universe (as claimed by Iamblichus) means that its use is for shedding light on a pattern of great importance for the study of the physical world, established as it is by the dyadic principle on a very high metaphysical level. Proper consideration of the Atlantis story is thus for Proclus an act of recollecting the universal and recalling the *periodoi* to which all peoples are subject, at the same time as considering the relation of these *periodoi* to the workings of the universe.

The alleged relation of an Egyptian method of using history to illuminate the universal to the *Pythagorean* practice of recollecting one's earlier lives (I, 124.4ff) provides a handy link with Proclus' insistence that the methodologies employed in the *Timaeus* are essentially 'Pythagorean', which in turn suggests dependence on images and symbols, both of which have a special place in myth. Compare the account of 'Egyptian' method at I, 129.23ff., where a key feature is the application of Plato's interpretation of the Phaethon myth to the Atlantis story that it introduces.

I argue that Proclus' evidence shows what *mythos* as opposed *historia* had been for earlier interpreters (at least to Porphyry), more terms of literary genre than of truth-status, though as in Porphyry's *De Antro Nympharum* the terminology of invention, *plassô*, *plasma*, had regularly been applied to *mythoi*. *Historia* was no more than a descriptive narrative based on the accounts of others. *Mythos* had *symbolic* meaning, *historia* a *literal* one. Numenius had inspired both ingenuity and debate, promoting symbolic meanings by demonstrating that literal meanings could not be taken seriously. After Numenius, no named figure resists symbolic meanings, though Longinus is behind the literalist arguments at I, 129.12-23. Iamblichus' attempt at reconciliation is the first sign of this dichotomy being questioned, possibly at the expense of misunderstanding the terms of the debate, and replacing the contrast between genres (and the related distinction between two types of authorial meaning) with a related one between levels at which something is true. *Mythos* was not the same for all Neoplatonists!

School of Liberal Arts,
University of Newcastle,
NSW 2308,
Australia
31st Aug. 05

American Philological Association,
292 Logan Hall, Univ. of Pennsylvania,
249 South 36th St.,
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19104-6304
USA

Dear APA,

Please find attached one abstract (for paper in session organised by S. Slaveva-Griffin), which I hope will reach you from here in time (I only received the request today). I am sorry that I cannot provide you with a copy on US paper, but it is more or less impossible to find here. The margins should be OK for though.

Regards,

Harold Tarrant