

Was Atlantis An Allegorical Flight of Fancy Like Plato's Cave And His Ideal Forms?

Post by "Cassius" of January 28, 2025 at 10:50 AM

From the wikipedia article:

Some ancient writers viewed Atlantis as fictional or metaphorical myth; others believed it to be real.^[30] [Aristotle](#) believed that Plato, his teacher, had invented the island to teach philosophy.^[21] The philosopher [Crantor](#), a student of Plato's student [Xenocrates](#), is cited often as an example of a writer who thought the story to be historical fact. His work, a commentary on *Timaeus*, is lost, but [Proclus](#), a [Neoplatonist](#) of the fifth century AD, reports on it.^[31] The passage in question has been represented in the modern literature either as claiming that Crantor visited Egypt, had conversations with priests, and saw hieroglyphs confirming the story, or, as claiming that he learned about them from other visitors to Egypt.^[32] Proclus wrote:

Quote

As for the whole of this account of the Atlanteans, some say that it is unadorned history, such as Crantor, the first commentator on Plato. Crantor also says that Plato's contemporaries used to criticize him jokingly for not being the inventor of his Republic but copying the institutions of the Egyptians. Plato took these critics seriously enough to assign to the Egyptians this story about the Athenians and Atlanteans, so as to make them say that the Athenians really once lived according to that system.

The next sentence is often translated "Crantor adds, that this is testified by the prophets of the Egyptians, who assert that these particulars [which are narrated by Plato] are written on pillars which are still preserved." But in the original, the sentence starts not with the name Crantor but with the ambiguous *He*; whether this referred to Crantor or to Plato is the subject of considerable debate. Proponents of both Atlantis as a metaphorical myth and Atlantis as history have argued that the pronoun refers to Crantor.^[33]

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Other ancient historians and philosophers who believed in the existence of Atlantis were [Strabo](#) and [Posidonius](#).^[37] Some have theorized that, before the sixth century BC, the "Pillars of Hercules" may have applied to mountains on either side of the [Gulf of Laconia](#), and also may have been part of the pillar cult of the Aegean.^{[38][39]} The mountains stood at either side of the southernmost gulf in Greece, the largest in the Peloponnese, and it opens onto the Mediterranean Sea. This would have placed Atlantis in the Mediterranean, lending credence to many details in Plato's discussion.

The fourth-century historian [Ammianus Marcellinus](#), relying on a lost work by [Timagenes](#), a historian writing in the first century BC, writes that the [Druids](#) of [Gaul](#) said that part of the inhabitants of Gaul had migrated there from distant islands. Some have understood Ammianus's testimony as a claim that at the time of Atlantis's sinking into the sea, its inhabitants fled to western Europe; but Ammianus, in fact, says that "the Drasidae (Druids) recall that a part of the population is indigenous but others also migrated in from islands and lands beyond the [Rhine](#)" (*Res Gestae* 15.9), an indication that the immigrants came to Gaul from the north (Britain, the Netherlands, or Germany), not from a theorized location in the Atlantic Ocean to the south-west.^[40] Instead, the Celts who dwelled along the ocean were reported to venerate twin gods, ([Dioscori](#)), who appeared to them coming from that ocean.^[41]