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Timaeus and Critias

Plato



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This excellent edition combines the Platonic full length dialogue of Timaeus with Critias - an unfinished but important fragment in classical philosophy.

Plato's *Timaeus* is a dialogue by the acclaimed Greek philosopher, wherein Timaeus is engaged by Socrates about a variety of topics.

Often overlooked by scholars until the late Victorian era, this dialog nevertheless represents important developments in Plato's thought regarding human nature and the physical nature of the world and reality. Today it remains highly considered by scholars in Ancient Greek philosophy, despite the majority of the text being essentially a monologue.

In this dialogue portions, Socrates and Timaeus discuss the nature of the physical world and of reality. The monologue portions are delivered by the titular Timaeus, who expostulates about the nature of the universe and of human existence to a receptive and thoughtful Socrates.

Notably among the chapters is a discussion of the Four Elements which were an important aspect in Greek thinking about the universe. Timaeus puts forward the idea that each element has a specific shape in manifestation - For Fire, a tetrahedron, for Air an Octahedron, for Water an Icosahedron, and for Earth a cube. The significance of the shapes becomes clear: Plato, as Timaeus, proposes they interact with the universe by means of their shape and ratio.

Plato's *Critias* is a fragment of another late period dialogue written in a similar tone to the Timaeus, to the point where scholars of antiquity regard the two as synonymous.

The topic discussed by Critias, Timeaus, Socrates and Hermocrates is one of intense interest even today: the lost city of Atlantis. After introducing the world's earliest creation by the Gods, we hear that the magnificent Atlantis was given to Poseidon; the God of the Sea.

The conversation proposes that after an initial period of holy alignment and splendour, the city of Atlantis had gradually become corrupted. Its citizenry came to lose their virtues and thus their alignment with the Gods. As a result, Zeus - the God of all Gods - commences to speak.

At this point however, the dialogue is cut short - leaving scholars with an ancient cliffhanger story that, over two millennia later, has never been resolved.

Translated by the highly regarded Oxford scholar **Benjamin Jowett**, this edition of *Timaeus and Critias* combines quality with inexpensiveness.

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