

The Dramatic Date of Plato's *Timaeus-Critias*

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IN THIS PAPER, I will argue that the dramatic date of Plato's *Timaeus-Critias*¹ might correspond to the festival of *Kallynteria* in the year 429 B.C. To defend this proposal, I address the following issues:

- (i) The refutation of the dramatic chronologies provided so far for the series *Timaeus-Critias*.
- (ii) The dramatic relationship between the *Republic* and the *Timaeus*, which I elaborate by resolving two objections raised against this interpretation. I argue that:
 - (a) the restriction of Socrates' summary of *Timaeus* 17B–19B to the contents of Books 2–5 of the *Republic* can be explained by the thesis of the *proto-Republic*.
 - (b) the alleged temporal inconsistency between the dramatic circumstances of the *Republic* and the *Timaeus* vanishes when the festival of the *Timaeus* is identified as the *Kallynteria*.

By disposing of these objections and building on Lampert's thesis about the dramatic chronology of the *Republic*, one may establish the *Kallynteria* of 429 as the dramatic date of the *Timaeus-Critias*.

1. *A brief status quaestionis: dramatic dates for the Timaeus-Critias*

Proposals for a dramatic date for the *Timaeus-Critias* can be divided into two main groups: those that consider providing a specific year unnecessary, and those that define the internal chronology of the dialogues precisely.

¹ The dramatic continuity between the two dialogues, evident from the discursive plan advanced in Pl. *Ti.* 27A–B, justifies referring to the two as a whole. See S. Broadie, *Nature and Divinity in Plato's Timaeus* (Cambridge 2012) 115; C. Gill, *Plato's Atlantis Story* (Liverpool 2017) 4.

Among the former proposals is Cornford's, whose attitude is striking. He notes that Plato chooses the *Greater Panathenaia* as the dramatic setting for the *Timaeus*, but with regard to the chronology of the dramatic setting he adds that "the date is of no importance."² In the same group, Rosenmeyer dates the work from "any time in the late fifth century prior to the return and death of Hermocrates."³ More recently, Broadie has insisted on the fictitious nature of the dialogue's dramatic context.⁴

Scholars in the latter group are few. This reflects the difficulty of establishing a clear dramatic date for the *Timaeus-Critias*. Brisson, for instance, suggests a time range, the period between 430 and 425.⁵ More specific proposals default mainly to one of two dates: the *Panathenaia* of 421 or that of 429. Either choice presents problems.

Taylor, a twentieth-century proponent of 421 for the *Timaeus*, argues that the date follows from the apparent youth of Hermocrates in *Ti.* 20A–B. From the presence of Timaeus of Locri in Athens he also infers that relations between the two cities were cordial at the time. Thus, he establishes a dramatic date "not later than about the time of the peace of Nicias (421 B.C.)," a choice consistent with the year he proposes for the conversation in the *Republic*.⁶ One should note that Taylor, following Burnet, presupposes a state of peace for both the *Republic* and the *Timaeus*; so do Lampert and Planeaux for the latter.⁷ However, as I observe below, their interpretation has shortcomings.

² F. M. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology. The Timaeus of Plato* (Indianapolis 1997 [1935]) 5.

³ T. H. Rosenmeyer, "The Family of Critias," *AJP* 70 (1949) 404–410, at 409.

⁴ Broadie, *Nature* 133.

⁵ L. Brisson, *Platon. Timée. Critias* (Paris 2001 [1992]) 71–72.

⁶ A. E. Taylor, *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* (London 1928) 14–17. He argues for dramatic continuity from the *Republic* to the *Timaeus*.

⁷ Taylor, *Commentary* 16; L. Lampert and C. Planeaux, "Who's Who in Plato's *Timaeus-Critias* and Why," *RMeta* 52 (1998) 87–125.

Lampert and Planeaux think that the presence in Athens of Timaeus of Locri and Hermocrates of Syracuse proves their thesis. They claim that only the truce established after the Peace of Nicias could have allowed them to travel to Athens; from this, the *Panathenaia* of 421 follows as the dramatic date of the *Timaeus*.⁸ However, even if we overlook that no other source reports the presence of Timaeus (a figure of dubious historicity) and Hermocrates, several reasons invite us to re-evaluate this proposal:

- (i) The truce after the Peace of Nicias was rather a covert war which soon led to open hostilities (Thuc. 5.25.3). Therefore, the “state of peace” assumed by Burnet, Taylor, and Lampert and Planeaux could not guarantee the safe visit to Athens of a Syracusan and a Locrian.
- (ii) For this reason, it makes better sense for Hermocrates and Timaeus to have visited Athens at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, before their homelands got involved in the conflict. Hermocrates would not have been well received in Athens at the date proposed by Lampert and Planeaux, since by then the Athenians had already intervened in Sicily (427, Thuc. 3.86)⁹ and the Syracusan general had already warned about the danger of Athenian foreign policy (Congress of Gela in 424, Thuc. 4.59–64). Moreover, at the end of 422 the Athenians were trying to undermine the growing power of Syracuse (Thuc. 5.4.5–6). As for Timaeus, Lampert and Planeaux speculate that the reason for his visit was to accompany Phaeax on his return to Athens, after the statesman’s diplomatic trip to Italy.¹⁰ However, since the agreement between the Athenians and the Locrians predated 422 (Thuc. 5.4–5), the need for a Locrian ambassador

⁸ Lampert and Planeaux, *RMeta* 52 (1998) 93–95.

⁹ Cf. W. Welliver, *Character, Plot and Thought in Plato’s Timaeus-Critias* (Leiden 1977) 54.

¹⁰ Lampert and Planeaux, *RMeta* 52 (1998) 94 n.22.

to travel to Athens with Phaeax sometime after the negotiations seems unlikely.

Even with these shortcomings, Lampert and Planeaux's arguments might be acceptable if Plato had not provided other clues to ascertain the dramatic date of the *Timaeus*. I believe he did: the reference to the *Republic* offers important guidance that makes it unnecessary to depend on characters who in 421 are completely absent from the sources. But before presenting my own proposal, I must review those by Welliver and Nails, for whom the *Panathenaia* of 429 is the dramatic setting of the *Timaeus-Critias*. A genealogical reconstruction of Plato's lineage, which includes the ancestry of Critias, provides the grounds for their conclusion. If, as they claim, this interlocutor is Critias III (in Davies's *APF*),¹¹ the dramatic date could not be much later than 430, when he would have been about ninety years old.¹² Welliver and Nails agree, therefore, that the presence of Critias III requires a date for the *Timaeus-Critias* of around 430. But they differ in their reasons for choosing 429: Welliver suggests that Pericles is the fourth absent guest, and that the date for his fatal illness would correspond to the setting of the *Timaeus*.¹³ Nails

¹¹ Already in J. Burnet, *Greek Philosophy* I (London 1914) 338 and Appendix, followed by Taylor, *Commentary* 23, and Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology* 1–2. More recently, Welliver, *Character* 50–57; Lampert and Planeaux, *RMeta* 52 (1998) 96–97; D. Nails, *The People of Plato. A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics* (Indianapolis 2002) 106–108.

¹² I agree with those who think it more likely that Plato chose Critias IV as the narrator of the struggle between Atlantis and primordial Athens: Rosenmeyer, *AJP* 70 (1949) 404–410; J. K. Davies, *Athenian Propertied Families* (Oxford 1971) 325–326; S. Dušanić, “Critias in the *Charmides*,” *Aevum* 74 (2000) 53–63, at 57 n.23; and H.-G. Nesselrath, *Platon: Kritias. Platon Werke VIII.4* (Göttingen 2006) 43–50. Cf. Procl. *In Ti.* I 70.20–25. Nevertheless, I believe that both Critias III and Critias IV fit a dramatic date of 429: if we follow Nails (*People* 106–108), the former would have been ninety-one years old, and latter thirty-one.

¹³ Thuc. 2.65; Plut. *Per.* 38.1; Welliver, *Character* 44 n.11.

observes that Socrates would have been away from Athens between 432 and 429, when he returned from Potidea.¹⁴

Although I agree with these scholars that the dramatic date of the *Timaeus-Critias* is the year 429, my reasons for this are different. I do not believe, moreover, that the festival mentioned in these dialogues was the *Panathenaia*. I propose instead that “the feast of the goddess” (*Ti.* 21A, 26E) was the *Kallynteria* (also dedicated to Athena), because this identification preserves the dramatic continuity between the *Republic* and the *Timaeus-Critias*. The choice of the *Kallynteria* makes it easy to determine the dramatic chronology of the *Timaeus-Critias* on the basis of the *Republic*.

2. *The dramatic relationship between the Republic and Timaeus-Critias*

As noted above, the key to the dramatic date of the *Timaeus-Critias* is its relationship to the *Republic*. Already in antiquity the link between these works was often affirmed (Procl. *In Ti.* I 8.30–9.12; Chalcid. *In Ti.* 1.5; Aristotle the Grammarian *ap.* Diog. Laert. 3.61–62). Because this is currently a controverted point, I will address the two objections raised: first, the apparent restriction of Socrates’ summary of the *Republic* to Books 2–5; and second, the alleged temporal inconsistency between the festival in the *Republic* and the festival in the *Timaeus-Critias*.

2.1 *The restriction of Socrates’ summary and the proto-Republic*

In *Timaeus* 17B–19B Socrates recapitulates for his hosts the conversation about the ideal constitution they had had the day before (when they had been his guests),¹⁵ and he asks them to describe how a city thus arranged acts in practice, specifically in war (19C, 20B–C). The dialogue is portrayed in continuity with the previous discussion. Socrates’ summary shows that the con-

¹⁴ Nails, *People* 107.

¹⁵ As mentioned above, in the *Timaeus* a fourth guest from the previous day is missing. On his identity see e.g. Welliver, *Character* 44, and Lampert and Planeaux, *RMeta* 52 (1998) 107–119.

tent of conversation of the previous day is consistent, albeit with notable omissions,¹⁶ with Books 2–5 of the *Republic*.

The restriction of his summary to these books has been one of the fundamental objections to the dramatic relationship between the *Republic* and the *Timaeus-Critias*.¹⁷ I believe, however, that this restriction is adequately explained by the thesis of the *proto-Republic*, i.e. the assumption of an earlier version of the *Republic* that circulated in the 390s roughly identifiable with Books 2–5.¹⁸

¹⁶ H. Thesleff, “The Early Version of Plato’s *Republic*,” *Arctos* 31 (1997) 149–174, at 151–152.

¹⁷ In support of the dramatic relationship between the *Republic* and the *Timaeus-Critias*: Procl. *In Ti.* I 8.30–1.9.12; Chalcid. *In Ti.* 1.5; T. H. Martin, *Études sur le Timée de Platon* (Paris 1981 [1841]) 1; B. Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato* II (New York 1871) 147; E. Rohde, *Psyche* (London 1925 [1894]) 477–478; G. Fraccaroli, *Platone. Il Timeo* (Turin 1906) 135–136 n.1; Burnet, *Greek Philosophy* I 339; Taylor, *Commentary* 12, 33–34, 52; R. G. Bury, *Timaeus, Critias, Cleitophon, Menexenus, Epistles / Plato* (Cambridge 2005 [1929]) 3; P. Shorey, *What Plato Said* (Chicago 1934) 330; A.-J. Festugière, *Commentaire sur le Timée* (Paris 1966) 34 n.1; S. Bernadete, “On Plato’s *Timaeus* and *Timaeus*’ Science Fiction,” *Interpretation* 2 (1971) 21–63; Nails, *People* 326 (only the *proto-Republic* constitutes the conversation on the evening before the *Timaeus-Critias*). In opposition: Cornford, *Plato’s Cosmology* 4–5; G. Ryle, *Plato’s Progress* (Cambridge 1966) 230–231; D. Clay, “Gaps in the Universe of the Platonic Dialogues,” *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 3 (1987) 131–157, at 143–146; P. Friedlander, *The Dialogues: Second and Third Periods* (New York 1969) 357; Lampert and Planeaux, *RMeta* 52 (1998) 88–90 n.10; G. Nagy, *Plato’s Rhapsody and Homer’s Music: The Poetics of the Panathenaic Festival* (Washington 2002) 56–59; Gill, *Plato’s Atlantis Story* 11–12 n.28.

¹⁸ The original form of the *proto-Republic* is disputed. Thesleff favors a non-dialogical form, perhaps a speech whose copies could have been distributed within a short period of time (*Arctos* 31 [1997] 153, 157). Although this hypothesis fits the notion of an early dissemination of the content of the work, I think it is more likely that the *proto-Republic* was a dialogue, for three reasons: the readier reception of this mode of presentation, Plato’s preference for it in his surviving works, and the greater ease with which the *proto-Republic* could have been integrated into the final version of the *Republic*. This particular point does not affect my argument: even if Thesleff were right, Plato could eventually give the *proto-Republic* the form of a dialogue and provide it with a dramatic setting.

This is not the place to list the arguments, recently reinforced by Thesleff and Nails,¹⁹ in favor of the *proto-Republic*, but instead to review its implications for the *Timaeus*: Socrates' summary corresponds to the key propositions of Books 2–3 and 5, and, for this reason, the conversation of the evening before can be identified with the *proto-Republic*.²⁰

Is there then a connection between the *Republic* and the *Timaeus-Critias* implicit in Socrates' summary of the *proto-Republic*? I believe the answer is yes for the following reasons:

- (i) The repeated insistence of ancient sources on the connection favors it, even if their formulations are not always entirely accurate.²¹
- (ii) Plato clearly wants his readers to construe a chronological relationship in their minds conceived as a succession of conversations. Otherwise, he could have dispensed with the temporal markers in the prologue to the *Timaeus*.
- (iii) Plato could have refrained from listing explicitly the points the interlocutors had discussed the previous day. Far from doing so, and far even from alluding to them, Socrates provides a detailed list of the points agreed. By having his

¹⁹ K. F. Hermann, *Geschichte und System der platonischen Philosophie* (New York 1976 [1839]) 536–537; J. Hirmer, “Entstehung und Komposition der Platonischen Politeia,” *Jahrb. f. cl. Phil.* Suppl. 23 (1897) 579–678, at 592–598. More recently, Ryle, *Plato's Progress* 55–64; H. Thesleff, *Studies in Platonic Chronology* (Helsinki 1982), “Platonic Chronology,” *Phronesis* 34 (1989) 1–26, at 10–15, and *Arctos* 31 (1997) 149–174, followed by D. Nails, *Agora, Academy, and the Conduct of Philosophy* (Boston 1995) 116–122, “The Dramatic Date of Plato's *Republic*,” *CJ* 93 (1998) 383–396, at 394–395, and *People* 324–326. *Contra*: C. Kahn, “Proleptic Composition in the *Republic*, or Why Book I Was Never a Separate Dialogue,” *CQ* 43 (1993) 131–42, at 131.

²⁰ Thesleff, *Arctos* 31 (1997) 151–153; Nails, *People* 325–326.

²¹ Procl. *In Ti.* I 8.30–9.12; Chalcid. *In Ti.* 1.5. The division of Plato's works adopted by Thrasyllus and other ancient commentators places the *Republic*, *Timaeus*, and *Critias* in that order in the tetralogy headed by the *Clitophon*. Other ancient scholars like Aristophanes the Grammarian grouped the *Republic*, *Timaeus*, and *Critias* into a trilogy (Diog. Laert. 3.61–62).

characters recapitulate the previous dialogue, Plato intends his audience to do so too.

- (iv) The points listed correspond to the content of the *proto-Republic*, which, some ancient testimonies make clear, was already known in the 390s.²² Although it is not possible to date the composition of the *Timaeus* with precision, no scholar gives it a date earlier than this decade.²³ Thus, while writing the prologue to the *Timaeus*, Plato is aware that his audience will identify the Socratic summary with the *Republic* in its then-current form.²⁴ If he had not intended the identification, he could have started the dialogue *in medias res* or chosen a different content for the summary.²⁵

In sum, I believe that one should ignore neither the temporal markers Plato takes pains to specify nor the link he encourages the reader to make between the summary in the *Timaeus* and the ideal city of the *Republic*. Although sharing a similar conviction and affirming that the *proto-Republic* was the prequel to the

²² The parallels with Aristophanes' *Assemblywomen*, dated to ca. 392, are eloquent in this respect. Cf. Thesleff, *Arctos* 31 (1997) 173; Nails, *Agora* 122, 124.

²³ Even though their methodologies vary, most authorities ascribe the *Timaeus* to the last stage of Plato's writings (see the tables in Nails, *Agora* 58–61). A rare exception is Owen, for whom this dialogue belongs to the “middle group”: G. E. L. Owen, “The Place of the *Timaeus* in Plato's Dialogues,” *CQ* 3 (1953) 79–95.

²⁴ Even if (as is widely assumed) Plato had written the *Timaeus* after the final version of *Republic*, he could have had reasons of his own for circumscribing the summary of *Republic* to Books 2–5. Perhaps the later ones were not relevant to his argument in the *Timaeus-Critias*: Books 6–10 already speak of the city in motion and of its deterioration (the *Timaeus-Critias* speak of the same subject but explain it differently). Although this suggestion agrees with the most common view on the *Timaeus*' chronology, I will propose an alternative below.

²⁵ As Thesleff observes, *Arctos* 31 (1997) 152, “if Plato had wanted to operate with pure fiction, it would have been easy for him to create a summary of a previous discussion which would have fitted his present theme much better than the summary given in the *Timaeus* actually does.”

Timaeus-Critias,²⁶ Nails's approach entails the rejection of their dramatic continuity. To see why, it is helpful to review her assumptions about the dramatic dating of the *Republic*.

- (i) Nails claims that the existence of a *proto-Republic* makes it impossible for us to establish a "single firm dramatic date" for the surviving version. Although her 1998 article does not explain why, it suggests that one must reject the fictive unity of this dialogue in its final form because the *Republic* was made public in parts.²⁷ She also states, again without explanation, that "Plato never 'edited' the dialogue from the standpoint of dramatic date at all." I do not see a reason to follow this view: even if Plato had published (or written) different parts at different times, he could still have done so with an overall plan in mind that included their temporal coherence.²⁸ Even Thesleff, who believes in the *proto-Republic* and the independent existence of an early version of Book 1, has argued for the structural unity of the work as a whole, which he calls a "pedimental composition."²⁹ Therefore, a *proto-Republic* (or an earlier version of Book 1) need not exclude the possibility that Plato designed a unitary dialogue with full internal coherence. Nothing requires that the work as a whole (which includes the *proto-Republic*) exhibit inconsistent dramatic dates. As Nails ob-

²⁶ Nails, *People* 326.

²⁷ Nails, *CJ* 93 (1998) 394–395.

²⁸ Although with a different purpose, we find a similar idea in Kahn, *CQ* 43 (1993) 139, when he says that Plato was able to compose Book 1 "with the plan of the whole *Republic* in view."

²⁹ Thesleff, *Arctos* 31 (1997) 149–150. In favor of the prior composition of book 1 as a literary unit: Hermann, *Geschichte* 538–540; Rohde, *Psyche* 477; J. Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* (Oxford 1981) 17; Thesleff, *Studies* 107–110, 137–138, *Phronesis* 34 (1989) 11 n.36, 14–15, *Arctos* 31 (1997) 161 n.26; G. Vlastos, *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Cambridge 1991) 46–47; Nails, *People* 324. Against this idea: C. D. C. Reeve, *Philosopher-kings. The Argument of Plato's Republic* (Princeton 1988) 22–23; Kahn, *CQ* 43 (1993) 131–142.

serves, temporal inconsistencies are what give rise to more than one possible dating.

- (ii) In her 2002 book, Nails ascribes different dramatic dates to Book 1, the *proto-Republic*, and the rest of the dialogue. In this way she allegedly avoids the problems posed by reconciling the biographies of the characters to their joint appearance in Plato's work.³⁰ But Lampert has already discussed the controverted historical points and shown that it is possible to set the entire *Republic* in the context of the *Bendideia* of 429.³¹ This implies that the *proto-Republic* too can be set in 429.³²

In view of this, I suggest that Plato composed the *Tímaeus-Critias* in thematic continuity with the *proto-Republic*, and with the intent to make the dramatic date of the latter extensive to the *Republic* as a whole, so as to create a connected sequence for the

³⁰ Nails, *People* 324–325.

³¹ L. Lampert, *How Philosophy Became Socratic. A Study of Plato's Protagoras, Charmides, and Republic* (Chicago 2010) 405–411. See also C. Planeaux, "The Date of Bendis' Entry into Attica," *CJ* 96 (2000/1) 165–192, at 179–181. Many ascribe the conversation in the *Republic* to a date between 421 and 411: L. Campbell, *Plato's Republic* (Oxford 1894) III 2; Taylor, *Commentary* 16; K. J. Dover, *Lysias and the Corpus Lysiacum* (Berkeley 1968) 53; A. Bloom, *The Republic of Plato* (New York 1968) 440 n.3; M. C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness* (Cambridge 1986) 136; J. Howland, *The Republic: The Odyssey of Philosophy* (New York 1993) xii; R. Waterfield, *Plato. Republic* (Oxford 1993) 327. I cannot discuss here the problems with these views. Suffice it to say that Lampert's interpretation is the only one that combines the prosopography of the characters with the epigraphic testimonies and the historical circumstances that favour 429 as the year when the *Bendideia* entered the Attic calendar (note the precise wording of *Resp.* 327A).

³² Thesleff, *Arctos* 31 (1997) 152, argues that the reference in the *Tímaeus* to the conversation of the previous day may imply that, in contrast to other dialogues, the *proto-Republic* in its original form lacked a "fixed literary setting." I, on the other hand, believe that the inclusion of the *proto-Republic* in the *Republic* and the temporal markers in the *Tímaeus* in the context of Socrates' summary confirm the Plato's desire to offer a specific setting for the *proto-Republic*. This setting in turn is linked both to the final *Republic* and to the *Tímaeus-Critias*.

settings of these dialogues. If 429 is indeed the dramatic date of the *proto-Republic*, and if its content is identified with Socrates' summary in the *Timaeus*, then 429 must also be the year of the *Timaeus-Critias*.

Why, then, restrict the summary to the points in Books 2–5 of the *Republic*? First, because those are the ones most in line with the aims of the *Timaeus-Critias*:³³ the emphasis on the manner of life of the guardians,³⁴ reiterated in *Ti.* 17C–18B, perfectly matches the task of establishing how the ideal city acts in matters of war. Second, because this would have been the content readily identifiable by Plato's readers if the *proto-Republic* had already been in circulation for some time. And third, because it is quite possible that Plato wrote the *Timaeus* when the *Republic* as we know it today did not yet exist. We do not have any strong evidence of its existence before the 350s B.C.³⁵ In fact, Ryle has argued that Plato revised the *Republic* after he wrote the *Timaeus*, and that its final form was made public towards the end of the 360s.³⁶ This chronology would explain the *Timaeus*' resort to the *proto-Republic*. Under this scenario Plato would have expected his audience to place the (*proto-*)*Republic* in the *Bendideia* of 429, on the eve of the *Timaeus*. This authorial clue would fix the setting of the *Timaeus* and, by extension, of the *Critias* in a manner readily recognisable by his contemporaries.

³³ On the appropriateness of the *proto-Republic* as an introduction to the story of the conflict between Atlantis and early Athens see Ryle, *Plato's Progress* 231–232, and Thesleff, *Arctos* 31 (1997) 152.

³⁴ *Resp.* 369B–374D, 374D–376C, 376C–412B, 416D–417B, 461E–466D.

³⁵ Cf. Ryle, *Plato's Progress* 245; Thesleff, *Arctos* 31 (1997) 165. The most explicit witness to the existence of the *Republic* is Arist. *Pol.* 1261a6.

³⁶ Ryle, *Plato's Progress* 240, 249. Ryle's timetable for the composition of Plato's dialogues is very complex and not all of his theories are convincing. But the revision of the *Republic* after the *Timaeus* had been composed implies its late distribution in its current form and is consistent with the lack of evidence for it before the 350's.

2.2 *In support of temporal consistency*

The festival of the *Timaeus* is referred to in conversation as “the feast of the goddess” without further details. Traditionally, it has been identified as the *Panathenaia*, celebrated in the month of Hecatombaion.³⁷ So well established is this identification that Nagy does not hesitate to use it to strengthen his argument about the Homeric echoes of the *Timaeus-Critias*. The links he establishes between this festival and the speeches of the characters,³⁸ although attractive, presume a dramatic context built on vague references in the *Timaeus* (21A τὴν θεὸν ἅμα ἐν τῇ πανηγύρει, 26E τῆς θεοῦ θυσίᾳ). Contrast this with the clarity with which Plato specifies the *Panathenaia* in the *Ion* and the *Parmenides* (*Ion* 530B τὰ Παναθήναια, *Parm.* 127A–B εἰς Παναθήναια). This suggests that, if Plato had wanted to allude to the *Panathenaia* in the *Timaeus*, he would have made it clear too. Furthermore, a *Panathenaic* setting would obstruct the dramatic continuity between the *Republic* and

³⁷ Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology* 1, 5; Welliver, *Character* 12 n.10; K. A. Morgan, “Designer History: Plato's Atlantis Story and Fourth-Century Ideology,” *JHS* 118 (1998) 101–118, at 104, 106; Lampert and Planeaux, *RMeta* 52 (1998) 90 n.10; Nails, *People* 326; Nagy, *Plato's Rhapsody* 56–59; M.-L. Desclos, “Les Prologues du Timée et du Critias,” *EPlaton* 2 (2006) 175–202, at 178–179; T. K. Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy. A Study of the Timaeus-Critias* (Cambridge 2008 [2004]) 38; T. Garvey, “Plato's Atlantis Story: A Prose Hymn to Athena,” *GRBS* 48 (2008) 381–392, at 381; R. Waterfield, *Plato. Timaeus and Critias* (Oxford 2008) xii; Lampert, *How Philosophy Became Socratic* 407 n.182; D. J. O'Meara, *Cosmology and Politics in Plato's Later Works* (Cambridge 2017) 13.

³⁸ Nagy, *Plato's Rhapsody* 53. Socrates' comparison of his interlocutors' speeches with hymns to the goddess is suitable for the *Panathenaia*, but also for other festivals in honor of Athena. Regarding the *Apatouria* (*Ti.* 21B) as an evocation of the *Panathenaia* (Nagy 54), one should note that these festivals do not have much in common beyond the rhapsodic competition. The participants in the *Panathenaia* were diverse and embraced the entire community (cf. S. M. Wijma, *Embracing the Immigrant. The Participation of Metics in Athenian Polis Religion* [Stuttgart 2014] 37–64). In the *Apatouria* only male citizens and their children participated in their various phratries (cf. R. Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens* [Oxford 2005] 458–459).

the *Timaeus-Critias*, since the inauguration of the *Bendideia* took place on the 19th of Thargelion of 429.³⁹

As noted above, the setting of the *Republic* was already tied in antiquity to that of the *Timaeus-Critias*. Proclus thought that in the *Timaeus* Socrates narrated to Timaeus, Critias, Hermocrates (and a fourth anonymous guest) the events of the previous day in the house of Polemarchus (*In Ti.* I 8.30–9.12).⁴⁰ Therefore, he asserts that the feast in the *Timaeus* cannot be the *Greater Panathenaia*, which was too distant from the *Bendideia*, but the *Lesser Panathenaia* (I 26.10–20, 84.25–28). Although I think it is important that he emphasized the link with the *Republic*, clearly he had a deficient knowledge of the Athenian sacred calendar. As Fraccaroli (followed by Taylor and Festugière) has pointed out, he may have confused it with the *Plynteria*, which, like the *Bendideia*, was celebrated at the end of Thargelion, and, like the *Panathenaia*, was dedicated to Athena.⁴¹ Not enough attention has been paid to this alternative. Granted, as all assume, that the goddess must be Athena, why assume that the festival must be the *Panathenaia*, especially when, in keeping with the dramatic relationship explored here, there are other festivals to Athena much closer in time to the *Bendideia*?

³⁹ Nagy accepts that the *Timaeus* makes reference to the *Republic* but relies on the presence of different interlocutors to understand the summary in *Ti.* 17B–19B as a fiction (*Plato's Rhapsody* 56–57). In so doing, he overlooks that the *Republic* is narrated to an audience that could well have included Timaeus, Critias, and Hermocrates. He also refers to the interval between the *Bendideia* and the *Panathenaia*, but without discussing the identification of the latter. It is striking that, while rejecting the chronological sequence, he insists on the intertextuality between the *Republic* and the *Timaeus* by relying on the term *χθές* (“yesterday”) (*Plato's Rhapsody* 57–59).

⁴⁰ Chalcid. *In Ti.* 1.5 reports that Socrates was said to have recounted the ten books of the *Republic* the day before the *Timaeus*.

⁴¹ Fraccaroli, *Platone* 135–136 n.1; Taylor, *Commentary* 45; Festugière, *Commentaire* 121 n.2 on *In Ti.* I 84.28. See also P. Hadot, “Physique et poésie dans le *Timée* de Platon,” *RevTheolPhil* 115 (1983) 113–133, at 117 n.20.

According to Proclus, the first-century grammarian Aristokles of Rhodes said that the *Bendideia* was celebrated on the 20th of Thargelion⁴² and it was followed by “the festivals relating to Athena” (*In Ti.* I 85.26–31). What were these festivals that Proclus confused with the *Lesser Panathenaia*? For an answer I suggest that we consider the *Kallynteria* and the *Plynteria*, both linked to Athena and closely connected to each other. As already advanced, identifying the feast in the *Timaeus* with the *Kallynteria* dissolves the alleged chronological inconsistency between the settings of the *Republic* and the *Timaeus-Critias*.

Now, the exact dates for these festivals are controverted:

- (i) Xenophon records that Alcibiades returned to Athens on the day of the *Plynteria* when Athena’s statue was covered. For this reason, the Athenians regarded the day as *apophras* and avoided embarking on any serious business. That Alcibiades arrived on this very day was perceived as a bad omen (*Hell.* 1.4.12).
- (ii) Plutarch reports that Alcibiades returned to Athens on the very day of the *Plynteria*, a day considered *nefastus* because of the removal of the *kosmos* of the goddess and the concealment of her image. He adds that these rituals were performed in secret by the Praxiergidai (*Alc.* 34.1). Plutarch’s date, the 25th of Thargelion, is generally accepted.⁴³

⁴² Because the *Bendideia* included an evening festival (*IG I³* 136.26, 27; *Resp.* 328A8), Aristokles’ statement does not contradict that Bendis’ festival started on the 19th of Thargelion (cf. Procl. *In Ti.* I 26.13–15).

⁴³ Plutarch’s dating is accepted by L. Deubner, *Attische Feste* (Berlin 1932) 18; D. M. Lewis, “Notes on Attic Inscriptions,” *BSA* 49 (1954) 17–50, at 20; J. D. Mikalson, *The Sacred and Civil Calendar of the Athenian Year* (Princeton 1975) 160–161; H. W. Parke, *Festivals of the Athenians* (London 1986 [1977]) 152; J. M. Mansfield, *The Robe of Athena and the Panathenaic Peplos* (Berkeley 1985) 371; M. Christopoulos, “Ὁργια ἀπόρητα. Quelques remarques sur les rites des Plyntéries,” *Kernos* 5 (1992) 27–39, at 27; N. Robertson, “The Praxiergidae Decree (*IG I³* 7) and the Dressing of Athena’s Statue with the Peplos,” *GRBS* 44 (2004) 111–161, at 128; Parker, *Polytheism* 478; C. Sourvinou-Inwood,

- (iii) Hesychius says that *Kallynteria* derives from *kallynein kai kosmein kai lamprynein* and links this ritual to Aglauros, who “adorned” (*ekosmese*) the gods (s.v. *Plynteria*; *Anecd.Bekk.* I 270.1–3).⁴⁴
- (iv) Photius adds information about the dates for these festivals. He speaks of *Kallynteria kai Plynteria*, setting down their order in the calendar. However, he likely errs in placing the *Kallynteria* on the day for *Bendideia* and assigning the *Plynteria* to a day on which assembly meetings are attested (*Lex.* κ 124 s.v. *Kallynteria kai Plynteria*).⁴⁵

These sources agree only on the dating of the *Plynteria*. For the *Kallynteria* no primary source offers a feasible date.⁴⁶ Therefore some scholars place it before, some after, the *Plynteria*. The establishment of the sequence is complicated by the rituals that took place during the festivals, which some use to infer the order. There is a consensus that the *Plynteria* involved washing rites.⁴⁷ The same cannot be said, however, for the *Kallynteria*: some interpret it as adorning rites, others give priority to the cleansing

Athenian Myths and Festivals. Aglauros, Erechtheus, Plynteria, Panathenaia, Dionysia (Oxford 2011) 136, 194.

⁴⁴ Both the *Kallynteria* and the *Plynteria* were dedicated to Athena; Aglauros was a “secondary cult recipient” (Sourvinou-Inwood, *Athenian Myths and Festivals* 154–155; cf. Parker, *Polytheism* 474).

⁴⁵ For assemblies on the 29th of Thargelion see Mikalson, *Sacred and Civil Calendar* 161–162. Mommsen had already pointed out Photius’ error (A. Mommsen, *Feste der Stadt Athen im Altertum* [Leipzig 1898] 493), followed by Lewis, *BSA* 49 (1954) 20. On the overlap of the *Bendideia* and the *Kallynteria* see Deubner, *Attische Feste* 17–18; Mikalson 160–161; Parke, *Festivals* 152; and Sourvinou-Inwood, *Athenian Myths and Festivals* 194. Christopoulos, *Kernos* 5 (1992) 27, notices Photius’ error but says nothing about the overlap. Sourvinou-Inwood (194) cites Parker in opposition to Photius’ dates, but his position on the *Kallynteria* is not clear to me; after stating the objections to Photius, he declares them “not quite conclusive” (*Polytheism* 475).

⁴⁶ Cf. Mikalson, *Sacred and Civil Calendar* 158.

⁴⁷ It also included a procession (Hesych. and Phot. s.v. *hegeteria*) whose details are controversial. For a recent proposal see Sourvinou-Inwood, *Sacred and Civil Festivals* 158–165.

rites, while a third group allows for both activities.⁴⁸ Some scholars infer the sequence by assuming a logical order: either that the cleansing of the *Plynteria* naturally precedes the adorning rites of the *Kallynteria*; or, conversely, that the cleansing of the temple of Athena Polias during the *Kallynteria* naturally preceded the bathing of the cult statue in the *Plynteria*. Other proposals rely less on common sense and more on the ritual complexity of Greek religion.

I urge instead that we consider the order transmitted by the sources. Several authorities rely on Plutarch for the dating of the *Plynteria* but follow Photius for the *Kallynteria-Plynteria* sequence. Of these, some understand the *Kallynteria* as a ritual cleansing of the temple of Athena Polias,⁴⁹ but not all who hold this view resort to the festival's nature to reinforce the order: the sources suffice to support the precedence of the *Kallynteria*. Lexical analysis of the verb *kallynein*, in particular, plays an important role in the argument.⁵⁰ Thus, for example, against the apparent incongruity of adorning before cleansing, Harrison remarks that this verb not only means “to beautify, but to brush out, to sweep, to give a shine to”; and she compares the corresponding ritual with the Roman *everrucatio*.⁵¹ Parker notes that “καλλύνω and

⁴⁸ *Kallynteria* as cleansing rites: Mommsen, *Feste* 487; J. E. Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (Cambridge 1903) 115; Deubner, *Attische Feste* 20; Parke, *Festivals* 152. *Kallynteria* as an adorning festival: Mansfield, *Robe* 370; Robertson, *GRBS* 44 (2004) 129. *Kallynteria* as a combination of ornamental and cleansing rites: Lewis, *BSA* 49 (1954) 20; Sourvinou-Inwood, *Sacred and Civil Festivals* 155–156.

⁴⁹ Mommsen, *Feste* 486–488; Harrison, *Prolegomena* 115; Deubner, *Attische Feste* 18, 20; Parke, *Festivals* 152. Lewis, who links the closure of the temple of Athena Polias during Thargelion with the *Kallynteria*, thinks that this festival also included adornment rituals (*BSA* 49 [1954] 20); but the *Kallynteria-Plynteria* sequence still made sense: the statue of the goddess would have been stripped of the *kosmos* in the *Plynteria*.

⁵⁰ Note the use of *kallynein* to explain the term *Kallynteria* in Hesych. s.v. *Plynteria*; *Anecd.Bekk.* I 270.1–3; and Phot. κ 124 s.v. *Kallynteria kai Plynteria*.

⁵¹ Harrison, *Prolegomena* 115.

associated words typically refer to cleaning rather than decoration.”⁵²

Even some who consider the *Kallynteria* strictly an adornment festival still place it before the *Plynteria*. So, e.g., Mansfield, who in view of the days without assembly meetings before the *Plynteria* argues that the *Kallynteria* could have taken place on the 20th, 21st, 22nd, or 24th of Thargelion.⁵³ He adds that Philochoros’ statement that the 20th, 21st, and 22nd were consecrated to Athena could refer to the *Kallynteria* (*FGrHist* 328 FF 189–190). Thus he favors a date between the 20th and 22nd, with a preference for the latter.⁵⁴

Other authors defend the *Plynteria-Kallynteria* sequence. So does Robertson, who understands the *Kallynteria* as adorning rites. For him, the implications of *kallynein* tied to cleansing are “obviously secondary, and no doubt colloquial to begin with and quite unsuited to a festival name.” If so, the *Kallynteria* must precede the *Plynteria*: “Adorning will naturally follow washing.” Thus, he affirms that the *Kallynteria* would have been held after the *Plynteria*, probably on the 28th of Thargelion.⁵⁵ But this argument faces two objections: first, his judgment about propriety is wholly subjective; second, it simply does not follow that ritual washing must precede adorning rites. Quite apart from the ritual complexity of Greek religion, one need only read Photius to find evidence in favor precisely of the disputed sequence.

⁵² Parker, *Polytheism* 475.

⁵³ For days without assemblies see Mikalson, *Sacred and Civil Calendar* 159–160, 202. Regarding the sequence of the festivals, Mikalson does not take a definite position. He places the *Kallynteria* between the 24th and 28th, the 25th excluded (the day of the *Plynteria*). His lower boundary of the 24th is inexplicably high.

⁵⁴ Mansfield, *Robe* 370 and 384 n.16. In line with Mansfield, Ridgway situates the *Kallynteria* between the 20th and 23rd, reserving the 25th and 26th for the *Plynteria*: B. S. Ridgway, in J. Neils (ed.), *Goddess and Polis* (Princeton 1992) 124.

⁵⁵ Robertson, *GRBS* 44 (2004) 129–130.

Sourvinou-Inwood has recently argued that the *Kallynteria* followed the *Plynteria* (namely on the 27th and 28th of Thargelion).⁵⁶ Unlike Robertson, she claims that its rituals combined the cleansing of the temple of Athena Polias with the adornment of her statue. To justify the sequence “first cleansing, then adornment,” she suggests that after the washing of Athena’s peplos on the Acropolis on the 25th of Thargelion and the bathing of her statue in Phaleron on the 26th (the *Plynteria*), her image returned to the Acropolis in the morning of the 27th, the first day of the *Kallynteria*. To evade the incongruity of placing a recently bathed statue into a temple yet unclean, she proposes that the image remained near the altar outside until the 28th. Meanwhile the temple would have been cleansed as part of the *Kallynteria*.⁵⁷ This intricate process seems inherently implausible. If housing a clean statue in a temple in need of cleansing seems unusual, so it is to leave the image outside for a day. The inverse order seems more natural. Sourvinou-Inwood’s logic here is inconsistent with her criticism of Photius, whom she reproaches with “rationalizing” for assuming that the cleansing of the temple must precede the bathing of the statue and that the order of the feasts in the calendar must correspond to the mythological sequence associated with them.⁵⁸ No ancient source supports this element of Sourvinou-Inwood’s reconstruction. In fact, she rejects Photius, the only surviving testimony on the order of these festivities. From his erroneous placement of the *Kallynteria* when the *Bendideia* was celebrated, and of the *Plynteria* on a day when the assembly could meet, she infers that “there is no reason

⁵⁶ Relying only on secondary literature, Hollinshead also places the *Kallynteria* after the *Plynteria*. She assumes that the former consisted merely of adorning rituals, which followed logically the cleansing of the statue: M. B. Hollinshead, “The North Court of the Erechtheion and the Ritual of the *Plynteria*,” *AJA* 119 (2015) 177–190, at 184.

⁵⁷ Sourvinou-Inwood, *Sacred and Civil Festivals* 155–156, 195, 215–216.

⁵⁸ Alluding to the complexity of ritual logic, she rejects that the sequence might be reflected in the calendar.

to consider trustworthy the order he ascribes to the two festivals.”⁵⁹ But this conclusion is hardly necessary and one should independently assess the plausibility of the rest of Photius’ report. The arguments reviewed here suggest that it is highly plausible.

To reiterate: because the recipients of *kallynein* are associated more with cleanliness than with adornment, the *Kallynteria* might well have included cleansing rituals. This would be consistent with the logic of cleansing the temple of Athena Polias before bathing the statue and dressing it in a *peplos* washed during the *Plynteria*.⁶⁰ There is no need to convolute the process.

Even if the *Kallynteria* were merely an adorning festival or it combined cleansing and adornment, it would still be legitimate to assert the sequence *Kallynteria-Plynteria*.⁶¹ Indeed, this order reflects their *aition*: the *Kallynteria* is associated with the priestess Aglauros as the first one to have “adorned” (*ekosmese*) the gods; the *Plynteria* commemorates the first time the *peplos* was washed after her death (Phot. κ 124 s.v. *Kallynteria*; Hesych. s.v. *Plynteria*; *Anecd.Bekk.* I 270.1–5).⁶² Moreover, as we saw before, Aristokles of Rhodes noted that the *Bendideia* was celebrated on the 20th of Thargelion and was followed by “the festivals relating to Athena” (Procl. *In Ti.* I 85.26–31). If the *Plynteria* was held on the 25th of Thargelion, as Plutarch claims, and Aristokles’ chronological succession is strict, then the *Kallynteria* must have intervened between the *Bendideia* and the *Plynteria*. This precedence would explain Philochoros’ observation that the 20th, 21st, and 22nd were devoted to Athena (*FGrHist* 328 FF 189–190). We should add to this that it is the order transmitted by Photius and that no testimony explicitly supports the reversal *Plynteria-Kallynteria*.

⁵⁹ Sourvinou-Inwood, *Sacred and Civil Festivals* 194.

⁶⁰ That the *Plynteria* included the dressing of the statue with the clean *peplos* (*IG I³* 7.10–11; Sourvinou-Inwood, *Sacred and Civil Festivals* 150) reinforces the view that the *Kallynteria*, understood as temple cleansing rites, was held first.

⁶¹ So Lewis, *BSA* 49 (1954) 20, and Mansfield, *Robe* 370 and 384 n.16.

⁶² Cf. Sourvinou-Inwood, *Sacred and Civil Festivals* 144, 154–155.

It seems best, then, to assume that the *Kallynteria* preceded the *Plynteria*. To ascribe it a specific date we would need to know what days between the *Bendideia* and the *Plynteria* lacked assembly meetings. The *Bendideia* spanned two days. While its rites began on the 19th of Thargelion, the all-night festival or *pannychis* extended the festivities into the 20th (*IG I³* 136.26, 27; *Resp.* 328A8).⁶³ With the *Plynteria* on the 25th, we are left with the 21st, 22nd, or 24th, when the assembly did not meet.⁶⁴ Philochoros rules out the 24th and leaves only the 21st or 22nd (or both).

3. Conclusion

We now return to the dramatic sequence envisioned by Plato. By identifying the *Kallynteria* as the feast of the goddess in the *Timaeus-Critias*, one can reconstruct a calendar consistent with the continuity between the setting of the *Republic* and the setting of the two dialogues: on the 20th of Thargelion of 429 Socrates hosts Timaeus, Critias, Hermocrates, and an unnamed fourth guest (*Ti.* 17A–B). To them he relates how the previous day (the 19th of Thargelion) he went down to the Piraeus to witness the inauguration of the *Bendideia* and spent the night there, at the home of Polemarchus. Socrates' account thus includes the discussion contained in the *Republic*.

The next day, the 21st of Thargelion, his hearers meet again during the “feast of the goddess,” the *Kallynteria* of 429, this time at Critias' home and without the anonymous fourth guest. It is there that Socrates summarizes the main traits of the ideal city, which his interlocutors had heard the previous day in Socrates' report of his night at Polemarchus'. With this preamble, Plato suitably introduces a discussion of the ideal city in action in the

⁶³ This leads to variations in the dates given by the sources (Procl. *In Ti.* I 26.13–15); cf. Mikalson, *Sacred and Civil Calendar* 158.

⁶⁴ Cf. Mikalson, *Sacred and Civil Calendar* 159–160, 202.

practical world. The *Republic* and the *Timaeus-Critias* would thus be thematically and dramatically linked.⁶⁵

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