

# **Aristotle and Atlantis**

What did the philosopher really think  
about Plato's island empire?

Translated by  
Cecelia Murphy

Thorwald C. Franke  
[www.atlantis-scout.de](http://www.atlantis-scout.de)

Books on Demand  
Norderstedt 2012

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# Preface

On the path towards an existence theory for Plato's Atlantis as a real place which can bridge the gap with the current status of historical and philological sciences, one particular obstacle stands in the way: the ever-repeated claim that Aristotle would have rejected Plato's Atlantis as an invention, and that this rejection even appears in the form of an explicit statement from the philosopher himself in 2.3.6 in conjunction with 13.1.36 of Strabo's *Geographica*.

Back in July of 2006, I had published a brief consideration of Strabo 2.3.6 on the Internet, but at the time I did not put forth the effort to perform a systematic review of the literature, as it seemed quite obvious to me that there was no word of Aristotle's to be found here.

Now that my review of the literature is complete, it became ever clearer to me with each work I examined that I would not only be able to unsettle the claim that a statement by Aristotle about Atlantis exists, but also that it would be possible to capture Aristotle's true meaning in a better and more secure way than in the meager half-sentences and footnotes in the literature thus far. I will now provide a thorough representation of Aristotle's opinion on Plato's Atlantis, which I shall justify with a depth of detail not previously undertaken by anyone.

The reader should not, however, lose sight of the fact that in this analysis, the question as to the existence of Plato's Atlantis as a real place is not up for debate. The sole matter at hand here is the opinion of Aristotle on this issue. Whatever "the philosopher's" opinion may be, the question of Atlantis' existence is not determined by it. It would be wrong to mistake the disruption of the previous argumentation surrounding Aristotle's opinion as an occasion to fall under the opposite illusion and assume the existence of Atlantis as an absolute certainty simply because Aristotle saw it that way. Far more comprehensive argumentation is required to demonstrate the existence of Plato's Atlantis.

One should also beware of preconceptions about the representatives of philology. I regret very much that my literature review has not brought to light a glorious chapter in philology. Nevertheless, philology has made important and lasting contributions to the research on Atlantis, and it is only with its arsenal of instruments that further progress can be achieved. Real science can be recognized in the way it retains its value in a transmuted form when the paradigm changes.

As I did with the publishing of my last book, *Mit Herodot auf den Spuren von Atlantis – Könnte Atlantis doch ein realer Ort gewesen sein?*, this time, too, I have created a page on my Atlantis-Scout Web site where reactions, addenda and corrigenda will be gathered.

I hereby present my argumentation regarding Aristotle's opinion on Plato's Atlantis for examination to all who are interested.

Thorwald C. Franke  
Frankfurt am Main, February 28th, 2010

# Introduction

The opinion of Aristotle on Plato's Atlantis is essentially deduced in two fundamentally different ways:

First, one attempts to make out an opinion by inferring from statements by the philosopher which make no mention of Atlantis, but which touch upon areas close to the subject. Here, we shall call this “implicit argument” because it tries to indirectly derive the opinion of Aristotle from statements which implicitly contain an opinion about Plato's Atlantis.

The second way is more direct and heavy-handed: some claim it possible to demonstrate in combination with Strabo 13.1.36, that Strabo 2.3.6 contains a statement by Aristotle which explicitly declares Plato's Atlantis to be an invention of Plato. Therefore we shall call this reasoning the “explicit argument”.

In the pages that follow, we will pursue these two arguments in this order, examining them from a historically as well as a critical perspective, and presenting alternatives in order to ultimately arrive at an overall picture of Aristotle's opinion on Plato's Atlantis. To this end, we will review and process in painstaking detail the academic literature about Atlantis on the one hand, and about Aristotle on the other. In particular, a meticulous and extremely thorough research of the literature will be performed on the issue of the interpretation of the disputed passage in Strabo 2.3.6; this research is extensively documented in the appendix.

The appendix also includes the text of the most important passages from the works of Aristotle on which the various arguments are based. For the sake of convenient referencing and to facilitate quick orientation among the numerous passages, each of these passages has been provided with a concise name.

Let us now begin with the implicit argument.

# Appendix A: Basic Chronology

This timeline is solely intended to provide a general orientation; the dates indicated are in part uncertain.

Solon	ca. 640-560 BC
Herodotus	ca. 484-424 BC
Socrates	ca. 469-399 BC
Plato	ca. 428-347 BC
Aristotle	384-322 BC
Theophrastus	ca. 371-287 BC
Crantor	ca. ? - 275 BC
Eratosthenes	ca. 276-194 BC
Polybius	ca. 200-118 BC
Posidonius	135-51 BC
Strabo	ca. 63 BC - 23 AD
Pliny the Elder	23-79 AD
Ptolemy	ca. 100-175 AD
Proclus	412-485 AD



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