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But then came astonishingly violent earthquakes and floods, and on one terrible day and night, all the warriors of Athens vanished beneath the earth, and out in the ocean, the island of Atlantis sank beneath the waves and disappeared utterly.

And this is the reason why the sea in that region is now impossible, and it is impossible for any navigator to make his way across it, for there is thick mud just below the surface that impedes the progress of any ship, the rubble left by the island as it subsided.

So Tom Holland, that is friend of the Rest is History, Plato. Is he? He's been elevated. What a friend to have. What a friend to have. Not merely a leading philosopher, I think it's fair to say. The greatest, I think.

Some would say the greatest. He is the author of Timaeus, and it's from Timaeus that that reading comes. So Plato is the first person to really mention Atlantis. I mean, absolutely. You know, not really. I mean, he absolutely.

Absolutely. And you explained in the first episode how you think he's using Atlantis as a kind of political and cultural kind of metaphor as a shorthand, reflecting on Athens's position at the end of the Peloponnesian War, Athens's relationship with Sparta, with its own history, its politics, his anxiety about the form of government that is now running Athens. I think it's the first parody of works of history. So very exciting for us.

But that's not a view that is held by most Atlantis enthusiasts, chief among them. I'm not going to describe him as a friend of the Rest is History. He's a friend of Netflix.

Well, he's the father of the commissioner of documentaries on Netflix, isn't he?

Yes.

Graham Hancock.

He's Graham Hancock, the author of, I don't know, what they call magicians of the gods or whatever those books are called, in which Atlantis plays a very big part.

And we started the first episode by talking about Graham Hancock, and I'm sure we'll return to Graham Hancock, because Plato comes up with the idea of Atlantis.

And as you said last time, it's sort of, you know, people are banding it around for a few centuries. And many of them don't think Plato means it seriously as a sort of genuine literal geographical description.

Yeah.

But there's a point at which Atlantis disappears from the conversation, isn't there, in the medieval period? And then it reappears. Why do you think it reappears?

Because, as I say, the myth begins with Plato, and it's Plato who gives us really the two definitive accounts. But Plato, because he's writing in Greek, his writings are lost.

Actually, ironically, pretty much apart from the Timaeus, but almost all his other writings are lost in the Middle Ages.

And it's only with the rediscovery of Greek learning in the Renaissance that Plato's dialogue starts to reappear in Latin Christendom.

This is why over the course of the 16th century, people become more and more familiar with the idea of Atlantis.

Right.

And the idea of Atlantis that we have at the moment, we think of it as being ancient Greek, but I think it would be better to say that it's at least as modern as it is ancient.

Because as the understanding of it evolves over the centuries since the Renaissance, it tells us an awful lot about the obsessions and the paranoias and the yearnings of modern Europe.

Yeah.

And the way that those have evolved over time. And I know I often use this phrase, but it does hold an intriguing mirror up to evolving cultural and political trends in Western Europe.

So, in a way, this episode is not merely a sequel to the episode we did about Plato and Atlantis.

But it's also a companion piece to the episodes we did about Columbus, isn't it?

If you haven't listened to our episodes about Christopher Columbus, we did a four-part series.

And at the beginning, we talked about how Columbus' head was full of all the stuff that he had read about strange islands out in the Atlantic.

Marco Polo, of course, has gone off to cafe and Columbus has read that.

People are debating if there's a legendary island called Brazil out there somewhere across the North Atlantic.

There might be sort of strange folk memories of Greenland or of Newfoundland, the Viking colony there.

Do you think Atlantis is revived as part of that sort of package?

I mean, again, we mentioned this at the end of the last episode.

What is intriguing is that Atlantis is actually the dog that doesn't bark in the story of Columbus.

He doesn't mention it.

Yeah.

But I think what happens, so there are various ways in which Plato's story is reinterpreted.

And one of the ways in which it's reinterpreted, I think, is a direct result of the discovery of America.

And that's the idea that there are survivors.

So Plato says that the whole island sinks.

He doesn't mention survivors.

But when people get to America and they're trying to work out what it is, it isn't long before people are referencing Plato and thinking,

maybe either this is Atlantis, obviously that's a problem because Plato says that it sunk, or that there were survivors from Atlantis and they contributed towards the civilizations that people are finding in the New World.

And that, of course, is very Graham Hancock, the idea that there is a lost kind of sort of clan of experts.

Yeah.

I mean, that's basically the thesis of his stuff.

Yes. So the idea that Atlantis is an advanced civilization superior to the peoples of both America and Europe and Asia and Africa,

and that essentially it's the people of Atlantis who have instructed these less civilized peoples in the arts of civilization, an absolutely key theme.

Plato never said that, though.

Plato never discusses that, never mentions that.

So I think that that is absolutely expressive of an attempt by people in Europe to work out who on

Earth are these people that we've found.

Yeah.

So you have this guy who's a historian of Cortez's expedition.

I called Francisco López de Gamarra.

Yes.

Have you come across him?

I have, Tom, because I'm writing a children's book about the conquest of Mexico right now.

So Gamarra is in my thoughts all the time.

He was Cortez's secretary.

He went with Cortez so much later in life, not content with toppling the Aztecs.

Cortez just went from an expedition to Algeria.

And he never went to America, did he?

Gamarra never went to the America, he never went to the New World.

And his account of Cortez's life is generally seen as a complete Anata hagiography.

He sees Cortez as the epitome of gallantry and chivalry, and Cortez is credited with all these incredibly farsighted decisions, which most historians now say Gamarra is talking nonsense.

But Gamarra is one of those viewpoints we have into the Mexica, the Aztec civilization.

And I see from your notes, Gamarra is one of these people who says, well, where did the Aztecs come from?

They had migrated from a place called Azlan.

Yeah.

And Aztecs means people from Azlan.

Yeah.

And we now think, when we had Camilla Townsend on our podcast, and she was talking about this, the author of the brilliant book, Fifth Sun, about the Aztecs.

People now think, don't they, that the Aztecs migrated, the Mexica migrated overland from what's now New Mexico or Colorado or thereabouts.

And if there wasn't Azlan, some sort of folk memory of a starting point, it was there.

But Gamarra thinks it could be Atlantis, brilliantly.

Well, because there is a certain phonetic resemblance, isn't there?

I suppose so.

You know, if you stand in your head and close your eyes and...

Yeah.

Azlan, Atlantis, I mean, kind of.

So here's the thing.

The Aztec mythology is all about islands and lakes, because of course they end up in Tenochtitlan, which is Mexico City, which is an island and a lake.

So there's an island, and it's not completely unreasonable that if you're sitting around in 16th century Spain, you hear about these people who do have an impressive civilization, who've come from an island and left and now migrated somewhere else, and you might think, oh, there you go.

Yeah.

Okay.

So this is where this kind of begins.

And then there's another guy who's the bishop, the bishop of the Yucatan, Diego de Landa, who is much cursed, both by the mayor and by historians of the mayor, because he basically destroyed all the main records. He did what all historians secretly want to do. He made notes on the main sources. And he got rid of all the primary sources. They destroyed them so nobody else could ever read them. Yes. Yes. So, but he, among all the notes, he reports a story that supposedly is told by the mayor that their ancestors had come from a land in the east. Which, I mean, essentially, it depends on scripts that he wasn't really qualified to decipher by GABA. Right. And he could have been talking about Cozumel, which is an island off the coast of the Yucatan. Well, he could, Mr. Skeptic. He could. But equally, he could have been talking about Atlantis. Oh, right. You want to keep that open as a possibility, do you, Tom? What I'm saying is that the evidence here is stacking up. Right. Aslan, islands out in the east. Hold on, they can't both be, they can't both be Atlantis, surely? They can. Yeah, well, you could say that both the Aztecs and the mayor come from Atlantis. Basically, everyone comes from Atlantis. That's not the maddest claim we'll be hearing on this podcast. Oh, no. So, so that's, that's one theme. The idea that there are survivors and that they might have colonized in a various reaches of the continents that have survived. The other idea, which is kind of implicit in that is that Atlantis is a kind of utopia. It's a model of high civilization. Yeah. Which isn't at all what Plato says. I mean, Plato makes it out to be a fabulously wealthy and sophisticated place, but it gets destroyed because it's hubristic, because it is launching imperial invasions everywhere. Plato is absolutely not saying that it's, it's a model to be followed. In fact, just the opposite. It's, I think it's his kind of power. It's, it's a kind of fusion of the Persian Empire and democratic Athens. Yeah. And Plato isn't really keen on either of them, but particularly in England.

So there's, Thomas More writes about utopia.

This idea that there is a kind of perfect realm.

Which is exactly that, that time, by the way, it's 1516.

So it's exactly the moment when they're discovering Mexico and the Maya and all that stuff.

And that idea of a kind of a land where if you find it, you will have the model of a perfect realm.

Then gets picked up by Francis Bacon.

Yes.

Who you will admire Dominic as the man who basically invents science.

Yeah.

They went to Lord Viscount St. Albans.

He writes a book called The New Atlantis, which is actually a novel.

So it's a kind of didactic novel.

Right.

It's not particularly exciting, not great characterization.

It's not the Da Vinci Code.

It's not the Da Vinci Code.

But it gives a kind of portrait of this island that supposedly is in the Pacific and it's become Christian.

It's, I think they got converted by St. Thomas.

But the key thing is that it's full of people who we now would call scientists.

Oh yeah.

People who, who live by reason, who do experimentation, which Francis Bacon was very into.

Bacon says that they embody generosity, enlightenment, dignity and splendor, piety and public spirit.

And actually this kind of model of a community of high-minded people interested in the natural world goes on to preserve as one of the inspirations to the Royal Society.

What an amazing thing that this novel about an island of scientists inspires the Royal Society, which itself then inspires the island of scientists and gullivers travels.

Yeah.

It just goes round and round and round.

Yeah.

Amazing.

That's the element.

And the other thing, which again is implicit in Francis Bacon's idea that Atlantis could exist in the Pacific, is that the location of Atlantis, it's moving around all over the place.

I mean, just to reiterate, Plato's very clear where Atlantis was.

It was beyond the Pillars of Hercules, in other words, the Straits of Gibraltar.

So in the ocean that comes to be called the Atlantic after Atlantis.

Yeah.

But Plato's obviously called it wrong if it's actually America or if it's in the Pacific.

And what you start to see as a kind of nationalism starts to develop, so this is before the kind of heyday of romantic nationalism, but the absolutely classic example of this is a guy called Alasrutbeg in the late 17th century, who was the rector of the University of Uppsala.

And he does very detailed research into Atlantis.

Research.

What's this?

What does this research consist of?

Well, so he's in Uppsala in Sweden.

Where do you think he ends up saying that Atlantis was, Dominic?

Finland.

I don't know.

Maybe it's the island of Gotland, Tom, which we've talked about in the podcast before.

It's Sweden.

Oh, it is Sweden.

Where do you think the rector of the University of Uppsala locates the capital of Atlantis?

Oh my God, it's Uppsala.

The capital of Atlantis was Uppsala.

Amazing but true.

Hold on, but it's not an island.

That to me is the...

That's detail.

An absolute detail, as we will see.

So, and to see genuinely, he genuinely thinks this.

I think he does.

Yeah.

And he proves it.

Very learned to whom.

Okay.

Have you read it?

No, I haven't.

Well, let that not put us off.

So, Dominic, those are basically the constituent elements.

There are survivors.

Atlantis is a home of superior civilization and basically the location of the island itself is a very movable feast.

But those...

So, those examples you've given us, they're all slightly different, aren't they?

So, the Spanish guys in the 16th century, I mean, they can be forgiven for thinking anything because they're discovering new things all the time.

They...

It's easy for us to sort of mock and say, haha, they thought that Atlantis was Colorado or something.

Oh, I mean, Columbus thought Cuba was China.

Right.

It's not a terrible sin to say that, I don't know, the Aztec Empire was Atlantis.

I mean, they don't know what we do.

They're discovering stuff that's completely reasonable.

Francis Bacon is using it as Thomas Moore was using Utopia.

Yeah.

He's using it as a political parable.

The fellow from Sweden, he's probably the first example, I suppose.

He's the sort of the slightly cranky conspiracy theorist who's basically hit on something that will make him look good and presumably his university.

Yeah.

I mean, essentially, he's drawing on, you know, he's taking words that sound a little bit like Swedish, you know, the Greek.

But words?

I mean, what words?

I don't know.

I haven't read it.

Yeah.

It's a bit like the Da Vinci Code stuff, that you have your idea, you want it to be Sweden. And then, essentially, you just look for anything that might support that.

Yeah.

Of course.

That's how you do it.

So these kind of three elements are bubbling away over the course of the 18th into the 19th century.

And there are various iterations of it that draw on kind of one or other of these various aspects.

But the absolutely definitive account comes from a guy who is essentially second only to Plato in terms of inventing Atlantis.

And this is a guy called Ignatius Donnelly, who is...

He's a great character.

He's an Irish stock, American lawyer, ends up Republican congressman for Minnesota.

Yeah.

Were you aware of him?

Yes, because he was the vice presidential candidate of the populist party in 1900.

He's a really interesting guy.

He's Irish, as you say, but unlike a lot of Irish sort of politicians in the 19th century, he ends up in the Republican party, anti-slavery, his pro-women suffrage.

So he's quite progressive by and large.

So his record during the Civil War, for example, his political record is pretty impressive.

I read that he lived in the same place as me when I lived in Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota.

Did he?

Yeah.

So no wonder you came across him then.

Well, I think it's just his name is sort of hanging around in late 19th century American politics.

He's a sort of eccentric character because at one point you tried to set up a utopian community.

Yeah.

In Minnesota.

In Nininga, which I don't think worked out at all.

And when you look through his list of publications, so among other things, he wrote a big book about Francis Bacon writing Shakespeare called The Great Cryptogram, which perhaps gives you some sense of its scholarly worth.

He wrote a book called Ragnarok, The Age of Fire and Gravel.

So that's the sequel to Atlantis.

So basically, we would not be talking about him.

I don't think anyone would really remember him outside specialists perhaps in late 19th century American politics.

If he had not in 1882 published a book called Atlantis, The Anti-Diluvian World, so anti-Diluvian before the flood.

And he very potently mixes these kinds, he's drawing on Plato, but he's also mixing these kind of various early modern traditions.

So he's massively into the idea that essentially civilization, as we understand it, is seeded by survivors from Atlantis.

His proposition is, he's got a number of propositions about Atlantis, one of which is that the gods and goddesses of the ancient Greeks, the Phoenicians, the Hindus and the Scandinavians were simply

the kings, queens and heroes of Atlantis.

And that's just intrinsically ridiculous, isn't it?

All of them.

Well, it's the euhemerist idea.

There's a theory put forward by a Greek called euhemeris, that the gods were mortal kings who had over the course of the decades and centuries had come to be elevated into the heavens in people's memories.

But I mean, that's a hell of a lot of gods.

Yeah, it is.

The Scandinavians, the Hindus, the Greeks.

I mean, I think what he's doing there is this is an age when people are becoming increasingly interested in kind of comparative mythology and people are drawing up lists of pantheons.

And he's kind of working out parallels.

I mean, you can see, you know, the Greeks, the Hindus, Scandinavians, they're all Indo-European.

So that's another idea that is very current.

And he's saying that the similarities between these various pantheons are to be explained by the fact that they all came from Atlantis.

And then he chucks in the Phoenicians who were not Indo-European just for fun.

He argues that there are two places in particular that preserve the original religion of Atlantis and they are Egypt and Peru.

But which have different religions, Tom?

Well.

And that would seem to be the flaw in his reasoning.

Well, you may say that.

Yeah.

But I think the argument is that scholars have inadequately appreciated the degree to which they were actually the same.

So this is another theme is that people who write about books about Atlantis are often self-educated in the subject and have a deep contempt for hidebound academics.

So this is another theme that will be coming up.

Yeah.

The mainstream academic establishment is squashing, is censoring the truth about the religions of Egypt and Peru.

Okay, fine.

He's saying that in Europe, both the Bronze and the Iron Ages, they have their origins in settlers coming from Atlantis.

He's arguing that it's not just America that is being colonized, so is Europe.

Right.

So they wouldn't have learned ironworking or bronzeworking without settlers from the Atlantic.

Metallurgy is not my strong point.

So I can't be skeptical about that.

What about alphabets?

So he's saying that both the Mayan and the Phoenician alphabets come from Atlantis.

Again, surely very different alphabets.

Are they?

I honestly don't know about the Mayan alphabets.

I'd be very surprised if it was anything like the Phoenician alphabets.

Maybe if there are any specialists in May are out there, they could advise on whether this is in any way a plausible theory.

And he argues that basically, after the destruction of Atlantis, that a few survivors escape on ships, that they are carried across the ocean to both America and to Africa and Europe, and that it's this that explains the kind of universal story of the flood that Donnelly says is to be found pretty much everywhere, basically from the Pacific to the Caspian.

Yeah.

There is a universal legend of the flood, isn't there?

It's not entirely universal, but I mean, it's a very common one.

It's very common.

Yeah.

Occam's razor is just, you know, people, I don't know, floods, I would say.

Yeah.

Anyway.

So that's one aspect of it.

Then there's the idea that you get from Francis Bacon that it's utopia, and the reason why this colonisation is significant is because Atlantis, Donnelly says, is where basically humans first rose from a state of savagery and barbarism to attain civilisation.

I mean, this is kind of the Graham Hancock thesis, isn't it?

It's absolutely the Graham Hancock thesis.

It's totally the Graham Hancock thesis.

The only difference between the Graham Hancock thesis and Ignatius Donnelly's is that Donnelly does think that Atlantis had been in the Atlantic.

Yeah.

And he thinks Plato was onto something.

The Plato was right to identify that it was beyond the pillars of Hercules.

I mean, to be fair to him, since our only source for the Atlantis story is Plato, and

Plato is very specific about where it is.

Yeah.

I mean, he's acknowledging that Plato got that right.

So he's obsessed by the idea of different races.

Yeah.

He's very kind of into that.

Well, he's writing in 1882, so that's obviously in the ethos, isn't it?

He's Irish.

And so he does basically think that the Elantians are Irish.

Donnelly, what an amazing coincidence.

So he says that the people from Atlantis were red, they had red hair and blue eyes.

How can he possibly know?

And probably freckles, it wouldn't surprise me, and probably were bright red in the sun.

Oh, my...

I mean...

Essentially, they're Irish.

This is the thing with all these conspiracy theory explanations.

I would have much more time for them if he said, to my amazement, they turned out to be Belgian, or if he'd sort of said, as an Irishman, it pains me to admit it, but they turned out to be English or something.

But to always say, and it happens to be Uppsala or whatever.

But there's a tension there because he wants them to be Irish, but at the same time, he wants them to have settled all across Europe and Asia and America.

So he's very keen on the idea that Atlantis is the original orange point for the Indo-Europeans and for the Semitic peoples as he describes them.

So that's how the Phoenicians and the Greeks and everybody come to get their interest in these ancient peoples and estate and for gods.

But he also has to explain how they came to be an American, how they came to influence America.

So he describes Atlantis as being a bridge of land where the white, dark and red races meet.

So actually, although there's a slight element of blowing the trumpet for Aryans and specifically Irish people, he is also, the logic of his own argument obliges him to accept that Atlantis was a place where, as he puts it, white, dark and red races meet.

Well, that would match his own political proclivities, Tom, because Donnelly was a Republican, anti-slaver

Republican who had been very pro-reconstruction and all that sort of thing.

Right.

And so the stereotype of people who are obsessed by madness of Atlantis is that they're white supremacists.

They're very kind of into the idea that Quetzalcoatl, you know, the story that it's a folk memory of Atlantis, a white man with a beard coming and bringing civilization, and that's definitely a part of the mix.

But it's not the only part.

So Donnelly argues that the early Egyptians seemed to have portrayed themselves as being red.

So if you think of those kind of, you know, the paintings, Egyptians are often portrayed as red.

And he says that this is because they came from America.

So the founders of ancient Egypt are Native American.

Right.

And he looks at the great Olmec heads in Central America, and he says that these clearly look African.

So this Olmec civilization was founded by people from settlers, colonizers from, ultimately from Africa.

So there's a lot of cross-fertilization going on, according to Donnelly.

He would fit in very well.

He could be a, you know, modern museum creator or something, Tom, and he would go down very well.

Well, would he?

So we'll come to this, perhaps in part two, because I think we should call a-

Call a halt.

Call a halt here.

When we come back, we'll have a look at how this idea of Atlantis as the anti-Diluvian civilization, how it got kind of recalibrated in the 20th century in often very dark ways.

Right.

But before I go, I will read a comment by a French scholar, Thomas Henri Martin, in his studies on Plato's Timaeus, which he published in 1841, with his perspective on all this. Every scholar, as he wrote, setting sail in quest of Atlantis with a more or less heavy cargo of erudition, but without any compass except their imagination and caprice, have foraged at random.

And where have they landed?

In Africa, in America, in Australia, in Spitzbergen, in Sweden, in Sardinia, in Palestine, in Athens, in Persia, and in Ceylon, they say.

That's like a list of Graham Hancock's locations, Tom.

C'est vrai.

Okay.

Let's take a break for more Atlantis.

Welcome back to the Restless History.

Now we've been talking Atlantis, we talked about Plato, we talked about Domara, the biography of Cortes, we talked about Francis Bacon.

And now, Tom, I believe we're about to talk about the Nazis.

Is that correct?

Well, Dominic, as you will know, one of the kind of organizations that fed into the Nazis was the Thule Society.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Thule.

We talked about them a lot.

They were very runish.

They were interested in Sostakas and kind of esoteric stuff in Bavaria, weren't they?

And in the late 1910s, only 1920s.

So Thule was the island that lay up furthest north, Ultima Thule, the Romans called it.

Could that not?

That's Iceland, is it?

Is that Iceland?

That's the thinking?

Has it been thought to be Britain or Shetland or Iceland or Greenland or America or whatever?

But not Atlantis?

It comes to be equated with Atlantis by very radical German nationalists, who, drawing on Donnelly, come to see it as the homeland of the Aryans, the Indo-Europeans.

And obviously, they have the problem that if it's out in the Atlantic, that's no good.

They need it to be somewhere nearer to Germany.

And so they start to develop two, basically two, mad ideas.

The first is that essentially it was in the North Sea.

So whether this is a kind of echo of Doggerland or whatever, I don't know.

They're kind of into that idea.

And the other is that Donnelly had hyped up the Atlanteans as having super advanced technology.

But for the Nazis, the technology is off the scale.

And actually, what they're doing there, they're drawing on the work of another hugely influential American on this myth, a guy called Edgar Case, who was known as the sleeping prophet, who was a guy who whenever he went to sleep, he would have visions.

So yeah, it's a clairvoyant.

Yeah.

This goes all the way back to when he was doing school and he hadn't done his spellings properly.

And so his father walloped him and he ran to bed sobbing.

And then an angel came in the night and taught him his spelling and when he woke up, he could do it perfectly.

And this angel kept appearing to him over the course of his life.

And he came up with all kinds of, well, kind of mad stuff to diagnose you in your sleep.

Just reading it now.

Yeah.

He was, he was struck in the cockaxe during a school football game, began to act strangely.

While asleep, he diagnosed his own injury and prescribed a cure, which worked.

And since then, whenever you went to see him, something was wrong with you, he would go to sleep.

Right.

So and get a vision of your, of what to do.

Wow.

His visions kind of went on quite a long way from how to stop a sports injuries, a bit like Don Leo, I mean, a bit like everybody.

He's obsessed by races.

So he's obsessed with the idea that there are different races born at different times.

So there's the white, the black, the brown, the yellow, the red races.

And he's obsessed by Atlantis.

And he says, again, intriguingly that the Atlanteans were the red races.

So they were the Native Americans.

And he says as well, that they'd solved the energy crisis by developing crystals.

And that these crystals had sunk beneath the, the waves when Atlantis plunged me, you know, got destroyed.

And that this is what explains the Bume de Triangle.

This is a popular theory.

That's where the crystals are.

Yes.

Exactly.

Okay.

So that's why ships vanish and planes and things.

And Kate also predicted that these crystals would be rediscovered by the, by the United States in 1958.

Got it.

That's precise.

Were they?

Doesn't.

Doesn't seem so.

He, he had a lot of very big name celebrity clients because of his dream vision.

So Woodrow Wilson was one and a very much not a friend of the rest is history, top murderer Thomas Edison.

Yes.

That's one.

So we discussed Edison murdering Louis Le Prince in a previous episode.

But a thing that had not previously occurred to me was that he could have, case might have been involved with that in some mysterious way.

Well, there's a whole novel waiting to be written there, isn't there?

Because even though case was then the child, it was when he was a child that he was being visited by angels and doing a lot of his cocky kind of diagnosing work.

I think it's coccyx.

Dominic.

It is coccyx.

Yeah.

It is coccyx.

It's just, I'm not, I'm not really, I'm not a medical man.

No, no, you've never, you've never attended otherwise.

No.

Unlike Edgar Case, actually.

Yes.

One of the things we don't have.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Anyway, so all this kind of stuff about crystals, superpowers, all this kind of thing fuses in Germany before and after the First World War with ideas that Atlantis might actually have been in the North Sea.

And although Hitler himself, to give Hitler credit, not a phrase you often hear on, but to give him credit, he thought this was all mad.

So he had no time for Atlantis being, you know, the homeland of the German people.

But Rudolf Hess was very into it.

Alfred Rosenberg was very into it.

Himmler inevitably, I mean, he was all over it.

And during the war, he was very disappointed that the state of war meant that he couldn't launch deep sea explorations.

In the North Sea.

In the North Sea.

So I think had they won the war, he would have, it would have been great for the archaeology of Doggerland.

Yes.

Obviously, it would have been terrible in all kinds of other ways, but.

Yes.

It's important that you point that out, Tom, but if you were a fan of archaeology of the Doggerland, Himmler would have plowed billions of Reichsmarks into excavating it.

That's very much, this is very man in the high castle, though, isn't it?

Yeah.

I mean, if you've seen that, the adaptation of the Philip K. Dick novel, I mean, I'm surprised they didn't work this in.

But that tells you about Atlantis, doesn't it?

It's to do with crystals, clairvoyance, sort of strange mythological science, which is all in the air in the late 19th, early 20th century.

Yeah.

But the Nazis, obviously, having none of this idea that you get from a case that the Atlanteans were Native Americans or that you're getting Ignatius Donnelly, that it's a melting pot for red, white, and black races, I mean, they're very into race, but there's only one race in Atlantis, and that's the white race and specifically the Aryan race.

And so that makes the whole Atlantis story suddenly seem incredibly sinister in the wake of the war.

And so that means that in the wake of the Second World War, the Atlantis myth, although its popularity remains, I mean, there are endless kind of books being written about it.

I'm sure you've probably read them as a child.

I mean, I was fascinated.

Oh, God, I was fascinated by Atlantis when I was about 10 or something.

Yeah, absolutely.

And it's inspired all kinds, you know, man from Atlantis we mentioned and all kinds of things like that.

Yeah.

Often for scholars, it seems quite sinister.

Story seems quite sinister because they're aware of where it led and the idea that, you know, you can be interested in Atlantis and then suddenly become a white supremacist becomes quite an important idea.

But I think the kind of the inherent fascination of the myth is such that even academics, even kind of archaeologists, even very distinguished scholars have been unable to resist its allure.

And if the kind of the Nazi reinterpretation of Atlantis is the most notorious, perhaps the most convincing explanation is one that also emerged in the early years of the 20th century, when Arthur Evans, the English archaeologist, discovered what he came to call Minoan civilization.

So an ancient civilization on Crete that had not previously been suspected.

Yeah.

People, I'm sure, you know, been on holiday to Crete, been to Knossos, all that kind of stuff.

I was about to say, he's the guy who basically created Knossos and claimed it was authentic. Is that right?

Yeah, that's right.

I've got a book on Knossos.

It's kind of the opening line is to the effect of the Bronze Age palace of Knossos is one of the most striking modernist buildings.

Right.

So yeah, so he basically invents it.

But there's this idea that it's a highly sophisticated civilization, lots of ships that it establishes what Thucydides called a Thalocracy under King Minos.

So an empire of the sea, which is all very Atlantis.

And there are lots of frescoes of people jumping bulls that were found.

And the Atlanteans are supposed to have had a particular relationship with the bull, because Poseidon, who is the forefather of the Atlantean kings, his sacred animal was the bull.

So it all kind of seems to connect together.

And then one of the archaeologists who proposes this, a Greek archaeologist called Spyridon Marinatos, he then goes to an island called Santorini, which in ancient times was called Thera, which there had clearly been an absolutely massive volcanic explosion there.

So much so that the middle of the island is just gone.

It's a kind of circle round at the bay.

It's the huge Caldera, isn't it, the crater.

Yeah.

It excavates a site there called Akrotiri.

And again, he finds all kinds of freezes of teeming harbours, ships, all this kind of stuff.

And he thinks this is very, very Atlantis.

And this is the kind of academically acceptable version of the myth.

But this is so well known.

This is what you see in the rough guide to Santorini.

I mean, to be honest with you, Tom, before we did this, I had vaguely as a complete and utter outsider.

I just vaguely assumed that you were going to say, it's generally now agreed that Atlantis is Santorini.

So, I mean, you will see endless documentaries about it.

You will get kind of mad documentaries where it's aliens on the History Channel, but you will get this on Channel 4 and BBC Two.

Yeah.

This is classic BBC Two material.

Here's a story about Thera, which is the real Atlantis.

I think basically the issue, the problem that you have with all the other theories are just as present with this.

So the obvious one is Plato is very specific.

Atlantis was in the Atlantic, Crete or Thera or wherever.

It's not in the Atlantic.

Yeah.

So that's a major problem.

In this, Atlantis is destroyed by a volcano.

But there's no mention of a volcano in Plato's account.

It sinks beneath the sea.

He might have just forgotten the volcano and talked about the tsunami.

He forgot.

So there's no hint of this in any account or indeed in any myth.

So we do have myths about Crete.

We have Theseus.

We have the Minotaur.

We have King Minos, which gives his name to this culture.

But there's no hint at all of Atlantis in any of these myths.

Well, I mean, matching it to Plato is mad if we accept your premise that Plato was writing about a political metaphor.

Well, we have no evidence at all for anything that links the destruction of Thera, whenever it is, when is it, kind of middle of the second millennium, to the time of Plato, which is kind of 1,000 years and more after it.

But how is that story passed down?

We have no trace of how it was passed down whatsoever until suddenly it becomes fully formed in Plato's account.

Right.

There's not some other corpus of legends.

Right.

And in Plato, Plato himself says, all the various actors within his dialogue say, nobody's heard of this.

And Crete asked who is telling it, has to come up with a very kind of high-falutin account of how it is that he's heard it when nobody else has heard it.

That's the whole point.

Nobody knows about this story.

So how does Plato know about it?

In the story, Atlantis is 11,500 years old, I don't think Crete is.

Neither Crete nor Santorini remotely resemble Plato's description of it.

Okay.

Well, you mean the archaeological findings, don't you?

Yeah.

There's no canals, no kind of walls going around it in Minas Tirith style, no elephants.

Well, to be fair, the elephants, despite who not have been indigenous, they might have been brought by traders or tributes.

Basically, so people call this pseudo-history, pseudo-archaeology, all the Atlantis stuff.

This is posh pseudo-archaeology in the way that the Cathars having been a secret dualist cult is kind of posh pseudo-history, but I think it's kind of testimony to the inherent fascination of it.

And I think that it suggests how even archaeologists can succumb to the romance of the account.

And it's that that makes the Graham Hancock series and his books so interesting, I think.

Right.

So Graham Hancock is basically his background.

He was a journalist, I think, the economist in East Africa.

He wrote a lot about the politics of aid, things like that.

Then because he was in Ethiopia, he got obsessed by the story that the Ark of the Covenant is kept in a church in Ethiopia.

And then from that, he moved on to writing about ancient Egypt, the idea that the pyramids at Giza map on to the stars that you see in the constellation of Orion and kind of spiral out from that.

I think in your life, you're allowed to come up with one theory of this kind.

But if you come up with more than one, it discredits the...

Well, like Donnelly with Shakespeare was bacon.

Yeah, exactly.

I mean, I've watched ancient apocalypse.

You've watched it all through, haven't you?

I've watched it all through.

And in that, I mean, maybe he's concealing it.

Maybe secretly he's a Nazi.

I don't know.

Maybe he's secretly a white supremacist.

But based on those documentaries, the whole thing is about environmentalism.

Right.

You know, he's essentially saying that as far as I could tell that unless we stop using electricity, we're going to get wiped out by a comet.

Donnelly will be able to watch his programs, unfortunately, if that happens.

He's hostile to European colonialism.

He talks, refers to 19th century land grabs.

So as far as I can tell, he's not a white supremacist.

Right.

This is not a program for him to enjoy.

But this is very much the tenor of the criticism that archaeologists aim at him.

So the idea is that this is a gateway drug that will lead you to white supremacy.

Yeah.

I've read that essay on the Guardian website, Tom, saying Graham Hancock is leading people into, you know, QAnon or something.

Yes.

And I think that's because the uses that the Nazis put their story to hang so heavily that it's tainted the whole enterprise.

And I think also it's the idea that there's an anxiety about the idea that, say, American cultures, Native American cultures, derived from New Cassettlers from colonists from the East.

You know, there's an obvious kind of anxiety about that.

But I mean, to be fair to Case and to Donnelly and to people who Hancock is clearly drawing this stuff, deriving this stuff from, you know, as we've seen, it's slightly more complicated than saying that the Atlanteans were white people.

I mean, there is a kind of element of that, certainly the Nazis drew on, but it's not exclusively that.

Yeah.

You know, Case is saying that the Atlanteans were Native Americans.

They were the red race.

Yes.

And Donnelly is saying that it's a kind of melting pot for American, European, African peoples.

And Graham Hancock is all over, I mean, he's all over the world.

He's going to Indonesia or wherever and saying there are traces of superior civilizations here.

Yeah.

So it's not at all Eurocentric.

Yeah.

I mean, I think it's not.

I mean, the European civilization arrives as much from the Atlanteans as does American civilization.

Yeah.

So yeah.

So essentially his argument is the Ignatius Donnelly one that there was a great catastrophe, a highly advanced civilization was wiped out and that these people then went around and kind of ceded civilization around the world.

And archaeologists obviously absolutely hate this.

And I think that one of the reasons why they like to cast Graham Hancock as a kind of gateway drug to white supremacy is that it gives them a kind of Indiana Jones vibe.

Oh, right.

They're taking on Nazis.

Right.

They are fighting the good fight against the forces of evil.

Yes.

So rather than excavating pots, they're fighting fascism.

Right.

Or fighting fascism by excavating pots.

Exactly so.

But obviously what is really infuriating him is the fact that Graham Hancock is clearly spectacularly wrong.

Okay.

And you can absolutely see it's infuriating.

I just thought you were going to say spectacularly rich.

Well, yes, well, he's wrong and rich.

And so how infuriating it must be to have spent decades mastering the chronology of the late Ice Age and having a kind of incredibly detailed knowledge of all these various excavation sites.

Phoenician pottery.

Yes.

And then this guy pops up, has a 10-part series on Netflix, a million-selling book.

And Graham Hancock is very, very abusive about them.

So he's very into the idea that basically it's big archaeology, that big archaeology has discovered the truth, but it's concealing it from everybody.

Presumably he would say, listen to this, that we are the tools of big archaeology, would he?

Yes, he would.

Yes, he would.

Okay.

Well, let's see if that doesn't happen because I will stick up for him.

Tom, is he wrong?

I mean, you blithely say Graham Hancock is incredibly wrong as well as incredibly rich.

But what persuades you that he is so wrong, you know, convince me.

Well, I think the overwhelming evidence for it is that we have no evidence.

Right.

I mean, there is absolutely zero evidence for any of this, apart from the Atlantis story, which is the initial inspiration for it.

And then Hancock is going around the world trying to kind of bundle up any hint of myth

that suggests that they might corroborate it.

So for instance, he's citing Zoroastrian myth, which isn't written down for centuries and centuries and centuries after, you know, millennia after, it's as improbable as the idea that Plato is actually transcribing an actual story.

Yeah, which seems, when you read the Plato thing, it actually seems blindingly obvious that he's not giving you.

Yeah.

And the thing is that when he goes to these sites, which he claims are actually built by people from Atlantis, there's lots of evidence for, say, the hunter-gatherers who were living there.

Yeah.

Lots of archaeological evidence.

But there's absolutely no archaeological evidence at all that they were highly superior and sophisticated.

The iPhones are nowhere to be seen.

There are no iPhones at all.

There are no crystals.

I mean, there's nothing.

Yeah.

So there's an absolute absence of any hard archaeological evidence.

And I think that the idea that big archaeology has been secretly hiding it is disproven by the fact that actually the most intriguing site that he visits in the course of his expedition, Gobekli Tepe, which is this site in Turkey, which dates back a very, very long way.

And it is really old and really fascinating, and it's kind of from the end of the Ice Age at the beginning of the Holocene.

Archaeologists, how does he know about it?

He knows about it because archaeologists found it and excavated it.

They're not covering it up.

They're not covering it up.

And his technique is he will go there and he'll have some hapless curator or somebody who's in charge of the site, who will kind of give the lowdown on it, and then she'll be cut, and suddenly there'll be some bloke, usually with a beard, who will pop up, and he'll be all about the crystals, star patterns and things like that, and they'll be cut together. So it looks as though the pair of them are telling the same story, which of course they aren't.

So right from the beginning, Graham Hancock has been in this idea that the people who escaped from this catastrophe were obsessed by the stars and that there are lessons to be found in the stars that are imprinted in various monuments, say the pyramids and so on.

Yeah.

And then there's the Gebekli Tepe, and particularly there's a pillar 43, it's called the Vulture Stone at Gebekli Tepe, where he reads all kinds of messages about what the procession of the equinox, which is when the earth wobbles on its axis, and where the sun rises at the spring equinox, kind of moves westward gradually over the course of millennia, and then it

kind of moves back.

Okay.

And this happens kind of over the course of, I don't know, 25,000 odd years, and that this is written into all these ancient monuments.

But there's a glaring problem with that, which is that it depends on there being an idea of a zodiac, because he's kind of tracing it through the idea of the zodiac.

And he's identifying various images on this Vulture Stone as being portrayals of the constellations that form the zodiac.

But these constellations originate with Babylon.

So there's no way that, you know, they didn't know that Babylonian zodiac.

Yeah.

I mean, that's kind of really obvious.

So all of those reasons, I think, suggest that it's improbable.

There's a further problem, which is what exactly is the catastrophe?

Is it the melting of the ice caps?

Is it the fact that...

It's a comet.

It's a comet.

I read that out at the beginning of episode one.

Right.

So this is his latest iteration.

But before that, he thought that it was a continent that had moved and ended up under Antarctica.

Okay.

And then it got proved that actually, Antarctica's been under rise for millions of years, so that couldn't be possible.

Yeah.

So I think that's all...

I think it's all clearly mad.

But having said that, at the end of last episode, I said that there were areas in which I think Hancock is actually fascinating.

And I think that there are aspects of his case that do get us back, ironically, to the mindset of Plato.

Ooh.

That's a comparison I didn't expect.

Well, so this idea of the comet, this is from the Timaeus.

In the Timaeus, the Egyptian priests tell Solon, their Athenian visitor, that feet on in his chariot, going, you know, driving the chariot of the sun, burning the earth, that this is actually a folk memory of a comet.

So Graham Hancock is kind of being true to the story there, I think.

Right.

And I think also, Plato's great idea was, you know, certainly in the Republic, if not in the Timaeus, was this idea of there being philosopher kings.

People of such transcendent wisdom that they should have the guidance of people who are

more ignorant and less suited looking after themselves.

His idea, which derives from Donnelly, that civilization originates with kind of nautical philosopher kings.

The kings who are going around on the ships and scattering the seed of civilization, again, that's quite platonic.

And I do think that one of the problems that historians, archaeologists, whatever, a very ancient culture's face is that scholarship is founded on kind of traditions of objectivity and scrupulous study that can remove the people who do it from the kind of the philosophical or the religious or the cultural or the mythological context in which these stories may have originated.

And that's why the kind of the very mad theories often, they can get you back closer to the original spirit in which these myths were told often than the much more scrupulous, objective, accurate, scholarly accounts do.

And that's a kind of strange paradox there.

Yeah.

Plato and his original audience would have relished the editions of the gods and ancient apocalypse, whereas they would have found the bulletin of, you know, archaeological studies very tedious.

And I think they would have found it much easier to recognise Graham Hancock's ancient apocalypse as being true to the story than, yes, exactly, as you say, the kind of the bulletin for mid-east prehistory archaeology.

Well, that is not the conclusion I expected you to reach, that basically you spent two hours proving that Plato would have really enjoyed Graham Hancock's series on that. I'm not saying that.

I doubt Plato would have had time for Netflix, do you think?

He'd have been down the gymnasium, talking about down in the gym, down in the academy, hanging out with the lads.

Maybe he would.

Yeah, maybe he would.

Talking about, you know, ideal forms and ideal state and all that kind of stuff, immortality of the soul.

I suppose he would.

But even Plato would have relaxed, wouldn't he?

He might have said, yeah, we'd have had a symposium.

Maybe he'd have invited Graham Hancock for a symposium.

Maybe he'd have got ground for a Netflix and chill, that's what Plato would have been all about.

So, I mean, do you think the Atlantis thing has become such a joke now?

No offense to Graham Hancock, but has it become such a joke that it doesn't have any legs?

And it was a 19th and 20th century obsession, a bit like the Yeti or something, or Shangri-La.

Yeah, I think so.

I think people aren't going to be talking about it in the 23rd century, are they?

Well, I mean, Graham Hancock's series did fantastically well, I mean, there's clearly

an appetite for it.

It was very well made, isn't it?

A lot of people say, oh, well, you must have something there.

Do they say that though?

Or do they say this was immensely entertaining, Tosh, not unlike the rest is history?

No, because he's going on the Joe Rogan show.

I saw that.

To debate it with an archaeologist with the splendid name of Flint Dibble.

That's a brilliant example of a nominative determinism, isn't it?

Yes.

Surely, Flint Dibble is a particular kind of incredibly boring artifact you find at a trough at a local history museum, I don't know, anyway.

Well, but it'll be very exciting.

So I guess lots of people listen to Joe Rogan, don't they?

Yeah, even more than listen to the rest of history.

And if Graham Hancock is able to hold his own against Flint Dibble, then who knows?

Then maybe he'll qualify for a slot on our podcast, Tom.

We get them both, couldn't we?

Yes, let's get them all.

All right.

On that bombshell, Tom, that was absolutely fascinating, very entertaining.

It was genuinely a really interesting mirror onto people's changing obsessions.

And I think also, quite interesting because before we did the Atlantis ones, we had Peter Frankopoulos talking about climate apocalypse.

So that's something we didn't discuss, was the way in which maybe we're getting back to the original point of the story that Plato told, that Atlantis is a parable about hubris and nemesis.

Yes.

It kind of maps quite well onto the environmental anxieties about the fact that we've basically just become too successful as a species, that we're being destroyed by our own technology.

All right.

On that bombshell, or rather, on that tsunami, we say, thank you for listening to the rest of this history and we'll be back next time.

Goodbye.

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