The aim of this paper is to analyse the manifold significance of the myth of the Statesman (269c-274e). In fact, this myth has often been treated either as a digressive and separate piece of cosmological doctrine, or as a rather lengthy tale fashioned for the political purposes of the dialogue but deprived of great cosmological importance. On the contrary, I mean to show the intimate relation of cosmology to anthropology and politics in the myth, so that, far from being a digression, this story turns out to be crucial to understanding the general purpose of the dialogue and even its importance in Plato's later thought. In this respect, I intend to enrich my analysis in the light of other kindred (especially later) dialogues, which may indirectly help us deepen our understanding of the Statesman. I shall argue for the thesis that (I) in spite of the mythical device of creation and cosmic cycles, according to Platonic principles there cannot be periods of disorder or cosmic drama in the whole universe, but (II) these stand for human and social disturbances. In other words, it is mainly in human affairs that confusion and ethical conflict arise. (III) Finally, I intend to draw some conclusions of present interest to us.

I

As is well-known, the Statesman myth presents us with a picture of opposite cosmic cycles. There are times when God himself guides the world and makes it go in a forward revolution.
But at some other times God abandons the universe and it turns backwards. This rotation in reverse starts by being regular, thanks to the world's *phronesis* and remembrance of God's instructions. But, as time passes and memory grows dim, the influence of the corporeal element of the world's constitution becomes greater and the motion of the universe turns therefore increasingly disorderly, to such an extent that God has to come back to restore order (cf. 269c-d, 272e ff.).

In fact, this myth introduces several elements of cosmological importance, many of which anticipate further developments in Plato's late cosmology (as will be shown in *Philebus*, *Timaeus* and *Laws*).² For example, the world is a living creature (*zoon*) with a body and an intelligence (*phronesis*) of its own (*Sta.* 269d, cf. *Tim.* 30b, *Phil.* 29a-30a, *Laws* 896e ff.), and has been framed by God out of a pre-existing state of bodily ataxia (*Sta.* 273b, c; cf. *Tim.* 30b, 53a-b, etc.). In addition, this God or Demiurge (demiourgos, 270a, 273b) is a "divine cause" that accounts for whatever order, beauty and goodness exist in the universe, whereas "the bodily" (to *somatoeides*, analogous with *ananke* in the *Timaeus*, also mentioned at *Sta.* 269d, 270c) is held responsible for its potential or actual disarrangements (*Sta.* 273b-d; cf. *Tim.* 29a, 46c-e, 48a, 68e). God, in turn, has two mythical functions: First, he is the Creator of the world as an ordered whole (*gennesas*, 269d; cf. *synarmosas*, *syntheis*, *kosmesas*, 269d, 273b, d); though this creation of order seems to occur not only once but in a sense periodically, since God is also the restorer of order under threat of chaos (cf. 273d-e). Secondly, and above all, God is also a ruler or leader who takes care of the universe during its orderly periods (cf. 269d,