



428 BCE

PLATO | Life and Death

Plato was born in 428 BCE in Athens or Aegina; his name is probably a nickname, meaning “broad.” Little is known about his early life, except that his father died while Plato was a child and that he received a good education. His family tree is fairly well-mapped, since he was born to a wealthy Athenian family and wrote his famous relatives into many of his dialogues. After travels around the Mediterranean, he returned to Athens and founded the Academy in the 380s. Later in life, he became involved with politics in Syracuse, which was a tumultuous time in his life. He died in 348, at about 80 years old.

380 BCE

348 BCE

History of the Academy

The school began in the 380s, at the public grounds of a sacred olive grove dedicated to Athena, and the site of a myth involving the Athenian hero Hekademos. As a holy site, there were numerous traditions that took place on the road between Athens and the grounds of the Academy. The school was not open to the public, but free to members, and based on a structure that divided senior and junior members. Two women are known to have studied there; both dressed as men in order to attend. There was no set curriculum; instead, Plato posed problems to be solved by others. He would occasionally give lectures. There were three phases of the school, the Old Academy (380-266), Middle Academy (266-155), and New Academy (155-86), with increasing degrees of academic skepticism. When the city was attacked by the Spartan army, they left the grove untouched out of reverence for Athena; later, the Roman general Sulla did not feel the same, and destroyed the grounds in 86 BCE.

266 BCE

Teachings

Plato used myth, allegory, the dialectic method, and written dialogues to educate his followers on a range of topics. He focused on ideas about the nature of reality and knowledge, as well as developing philosophies about politics (at the time, this was viewed negatively by outsiders).

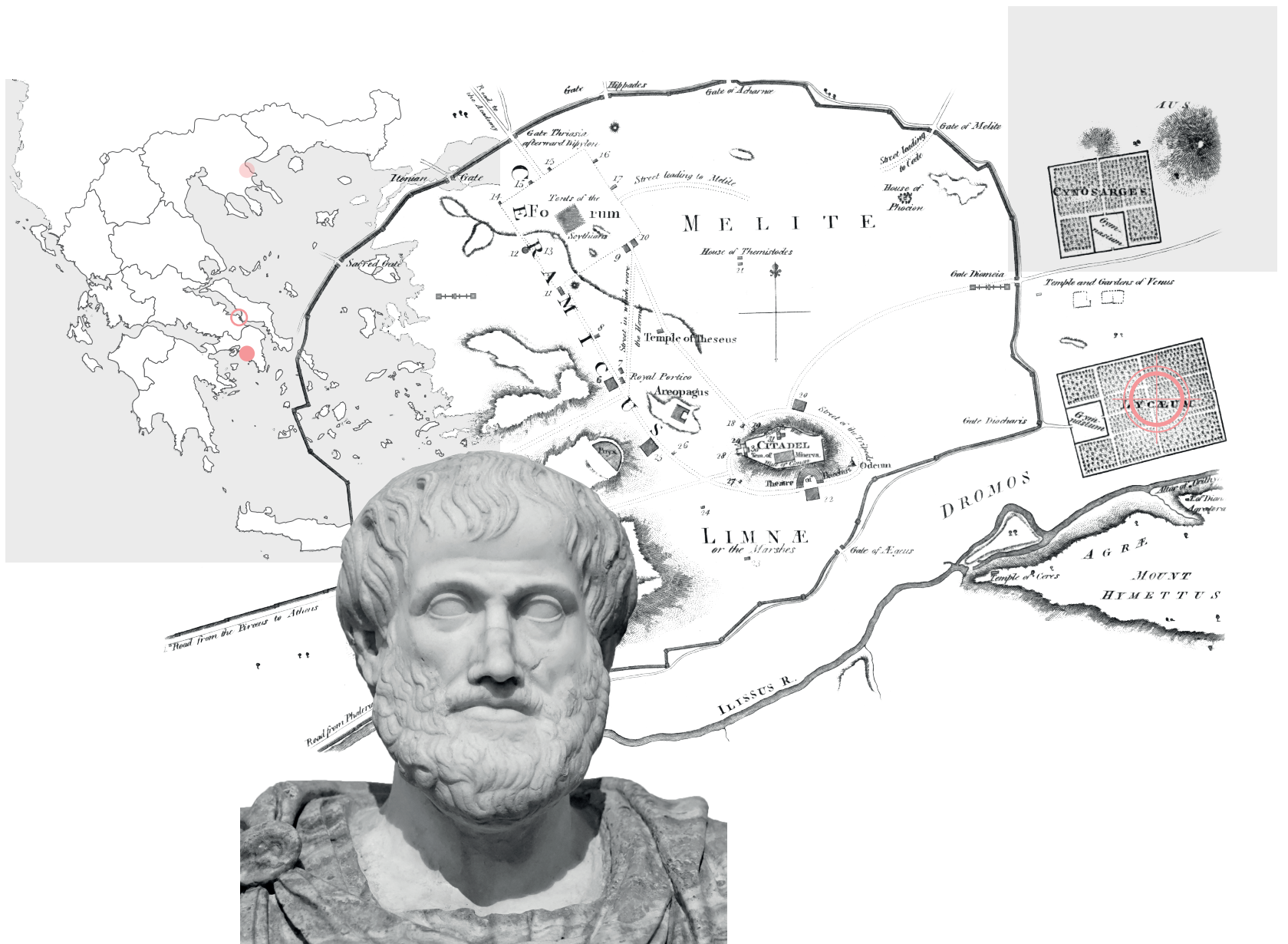
155 BCE

Writings

35 (or more) dialogues and 13 letters are attributed to Plato: Apology of Socrates, Axiochus, Charmides, Clitophon, Cratylus, Critias, Crito, Demodocus, Epinomis, Eryxias, Euthydemus, Euthyphro, First Alcibiades, Gorgias, Halcyon, Hermocrates, Hipparchus, Hippias Major, Hippias Minor, Ion, Laches, Laws, Lysis, Menexenus, Meno, Minos, On Justice, On Virtue, Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 228, Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 229, Parmenides, Phaedo, Phaedrus, Philebus, Protagoras, Republic, Rival Lovers, Second Alcibiades, Sisyphus, Sophist, Statesman, Symposium, Theaetetus, Theages, Timaeus.

86 BCE

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428 BCE
364 BCE
334 BCE
322 BCE

ARISTOTLE | Life and Death

Aristotle was born in Stagira (in the north of Greece) in 384 BCE. Little is known about his youth, except that his father died while he was very young and he was therefore raised by a guardian. At the age of 17, he joined the Academy, and remained a student there for twenty years (until 347 BCE). In 343, he began tutoring Alexander the Great. He founded the Lyceum in 334 and is believed to have written most of his works between 335 and 323. He was married twice. In 323, he was denounced as impious and he fled to Chalcis, on Euboa, where he shortly thereafter died.

History of the Lyceum

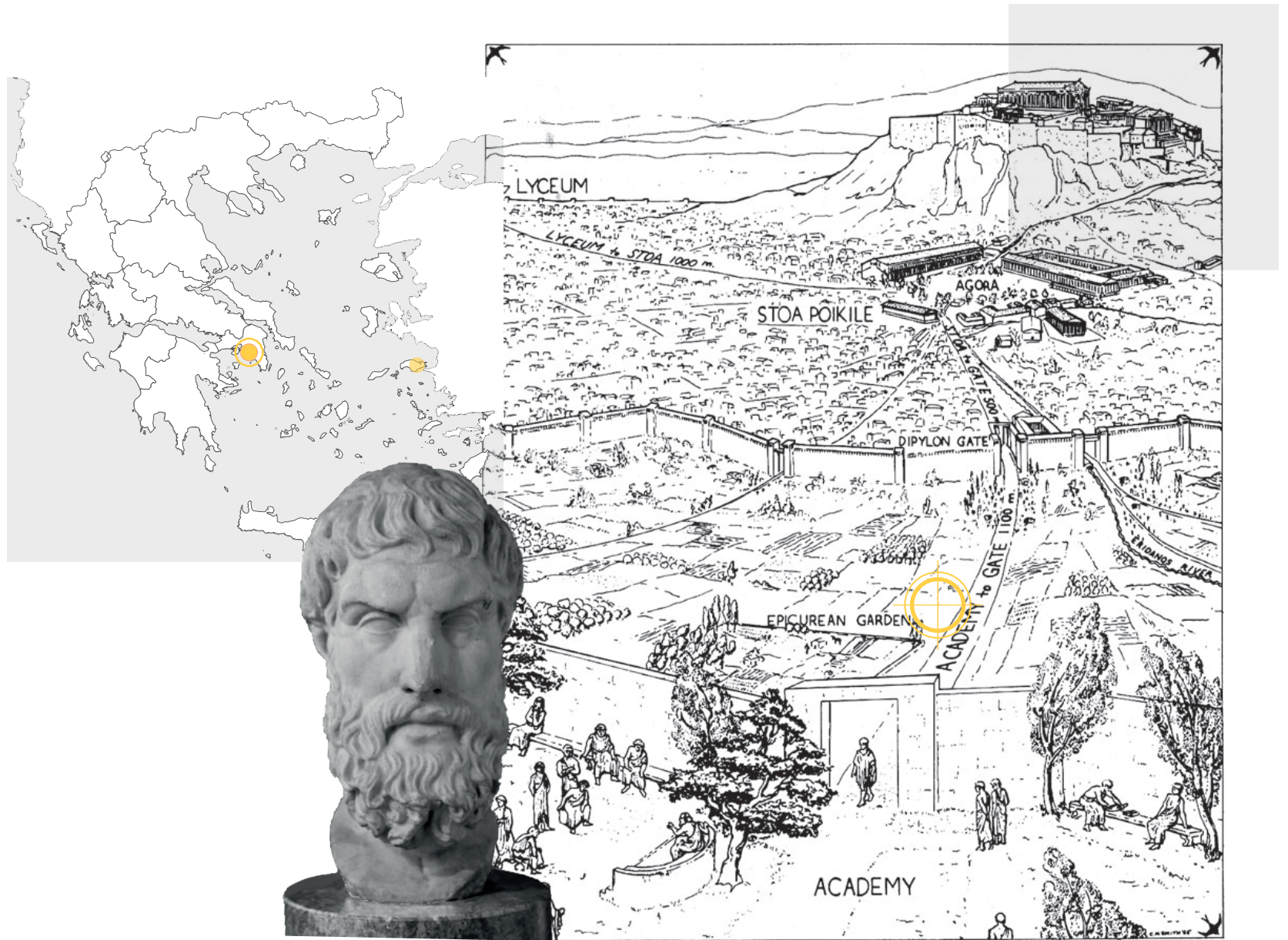
The Lyceum was opened in 334 on the grounds of a public gymnasium, because Aristotle was not an Athenian citizen and could not own land on which to start a school. He would walk across the grounds while he lectured, gaining the reputation as the “peripatetic school.” They would begin with morning lessons, followed by a public lecture; manuscripts of those lectures were later circulated throughout the city. However, there was no set curriculum, no fees, and no membership. Aristotle built an extensive library including his own works and student work. The students focused on “cooperative” research and were assigned historical or scientific projects to study. The school was student-run; a student administrator was elected every ten days. Aristotle and the students of the Lyceum developed first zoo and botanical garden in existence. They studied physics, biology, zoology, metaphysics, logic, ethics, aesthetics, poetry, theatre, music, rhetoric, psychology, linguistics, economics, politics, government.

Teachings

Although he was trained in Platonism, Aristotle’s teachings made a marked shift towards Empiricism. He is, today, considered the “father of western philosophy.” As with most schools at that time, he used the dialectic method to teach and wrote treatises and dialogues. He focused on physical philosophies as well as abstract and practical philosophical inquiries.

Writings

Many of Aristotle’s writings survive in full, although many more exist in fragments: 6 on logic (Interpretation, Prior Analytics, Posterior Analytics, Topics, Sophistical Refutations), 18 on physics (Physics; the Heavens; Generation and Corruption; Meteorology; the Soul; Sense and Sensibilia; Memory; Sleep; Dreams; Divination in Sleep; Length and Shortness of Life; Youth, Old Age, Life and Death and Respiration; etc.), 1 on metaphysics (Metaphysics), 5 on ethics and politics (Nicomachean Ethics, Great Ethics, Eudemian Ethics, On Virtues and Vices, Politics, Economics), and 2 on rhetoric and poetics (Rhetoric, Poetics).



EPICURUS | Life and Death

Born in 341 on Samos to Athenian Parents, Epicurus received a typical Greek education, which included Platonic training. He began teaching in Mytilene at 30 (311BCE). He founded a school in Lampsacus, and then in 306, came to Athens to start the Garden. He was vilified during his lifetime as wanton hedonist, but became more celebrated after his death, in 270 BCE. He was never married and had no children, and was possibly a vegetarian. His death, at the Garden, was said to be slow and painful, but he notably maintained a positive disposition despite that.

History of the Garden

Epicurus started his school on a small plot of land about halfway between the Stoa and the Academy. The inscription over the gate read "Stranger, here you will do well to tarry; here our highest good is pleasure." He lived there with his followers; it served as a community for people wanting to live as Epicurus prescribed. Epicurus and his followers would eat simple meals and converse about philosophical subjects on the grounds of his garden. He accepted women as a rule, rather than an exception. Epicurus enjoyed hosting large feasts on his birthday, and required that the tradition go on after his death. His followers regarded him as their savior, and after his passing, Epicureanism became somewhat of a hero cult. Epicurus' thinking seems heavily influenced by other philosophers, though he denied it. His teachings are most similar to Cynicism, and represent a hard opposition to Plato. Any rivalry with Stoicism developed after his death.

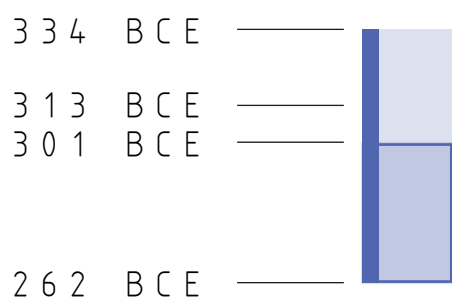
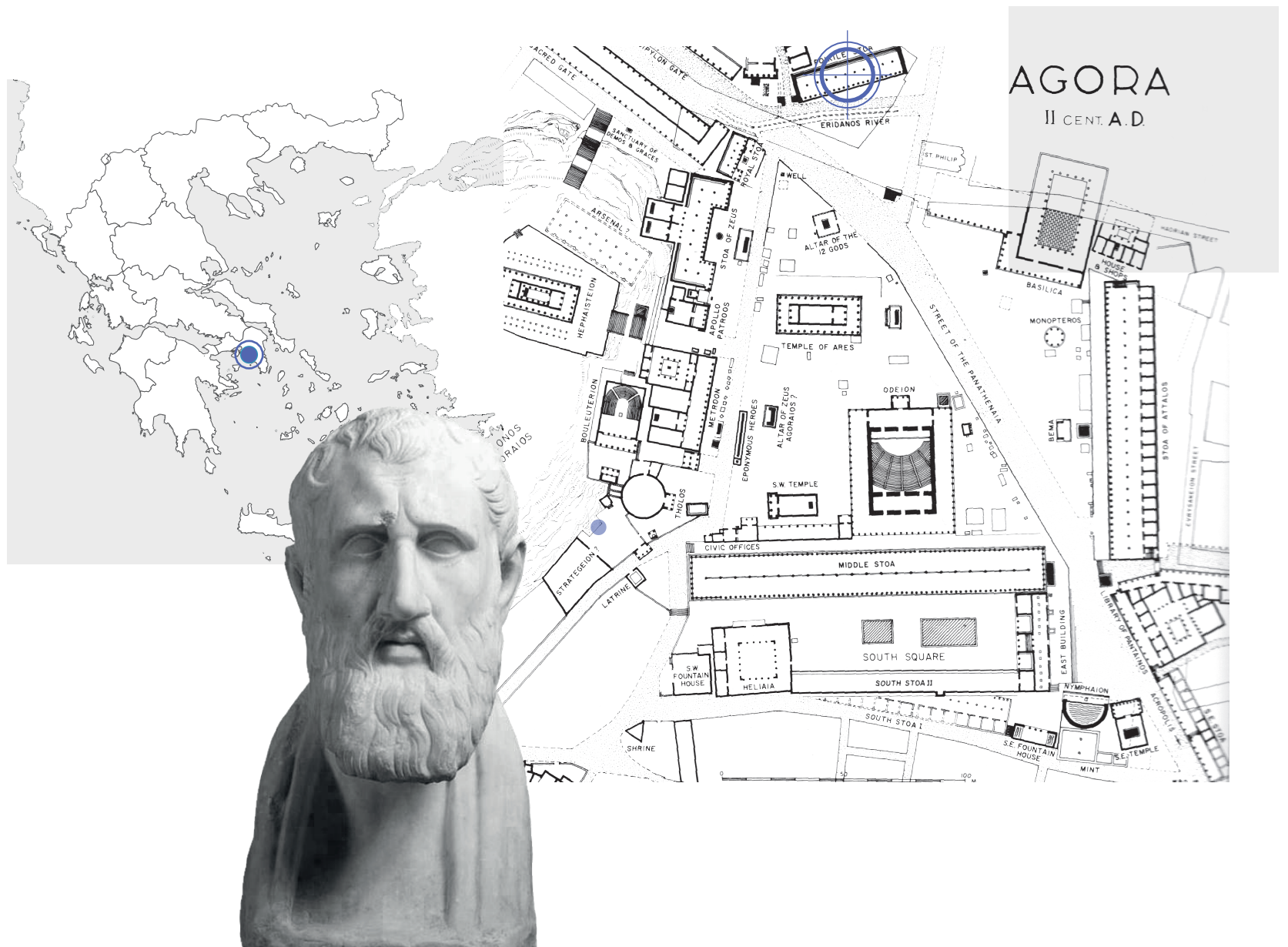
Teachings

Epicureanism focuses first and foremost on ethics, and in particular on hedonism. He emphasizes freedom from fear and pain, and living a self-sufficient life with friends. Epicurus was also an atomist and empiricist, and taught subjects ranging from physics to theology to politics.

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Writings

Epicurus was a prolific writer, having written over 300 pieces; however, most are lost. Only three letters remain in full (letters to Menoeceus, Pythocles, and Herodotus) and a few fragments. Philosophical biographer Diogenes Laertius notes 44 major works, including titles such as On Nature; On Atoms and the Void; On Love; Problems; Fundamental Propositions; On Choice and Avoidance; On the Chief Good; On the Criterion (the Canon); On the Gods; On Piety; Essay on Just Dealing; The Banquet (Symposium); On Seeing; On Touch; On Fate; Opinions on the Passions; Prognostics; Exhortations; On Perceptions; etc.



ZENO of CITIUM | Life and Death

Zeno was born in Citium, Cyprus, in 334 BCE, the same year that Aristotle opened the Lyceum. He became a wealthy merchant before finding his interest in philosophy (purportedly through an oracle's suggestion), and then took on an ascetic lifestyle, following the teachings of Cynicism. He studied under many philosophers, and came to Athens at the age of 21. He began teaching stoicism at the ancient agora, around the age of 30. Zeno was admired and celebrated during his lifetime; he was eventually offered Athenian citizenship when offered but declined because of how it might reflect on his own Phoenecian descent. He died in 262 BCE.

History of Stoicism at the Stoa Poikile

The Stoa Poikile became the home of Zeno's school of philosophy in 301 BCE, though it was a popular meeting place and had previously been home to a group of poets, called the Stoics. Initially, his followers were called Zenonians—but they eventually became called the Stoics themselves. Zeno is described as being earnest, gloomy, introverted, and was said to have disliked verbose speeches; however, he gained many admirers, including a king of Macedonia who would visit whenever he came to Athens. Stoicism flourished as one of the major schools of philosophy from the Hellenistic period through to the Roman era. The Stoa itself stood for six centuries, though it suffered when Athens was sacked in 276 CE by the Herulians. Over a century later, the building was disassembled to be re-used for a wall project elsewhere.

Teachings

Stoicism emphasized goodness and peace of mind from a virtuous life. Zeno divided philosophy into three parts. He ascribed the sub-categories of rhetoric, grammar, and the theories of perception and thought to the broad title of logic; natural science, theology, and the universe to physics; and ethics, which sought happiness by living "according to Nature."

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Writings

None of Zeno's writing survives, except in fragments. Many titles are known, though, including 7 on ethics (Republic; On Life according to Nature; On Impulse, or on the Nature of Humans; On Passions; On Duty; On Law; On Greek Education), 4 on physics (On Sight, On the Universe, On Signs, On Pythagorean Doctrines), 4 on logic (including General Things; Homeric Problems; On Poetical Readings), and 10 on other various topics (including Solutions, On Being, On Nature, On the Logos, Discourses).