

ACADEMY, PLATO'S (Greek, **Ακαδημεια, Ακαδημια**) — a higher school founded by Plato in Athens in 387 BC as an association of learned men who were dedicated to independent research, teaching, and to the cult of the muses.

Plato founded his own school after returning from his first trip to Sicily. The school was located near the hill Kolonos in the gardens and groves next to the gymnasium and park of Akademos (Ακαδημος), an Athenian hero who revealed where Helen was hidden. Plato acquired the garden and built a house with a portico and a chapel dedicated to the muses. Over time the school took on the name "Academy" from the name of the hero. There were solemn celebrations of the birthday of the patron of sages and the ruler of the temple in Delphi — the God Apollo; on the same the birth of Plato was celebrated, and the memory of Socrates was also commemorated with banquets.

THE ORGANIZATION OF PLATO'S ACADEMY. As the founder of the Academy, Plato had the lifelong dignified position of thiasarch (scholarch). Plato appointed Speusippus as his successor, but thereafter the scholarch was elected for life by the young members. The youthful members held all the minor offices, e.g., gatekeeper for the temple (who was concerned with the offering of sacrifices), secretary (who registered the members), and censor (who prepared symposia and who kept order in them). The symposia (banquets) were regarded in the Academy as solemn festive acts and were preceded by sacrifice or prayer. Plato saw to it that moderation was observed in sensual joys so that the symposium by the proper use of the intellect's power could become primarily a joy for the soul. Plato's followers (e.g., Speusippus) developed rules for the symposia.

Today some scholars question the view that Plato's Academy was a band or θιασος for the worship of the muses and Apollo, the lord of the muses, although the strong bonds of such a band would explain the broad autonomy and persistence of the school as an institution that relied on an untouchable estate which was a holy property. The members of Plato's Academy could only make use of this property. Since it was inviolable, it remained undiminished for centuries. The school had no statutes. Its organization depended upon the director. It accepted both young disciples (e.g., Aristotle at seventeen years of age), and mature scholars (e.g., Eudoxus of Cnidus, who came to Plato's Academy with his own disciple). Before someone was accepted into Plato's Academy, he had to pass an examination conducted by Plato himself. The teaching was in the form of lectures, seminars, colloquia and discussions (cited texts were the starting point in opening a discussion). The discussions took place while they strolled about the garden or in the porticos of the city. The master himself, Plato, held lectures. When he was traveling, students would lecture in his place. The school was endowed with laboratoria and a library. The library possessed, among other things, the writings of the master as they appeared in succession. Plato's Academy for the first time in the history of education led to contact between the various sciences. It often looked in part to the traditions of the school of Pythagoras, and became a model itself for other schools: the Aristotelian, Stoic and Epicurean schools, and in a certain way it was the beginning of the universities of the future. Plato's disciples came from many cities in northern Greece, Macedonia, and the shores of the Black Sea.

THE DIDACTIC GOALS OF PLATO'S ACADEMY. Plato regarded the education of "fitting souls" as his most important aim in life, more important than his own philosophical work (*Phaedr.*, 276 E; 277 a). Plato stated that the aim of the Academy was to educate disciples, philosophers who in the future would occupy positions of authority in the state and be guided

by true philosophy. In Plato's Academy, education had the purpose of forming future men of state as sages and politicians, a chosen group of just men formed in the good who would propagate justice from the Academy to society "[...]I was forced to say, when praising true philosophy that it is by this that men are enabled to see what justice in public and private life really is. Therefore, I said, there will be no cessation of evils for the sons of men, till either those who are pursuing a right and true philosophy receive sovereign power in the States, or those in power in the States by some dispensation of providence become true philosophers." (*Epist.*, VII 326 B). Plato often expressed the desire that the same people should be philosophers and the rulers of great states. However, Plato states it takes half a century to form a man, since an educated philosopher should still spend fifteen years in the active life of the political community to acquire experience and battle temptations. Only those who have cultivated philosophy with perseverance for a long time are capable of taking up these goals: "[...]it does not admit of exposition like other branches of knowledge; but after much converse about the matter itself and a life lived together, suddenly a light, as it were, is kindled in one soul by a flame that leaps to it from another, and thereafter sustains itself." The teaching of philosophy may awaken such an illuminating knowledge (or remembrance in the soul), and only this can truly form and educate the free man.

**TEACHING IN PLATO'S ACADEMY.** The candidates for philosophy had to undergo a fitting preparation. Plato made mathematics the introduction to philosophy. He held that the study of mathematics was of great benefit in forming intellectual skills. According to legend, inscribed over the entrance of the Academy were the words "Let no one enter here who does not know geometry". In the *Republic* (VII 528 a), Plato classified the mathematical sciences on the basis of the views of the Pythagoreans. They divided the mathematical sciences according to the questions each answered. The question "how many" belonged to arithmetic and music. "How great" was the question of geometry and mechanics. Plato presented the mathematical sciences in the following order: arithmetic, geometry (he distinguished plane geometry — or planimetry, and spatial geometry — stereometry), astronomy, and music. He thought that these sciences are connected by formal relations that can be seen, for example, in their diminishing degrees of abstraction. The mathematical sciences mentioned above put to the test and exercise the minds of students who are capable of philosophical meditations. The candidates for philosophy can be chosen from among the students of mathematics. According to Plato, it is not enough to stay at the level of teaching and lectures on the principles of numbers, but the minds of students should be directed to ever more abstract levels of thought, e.g., they may start from the first three numbers and pass on to meditations on the abstract concepts of unity and plurality. These meditations can facilitate the transition of the soul from knowledge of the world of changing things to an intuition of the world of beings "without form", namely to an intuition of ideas. In the same way, astronomy is a mathematical science that studies the combination of repetitive cyclical motions, and it leads at the end to the discovery of the plan of the demiurge who established the order of the world.

**THE STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT OF PLATO'S ACADEMY.** The Old Academy. Plato was the scholarch of the Academy for forty years and developed his philosophical system there. After the death of the master, the first director of Plato's Academy was his nephew Speusippus (347–339). Speusippus primarily studied the theory of logical classifications and the science of numbers. The next scholarch was Xenocrates of Chalcedon (339-314) who studied demonology (Platonic theology). The third scholarch after Plato was Polemon of Athens (314-269) who chiefly studied ethics. In 268, Crates briefly ruled the Academy and was also interested in ethics. Some of the disciples who contributed to the fame of the Old Academy were Heraclides of Pontus (he founded his own school), Eudoxus of Cnidus,

Philippus of Opus (an astronomer), and Crantor of Soloi (the first commentator of Plato's *Timaeus*). The most famous disciple of Plato was Aristotle (384-322), who created his own great philosophical system and founded his own school, the Lyceum. The Peripatos (Aristotle's Lyceum) and the Stoa (Zeno of Citium was a disciple of the Cynic Crates and of the Academic Polemon, both scholars of Plato's Academy) are regarded as independent branches of Plato's Academy.

The Middle Academy. The school departed significantly from Plato's teachings and moved in the direction of scepticism when Arcesilaus (315–240) became scholarch. Arcesilaus held that we may have only subjective certainty of the truth, but not certainty as referring to the world. Some time after Arcesilaus, Carneades (214–129) was scholarch. Carneades continued in scepticism and proclaimed a theory of probability. According to him, the investigation of mental images leads us to the various degrees of probability.

The New Academy. After Philo of Larissa held the position of scholarch (c. 110 BC), the Academy tried to return to Plato's original teaching, but it leaned toward Stoicism, while moderating the positions of Scepticism and allowing for the possibility of some knowledge of things. Basically, the Academy was inclined to eclecticism and combined the most acceptable views of the Stoics, Sceptics, Platonists, and later the Peripatetics as well. Antiochus of Ascalon (130-69 BC) introduced eclecticism into Plato's Academy and held that universal or common conviction is the criterium for truth.

Plato's Academy later would be more and more influenced by neo-Pythagoreanism. The Academy developed in different cities and these offshoots were not always connected with the Athenian home of Plato's Academy. With Ammonius Saccas (d. c. 242 AD), we may begin to speak of a neo-Platonic school, and Ammonius Saccas is regarded as the initiator of neo-Platonism. Plotinus (204–270) was his disciple for eleven years in his Alexandria school. The Syrian school developed the neo-Platonic conceptions (Porphyry of Syria, Iamblichus of Ceole Syria). The main representatives of neo-Platonism in Plato's Academy who developed their views in the Athenian school at the end of the fourth century and the beginning of the fifth century were Plutarch of Athens, the son of Nestorius, Proclus, Marinus of Naples, Isidore, Damascius and Simplicius. Plato's Academy in Athens was closed in 529 AD after almost nine centuries by the command of the Emperor Justinian. Justinian gave a special edict that "henceforth never again shall there anyone lecture on philosophy or explain the laws in Athens" (*Codex Iustinianum*. After this edict, the Platonists fled to Persia.

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Maria J. Gondek