

## PLATO'S ACADEMY

The Academy was a philosophical school established by Plato that safeguarded the continuity and the evolution of Platonism over a period of about 300 years. Its contribution to the development of Hellenistic philosophical and scientific thinking was decisive, but it also had a major impact on the formation of most of the other philosophical trends emerging during this period. This volume surveys the evidence for the historical and social setting in which the Academy operated, as well as the various shifts in the philosophical outlook of Platonism during its existence. Its contribution to the evolution of special sciences such as mathematics is also examined. The book further includes the first complete annotated translation in English of Philodemus' *History of the Academy*, preserved on a papyrus from Herculaneum. It thus offers a comprehensive picture of one of the most prominent and influential of all educational institutions in ancient Greece.

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# PLATO'S ACADEMY

*Its Workings and Its History*

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## Preface

The papers that appear in the present volume were originally presented at a conference entitled 'Plato's Academy: A Survey of the Evidence', held on 12–16 December 2012 by the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. The conference, which was part of the project 'Plato's Academy – Development of Knowledge and Innovative Ideas' sponsored by the Greek Ministry of Education and by the European Social Fund (2007–13), was under the auspices of HE the President of the Hellenic Republic Dr Karolos Papoulias. The editors, who also acted as the organising committee for the conference, wish further to express their gratitude to the former Minister of Education Mrs Anna Diamantopoulou, to the Vice-Rector of the University of Athens Professor Thomas Sfikopoulos and to Professor Vasso Kindi for their valuable assistance.

The papers included here are meant to represent the multifarious character of Plato's school, the diversity of the types of learning pursued in it and the various aspects of its interaction with contemporary historical and social circumstances. On the other hand, special care has been given in order to integrate the multiple approaches involved into a comprehensive narrative that reflects the complex nature of the exercise of philosophy in antiquity as being an activity far more variegated than a purely academic endeavour. The evolution of the Academy's philosophical stance through various stages is also an important key for our understanding of its historical course, its theoretical versatility and its significance for the development of ancient thought. Philodemus' *History of the Academy* is undoubtedly one of the primary sources on this topic preserved for us from antiquity thanks to the ashes of Vesuvius. For this reason, we have decided to include this invaluable document as an Appendix, translated for the first time in its entirety into English and accompanied by a mainly historical commentary. This should enable even the non-specialist reader to derive a comprehensive picture of the development of the school during the three centuries of its existence.

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