Plato

Plato is considered to be one of the world’s earliest philosophers. Since he lived so very long ago, it is impossible to know his exact birth date, but most scholars agree he was born between 429 and 423 BC, in Greece. Plato joined his two brothers and became a student of Socrates, who forced them to examine their beliefs.

For eight months, 404-403 BC, Greece was ruled by a group called the Thirty Tyrants. It was later ruled by a democracy. The Greek are famous for having invented democracy, a government system which we still use today. Plato’s beloved teacher, Socrates, was brought to trial for corrupting youth and religious impiety. He was sentenced to death. His friends, including Plato, offered to pay a fine instead but to no avail. This experience made Plato convinced that political regimes would only truly work when politics and philosophy were brought together. He said: “Either true and genuine philosophers attain political power or the rulers of states by some dispensation of providence become genuine philosophers.”

Plato travelled to Sicily and Italy and then returned to Greece in about 387 BC. Plato founded his own school in Athens, Greece. He wanted to educate the future leaders of cities. It was called the Academy. Interestingly, this is where we got the word for “academics” today. His school was much like a university, and offered classes in science, astronomy, and mathematics. He ran the school, and delivered lectures. Unfortunately, these lectures were never published.

Plato created many pieces of writing, most of which are referred to as “Dialogues.” He wrote about many different topics, including art, literature, the mind, immortality, politics, religion, and morality.

Plato died at eighty years of age, in the year 347 BC.