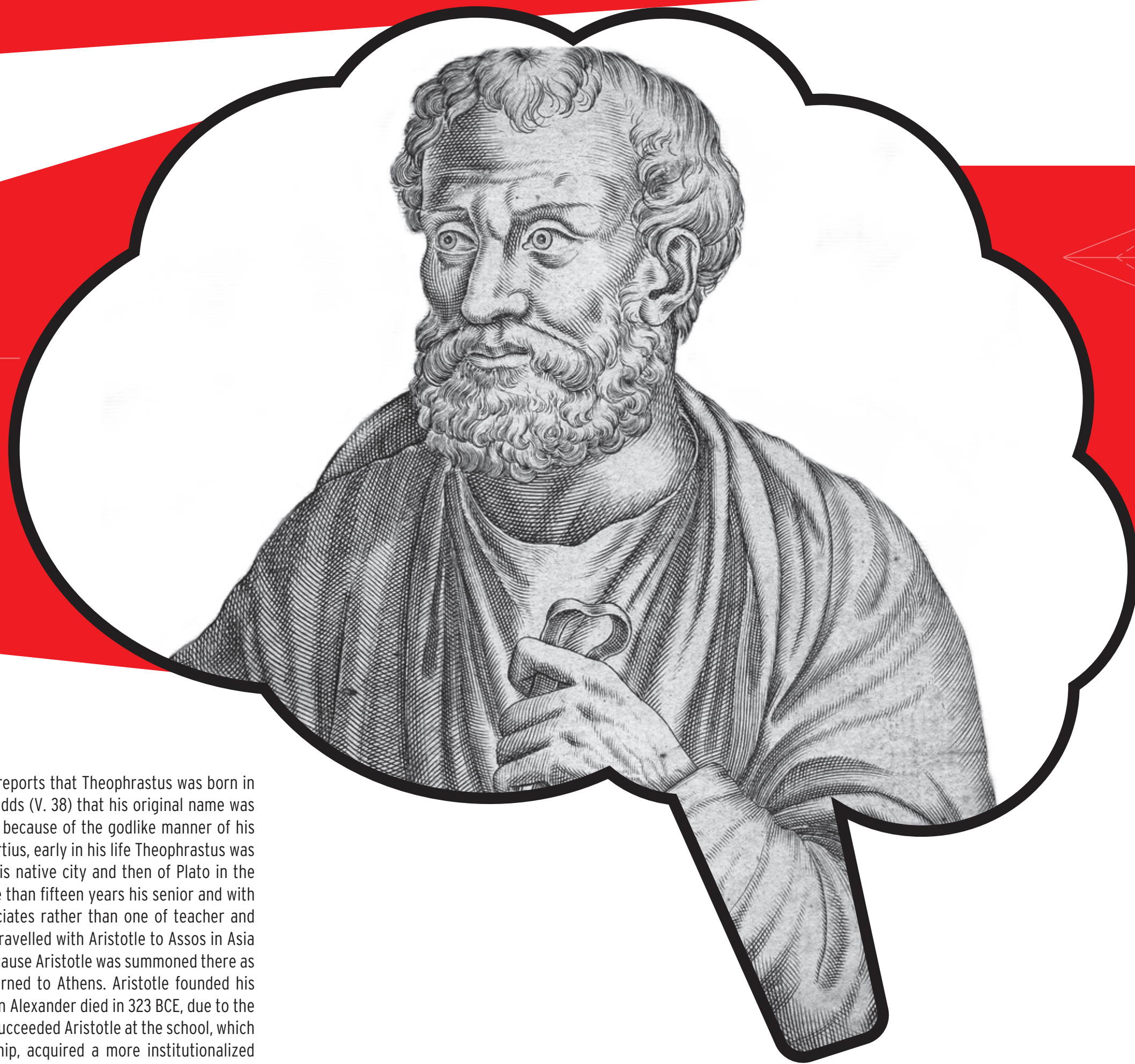


# ANATOLIA "THE LAND WHERE SCIENCE WAS BORN AND FLOURISHED"



## LIFE

Diogenes Laertius in his *Life of Theophrastus* V. 36 reports that Theophrastus was born in Eresos on the island of Lesbos around 371 BCE. He adds (V. 38) that his original name was Tyrtamus, but Aristotle changed it to Theophrastus because of the godlike manner of his speech (theos-phrazein). According to Diogenes Laertius, early in his life Theophrastus was a student of an otherwise unheard of Alcippus in his native city and then of Plato in the Academy, where he met Aristotle, who was not more than fifteen years his senior and with whom he had a relationship of colleagues or associates rather than one of teacher and pupil. After Plato's death in 347 BCE, Theophrastus travelled with Aristotle to Assos in Asia Minor, back to Lesbos, and later on to Macedonia, because Aristotle was summoned there as tutor of Alexander. Around 335 BCE they both returned to Athens. Aristotle founded his school at the Lyceum but he had to leave again, when Alexander died in 323 BCE, due to the increasing anti-Macedonian feelings. Theophrastus succeeded Aristotle at the school, which during the next thirty-five years, under his headship, acquired a more institutionalized character. It is reported that he lectured to as many as two thousand pupils at a time at the Peripatos, among whom we find the Academic skeptic Arcesilaus, who left him for Polemo's Academy, the comic poet Menander and the politician Demetrius of Phalerum. So, when Demetrius became governor of Athens in 317 BCE in the Macedonian interest, he protected and helped Theophrastus, whose situation had become precarious, as is testified by a prosecution of impiety that was brought against him, most probably before Demetrius came to power, by a certain Agnonides. After Demetrius' expulsion in 307 BCE, he was again persecuted, more seriously this time, when a law was passed forbidding anyone to open a school of philosophy without a government license; Theophrastus as well as many other philosophers left Athens, and he returned only when the law was repealed a year later (V. 37-38). Theophrastus died around 287 BCE and in his will, which survives in a copy provided by Diogenes Laertius in his *Life* (V. 51 ff), preceded by a list of his writings. He left all his books to his disciple Neleus, including the manuscripts of Aristotle's works, which he had inherited when he took over the Lyceum.

## STUDY

Diogenes Laertius is our main source for Theophrastus' life and works; he tells us little about Theophrastus' life, but at least includes his last will and a catalogue of his works. Diogenes attributes to Theophrastus well over two hundred separate treatises in different styles, of varying length and on a very wide range of topics, totaling 232,808 lines; of these less than ten per cent survives. Some works seem to have been intended for use within the school as basis for Theophrastus' lectures, while others were intended for a wider audience and they were, therefore, written in a popular style or in dialogue form. Judging from the surviving material and from their titles, some works were on the same topics as ones by Aristotle, whereas others seem to have dealt with topics related to those of the Aristotelian treatises but not covered by them.

Unfortunately, only a few Theophrastean works are extant, mainly because they seem to have been particularly influential in later periods, and were recopied then for that reason:

- Two large treatises on botany, which constitute the first systematization of the botanical world and one of the most important contributions to botanical science during antiquity and the Middle Ages:
  - Plant Explanations, six books on the vital functions of plants and their causes.
  - Enquiry into Plants, nine books with material relevant for the writing of Plant Explanations.



1. The Characters, a collection of thirty concise, often humorous sketches of negative types of individuals from everyday Athenian life.

# THEOPHRASTUS

**Born & Died:** C. 371 – C. 287 BC

**Main Interest:** Botany, Physics, Ethics, Grammar, History, Logic, Metaphysics

**School:** Peripatetic School

**Notable Ideas:** Botany "He is father of BOTANY"

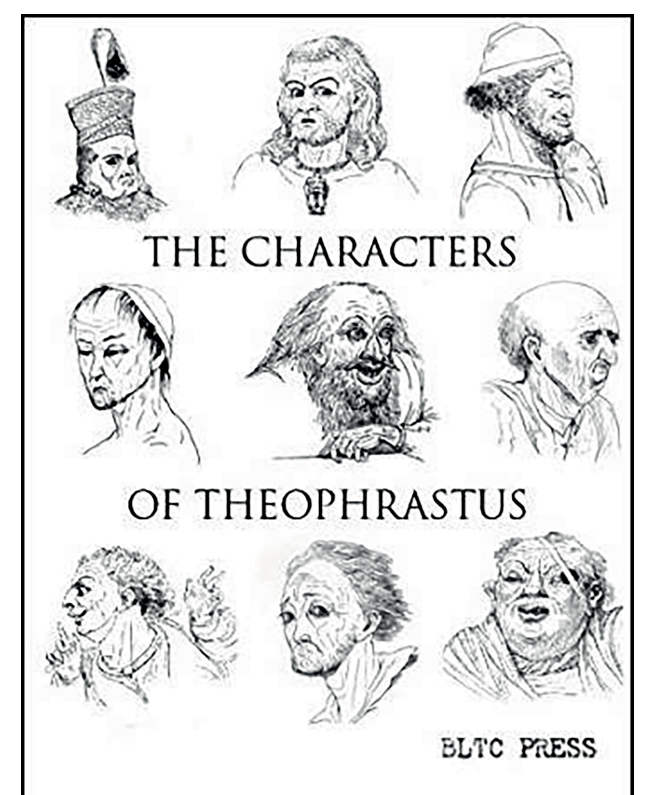
The first systemization of the botanical world, call him the "father of botany"



His two surviving botanical works, *Enquiry into Plants (Historia Plantarum)* and *On the Causes of Plants*, were an important influence on Renaissance science.

There are also surviving works *On Moral Characters*, *On Sensation*, *On Stones*, and fragments on *Physics* and *Metaphysics*

His book *Characters* (are the first recorded attempt at systematic character writing

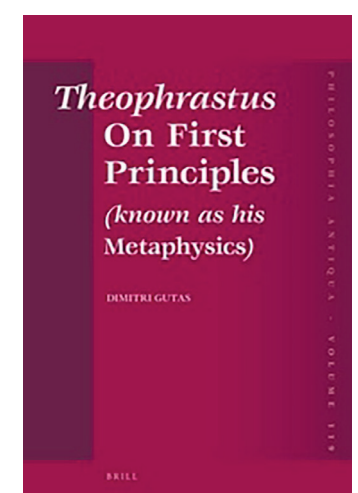


The Characters of Theophrastus  
Theophrastus (319 BCE)

- The Dissembler
- The Flatterer
- The Garrulous Man
- The Boor
- The Self-Seeking Affable Man
- The Willfully Disreputable Man
- The Loquacious Man
- The News-maker
- The Unconscionable Man
- The Penurious Man
- The Buffoon
- The Tactless Man
- The Officious Man
- The Stupid Man
- The Surly Man
- The Superstitious Man
- The Quarrelsome or Grumbling Man
- The Distrustful Man
- The Nasty Man
- The Ill-Bred Man
- The Man of Petty Pride
- The Parsimonious Man
- The Pretentious Man
- The Arrogant Man
- The Coward
- The Oligarch
- The Oligomath or Late-Learner
- The Backbiter
- The Friend of Rascals
- The Mean Man

The work contains thirty brief, vigorous, and trenchant outlines of moral types, which form a most valuable picture of the life of his time, and in fact of human nature in general. They are the first recorded attempt at systematic character writing.

- Two short independent treatises:
  - Metaphysics or On First Principles, a treatise investigating the principles of nature.
  - On the Senses or On Sensations, a treatise dealing with theories concerning the senses and their objects from Parmenides to Democritus and Plato.



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