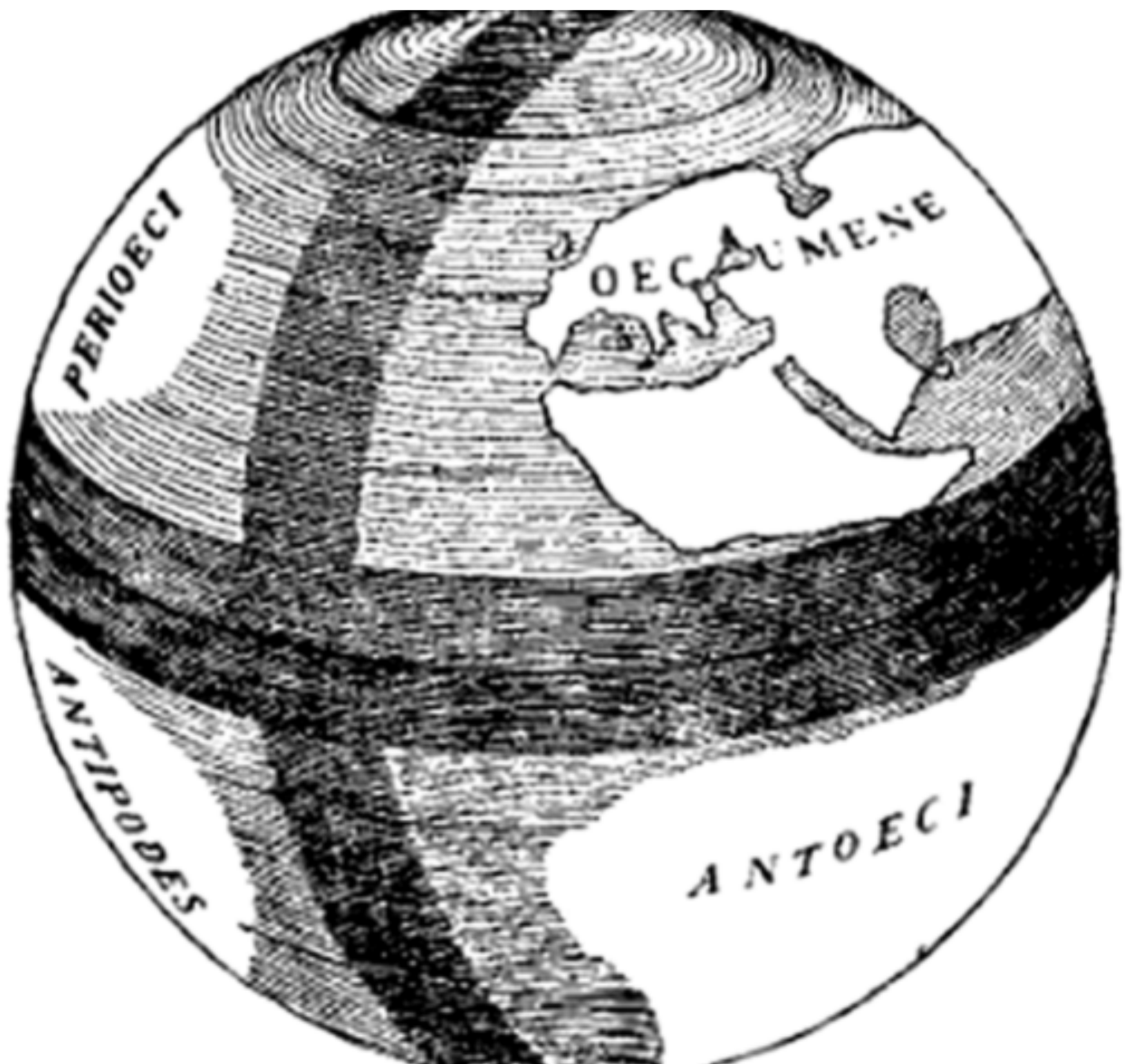


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# Crates of Mallus



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Cover:

The Globe of Crates of Mallus, displaying the *oecumene* (the known world of Europe, Asia, and Cissaharan Africa), *perioeci* (the unknown land on the other side of the Northern Hemisphere), *antoeci* (the unknown land on the other side of the equator, inaccessible owing to the presumed impossible heat), and *antipodes* (the unknown land on the opposite side of the world, likewise inaccessible) (**Encyclopaedia Britannica**, 11th ed., Vol. XVII, p. 635; Public domain, via [Wikimedia Commons](#))

## Crates of Mallus

Greek language grammarian and Stoic philosopher, Crates of Mallus (fl. 2nd century BCE), was the founder of the school of grammar at Pergamon and seem to have been the head of the library established there by the Attalid dynasty.

Crates was born in Mallus in Cilicia but left the city when he was young. After growing up at Cilicia's capital, Tarsus, he moved to Pergamon, where he lived and worked under the patronage of Eumenes II, who established the city as a centre of learning and built the library there, and Attalus II.

When he visited Rome as an ambassador for Eumenes (in 168 BC) or Attalus nine years later, he is reputed to have broken his leg after falling into an open sewer. The injury forced him to stay in Rome. While he recovered, he delivered lectures that prompted the study of grammar and criticism, which he regarded as separate fields of study among the Romans.

In Crates' view, criticism investigated everything that could cast light on a literary work; grammar applied the rules of language to the work to ensure that the meaning was clear.

His chief literary work was a nine-volume critical and interpretive commentary on Homer, the **Iliad** and the **Odyssey**, in which he maintained that Homer intended to express scientific or philosophical truths through poetry.

Crates also produced commentaries on Hesiod's **Theogony**, Euripides, Aristophanes, and other ancient authors and works on the Attic dialect, natural history, and agriculture. Unfortunately, only a few fragments of those works have survived over the ages.

Nothing, however, remains of what may have been his most significant achievement, which seems to stem from his study of Homer, who has Menelaus travelling home from the Trojan War by sailing south around Africa. Crates, therefore, needs to fit this part of the epic to the world known to the Greeks.

While Crates' original works are lost, Strabo, writing two centuries later, commented on what one hopes was an extant copy of Crates' original work <sup>1</sup> and not some lost work of an unknown intermediary.

According to Strabo, Crates constructed the earliest known representation of the Earth on a globe.

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<sup>1</sup> "whoever would represent the real earth as near as possible by artificial means, should make a globe like that of Crates" (**The Geography of Strabo**, II, v, 10).

Strabo comments at some length on Crates' extrapolation from Homer and its relationship to the known world. Crates' globe featured four symmetrical and inhabited continents separated by two ocean bands.

One ran north to south and equated to the Atlantic, with a corresponding ocean on the other side of the globe. The other, on an east-west horizontal orientation around the equator, corresponded to the torrid zone in the five climatic zone model of the Earth.

Crates considered that since the *oikumene* (the known world encompassing Europe, North Africa, and Asia) was inhabited and lay in the temperate zone, the other three quadrants could be populated as well.

They were, in turn, the *perioikou* (near dwellers) to the west of the *oikoumene*, roughly corresponding to North America), and in the southern hemisphere, the *antoikoi* (opposite dwellers) and *antipodes* (those with feet opposite). His *antipodes* would roughly coincide with South America, with the *antoikoi* possibly corresponding with ancient Gondwana or some non-existent amalgam of southern Africa and Australia.

In Crates's model, each quadrant was inaccessible from the others. On that basis, one might question the assumption that all were inhabited, but that could be "too much for an orderly and systematic Greek mind".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> G. A. Mawer, **Incognita: The Invention and Discovery of Terra Australis**, p. 5.

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