



ELECTRYONE
ΗΛΕΚΤΡΥΩΝΗ

ISSN 2241-4061

9 772241 406118

“On the meaning of being a woman and a philosopher in the Graeco-roman world.”

Konstantinos Mantas

mantaskostas@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: This paper will focus on women as philosophers in the Graeco-roman world: its time span will be extended, roughly, from the 6th c BC to the end of the 4th c AD. This rather elongated time span is due to the scarcity of the sources: Although there is a significant progress on the subject of the role of ancient Greek and Roman women in religion, economy and –even–politics, this is due to the bulk of information which can be gathered from– both – inscriptions and papyri. We cannot be so lucky on the subject of women’s share in intellectual life. The surviving material written by women is flimsy and fragmented: we know the names of some female poets and some fragments of their poems, but what about female philosophers?

Of course, there is a list which –according to Richard Hauley –records the names of sixty-three women philosophers of antiquity. The problem with that list is: were these women genuine philosophers or they were simply ciphers or heroines of anecdotes? In other words, did those women produce philosophical work?

This seems to be a moot point in the historical research: For most of them, we cannot be sure about anything else except their name and some short story, usually in connection with a male philosopher and of anecdotal character. There were some female students in various schools of philosophical thought, starting from the Pythagorean ones, through Plato’s academia to the various epicurean “gardens”. Some women, even taught, though this is a rather rare phenomenon. But the only philosophical works which survives under a woman’s

name consists of a few epistles by Pythagorean women sent to other women who sought their advice. These epistles present problems to the researcher: Some deny that they could have been written by women, thus considering them as having been written by men using female pseudonyms. This is an argument colored by sexist prejudice: if we accept that, we should deny all female authorship in antiquity.

Of course, women philosophers can be connected to female mathematicians : in antiquity, a philosopher had had to be well-versed in mathematics and there are references to female mathematicians from the mythological era(Aethra, the mother of Theseus) up to late antiquity(Hypatia). Also, some women in postclassical Alexandria were alchemists and theurgoi. This is another aspect of female spirituality : it seems that it was easier for women to participate in philosophical work of a metaphysical nature(close to witchcraft). The story of Sosipatra(4th c AD), as it has been recorded by Eunapius in his Lives of the sophists is similar to fairy tales and apocryphal texts.

Another important aspect of the history of women philosophers is that they were closely linked to a male philosopher: usually , as his wife or daughter(Theano, Hipparchia, , Sosipatra, Hypatia). Like most of women doctors, female philosophers seem to have profited due to this kind of nepotism which was prevalent in antiquity.

So, the fact that women, even, when they taught philosophy seem to have done so in their home, needs not to surprise us. In the Hellenistic and Roman era, women could act in various civic roles , as benefactors and titular office –holders but only as members of local aristocratic dynasties and in a “privatized” civic system of rule.

Last but not least: who should we call a philosopher in antiquity? The epigraphical material shows, that most of the inscriptions engraved on tombs, honouring women as philosophers, imply that the deceased were honored as educated women- not as creators of genuine philosophical works. The same seems to apply to the empress Julia Domna, wife of the emperor Septimius Severus-she was given the honorific title of philosophos, but she did not write anything. Her contribution to philosophy is limited to the foundation of a philosophical salon and to her commission of the writing of the biography of the legendary sophist and magician Apollonius of Tyana.

KEY-WORDS: Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, philosophical schools, Cynism, Stoicism, Theano, Aspasia, Hipparchia, Julia Domna, Neoplatonism, witchcraft, Hypatia.

According to Mary Ellen Waith, we can trace the history of philosophy to Hesiod-back in the 7th c. BC, thus leaving out philosophy in its oral form¹.

The first philosopher who accepted women among his students -or it would be better to say, his disciples-was Pythagoras of Samos (7th c. BC). Actually, it was Pythagoras who received parts of his philosophical program from Themistocleia, a Delphian priestess - nevertheless it is annoying that there is no further information on her-so, she seems to have been little more than a cipher. For that reason it would have been easy for the unbelieving researcher to relegate her to the pantheon of semi-mythological figures than to that of the historical ones. According to Iamblichus who wrote his *Life of Pythagoras* almost 900 years later, among the 235 names of Pythagoreans were listed 17 ones of women². At first sight, it seems that women represented an insignificant minority among the Pythagoreans but considering that these women belonged to the first Greek school of philosophy, their mere existence looks like a revelation . The male Pythagorians were classified according to their city of origin but the female ones were classified both by their city of origin and by their status as wives, daughters or sisters of male Pythagoreans³. This was due not only to the nepotism which was prevalent in societies organized around the bonds of consanguinity and marriage but, also, it was a consequence of the strict dietary and sexual regulations imposed by Pythagoras on the members of his circle: in a way, the Pythagoreans' way of life was impossible to be exercised by a married man if his wife was not a Pythagorean, too. Most of these women were Greek and of Dorian descent-but there were among them a few native Italian women like Ocello and Eccello, sisters of Occelus and Occilus, respectively who were members of Pythagoras circle. There is evidence that the women of the Pythagorean circle were literate: Pythagoras' mother had been sending letters to her son and Pythagoras' *ὑπομνήματα*, had been left for preservation to his daughter Bitale.

The fact that seven of the seventeen Pythagorean women known to us seem to have come either from Sparta or from cities connected with Sparta can be easily accepted as a natural consequence of Spartan women being used to living under a strict and harsh set of rules and of being socially more free than their sisters in the rest of the Greek world. Pythagoras' doctrine about the family and the social morality were sympathetic to women: he did not approve of men having concubines or having extramarital affairs, though in Croton and in other wealthy cities of Southern Italy, men's sexual infidelity was tolerated⁴. Besides the

¹. Mary Ellen White, ed., *A history of women philosophers*, v.1, *Ancient women philosophers 600BC-500AD*, Dordrecht, 1989, p. 5.

². Sarah. B. Pomeroy, *Pythagorean women :their history and writings*, Baltimore, 2013, p. 4.

³. S.Pomeroy, *ibid*.

⁴. S. Pomeroy, p. 8.

"Dorian connection", Pythagorean women were linked to traditional religion cults, especially to those in honor of goddesses who were patrons of marriage like Hera. The fact that Pythagoras assembled his female followers at the temple of Hera Lacinia which was located at the vicinity of Croton, was not an act without special ideological dimensions: women were assembled at a religious site of a goddess who patronized marriage and they were encouraged to dedicate their luxurious personal items (clothing and jewellery) to Hera. Thus, Pythagoras managed to make them to be obedient to his strict dress code -they had to behave like model wives and as modest housekeepers who scorned luxury⁵. The only negative aspect of Pythagoreanism on the subject of women was the relegation of the female to the lesser category not to the better one around whom the cosmological order had been organized⁶. This contradiction has been explained by some scholars as an Aristotelian version of the Pythagorean list of the two antithetical categories⁷.

Plato and the female in his philosophical concept:

Plato had been linked to the Pythagorean school of philosophy because of the Pythagorean influences in his work (i.e the immortality of soul and the circle of its reincarnations). There is, also, another possible link: one or-according to some scholars two-of the Pythagorean women philosophers whose texts have survived antiquity, -was called Perictione. Since Plato's mother was called Perictione, too some scholars suggested that Plato had been indoctrinated to pythagorianism through his mother. Although this scenario which presents Plato as μητροδίδακτος seems attractive to modern readers it falls foul of the known historical conditions in 5th c BC Athens. But what about Plato's opinion of the female sex in general? According to a tradition there were two women, Lasthenia and Axiothea among his students⁸. Because of lack of further information on the subject and of the anecdotal character of Diogenes Laertius brief passage on them, it is not worth speculating on the subject. The only way worth of giving thought on it is to analyze Plato's views on women: if he thought them capable enough on the intellectual level he may have accepted those two women among his students. Nevertheless, Plato on women is a rather controversial topic. Scholars had been polarized on the subject: some labeled Plato a misogynist, others a feminist. Also, Dorothea

⁵. S. Pomeroy, p. 35.

⁶. S. Pomeroy, p.10.

⁷. S. Pomeroy *ibid*.

⁸. Διογένης Λαέρτιος, *Βίος και γνῶμαι τῶν ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ εὐδοκίμησάντων καὶ τῶν ἐκάστη αἰρέσει ἀρεσκόντων ἐν ἐπιτόμῳ συναγωγῇ*, 45.

Wender came close to the point in her article «Plato: Misogynist, paedophile and feminist»⁹. It is not useful applying anachronistic concepts like feminism to the study of such alien societies such as the Graeco-roman ones. Plato was not concerned about women's status per se.

He was worried about "that wasted half of the populace"¹⁰. In other words he did not care if the status of women in the Athenian society was just to them but only if it was useful to the state or not. More to the point, Urana Diomatari, a Greek essayist, who, though she was not an academic, wrote an excellent book on that topic, *Plato and women*, (Athens, 1975), concluded definitely that the great philosopher disliked women and did not believe that they were intellectually competent. Ms Diomatari did not limit her research to the three political works by Plato (*Politicus*, *Politeia*, *Laws*) but she went, painstakingly, through the whole platonic body of work in order to uncover, hitherto, hidden layers, of the platonic view on women. Her findings did not agree with the idea of a Plato sympathetic to women. On the contrary, it seems that Plato showed a deep distrust to female intellect and soul: In *Timeus*, only the weak and unjust men were reincarnated in the second cycle, in the bodies of women (90e, 91). In *Phaedrus*, it is suggested that a woman's soul could –at best– be born again as a bee, an ant or as a mediocre man –the last and best transformation was reserved only for the few who managed to live in their previous lives in a just and modest way¹¹. A usual point of controversy among platonic scholars is the Diotima problem: why Plato had had to use a woman as his mouth piece in the *Symposium*? Plato was ambivalent about Diotima. Diomatari suggests that, even Diotima, falls victim to Plato's irony (*Symposium*, 280c). She doesn't believe that Plato chose Diotima to express philosophical views in order to express his faith in the intellectual capacity of the female sex. On the contrary, she agrees with I.Sykutris, that Plato chose to speak through Diotima because only a woman could speak on a topic similar to pregnancy¹². Also, Diotima was a priestess and a seer and Plato in his work expressed great respect to priests of both sexes: in the *Laws*, a dialogue he had written in his old age he had revised his radical plans for social reform which he had presented in *Politeia*. His Ideal state in the laws was much closer to the Athenian reality of his days: there were no place for women as members of the ruling elite. Women were relegated to their usual roles as housewives and nurses–there was an exception to this rule, though: women could hold priestly office. Anyway, on this topic, Plato seems to follow the tradition of his city: Athenian women

⁹. In Peradotto-J.P. Sullivan, eds, *Women in the Ancient world: The Arethusa Papers*, Albany. 1984. p. 213-228

¹⁰. D. Wender, p. 227.

¹¹. Ουράνα Διοματάρη, *Η γυναίκα στον Πλάτωνα*, Αθήνα, 1975, σ. 75.

¹². Διοματάρη, σ. 116.

were elected or chosen among the members of some aristocratic clans in priestly offices . It seems ironic that, hierarchically, the most important religious office in Athens was that of the priestess of Athena Polias¹³. Despite the masculine attributes of Athena, she did not cease being a goddess and as such she had to be served by a mortal woman. Thus, the woman who was chosen to serve Athena Polias enjoyed legal privileges which were unthinkable for any other Athenian woman, i.e she could engage in a lawsuit against an offender of the temple in her own name. That office was for life: Lysimache, an Athenian lady who died at the extremely old age of 88, had served the goddess for 64 years and, had given birth to four children (GB 64). But priestesses were the exception -all other women according to Plato were morally and intellectually inferior to men. So, it seems that Plato would not have been particularly pleased to teach women.

Aristotle: the woman as inferior form of man

Both Plato and his brilliant student Aristotle shared a common view on the inferiority of slaves, banausoi, children and women. Nevertheless, the woman problem was taken very seriously by Plato whereas Aristotle did not consider that problem serious enough to engage himself in trying to solve it. Though N. Smith's argument that Plato was "pro-woman" lacks conviction, he is right when he argues on the topic of their differentiation on the question of women: we can imagine Plato tolerating the existence of two female students in Academia but Aristotle walking and discussing philosophy with women, that could have been only a bad joke¹⁴. Aristotle was not an idealist like his teacher, he was realist, a keen observer of the natural world. To him woman was a "mutilated man" a eunuch like creature due to the fact-according to Aristotle-that though she shared in the deliberative part of the soul, it was not sovereign in her (Politics 9260a13). So, women had to be obedient to men who had their mental capacity in full-but not in the same way as slaves who lacked deliberation. Aristotle's sexist ideology was in full accordance to the prevalent intellectual stream of thought in classical Athens, according to P. Cartledge.

Aristotle is similar to Thucydides on the topic of women. For both of them woman was inferior to men and women were too insignificant to become more than footnotes in their brilliant texts. Whereas in Herodotus work there are 373 references to women, in Thucydides

¹³. P. Cartledge, *Οι Έλληνες: εικόνες του εαυτού και των άλλων*, Αθήνα, 2002, σ. 112.

¹⁴. Nicholas D. Smith «Plato and Aristotle on the nature of women», *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, v. 2, 1983, p. 475.

there are less than 45: most of them refer to women alongside children as passive victims of the war, the other to Thracian queens as links to Athenian aristocratic families through marriage and there is a reference to the priestess of Hera in Argos because she was the eponymos archon of that city. Nevertheless, there is a curious reference to an anonymous woman who –illogically– helped the enemies of her city, some Theban soldiers who had made an unsuccessful attempt to take Plataea in 431 BC by giving to them an axe in order to break one of the city's gate so they could escape (Thucydides 2.43)¹⁵: It seems that woman symbolized in both Thucydides and Aristotle the irrational element.

Cynics and Epicureans:

Cynic and epicurean philosophy stood as the opposite pole to the Aristotelian political philosophy: Aristotle was the philosopher who created the theoretical framework of the city as political organization-just before its collapse. On the other hand, Cynics and Epicureans were living in a post city-state world: the cities went on as geographical entities but they had lost their political autonomy due to the development of the Hellenistic kingdoms in the east and the federal states in mainland Greece.

Cynics had chosen a way of life similar to the one of dogs: everything that reminded the refined way of city life had to go to the dogs-literally. The founder of cynic philosophy Diogenes the Cynic had pushed his anti-civilization theory to the breaking point: He advocated public masturbation, incest, even cannibalism . His ideas seem to have come to the surface in the 1960s in the hippie movement. – the ascent of primitivism as an opposition to a supposedly civilized society. Cynics were practitioners of a way of life not theoretical analysts. Diogenes Laertius recorded in a brief passage in his Lives of the philosophers some vignettes of the life of the sole female of the Cynic movement-Hipparchia whose name imply that she was an aristocrat. Nevertheless, Hipparchia, became a Cynic via marriage-she fell in love with a friend of her brother, the Thracian Crates and persuaded him to let her become his wife¹⁶. Hipparchia abandoned traditional female occupations like spinning and shared Crates' harsh way of life. In some ways she seems a rebellious woman, in others she is more the model wife, she combined both radical and traditional aspects of behavior. Epicuros, on the

¹⁵. T. E. J Wiedemann, «ελάχιστον εν τοις άρσεσι κλέος» Thucydides, women and the limits of rational analysis, 30(2), 1983, p. 163-170.

¹⁶. Konstantinos Mantas, «The incorporation of girls in the postclassical educational system». POLIS, 29, 2012, p. 80-81.

other hand, when he founded his philosophical school, the Garden, accepted people of all social classes and of both sexes: it seems though that the Epicurean garden, was more like a community than a philosophical school in the strict sense-some scholars believe that the epicurean gardens were the prototype for the first Christian communities. Epicurus accepted women, even hetaerae like Leontion in the Garden but there are no surviving texts by her or by any other female Epicurean. Based on the axiom *λάθε βιώσας*, the epicurean way of life was a subterranean one, a refuge for those who were dissatisfied by the corrupt social and political mores of their cities.

The Hellenistic and roman privatization of public life

Since the Macedonian subjection of mainland Greece after 336 BC, the establishment of monarchical states in the Greek world signaled the "privatization" of political life: Royal *oikoi* became the center of political life and in those *oikoi* female members played a prominent role. The famous and infamous Hellenistic queens, in a way, signaled a return to the mythical Greek past, when political life was open to strong royal women like Clytemnestra. Those female monsters who seemed to terrorize the subconscious of the soul of the Athenian male, returned with a vengeance. Ironically, the Athenian citizens of the Hellenistic era were obliged to pay homage to these royal women. Philosophers of the era could not ignore these changes: Phintys, the Neopythagorean claimed that it was not proper for a woman to philosophize, to ride a horse or to speak in public¹⁷. On the other hand, Perictione, begged to differ: according to her, a woman whose soul is courageous, *sophron* and just could become a good wife and mother but-also-in some cases a good ruler of tribes and cities¹⁸. The reference to female rulers secures a postclassical date for Perictione though there is another view expressed by Vula Lambropoulou, that Perictione had in mind queens in the periphery of the Greek world, like the ones mentioned by Herodotos (Tomyris, Artemisia I)¹⁹. Though such literary references to women acting in the public sphere were rare even in the Roman period, there are plenty of surviving literary texts which record the names of women as benefactors and honorary office-holders in the Eastern part of the Roman empire. The formulaic language of the inscriptions implies that the city has lost its autonomy -it had been relegated to the status of a subject to the Hellenistic kingdoms and to Rome. Rich aristocrats of both sexes

¹⁷. Κένεθ Γκάθρι, *Οι διδασκαλίες των πυθαγορείων μέσα από τα αρχαία κείμενα*, Αθήνα, 1995, σ. 181.

¹⁸. *Ibid.*

¹⁹. Voula Lambropoulou, «Some Pythagorean female virtues», in Richard Hauley-Barbara Levick, eds, *Women in antiquity: new assessments*, London-N.York, 1995.

have become "fathers" and "mothers" of the city and of the various civic bodies -if they were mature: what was unthinkable in the age of Aristotle had become part of everyday life 200 years after his death. Nevertheless, even those women owed their public role to their male relatives.

Metis, magic and theurgia

Since the archaic period, a certain kind of thinking, metis, could be associated with women-actually, with a very special type of women: the witch., like Circe and Medea²⁰. Although metis was not exactly intelligence, it was a special way of thinking and although mortal men like Odysseus were practicing it, only goddesses and witches had been its practioners out of the whole female sex: mortal women were not included. This connection between metis and magic, implies that it was easier for women to be associated with schools of philosophy of a metaphysical dimension.

It is very unusual that Eunapius author of *Lives of the Sophists* (4th c AD) included in anotherwise strictly male list of men's lives that of a woman, a certain Sosipatra of Ionia. Of course, Sosipatra was connected to one of the men whose lives were recorded by Eunapius: she was the wife of Eustahius, one of lablichus most prominent students who due to his intellectual abilities was chosen by the emperor Constantius to act as his personal advisor and as ambassador (*Vitae Sophistorum* 6.5.1-6.6.5). But despite this, Sosipatra was not a later-day Hipparchia. She seems to have been the exceptional woman because she emerges in Eunapius tale as a figure more important than her husband -her wisdom was so surpassing that his seemed insignificant in comparison²¹. This is not typical for antiquity: A woman who is intellectually on a higher level than her husband would have been considered an anomaly. This was not so in the case of Sosipatra. Her life story has something of the fairy tale and - also, something biblical. She was the daughter of a rich man of the landholding elite of Ephesos. In the fifth summer of her life two very strange old men appeared on her father's estate outside Ephesos and after their request of being hired as agricultural workers was granted they worked a miracle: they produced an unbelievably large harvest of grapes. Sarah Ills Johnston is right when she makes the connection between this episode of Sosipatra's life

²⁰. Evelien Brache, *Of Metis and Magic: The conceptual transformation of Circe and Medea in Ancient Greek and Roman poetry*, PhD thesis, 2009

²¹. Sarah Ills Johnston, «Sosipatra and the theurgic life: Eunapius *Vitae Sophistorum*» in Jorge Ruple, Wolfgang Spiche (ed.), *Reflections, in Religious Individuality*, Bonn / Berlin, 2012, p. 91-116.

and the story of Filimon and Bauchis, the pious old couple who showed hospitality to two wretched old beggars who were Zeus and Hermes in disguise in a undercover mission to check men's moral qualities: the couple was rewarded with the transformation of their jug into a never ending source of wine²². After the performance of this miracle, the two men, having established their supernatural status persuaded Sosipatra's father to leave her into their care for the next five years, so they could transform her in a godlike maiden. When the period of her apprenticeship had been terminated, her father returned to his estate to find his daughter transformed into a special kind of person: Sosipatra was an indigo child of the 4th c AD. Sosipatra, despite her spiritual gifts, followed the traditional way of life: She married and became a mother. After her husband's death, she moved to Pergamon where she lived with her children under the protection of Aedesius, a relative of her late husband.

Aedesius was a philosopher with a school of his own in which Sosipatra taught, though in private. Despite her wisdom and the fact that the students rated her lectures above those of Aedesius, she had had to teach in her home, not in the school. She had had clairvoyant powers but she needed Aedesius help to avoid the erotic magic spell of an unwanted suitor. The story of Sosipatra reveals that even the most exceptional woman in antiquity needed male social and spiritual help in order to survive.

Another woman who was theurgos was the Athenian Asclepigenia, daughter of Plutarch of Athens who succeeded her father as co-director of the neoplatonic academy of Athens together with her brother Hierius and her colleague Syriannos in 430 AD. The philosophical program of the neoplatonic academy of Athens was based on metaphysics and magic²³.

What's in a name: Who was called philosopher in antiquity

One of the problems which a scholar has to face when doing research on philosophy in antiquity is the definition of the term philosopher. Who was a philosopher in them days? In our days a philosopher is someone who produces philosophical texts either as an original thinker though this is very rare or as a commentator of the texts of the great philosophers of

²². Sarah Ills Johnston, *ibid*.

²³. Mary Ellen Waithe, v. I, p. 201-202.

the past. But who was called a philosopher in antiquity? Though we cannot be sure about the precise meaning of the term in antiquity, it seems that it was much wider and it was not the same in all periods: antiquity covers a very long period of time from 8th c BC up to the 5th c AD or even later. It is natural that terms and ideas were transformed in such a long period of time. Many of the great philosophers of antiquity never wrote anything (Socrates, Diogenis the Cynic) so we are obliged to search for their ideas in the texts produced by their students. It seems that the term, when applied to a woman, especially in the Roman period had a meaning somewhat different of that of an original thinker. For instance, Marcus Aurelius (161-180 AD) was known as the philosopher-emperor: he authored *Meditations*, an autobiographical book strongly influenced by Stoic philosophy. But what about a «φιλόσοφος βασιλίς», Julia Domna, the second wife of the emperor Septimius Severus (193-211 AD): According to the 3rd c, AD historian Dio Cassius Julia Domna started to study philosophy during the years of her banishment from her husband's court due to the hostility of the emperor's close friend and advisor (7.5.17). Flavius Philostratus in one of his letters to Julia refers to the fact that the empress commissioned him to write a biography of the 1st c AD sage and philosopher Apollonius of Tyana. There is a letter of Philostratus to Julia Doman (Επιστολαί, 73) in which he discuss not philosophical but philological problems. Those were the philosophical pursuits of Julia Domna: another imperial consort before her, Plotina, wife of Trajan (98-117 AD) had been commemorated in two Athenian inscriptions for being a patroness of the Epicurean school at Athens: Actually, In the 1st of these inscriptions, Plotina herself, announces her special care for the Epicurean school, so much that she persuaded her adoptive son (actually her late husband's adoptive son, since Roman law did not allow women to adopt), the emperor Hadrian to allow the testamentary successor of the school's head, being selected among both Roman citizens and Greek ones²⁴. So, there was a Roman «philosopher-king» but not a real «philosopher -queen», despite the fact that Julia Domna took part in the imperial administration during the last years of the rule of her son, Caracalla (193- 217 AD). Finally, three inscriptions of the 2nd and 3rd c AD have recorded the names of women who were commemorated on her tombs as «philosophers» two are written in Greek and one in Latin. A lady called Magnilla was commemorated as a philosopher, and as daughter and wife of philosophers. (Apollonia, Mysia, 2nd c AD), IGR 125). Aurelia Oppia, daughter of Cleon was styled as «the most philosophical of women (IGV.I. 598, Sparta, 3nd c AD) and Euphrosyne who died at the early age of twenty was «pious, instructed in the nine muses, a

²⁴. Τάκης Παναγιωτόπουλος, «Οι Επικούρειοι στα χρόνια του Αδριανού, Ο κήπος του Επίκουρου», www.epicuros.gr/arthra/a_aitra.adrianos.pdf.

philosopher» (ILS7783). Since one of them was only 20 years old on when she died and the other two died childless, they should have been very young when they died, too. So, they could not have produced any significant body of work, if they had written anything at all. Also, two out of three belonged to families of philosophers and one married to another philosopher, thus giving weight to the theory of strong nepotism in the cases of women who studied philosophy. There are some literary backing on the notion of Roman women obtaining a philosophical education in the works of Seneca and of Musonius Rufus, who advocated the education of women in philosophy though in a strictly domestic sphere, and Dio Chrysostom, pupil of Musonius Rufus who had had as one of his interlocutors in the dialogue *Chryseis*, a woman who was much better in that role than the male ones in other dialogues²⁵. Finally, we have to refer to the case of shallow -minded and rich women (and men) of the Roman elite who used their wealth in order to torment poor Greek sophists like the one described by Lucian (on salaried positions 31-32): the philosopher's pretentious patroness had had obliged him to look after her pregnant dog which gave birth in his cloak.

Conclusions

The pursuit of philosophy was in antiquity, a male activity like all the other intellectual ones: Pythagoras and Epicurus accepted women among their circles, but this was not the case with the other founders of philosophical schools. Perhaps, this inclusive policy can be explained by the fact that both pythagoreanism and epicurianism were more a way of life than an intellectual pursuit. Nevertheless, the nepotism prevalent in the Graeco-roman world and the privatization of public life allowed some women to pursue philosophical careers.

Bibliography

A. In English

Scott Aitkin and Emily McGill-Rutherford, "Stoicism feminism and autonomy", *Symposion*, 1, 1, 2014, p. 9-23.

²⁵. Karin Blomqvist, *Myth and moral message in Dio Chrysostom: A study in Dio's moral thought, with a particular focus towards women*, Lund, 1989, p. 91-114.

Evelien Brache, *Of Metis and Magic: The conceptual transformation of of Circe and Medea in ancient Greece and Rome*, PhD thesis, 2009

Karin Blomqvist, *Myth and moral message in Dio Chrysostom: A study in Dio's moral thought with a particular focus towards women*, Lund. 1989.

Sarah Ills Johnston, "Sosipatra and the theurgic life: Eunapius Vitae Sophistorum", in Jorge Ruphe-Wolfgang Spickermann (eds), *Reflections in Religious Individuality*, Bonn/Berlin , 2012, p. 99-116.

Lisa Hill, "The first wave of feminism: Were the stoics feminists?", *History of political thought* , January, 2001, p. 13-40.

Voula Lambropoulou, "Some Pythagorean female virtues" in Richard hauley-Barbara Levick (eds), *women in antiquity: new assessments*, London-N.York, 1995, p. 122-134.

Konstantinos Mantas, "The incorporation of girls in the postclassical educational system", *POLIS*, 24, 2012, p. 77-89.

Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Pythagorean women: their history and writings*, Baltimore, 2013.

Nicholas D. Smith, "Plato and Aristotle on the nature of women", *Journal of the history of philosophy*, 21, (4), 1983, p. 467-476.

Mary Ellen Waithe, (ed) *A history of Women philosophers, v 1: Ancient women philosophers 600 BC-AD 500*, Dordrecht-Boston-Lancaster, 1987.

Dorothy Wender "Plato Misogynist, paedophile and feminist" in J. Peradotto - J.P. Sullivan(eds), *women in the Ancient world: the Arethusa papers*, Albany, 1984, p. 213-226.

Thomas E.J Wiedemann, "ἐλάχιστον ἐν τοῖς ἄρσεσι κλέος" Thucydides. Women and the limits of rational analysis, *Greece and Rome*, 30 (21), 1983 p. 164-170.

B. in Greek

Paul Cartledge, *Οἱ Ἕλληνες: εἰκόνες του εαυτοῦ και των ἄλλων*, Αθήνα, 2002.

Γούντυ Γκάθρι, *Οἱ διδασκαλίες των πυθαγορείων μέσα από τα αρχαία κείμενα*, Αθήνα, 1995.

Ουράνα Διοματάρη, *Η γυναίκα στον Πλάτωνα*, Αθήνα, 1975.

Τάκης Παναγιωτόπουλος, "Οἱ επικούρειοι στα χρόνια του Αδριανού" *Ο κήπος του Επικούρου*, [www,epicuros. gr/artra.adrianos.pdf](http://www.epicuros.gr/artra.adrianos.pdf).

K.M.