Chapter 5. The Education of Women and the Greek Schools of Philosophy.

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Introduction.

Women and paideia: A most infrequent combination in Antiquity! Women and schole: Even more remote and a margin in the schooling tradition! The nexus between women and schooling is weak indeed and despite valiant attempts by classical scholars, very little can be said before the fourth century B.C. Earlier, Sappho had provided an example. Pythagoras admitted women into the community. Aspasia and Phryne were models of the educated intellectual and erotic hetairai respectively. With the advent of philosophic schools a few women did participate. These were either foreigners or daughters of philosophers of the minor Socratic schools and later, the Academy and Epicurus' Garden. No tradition attests a woman attending the Lyceum or Stoa. The rhetorical tradition is similarly not represented. In the Hellenistic period there was greater opportunity for women of the propertied classes, though outside the framework of the school, that is, the ladies, princesses and queens of Alexander's shattered empire. Women also entered some professions: medical, literary, poetic, artistic, etc. The extent to which they participated in higher education as such is not known. Individual cases are separated by generations and centuries.

Plotinus received women into his school. In the East the synthesis between philosophy and religion enabled
Sosipatra to hold a chair of philosophy and practice theurgy. Hypatia was head of her own school of philosophy in Alexandria, and Asclepegeina, according to Marinus, taught Proclus white magic. Christianity had by now triumphed, but it did little, if anything, for the higher schooling and education of women.

Traditional scholarship has mainly focused on Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. From oriental seclusion to cultured housewives, views range the spectrum depending on which sources are given primacy. This chapter is concerned to explain the nature of the interaction between the Greek school of philosophy and women. In a patriarchal society, the Greek school was invented for the education of men. Formal schooling for girls took place within the framework of a male school engaged in the production of male knowledge. Women participated only if they could fit in, or if the school could accommodate them without loss of power. Girls were educated at home for marriage and the reproduction of private property. Hetairai had no such burden and could acquire paideia. Other women (priestesses, witches, theurgists) appropriated forms of religious knowledge as their own and as competing alternatives to the male culture of the school.

In the mainstream of schooling the education of women is a tangent. This tangent however can help explain the nature of Greek schooling as the result of specific social relations of inequality in the division of labour between the sexes in a patriarchal society.
5.1. The Early Schools and the Education of Women.

In the process of formation, the school as an institution was constructed in the later Classical period and following by and for the education of men. The higher schooling of women was not even theorised let alone practised at this time. Even in the case of Sparta, the education of women took place within already existing institutions and not in separate schools as such. Most women simply did not go to school in Antiquity. The truth is that most boys did not go to school either. Schooling in Antiquity was the privilege of the ruling few; a minority culture based on leisure and mental as opposed to manual work. Most women, like most other people, worked for a living under conditions of exploitation and did not have time for schole. Only very few women in Classical Athens could acquire the semblance of an education. These were citizen women of the propertied classes and their education took place within the home where they learned to read (1) and less often write. (2) A few but very suspect (3) red-figure vases indicate this, although we can not infer from them that girls went to schools, (4) let alone there being schools for girls, and Beck is certainly wrong in his belief that there were such schools. (5) Nor can we take the women in Attic tragedy and comedy as representative of real Athenian women, certainly nothing resembling the norm. (6) Outside the home, a minimum of schooling was available to women and these were primarily women of the propertied classes who had the leisure and means for cultural
pursuits. Nor they did take part in the educational explosion of the rhetorical culture of the sophists in the fifth century and only in a few instances did they share in the philosophical developments of the fourth. Married off at an age between 12-16, any subsequent educational experience other than annual public festivals and religious ceremonies was confined mostly to domestic life. The majority of foreigners and slaves had no rights in the polis and they would have to look after their own interests. Some slaves could have been instructed to perform specialised tasks and this may have required some literacy.

The only class of women who could acquire substantial intellectual education was the hetaira class; the companion or courtesan. (7) Aspasia, the consort of Pericles and Phryne, the most beautiful of women, were the models of the educated intellectual and erotic hetaira respectively. Men outnumbered women in Antiquity by roughly two to one (8) as female infanticide was more widespread so as to protect private property by limiting the number of dowries. Also, men married, in their thirties, virgins in their teens. Thus access to citizen women in the meantime was not usually possible. In addition to state-run brothels of both sexes, this gave way to the establishment of the special class of hetairai, intellectual and sexual companions available to many males, on the one hand; and the practice of paiderastia on the other.

The designation hetaira, which was a euphemism for a high-class call-girl, became part of the ideology that was
constructed in order to justify the practice of men associating with women who were not part of the oikos (home) as wives or the polis as citizens. The hetairai were in reality the rank and file prostitutes of the Ancient world. Solon legalised prostitution of both sexes in state run brothels and taxed them. (9) The Romans did the same. Only a small fraction of hetairai fall into the category of truly educated women. (10) Possessing beauty and accomplishments they were able to associate with men on more than a sexual level, though the exchange of sexual favours included economic gain which was the source of their livelihood. Some amassed considerable wealth, but most suffered the exploitation peculiar to the profession. As metics they had no rights and could not own landed property: the major form of economic security in Antiquity. They were not respected as a class or as individuals (with few exceptions), however gifted or extraordinary. This was reserved for married citizen women.

Aspasia is a good example of the educated hetaira. Having a keen intellect and possessing a good education she was the consort of Pericles, never his legitimate wife. She is credited with holding regular symposia where the foremost intellects of the day gathered, some husbands bringing their wives along, and especially Socrates who with his students sought her company. (11) She also had a reputation of being a teacher of rhetoric, (12) a political advisor to Pericles, and teacher of Socrates in philosophy. (13) There is no strong evidence that she taught either, nor that she played "any part in feminist thinking", (14)
just as there is no evidence that she was a madam who ran a high class brothel, as later Comedy was wont to portray her. She was charged with asebeia (impiety), but acquitted. In later tradition, she justly remained famous for her intellectual qualities which were real and not mere show.

In the Hellenistic period, the model of the educated hetaira was thus theorised by the leisured class, by its poets, sculptors, writers etc., as legitimation of the practices of men associating with them, and why it was permissible to do so. Thus educated hetairai range the literary spectrum: art, poetry, politics, philosophy. With the advent of higher schools and in the Hellenistic courts especially they were rarely absent. (15)

There was also in the Hellenistic period further expansion in the schooling of girls at the elementary-primary level. Athens is not represented in the sources which point to the rest of Greece, particularly the Aegean islands, Ionia and Alexandria where girls are represented as going to school. (16) We don't know how widespread the practice became or how long it lasted in any particular polis. Taught basic literacy, dancing and music, the schooling of these girls came to an end with marriage. Any further formal education in the schools of the sophists or philosophers was excluded by the new role of housewife. No self-respecting male citizen would allow his wife to attend such schools. Only women who rejected marriage for a professional career, whether by choice or circumstance, were able to acquire higher education, and this is the case with most of our known women philosophers and other
professional women of Antiquity. (17)

Before considering these women, we can not bypass Sappho, for in the history of the education of women the association of Sappho and her circle of young girls has been represented as a real school of higher learning and a thiasos: a religious association in the service of the Muses with Sappho as teacher and high priestess. (18) Page has refuted this 19th century construction. (19) It was neither; and the same holds for Sappho's rivals, Andromeda and Gorgo. Perhaps it can best be described as an informal association of young aristocratic girls who under the care of Sappho engaged in the art of poetry, dancing and music before marriage. It was part of the general culture which was available to ruling class women in 6th century B.C. Lesbos, and as the poetry of Sappho indicates, a specifically feminine dimension of ruling class culture. It was purely literary and private, dealing with personal emotions and feelings as opposed to the public, socio-political life of male citizens. The division of labour was thus maintained in the intellectual life of ruling class men and women in Lesbos, reflecting the division between the public (political) and private (domestic) life of its men and women respectively. Thus the dominant activities of Sappho's circle revolved around her personal relationships with her girls mediated by the study and practice of the art of poetry, singing and dancing. As to the nature of her relationship with her girls, her poetry is clear enough. It was erotic, based on real care and love. There is no evidence for sexual practices, and in this respect she is
comparable to Socrates and his love for his pupils. Like him, she loved her girls and also with some she fell in love. The language of her poetry expresses perfectly the passion of physical love, (20) but unlike Socrates, she did not sublimate her eroticism by dwelling on the aesthetic, mental or spiritual aspects of her relations with her girls.

The example of Sappho as a great poetess was not lost on subsequent women and many followed in her footsteps, forging successful professional careers in the field of literature. (21)

The earliest association between higher education in formal schools and women took place in the schools of philosophy. It is very difficult to present a coherent picture of the education of women in the schools of philosophy as there is very little to go on by way of evidence, where over a millennium, only a handful of women are recorded as participating. Now, this may not necessarily have been due to their complete absence. Part of the explanation has to do with the nature of the evidence itself: (i) its paucity and (ii) its selectivity in that it was men that wrote about women for the edification and interests of other men, and this was neither frequent nor systematic. The insights we get from these occasional glimpses do little to inform us on how women themselves felt and interpreted their philosophical education. The other problem is more recent and has to do with the reproduction in scholarship of an ideological account of women and the schools.
The Pythagoreans and their offshoot, the Platonists, were the only philosophical sects which produced outstanding women philosophers, the most illustrious being Hypatia of Alexandria in the fifth century a.d. ... In fact the Pythagoreans and Platonists were the only ancient philosophical schools to allow women to share in the teaching. (22)

Hypatia, we are told, wrote some philosophical hypotheses, some arguments, and some questions. But what they were is of less interest than the fact that she complied with the custom of the Cynics to the extent of receiving her husband's embraces publicly. The "lovers of philosophy" flocked after Hypatia... Epicurus' "particular friend", Themista, was so dear to him that he undertook to roll through the dirt to her if she did not come to see him. And what philosophy Aspasia taught is... (23)

The best example that Gorman can offer is Hypatia, over nine hundred years after Pythagoras and eight hundred after Plato; though with both schools she had precious little to do. Gorman is also mistaken in crediting "the Pythagoreans and Platonists as the only... schools... et al.", for he forgets both some of the Minor Socratic schools (Cyrenaic, Megarian, Cynics) and Epicurus' Garden in particular which treated women equally and produced women philosophers who were also authors and teachers far
superior to anything the Academy ever produced. Lloyd mistakes Hypatia of Alexandria for Hipparchia the Cynic (seven centuries separate them), since it is the former who attracted students, "many of whom came from a distance to receive her instructions". (24) Hipparchia is not credited with having students though there is no reason to think that she did not teach. As for Aspasia teaching philosophy, Clement (Strom. IV. 121) notes that she was much maligned by the Comic poets who satirically represented her as the teacher of Socrates and Pericles in philosophy and rhetoric respectively; meaning that she was neither. Lastly, the negative tradition (D.L.X.5) of Epicurus' relations with the women of the Garden, especially Leontion and Themista is reproduced and further distorted. (25)

The school of Pythagoras is the first to attest women as students and later, as philosophers. Most of them are mere names to us now (26) and precious little can be said of the others. (27) Tradition reports that soon after his arrival in Croton, Pythagoras gave as his last address a separate talk to the women of the city. (Iamb. V. Pyth. 54.) The phrasing in Porphyry is such as to imply that it was unusual. Porphyry says: "and even to the women, since even a meeting of women was arranged for him". (28) Diogenes Laertius (VIII. 41) also informs us that after a successful visit to Hades by Pythagoras, the men were so amazed at his feat that they went "so far as to send their wives to him in hopes that they would learn some of his doctrines; and so they were called Pythagorean women". What did Pythagoras say to the women? He lectured on religion and marital
relations where women were to give in to the authority of
their husbands, and "to speak little and modestly". (29)

What was the extent to which women participated in the
school? The mass of followers (Porph.V.Pyth.19) were not
part of the school proper, nor privy to the sacred doctrine
which was reserved for the initiated few.
(Porph.V.Pyth.37.ff) Some of these were women; notably his
wife Theano, and later his daughters; one of whom became
"after her marriage, the leader of the women".
(Porph.V.Pyth.4) Is this an indication of the division of
labour in the school; men teaching all sexes but women
teaching only other women? Theano, Diogenes says, "wrote a
few things and advised women". (VIII.43) Did Pythagorean
women gain full access to the school and its teaching or
only to that part dealing with how they should relate to
men, as it was theorised by men? The speech to the women as
reported by Iamblichus (54.ff) presupposes unequal social
relations between the sexes in favour of men, and if such a
norm informed Pythagorean practice, then it appears that
few, (wives and daughters of initiated members) if any, had
full and equal access to the philosophy of the school.
Although much of the Neopythagorean pseudographia of the
Hellenistic period, dealing with women and related issues
was attributed to the early women of the school itself,
bearing in mind women such as Theano, Myia, Melissa and
Perictione who were known as philosophers and authors, it
is not impossible that the literature or part of it was in
fact written by Neopythagorean women rather than men.
Whether the authors were men or women, the school
philosophy was the same, and the means consisted of a most clever way of legitimating existing unequal social relations between the sexes: (i) by having women of the school write them, and (ii) by attributing such works to them, irrespective of who were the true authors. With the Neopythagorean revival of the first century b.c. and within the Roman empire the scene is dominated by men. Nigidius Figulus, Apollonius of Tyana, Numenius of Apamea are the major figures, and, in the fusion of philosophies under Neoplatonism, the philosophy of Pythagoras was itself taken up by a host of philosophers from various schools of thought. Women themselves figure little in this late development of the Pythagorean tradition.

5.2. The Schooling of Women in the Minor Socratic Schools, Academy, Lyceum, Garden and Stoa.

The Pythagorean school set the precedent, and although no women are known as attending the Sophists (perhaps hetairaí excepted) of the fifth and fourth centuries b.c., or teaching rhetoric themselves, it was the schools of philosophy; the Minor Socratic, the Academy and Garden which continued the Pythagorean example. Thus Aristippus, founder of the Cyrenaic school of philosophy, educated his daughter, Arete, and she in turn passed on the school's doctrine to her son. (1) This father-daughter educative relationship will figure consistently in Antiquity as one of the means by which women were able to acquire higher education. Even one of the seven wise men, Cleobulus,
educated his daughter Cleobuline, for she followed in her father's profession; composing riddles in hexameter form. (D.L.I.89) One of his educational sayings includes both sexes.

He said that we ought to give our daughters to their husbands maidens in years but women in wisdom; thus signifying that girls need to be educated as well as boys. (D.L.I.91)

Diodorus Chronus, of the Megarian school, educated his five daughters in the school's philosophy, but whether in private or in the school itself we don't know. We know their names, (Menexene, Argeia, Theognis, Artemis, Pantaclea) and that is all. (Clem.Strom.IV.121) Stilpo, head of the Megarian school had a woman student, Nicarete of Megara, who was often mistaken for a hetaira and his mistress, (2) for no respectable citizen woman (which Nicarete was) according to Greek male thinking and existing practice would even contemplate attending a school of philosophy. Yet, like Nicarete, there were exceptions. None survive for the Elian-Eretrian school and only one for the Cynics. (3) This was Hipparchia, Cynic extraordinaire, who consciously and single-mindedly demanded and got an equal opportunity at a philosophical education as her brother, also a cynic. (4) She rejected traditional marriage, adopted the dress of the Cynics, married their leader Crates and lived a public life, including going to symposia where she was more than a match for her male adversaries as one such encounter with Theodorus the Atheist illustrates. Here a woman beats a man on his own
ground - philosophical argument. For want of a reply, the male becomes irrational and attempts "to strip her of her cloak" (D.L.VI.97) and expose her as a woman pretending to masculinity and male knowledge when she should know better than to leave the loom for philosophy. Hipparchia achieves a double victory by not being intimidated and in her rejection of his advice as a waste of her time.

Other women did not follow the Cynic way of life. Based on poverty and self-denial it was not an attractive career for a woman seeking economic security. Philosophy in general was never a lucrative career and only a few made a decent living out of it as teachers or court philosophers. The economic factor was thus crucial when it came to choosing a career as an alternative to marriage. It had to pay. (5) As Pomeroy points out, women, unlike men, did not enjoy royal patronage. (6) It is no accident that women do not figure as independent individual teachers running their own schools. Thus in the Academy, Lastheneia and Axiothea are referred to as successive disciples (mathetes-learners) of Plato and of his successor Speusippus; (D.L.IV.2) never as philosophers in their own right. Their teacher-pupil relationship with Plato is unknown, and in view of what has been said above (see ch.4.2) regarding the dominant form of teacher-pupil relations in the Academy, with the exception of general discussions heard by all students, it is highly unlikely that Plato undertook their personal education himself, as he did, say, of Aristotle, Aster, Dionysius, etc. The tradition that they were also Speusippus' disciples is itself spurious. In fact it belongs to the
Speusippian part of the doxography that is hostile to him; representing Lastheneia as his mistress. (7) "We may judge of your wisdom by the Arcadian girl who is your pupil". (8) It seems that it was left to Xenocrates, his successor, to set the record straight in a work titled: The Arcadian, one book; (D.L.IV.11) where he probably wrote on and defended Lastheneia. For a woman to attend the Academy appears to have been a very difficult task and Axiothea had to disguise herself as a man in order to do it. She cut her hair and donned men's clothing. Dichaearchus reports this. (9) We do not know the fate of these women, or whether there were others. Diogenes Laertius (VIII.88-9) names three daughters, a son and grandson of Eudoxus of Cnidus. Of the first, whether they went to school, or whether Eudoxus educated them himself is nowhere mentioned. Diogenes Laertius does note, however, that it was the son who inherited and passed on the father's intellectual tradition. (VIII.89) Almost three centuries down the line, when the Academy was near its end as an institution, a certain Caerella figures a few times in Cicero's correspondence as an Academic who was "inspired by a love of philosophy", (10) though she was not said and is not known to have been a member of the Academy itself. The period in between is a blank and the idea that "women flocked to his [Plato's] lecture room from various cities of Hellas" (11) is nowhere confirmed in the sources. Plato's theorisation of the position and his proposed education of women guardians in The Republic (B.V) did not translate into the practice of wholesale admission of women.
into the school where the homosexual inclinations characterising the social relations of the school in theory and practice (12) were predicated on the rejection of women as equal partners. Axiothea did not dress in men's clothing out of a sense of fashion. Hagnodice, the first woman obstetrician did the same in attending medical school and later in her practice; revealing her true identity to her women patients in private. (13) I do not, however, believe the doxography that portrays Hagnodice as actually trying to pass herself off as a man. The practice of shaving beards for example, still a distinguishing feature of a man, did not become popular until the later Roman Republic. As in the case of Hipparchia and Axiothea who went about in men's clothing, but were known to be women, Hagnodice tried to remove the obstacles of gender by discarding some of its outward signs, such as clothing and appearance. The point was not to keep their gender secret, but to make it irrelevant as a factor in getting a medical or philosophical education. This was doubly difficult because the schools were in fact a positive hindrance to women gaining access. This is true of both the Lyceum and Stoa where not a single case is attested. While Plato hated women as such, he projected in the guardian class of The Republic (Book V) the transformation of a few, and this with a view to service for the ideal state only. He was not concerned with the equality of the sexes, nor with the liberation of women themselves, whether as individuals or as a class in general.

Aristotle on the other hand provided the
epistemological justification for the reproduction of the existing social practices of the inequality of the sexes and the rule of men over women; (14) and his successor Theophrastus argued against the intellectual education of women as being detrimental to their health. (15) Women do not figure in the lives or the school of the Peripatetic philosophers. The early Stoics retained the Cynics' theory of the equality of all humans and accepted the dictum that virtue is the same in men as in women. Cleanthes wrote on it. (16) In subsequent generations however, the Stoics modified and rejected a good part of their Cynic inheritance, especially in their conception and definition of Virtue within socio-political life; along with the comprehensive system of duties that reflected existing social relations between the sexes, and an ethics which reinforced the traditional practices of marriage. (17) Thus the Stoic maxim that the sage will marry. (Cic Fin.III.19.68.) We hear of no Stoic women philosophers and there were probably none that came out of the school.

Except for the Cynics, the school of Epicurus was the only school that besides theorising the equality of human beings, practised it as well. This partly explains the hostile tradition which misunderstood and distorted Epicurus' doctrine of hedone (pleasure, joy), and especially the relations between men and women in his school. (18) (D.L.X.3-8) Cicero who testifies to the genuine practice of philia (love and friendship) in the Garden (Fin.II-III) is also the major culprit in reproducing that tradition.
And that little harlot Leontion dared to write a book refuting Theophrastus? Perhaps she did write good Greek, but all the same, such was the degree of licence that prevailed in the Garden of Epicurus.

(N.D.I.33.93)

Leontion was both author and teacher and at one stage it seems head of the school when Epicurus was abroad. (19) The tradition linking her with Epicurus as his hetaira is not to be trusted. (20) She lived in the school with Metrodorus in a de-facto relationship, (D.L.X.23) an association which formed part of the general counter-culture which the Epicureans offered in rivalry with the dominant culture of the day. Women and slaves (D.L.X.5-7,10,21) participated freely in the general activities of the school. Most of our knowledge is restricted to the early history of the Garden, (21) but since it continued to exist as an institution into the Roman empire, there is no reason to assume that women and slaves did not continue to participate. The Cynics likewise continued to profess the equality of humans. In Musonius Rufus of the later first century a.d. we find the clearest expression regarding the ethical equality of the sexes and a call for an equal philosophical education. (22) The Cynics, like the Epicureans, however, had little effect in changing dominant existing practices and the schools of philosophy went about their business of reproducing those practices.

It was the educated element of the hetaira class and their interaction with the schools and philosophers that once again comes to the forefront at the expense of women
from other social backgrounds, for the former were certainly a far more interesting subject for the doxographer, hagiographer (23) and biographer. Most of our school philosophers did not marry (Aristotle is one of the few who did) and many of them had relations with educated hetairai. Even Plato, a confirmed paiderastes, was credited with a hetaira for a mistress. (Athen.589c) Aristippus was notorious for his relations with courtesans (24) as were Alexander's Successors. (25) Xenocrates was famous for having resisted the advances of the celebrated Phryne the younger, (D.L.IV.6) while Arcesilaus, another scholarch, was reckoned to be oversexed. He lived openly with several hetairai, though he preferred boys. (D.L.IV.40-1) The Stoics were represented as notorious paiderasts (Athen.563e-f) and figure little as having relations with hetairai.

Athenaeus (583f) notes that "there were other courtesans who also thought very highly of themselves going in for culture and apportioning their time to learned studies". A hetaira like Glycera, who spent a good deal of time with philosophers, was highly educated. (Athen.584a) Alciphron, in the late second century a.d. adds to the picture of the interaction between the schools and hetairai in a collection of Letters of Courtesans (26) In Letter 7, a hetaira complains to a lover who has deserted her for the Academy and its philosophers. She sets her profession in rivalry with them and declares a knowledge of their teachings. "I have gone to school myself and have talked with many of them", (7.5.) concluding: "We teach young men
just as well as you do" (7.6). She further adopts the philosophy of Hedone (pleasure) and declares herself a wise woman. (7.8) Long before the second century a.d. the Epicurean doctrine of hedone was conflated with physical pleasure, but still it is interesting to note that this hetaira is identifying herself as a wise woman of the Garden, a school that was well known for its acceptance of women, especially hetairai. She also sets up Aspasia and Socrates as rival teachers, the former with Pericles, an enlightened democrat, the latter with Critias, a cruel leader of the thirty tyrants, drawing a moral lesson, namely, that a woman makes a better teacher than a man. Outside the orbit of the traditional oikos and marriage, philosophers and students associated freely with hetairai as part of the intellectual life of Antiquity.

Thus in the later Hellenistic period a greater number of women were able to acquire some form of higher education or culture and enter professions in medicine, art, poetry, music and other literary pursuits. (27) The dominant model was once again of fathers educating daughters in their profession. An inscription, illustrating this, reads: "The philosopher Magnilan, daughter of the philosopher Magnon, and wife of the philosopher Magnon". (28)

5.3. Women in the Middle Platonic and Neoplatonic Schools.

Regarding women and schooling in the late Roman Republic and empire, information is scarce. (1) The evidence is mainly about the educated Roman women of the
propertied classes. These women however did not acquire their education in the schools of the philosophers and rhetoricians, as Roman men did, but either through private tuition or as part of the general socio-political culture in which they engaged at home and in society. (2) The ideal of the educated Roman woman emerges in Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi; the mothers of both Cicero and Caesar, and Pompey's third wife who was intellectually gifted. (3) Women outside the norm such as Laelia and Hortensia were educated by their fathers in their respective professions, the latter as an orator, the former as a lawyer. (4) Sempronia was versed in both Greek and Latin literature, intellectually superior to most men, as well as sexually uninhibited. (5) She was therefore perceived as an intellectual and sexual threat to the power of men and the Roman state along with her lover and 'rebel' Cataline in the events leading up to and during the so-called Cataline conspiracy. Under Cicero's consulship and by his actions she shared Cataline's execution.

In the empire, a literary education was in vogue and Roman ruling class women were conspicuous consumers. (6) Lucian in one of his satires subjected this type of education to systematic ridicule:

That is another thing that the women are keen about - to have men of education living in their households on a salary... They count it as one among their embellishments if it is said that they are cultured and have an interest in philosophy and write songs not much inferior to Sappho's... they trail hired rhetors,
grammarians and philosophers about and listen to their lectures. (7)

Thus while the wealthy Roman matron indulged in activities of leisure, Roman women as a rule received little more than a basic elementary education. Much has also been made of the so-called literary salons run by women, or where women participated. The most notable one was that of the empress Julia Domna (fl. c.a.d.190-220), but from what we can gather from the extant sources, (8) it was more of a gathering of second rate professionals, of the type noted by Lucian, performing for the edification of an empress rather than an association of persons of high calibre; for none of the intellects of the day, as Bowersock points out, (9) had anything to do with it.

What can we say about women and schools of philosophy in the centuries a.d.? Not much. The problem is partly with the lack of evidence. Though far from providing a complete picture, we may nevertheless piece together the scraps of information towards a coherent one. First we may assume with some confidence that if anything, opportunities for women did not regress under the Pax Romana. Diogenes Laertius refers to Pamphilia throughout his history of philosophy. She was a daughter of a grammarian in Nero's time. Probably educated by her father, she wrote on numerous topics, including philosophy. Similarly a certain Euridice is mentioned by Plutarch as being educated in philosophy (10) but there is difficulty in establishing her identity. Educated Roman women generally dominate as the representative norm and therefore obscure the professional
women and those that may have attended the schools. Thus the mother of Agricola is noted for putting an end to her son's un-Roman zeal for philosophy (Tac.Ag.4.4).

In the meantime the schools of philosophy themselves lost ground to the second sophistic when from the second to the fifth centuries a.d. sophistic and other literary studies pushed philosophy from the educational arena as it retreated from public into private life. The gymnasium, forum, stoa, theatre now belonged to the sophist, the intellectual entertainer of Antiquity. (11) I suspect that the distinction between sophistic (public) and philosophy (private) partly corresponded with the division of activity in life between men (public) and women (private) and is no doubt a factor in the non-representation of women in sophistic, while they continued to figure in philosophical schools. In fact, because of the closer association between philosophy and private life on the one hand and philosophy and religion on the other, women for the first time became dominant individuals in philosophical schools. This took place in the Neoplatonist schools of late Antiquity.

In his life of Plotinus, Porphyry says:

There were women, too, who were greatly devoted to him: Gemina, in whose house he lived, and her daughter Gemina,... and Amphiclea... all of whom had a great devotion to philosophy. (V.Plot.9.1-6)

There is no reason to think that women were excluded from attending the school of Plotinus, particularly when they are included in the section dealing with his students and associates. (Porph.V.Plot.7-9) The school of Plotinus is

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one of the few philosophical brightspots in the third century a.d. and it was a century before we encounter in the fusion of philosophy and mystery religions, the powerful figure of the woman philosopher-theurgist. This is a dimension from religion which women were able to draw upon, especially the mysteries; and as priestesses they were able to claim it as part of women's knowledge in the form of suprasensual knowledge along with the ability to use it: that is, magic in its many forms. It is no accident that mythical monsters are female aberrations of women - Skylla, Gorgons, Lamia, and the sacred mysteries of women and Dionysius, the Thesmophoria and the association with black magic (witchcraft) which indicate something unspeakable. This is the way in which men conceived women's knowledge. The tendency towards mystery religions exploded in the fourth century a.d. and it was taken up in philosophy as theurgy by the Neoplatonists. (Eunap.V.P&S.458.ff) The emperor Julian was a devoted convert and corresponded with the priestess Theodora (Ep.32-34) as with sophists, philosophers and theurgists alike in his attempt to restore Paganism in the form of intellectual Greek culture. The wife of Maximus the theurgist was visited by women, and is credited with "so profound a knowledge of philosophy that she made Maximus seem not to know how to swim or even know his alphabet". (Eunap.V.P&S.457) This proverb for stupidity was not lost on Maximus, a master fraud who had little knowledge of philosophy. His wife practised the same trade as him. Eunapius' high regard for theurgy as the ultimate
philosophy receives its ideal embodiment in another woman: the remarkable Sosipatra of Ephesus: philosopher-theurgist. (Eunap.V.P&S.467.ff) Initiated into the Chaldean mysteries by two priests from an early age, and apparently self-taught in philosophy, rhetoric, and poetry (12) she was one of the very few women to hold a professional chair of philosophy and run a school that also drew students away from her rivals. (Eunap.V.P&S.469) The other example is the famous Hypatia of Alexandria (fl.390-415), daughter of the mathematician Theon who so educated her "in literature and science, as to far surpass all the philosophers of her own time". (13) As a teacher in her own right, she succeeded her father in his school and according to the Suda (14) "she was officially appointed to expound the doctrines of Plato, Aristotle, etc", with the rest of the Neoplatonic tradition. (15) Synesius of Cyrene, later Christian bishop, was one of her most devoted disciples and correspondents. (16) A notable aspect of the teachings of Hypatia and the Alexandrian schools of philosophy in general was their resistance to the incursion of theurgy and other mystery religions. Neither Synesius nor Socrates Scholasticus represents Hypatia as a wonderworker, controlling the elements and foretelling the future. As a pagan, however, and in the midst of a Christian city, she died at the hands of a Christian mob in March a.d.415.

The tradition of Aristotelian exegesis and mathematical studies continued in Alexandria. In his life of Proclus, Marinus notes that Olympiodorus, his Aristotelian teacher, wished Proclus to marry his daughter
"whom he had taken care to instruct in philosophy" (Mar.V.Proc.10). The marriage did not eventuate for Proclus decided to go to Athens on the advice of Athena, his guiding deity. (Mar.V.Proc.10) Philosophy itself had been supplanted by theurgy, now the highest form of knowledge a person could acquire. Women were particularly adept at this from their long historical association with it. Diogenes Laertius reports a story where Pythagoras is alleged to have acquired most of his moral dictums from the Delphic priestess Themistoclea. (VIII.8) Thus while Proclus studied philosophy and theurgy at Athens (17) it was only a woman that completed his initiation in theurgy. This was: Asclepegenia, the daughter of Plutarchus: for she alone, at that time, understood the knowledge of the great Orgies, and of the whole theurgic discipline, delivered to her by her father, who received it from Nestor. (Mar.V.Proc.29)

Although this does not suggest a diadoche (succession) of women theurgists it seems to imply that final authority could very well be invested in a female theurgist. There was another Asclepegenia who was also versed in the theurgic discipline. (Mar.V.Proc.30) Other women are not attested and as the Athenian school of Neoplatonism came to an end later in the sixth century, Christianity had by now appropriated the ancient tradition. Within its new institutions, higher education was restricted to a preparation for the clergy and bureaucracy. Women did not figure in this. Thus, a thousand years down the line, the education of women appears to have taken a backward step as
their position within the home and marriage was further reinforced.


Why were there so few women in the higher schooling tradition in Antiquity and how can we explain the problem? On one level it is in the nature of the sources. Written by men representing male culture, the idea of the formal education of women past the marriage age was not favourable to women and at best it was tangential in the mainstream philosophical tradition, except by a few rivals of the dominant culture. (1) Thus our educated women of the Classical and Hellenistic period, - royal, ruling class women, hetairai, professional women and women philosophers of the schools are represented because they participated in the intellectual culture of the Greek male citizens and engaged in an intellectual as well as a sexual relationship with them. The early women philosophers were a novelty and were noted for this, especially those that denied their femininity in order to participate. Others were educated by their fathers who lacked sons, thus continuing the tradition of the transmission of knowledge from father to offspring. In the schools, the model was that of intimate teacher-pupil relationship and transmission of knowledge through a succession of heads and their students within a school tradition. The succession was however dominated by men. Women mostly figure as students, learners, lovers, daughters and sometimes as teachers, but rarely as heads of
schools. Sosipatra and Hypatia are exceptions, but this was eight hundred years down the line, and most of the period in between is a blank. We have women philosophers for the first few centuries and for the last few, while the six centuries in between are mostly silent. Why? I suggest that, initially, as the novelty wore off, writers looked for fresh material. The Hellenistic ladies of the diadochoi from Berenice to Cleopatra; (2) the women grammarians, artists, physicians, poetesses, musicians, etc., displaced philosophers as women to be written and talked about in cultured circles. Thus Hestia of Alexandria's work on a Homeric problem consulted by Demetrius of Scepsis, and Diophila's treatise on astronomy used by the great Callimachus, were deserving of mention, if only as an aspect of the intellectual life of men. Were there women going to the schools of philosophy after men lost interest in recording and writing about them? I am inclined to believe that there were, especially in the light of the expansion of professions open to women. It is just that we are left at the mercy of the tastes and interests of male writers catering to a leisured elite. In time both the women philosophers and Hellenistic professional women simply became part of the tradition and were rarely commented on. Only when a new dimension was found did it receive notice. This happened when the Romans came to power, and for the next four centuries, Roman women were theorised as part of the general ideology of Roman ruling class culture and the legitimation of an empire based on subjection. Also, Roman women did not go to any of the
philosophical and rhetorical schools in the cities of the empire to study, as did their men. Marriage and the home were their everyday reality, and education a by-product of interaction with cultured society. In the late empire women who went to schools of philosophy were still women who were in the framework of the schooling tradition either as daughters, wives of professionals, or independent professional career women. This is the case with the women of the Neoplatonist schools of late Antiquity.

On a second and more important level, one needs to explain the institution of schooling in Antiquity as an institution serving specific class and gender interests which it legitimated through the reproduction of a set of social relations within patriarchy based on the inequality of the sexes and the exploitation of women. As an educative institution, the schools were always a minority culture serving the dominant propertied classes. This was explicitly theorised. They were private and not free. Culture was a commodity and they were in the business of selling knowledge for a fee. Competition was keen. The nature of the practice was mental work, and few had the time to engage in it, least of all married women. Those who did were men, and the activities characterising the schools had to do with the production and transmission of male knowledge relating directly to the dominant form of male culture and rule obtaining in everyday life. Patriarchy was an instance of class domination wherein men ruled women. The social relations of patriarchy were given added and more sophisticated legitimation in the schools on the
question why it was just for men to rule women. Thus theories about the innate inequalities of humans, and the sexes in particular, were produced in the schools, reflecting the highest superstructural level at which were justified basic economic inequalities in the division of labour existing on a day-to-day basis between the sexes. In the Classical period, the dominant form of relationships between the sexes were clear: adult citizen males exercised economic, political and cultural dominance over women, particularly at Athens (3) where they could not own or dispose of private property; had no economic power or political rights. (4)

The determining factor was the reproduction of the family through private property. In the hands of men, the closer this nexus became, the less freedom women had. In Sparta where the women’s role in the division of labour was the production of warriors for the state rather than private property, they were able to own and dispose of land which enabled them to exercise the various privileges associated with ownership. As property rights relaxed in the Hellenistic and Roman period women were able to participate more in socio-political (public) life. (5) While the degree to which women could own property, exercise authority, rule men in the home, etc., is debatable, the fact is that, when considered in relation to the economic power of men, they were always in the last instance subject to men and their control. This is what counts.

As an expression of the dominant social relations
between the sexes in the socio-economic sphere, the schools of philosophy were in the business of perpetuating the dominant ideology, first on a class basis — only the ruling class got higher education; then on a gender basis — only ruling class males engaged in intellectual labour. The initial physical establishment of schools and their infrastructure was the attempt on the part of the dominant male culture to legitimate its own interests in opposition to women. This took the form of the institutionalisation of the intellectual division of knowledge; that is, the school was established for the purpose of dealing with male culture based on male reason which was public. Women's knowledge was private and therefore thought inferior, dealing with emotions and feelings often associated with the irrational elements of religion. The ravings of the Pythian priestess at Delphi only made sense when interpreted by male priests. The female tradition of knowledge was suppressed by being relegated to the personal and private life of women in religion (the mysteries, healing, witchcraft), and domestic life (childbirth, domestic work, etc). Was there a tradition of women's counter culture as the historical outcome of the antagonistic division of labour in knowledge? The extent to which women identified themselves in these terms in possibly conscious opposition to men is impossible to gauge, since they did not leave an account of it. We only have the male version. In the initial period of formation, the Pythagoreans illustrate the division. While Pythagoras deals with the whole range of philosophy, including giving
advice to women, the women philosophers are not represented asdiscoursing on metaphysics, politics, ethics etc. Their activity is restricted to writing about or giving advice to women on marriage, chastity, religion and ritual purity. The view of women philosophers as conscious appropriators of male culture is true of some individual cases, but they are the exception to the rule. The school was sufficiently flexible to accommodate a small number of women over the centuries on its own terms and without loss of power or the need to compromise.

We should not be surprised to find such a small number of women in the schooling tradition which itself was marginal in Antiquity. Today we just do not realise how relatively unimportant formal schooling and the written word were for most people in Antiquity as opposed to the spoken word. Even among the ruling class the spoken word was a lot more powerful and most people were educated by it, including women, whose life was determined by their relation to the economy and the division of labour obtaining within it. As a result, women were relegated to a subordinate position involving their exploitation. One of the offshoots was that, among other things, they did no receive higher education. Marriage and the reproduction of private property within the family were their destiny. If this in itself required a certain amount of education before marriage, it took place within the home (6) or society at large and was part of the cycle of oppression rather than a liberating experience for women had little or no control over it.
A further consideration also has to do with the competition between the professions and the gaining of a livelihood. That is, of the women that were able to acquire higher schooling, the economic factor was essential unless they were already well off through family property, patronage, etc. By and large, however, for an independent woman, a profession had to pay and she had to earn her means of subsistence. Of the various professions open to them, that of philosophy was probably the least remunerative. It appears that it was easier to sell, in the first place, one's body or sexual services, and secondly, one's intellectual work in the plastic and literary arts and disciplines, than to teach philosophy for a fee. This is the case with hetairai and the known women poets, artists, musicians, etc. (7) Except for a few in the late Roman empire, women in philosophy figure mostly as pupils, disciples, daughters, or lovers and rarely as independent teachers in their own right.

We should also not be surprised to find in the model of the ancient school the historical continuity of basic social relations persisting in school practices within a patriarchal society where forms of private property were the mediating commodity. They persisted because the initial divisions in labour and their antagonisms also persisted. The school reproduced them in theory and practice; in its content and method from its earliest to its highest form of schooling.

Thus although the history of the education of women in the schools of Antiquity is peripheral, in virtue of this,
it can help explain the nature of the school as an institution within Ancient society. The schools mediated the antagonisms and conflicts of interests inherent in particular class and gender relations; especially between the sexes. It makes intelligible the real purpose of the school which was to justify and reproduce those practices of inequality and exploitation. Except for isolated attempts, (8) Antiquity produced no systematic policy and practice regarding the education of girls, especially at the level of higher schooling. Rather, they theorised the existing practices as legitimate and just, and invested their teaching in the male model of the philosopher-teacher as wise man, their ultimate justification.