

## PENELOPE AS LADY PHILOSOPHY

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FROM THE LEGENDARY SEVEN SAGES to the last Neoplatonists one can find but few women among the well-known philosophers of antiquity. Like orators and historians, most philosophers were men.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, when they personified Philosophy or Wisdom these philosophers almost invariably depicted her as a woman, a young and beautiful maiden, a mother, nurse, or teacher and guide.<sup>2</sup> As such, Lady Philosophy took her place among a multiplicity of well-known mythical and religious female figures like Gaia, Athena, and the Muses, personifications of abstract concepts like Δίκη (justice) and Ἀρετή (virtue), or Τύχη (fortune).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Questions of the role of women and the significance of the masculine gender of authors of Greco-Roman literature from antiquity have been examined at length during the last decades. Roger Just gives a balanced introductory survey in his work *Women in Athenian Law and Life* (London 1989), esp. chap. 1, "Introduction: The 'Problem' of Women" (1-12). On the significance of the gender of female figures in religion and literature see the work of Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form* (London 1985), and of Karen King (ed.), *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism* (Philadelphia 1988). The present study of Homeric Penelope as Lady Philosophy was originally prepared for a symposium of the Classical Association of Canada on "Women in Mythology" and was inspired by the work of Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution, 750 B.C.-A.D. 1250* (Montreal 1985), and Jane McIntosh Snyder, *The Woman and the Lyre: Women Writers in Classical Greece and Rome* (Carbondale, IL 1989). My treatment has benefited from comments by members of the Network of Women in the CAC, my colleagues John Warden and M. Eleanor Irwin, as well as the outside readers of *Phoenix*. I am also grateful to John M. Rist for his critical reading and helpful suggestions; of course, I myself take full responsibility for any errors remaining.

<sup>2</sup>Pierre Courcelle's discussion of the personification of philosophy in his "Le Personnage de Philosophie dans la littérature latine" (*JSav* [1970] 209-252) is significant. Cf. his "Le Visage de Philosophie," *REA* 70 (1968) 110-120. He takes the personification back to Plato's *Phaedrus* 250c-d and discusses particularly Latin authors like Cicero, Seneca, St. Augustine, and Boethius, but does not deal with the portrayal of Lady Philosophy in the *Republic* 490 ff. Also missing is reference to the interesting personification of philosophy in Lucian's *Fugitivi*; on the latter cf. D. R. Dudley, *A History of Cynicism* (London 1937) 144-147. For the portrayal of Lady Philosophy in late antiquity and in Christian authors the history of the personification of Sophia in Judaic literature must also be considered; the bibliography on this is extensive. A brief discussion on the significance of Sophia for Philo of Alexandria may be found in J. Engelsman, *The Feminine Dimension of the Divine* (Philadelphia 1979) 95-106; Sophia is also discussed in a number of articles in the work edited by Karen King (above, n. 1).

<sup>3</sup>Particularly the poets Hesiod and Pindar are noted for personification of abstract concepts like Δίκη, Εὐφροσύνη, and Εὐνομία; cf. Hes. *Op.* 213 ff, *Theog.* 215 ff, 901 ff, or Pindar's *Olympian Odes* 13.7. Prodicus presents Ἀρετή and Κακία in his version of

Involvement (or even presence) of women in public life, whether in politics, in business, or on the battle-field, typically evoked comment.<sup>4</sup> From surviving literature we know that the question of appropriate roles for women in the community or home was not ignored. In fact it was often the subject of serious discussion.<sup>5</sup>

What then of philosophy? Were women considered capable of philosophical discussion? An interesting treatment of this question can be found in the recent work of Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, in which she examines philosophical positions on male-female relationships.<sup>6</sup> Although women's capacity for philosophizing is not the main focus of this work, Allen touches on it particularly as she investigates how wisdom or virtue may be attributed to women.<sup>7</sup> From numerous references to women in the literature and extensive use of imagery based on their concerns Allen draws a positive conclusion regarding the acceptance of women as partners in the search for wisdom. In a far less comprehensive study of women philosophers Jane Snyder comes to a similar conclusion. In comparison with subjects

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the choice of Heracles (Xen. *Mem.* 2.21-34). The philosophers used female figures like Gaia in presenting cosmic principles: Empedocles' Φαίλα (and Νείκος) or Plato's Ὑποδοχή (Receptacle) in the *Timaeus* 49a. On Philosophy and Fortune see passages like Seneca *Ep.* 16.3-6.

<sup>4</sup>A helpful discussion of associations of public and private space, and the separate roles and spheres assigned to men and women may be found in J. J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire* (London 1990) 129-161.

<sup>5</sup>Plato's *Republic*, esp. Book 5, is probably the best witness to the extent of the discussion in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. Dramatists had presented strong-minded women like Antigone and Medea. And Euripides' Clytemnestra or Helen could be as skilful in rhetorical argument as their respective husbands. The discussion of involvement of women in public life begun early this century with the article of A. W. Gomme, "The Position of Women in Athens in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries," *CP* 20 (1925) 1-25, has grown enormously and produced a flood of publications. See the bibliography by Sarah Pomeroy published in J. Peradotto and J. P. Sullivan (eds.), *Women in the Ancient World* (Albany, N.Y. 1984) 315-372.

<sup>6</sup>Discussions of Hildegard of Bingen (A.D. 1098-1176) and the establishment of Aristotelian studies at the University of Paris are indeed the highlights of this work of Prudence Allen (above, n. 1). The present essay only refers to the first chapters, up to and including chap. 3, "The Adoption of Aristotelian and Platonic Concepts," which incorporates treatment of Boethius. Allen clearly favours a position of sex-complementarity, a position which she finds most clearly presented by Hildegard of Bingen and only feebly foreshadowed in earlier writers. She typifies Plato's position as one of sex-unity (non-differentiation), and that of Aristotle as sex-polarity (emphasizing the differences). Although treatment of philosophers in the early chapters is uneven, and one might take exception to any number of interpretations, the systematic way in which Allen juxtaposes a multiplicity of discussions of male-female relationships is challenging and refreshing.

<sup>7</sup>In determining positions such as those of sex-unity or sex-polarity Allen looks at four questions: 1) by which (opposing) characteristics is the male sex distinguished from the female? 2) what are the respective roles in generation? 3) can wisdom be attributed to women in the same way as to men? and 4) can the virtues be attributed to women just as they are attributed to men?

like history and rhetoric, Snyder claims that we have many more names of women who were actively engaged in philosophy.<sup>8</sup>

As part of an investigation of the role of women in ancient myth and philosophy, the present essay will look at two accounts which have used the Homeric Penelope to symbolize philosophy or wisdom. With her high profile in epic poetry Penelope remained a figure of considerable interest in ancient literature, particularly among Hellenistic poets. Such interest is certainly not restricted to antiquity. In recent years a number of book-length studies and numerous shorter articles have been devoted to Penelope's role on Ithaca and the nature of her involvement in Odysseus' νόστος. Scholarly discussion in the earlier part of this century typically focused on her faithfulness and idealized her astute management of the family estate. Contemporary analysis from a feminist perspective, however, accents a more ambiguous Penelope, using alternative traditions which even in antiquity cast a shadow on her loyalty to Odysseus.<sup>9</sup>

The present examination of Penelope as a symbol of wisdom and philosophy may be understood as part of an attempt to take the discussion of Penelope in a somewhat different direction. I have argued elsewhere that the Homeric epic does not, as such, support the more ambiguous reading of Penelope, any more than it supports the idealization of the "domesticated" Penelope of earlier scholarship.<sup>10</sup> Our treatment here begins with an account which is found in a number of ancient authors, particu-

<sup>8</sup>In the fourth chapter of her *The Woman and the Lyre* (above, n. 1), "Women Philosophers of the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds" (99-121), Jane McIntosh Snyder asserts: "Although history is represented by no women writers of the ancient world and rhetoric by only one of whom we know, . . . philosophy attracted many female exponents" (99-100). She presents Epicureans (Leontion), Cynics (Hipparchia), Pythagoreans (Theano, etc.), and the Neoplatonists (Hypatia). More names could be added; others are mentioned in Allen's study (note 6). For a variety of reasons little of the writings of female philosophers has survived. Snyder compares involvement of women in philosophy with that in poetry, particularly lyric poetry with its well-known female representatives: Sappho, Corinna, Telesilla, Erinna, etc.

<sup>9</sup>The considerable and persistent interest in Penelope in antiquity has been well documented in M. M. Mactoux, *Pénélope, légende et mythe* (Paris 1975). With her study, *Penelope's Renown, Meaning and Indeterminacy in the Odyssey* (Princeton 1991), Marilyn A. Katz has accented the ambiguity of the Homeric portrayal of Penelope. The recent work of Nancy Felson-Rubin, *Regarding Penelope: From Character to Poetics* (Princeton 1994) is more nuanced. Using the Bakhtinian dialogic model for literary studies, Felson-Rubin takes a careful look at the various ways in which Penelope interacts with other characters as the plot develops, and arrives at an assessment which is more positive than her own earlier article, "Penelope's Perspective: Character from Plot," in J. M. Bremer, I. J. F. de Jong, and J. Kalff (eds.), *Homer: Beyond Oral Poetry. Recent Trends in Homeric Interpretation* (Amsterdam 1987) 61-83. J. W. Mackail, *Penelope in the Odyssey* (Cambridge 1916) may be taken as representative of the idealization of Penelope among Homeric scholars earlier in this century.

<sup>10</sup>I will not repeat here arguments presented in a forthcoming article, "Homer's Penelope: A Tale of Feminine Arete," to be included in a collection edited by P. Vicari, *Can*

larly Plutarch and Diogenes Laertius, and is focused on Penelope and her suitors.<sup>11</sup> In my examination of this *topos* I will discuss symbolic use of Penelope to add a measure of status to the study of philosophy, in contrast to preparatory subjects of the ancient curriculum, the ἐγκύκλια, represented by her maidservants. The second account using Penelope in this way focuses on her work of weaving and unraveling the shroud of Laertes, her father-in-law. For this we have only one main source, the collection of Scholia on the *Odyssey* of the twelfth-century scholar Eustathius,<sup>12</sup> which has preserved a much older allegory of weaving as a philosophical activity, and of unraveling as a symbol of the logical processes involved in "analysis." Examination of such allegorical use of Penelope's weaving has led me to conclude that this account represents a Stoic response to Cynic or Cyrenaic denigration of logic as the introduction to philosophy. In the final section I will return to the issue of the choice of Penelope, as a symbol of philosophy, within the context of ancient personifications of philosophy as a woman. How significant is the choice of Penelope as "Lady Philosophy" for the more general question of involvement of women in the practice of philosophy in Greco-Roman antiquity? In response to the conclusions of Prudence Allen I shall raise considerations which suggest caution.

## I

The treatise on education traditionally attributed to Plutarch reports Bion's comparison of the suitors (μνηστήρες) of Penelope with students who wear themselves out on useless subjects. When the suitors could not win the hand of Penelope in marriage, they resorted to sleeping with her maidservants (θεραπαίνας); this story, according to Bion, provides an effective image of those students who are unsuccessful in the study of φιλοσοφία itself.<sup>13</sup> Diogenes Laertius attributes a similar comparison to Aristippus who said that while the suitors were successful with maidservants like Melantho, their lack of success with Penelope, for whom they had come to Ithaca, represents the efforts of students who stop before they undertake philosophy, contenting

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a Woman be Good? The collection will examine how virtue was attributed to women in antiquity and the medieval world.

<sup>11</sup>The relevant texts are ps.-Plut. *On the Education of Children* and Diogenes Laertius *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*.

<sup>12</sup>Eustathius, *Commentarii ad Homeri Odysseam*, ed. G. Stallbaum (Leipzig 1827–28; repr. Hildesheim 1970).

<sup>13</sup>Ps.-Plut. *On the Education of Children* 10 (= Plut. *Mor.* 7d): ἀστείως δὲ καὶ Βίων ἔλεγεν ὁ φιλόσοφος ὅτι ὥσπερ οἱ μνηστήρες τῇ Πηνελόπῃ πλησιάζειν μὴ δυνάμενοι ταῖς ταύτης ἐμίσγνυντο θεραπαίनाς, οὕτω καὶ οἱ φιλοσοφίας μὴ δυνάμενοι κατατυχεῖν ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις παιδεύμασι τοῖς οὐδενὸς ἀξίοις ἑαυτοὺς κατασκελετεύουσι.

themselves with mere preparatory subjects, τὰ ἐγκύκλια παιδεύματα.<sup>14</sup> And the sixth-century *Anthologion* of Stobaeus quotes a passage from Ariston's 'Ομοιώματα in which he makes the same comparison between those who do not concern themselves (ἀμελοῦντας) with philosophy, but work hard at τὰ ἐγκύκλια παιδεύματα, and the suitors of Penelope,<sup>15</sup> they have chosen the maids instead of the mistress.

These philosophers could presuppose familiarity with the Homeric account of Penelope on Ithaca before the return of Odysseus. Young men from the surrounding islands had for a number of years been arriving at the palace assuming that Penelope would wish to remarry in the prolonged absence of her husband Odysseus. And Penelope had not dissuaded them. In fact they reproach her for sending them notes of encouragement. She was evidently not altogether displeased with their presence, yet used every possible strategy to delay the day of decision. Most famous was her excuse of preparing a shroud for her father-in-law Laertes, weaving by day, and unraveling the same each night. Was their presence a degree of protection against being summoned home to her father Icarus to be given in marriage in a proper suit? The suitors meanwhile became impatient and arrogant, ordering the servants to provide food and entertainment, and taking advantage of willing servant-girls like Melantho.

Yet more than mere familiarity with Penelope was at issue here. In order to make their educational claims these authors also presupposed a rather positive portrayal of Penelope. From their allusions to the suitors it is clear that philosophers like Bion, Aristippus, and Ariston were primarily

<sup>14</sup>Diog. Laert. 2.79–80: τοὺς τῶν ἐγκυκλίων παιδευμάτων μετασχόντας, φιλοσοφίας δὲ ἀπολειφθέντας ὁμοίους ἔλεγεν εἶναι τοῖς τῆς Πηνελόπης μνηστήρσι. καὶ γὰρ ἐκείνους Μελανθῶ μὲν καὶ Πολυδῶραν καὶ τὰς ἄλλας θεραπαίνας ἔχειν, πάντα δὲ μᾶλλον ἢ αὐτὴν τὴν δέσποιναν δύνασθαι γῆμαι.

The translation of τὰ ἐγκύκλια παιδεύματα as "preparatory subjects" anticipates the discussion of the term as it is used by Philo of Alexandria (see below, 289–293). The term occurs also in Stobaeus' report of the comparison, and here (as in Bion's use) the students of such subjects are said to "work hard" (πονουμένους), or "wear themselves down to the bone" (κατασκελετεύουσι) on these subjects. However worthless to Bion, these παιδεύματα were obviously of considerable significance to the students. For a more extensive discussion of ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία and related terms see the appendix (below, 301–302).

<sup>15</sup>Stob. Flor. 4.140: Ἐκ τῶν Ἀρίστωνος Ὁμοιωμάτων. Ἀρίστων ὁ Χίος τοὺς περὶ τὰ ἐγκύκλια μαθήματα πονομένους, ἀμελοῦντας δὲ φιλοσοφίας, ἔλεγεν ὁμοίους εἶναι τοῖς μνηστήρσι τῆς Πηνελόπης, οἱ ἀποτυγχάνοντες ἐκείνης, περὶ τὰς θεραπαίνας ἐγίνοντο.

Diogenes Laertius also refers to Ariston when discussing Aristippus' use of the comparison (2.80). A Vatican *Gnomologium* attributes the saying to Gorgias, and a late collection of *Apophthegmata* ascribes it to Aristotle as well. See L. M. de Rijk, "Enkuklios paideia: A Study of its Original Meaning," *Vivarium* 3 (1965) 24–93, particularly 82–85; also Albert Henrichs, "Philosophy the Handmaiden of Theology," *GRBS* 9 (1968) 437–450, esp. 444.

concerned to denigrate those who did not give first priority to the study of philosophy in comparison with subjects which were less worthy and designated as τὰ ἐγκύκλια. This is why they used the Homeric account; they wanted to make the point more effectively by comparing philosophy itself with Penelope as a mistress (δέσποινα) more noble and worthy than her maidservants; she is the true object of desire for the suitors who in fact resort to, and get no further than, the servant-girls.

Of these three philosophers, Aristippus of Cyrene (ca 435–350 B.C.) was among the followers of Socrates, but is known for advocating pleasure (ἡδονή) as the ultimate good, or τέλος of life, and has traditionally been regarded as the founder of the Cyrenaic school of philosophy. Diogenes Laertius tells us that in his treatises on education Aristippus advised students to occupy themselves with that which would be useful (οἷς . . . χρήσονται) when they are grown up, namely the wisdom (φρόνησις) by which the sage could measure toil and pain (πόνος, λύπη) in the attempt to minimize them.<sup>16</sup>

Bion of Borysthenes (ca 325–255 B.C.) was bought as a slave and trained by a rhetorician, but attended the philosophical schools after his master's death. Although associated with the Cyrenaics in his teaching that happiness (εὐδαιμονία) was to be obtained by a shrewd adaptation to circumstances, Bion also adopted the rough cloak and wallet (τρίβων, πήρα) of the Cynics. Diogenes Laertius comments on his disregard for the subjects of a general education in μουσική and γεωμετρία.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, Ariston of Chios (fl. ca 250 B.C.) was influenced by the Stoic Zeno but disagreed with him on the importance of the ἐγκύκλια μαθήματα, particularly the integration of logic and physics in philosophy. According to Ariston, the pursuit of virtue (ἀρετή) was the only concern worthy of the philosopher.<sup>18</sup> Like the Cynics, Ariston emphasized simplicity of teaching rather than theoretical complexities. The Cynics praised toil and hardship (πόνος . . . ἄσκησις), using the mythical Odysseus or Heracles as examples of those who attained to virtue through hard work.<sup>19</sup>

As Cynics and Cyrenaics these philosophers agreed in regarding philosophy primarily as a matter of lifestyle; the Cynics were in fact well-known for advocating the shortcut to virtue.<sup>20</sup> They had little patience for a long program of studies such as that outlined in the *Republic*, where Plato emphasized the preparatory value of mathematical subjects, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, and harmonics, as an important tool for abstract thought

<sup>16</sup>Diog. Laert. 2.80; C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy: A Collection of Texts* (Leiden 1963) 1.166–169.

<sup>17</sup>Diog. Laert. 4.53; cf. Dudley (above, n. 2) 62–69.

<sup>18</sup>Diog. Laert. 7.127, 129; also Dudley (above, n. 2) 100–101.

<sup>19</sup>Mactoux (above, n. 9) 49–65, esp. 58; cf. F. Buffière, *Les Mythes d'Homère et la pensée grecque* (Paris 1956) 365–391.

<sup>20</sup>Diog. Laert. 7.121.

and a propaedeutic for dialectic and philosophy.<sup>21</sup> Their position bears more resemblance to that of Isocrates, who disagreed with Plato's high evaluation of the mathematical disciplines, yet spoke of his own program as a training in φιλοσοφία; according to Isocrates an education in geometry or astronomy had limited usefulness as a "mental gymnastic . . . and preparation for philosophy."<sup>22</sup> However, the particular comparison using Penelope to represent philosophy and the suitors for τὰ ἐγκύκλια is not found in the work of Isocrates any more than in Plato's dialogues.

Use of the term τὰ ἐγκύκλια for preparatory subjects is not clearly attested in ancient literature until some two hundred years after the work of these Cynics and Cyrenaics, with the treatise of Philo of Alexandria (ca 20 B.C.–A.D. 40) on education, his *De congressu eruditionis gratia* (*On union with propaedeutic studies*).<sup>23</sup> Philo seems to use the term τὰ ἐγκύκλια (79) almost interchangeably with terms like ἡ μέση παιδεία (12), ἡ διὰ τῶν προπαιδευμάτων ἐγκύκλιος μουσική (9), or τὴν τῶν μέσων καὶ ἐγκυκλίων ἐπιστημῶν μέσῃν παιδείαν (14). Such terms refer to subjects like grammar, poetry, geometry, astronomy, and rhetoric, as requiring a degree of reasoning (τῇ ἄλλῃ λογικῇ θεωρίᾳ πάσῃ, 11).

For Philo these subjects were characterized by a degree of inferiority to philosophy, or the pursuit of virtue and wisdom. Yet they did have an appropriate and legitimate role as a preparation for philosophy. This intermediate and preparatory role is well illustrated in the extended allegorical analysis of the story of Sarah and Abraham, based on Genesis 16.

Like Penelope, Sarah is said to be symbolic of Philosophy, Wisdom, or Virtue,<sup>24</sup> while her servant-girl Hagar represents studies preliminary to philosophy.<sup>25</sup> As Sarah's husband, Abraham has a role which differs significantly from that of Penelope's suitors. His portrayal is analogous, rather,

<sup>21</sup>Plato *Rep.*, esp. book 7. Mathematical investigations presented processes of deductive reasoning from unquestioned postulates or axioms to conclusions; it was the task of dialectic to examine the axioms or premises themselves and seek the principles or forms on which these depend in the nature of ultimate being, truth, or goodness (6.509d–511b).

<sup>22</sup>Isoc. *Antid.* 261–268.

<sup>23</sup>Citations of the treatise (usually referred to as *De congressu*) are based on *Les Oeuvres de Philon d'Alexandrie* 16: *De congressu eruditionis gratia*, tr. Monique Alexandre (Paris 1967).

<sup>24</sup>Because Sarah was barren she consented to Abraham's union with her handmaiden, Hagar, giving him the longed-for son, Ishmael. Yet this was not the child of promise. Intensely jealous of Hagar, Sarah sent her away, and later herself bore the fully legitimate child, Isaac. In the allegory of Sarah Philo begins with an etymology of her name in Hebrew: ἀρχή μου ("she who rules me," *De congressu* 2), from which he moves to an association with wisdom (φρόνησις or σοφία), the true goal of φιλοσοφία (78–79) and the virtues (ἀρεταί) which rule the soul as its queen (βασιλὶς . . . ἀρχουσα, 2).

<sup>25</sup>Hagar, the παιδίσκη Αἰγυπτία (*De congressu* 1) is first referred to as θεραπαινὶς in sections 9–11, where she is identified with ἡ διὰ τῶν προπαιδευμάτων ἐγκύκλιος μουσική, or simply τὰ ἐγκύκλια. Philo also gives the etymology based on the Hebrew: παροίκισις

to that of Odysseus as the Stoic sage who makes progress toward the attainment of virtue or wisdom, for he is said to represent the enquiring soul (or mind) which is unable to bear children to wisdom before it has been prepared by intermediate studies to distinguish truth from falsehood (17–18).<sup>26</sup> But Philo insists that the offspring of union with such preliminary studies (Hagar) has no independent value. It is to be dedicated to the pursuit of true philosophy, symbolized by Sarah. Only through her are legitimate children born.

Intermediate studies or τὰ ἐγκύκλια are therefore considered important and useful, but only as a propaedeutic for further studies in philosophy. Those who, like the suitors of Penelope, remained ensnared by the charms of the handmaidens and forgot their pledge to φιλοσοφία (78) could expect Philo's scorn or the anger which Sarah turned on Hagar when the latter insulted her mistress by arrogantly flaunting her fertility.

The language of sexual pursuit and union to describe students of philosophy can be traced back to Plato and the Sophists.<sup>27</sup> To understand Philo's subtle reworking of the motif of Penelope and the suitors in this allegorical interpretation of Sarah and Abraham, however, we must return to earlier philosophical discussions in Plato and Aristotle.<sup>28</sup>

Plato in the *Symposium* makes explicit use of the imagery of sexual union and its offspring: Diotima praises Eros as the true philosopher because he seeks to possess wisdom (with goodness and immortality), and gives birth to spiritual offspring in the presence of beauty. Like Eros, the true philosopher is stung by the beauty of the object of desire, but he looks beyond the beauty of bodies to that of souls (or of knowledge), and gives birth to spiritual children like poetry, laws or beautiful ideas (203b–212b).

Where focus on the philosopher in the *Symposium* might provide a key to the role of Abraham (or Odysseus), the portrayal of philosophy as a young maiden surrounded by a host of suitors in the *Republic* brings us a little closer to Cynic and Cyrenaic use of the Homeric Penelope and Philo's use of Sarah. While discussing the uselessness of philosophers within a democratic

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("sojourning," 20–23); being associated with Egypt means she is also associated with what Egypt typically represents, the earth, the body, and the objects of sense-perception.

<sup>26</sup> Abraham represents the mind or soul (νοῦς) as it progresses (προκόπτων) toward knowledge and wisdom (*De congressu* 23); it has a role midway between that of the perfect sage (σόφος) and the hopeless fool. A number of passages (e.g., 6 and 73–77) reflect an autobiographical element in this discussion of education.

<sup>27</sup> The best examples can be found in Plato's *Symposium* and *Alcibiades*, but also the opening scenes of the *Protagoras*.

<sup>28</sup> Numerous discussions of this motif in Philo have linked it with the Cynics; cf. Henrichs (above, n. 15) 444–445, and A. Mendelson, *Secular Education in Philo of Alexandria* (Cincinnati 1982) xxiii–xxiv. Much less has been done to connect it with the work of earlier philosophers, Plato and his portrayal of Lady Philosophy in the *Republic*, or Aristotle.



state (Book 6), Socrates portrays Lady Philosophy as abandoned by the noblest of her suitors, who have all been seduced by ambition or corrupted by public applause (487b ff). She has been deserted by those who ought to protect her, for her impoverished father and nearest kin cannot provide for an honourable marriage (495b ff). While she enjoys a reputation sufficient to attract a multitude of suitors, these only add to her reproach, for, like the bald-headed tinker just out of prison, they are unworthy, maimed, and warped by the demands of their lowly occupations.<sup>29</sup> Plato resumes the metaphor of sexual union introduced earlier (490b–c) when he provides the application of this tale: marriage of Philosophy with such unworthy suitors would produce offspring little better than bastards. Although union of the true lover of knowledge with true Being produces children like intelligence (φρόνησις) and truth, when Philosophy is mismatched with men unworthy of culture (παίδευσις), they produce nothing better than σοφίσματα, sophistry (496a6).

In making his comparison between Philosophy and her unworthy suitors Plato did not use the story of Homeric Penelope (as noted above). And where Plato stressed the value of τὰ μαθήματα as a preparation for philosophy, his suitors were Sophists; although interested in acquiring debating skills, they were certainly not ensnared by the charms of preliminary studies, as these concerned Cynics, Cyrenaics, and Philo. Plato's account in the *Republic* is thus particularly of interest for its strong portrayal of Lady Philosophy as a marriageable young maiden of noble descent attracting suitors from far and wide.

Plato does contrast unworthy suitors with those who are true lovers of knowledge and wisdom, as he contrasts also the respective offspring from such unions. To find a clearer precedent, however, for the sharp differentiation between philosophy and the preliminary subjects as symbolized by Cynics or Cyrenaics in the relationship between Penelope and her maids (or between Sarah and her slave Hagar), it may be helpful to recall Aristotle's comparison of σοφία with the ἐπιστήμαι in the early books of the *Metaphysics*. Wisdom, according to Aristotle, includes knowledge of causes and first principles, and is thus clearly superior (ἀρχικωτέραν) to its ancillary (ὑπερετούσης), the sciences as branches of knowledge which depend on experience and reasoning (*Met.* 982a1–20); this he illustrates by referring to the wise man as one who gives orders, while the less wise obey. A little further on he elaborates on philosophy as the only truly free branch of knowledge (μόνην οὖσαν ἐλευθέραν τῶν ἐπιστημῶν) since it exists for its own sake, and

<sup>29</sup>Most commentators regard the reference to devotees of Philosophy who have been corrupted by public acclaim as a veiled reference to Alcibiades. There is far less certainty regarding the intention of Plato in describing the bald-headed tinker. It would appear from the description of the offspring as sophistry that Plato had in mind such noted practitioners of eristics as Euthydemus or Dionysodorus; cf. Plato *Euthydemus*.

not for another's advantage, just as a free person pursues his own affairs and not those which are to another's advantage (982b24–27). Aristotle goes so far as to use the term *δούλας*, or maidservants, for these subordinate sciences when contrasting them with philosophy as *ἀρχικωτάτη* ... *ἡγεμονικωτάτη* (996b10–12), even though he does not agree with Aristippus, one of the Sophists who allegedly repudiated *τὰ μαθήματα* (996a29–36). Use of “servant” terminology for the sciences may be understood as a hint of Aristotle's familiarity with the metaphorical use of Homeric Penelope and her handmaids, but Aristotle is really more interested in taking his illustrations from political life, as in 982b24–27.

Thus Philo's use of the story of Sarah and Hagar to indicate his evaluation of the *ἐγκύκλια* may be traced to Cynic and Cyrenaic elaboration of Homeric Penelope and her suitors; his use of sexual imagery for the acquisition of wisdom can be traced back to Plato and the Sophists, but the “useful though subordinate” status for preparatory studies was most clearly articulated by Aristotle. One may not be able to draw direct lines of dependence from Philo to such earlier work, yet it is of interest to observe prior development of themes which served as basic ingredients for Philo's allegorical use of a mistress-maidservant-suitor triangle in the educational treatise which first clearly uses the term *τὰ ἐγκύκλια*.

Even without access to all the pieces of the puzzle, it is clear that philosophical schools were ready to use well-known myths and legendary characters as metaphors or allegories to illustrate their own positions; when they disagreed with other schools they were quite prepared, also, to respond with use of the same metaphors while elaborating or focusing on different aspects of the myths. Stories of suitors were popular in Greek literature. Aside from the mythical accounts of the wooing of Helen, Hippodamia, or Atalanta, Herodotus tells the famous story of Hippocleides dancing away his chance to become the husband of Agariste.<sup>30</sup> In his portrayal of Lady Philosophy Plato did not use these tales or the story of Penelope, whose encounter with the suitors was to become a *topos* among Hellenistic philosophers like Cynics or Cyrenaics. The negative evaluation of preparatory studies among the latter would, of course, not have been acceptable to Plato. Yet even if his use of the language of erotic pursuit is better understood in the context of Sophistic terminology for the pursuit of students, we may safely assume that Plato could have made use of the Penelope story for his own purposes, had he wished to do so. Philo's reworking of the mistress-maidservant-suitor metaphor in the allegorical use of Sarah and Hagar, to give preparatory studies their proper if subordinate place, provides some indication of the flexibility with which ancient authors used literary allusions. It is of interest that when Plato does mention Penelope in *Phaedo* 84, he

<sup>30</sup>Hdt. 6.125–131.

focuses on her preoccupation with weaving and unraveling,<sup>31</sup> which is also the focus of our second account of Penelope as a symbol of philosophy.

## II

The twelfth-century collection of scholia on the *Odyssey* made by Eustathius of Thessalonica presents us with numerous allegorical interpretations of the story of Odysseus. His desire to return to Ithaca and Penelope is taken to represent the soul's desire for true philosophy.<sup>32</sup> The lengthy stay with Calypso represents preoccupation with astronomy (her father was Atlas!) and other intermediate and less worthy subjects.<sup>33</sup> But according to the scholia on 1.51–52 Odysseus never lost his desire for Penelope, who represents philosophy, or more precisely philosophy carried out according to method and rule, μεθοδικήν καὶ κανονικήν φιλοσοφίαν.<sup>34</sup> The allegory is assured by her use of the loom (ἱστόν) on which she practiced both the weaving and the unraveling of her work, ὑφαινόμενόν τε καὶ ἀνάλυστον (1390.7).

Elaboration of weaving as an allegory for the pursuit of philosophy is given in the scholia on *Od.* 2.93 ff. where Antinoos describes Penelope's strategy of weaving the shroud (1436.36 ff.).<sup>35</sup> The weaving itself repre-

<sup>31</sup>Plato mentions Penelope's work of weaving and unraveling as an endless and useless task in *Phaedo* 84. In the context of a discussion of philosophy as a pursuit which releases (λύειν) the soul from contamination by the body, Socrates cautions his listeners against giving in to pleasures, since these bind the soul to the body, and give philosophy the same kind of useless task represented by Penelope's weaving and unraveling.

<sup>32</sup>Eustathius (above, n. 12) 1390.3 ff, giving scholia on *Odyssey* 1.51–52: ποθεῖ δὲ ὁμῶς μάλιστα καὶ τὴν μεθοδικὴν καὶ κανονικὴν φιλοσοφίαν. ἀφ' ἧς ὡς οἶα τινος πατρίδος ὁρμώμενος, εἰς ταῦτα ἤλθε καὶ εἰς ἐκείνην ἐπανακάμπτειν γλίσχεται ἥς χωρὶς οὐκ ἔστι φιλοσοφεῖν. ὅτι δὲ τοιαύτη τις ἡ Πηνελόπη, δῆλον ἔσται ὅτε τὸν ἱστὸν θεωρήσωμεν τὸν ὑπ' αὐτῆς ὑφαινόμενόν τε καὶ ἀνάλυστον. "Nonetheless he (Odysseus) especially longs for philosophy pursued according to method and rule. For it is from her he set out as it were from his homeland, and came to the present situation (i.e., with Calypso); he also strives to return to the former, for without her he is unable to philosophize. It will be clear that Penelope is such (i.e., represents philosophy) when we reflect on the loom on which she performed her weaving and unraveling" (my translation).

<sup>33</sup>In the *Odyssey* 1.51–52 Athena complained to Zeus that Odysseus was being held by Calypso against his will, and longed desperately to return to Ithaca. As daughter of Atlas (i.e., the invisible axis running from the north to the south pole through heaven and earth), Calypso was taken to represent sciences such as astronomy in the allegorical elaboration of the story. Accordingly, Odysseus' lengthy stay with Calypso was taken to symbolize his preoccupation with such sciences as a preparation for his real love, philosophy. Cf. Eustathius (above, n. 12) 1389.41 ff.

<sup>34</sup>The passage is discussed in Felix Buffière (above, n. 19) 388–390.

<sup>35</sup>Eustathius (above, n. 12) 1436.36 ff., giving scholia on *Odyssey* 2.93: ἡ μὲντοι ἀλληγορία κατὰ ἀστειοτέραν ἀναγωγὴν, φιλοσοφίαν μὲν καὶ πάλιν τὴν Πηνελόπην νοεῖ. ἱστὸν δὲ ὑπ' αὐτῆς ὑφαινόμενον, τὴν φιλόσοφον τῶν προτάσεων ἐπισυνθεσιν. ἐξ ὧν αἱ συλλογιστικαὶ ὑφαινόμεναι γίνονται συμπλοκαί. ἀνάλυσιν δὲ ὑπ' ἀνάγκης γινομένην τοῦ τοιοῦτου ἱστοῦ ὑπονεῖ,

sents the synthesis or combination of propositions (προτάσεων), taking major and minor premises and weaving them together in syllogistic reasoning. Of even more interest is the unraveling, ἀνάλυσις, representing the reverse procedure of deconstruction: checking definitions, distinctions, or the validity of constituent propositions to test the coherence of the argument and soundness of conclusions based on it. The latter procedure was all the more significant because it symbolized the strategy to delay the dreaded marriage.

As in the accounts of Aristippus, Bion, and Ariston, the suitors represent misguided students of philosophy. The role of the maidservants, however, is considerably more important in this allegory. Emphasis here is not on their betrayal, but on the assistance given to Penelope in both the weaving and nocturnal "analysis." This has given at least one of them the clue to Penelope's intentions; consequently this particular maidservant is said to represent the analytic method (ἀναλυτική συλλογιστική μέθοδος, 1437.26 ff) which characterizes philosophy. By informing the suitors of the unraveling process, she is assigned responsibility for introducing the suitors to the first steps in philosophy (1437.29 ff).<sup>36</sup> Penelope herself is also given a very positive role as Lady Philosophy, and represented as standing at the

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τὴν οὕτω παρὰ τοῖς φιλοσόφοις λεγομένην τῶν ἐξ ἀνάγκης πλεκομένων συλλογισμῶν ἀνάλυσιν. ἥς οὐκ ἐπαίουσιν οἱ σπάταλοι καὶ παχεῖς μνηστήρες τῆς Πηνελόπης, οἳ μὴ δὲ ἐξευρεῖν οἴκοθεν τι λεπτὸν ἐξιχύοντες. θεῖον γὰρ ἀληθῶς τὸ τοιοῦτον ἔργον. διὸ καὶ ἡ Πηνελόπη λέγει πού ἐν τοῖς ἐξῆς, θεὸν ἐμπνεύσαι αὐτῇ τὰ κατὰ τὸν τοιοῦτον ἱστόν. καὶ οὕτω μὲν οἱ τρυφηταὶ μνηστήρες οὐδὲν οἶδασιν. θεράπαινα δὲ τις τῶν ἔνδον ἐκφαίνει τὸ ἔργον. εἴη δ' ἂν αὕτη, ἡ τῇ φιλοσόφῳ ταύτῃ ὑφαντικῇ προστετηκυῖα καὶ ταύτῃ φιλοπονοῦσα, ἀναλυτικὴ συλλογιστικὴ μέθοδος. εἰ καὶ οἱ ἀμέθοδοι καὶ οὐ ποθοῦντες τὴν τοιαύτην ὑφαντικὴν, ταχὺ παύουσι τὸ φιλόσοφον ἔργον, κύβοις αἰθῆς ἑαυτοὺς ἐπιρρίπτοντες καὶ αἰγανέαις παραβάλλοντες. "The allegory giving a more clever reference again understands Penelope as philosophy. And the loom on which she weaves is the philosophical combination of propositions. From this arise the woven intertwinings of syllogisms. However the analysis (or unraveling) which of necessity was done on this loom is to be understood as that analysis referred to by the philosophers when they speak of syllogisms which are interwoven of necessity. The wanton and thick-headed suitors of Penelope did not notice this inasmuch as they were unable to discover anything refined from the house. For truly this work of Penelope had a divine character. This is why Penelope says in the sequel that a god inspired her in the work at the loom. And so the insolent suitors know nothing. But one of the maidservants of the house reveals the deed. We should identify this servant who is devoted to the philosophical task of weaving, and is attached to the work, as the analytical syllogistic method. As for those who are lacking in method and do not long for such an art of weaving, they will soon drop the philosophic task and return to their dice and hunting" (my translation).

<sup>36</sup>The suitors are first told what is happening at night when one of the maids informs them of how Penelope practices ἀνάλυσις or unraveling. In his reflection on the allegory Eustathius comments that those who do not understand the allegory of weaving are not even close to the entry hallways of philosophy. Compared to such, the suitors are at an advantage since they have been introduced to philosophic weaving (of the syllogism) and may hope that Penelope will reveal her secret of analysis to them (1437.29 ff.) Cf. Buffière (above, n. 19) 390–391.

entry portals of true philosophical studies as she gives instruction in its first subject: logic.

Eustathius does not give us any clear indication concerning the origin of this particular allegory in the philosophical schools. In his discussion of the myths of Homer, Buffière suspects that it was well-known within the circles of Porphyry and Plotinus, and may already have been developed in the Hellenistic schools after Aristotle.<sup>37</sup> In order to examine the question of the origin of this allegory we must look at the role of logic in the study of philosophy: at what point did logic come to be regarded as the important point of entry to philosophy? For significant innovations in the development of logic we can look to three important turning points in ancient philosophy: Aristotle's *Organon*, the work of the Stoic Chrysippus, who is reported to have written no less than 311 treatises on logic, and Porphyry's *Isagoge* (*Introduction to Aristotle's Categories*) and commentaries on Aristotle's logic.<sup>38</sup>

Aristotle had developed logic far beyond Plato's use of dialectic in the dialogues; the *Organon* includes not only a discussion of "categories," or predication, but also the problems of interpretation and syllogistic reasoning, or correct use of rules of inference. Yet for Aristotle logic represented no more than a preliminary tool (*ᾠργανον*)<sup>39</sup> in philosophical reasoning; he did not include logic as part of philosophy proper.<sup>40</sup> Since Porphyry's work on logic signals a return to Aristotle, this also makes him a less likely source for the allegory.

For the Stoics, on the other hand, logic had a significant role. With their primary division of philosophy into three parts: logic, physics, and ethics, they clearly integrated logic as a necessary and introductory part of philosophy.<sup>41</sup> Among the early Stoic teachers Zeno (ca 350–260 B.C.) was interested in the logical puzzles of the Megarians. But it was particularly Chrysippus (ca 280–205 B.C.) who developed logic in a direction quite different from that of Aristotle. Instead of a logic of terms, with questions

<sup>37</sup>Buffière (above, n. 19) 365–391.

<sup>38</sup>A helpful brief discussion of Aristotle's logic may be found in W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy 6: Aristotle, an Encounter* (Cambridge 1981) chap. 9, 135–169. For Stoic logic F. H. Sandbach, *The Stoics* (London 1975) 95–100, gives an introductory account; a more extensive discussion can be found in Benson Mates, *Stoic Logic* (Berkeley 1961). For Porphyry see *Porphyry the Phoenician, Isagoge*, tr. Edward W. Warren (Toronto 1975).

<sup>39</sup>It is generally thought that Andronicus, who edited the work of Aristotle in the first century B.C., provided this title for the collection of Aristotle's logical works; cf. Guthrie (above, n. 38) 135–136, n. 3, and Hans B. Gottschalk, "The Earliest Aristotelian Commentators," in R. Sorabji (ed.), *Aristotle Transformed* (New York 1990) 55–81, esp. 66.

<sup>40</sup>Guthrie (above, n. 38) 135.

<sup>41</sup>Diog. Laert. 7.40 ff.

of class-inclusion and -exclusion, Chrysippus focused on the relationship of propositions or conditional statements (προτάσεις). The significance of the Stoic innovation, however, was not greatly appreciated in antiquity, and their system has been transmitted in fragmentary form. It was rediscovered earlier this century by the Polish logician Lukasiewicz, and rehabilitated in contemporary logic, which has rejected the Aristotelian approach.<sup>42</sup>

For us it is also significant that alongside the two main subdivisions of logic, rhetoric and dialectic, the Stoics developed a section dealing with canons or criteria (τὸ περὶ κανόνων καὶ κριτηρίων) as a means of discovering truth.<sup>43</sup> It is likewise significant that the Stoics are known to have developed elaborate rules for analysis of the syllogism, called θήματα, dealing with basic undemonstrable positions to which all valid arguments can be reduced.<sup>44</sup> The fact that Chrysippus was noted also for allegorical treatment of Homer lends further weight to an argument in favour of attributing this particular allegorical presentation to the Stoics, and specifically to Chrysippus himself.<sup>45</sup>

Cicero provides evidence from the first century B.C. for the interest in logic and the popularity of comparison of logical analysis with the art of weaving. In the *Academica* 2.29.95 as he demonstrates the limits of dialectic in solving logical impossibilities, he even uses the Homeric example when he compares the process of checking for false premises with Penelope's unraveling of her work on the loom.

And finally, we know that the comparison of weaving and logic can be taken back to third-century B.C. debates, from the "comparisons" of Ariston which Stobaeus has preserved in a fragment comparing dialectical arguments (λόγους τῶν διαλεκτικῶν) with the weaving of a spider's web. Both, he says, are characterized by great intricacy, and both are equally useless.<sup>46</sup> I would argue that with this allegory Chrysippus was providing a reply to Ariston by taking the original comparison with its focus on the suitors, and developing it to strengthen the portrayal of Penelope, who with her weaving shows that logic is indeed an important and useful part of philosophy. As

<sup>42</sup>Mates (above, n. 38) 1-8. Cf. I. Mueller, "An Introduction to Stoic Logic," in J. Rist (ed.), *The Stoics* (Berkeley 1978) 1-26, esp. 1-2.

<sup>43</sup>Diog. Laert. 7.41-42. Cf. A. A. Long, "Dialectic and the Stoic Sage," in Rist (above, n. 42) 101-124, esp. 114-115.

<sup>44</sup>Mueller (above, n. 42) 12-15.

<sup>45</sup>Diogenes Laertius (7.187-188) mentions his allegorical use of sexual activity between Zeus and Hera to symbolize cosmogony. The allegory is discussed by J. Rist, "On Greek Biology, Greek Cosmology, and Some Sources of Theological Pneuma," in D. W. Dockrill and R. G. Tanner (eds.), *The Concept of Spirit* (Auckland 1985, *Prudentia* Supplement) 27-47, esp. 41-43. It was J. Rist who first suggested to me that Chrysippus might well be the source of Eustathius' allegory. Further research on the various possible origins has confirmed this suggestion.

<sup>46</sup>Stob. *Flor.* 82.15.

Lady Philosophy she not only rules as a queen over the more lowly subjects of study; with her work of weaving she represents the significant role of logic at the entry portal to her palace of knowledge and philosophy.

Thus both sets of passages considered, those of Aristippus, Bion, and Ariston, and also those from Eustathius, present Penelope as a symbol of philosophy and may be understood as part of an ongoing debate regarding the respective pedagogical value of philosophy and the preparatory subjects. They also represent interesting examples of a long and flexible tradition in the personification of philosophy as a woman. If Cynic and Cyrenaic use of this motif does not depend directly on Plato's portrayal of Lady Philosophy, still like him they have focused on her as a bride, or at least potentially available for marriage, and attracting suitors of various kinds. By focusing on her task of weaving, the allegorical development of this portrayal shifts attention to a more mature Lady Philosophy, skilled and industrious in a task closely associated with the life of women in antiquity. If the young maiden/bride came under the protection of Artemis or Hera, married women would look particularly to Athena as their patroness, especially when it came to skill in handicrafts like weaving.<sup>47</sup> It is significant that Athena, as goddess both of wisdom and of handicrafts, is portrayed by Homer as a repeated inspiration for Penelope, particularly in the strategy of delay through weaving; Athena was identified with Penelope as closely as she was identified with the wily Odysseus.

Greek poets like Hesiod did not find it difficult to pass from personification to deification. Lady Philosophy could easily be assimilated to some of the more well-known Olympian goddesses. Indeed, from Aulus Gellius' *Noctes Atticae* we know of the effort to give her a genealogy as daughter of the Titaness Mnemosyne, and sister of the Muses.<sup>48</sup> Later personification tended to favour presentation of Lady Philosophy as an older woman, a mother, nurse, healer, or prophetess and guide for life, much like the figure of Diotima in the *Symposium* or Parmenides' *Thea*. Pierre Courcelle has dealt with the personification of philosophy in Cicero, Seneca, St. Augus-

<sup>47</sup> Among the Olympian goddesses Athena was the most important patroness of skill in weaving; with Hephaestus she was concerned for the arts (τέχναι) and crafts, especially crafts connected with the life of women. The story of Arachne (Ovid *Met.* 6.1-145) is perhaps the best example of her association with weaving. There is also a long tradition of metaphorical use of the terminology of weaving to represent thought processes, especially for clever scheming, as at Plato *Symp.* 203d; to do justice to this theme requires another article.

<sup>48</sup> Aulus Gellius quotes the early Latin poet Afranius, *Usus me genuit, mater peperit Memoria, / Sophiam vocant me Grai, vos Sapientiam* (N.A. 13.8.3). Courcelle ("Le Personnage de Philosophie" [above, n. 2] 235) points to an anticipation of the association of Philosophy with the Muses in Plato's *Republic* 548b-c, where he speaks of the true Muse known by discussion (i.e., not by the use of force) and philosophy (τῆς ἀληθινῆς Μούσης τῆς μετὰ λόγων τε καὶ φιλοσοφίας).

tine, and Boethius in a series of articles during the past decades,<sup>49</sup> so it is not necessary to elaborate on the later portrayal of Lady Philosophy at this point, except to reinforce Courcelle's conclusions regarding the influential role of the earlier literature for the portrayal of Lady Philosophy in the Middle Ages.

### III

In conclusion I would like briefly to examine the significance of the choice of Penelope as a symbol of philosophy. How important are the gender-associations of feminine personifications for abstract concepts or cosmic principles like Hesiod's *Gaia*, Empedocles' *Philia*, or Plato's *Hypodochē*? Is it legitimate to argue from female personification to an identification of characteristics of such personifications (or deifications) with actual women of flesh and blood? This is an important issue for current discussion regarding the role of women in ancient Greco-Roman culture. Can one legitimately deduce a correlation between the frequency of references to feminine deities or mythical figures and the prominence of women in public life? We return to this question here also because Prudence Allen, whose study, *The Concept of Woman*, provided significant inspiration for the present essay, on numerous occasions makes a rather swift transition from a recognition of the female personification of philosophy to conclusions regarding the acceptance of women as significant partners with men in the quest for truth and wisdom.<sup>50</sup>

One might certainly expect that those philosophers who have given a positive evaluation of the role of women, and regarded women as capable of embodying the virtues and wisdom, would also be proponents of female participation in the pursuit of wisdom or philosophy. And it is true that one can draw correlations between the positive portrayal of the feminine and the actual involvement of women in the ancient schools of philosophy. We know of female adherents for all the schools mentioned in the discussion of Penelope: the Academy, the Cynics and Cyrenaics, the Stoics, and one can add to this list the Epicureans, Pythagoreans, and Neoplatonists.<sup>51</sup>

Yet we must also exercise caution in drawing connections between the positive (or negative) portrayal of women in the philosophical treatises and

<sup>49</sup>See above, n. 2.

<sup>50</sup>For examples, see Allen's argumentation ([above, n. 1] 239) dealing with the apparition of Lady Philosophy to Boethius; or the following, "This example of the female personification of philosophy attests to the need for a complementary male and female contribution to philosophy . . ." (245).

<sup>51</sup>Lists may be found in studies like that of Prudence Allen. For the Neo-Platonists see also M. Goulet-Cazé, "L'École de Plotin," in L. Brisson *et al.*, *Porphyre, La Vie de Plotin* (Paris 1982) 231 ff., esp. 238-246.



the actual participation of women in the respective schools. It is first of all important not to minimize the barriers to be overcome by women who joined these schools. We know that Axiotheia came to the Academy dressed in male clothing, probably to protect herself against unwanted advances.<sup>52</sup> In late antiquity Hypatia was able to dissuade a would-be lover only by throwing a filthy menstrual rag his way.<sup>53</sup> Many of the women in the Epicurean school have names suggestive of a *hetaera*, and were typically regarded as belonging in that class.<sup>54</sup>

As we have seen from our discussion of the symbolic use of Penelope, feminine characteristics like the attraction of suitors, or ability in weaving, are developed particularly to give a more vivid personification, or present a philosophic position with greater clarity. The metaphors or allegories have a specific literary and hermeneutic purpose in the presentation of abstract concepts, namely to add colour or emphasis which could otherwise be conveyed only with difficulty. These symbols could also take on a life of their own, particularly in poetry, and even be portrayed as independent deities with personal and gendered characteristics. Yet the ease with which one sees this occurring, particularly in the work of Hesiod or the lyric poets, must add its own weight to the note of caution against drawing close connections between such symbolic portrayals and any real flesh-and-blood women to whom these characteristics could also be applied. A case in point is the example of Gaia. It was long thought that the prevalence of cultic Gaia figures in archeological finds not only represented the supremacy of female deities, but also served to indicate a superiority of women in a matriarchal society.<sup>55</sup> Scholarly consensus today connects these figurines with various aspects of fertility cults but is much more cautious regarding a correspondingly important social role for women.<sup>56</sup> And it is also clear from

<sup>52</sup>Diog. Laert. 3.46.

<sup>53</sup>J. Rist, "Hypatia," *Phoenix* 19 (1965) 214-225, at 221.

<sup>54</sup>Snyder (above, n. 1) 103-105.

<sup>55</sup>This question is discussed by M. I. Finley, "Archeology and History," *Daedalus* 100 (1971) 168-186, at 170 ff., and Eva Cantarella in the introductory chapters of her work *Pandora's Daughters* (Baltimore 1987). See also the discussion of Joan B. Townsend, "The Goddess: Fact, Fallacy and Revitalization Movement," in Larry Hurtado (ed.), *Goddesses in Religion and Modern Debate* (Atlanta 1990) 179-203.

<sup>56</sup>It is important to realize that particularly the personifications which passed over into allegories (or even partial deifications) were very flexible in using male or female symbols and corresponding gender-characteristics. Literature gives many examples where Odysseus and his wanderings were used to represent the journey of the soul to its ultimate home; but ancient authors were just as likely to use the story of Helen who was seduced by her lover and taken far from home, only to be restored when she had come to realize her true origin and identity. Cf. J. Pépin, "The Platonic and Christian Ulysses," in D. J. O'Meara (ed.), *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought* (Albany, N.Y.

our knowledge of the religion and mythology of ancient Greece that numerous feminine deities were worshiped for their involvement in activities like war or hunting which had very little to do with the ordinary daily life of women.<sup>57</sup>

Over-idealization of the feminine may, in fact, have presented an obstacle for the actual participation of women in philosophy.<sup>58</sup> In her *Monuments and Maidens*, Marina Warner makes a strong case: "Liberty is not represented as a woman, from the colossus in New York to the ubiquitous Marianne, figure of the French Republic, because women were or are free . . . indeed the French Republic was one of the last European countries to give its female citizens the vote."<sup>59</sup> Such idealization occurred in the portrayal of Penelope by Roman poets like Horace and Propertius who used her to embody the virtues of chastity and fidelity.<sup>60</sup> The Homeric Penelope is by comparison much less idealized. Although she is portrayed as both wise and clever (περίφρων), she is also vulnerable and limited in her ability to control the situation in her home. Tears indicate her anger and frustration. Indeed, I would conclude that in the final analysis one must credit the competence of Homer as a master story-teller, and the continuing popularity of epic poetry, with the metaphors and allegories which in the later tradition have portrayed Penelope as Lady Philosophy.

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1981, *Studies in Neoplatonism* 3) 1-18. See also the discussions of Sophia in the work of Karen King (above, n. 1).

<sup>57</sup>In the opening chapter of his *The Glory of Hera* (Boston 1968) 10, discussing the tensions of mother-son relationships, P. Slater remarks ironically on the resentment of Athenians at the command of an opposing ship by a woman, Artemisia (Hdt. 8.93), while they had no difficulties with the feminine phantom encouraging them to fight (8.84). A similar point is made by S. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves* (New York 1976) 9, in her discussion of goddesses who pursue numerous activities quite foreign to the lives of mortal females.

<sup>58</sup>An interesting illustration of this phenomenon comes from the stories of J.-P. Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir; cf. Toril Moi, "Simone de Beauvoir: The Making of an Intellectual Woman," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 4 (1990) 1-23, esp. her quote on 6, "For if Sartre showed obvious qualities, such as a strongly asserted, albeit slightly imprecise intelligence and culture, everybody agreed that she (i.e., Simone) was Philosophy." And she was rewarded with second place, to give way to Sartre! Moi comments, "Perhaps the examiners thought that the point was not to be but to master philosophy?"

<sup>59</sup>Warner (above n. 1) xix-xx.

<sup>60</sup>Hor. *Odes* 1.17.20; Prop. 3.12.37. Cf. Mactoux (above, n. 9) 129-130.

## APPENDIX: ON THE MEANING OF ENKUKLIOS PAIDEIA

Extensive discussions attempting to give a generally valid definition of the adjective ἐγκύκλιος when used with παιδεία may be found in L. M. de Rijk, "Enkuklios paideia: A Study of its Original Meaning," *Vivarium* 3 (1965) 24–93; H. I. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* (Paris 1937) 211–235, *idem*, *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'Antiquité*<sup>6</sup> (Paris 1965) 265–267, *idem*, "Les Arts libéraux dans l'Antiquité Classique," *Actes du IV<sup>e</sup> Congrès International de Philosophie Médiévale* (Montreal 1969) 1–33; I. Hadot, *Arts libéraux et philosophie dans la pensée antique* (Paris 1984) 263–293; and A. P. Bos, "Exoterikoi logoi and enkuklioi logoi in the *Corpus Aristotelicum* and the Origin of the Idea of the *enkuklios paideia*," *JHI* 50 (1989) 179–198, an article expanded in his book *Cosmic and Meta-Cosmic Theology in Aristotle's Lost Dialogues* (Leiden 1989) 113–151.

Where de Rijk looks for the origin of the term in μουσική and choral training ("in a circle") for dramatic festivals in classical Greece, Marrou focuses on the "non-specific," or "regular" nature of an education which is generally shared, at least among the elite who have access to it. Hadot disagrees with Marrou's use of examples from late authors (and their much more developed concept of the "liberal arts") for his discussion of τὰ ἐγκύκλια in the Hellenistic period. Instead Hadot revives a theme introduced by de Rijk (39–40, 54), of the link or bond unifying the various subjects of study, mentioned by Cicero *De or.* 3.21 and Vitruvius *De arch.* 1.1.12; this link may be traced back to Plato *Republic* 537c where dialectic is described as revealing the connections between the various subjects of study, since the use of λόγος (reason) is often indicated as the distinguishing feature of such subjects, differentiating them from more practically oriented τέχναι. Hadot believes the choral imagery used for τὰ ἐγκύκλια in many authors, including Philo of Alexandria, symbolizes such interconnections (265–270). In his discussion of τὰ ἐγκύκλια Bos approaches the question in the context of an examination of the terms ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία and ἐγκύκλιοι, as these are used by Aristotle to refer respectively to intra-cosmic reality represented by ἐξωτερικοὶ λόγοι, and to extra-cosmic reality, τὰ ἔξω. Accordingly Bos proposes that ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία be understood as an education which takes the soul in its ascent (as in *Phaedrus* 247a) through the celestial spheres, the ἐγκύκλιοι to be completed by contemplation of that which is truly transcendent, ἔξω, whether through first philosophy, or σοφία. Although Bos realizes that his argument depends on speculation regarding Aristotle's lost writing, his explanation does account for the "preparatory" nature of the ἐγκύκλια prominent in writings of Philo of Alexandria and other authors.

All of these studies refer to the ἐγκύκλια as a "curriculum," "circuit," or series of studies, although they differ widely on how we can trace this

meaning back to earlier Greek use of ἐγκύκλιος. The term clearly refers to a series of studies to be followed in some sequence, yet it is also important to realize that students typically moved about from one teacher to another, often staying in their home, or visiting them in the home where they were guests (as in the case of the Sophists in Athens). We must not allow the more structured and institutionalized educational facilities of the present to mislead us in overemphasizing the organizational aspect of studies covered by the term ἐγκύκλια. And secondly, it is important in looking at passages where τὰ ἐγκύκλια are contrasted with philosophy to look at the particular philosophical positions implied. The philosophical schools, especially in the earlier Hellenistic period, differed substantially in the subjects which were or were not included or thought worthy of philosophical consideration.