

## ZENO OF SIDON AND THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN EPICUREANISM\*

### ABSTRACT

*This article contributes to our understanding of women in the Epicurean school. Focussing on the second- and first-century B.C.E. philosophers Zeno of Sidon and Philodemus of Gadara, it examines some neglected textual evidence and argues that a misogynist position can be traced back to Zeno. While Epicureanism contains many progressive ideas on women and early Epicureans admitted women in their communities, Zeno was much more dismissive of women than other Epicureans. This points to a significant doctrinal development in the Epicurean school.*

**Keywords:** Epicureanism; Epicurus; Zeno of Sidon; Philodemus of Gadara; women; social philosophy; political philosophy

In contrast to other ancient Greek philosophical schools of the time such as the Academy, Peripatos and Stoa, there is ample evidence of women in the Epicurean Garden. In addition to Batis, the sister of Metrodorus and wife of Idomeneus; Themista, wife of Leonteus; and Leontion, a *hetaira* turned philosopher who had relationships with Epicurus and Metrodorus, and a son and a daughter with the latter; there is evidence for *hetairai* in the school: Mammarrion, Hedeia, Nikidion, Boidion, Demetria and Erotion.<sup>1</sup> Since the Epicurean *hetairai* have sexualized or gendered aptronyms—for instance, Mammarrion means ‘Tit’ and Hedeia ‘Sweetie’—and we do not know much else about them, some scholars doubt whether these women were real people rather than critics’

\* I thank CQ’s reader for suggestions.

<sup>1</sup> See also F.J. Campos Daroca and M. de la Paz Martínez, ‘Communauté épicurienne et communication épistolaire. Lettres de femmes selon le *PHerc.* 176: la correspondance de Batis’, in A. Antoni, G. Arrighetti, M. Isabella Bertagna and D. Delattre (edd.), *Miscellanea Papyrologica Herculanensia* (Pisa and Rome, 2010), 1.21–36, at 26–30, who distinguish different classes of women in the Epicurean school: the *hetairai*, and the sisters, wives, mothers and daughters. The claims of N. DeWitt, *Epicurus and His Philosophy* (Minneapolis, 1954), 95–6, that the majority of women in the Garden were *hetairai* and that there was a proportionate number of female slaves, are not backed by textual evidence. On women in the Epicurean school, see A. Angeli, ‘La scuola epicurea di Lampsaco nel *PHerc.* 176 (fr. 5 coll. I, IV, VIII–XXIII)’, *CErc* 18 (1988), 27–51; M. Capasso, ‘Un albero per Leonzio’, in F. de Martino (ed.), *Rose di Pieria* (Bari, 1991), 279–311; S. Föllinger, *Differenz und Gleichheit: das Geschlechterverhältnis in der Sicht griechischer Philosophen des 4. bis 1. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.* (Stuttgart, 1996), 239–55; P. Gordon, ‘Remembering the Garden: the trouble with women in the school of Epicurus’, in J.T. Fitzgerald, D. Obbink and G.S. Holland (edd.), *Philodemus and the New Testament World* (Leiden and Boston, 2004), 221–43; P. Gordon, *The Invention and Gendering of Epicurus* (Ann Arbor, 2012), 72–108; A. Tepedino Guerra, ‘Il ritratto di una donna del Giardino epicureo: Batide di Lampsaco (Script. Anon. Epicur., *PHerc.* 176, fr. 5 col. XIX)’, in A. Casanova, G. Messeri and R. Pinaudi (edd.), *E si d’amici pieno: omaggio di studiosi italiani a Guido Bastianini per il suo settantesimo compleanno* (Florence, 2016), 345–53; T. Di Fabio, ‘Donne epicuree: cortigiane, filosofe o entrambe?’, *Bollettino della Società Filosofica Italiana* 221 (2017), 19–36; and K. Arenson, ‘Ancient women Epicureans and their anti-hedonist critics’, in K. O’Reilly and C. Pellò (edd.), *Ancient Women Philosophers: Recovered Ideas and New Perspectives* (Cambridge, 2023), 77–95.

concoctions of the supposedly debauched Epicurean way of life.<sup>2</sup> As the *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names* shows, however, these names are well attested in other sources, which makes it unlikely that they are complete fictions.<sup>3</sup> More importantly, these Epicurean women are mentioned in Philodemus.<sup>4</sup> This would be strange if anti-Epicurean critics had invented them. Nevertheless, these women remain in the shadows, because appeals to epigraphical evidence to support their historical reality have not been successful so far.<sup>5</sup>

The extant evidence does not show that all functions within the Epicurean community were open to women as they were open to men.<sup>6</sup> For instance, there is no indication that women held leadership roles in an Epicurean community.<sup>7</sup> And there is only evidence that a single woman, Leontion,<sup>8</sup> may have written a philosophical treatise directed against Theophrastus.<sup>9</sup> This is surprising because if Leontion were a philosopher, we would perhaps expect that she would have written more than a single treatise; and although there were many women connected with the Epicurean school in some way, we have no evidence that they wrote anything.

Regardless of whether Epicurean women took up more pre-eminent roles within the school, they were clearly addressed by Epicurean philosophy. Epicurus explicitly speaks to women in his writings,<sup>10</sup> and Epicurean teachings themselves contain progressive ideas on women since they free them from an existence within the traditional family setting and the role expectations that come with it.<sup>11</sup> For instance, Epicurus considers the desire for sexual intercourse a natural and unnecessary desire, one that reflects a

<sup>2</sup> See M. Nussbaum, 'Therapeutic arguments: Epicurus and Aristotle', in M. Schofield and G. Striker (edd.), *The Norms of Nature: Studies in Hellenistic Ethics* (Cambridge, 1986), 31–74, at 38 n. 10; and Gordon (n. 1 [2012]), 105–6.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.lgpn.ox.ac.uk/>. While the names Demetria, Hedeia, Erotion and Boidion respectively occur in 236, 99, 30 and 21 sources, Mammarian and Nikidion each occur in four sources.

<sup>4</sup> In *P.Herc.* 1005: M. Erler, 'Epikur – die Schule Epikurs – Lukrez', in H. Flashar (ed.), *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie: Die Philosophie der Antike 4.1: Die hellenistische Philosophie* (Basel, 1994), 29–490, at 287.

<sup>5</sup> See C.J. Castner, 'Epicurean hetairai as dedicants to healing deities?', *GRBS* 23 (1982), 51–7; *pace* Gordon (n. 1 [2004]), 235–6.

<sup>6</sup> *Pace* B. Frischer, *The Sculpted Word: Epicureanism and Philosophical Recruitment in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley / Los Angeles / London, 1982), 62 (who claims that the Epicurean school 'was willing to grant females full rights of participation in all of its activities') and Di Fabio (n. 1), 30 ('le donne nel Giardino epicureo [...] rientravano nella schiera dei discepoli di Epicuro al pari degli uomini').

<sup>7</sup> C. Jensen, *Ein neuer Brief Epikurs* (Berlin, 1933), 17, offers a reconstruction of *P.Herc.* 1008, col. ii, according to which Leontion was an overseer at some point: 'it was a disgrace for everyone that Leontion over time became an overseer of the others and of a married woman' (παῖσιν ὄνειδος [γενέσθαι [[θαυ]] Λεόν]τινον δι[ὰ] χρόνου π[ρ]ο[σ]τάσαν των] ἄλλων [καὶ δ]η[ρ]α γα[με]τῆς γυν[α]ί[κος], Phld. *On Vices* I, col. ii.15–17; translation mine). (The double square brackets indicate superfluous letters in the original.) As the square brackets make clear, however, most of the text is Jensen's addition: neither the name Leontion nor προίστημι is legible. As a result, Jensen's speculative reconstruction did not convince scholars: see reviews by C. Bailey, *CR* 48 (1934), 87 and R. Philippson, *Philologische Wochenschrift* 54 (1934), 154–60. On a supposed statue of female leader in the Garden, see M. Guarducci, 'La statua di "Sant" Ippolito' in Vaticano', *RPAA* 47 (1974), 163–90, as well as Gordon (n. 1 [2012]), 72–5.

<sup>8</sup> On Leontion, see especially Capasso (n. 1).

<sup>9</sup> Fr. 28 Usener (= Cic. *Nat. D.* 1.93 and Plin. *HN* 1, Preface 29). For discussion of the evidence, see Arenson (n. 1), 87–8.

<sup>10</sup> See Plut. *Mor.* 1126F and 1129A. Diogenes of Oenoanda also addresses women in his Epicurean inscription in NF 186. See J. Hammerstaedt and M.F. Smith (edd.), *The Epicurean Inscription of Diogenes of Oinoanda: Ten Years of New Discoveries and Research* (Bonn, 2014), 129–31.

<sup>11</sup> See J.M. Snyder, *The Woman and the Lyre: Women Writers in Classical Greece and Rome* (Bristol, 1989), 102–3 and Föllinger (n. 1), 244–5.

preference and thus can be neglected if acting on the desire produces more pain than pleasure.<sup>12</sup> This view has consequences for the relation between the sexes. One of the main motivations for joining up with the opposite sex falls away on the Epicurean view. Epicurus does not consider marriage a precondition of leading the best life, and he counsels against having children.<sup>13</sup> Nor is there evidence that Epicurean women could not achieve happiness. On the contrary, Batis was probably said to possess virtue equivalent to that of Epicurus, which contrasts with Aristotle's view, for instance, according to which women are not able to obtain the same virtues as men.<sup>14</sup>

While these ideas on women in the Epicurean school are well known and hold true of early Epicureanism, in what follows I argue that Zeno of Sidon (second/first century B.C.E.) probably held a view that diverged from the one just described.<sup>15</sup> In particular, I propose that he defended a misogynist view. This points to a significant doctrinal development within the Epicurean school.<sup>16</sup>

The central piece of evidence for the claim that Zeno defends a dismissive view on women is a testimonium found in Soranus' *Gynecology*.<sup>17</sup> Written in the first/second century C.E., this text has not been sufficiently appreciated by the scholars who have

<sup>12</sup> Fr. 456 (= Σ Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1118b8), 464 (= Porph. *Abst.* 1.51.6) and 67 Usener (= Ath. *Deipn.* 12.546e–f and further texts). On the Epicurean classification of desires, see J.M. Robitzsch, 'A functional reading of the Epicurean classification of desires', *Apeiron* 55 (2022), 193–217.

<sup>13</sup> Diog. Laert. 10.119; fr. 526 Usener (= Clem. Al. *Strom.* 2.23); Arr. *Epict. diss.* 1.23 and 3.7.19; as well as C.W. Chilton, 'Did Epicurus approve of marriage? A study of Diogenes Laertius X, 119', *Phronesis* 5 (1960), 71–4; A. Grilli, 'Epicuro e il matrimonio', *Rivista critica di storia della filosofia* 26 (1971), 51–6; T. Brennan, 'Epicurus on sex, marriage, and children', *CPh* 91 (1996), 346–52; K. Arenson, 'Epicureans on marriage as sexual therapy', *Polis* 33 (2016), 291–311.

<sup>14</sup> *P.Herc.* 176, col. xix. Tepedino Guerra (n. 1), 347 most recently examined the papyrus: 'the one [woman] who accomplished all our things, and also led both her mother and sister to do things similar to her in all cases; she in fact also had the prudence of the Master himself (that is, Epicurus) in everything and the measure and further both the kindness of a frank and refined conversation' (... η ἐκεῖνη, ἡμέτερα πάντα συντελέσασα, καὶ προσέτι μητέρα τ' [ἦ]εν αὐτῆς καὶ τὴν ἀ[δ]ελφὴν εἰς τὸ παρὰσπλήσια [ἐ]αυτῇ πρ[ό]τειν κατὰ π[ό]λιντα· ἦν δ[ὲ] καὶ τὸ αὐτοῦ [τ]ο[ῦ] ἀνδρὸς εὐ[λ]αβὲς παντὶ κ[αὶ] μ[ε]τρίον, ἔτι δὲ [κ]αὶ διατριβ[ή]ς ἐλευθέρως καὶ π[ε]ριτ[τ]ῆς ἐπιεικῆς, translation mine). This reconstruction is different from the older readings found in Angeli (n. 1), 45, and Daroca and Martínez (n. 1), 30. In any event, on all reconstructions, Batis is complimented as having the same prudence as Epicurus himself. Furthermore, on Tepedino Guerra's reconstruction, Batis is a model to other women. If this is correct, then one wonders whether this implies that she is only a model for women and whether the claim that Batis has the prudence of Epicurus is a rhetoric hyperbole. However, such a restrictive reading is not justified in light of Plutarch's report that Epicurus cannot be surpassed in wisdom because of the specific atoms that he alone (and no one else) possesses. These atoms were given to him by his mother: 'No one has been born or is wiser than Epicurus, and his mother had such atoms in her that in combination would produce a sage' (μηδένα σοφώτερον Ἐπικούρου γεγονέναι μηδ' εἶναι, ἡ δὲ μήτηρ ἀτόμους ἔσχεν ἐν αὐτῇ τοσαύτας, οἷαι συνελθοῦσαι σοφὸν ἂν ἐγέννησαν, Plut. *Mor.* 1100A = fr. 178 Usener; translation mine). In other words, Epicurus' mother is another example of a woman who, in virtue of her specific atomic make-up, is able to achieve a higher level of wisdom than other people can achieve.

<sup>15</sup> On Zeno, see K. von Fritz, 'Zenon von Sidon', *RE* X.A (1972), 122–38; A. Angeli and M. Colaizzo, 'I frammenti di Zenone Sidonio', *CErc* 9 (1979), 47–133; Erler (n. 4), 268–74; and A. Angeli, 'Zénon de Sidon', in R. Goulet (ed.), *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*, VII (Paris, 2018), 400–15.

<sup>16</sup> On doctrinal development in the Epicurean school in general, see J. Fish and K.R. Sanders (edd.), *Epicurus and the Epicurean Tradition* (New York, 2011).

<sup>17</sup> On Soranus, see F.E. Kind, 'Soranus', *RE* III.A (1927, 2<sup>nd</sup> series), 1113–30; A.E. Hanson and M.H. Green, 'Soranus of Ephesus: *methodicorum princeps*', in W. Haase (ed.), *ANRW* 2.37 (1994), 968–1075; L. Caldwell, 'Gynecology', in G.L. Irby (ed.), *A Companion to Science, Technology, and Medicine in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Malden, MA, 2016), 1.360–70.

studied the status of women in the Epicurean school.<sup>18</sup> In the testimonium which is fr. 28 in the collection of Zeno's fragments by Angeli and Colaizzo, Soranus (*Gyn.* 3.3) discusses whether men and women are subject to different diseases and adduces a series of reasons meant to establish the affirmative. One of these reasons is the authority of the philosophers:

φύσει τε τὸ θῆλυ τοῦ ἄρρενος διαφέρει μέχρι τοῦ καὶ Ἀριστοτέλην καὶ Ζήνωνα τὸν Ἐπικούρειον εἰπεῖν ἀτελεῖς μὲν εἶναι τὸ θῆλυ, τέλειον δὲ εἶναι τὸ ἄρρεν.

and by nature the female sex differs from the male to the point that both Aristotle and Zeno the Epicurean say that the female sex is imperfect, but the male sex is perfect.<sup>19</sup>

'Zeno the Epicurean' must be Zeno of Sidon.<sup>20</sup> Yet we would have more faith in the testimonium if Soranus told us in which work Zeno made the claim that women are by nature imperfect.<sup>21</sup> On the basis of the above passage, it is also unclear whether Soranus even had first-hand or second-hand knowledge of Zeno,<sup>22</sup> and whether the words Soranus uses to describe Zeno's position were the ones Zeno himself used. Nevertheless, the report in Soranus captures the core idea underlying Zeno's divergent position on women.<sup>23</sup> It fits perfectly with the other textual evidence on Zeno if we examine the writings of his student Philodemus of Gadara.<sup>24</sup>

The degree of Philodemus' dependency on Zeno is difficult to ascertain. We know that Philodemus refers to Zeno in his works,<sup>25</sup> that he shows great reverence for his teacher Zeno,<sup>26</sup> and that at least two of Philodemus' works are transcriptions of Zeno's lectures: *On Frank Criticism*, according to the subscript at the end of *P.Herc.* 1471,<sup>27</sup> and a further work whose title we do not know and that is not otherwise extant.<sup>28</sup> Except for some testimonia in later authors, however, Zeno's own writings—which were probably voluminous—<sup>29</sup>

<sup>18</sup> W. Nijs, 'Straightening the uterus with Epicurus: some parallels for *P.Herc.* 908/1390', *Mnemosyne* 75 (2022), 467–82 highlights the importance of Soranus for understanding Epicureanism by suggesting that the Epicurean treatise conventionally known as *On Procreation*, probably written by Demetrius Lacon (second century B.C.E.), and a passage in Lucretius' *On the Nature of Things*, exhibit important parallels with Soranus' *Gynecology*. He mentions our testimonium in a footnote of his paper, but given his focus, does not further discuss it. Likewise, Gordon (n. 1 [2004]), 240–1 conjectures that Zeno was the originator of the gendered expression οἱ ἄνδρες, first found in Philodemus, to refer to the leading early Epicurean philosophers (instead of, for instance, the more neutral expression 'the four'). And Gordon (n. 1 [2012]), 107 notes that either Philodemus himself or his time or his teacher Zeno are responsible for 'Philodemus' dim view of female character' in *On Frank Criticism*.

<sup>19</sup> Zeno of Sidon, fr. 28 Angeli and Colaizzo. Translation mine. On Ilberg's restoration of the text, see Angeli and Colaizzo (n. 15), 125 n. 685. The text in the more critical recent edition of the *Gynecology*, P. Burgière, D. Gourevitch and Y. Malinas (edd.), *Soranos d'Éphèse: maladies des femmes* (Paris, 1994), is identical with Ilberg's (quoted above), with the exception that Ἐπικούρειον is not capitalized.

<sup>20</sup> See also Burgière et al. (n. 19), 3.63.

<sup>21</sup> W. Crönert, *Kolotes und Menedemos* (Leipzig, 1906), 176, supposes that the passage is evidence for the existence of a work Περὶ ζώων, but this inference has not won support: von Fritz (n. 15), 124; Angeli and Colaizzo (n. 15), 125–6.

<sup>22</sup> Crönert (n. 21), 108 n. 508; Angeli and Colaizzo (n. 15), 126.

<sup>23</sup> None of the authors who have commented on the passage in Soranus doubts the authenticity or reliability of the report.

<sup>24</sup> On Philodemus, see Erler (n. 4), 289–362 (with references to older literature).

<sup>25</sup> See e.g. Phld. *On Sign Inference*, col. xix.4–11.

<sup>26</sup> See Phld. *To the ...*, col. xiv.6–9.

<sup>27</sup> Zeno of Sidon, fr. 23 Angeli and Colaizzo.

<sup>28</sup> Zeno of Sidon, fr. 16 Angeli and Colaizzo (= *P.Herc.* 1389 subscript). Perhaps also a third work (see the subscript of *P.Herc.* 1003, which is the fragment 6 among Angeli and Colaizzo's uncertain fragments), but the reading of this text is uncertain. For the claim that Philodemus' *On Anger* is based on Zeno's lectures, see Crönert (n. 21), 91 and K. Wilke, *Philodemi De ira liber* (Leipzig, 1914), vii.

<sup>29</sup> Diogenes Laertius calls him 'a man who wrote much' (πολυγράφος ἄνθρωπος, 10.25 = Zeno of Sidon, fr. 2 Angeli and Colaizzo; translation mine).

have not survived. Therefore we are unable to check Philodemus' claims against Zeno's, and it is for the most part unclear to what extent Philodemus is following his teacher.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, I argue in what follows that at least when it comes to the status of women, Philodemus came to a different conclusion than his teacher. After all, among Philodemus' extant works, *On Frank Criticism* is the most critical of women. But as already noted, *On Frank Criticism* is based on Zeno's lecture notes, and the comments in this work perfectly align with Soranus' report on Zeno's view on women.<sup>31</sup> By contrast, other works by Philodemus, which are probably not based on Zeno's, advance a more progressive view on women. To resolve the discrepancy, therefore, the dismissive stance on women advanced in *On Frank Criticism* ought to be ascribed to Zeno rather than to Philodemus himself.

In *On Frank Criticism*, Philodemus claims first that there are different types of students and that their age and sex accounts for the main differences among them. As a result of these differences, students ought to be taught in different ways (col. vi.a.1–8; Konstan, Clay, Glad, Thom and Ware's translation):

δῆλον δὲ γέγονε ἐκ τῶν εἰρημέ[νων, ὅτι καθ' ἕκαστον ὁ μέ[ν] μακρά, [ὁ δὲ μικρὰ  
δοίσι]ουσ[ι]ν, ὥσπερ γ[υναι]κὸς μεράκιον δια[φέρει] γυναικῶν τε καὶ νε[ανί]σ[κων]  
γέροντες ἀμ[α] διοί]σουςιν.

It has become obvious from what has been said] that they {teachers} will differ for each {student}, one much, [one little,] just as a lad differs from a woman and old men will differ from <[women]> and youngsters alike.<sup>32</sup>

Second, Philodemus maintains that women generally handle frank criticism poorly (col. xxii.a.1–11; Konstan, Clay, Glad, Thom and Ware's translation):<sup>33</sup>

καὶ μᾶλλον ὑ[π]ολαμβάν[ε]ται ὅτι οὐκ ἐκείνοις καὶ μᾶλλον ὑπὸ τῆς ἀδοξίας θλίβον[τ]αι  
καὶ μᾶλλον ὑπονοοῦσιν πονηρὰ περὶ τῶν νοθευόντων καὶ καθόλου πάντα, δι' ἃ τις

<sup>30</sup> This has led to different evaluations of Philodemus. For the view that Philodemus entirely depends on Zeno, that is, completely lacks originality, see A. Vogliano, 'Gli studi filologici epicurei nell'ultimo cinquantennio', *MH* 11 (1954), 193 and D.N. Sedley, 'Philosophical allegiance in the Greco-Roman world', in M. Griffin and J. Barnes (edd.), *Philosophia Togata: Essays on Philosophy and Roman Society* (Oxford, 1989), 103–4. (For scholars' general low estimation of Philodemus, see M. Gigante, *Filodemo nella storia della letteratura greca* [Naples, 1998], 9–25 = M. Gigante [ed.], *Il libro degli Epigrammi di Filodemo* [Naples, 2002], xi–xxviii.) For the divergent view that Philodemus shows at least some originality in his writings, see M. Gigante, *Ricerche filodemee* (Naples, 1983<sup>2</sup>), 180; M. Gigante (this n. [1998]), 49–54; and V. Tsouna, 'Philodemus and the Epicurean tradition', in A.M. Ioppolo and D.N. Sedley (edd.), *Pyrrhonists, Patricians, Platonizers: Hellenistic Philosophy in the Period 155–86 BC* (Naples, 2007), 341–400, who claims that while Philodemus 'follow[s] for the most part in Zeno's tracks' (343), he also 'expands' on Zeno's ideas (360, 379).

<sup>31</sup> We can also attempt to verify a part of Soranus' claim indirectly, namely, in so far as Soranus claims in the quoted passage that Aristotle held that women are by nature imperfect, whereas men are perfect. Although Aristotle does not explicitly state this, several passages in his extant works endorse the underlying sentiment. For instance, Aristotle maintains that 'the male is by nature superior, the female inferior' (τὸ ἄρρεν πρὸς τὸ θῆλυ φύσει τὸ μὲν κρείττον τὸ δὲ χεῖρον, *Pol.* 1254b13–14; translation mine), that the female is a 'mutilated male' (ἄρρεν ... πεπηρωμένον, *Gen. an.* 737a28; likewise), and that while women have a deliberative faculty (τὸ βουλευτικόν), they do not have it in the full sense (*Pol.* 1260a12–13). As a result, Soranus does not seem to be mistaken in his summary of Aristotle's view. This conclusion is no guarantee that Soranus is also correct about Zeno's view, but establishes his reliability to at least some extent.

<sup>32</sup> D. Konstan, D. Clay, C. E. Glad, J. C. Thom and J. Ware (edd.), *Philodemus: On Frank Criticism* (Atlanta, 1998). Braces indicate translator additions/clarifications. Angle brackets plus square brackets indicate additions or supplements suggested by previous scholars (that is, Philippon or Gigante).

<sup>33</sup> On frank criticism of women, see V. Tsouna, *The Ethics of Philodemus* (Oxford, 2007), 109.

δάκνονται, μᾶλλ[ο]ν ἔχουσιν χειμάζοντα, καὶ θρασύτεραι δ' εἰσὶ κα[ὶ] χαυν[ό]τεραι καὶ φιλοδο[ξ]ότεραι.

... [and] they {i.e. women} assume rather that they are being reviled and they are all the more crushed by the disgrace and they rather suspect evil things concerning those who admonish and in general they rather deem upsetting everything by which some {of their sex} are stung, and they are too impulsive and too vain and too fond of their [reputation] ...

And finally, Philodemus writes that women themselves believe that their natural weakness warrants special treatment (col. xxii.b.1–9; Konstan, Clay, Glad, Thom and Ware's translation, modified):

καὶ ἄξιουσιν τὴν τῆς φύ[σεως] ἀσθένειαν ἐλεεῖσθαι καὶ συγγνώμης τυγχάνειν καὶ μὴ προπηλακίζεσθαι πρ[ό]ς τῶν ἰσχυροτέρων ἐξ ἐπ[ὶ] τῆς δεξ. ὅ[θ]εν καὶ ταχέως ἐπὶ τ[ῇ] δάκρυα καταντῶσιν, ἀπὸ καταφρονήσεως ἐπικ[ό]πτεσθαι νομίζουσαι.

and they {i.e. women} think it right] that their natural weakness be pitied and that they meet with pardon and not be intentionally ridiculed by those who are stronger {than they are}. Hence they quickly reach {the point of} tears, believing that they are reprieved out of contempt.<sup>34</sup>

One could take the last passage to mean that women come to an incorrect assessment of how they ought to be treated (that is, that they ought to be pitied), and that women are also wrong to think that they are naturally weak. But in line with Soranus' report, we could also think that Philodemus in the above passage is not questioning the natural weakness of women *per se*, but only the treatment that they ought to receive as a result of their natural constitution. Such a reading would supply us with a reason for why women ought to be treated differently from men (that is, the need to be taught by different teachers) and for why women handle frank criticism less well, namely, that they are by nature inferior to men. Put differently, the testimonium in Soranus would provide the missing explanation for why different treatment of women is justified, which does not otherwise follow from the extant passages of *On Frank Criticism*.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, this explanation is especially interesting because it uses nature as the differentiating feature between women and men. It thus refers to an essentialist explanatory category, which seems atypical in Epicureanism and so points to a significant innovation by Zeno.

The reader might object that the attitude towards women found in *On Frank Criticism* could be Philodemus' own. After all, if his other works also advanced misogynist ideas, and these texts were not based on notes on Zeno's lecture, but were probably Philodemus' own, then it would not follow that Zeno was the originator of a dismissive view on women. An analysis of Philodemus' other works, however, shows that these texts either reproduce ideas found in early Epicurean authors or that they defend a much more progressive view on women incompatible with the view advanced in *On Frank Criticism*. As a result, these other Philodemian works support the thesis defended here, namely, that the misogynist view can probably be traced back to Zeno.

Philodemus merely reproduces the view on women already found in early Epicurean authors in *On Property Management*, *On Music* and *On Choices and Avoidances* (?), where Philodemus repeats the sceptical attitude towards marriage already found in

<sup>34</sup> Konstan, Clay, Glad, Thom and Ware translate ἡ τῆς φύ[σεως] ἀσθένεια as 'weakness of their nature', but see the parallel cases in *KD* 7, 15 and 31, as well as *SV* 25 where the genitive τῆς φύσεως simply means 'natural'.

<sup>35</sup> Pace Föllinger (n. 1), 242, the testimonium in Soranus is therefore a rare Epicurean statement on the relationship between men and women from a theoretical perspective.



Epicurus. In the first work, Philodemus makes clear that there can be ‘a happy life even without her (that is, a wife)’ (εὐδαίμονος ζωῆς καὶ χωρὶς αὐτῆς, *On Property Management*, col. ix.2–3; Tsouna’s translation). In the second work, Philodemus in the same vein speculates ‘if indeed marriage may also be considered a good in an unqualified way’ (εἰ δὴ καὶ γάμος ἀπλῶς ἀγαθὸν ἂν λέγοιτο, *On Music* IV, col. v.35–7; translation mine). And in the third work, if the restoration is correct, Philodemus makes clear that an external good like marriage contributes little to the best life when compared to the adherence to the most important teachings outlined in the *Principal Doctrines* (*P.Herc.* 1251 = *On Choices and Avoidances*, col. xv.6–16; Indelli and Tsouna-McKirahan’s translation).<sup>36</sup>

χρῆ [δὲ κ]ατέχειν καὶ δι[ότι σ]υμβά[λλε]ται μὲν εἰς τὸ κ[ατ]ατυγχ[άν]ειν καὶ τὸ περ[ὶ τ]ῶν κατὰ μ[έρο]ς ποητικῶν τῶν ἐξω[θ]εν ἢ κρ[ι]βωκέναι πῶς ἔχει [πρὸς] ἡμᾶς, οἷον πολυτελείας καὶ μο[ρ]φ[ῆ]ς καὶ πλούτου κοινῶς καὶ [γὰ]μου καὶ τῶν ὁμοίων, ἀλλὰ μικρὸν ὥς πρὸς τὰ κυριώτ[α]τα περὶ ὧν ὑπεμνήσ[α]με[ν].

It is necessary to bear in mind also that a further factor which contributes to success is a thorough understanding of individual sources of external goods and how they stand in relation to us—for example, luxury and beauty and wealth, generally speaking, and marriage and the like—but its contributions are small in comparison to the cardinal tenets which we mentioned.

Philodemus advances a more progressive view on women in other passages of *On Property Management* as well as his *Epigrams* than the one defended in *On Frank Criticism* and the Soranus testimonium. In *On Property Management*, Philodemus criticizes the view, defended in the pseudo-Aristotelian *Economics*, that the best form of rule in the city-state is not a monarchy, whereas in household management is a monarchy (cols. vii.45–viii.7). This criticism opens up the possibility of a more equal relationship between the sexes because it implies that women and men could manage the household together in a more democratic fashion.<sup>37</sup> Likewise, in col. viii.24–40, Philodemus rejects the view that women are considered mere property (κτῆσις) of their husbands rather than their genuine partners.<sup>38</sup>

In the *Epigrams*, Philodemus articulates a more progressive view on women than the one that is found in *On Frank Criticism*. It is a difficult question whether the contents of any given epigram can be ascribed to the author Philodemus and whether there is doctrinal continuity between the ideas advanced in the *Epigrams* and in philosophical treatises such as *On Frank Criticism* and *On Property Management*.<sup>39</sup> Four points help us to address that question, however. First, none of Philodemus’ epigrams that feature

<sup>36</sup> G. Indelli and V. Tsouna-McKirahan (edd.), [Philodemus]: [*On Choices and Avoidances*] (Naples, 1995).

<sup>37</sup> Föllinger (n. 1), 248; also R. Laurenti, *Filodemo e il pensiero economico degli Epicurei* (Milan, 1973), 57–9.

<sup>38</sup> Föllinger (n. 1), 248 n. 107 (with reference to older literature). At *On Property Management* cols. xxiii.42–xxiv.2, Philodemus comments: ‘For, [usually], nothing drains and ruins the most illustrious and [richest houses] so much as [extravagance in lifestyle], lechery, ostentatious actions, [effeminate behaviour] and similar things (οὐ[δ]ὲν γὰρ ἐκχεῖν [κ]α[ὶ] ἄνατρεπεῖν εἰ[θ]ιστ[α]ι λαμπροτάτα[ς] καὶ πλ[ου]σιωτάτας οἰκίας ὧ[ς] πολυτέλει[α]ί τε[ ] δι[αί]της κα[ὶ] λ[α]γνε[ῖ]αι καὶ π[ε]ριβλένε[ι]ς κα[ὶ] γυν[αι]κ[ισ]μοὶ καὶ τὰ τούτοις ὁμοί[ο]τ[ε]ροπα, Tsouna’s translation, in V. Tsouna [ed.], *Philodemus: On Property Management* [Atlanta, 2012]). If the restoration of this passage were correct, then in contrast to what has been argued so far, *On Property Management* would contain a dismissive remark on women. However, as one can see, the restoration is speculative and the reading γυναικισμοὶ is uncertain.

<sup>39</sup> For discussion see D. Sider (ed.), *The Epigrams of Philodemus* (New York and Oxford, 1997), 34 and the commentary on particular epigrams.

women mocks them in any way; they rather capture brief snippets of their respective lives. Second, two poems have female narrators (*Epigrams* 25, 26 Sider). If these are in fact by Philodemus, it would indicate that he was open to taking up a female perspective. It is difficult to imagine that such a stance is compatible with a completely dismissive attitude on women, especially since these epigrams do not make fun of women. Third, two poems that are part of the Xantho series express a positive evaluation of women. In *Epigram* 3 Sider, an unnamed lover asks a *hetaira*, Xantho, to sing a certain line to him, to which the *hetaira* replies that the line he asks her to sing does not make any sense (Sider's translation):

—Ξανθὼ κηρόπλαστε μυρόχροε μουσοπρόσωπε,  
 εὔλαλε, διπτερύγων καλὸν ἀγαλμα Πόθων,  
 ψῆλόν μοι χερσὶ δροσινᾶς μύρον· ἐν μονοκλίνῳ  
 δεῖ με λιθοδήτῳ δεῖ ποτε πετριδίῳ  
 εὔδειν ἀθανάτως πολὺν χρόνον. ἄδε πάλιν μοι,  
 Ξανθάριον, ναὶ ναὶ τὸ γλυκὺ τοῦτο μέλος.  
 —οὐκ αἶεις, ὠνθραφ' ὁ τοκογλύφος; ἐν μονοκλίνῳ  
 δεῖ σε βιοῦν αἰεὶ, δύσμορε, πετριδίῳ.

<Man.> Xantho—formed of wax, with skin smelling of perfume, with the face of a Muse, of splendid voice, a beautiful image of the double-winged Pothoi—  
 pluck for me with your delicate hands a fragrant song: 'In a solitary rocky bed made of stone I must surely someday sleep a deathlessly long time.' Yes, yes, Xantharion, sing again for me this sweet song.

<Xantho.> Don't you understand, man, you accountant you?  
 You must live forever, you wretch, in a solitary rocky bed!

Xantho comes across as much more intelligent than her lover. We might infer that Philodemus acknowledges that some women, sometimes, are more intelligent than men.

Fourth, *Epigram* 7 Sider addresses Xantho as ὦ φιλεράστρι' ἄκοιτις, which gives Xantho the triple identity of a wife, lover and friend.<sup>40</sup> This combination is unusual because Xantho is described as a friend, which, given the importance of friendship in Epicureanism, is especially significant.<sup>41</sup> As a result, it seems unlikely that the narrator would not cherish his wife and consider her as an equal partner of sorts, which again points to a positive evaluation of women.

In summary, then, since Philodemus is probably not following Zeno's lecture notes in the epigrams and these texts present women in an unambiguously positive way, the epigrams further support the idea that a dismissive view of women can be traced back to Zeno, Philodemus' teacher. Zeno's view on women thus not only differs from that of Philodemus himself, but also from early Epicurean authors. No text supplies us with a reason why Zeno innovated and diverged from the view on women that early Epicurean authors held. But the neglected testimonium in Soranus shows that Zeno's view was different from other Epicurean authors and that he introduced an essentialist explanation on the difference between the sexes into Epicureanism that was not found in Epicurus himself. This indicates a significant doctrinal development within the Epicurean school.

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<sup>40</sup> See also the commentary in Sider (n. 39), 88–9.

<sup>41</sup> Gordon (n. 1 [2004]), 239–40. On Epicurean friendship, see P. Mitsis, 'Friendship', in P. Mitsis (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Epicurus and Epicureanism* (Oxford, 2020), 250–83.