

Athenian Political Prejudices

Post by “Eikadistes” of December 24, 2025 at 12:02 PM

I was reviewing the [Last Will](#), and something occurred to me about (potentially) anti-Epicurean, Athenian prejudices against the Garden. I think there's a misogynistic assumption laced-in there, and a xenophobic element that reflects property laws, which was a primary concern in the Will. Epíkouros, *himself*, seems to have been respected, but I'm not so sure about the rest.

Based on my attempt to [reconstruct](#) Epicurean history by each, individually-attested figure's name, I am considering the following, based on 27 or so, well-established, [early Epicureans](#) (there are another 20 or so from uncertain locations):

- Almost half of Epíkouros' closests friends were non-Athenians, from Lampsakos.

I'm curious if anyone might be able to expand on sociological prejudices in ancient Athens (that city, in particular, for context in the Garden). My general understanding is that prejudicial, cultural thinking among the Greeks had less to do with your appearance and more to do with whether or not you could speak Greek, but I'm sure that's just a generalization.

I might be influenced by current events, but, I'm curious if some of the attitudes regarding immigration that are playing out right now in America (and were seeded a long time ago) are in any way comparable to prejudicial attitudes of traditional minds in ancient Athens. Or maybe they lack those characteristics that I am calling “prejudicial”? (or not...)

Anyway, here is another consideration I had, if they faced xenophobia (which, again, based on the #1 concern as Epíkouros states in the Last Will, I think it may been). The following may have been a challenge in making a “first-impression”:

- Two of the four Founders were Lampsakian.
- One of the four Founders was Lesbian (...I *think* that's the proper demonym?)
- The main Founder has Athenian citizenship **only** by a technicality, through his parents. He, himself, was born, raised, educated, and began his career in another territory. He did not acquire property in Athens until his 30s.

Was there Athenian prejudice by native Athenians versus foreign-born Athenians? We're having this exact debate right now in America, and re-defining how we look at citizenship based on location of birth. I suppose this is not *just* a modern issue.

Would foreign-born people establishing the Garden down the road from the Academy have been received ... sort of ... the way that establishing an Islamic, cultural center in NYC was received by many after 9/11? Political evaluation aside, I observed a lot of traditional minds angered by that suggestion, and I wonder if we can find an analogue in Antiquity.

All right, so, if any other philosophers represented sociologically prejudicial attitudes of any type (I'm looking at you, Aristotle), I wonder if they attached their nativist prejudices against the Garden. For example, I can imagine a Peripatetic student, rambling about the Lyceum, complaining about "those damn foreigners" in the Garden ... or not! I'm just curious.

Here's another consideration I'm wondering:

- Of Epíkouros' closest associates (as I count), 25% or so were *hetairai*.

Unless the names of hetairai were over-represented by biographers in an effort to exaggerate and demonize Epíkouros' sex-life, and others were under-represented, the Garden seems to have been safe for women seeking education, including pregnant women, and, mothers. This was not the case with all schools of philosophy, and Aristotle, in particular ... talked a lot of shit.

The Peripatetics entertained a misogynistic attitude, but they weren't the only ones. As I understand, this was a popular view, given the Athenian political system. Outside of the non-traditional Cynics, I imagine that the hetairai were popular targets for Epicurean opponents. We have record of this from polemics, and then later demonization from Christian writers. Dr. Pamela Gordon writes extensively about this in her book *The Invention and Gendering of Epicurus*.

So, imagine you're a grumpy, prejudicial Peripatetic in 300 BCE, and the Epicureans moved into the Garden only a few years ago. Everyone seems to be *charmed* by the Founder, but he has a bone to pick with *virtue*, has been kicked out of at least one island in the past for his teachings, and keeps unusual company ... about 3 of 4 Epicureans from their perspective are either foreigners, or women whom they unfairly disparaged as prostitutes.

If there were prejudicial minds among the schools of their opponents, Epicureans must have been prime targets for a form of misogynistic, xenophobic prejudice that is very recognizable from a contemporary perspective.

'Same time, I don't mean to project my own perception of history on them. So I'm curious.