



Highlights of Ancient Greek Philosophy

by Khan Amore

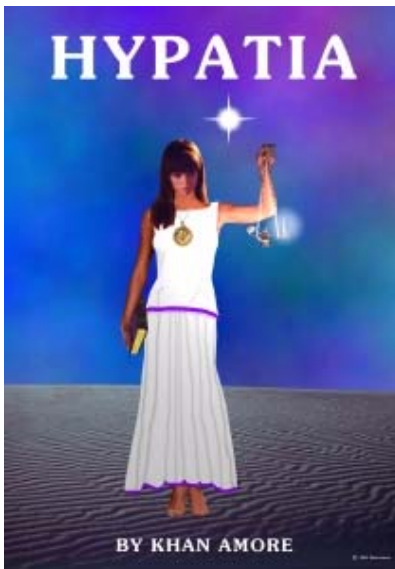
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Hypatia (A.D. 379? - 415)

Born in Alexandria, Egypt, in the very last days of that brilliant age known to us as *classical antiquity*, Hypatia was the last of the ancient Greek Natural Philosophers. By all accounts stunningly beautiful, dazzlingly brilliant, yet always modest and kind, she was history's first female mathematician, the first female astronomer, as well as history's first female Natural Philosopher (as opposed to an *ethical philosopher*, like Aristippus' daughter, **Arete**.) Hypatia was really more of a scientist and teacher who strove to preserve and propagate the wisdom of the ancient Greeks rather than a metaphysical philosopher like the mystical **Neo-Platonists** of her day, but her chief importance in the history of philosophy lies in the fact that she was the last keeper of the flame of knowledge in the great Alexandrian University — the *Museum* — which was the ancient world's center of learning. As the daughter of **Theon**, the last head professor of the Museum, she practically grew up in the Great Alexandrian Library, where all the world's knowledge was kept, for, in addition to being a child prodigy she was a voracious reader. Already by the age of womanhood in those days (i.e., *twelve*) she was considered to have assimilated the sum total of all significant human knowledge. Books in those days, before the advent of printing, were in the form of hand-written scrolls, each one a priceless original, and when what was left of the Great Alexandrian Library was burned down by the Christians at the command of Christian Emperor **Theodosius "The Great"** in 391, the books were all gone. But Hypatia's mind still contained the best of what was lost in the flames, and so, throughout the rest of her life, whenever someone was stumped by a problem, there were no more books to turn to — to see if some brilliant ancient Greek hadn't already solved it — there was only Hypatia to turn to. By the time her career as lecturing natural philosopher culminated, she was considered an oracle, and citizens and heads of state streamed in from all over the two empires to consult with her on important matters. Indeed, so great was her renown, that letters from all over the far-flung empires addressed simply "to the Philosopher" would unerringly find their way to her. Her life's mission was to preserve the ancient knowledge of the brilliant Greeks, and to preserve their tradition of free-thinking rational thought, but the world around her was in upheaval, and the Christians were consolidating their power, turning the mind of man away from Reason, to Faith. Hypatia was the last obstacle to the Church's goal of world domination, and when the mob of Christian monks under Saint Cyril came to make of her history's greatest martyr for Science — in the most gruesome way imaginable — the scholars left Alexandria in disgust, Alexandria ceased to be the world's center of learning, the *Dark Ages* descended upon the world, and the mind of man stagnated for a thousand years. Her life had all the heroic elements of a Greek tragedy, and if this were all we knew, her place in history would already be assured, as a great tragic soul,

standing alone against the coming darkness. But this is *not* all we know. Recent research suggests that the Christians did *not* succeed in destroying her life's works, as was previously believed. Hypatia did *not* live in vain. It is now believed, by those competent to judge such matters, that the very primers of rational thought (Euclid's *The Elements*, Ptolemy's *Almagest*, and Diophantus' *Arithmetica*) have come down to us only through the Hypatian recension — that is, through copies made of Hypatia's own hand-written notes on these masterpieces. These books bear the very seed of the ancient Greek genius, and when these books were re-discovered, at the end of the Middle Ages, that seed sprouted and a New Age of secularism and rational thought dawned upon the world, a period in history which we today know as the *Renaissance*, meaning, quite literally, the “Re-Birth” — of the classical age of Greek wisdom. Although that seed lay dormant for a thousand years, it eventually sprouted and bore the fruits which produced the Modern Age, and in the end, the great woman triumphed, after all.

And so we see that the last of the ancient Greek philosophers was also the first *woman* to don the Natural Philosopher's robe. With the gruesome public assassination of Hypatia, ancient Greek philosophy (meaning, literally, “Love of Wisdom”) comes sadly to an end, as well. Hypatia is regarded by some to be the greatest woman in history, and all known facts about her life may be found in the controversial erotic historical science-fiction novel, *HYPATIA*, by Khan Amore, for sale at www.hypatia-lovers.com .



THE END
of *The Genius of the Ancient Greeks*

