

## PHILOSOPHER QUEEN AND PLATO'S JINGOISM OF WOMEN LIBERATION

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### Abstract

The woman is a being often enveloped in layers of mystery. She has led men, across time, to question both her nature (ontologically) and her capabilities (functionally). Consequently, the “woman question”—who she is and what she is capable of—has persisted throughout history. Using the philosophical method of analysis, this paper examines Plato’s perspective on this question, with the aim of emphasizing the equality of men and women while drawing attention to the injustice historically faced by women. The scope of the paper covers the nature of the Greek state, its democratic political system, and the condition of women in Athenian society, where unequal treatment consistently favored men. Despite the widespread subjugation of women, Plato advances an argument for radical egalitarianism, maintaining that both men and women should be considered equally capable of becoming philosopher-kings or philosopher-queens. For him, although only a few individuals—whether male or female—attain excellence in virtue, such individuals should be selected to rule, regardless of gender, alongside others who share similar qualities. This argument challenges and transcends social practices grounded in unjust assumptions of male superiority. Consequently, this paper affirms that men and women are fundamentally equal. Philosophers, wherever they are found—whether men or women—should be identified and entrusted with leadership as philosopher-kings or philosopher-queens.

**Keywords:** Plato, woman, man. Athens, and equality.

### INTRODUCTION

The “woman question” has remained one of the world’s most troubled issues. It has not ceased to surface at each historical moment and this is precisely because it has not been given adequate response. When an issue is treated and dismissed but rebounds now and again, one expects that it has a genuine problem but an unsatisfactory solution. Such is also the case with the ‘woman question’ – the place of woman in the design of being and her role in the city-state. Actually, throughout history women have been in most part misrepresented, devalued and consequently excluded from the world’s affairs. A single example can be cited from Nietzsche’s ‘Beyond Good and Evil’ where he criticized women’s attempt at independence, i.e. at being “women as such”. He called it “one of the worst developments in the uglification of Europe”. He described women as “having so much cause for shame; in woman there is so much pedanticism, superficiality, school-marmishness, petty presumption, unbridledness and indiscretion concealed... which has really been best restrained and dominated hitherto by the fear of men” (Nietzsche, 1990:163). He praised Napoleon’s reproach to the eloquent Madame de Stael on the benefit it is to mankind and women at large when these latter seal up mouth with regard to politics: “mulier taceat in politicis” (164)

Right from the early cultural conception to the philosophical dialectics, the history of women have remained a dreary one of misogyny enough to document. They have been castigated and calculatedly kept away from the course of civilization, even much farther away from roles in human government. This is probably so because the Greek world, which has been the cradle of Western civilization and inventor of democracy had first paved the path towards this direction, having considered from the beginning as inferior beings and threat to development, beings who must cautiously be excluded in law and in act from the public sphere of mankind if the world’s historical progress is to keep on its course. But, Plato came up and was the first to challenge this conception; he considered the socio-political activities of his people as not guided by right principles. Indeed, he felt completely dissatisfied with it that he sought a new social theory based on the principles of nature and in which he addressed the issue of women and their social political life in the city. Alvin Gouldner (1965:173-174) hinted this fact to us that it was the “disillusioning experiences with political immorality of both the ‘right’ and the ‘left’ which brought Plato “to commit himself to social theory and philosophy.”

Democracy which is the government of the people by the people and for the people was first invented and practiced in Athens. One had expected such a constitution which grants liberty to all and in which every possible desire can be satisfied, would be predisposed to women but not even in Athens were women rescued from this ugly prejudice, image and position. One therefore sees clearly why Plato thought his people were infested with ignorance in their democratic practice and decided rather to set the whole nation clean by suggesting a new way based on new principles. Although he had in several quarters been criticized for not correcting what was wrong in democracy but going out of the way to found a new state, I will show in this article that Plato’s intervention on this matter was not only a redirection of the practice of what democracy should be, given its name and principles but also a serious call and attention to the issue of injustice against

women.

### DEMOCRACY AND ITS GREEK ORIGIN

As a concept, democracy originated from the Ancient Greece (Athens). It is a derivative of the Greek word *δημοκρατία* meaning "the rule of the people" or "the rule by the people". It's constitution according to Pericles affords equal justice to all in their private differences; here the advancement in public life falls to the reputation of capacity, class considerations are not allowed to interfere with merit, nor again does poverty bar the way; if a man is able to serve the state, he is not hindered by the obscurity of his condition. The freedom which is enjoyed in government extends also to ordinary life (Thucicides, 1991:xxvii). This presents the essential ingredients of democracy in the ancient Greece where Pericles lived Aristotle defines it as "the rule of the many for the good of the poor" as opposed to oligarchy which is "the rule of the few for the good of the wealthy" (Aristotle, 1981: III, v. 7). Aristotle makes this contrast to create the intrinsic character of the two polities: whereas in oligarchy, the rulers are few because there are only few people who are wealthy, in democracy they are many because liberty is enjoyed by all alike. In democracy therefore, liberty is the ground on which the people lay claim to the government. Although there can be nuances in the world's democracies, it is generally, a government in which power and civic responsibility are exercised by all citizens, directly or through their freely elected representatives. Democracy is a set of principles and practices that protect human freedom; it is the institutionalization of freedom Conscious of the fact that this edition of the Annual Faculty of Arts Conference on the theme of 'Ten years of Democracy in Nigeria' will sufficiently furnish a wide range explanation by various authors on the meaning of democracy, I have decided then to limit myself just to its etymological association and practice, as factors providing the background to Plato's intervention in the history of Athenian practice of democracy and women's political role in the state.

### WOMEN IN THE ATHENIAN SOCIETY

Among the numerous Greek states, Athens was one of the biggest, richest and most powerful. Its democratic constitution, while not unique, was probably more radical and innovative than those established elsewhere; factors which rather than affect positively the lives, status and images of women in Athens, were possibly responsible for their degradation. According to law, an Athenian woman had no independent existence; her sphere in life was her family. She was always assumed be incorporated into the *oikos* which was headed by her *kyrios*, or male guardian. Her active life did not really begin until her marriage and before this time, she was always under the guardianship of her father, or male next-of-kin. The marriage itself was arranged by her father and her prospective husband: she was simply passed from the house of one *kyrios* to the house of another - the husband, with some money as a dowry.

The reason for the above perennialism was based, of course, on a presumption that men were more intelligent than women and that women, left on their own can not rule their life well. The role of a woman's *kyrios* therefore, was generally that of guide and protection. He acted as an intermediary between the private domain occupied by the woman and the public sphere from which she was not allowed to participate. This public sphere included all dealings which have legal significance, such as making of contracts, arranging marriages, conducting legal proceedings etc. A woman was forbidden to conduct legal proceedings on her own behalf. In fact, she could not even give evidence in court.

About their political status, the Athenian women were not considered to be *politai* i.e. 'citizens' with full political rights as is the case with men. They had only civil rights and the word *astai* was employed to signify their citizenship on this basis of civil rights. The Athenian state never enfranchised women, as indeed no Greek state ever did. "In Athens" says Blundel, "they could not attend or vote at meetings of the Assembly; sit on juries or serve as Council members, magistrates or generals. Their exclusion from political arena extended even to public speech..." (Blundell, 1995:128). They could not even advice their husbands privately at home over political matters. Aristophane (1973, 518-20) tells of a heroine's common in her complete lack of influence over her husband on political affairs: "And if I so much as said. Darling, why are you carrying on with this silly policy?' he would glare at me and say, back to your weaving, woman, or you'll have a headache for a month". We may not however, authoritatively claim that there were instances where women had managed to exert pressures on their husbands inside the Athenian family. The issue is that whether they did it or not, it could not be interpreted as 'power behind the throne' for in the Athenian democracy as R. just rightly pointed out, "there were no thrones from behind which women could rule..." (1989:22). In fact, some people have seriously suggested that the development of democracy in Athens has been a parallel phenomenon to the subordination of women. Pervasively, "democracy created a growing dichotomy between activities which were public and collective, and those which were private and individual, it accentuated the disparity between males and females." (Blundell, 1995:129)

On education, the disparity was equally transparent. There was unequal treatment in the upbringing of the Athenian males and females. Xenophon established this fact concretely when he reported to us about a dying man's desire to find a trustworthy person who would look after his son's education, but for his daughter, her virginity (Memorabilia 1.5.2). In Classical Athens therefore, women's education was no issue; the only woman who was said to have displayed intellectual accomplishments worthy of note was Aspasia, the mistress of Pericles, but incidentally, she was a foreigner. Indeed, "none" Blundell says "of the fence poets whose names have been preserved was Athenian" (133). Some women who knew how to read and write, he said, were said to have been probably taught privately at home.

The sexual seclusion of women was another area of practical concern in the lives of the Athenian women. R. Padel (1983: 3-19) tells us that the low status of Athenian women was particularly marked by their confinement to their homes, their exclusion from social, public and economic life; and this exclusion was so highly valued by state that many women who did not like it were nevertheless constrained to it by the public honor and the practice of the time (Walcot, 1975:89). In his book, *Daily Life in Ancient Greece*, Flacelière (1965:55) expounded on this saying that whereas married women seldom crossed the thresholds of their own front door, adolescent girls were lucky if they were allowed as far as the inner courtyard, since they had to stay where they could not be seen - well away from the male members of the family'.

While it was not the cultural practice for women to operate in the public and social spheres, we cannot however conclude from some of these instances above that all Athenian women were confined to home. To claim so is not to do justice to the strategic fluidity in human categorisations. For even in our Moslem world of severe Koran confinement of women to home (*mattan kule*), they still went out for one business or another and kept appointments with lovers. Speaking on women in the Kabyle of Moslem Algeria, Bourdieu (1966:222) indicated this incongruity between what the law commands and what the practice often is. He wrote: "though it is commonly assumed that in North African society, the woman is shut up in the house, it is in fact completely untrue because the peasant woman always works out of doors". This fact too could not be less true of Classical Athens. The complete confinement to home of Athenian women may not have been feasible especially for many women of lower classes. In democratic society, Aristotie asks, "who could prevent the wives of the poor from going out when they want to?" (Aristotle, 1990:1300a, 7-8). This shows that the position of P. Walcot (91-102) on this point is very realistic, for though he admitted the fact of the social seclusion of Athenian women, he noted nevertheless that "we have no way of being certain how far social reality corresponded to the social ideal of female seclusion\_"

### PLATO'S RADICAL EGALITARLANISM

Plato's revolutionary proposal of sexual equality came in Book V of the Republic. Before this time, Plato had appeared traditionalist, following the lines of the existing cultural climate in quite a number of issues, like where he discussed the question of infants. He took only a small enlightened step away from tradition in some matters, for instance the issue of slaves. However, on the question of women, Plato was almost entirely a revolutionary. In the Classical Greek world as we have seen, women scarcely participated in public life. She never attended symposia nor took part in politics, nor engaged the philosophical discussions which were a part of the political activities. They perpetually belonged to a class far below any good human class, a class of inferiors deliberately maintained and exploited by men only for its own reproductive purposes (Ste, Croix, 1981:100-101).

Certain scholars think this treatment of women was so because in the Greek cultural world, varieties of explanations equating women with a phenomenon to be transcended in the name of historical progress were proliferated. The Greeks claimed that the emotion and sexuality linked with the female were perceived as a threat to the *polis*. Furthermore, their closeness to biological rhythms associated with birth and death represented a transitional process that threatened the Greek desire for permanence, independence and autonomy in the state. Or, that women they claimed, threatened the clear antinomies (like nature/culture, barbarian civilization) so dear to the Greek mind (Segal, 19:4:195).

Plato refused to accept these explanations and called up rather an examination of the human nature in relation to man a woman. As the concept of nature is the measure of all human political activities, Plato made his political proposals for women alongside the examination of the female human nature: "We must throw open the debate" he said, "to anyone who wishes either in jest or in earnest to raise the question whether female human nature is capable of sharing with the male all tasks or none at all, or some but not others..." (Plato, 1994, 452e-453a). This initial consideration of women's nature was so important because, human existence is the realization and perfection of the nature which mankind has, the nature which for him as for Aristotle, signified the order of right reason and right moral conduct. Nature denoted for Plato the moral ideal, the normative standard of activity in the world. Thus, the practice of politics is intended, not to controvert but to reflect and realize the design of nature. The best political order has an objective foundation in nature: "the ultimate measure of right and wrong ... the pattern of the good life or life according to nature" (D'Entreves, 1970:13).

This concern with human nature as the conceptual framework of his political reform and the call of women into politics can also be seen as follows: Man is seen in modern terminology as the only creature described

in terms of 'being and action', summarized by Aristotle in a sentence: "man is by nature a political animal" (Politics, 1253a1). The idea of action is what justifies the early translation of Aristotle's '*zoon politikon*' by '*animal socialis*', also found in Seneca; which later became the standard translation through Thomas Aquinas i. 96. 4; ii. 2. 109. 3: *homo est naturaliter politicus, id est, socialis* ("man is by nature political, that is, social"). Thus, both Plato and Aristotle saw the human nature as permanent and rational, capable of exercising action in the state. Now, given this nature that men and women share by essential definition, Plato felt it improper allowing women's exclusion from political action.

### Arguments for Natural Sexual Equality and Equality of Roles

Plato felt that an ideal state must be able to by-pass the Greek prejudice against women and bring them to share in the governance and protection of the city rather than be kept indoors on the grounds that because they must bear and rear offspring, they are unable to do so" (Republic, 451d6-8). Plato suggested, as in the beautiful expressions of Bluestone (1987:10) that "just as male and female sheep dogs are equally responsible for guarding the flock, so female and male rulers will guard the city, protect it in war and rule it in peace."

The imaginary critics of Socrates, Plato's teacher and the protagonist of the dialogue, had argued that since males and females have different reproductive roles, they should also play different social roles or practice different *polis* craft. But Socrates pointed out that one's role in reproduction has nothing to do with one's aptitude in *polis* craft:

Therefore, I said, if the male or female sex is seen to be specially qualified for a particular craft or way of life, we shall say that it ought to be assigned to that one. But if the only difference appears to be that the male begets children while the female bears them, we'll say that no difference between men and women has yet been produced that is relevant to our purpose, and we shall continue to believe that our guardians and their women should follow the same way of life (Republic, 454d-e).

Plato saw the reproductive difference as irrelevant dissimilarity to the governing of the state. He likened the above difference to that between the bald and the long-haired man. Just as in reproduction, the man and the woman stand as opposites, so do the bald and the long-haired men stand as opposites, but that does not for instance "allow bald men to be cobblers and forbid long-haired men to be, or vice versa" (454c). Thus, the differences between men and women are not the differences with respect to the practice of governance:

There is no practice of a city's governors which belongs to woman because she's woman, or to man because he's man; but the natures are scattered alike among both animals; and woman participates according to nature in all practices, and man in all, but in all of them woman is weaker than man (455d-e).

The expression of natural male superiority in the last phrase of the above argument certainly appears to detract from Plato's egalitarian pursuit; but worthy of note is the fact that Plato was not suggesting that all men are able to do everything better than all women; "many individual women", he said, "are better than many men in many things". What Plato is therefore stressing is that the same range of natural abilities is to be found in both sexes. There are some women who have an aptitude for medicine, others for athletics, others for soldiering, others for philosophy, just as we find among men (455\* 456a). But in any one area of these natural abilities, the females will always on average be outclassed by the males. Hence, when he talks of the guardian class, many men and women will gain admission into it because they share the same guardian nature or aptitude, though the men will on the average be superior to the women. And given that situation, he suggests in the case of war time for instance, that women be employed in lighter duties (457a) or as reserves (471d).

From the above analyses it is therefore clear what Plato means by the same nature or the same natural abilities is distributed among all people. It is not essentially physical in character for which reason he made the little exception above, but on the point of view of diversity and homogeneity:

We did not then posit likeness and difference in nature in any and every sense, but were paying heed solely to the kind of diversity and homogeneity, that was pertinent to the pursuits themselves. We meant, for example, that a man and a woman who have a physician's mind have the same nature (454c-d).

Some commentators of Plato have fundamentally disagreed with him on the argument over the reproductive difference as not counting much with regard to the ability to exercise civic duties. For A. E. Taylor (1956:278,) women cannot be soldiers or political leaders because sexual distinction "goes deeper and modifies the whole spiritual life profoundly." Similarly, Ernest Barker (1947:261) remarked that if the basic difference between men and women is that one begets and the other bears children, that one alone produces a number of other differences "which cut deep". According to him, "the fact of her sex is not one isolated thing in a woman's nature... it colours her whole being". He considers the nurture of children as a life-long duty of women which they cannot delegate to a crèche, but allowed unmarried women to enter into the open field of the world's activities.

Barker apparently misreads Plato here for he never denied the reproductive role of women only that such a role does not exclude their abilities for other functions and should never because of such duty be left to rust away. They must be employed to other things which they are equally able to do. "They must share the guardian's duties, hunt with them like hounds, share as far as possible in everything in every way. In doing so they will be

acting for the best, and in no way contrary to woman's nature as compared with man's as they were born to associate with one another" (Republic, 456a).

Expressing support for Plato's egalitarian revolution, a Stoic sage, Musonius Rufus went impressively far and felt that Plato was even conceding unnecessary ground to men. For Rufus; even the physical superiority which Plato grants to men is not universally established. He maintained:

Some men, sometimes, might reasonably do the lighter tasks which are thought suitable for women, and women might do the heavier tasks which are thought more appropriate for men: it depends on [physical strength, necessity, or the demands of the time. All human tasks, I think, a common to men and women, and nothing is necessarily exclusive to one or the other sex (See Clark, 51).

From the cited examples by Plato to show how natural abilities have been distributed to both men and women, even also the capacity for military duties, an English scholar, F. A. Wright tells us that a soldier needs only courage, strength, and skill, and for him, women possess them all. The chief requirement, for instance, of the modern warfare is endurance: the strength to stand exposure to harsh weather, insufficient food, lack of sleep and comfort, marching capacity. Wright concludes: "No one who knows the vagabonds and strollers of our English roads will say that women are not capable of supporting all these hardships as well as man. The female tramp is every whit as sturdy and hardy as her male companion" (Wright, 1969:169).

In his book, *Les idées de Platon sur la condition de la femme*, devoted entirely to the subject of Plato's ideas on women, Jean Ithurriague (1931:142) repeatedly affirmed the egalitarian views of Plato. For him, woman is by nature equal of man, and capable like him of performing "*offices les plus délicats et ... fonctions les plus difficiles*." He quired with approval on 1866 statement from the suffragist Susan B. Anthony that "equality of intelligence and virtue between the two sexes is indisputable; why make a difference between them" 124). Indeed, he called Plato the precursor and "*le plus grand des féministes*." He tells us that after Plato, women longer be thought of as she was before. And despite the vicissitudes of an unequal struggle, the basic idea of the equality of women and men will make its way (150).

### **Philosopher-Kings and Queens**

Plato was pushed to suggesting the situation the government of male and female rulers because the Athenian democratic state was full of defects, governed in ignorance. By its ignorant democracy, Plato's friend and teacher, Socrates was executed and women who constituted one half of the human race were continual being wasted. He felt that "the quickest and easiest way" to bring this idea state into existence was by a complete break with the existing society, to be initiated by the philosophers. Once the philosophers have taken power, they will expel all inhabitants over the age of ten and begin to raise the new generation properly (Republic 541c).

Among these philosophers would be men and women. They will rise from the ranks of the Guardians to the class of Rulers. In fact, Plato explicitly mentions female rulers in Book v11 (540c). For after having outlined the moral and particularly the intellectual virtues of these rulers, he was complemented in the following phrase: "it is a fine picture you have drawn of our Rulers, Socrates." And when immediately reminded whether some of these rulers will be women, his answer was: "All I have said about men applies equally to women, if they have the required natural capacities" (540c). This implies therefore that the common locution "philosopher-kings" is not entirely accurate. Bluestone criticized this expression philosophe-long' cha the use of the generic 'man' and 'he' for Plato's rulers (57-58). But one surprisingly sees Bluestone lapsing sometimes into these generic usages (29, 42, 112). This shows that like Plato, the failure to alter the linguistic convention does not involve any intentional distortion.

Evidently, the males have generally been at the front of Plato's mind. It was only in one notable passage that he had employed the feminine (540c). He had always used for his rulers the participle. But though that is a masculine grammatical form, it is also applicable like Greek masculine generally to a mixed group of men and women. He had already said: "don't think that anything I have said about the rulers has been more about men than about women - those whose natures are adequate" (540c).

The females manifest the very same constellation of virtues required for the rulers. By her nature too, she is capable of the rare and rarefied perfection of existence as male nature is, with no obstacle to its attainment inherent in her as such. Just as it is fully within the capacity of very, very few actual men to philosophize, to be philosopher-kings, so it is similarly within the capacity of at least a few women to philosophize, to be philosopher queens. Plato sees nothing about female nature itself that, for better or worse, precludes the kind of simplification of life philosophical rule presupposes, and which can result only from a complete subordination of every other concern to an almost maniacal love of wisdom. In short, there is so irreducible complexity to the female soul that would obviate its singular dedication of all its powers. The female bodily child-bearing potential, like the male's body power for child-begetting, can carry out its function without suffering as a consequence any ill effects.

Plato had long insisted that women are spirited and philosophic; athletic and suited for warfare (456a-b), - the natural qualities for which men guardians themselves were picked. It means then that there can be also women guardians and philosopher-rulers as is the case with men. The fact that among this class as in all other classes they possess these qualities in lesser degree than their male counterparts cannot serve any ground to deny

them the exercise of those related roles. This is important, and it involves a principle which Aristotle was to accept and use in justifying the subordinate role of women. The difference between ruler and being ruled Aristotle tells us, cannot be a matter of more or less, for ruling and being ruled differ in kind, while more or less do not (politics, 129h). Up to this point, Aristotle was still learning from and following Plato. The difference is that he did not travel the whole route to declare as Plato did, that women have similar nature with men but differing in degree.

For Plato, women who have philosophic spirit as some men must not be wasted in the lower station. For this exceptional quality is rare and valuable. Men and women must be true philosophers, reaching knowledge of the good through reason and dialectic. They are the only guarantors of the welfare of the state. For, as he prophesied: "Until the philosophers rule as kings or those who are now kings...genuinely and adequately philosophize, and political power and philosophy coincide in the same place...there is no rest from the ills for the cities... nor I think for human kind" (Republic, 473d). The philosophers must be sought out wherever they are, men as well as women, and their job must be to rule.

## EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

Given the Greek cultural climate, the application of the principle to women in such a way as to gain the outcome that they must acquire approximately equal status to men, is hardly what one can expect from the ancient Athenian culture. That is to overturn according to Herodotus, "the ordinary practices of mankind" (Herodotus, 11, 35). No such sexual egalitarianism as we find in Plato could be found in either the practices or the literature of his day, except in the topsy-turvy world of Aristophanic comedy where its appearance more or less reflected a cultural bias against it than working in its favor. But Plato seriously meant his revolution. It was not a comedy nor did he want the proposal to be left on the air. He set up various arrangements towards its realization, some of which were even further choking to traditional practices and conventional belief. It was therefore not surprising that he had to meet with hostilities in his own days and many people have supported those attacks up to this century. Arlene Saxonhouse (1976:210) for example, dismissed all of the Plato's proposals and says that she "cannot accept the view that Socrates wishes to emancipate the Athenian woman." She sees rather the Book V of the Republic as showing not an attempt to prescribe according nature, but rather the reverse: "...it shows an attempt to destroy the natural order. That Socrates must so pervert the natural in order to create the best political system must raise doubts about its value", (211).

Many more commentators insist on the deeper difference, which the reproductive/body difference makes. Bloom rejects completely the proposals and condemns Plato for "forgetting the importance of the body" (Bloom, 1968:382). He thinks that it is on the precondition of such "forgetting" that Plato could have made such a proposal. For, if he had given a good thought to the body and its requirements, he would have discovered that the differences between men and women are far more crucial than he had allowed.

Karl Nohle had in 19<sup>th</sup> century expressed the same idea. He requested Plato to admit the fact that no complete equality exists between men and women. He maintained that Plato "cannot deny" that the difference in the biological share in reproduction "hinders women from playing as great a part in the governing of the state." Thus, there must have been other reasons that made the philosopher overlook these basic defects in women (Nohle, 1880:136-137).

All these commentators in general share one basic assumption which is that women's nature is ascertainable and that it is other than what Plato describes it. For them, women's nature is different. Thus, the proposals of Book V are in a way unnatural and so cannot justify the gender equality. Perhaps, they may be right, but what has not been resolved is how to explain the nature of the modern female parliamentarians and even heads of state who contrary to the assumed different female nature, manage as well to display equal aptitude: for statesmanship as men. Some have also distinguished themselves in various capacities in the academic world; many are space astronauts, magnificent pilots, excellent military tacticians, truck drivers etc.

Some critics may argue that the tested presence of women in these categories as enumerated can only be explained as exceptions which do not spell any sign of equality with men. The argument of Plato however is not contradictory to this claim. For him, much as it is in the capacity of few women to display excellence of virtue, they must be chosen to rule with those men who though may be numerically more than women, display the same constellation of virtues. Plato saw his arguments as a way of accounting and transcending the attendant social practices based on different and better principles, or at least the principle that more readily ensures order or justice. His proposals in the Republic radically presented among many other things, another picture of women, granting them a social and political status—a place in the body politics. Certainly, Plato was not showing by this act any unusual love for women, for it was nothing of a favor to get them involved in every aspect of the state's activities and life. He did also criticize them in several places but that did not withhold him from his commitment to excellence wherever it was found, whether in man or in woman.

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