

ARISTOTLE AND WOMEN: HOUSEHOLD AND POLITICAL ROLES

Paul Schollmeier¹

Abstract: A survey of recent literature would suggest that Aristotle has become a whipping boy for philosophers who would advocate equality between the sexes. What I hope to show is that we can actually advance the cause of sexual equality by treating him more judiciously. Aristotle does argue that men and women by nature have different psychologies, and even that men are psychologically superior to women. But contrary to what many today think he himself does not conclude from this proposition that men and women ought to have roles entirely different within a city. Indeed, he leaves ample room in his theory for women to participate in political rule. We shall see by his own arguments that all women ought to have a vote in general assemblies, and that some women ought to hold high political office.

I

Even a casual survey of contemporary scholarship would suggest that Aristotle has become a whipping boy for philosophers who would advocate equality between the sexes.² I believe that we can do better by him. What I propose to show is that Aristotle presents a theoretical view that is not as inimical to sexual equality as many have thought. Even if we grant a premise decidedly inegalitarian, we shall nonetheless be able to see that Aristotle's theory entails some rather egalitarian conclusions.

The premise to be conceded is the obvious one. Aristotle clearly argues that men and women by nature have different psychologies, and even that men are psychologically superior to women.³ But contrary to what many today think,

¹ Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada, Box 455028, Las Vegas, NV 89154-5028. Email: paul@unlv.nevada.edu

² Aristotle often stands accused of perpetuating Athenian prejudice. See S. Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought* (Princeton, 1979), ch. 2; C. Garside, 'Can a Woman be Good in the Same Way as a Man?', *Dialogue* [Canada], 10 (1971), pp. 534-44; M. Horowitz, 'Aristotle and Woman', *Journal of the History of Biology*, 9 (1976), pp. 183-213; P. Tumulty, 'Aristotle, Feminism, and Natural Law Theory', *New Scholasticism*, 55 (1981), pp. 450-64; S. Clark, 'Aristotle's Woman', *History of Political Thought*, 3 (1982), pp. 177-91; E. Spelman, 'Aristotle and the Politicization of the Soul', *Discovering Reality*, ed. S. Harding and M. Hintikka (Boston, 1983), pp. 17-30.

³ Some biological premises also seem to give support to opponents of sexual equality. These premises, usually those that concern reproductive functions, allow Aristotle to serve for a whipping boy as well. See Okin, *Women*, ch. 2, pp. 81-3; Horowitz, 'Aristotle and Woman', pp. 192-206; L. Lange, 'Woman is not a Rational Animal', Harding and Hintikka, eds., *Reality*, pp. 1-15; G. Lloyd, *Science, Folklore, and Ideology* (Cambridge, 1983), pt. 2, sec. 4; or N. Tuana, 'The Weaker Seed', *Hypatia*, 3 (1988), pp. 35-59, esp. pp. 35-41. For the sake of this paper I shall assume that the biological theses do not support inequality if the psychological ones do not.

he himself does not conclude from this proposition that men and women ought to have roles entirely different within a city. Indeed, he explicitly states nothing about the political role of women. He alludes only in passing to the not unambiguous fact that some cities grant women citizenship (see *Pol.* 3. 2. 1275b22–34 and *Pol.* 3. 5. 1278a26–34).

I shall argue that Aristotle leaves ample room in his theory for women to participate in political rule. We shall see by his own arguments that all women ought to have a vote in general assemblies, and that some women ought to hold high political office. In fact, Aristotle does not advocate inequality within a household. He does differentiate roles for husband and wife, but he also explicitly argues that they ought to rule by turns.

Aristotle would thus appear to offer considerably more than an apology for Athenian prejudice. If I am right, his philosophy contains for his time a rather revolutionary perspective on women. Nonetheless, his theory does retain some more traditional elements, as we shall see. But whether or not my efforts succeed, we must surely exert ourselves to understand Aristotle as well as we possibly can. Unless we understand him, we shall not be able to understand ourselves. He is after all a seminal figure in our culture.

II

Aristotle discusses the sexes and their natural psychological differences in his *Politics*. He begins his discussion with a problem about moral virtue in a natural slave. Does a slave have any virtue besides that of a mere instrument? Does he require temperance, or courage, or any other such habit (*Pol.* 1. 13. 1259b21–26)? But he also asks about women and children. Does a woman need to be temperate or courageous? Does a child (1259b28–32)? He continues with a similar problem about natural virtue. Do those who rule by nature and those whom they rule have the same or different virtues (*Pol.* 1. 13. 1259b32–34)? More specifically, do males and females have the same natural virtues (1259b28–32)? And do adults and children (1259b28–32) or masters and slaves (1259b21–28)?

Aristotle resolves the problem about natural virtue first. He argues that both those who rule and those who are ruled have virtue, but that they have virtue that is different. Their virtue differs because those ruled differ (*Pol.* 1. 13. 1260a2–4). He explains with an analogy to the soul and its parts: 'This difference leads us at once to the soul. In the soul there is by nature one part that

Those who wish to examine these premises more closely might start with a recent article by Dobbs. Dobbs especially shows how complex is Aristotle's analysis of form and matter in reproduction. He even suggests that this analysis of reproduction bears some similarity to modern considerations of genotypes and phenotypes. He also shows that the human soul for Aristotle transcends any differences of reproductive function (D. Dobbs, 'Family Matters: Aristotle's Appreciation of Women and the Plural Structure of Society', *American Journal of Political Science*, 90 (1996), pp. 79–81).

naturally rules, and another that is ruled. And the virtue of these parts we assert to differ as the virtue of the principled part and that of the unprincipled part' (*Pol.* 1. 13. 1260a4–6).⁴ His analogy implies that someone who is a natural ruler has the virtue of the rational part, and that someone who is naturally ruled has only the virtue of the irrational part (1260a7–9).

He explains further that natural rule exhibits different kinds (*Pol.* 1. 13. 1260a9–10). For those ruled by nature have further differences. He elaborates his analogy to the soul:

The parts of the soul are present in all, but they are present differently. For the slave has no deliberative faculty at all. The female has a deliberative faculty, but her faculty is without sovereignty. The child has a deliberative faculty, too, but it is immature (*Pol.* 1. 13. 1260a10–14).

The implication important for our purpose is that a male has a deliberative faculty which is mature and has sovereignty, and that a female has a faculty which is mature but not sovereign.

Aristotle then offers his resolution for the problem about moral virtue. He concludes that those who rule and those who are ruled have different moral virtues: 'Similarly, it must necessarily be supposed with moral virtue. It is necessary that all share in moral virtue but not in the same way. Each must share in it to the extent required for his function' (*Pol.* 1. 13. 1260a14–17). Someone who rules especially requires complete moral virtue, but someone who is ruled does not:

That is why the ruler must have moral virtue which is complete. For his function is absolutely of an architectonic sort, and the principled part is an architectonic faculty. Each of the others requires moral virtue only to the extent appropriate to them (*Pol.* 1. 13. 1260a17–20).

But the principled part of our soul grasps a practical principle required for developing moral virtue. Anyone who rules thus has both intellectual and moral virtue, but someone who is ruled has only moral virtue.⁵

⁴ The translations of passages from the *Politics* and the *Ethics* are my own. For this purpose I used *Aristotelis Politica*, ed. W.D. Ross (Oxford, 1957) and *Aristotelis Ethica Nicomachea*, ed. I. Bywater (Oxford, 1962).

⁵ Spelman contends that Aristotle offers a psychology that is self-contradictory, begs the question, and is circular ('Politicization', pp. 21–7). Spelman argues that Aristotle contradicts himself because he begins with the proposition that the rational part of the soul by nature rules the irrational part. But he also has to assert that in women the rational part by nature is ruled by the irrational (p. 23). She thus implies that human beings have the natural end of rationality, but that women have the natural end of irrationality (pp. 23–4). But Aristotle implies that the irrationality of women is not a natural end but rather an acquired variation, which he accordingly refers to as a monstrosity in the biological sense. He explains explicitly that a variation of this sort is not necessary with regard to the cause for the sake of which or the end but is necessary in accordance with accident (*Gen. An.* 4. 3. 767b8–15). On this topic also see G. Matthews, 'Gender and Essence in Aristotle', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 64 (1986), supp., pp. 16–25.

We see, then, that a male has by nature a deliberative faculty which is sovereign, and that a female does not. We also see that someone who rules requires intellectual and moral virtue, and that someone who is ruled requires moral virtue only.

One might now be tempted to infer that a male ought by nature to rule a female because he has both intellectual and moral virtue and she has only moral virtue. A female might even seem to be incapable of attaining intellectual virtue. But an inference of this sort would be too hasty. To see why it is, we shall first ask what Aristotle means when he implies that a deliberative faculty can be sovereign or not sovereign (see *Pol.* 1. 13. 1260a13).

Aristotle does not answer our new question in his *Politics*, but in his *Nicomachean Ethics* he does provide an answer. When he discusses the intellectual virtues, Aristotle identifies the deliberative or calculative faculty with practical intellect (*Eth.* 6. 1. 1139a11–14). He argues that the practical intellect differs from the theoretical intellect in two ways. The theoretical and practical intellects concern different objects. The one concerns invariable things, and the other variable things (1139a6–11). But the theoretical and the

Spelman finds that Aristotle begs the question because he does not offer sufficient evidence for his analogy between the relationship of the rational and irrational parts of the soul and the relationship of men and women. He merely associates rationality with men and irrationality with women (pp. 23–4). But for Aristotle that men have a sovereign deliberative faculty, and that women do not, are merely empirical facts. He says, 'It is clear that . . .' (*Pol.* 1. 13. 1260a7). Spelman is right however to imply that we really ought to use modern psychology to determine whether we can confirm or disconfirm these facts asserted by Aristotle.

Aristotle appears to Spelman to present a circular argument because he wishes to use his psychology as a basis for his politics, yet he uses his politics to establish his psychology. For he uses some political analogies to show how the parts of the soul interrelate (pp. 24–7). But Aristotle does not use his analogies as premises for deductive or inductive arguments to establish his psychology. They are analogies only. For example, he states that the irrational part of the soul moves contrary to the rational part as paralyzed limbs move contrary to our wishes. But he does not use this analogy to argue that the irrational part moves contrarily because paralyzed limbs do. He explicitly uses it to illustrate a mental fact by a visual one (see *Eth.* 1. 13. 1102b13–24). And Spelman herself notes that he does (pp. 24–5).

Besides, the two political analogies cited by Spelman do not hinge on sexual differences (pp. 25–6). Aristotle does draw analogies between the rule of the soul over the body and the rule of a slave master and between the rule of the intellect over the passions and constitutional rule (*Pol.* 1. 5. 1254b2–6). But his point is merely that the soul rules the body for its own sake, and that the intellect rules the passions for their sakes (see *Pol.* 3. 6. 1278b30–1279a21 and 3. 7. 1279a36–39). He also draws analogies between the rule of the rational part and the rule of a slave master and the rule of a household manager (*Eth.* 5. 11. 1138b5–8). But he again makes a similar point. He implies that to treat our passions as mere slaves would be unjust to ourselves, but that to treat them as household members would be just (1138b8–12). For household rule is analogous to constitutional rule (*Pol.* 1. 12. 1259a39–1259b6).

practical intellect also have different functions. The theoretical intellect can grasp truth only, but the practical intellect can grasp truth and control desire:

Of the theoretical intellect, which is neither practical nor productive, the good and bad activity is truth and falsity, for this is the function of all thought. Of the practical intellect, the good activity is truth in agreement with desire — right desire (*Eth.* 6. 2. 1139a27–31).

But the practical intellect does not merely agree with desire. It agrees with desire because it makes desire right: ‘The appetitive part in a strong-willed man obeys a principle. And this part in the temperate and courageous man is even more obedient. For on all matters it speaks with the same voice as principle’ (*Eth.* 1. 13. 1102b26–28). The practical intellect thus appears to command desire, for desire obeys its principle. At least in virtuous and strong-willed people it does (also see *Eth.* 1. 13. 1102b30–1103a1).

But because they do not exercise control, some people allow the rational part of their soul to be overcome by the irrational part:

In strong-willed and weak-willed men there appears naturally to be besides the principled part another part which fights against and resists the principled part. For very much as paralyzed parts of the body, when we choose to move them to the right, turn on the contrary to the left, so is it with the soul. The impulses of weak-willed men move in the opposite way. But in the body we see that which goes astray, in the soul we do not (*Eth.* 1. 13. 1102b16–23).

That is to say, strong-willed and weak-willed people have a deliberative faculty. But the weak-willed fail to use their faculty to control desire (of course see also *Eth.* 7. 3).

Although he does not explicitly say so, Aristotle appears to indicate with these arguments that the deliberative faculty has sovereignty when it can rule desire. For the practical intellect has the function not only of grasping truth but also of commanding desire. He would accordingly appear to take the position that a male and a female both have a deliberative faculty that can grasp practical truth. But that a male has a faculty that can use truth to control desire, and a female has a faculty that cannot. He did in fact draw an analogy between those who naturally rule and are naturally ruled and the rational and irrational parts of the soul.⁶

⁶ Dobbs would no doubt agree. He is quite right to point out that Aristotle considers the deliberative faculty and its sovereignty when he is discussing the parts of the soul. The sovereignty of this faculty thus is ‘an intrapersonal phenomenon’. Interestingly, he also conjectures that the deliberative faculty requires greater sovereignty in the male because the male temperament is ‘more ambiguous morally and prudentially’ (*Family Matters*, p. 85). He refers especially to male spiritedness (see pp. 82–3).

Modrak appears to argue that the practical intellect of the female can neither grasp truth nor control desire. She implies that the female practical intellect is non-deliberative because it cannot arrive at correct practical judgements. That is, it cannot apply general

Perhaps we might now conclude from these arguments that men should rule women because women cannot control their desire, and that women would tend to exhibit weakness of will. But I think that these conclusions might still be too hasty. Why? Because Aristotle discusses only natural differences between the sexes when he discusses the parts of the soul. We shall find that these differences soon pale if we ask what cultural differences men and women might have.

Let us turn to the household and to marriage. When he discusses marriage, Aristotle strongly implies that men and women both have complete virtue, and that women are not weak-willed. Clearly, he argues that both men and women rule and are ruled within a household. And if so, neither men nor women can be weak-willed. For those who rule require intellectual as well as moral virtue, and even those who are ruled need moral virtue, as we have seen.

To show that men and women both rule within a household, Aristotle draws another analogy. This analogy is between a marriage and a polity:

A husband and father rules wife and children both as being free. But he does not rule both wife and children in the same way. He rules his wife in the manner of a polity and his children in the manner of a king. For the male is by nature more a leader than the female, if he is not constituted contrary to nature, and the older and mature is more a leader than the younger and immature. But in the rule of most polities the ruler and the ruled take turns, for this rule wishes their natures to be equal and not to differ (*Pol.* 1. 12. 1259a39–1259b6).

He again asserts that a male tends to be naturally superior to a female. But he also qualifies this assertion. He implies with his analogy to polity that a male and a female are equal and rule by turns. For he explicitly asserts that citizens in a polity are equal, and that they do rule by turns (also see *Pol.* 3. 17. 1288a6–15).

When he discusses it, Aristotle in fact goes to lengths to show that a polity ought to allow as many as possible to share in ruling. He argues that a constitution of this kind ought to take as its end moral virtue, which each person is more able to attain (*Pol.* 4. 11. 1295a25–1295b1). To strengthen this constitution, he recommends measures to maintain moderate wealth, which, he

principles to particular cases. And because it cannot do so, it does not enable a female to act in accord with a principle (D. Modrak, 'Aristotle: Women, Deliberation, and Nature', B-A. Bar On, ed., *Engendering Origins* (Albany, 1994), pp. 210–11). But she herself also recognizes that one can deliberate correctly and yet fail to act on a conclusion reached by deliberation (pp. 211–2). And besides only a natural slave has a non-deliberative practical intellect (*Pol.* 1. 13. 1260a12 and 1. 5. 1254b22–23).

Fortenbaugh agrees that women can deliberate, and he adds that they are clever. He rests his argument on ancient tragic heroines and their thoughts (W. Fortenbaugh, 'Aristotle on Slaves and Women', *Articles on Aristotle*, ed. J. Barnes, M. Scholfield, and R. Sorabji (New York, 1977), vol. II, pp. 138–9). We would, however, more properly characterize women as practically wise rather than clever (see *Eth.* 6. 12. 1144a23–28).

argues, is best suited to moral virtue (1295b1–1296a21). He also advocates other measures, borrowed from oligarchies and democracies, to insure that all participate in politics (*Pol.* 4. 9. 1294a35–1294b13).

To illustrate household rule, Aristotle uses a slightly different analogy. This analogy is not to a polity but to an aristocracy:

The relationship between man and woman appears to be aristocratic. For the man rules in accordance with worth, and over the things over which it is necessary that a man rule. But whatever things befit a woman he hands over to her (*Eth.* 8. 10. 1160b32–35).

But an aristocracy is an ideal constitution in which those who are privileged to be citizens rule by turns (*Pol.* 7. 14. 1332b27–41). Aristotle thus implies very strongly with this analogy to aristocracy that neither male nor female ought to rule permanently over all matters in a household. He is in fact familiar with the caste system in India, and he finds this permanent arrangement decidedly unjust. He denies that some people could differ so much from others that they would differ as gods and heroes do from humans. Hence, he concludes that all who are sufficiently virtuous ought to take a turn at ruling and at being ruled (*Pol.* 7. 14. 1332b12–27).

I cannot overemphasize the importance of these political analogies. We especially must not forget the general properties of aristocracy and polity. Aristotle argues that polity and aristocracy as well as kingship are healthy constitutions. What makes these constitutions healthy is the fact that their rulers rule for the sake of those whom they rule (*Pol.* 3. 7. 1279a25–1279b4). He also implies rather clearly that, because their rulers rule for others, rulers in healthy constitutions wish to hold their offices by turns. When in office the one ruler cares for the other, who is not in office, and the other ruler, when in office, does the same for the one (*Pol.* 3. 6. 1279a8–13).

Rulers who rule in corrupt constitutions look after their own interests not the interests of those whom they rule. These constitutions are, of course, oligarchy, democracy, and tyranny (*Pol.* 3. 7. 1279b4–10). Because they seek their own interest, these rulers do not care to hold office by turns. They prefer instead to remain in office always (*Pol.* 3. 6. 1279a13–16). Aristotle in fact adds that if he or she rules in everything, a man or a woman transforms their relationship into an oligarchy:

If the man is chief in everything, their relation changes into an oligarchy, for he does this contrary to merit and not as being better. But sometimes women rule because they are heiresses. So their rule comes to be not in accordance with virtue but for the sake of wealth and power, as in oligarchies (*Eth.* 8. 10. 1160b35–1161a3).

Please notice that he implicitly identifies worthiness to rule with virtue. And that he identifies a corrupt household with exclusive rule by either male or female.⁷

⁷ Smith argues that the constitutional rule of husband and wife differs from the rule of citizens in a polity. A male permanently rules over a female, but fellow citizens rule by turns. He cites *Pol.* 1. 12. 1259b4–10 (N. Smith, 'Plato and Aristotle on the Nature of Women', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 21 (1983), p. 475; also H. Levi, 'Does Aristotle Exclude Women from Politics?', *The Review of Politics*, 52 (1990), p. 402). But Aristotle implies rather strongly with his example of Amasis that a male and a female ought to rule by turns. For Amasis was someone who was once ruled and who now rules. This fact Amasis illustrated to his people by melting down a footpan and having it cast into a statue of a god (*Pol.* 1. 12. 1259b8–9). Aristotle thus would appear to assert not that a male always rules over a female, but that a male and a female always rule by turns (1259b9–10). And we can easily see why. Husband and wife rule over different matters (see again *Eth.* 8. 10. 1160b32–35). Smith also implies that a woman has a deliberative faculty which is sovereign over household matters, especially procreative functions, but lacks sovereignty over political matters (p. 476). I would ask why the practical intellect could control emotion concerned with matters of the one kind but not with those of the other kind. I would also ask why a woman could not rule at least by turns within a household if her intellect has sovereignty over procreation.

Salkever develops a position similar to that of Smith. He agrees that males should exercise a permanent rule over females without rotation of office. Citing *Pol.* 1. 12. 1259b1–5 as well as *Pol.* 1. 7. 1254b5–6, he adds that the male rule is political rather than despotic. That is, the rule should be for the sake of ruler and ruled alike, it should be with rough equality between ruler and ruled, and it should be subject to legal constraints (S. Salkever, *Finding the Mean: Theory and Practice in Aristotelian Political Philosophy* (Princeton, 1990), ch. 4, pp. 183–5). But Aristotle implies that husband and wife each rule for the sake of the other when they perform their different functions (*Eth.* 8. 11. 1161a22–25). They might of course accidentally benefit themselves (see *Pol.* 3. 6. 1278b37–1279a8). And by so ruling they might very well attain a rough equality. But whether or not they are subject to legal constraints, the passages cited do not indicate.

Dobbs uses the Amasis example to argue in favour of an equality between males and females but at the same time in favour of male rule in the household. His argument is that the footpan and the statue are of material with the same value, but that the change in form indicates that a male has a superior function. He concludes, however, that male rule is aristocratic because the male recognizes the equality of his wife and does not rule over her in all matters. This aristocratic rule thus differs from an oligarchic rule, which is a dominance relationship ('Family Matters', p. 78). Dobbs rightly points out how an aristocratic rule in a family differs from an oligarchic one. But I must ask, do not male and female rule by turns in an aristocratic family if the male hands over to his wife the roles appropriate to her? Especially if by so doing the male merely acknowledges what properly belongs to his wife (pp. 78–9).

Modrak recognizes the possibility that men and women might rule by turns in a household as do citizens in a constitutional rule. But without argument she, too, cites *Pol.* 1. 12. 1259a39–1259b10 to assert that Aristotle rejects this possibility out of hand ('Women', pp. 214–5).

Horowitz notes that a husband does not rule in all household matters but allocates some matters to his wife ('Aristotle and Woman', p. 208). She also argues that a marriage is unlike an aristocracy because a husband permanently rules over his wife, but fellow cit-

With these arguments Aristotle thus implies that women have complete virtue. If they can rule in any capacity, women would require intellectual virtue as well as moral virtue. For intellectual virtue is an architectonic capacity which enables one to rule. Indeed, intellectual virtue is what differentiates cultural from natural virtue. In this way Aristotle distinguishes what he calls virtue in the strict sense from natural virtue: 'If a man acquires practical intuition, there is a difference in his action. His habit will be similar to natural virtue, but it will be virtue in a strict sense' (*Eth.* 6. 13. 1144b12–14). Practical intuition is necessary for virtue in this sense because it is a virtue of the practical intellect. Practical intuition especially grasps the particular facts necessary for deliberation (*Eth.* 6. 7. 1141b14–21 and *Eth.* 6. 11. 1143a35–1143b5).

Virtue in the natural sense is merely a natural quality: 'All people think that each of the ethical characteristics belongs somehow by nature to those who have them. For we are just and temperate and courageous from the moment of birth' (*Eth.* 6. 13. 1144b4–6). He adds that virtue of this sort especially exists in children and in other animals (*Eth.* 6. 13. 1144b8–9). Because without intuition, it is merely desire.⁸

But if they have complete virtue, women cannot exhibit weakness of will. For virtuous people do not let the principled part of their soul be overridden by the unprincipled part. What can cause the principled part to be overridden are pleasures and pains. Pleasure can cause us to do what we ought not to do, and pain can hinder us from doing what we ought to do (*Eth.* 2. 3. 1104b8–11). But a virtuous person takes pleasure in virtuous action only and does not feel any influence of untoward pleasures or pains. A courageous person does not feel the pains of a coward, for example, nor does a temperate person feel the vexations of a sensualist:

We must take as a sign of these habits the pleasure or pain that supervenes upon their activities. For he who abstains from bodily pleasures and delights in it is temperate, but he who is vexed at it is intemperate. And he who stands his ground against terrible things and delights in it or at least is not pained by it is courageous, but he who is pained is a coward (*Eth.* 2. 3. 1104b3–8).

Those who are virtuous actually exhibit more control over their desire than those who are strong-willed. For the irrational part of their soul is more obedient (*Eth.* 1. 13. 1102b26–28). Indeed, virtuous people make principled the unprincipled part of their soul:

izens take turns ruling and being ruled (p. 207). But if they have different roles, would not husband and wife rule by turns when the one role or the other takes priority in a given situation?

⁸ Salkever agrees that husband and wife both ought to be educated in virtue. He argues that both sexes require virtue because marriage exists not for mere procreation but also for a good life. He cites *Eth.* 8. 12. 1162a20–22 as well as *Rhet.* 1. 5. 1361a7–11 (*Finding the Mean*, pp. 188–91).

That the unprincipled part is somehow persuaded by the principled part, admonition and chastisement and encouragement indicate. And if it is necessary to say that this part is principled, the principled part also will be two-fold. The one subpart having a principle in a strict sense and in itself, and the other listening to a principle as if to a father (*Eth.* 1. 13. 1102b33–1103a3).

The rational part of the soul would thus appear to assimilate the irrational part. But how can women have complete virtue if their practical intellect is not sovereign? They seem to have by nature a practical intellect which cannot control desire. Aristotle does not explicitly pose this problem. But if he had, I think that he could have resolved it by discussing nurture and education. He does observe that the many, presumably males as well as females, do not listen to argument but to fear (*Eth.* 10. 9. 1179b4–20). And he argues that parental guidance and good laws can instil good habits in the youth and overcome a natural deficiency of a psychological sort (see 1179b20–1180a24).⁹

He also discusses another way of learning to rule and of acquiring its virtue. We may learn to rule by being ruled. A good citizen, he argues, ought to know how to rule and to be ruled (*Pol.* 3. 4. 1277a25–27). He actually refers to a polity (1277b7–10). But he offers a military example. One can learn to be an officer in the infantry or cavalry by being under the orders of a cavalry or an infantry officer (1277b10–13). Could not men and women within a household learn from one another in this way, though they rule over different matters?

Though they may be naturally unequal, men and women can thus be culturally equal. At least, within a household men and women both have practical

⁹ Modrak observes that women might be able to overcome the deficiency in their practical intellect with education and experience. She even notes that we all have a natural capacity to acquire virtue through proper training ('Women', p. 214). I agree. But she goes on to suggest that Aristotle would reject this possibility. She cites *Pol.* 1. 13. 1260b14 and 8. 1. 1337a27–30 to assert that women ought not to realize their full moral potential (p. 214). Aristotle, however, states at 1260b14–15 only that a household is part of a city, and that a marriage is part of a household. He continues to argue at 1260b16–20 in favour of education for women and children, implying that a city cannot be virtuous if its women and children are not. And at 1337a31–33 he praises the Lacedaemonians on similar grounds for educating their children.

Modrak also suggests that women might have virtue supported by external constraints (pp. 216–7). But virtue of this sort could not be virtue in any moral sense. For moral virtue requires that one act knowingly, for the sake of an action chosen, and from habit (see again *Eth.* 2. 4.). And yet to acquire moral virtue, men as well as women must feel the constraint of law in their youth (again *Eth.* 10. 9. 1179b4–1180a24). After all, children are irrational creatures (*Pol.* 7. 15. 1334b20–25).

Horowitz implies that even within a household only men have practical wisdom and women only true opinion ('Aristotle and Woman', p. 207). And that their virtue consequently differs (p. 208). But she does admit that a woman can make some decisions about household matters (*Ibid.*). If so, a woman has some practical wisdom. Fortenbaugh does argue that women are weak-willed ('Slaves and Women', pp. 137–9). But he rests his argument only on *Pol.* 1. 13.

wisdom and moral virtue. For both sexes ought to rule only over appropriate matters, and neither sex ought to rule over all matters.

What are the things over which men and women rule? Unfortunately, Aristotle is not very explicit about what these roles ought to be. But he does give some indication of what they are. He does argue that marriage can exist for the sake of virtue and presumably happiness: 'This relationship might also arise for the sake of virtue if the individuals are good. For virtue exists for each, and they might take delight in qualities of such sort' (*Eth.* 8. 12. 1162a25–27). But he also argues that men and women form relationships for the sake of utility or pleasure (*Eth.* 8. 12. 1162a20–25). And he reminds us that we are naturally inclined to form couples for reproduction (*Eth.* 8. 12. 1162a16–19; *Pol.* 1. 2. 1252a26–30).

But marriage appears to exist especially for the sake of life itself. Aristotle argues that a family exists for the sake of everyday needs: 'The family is the community brought together by nature for daily needs, which Charondas called companions of the cupboard and Epimenides the Cretan companions of the manger' (*Pol.* 1. 2. 1252b12–15). He would imply that men have the role of acquiring property for this purpose and that women have the role of preserving it: 'Household management is different for men and women. For the function of the one is to acquire property, and that of the other to preserve it' (*Pol.* 3. 4. 1277b24–25; also 1. 8. 1256a1–13). Presumably, the property acquired and preserved would be what is required for everyday needs.

One can see without difficulty why Aristotle might suggest that men acquire and women manage property. Psychological differences in temperament are probably a factor. Aristotle argues that both parents love their children more than their children love them because they know their children better and their children are more their own (*Eth.* 8. 12. 1161b19–24). But he also asserts that these same considerations explain why mothers love their children more than fathers do (1161b26–27).¹⁰

¹⁰ I thus agree with Salkever that mothers may be more affectionate than fathers. Salkever does not cite *Eth.* 8. 12. 1161b19–24 and 26–7 but rather *Eth.* 8. 12. 1161b24–26, where Aristotle states only that parents love their children longer than their children love them. But he does also cite *Eud. Eth.* 7. 8. 1241b7–9, where Aristotle argues that because of childbirth, mothers think that their children are more their own work (*Finding the Mean*, pp. 194–5). Salkever conjectures however that the purpose of the family is to instil a sense of shame in its children. He believes that shame and modesty are necessary conditions of deliberation and education (pp. 191–4). But Aristotle asserts that only a few people obey a sense of shame, and that most people respond to their fear (*Eth.* 10. 9. 1179b4–20). He favours rather habituation and instruction within the family and especially within the city (1179b20–1180a24).

Dobbs suggests further differences in temperament. He states, citing *Hist. An.* 9. 1. 608a33–608b7, that males in almost all species tend to exhibit more spiritedness than females, and that females tend to exhibit more practical wisdom with regard to the nurturing of offspring. Their greater spiritedness would better enable males to acquire property, he continues, because it would make them more daring and even audacious. But females

Physiological differences could be a factor, too. Men are obviously stronger than women, and physical strength appears to have often been a prerequisite for acquiring property in the ancient world. Aristotle observes that important techniques for acquisition were not only herding and farming but also hunting and fishing, not to mention piracy (see *Pol.* 1. 8. 1256a19–1256b2). He points out that even those who rule will on occasion engage in these activities (*Pol.* 1. 11. 1258b10–11; and 3. 4. 1277b3–7).

Now one might object that Aristotle seems to reduce the rule over women to that over slaves. For men seem to use women only to maintain their property. But Aristotle explicitly distinguishes a female from a slave. The one is ruled for her sake, the other for the sake of a master (*Pol.* 3. 6. 1278b32–1279a8). Only a barbarian would fail to distinguish the two (see *Pol.* 1. 2. 1252a34–1252b9). The male would thus provide property for his wife and children. And the female would also manage property for her husband and children. Only accidentally do males and females benefit from their own roles (see *Pol.* 3. 6. 1279a1–8). But a slave who is truly a slave cannot rule at all. A natural slave cannot command but can only obey (see *Pol.* 1. 7.).

One might also object that Aristotle refers to a household as a monarchy (*Pol.* 1. 7. 1255b19–20). And he explicitly states that the male rules and the female is ruled (*Pol.* 1. 5. 1254b13–14). I would answer that, when he does, he speaks of a natural rule not of a cultural one (again *Pol.* 1. 5. 1254b13–14). He also says that a household is a monarchy. But he would appear to speak not of marriage but of parenthood. For he argues that a parent rules a child as does a monarch (*Pol.* 1. 12. 1259a39–1259b2 and 1259b10–17).

A final objection is more difficult, however. Aristotle quotes favourably the assertion that silence for a woman is an adornment (*Pol.* 1. 13. 1260a24–31). And he argues that male courage is the courage to command, and female courage the courage to obey (1260a21–24). I cannot yet answer this objection, but I shall be able to do so after we consider the sexes and their political roles.

III

Aristotle presents his most explicit discussion of political roles when he considers political sovereignty. He begins again with a problem. Who ought to have sovereignty in a city (*Pol.* 3. 10. 1281a11–13)? Curiously, he argues that all candidates for sovereignty bode ill for their city (1281a13–14). He appears to imply that a city would suffer if those who have wealth or those who are poor attain sovereignty. For if they rule exclusively, either party could bring about the ruin of their city. The rich could constantly exploit the poor, or the

would better preserve property, presumably for the sake of offspring, with greater serenity and modesty, he argues ('Family Matters', p. 82).

Levi cites almost the same passage, *Hist. An.* 9. 1. 608a21–608b15, recognizing the same differences ('Does Aristotle Exclude Women?', *The Review of Politics*, 52 (1990), p. 399).

poor could repeatedly appropriate the possessions of the rich (1281a14–28). Even those who are virtuous could prove ruinous to a city. For the few who have more virtue could deny others who have less the honour of a turn in office (1281a28–34).

Aristotle solves this problem by proposing that the people have sovereignty. He presents two arguments in favour of his solution. The one argument is that the people are good collectively, though individually they are not:

When they meet together, the many, of whom each is not a good man, are able to be better than the few best men not individually but collectively, as a feast to which many contribute is better than a dinner provided out of one purse (*Pol.* 3. 11. 1281a42–1281b3).

He explains that each can individually contribute some virtue or wisdom, and that all collectively make up as it were a whole person:

Each individual among the many possesses part of virtue and practical wisdom, and when they meet together, as the people become one man, who has many feet, and hands, and senses, so too they become one with regard to their moral habits and their thoughts (*Pol.* 3. 11. 1281b4–7).

The people in this way function much as a jury does for an art exhibit or a poetry recital (1281b7–10).

The other argument is that the people know best how the law functions in society:

Some works those who engage in the arts judge neither solely nor best — whatever works which those who do not possess the art understand. For example, it is not only for a builder to know a house. He who makes use of it judges it even better, but a household manager makes use of it. And a pilot judges better a rudder than a carpenter, and a guest judges better a banquet, not the cook (*Pol.* 3. 11. 1282a17–23).

The assumption is that the art of legislation is an art which legislators judge less well than those subject to their laws. Though legislators are of course accidentally subject to their own legislation (see *Pol.* 3. 6. 1279a1–16).

We see, then, that, because they have some virtue and wisdom, the people ought to hold sovereignty collectively. They would thus have the authority to elect officials and to call them to account (*Pol.* 3. 11. 1281b21–26 and 28–38). Aristotle also suggests that only individuals of great wisdom and virtue ought to hold individual office. At least, he argues that the people cannot hold office individually. For their unjustness and their ignorance would lead them into error (1281b26–28).

But who are the people who together ought to have sovereignty? Aristotle addresses this question when he discusses his ideal constitution. He accepts the conception of the division of labour for assigning functions to individuals in an aristocracy. But he does not apply this conception in a way that is

entirely strict. His application, however, explains how rulers ought to rule by turns. He argues, of course, that aristocrats ideally would not fulfil all functions necessary for a city. They ought not to be craftsmen or farmers, for example (*Pol.* 7. 9. 1328b33–1329a2).

But he also argues that aristocrats would fulfil more than one function. They ought to be both soldiers and assemblymen. These functions would in one way belong to different people, but they would belong to the same people in another way. For the same people take them up at different times of life:

Since there are a military class and a class of assemblymen, who decide about its interest and justice, and these classes appear to be parts of a city most of all, it must be laid down whether these two classes are different or both their functions are to be rendered to the same persons. But this is obvious, that in one way some functions belong to the same people, in another way to different people. In so far as these functions are suited to different primes of life, they belong to different people. The one requires practical wisdom and the other strength (*Pol.* 7. 9. 1329a2–9).

An additional consideration is that those who have force ought not always to be held in subjection. He here refers explicitly to males:

As it is impossible that those with the strength to use force or to hinder its use, that these would always submit to being ruled, so, too, these functions fall to the same persons. For those who are of the heavy infantry have the ability to abide by or not to abide by the constitution. It remains, therefore, that the constitution render both functions to the same persons not at the same time but as strength by nature falls to young men and to old men practical wisdom (*Pol.* 7. 9. 1329a9–16).

He thus argues from justice and expediency that two functions at least fall to the same men (see *Pol.* 7. 9. 1329a16–17).

We see, then, that aristocrats ideally are to have two civic functions. When old and practically wise, they serve in the assembly. And they serve in the military when young and strong. But we also see that Aristotle speaks primarily, if not exclusively, of men.

We might accordingly ask about women. Could women similarly fulfil two civic functions? One might wonder if women could have the honour of sitting in an assembly. They would not seem to be able to fulfil what appears to be a prerequisite for public office. For they would most probably have difficulty serving in ancient armies and navies. Aristotle himself observes the obvious fact that physical strength is a requirement for service in the armed forces, especially the heavy infantry.

But can we nonetheless justify a role for women in an assembly? I think so. We do find a parallel, if different, civic career possible for women in Aristotle's theory. Though they do not serve in its armed forces, females do serve in the households of a city, and this service would appear to qualify them to

hold office in an assembly. Aristotle could offer two arguments to show that women ought to hold the office of assemblywoman. These arguments are both drawn from his theory, though he does not apply them to women.

The first argument is that women possess practical wisdom and virtue which ought to find expression in an assembly. Aristotle argues that the people collectively have more wisdom and virtue than they do individually, as we have seen. But women have a contribution to make in an assembly. For they participate in household management. Their function is to maintain the property acquired by their husbands (again *Pol.* 3. 4. 1277b24–25). Without the contribution of this practical knowledge and virtue, any assembly would not make up a complete whole.

Though he does not make this argument, Aristotle does remind us that women are part of a city. He argues that a wife is part of a family, and that a family is part of a city, and that any part must be good if the whole is to be good. That is why women and children both must be educated with regard to their constitution (*Pol.* 1. 13. 1260b13–20). And on similar grounds he severely criticizes the Lacedaemonians for neglecting their women (*Pol.* 2. 9. 1269b12–1270a15).¹¹

The second argument that Aristotle could offer is that women would best know how laws affect the households of a city. The people know best how laws function because they are subject to them, as we saw. But only a woman would know best how a law affects her function of maintaining a household.

He does not present this argument either, but he does make a very similar argument. When he argues that the people know best how the law applies, he asserts that the manager of a household knows better than a builder how good a house is (*Pol.* 3. 11. 1282a19–21). And women do have a role in managing households.

I conclude, then, that Aristotle could apply the conception of the division of labour in a similar way to both men and women. As he argues that men have different functions at different times of life, so he could argue that women have different functions at different times. Men should serve first in the armed

¹¹ Modrak misconstrues Aristotle's example of the Lacedaemonian women ('Women', p. 213). Aristotle does not use this example to show that women are in general more wanton than men. He uses it merely to show that the Lacedaemonian constitution failed to make its whole city happy (*Pol.* 2. 9. 1269b12–23). Lycurgus successfully brought men under the rule of law, but he neglected to bring women under its rule (1269b39–1270a8). He also implies that lawgivers in other cities were more successful at educating women (1269b34–39).

Salkever agrees with me. He asserts that the Lacedaemonian laws and customs were deficient because they neglected the education of women. The Spartans, he continues, identified courage with virtue (*Finding the Mean*, p. 188).

Levi also agrees. He points out that Aristotle could hardly blame the Spartans for neglecting to educate their women if women were ineducable ('Does Aristotle Exclude Women?', pp. 339–40, 410).

forces and then in the assembly, and women should serve first in the household and then in the assembly. Males and females would thus have similar, but not the same, careers.¹²

My conclusion finds further support in Aristotle's brief indications of the proper ages for being assemblymen and for reproducing. Aristotle implies that the proper age for serving in an assembly is fifty years. He argues that older men should serve in the assembly because they are wise (see again *Pol.* 7. 9. 1329a2–16). And he asserts that fifty is the age of intellectual prime (*Pol.* 7. 16. 1335b32–35). But one would think that older women should serve in the assembly at the same age. Presumably, fifty would be the age of their intellectual prime as well. The age of fifty is also the approximate age at which men and women probably have less concern with their household functions. For at

¹² Smith also uses the principle of division of labour to discuss the role of women in a city ('Nature of Women', pp. 474–7). He argues that Aristotle applies this principle only to natural psychological differences, however (esp. pp. 475 and 477). But when he discusses aristocracy, Aristotle explicitly applies the principle to cultural differences, such as practical wisdom (*Pol.* 7. 9. 1329a2–16). And he implicitly takes into account cultural differences when he discusses the virtues of ruler and ruled (*Pol.* 1. 13. 1260a14–20). Smith also applies the principle of division of labour in a very strict sense. For he argues that one person can have no more than one function (p. 476). Aristotle himself does not apply the principle so strictly. For he argues that the same person can have different functions at different times of life (*Pol.* 7. 9. 1392a6–8 and 1392a13–14).

Smith rightly points out that at *Pol.* 1. 2. 1252b1–3 Aristotle distinguishes women from natural slaves with an analogy to the Delphic knife. Aristotle does argue that nature does not make women like the Delphic knife for more than one purpose (p. 476). But Aristotle also argues that men as well as women are in a sense not always the same people. For we change with age (again *Pol.* 7. 9. 1392a6–8).

Dobbs, of course, argues that women can have no political role to fulfil. Political rule, he claims, has the primary function of moderating male spiritedness. This function enables males to listen better to their rationality. It thus prepares men for rule not only in the city but also in the household. Citizenship, he tells us, is 'therapy' ('Family Matters', pp. 86–7). That women have practical wisdom is beside the point, he continues. Women rule in a household with a practical wisdom, which is not the same as the wisdom required for political rule, he implies. Their domestic offices must be kept distinct from and not absorbed by political offices (p. 87).

I would point out that political rule ought to be not for the sake of those who rule but rather for the sake of those who are ruled (*Pol.* 3. 6. 1279a8–21). One would thus think that any therapeutic measures would best benefit not those who are already in office but those who might one day hold office. Dobbs is quite right to argue that military training can have the effect of moderating spiritedness (p. 87). But those who serve in the armed forces are precisely those destined to rule later in life (*Pol.* 7. 9. 1329a2–17). Dobbs would also appear to forget that practical wisdom is of many kinds, and that to have practical wisdom of one kind would not preclude having wisdom of another kind. Indeed, males possess practical wisdom of both the political and the household varieties. They rule by turns in the city as well as in their own household. If so, why may not females also enjoy practical wisdom of these two kinds? They might thus share rule in civic and domestic politics and yet keep their domestic and civic functions distinct.

this age they both ought to cease their reproductive functions. Aristotle explicitly asserts that neither men nor women ought to reproduce much beyond fifty (*Pol.* 7. 16. 1335b32–38).

We, therefore, see, by Aristotle's own arguments, that women ought to hold office in assemblies. They make the assembly a better whole, for they best know how laws affect households. We might also surmise that a woman of great wisdom and virtue ought to hold high office individually. Aristotle does imply that the very best persons ought to hold individual offices when he discusses the people and their rule. Would not this proposition be true of both males and females?

One might object that these arguments apply only to aristocracy, but Aristotle distinguishes six species of constitutions. I would respond first that the arguments apply both to aristocracy and to polity. For aristocracy differs from polity only in the virtue required of its citizens. Aristocrats aim at the best happiness, which would require the virtue of philosophical wisdom (*Pol.* 3. 7. 1279a34–37; and *Pol.* 7. 1–3). The citizens of a polity at secondary happiness, which they define especially as military activity (*Pol.* 3. 7. 1279a37–1279b4; and *Pol.* 3. 17. 1288a6–15). Happiness of this moral sort requires only practical wisdom and virtue. Both citizens of an aristocracy and those of a polity thus contribute wisdom and virtue, though of different kinds, in their assemblies.

Kingship presents a special case, however. Aristotle argues that a king is appropriate whenever one individual or one family has preeminent virtue:

When a whole family, or some one individual, happens to be distinguished from others in accordance with virtue to such an extent that they surpass all others, then it is just that this family be the royal family and have sovereignty over all, or that this one individual be king (*Pol.* 3. 17. 1288a15–19).

He explains that a king has all the virtues that the people have piecemeal:

By nature the part is not superior to the whole, and this relationship happens to belong to him who has so great a superiority. So that there remains only to obey a man of such sort and to make him sovereign not indeed by turns but absolutely (*Pol.* 3. 17. 1288a26–29).

Notice that this argument depends on the same assumption used to show that the people ought to rule.

Presumably, a woman could also attain preeminence in virtue. For Aristotle does indicate that women can attain virtue. That is why they ought to rule in a household with their husbands (see again *Eth.* 8. 10. 1160b32–1161a3). And why they ought to receive an education (see *Pol.* 1. 13. 1260b13–20). A woman who has extreme virtue would thus have the qualifications needed to be queen. But males may by nature be more apt to be monarchs. Kingship is most often a transitional form of constitution. For a king is primarily a law-giver: 'It is necessary that the best man clearly be a statesman, and that he lay

down laws' (*Pol.* 3. 15. 1286a21–22). He is thus most appropriate for a society that is uncultured. He in fact becomes king because virtue is scarce:

Because of this perhaps, kings ruled first, because men greatly distinguished in accordance with virtue were few to be found and besides inhabited cities were then small. And they were made kings because of their beneficial deeds, the very thing which is the function of good men (*Pol.* 3. 15. 1286b8–11).

Males by nature would thus be most apt to become lawgivers. For males have by nature a practical intellect which is commanding (see again *Pol.* 1. 13. 1260a10–14). They would thus be more likely to be virtuous when a society lacks cultural amenities.

We are left, then, with the corrupt constitutions. I suppose that not only men but also women could become tyrants. Aristotle does suggest that both men and women can be oligarchs. At least, within a family males and females may rule in accordance with wealth and power (see again *Eth.* 8. 10. 1160b35–1161a3). And anyone may rule in a democracy (see 1161a6–9). But surely no one, male or female, would very likely wish to rule within a corrupt constitution. For those rulers who are corrupt do not wish to make a contribution to their society. They rule not in order to provide benefits for others but merely in order to gain benefits themselves (*Pol.* 3. 7. 1279b4–10, for example).

Our final objection remains, however. Aristotle might still seem to imply that women cannot hold political office. For he explicitly asserts that the temperance, the courage, and the justice of a man and a woman are not the same: 'The temperance of a woman and a man are not the same, nor is their courage or their justice, as Socrates maintained, the same' (*Pol.* 1. 12. 1260a21–22). And with regard to courage, at least, he explains that the courage of a man lies in commanding, that of a woman in obeying: 'The courage of a man lies in ruling, that of a woman in serving' (*Pol.* 1. 12. 1260a22–23). He explains that, instead of accepting a general definition of virtue, we would do better to define specific virtues for male and female. And he favourably quotes the poet who said that silence is an adornment for a woman (*Pol.* 1. 13. 1260a28–31).

The best answer to this objection appears to suggest that men and women again exhibit some cultural differences. These differences are similar to those exhibited in the household. Why is this? Men gain a different experience in the military than women do in the household. To see that they do, we must look more closely at the difference between male and female virtue. We must not forget that practical wisdom for Aristotle is not a single virtue. Indeed, Aristotle divides practical wisdom into several species and subspecies. He distinguishes practical wisdom of one kind for an individual, of course, and of another kind for a household, and yet another for a city. He also recognizes a distinct kind for a lawgiver, and he divides practical wisdom for a city into legislative and adjudicative subkinds (*Eth.* 6. 8. 1141b23–1142a11).

How do these distinctions pertain to male and female courage? When he discusses the rule in a polity, Aristotle explains further how male courage differs from female. He argues that a good citizen in a polity has the capability to command and to obey (*Pol.* 3. 4. 1277b7–16). And he compares the difference between commanding and obeying to that between male and female virtue:

The virtue of a good man who is ruled but is free, for example, his justice, would not be one but would have forms in accordance with which he rules and is ruled. So that his temperance and courage differ as do those of a man and a woman. For a man would be believed to be a coward if he exhibited as much courage as a courageous woman, and a woman would be believed garrulous if she exhibited as much discretion as a good man (*Pol.* 3. 4. 1277b18–23).

He explains the difference between these male and female virtues as one between their practical intellects:

Practical wisdom is the only virtue special to a ruler. It seems necessary that all other virtues are common to those ruled and those ruling. But the virtue of the ruled is certainly not practical wisdom but true opinion. The ruled is like the flute maker, but the ruler like the flute player (*Pol.* 3. 4. 1277b25–30).

Men would thus appear to exhibit complete practical wisdom, and women would have only true opinion.

But a brief reflection will tell us why males exhibit full practical wisdom and the courage to rule, and females only correct opinion and the courage to be ruled. In this passage Aristotle most probably discusses courage of a political kind. But only young males serve in the armed forces of a city (see again *Pol.* 7. 9. 1329a2–16). In service they would develop practical wisdom concerned with military matters and acquire the courage to command. That is why they may speak their mind on these matters, but females must remain silent.

Women, however, would surely acquire practical wisdom about household matters. For they manage household property (see again *Pol.* 3. 4. 1277b24–25). They could thus speak out about these matters, but men would have to remain silent. If they require it, women would also exhibit the courage to command in a household. And men would have only right opinion and the courage to serve.

Temperance is more difficult. Why would men have practical wisdom concerning temperance, and women only true opinion? Again, Aristotle apparently refers to temperance of a political sort. Temperance, of course, is a mean concerned with our appetites for food, drink, and sex (*Eth.* 3. 10.). But these appetites have a political mean determined in part by what territory and resources a city might have. Aristotle especially argues that the population of a city ought not to exceed the resources of its territory (*Pol.* 7. 4. 1326b2–11; and *Pol.* 7. 5. 1326b26–32). But what territory and resources a city has,

depends eventually on considerations of defence (*Pol.* 7. 4. 1326b22–24; and *Pol.* 7. 5. 1326b39–1327a3). And on considerations of law and order (*Pol.* 7. 4. 1326a25–33 and 1326b11–22).

But women would exhibit practical wisdom and temperance concerning household matters. They would best know what would constitute moderation with regard to appetite within a household. For a household obviously has limited resources, too.¹³

We see, then, that within a city men and women exhibit roles not entirely dissimilar to those exhibited within a household. Males and females both ought to have a turn at ruling in the assembly. Males especially should have a say in military matters, and females a say in household matters.

IV

We may conclude, I think, that Aristotle offers a political theory more amenable to questions of sexual equality than we might have thought. His assumption that men are naturally superior to women need not entail that women are culturally inferior to men. For natural psychological differences between men and women are largely irrelevant when compared with cultural qualities of men and women. Males may have a practical intellect naturally superior to that of females, but males and females can acquire similar intellectual and moral virtues. Because their virtues are similar, both men and women have the capacity to rule by turns within a city and a household.

Men and women do however exhibit some cultural differences. These differences appear to explain why men and women have practical wisdom of different kinds, and why they rule over different matters. Male virtue appears to turn on the greater strength of young males. Their strength makes young men better fit for military service in the city and better fit to acquire property. They thus acquire experience and practical knowledge about these matters. Female virtue may turn on greater compassion. This quality may suit them better for household management. And, hence, their knowledge and experience with these matters.

But my argument is merely an elaboration of Aristotle's theory. And the argument rests on an assumption that I have not questioned. Namely, males are by nature psychologically superior to females. To question this assumption does not appear to be a task for a philosopher. At least, not for this philosopher. This task would probably be more appropriate for psychologists, or physiologists, or perhaps even anatomists. What I hope to have shown is that this assumption about psychological inequality is for the most part irrelevant

¹³ Dobbs puts the matter nicely, though he speaks of household virtue only. He states that the general definition of virtue is the same for both men and women. But that the particular means appropriate for males and females must determine their different functions ('Family Matters', p. 82).

to issues concerned with political equality and sexuality.¹⁴ One might also ask to what extent Aristotle's more empirical assumptions apply in our time. For example, how important is physical strength today for performing military service or for acquiring property. And how important is compassion for household management?

Finally, we might wonder why Aristotle does not explicitly apply his arguments to women and their political role. I cannot say for certain. But he could not very likely have failed to see the implications of his political theory for women. After all, he offers a concept of natural slavery that has revolutionary implications for ancient politics, though he does not make them explicit, either. Perhaps he thought that a proposal to grant women a voice in politics the Athenians of his day would misunderstand. He did write the *Politics* in a language that is politically charged, and he seldom, if ever, misses a chance to inveigh against extreme democracy and its excesses.¹⁵

Paul Schollmeier

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS

¹⁴ Modrak does decide this issue against Aristotle ('Women', pp. 217–9). So does Lange ('Woman', pp. 12–4).

¹⁵ Levi points out that Aristotle, because he was an alien, may not have wished to confront the biases of his audience in a direct manner. Citing *Politics* 2.3.1268b40–1269a25, he suggests that Aristotle may also have had concerns about undermining habitual obedience to law ('Does Aristotle Exclude Women?', pp. 400–1).