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## Why Does a Woman's Deliberative Faculty Have No Authority? Aristotle on the Political Role of Women

**Abstract** *In this paper I will discuss Aristotle's controversial philosophical views on women. I will critically examine three main interpretations of his claim that women have deliberative faculty "without authority". According to the first line of interpretation, Aristotle has in mind that women's incapacity of advice-giving and decision-making in public affairs are determined by conventions in the political context of his time. I will attempt to point out the disadvantages of this kind of interpretation. Furthermore, I will put forward the reasons why is implausible the more recent interpretation, given by Marguerite Deslauriers. According to her reading, the lack of authority of deliberative faculty in women means nothing else than the tasks over which women have authority are for the purpose of the tasks put forth by men. The prevailing interpretation among scholars is that, in Aristotle's view, women are naturally inferior to men, due to the fact that they are all too frequently overruled by the irrational "forces" of their nature. I will argue that this line of interpretation elucidates what Aristotle presumably has in mind, although it makes his account of women and their rationality, if not inconclusive, then indisputably problematic. In other words, I attempt to prove that, if the prevailing line of interpretation is correct, such view of women produces some philosophically "insurmountable" problems for Aristotle. The aim of the last section of the paper is to point out how some of these problems could eventually be resolved.*

**Keywords:** Aristotle, women, deliberative faculty, decision-making, authority

902

### 1. Introduction

Unlike the sophists, Socrates and Plato, Aristotle's views on women could be characterized both as traditional and conservative<sup>1</sup>. What makes them philosophically interesting and challenging is the fact that he did not accept the traditional role of slaves and women for granted, but he provided the explanations for his views. Although it was generally accepted in Greece of Aristotle's time that women should have neither deliberative nor political function in the *polis*, he considered that this thesis ought to be supported by a reasonable explanation. Additionally, women did not play, as

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we all know, any political role in the ancient Greek society. Aristotle did think that this was a valid thesis, giving reasons for such a belief.

The aim of this paper is not to criticize Aristotle's beliefs from the contemporary, feminist perspective,<sup>2</sup> but to reconstruct and critically evaluate his views of the social and political role of women, taking into account the conceptual framework of his philosophy. I will focus on a much-discussed Aristotelian claim on women's deliberative capacity lacking in authority. There are three main interpretations of this thesis, which will be critically discussed. According to the first line of interpretation, Aristotle has in mind that women's inability of advice-giving and decision-making in public affairs is by convention in the political context of his time. Aristotle evidently shared the prevailing opinion of his time about women's inferiority, but I will attempt to prove that the customs of his time were not sufficient validation for his claim that women's deliberative faculty lacks authority. Furthermore, I will put forward the reasons why the more recent interpretation, given by Marguerite Deslauriers, is implausible. According to her, the lack of authority of deliberative faculty in women means nothing else than the tasks over which women have authority are for the purpose of the tasks of men. The prevailing interpretation among scholars is that, in Aristotle's view, women are naturally inferior to men, due to the fact that they are all too frequently overruled by the irrational "forces" of their nature. I will argue that this line of interpretation elucidates what Aristotle presumably has in mind, although it makes his account of women and their rationality, if not inconclusive, then indisputably problematic. I will also attempt to prove that, although the prevailing line of interpretation may be correct, such a view of women produces some almost philosophically "insurmountable" problems to Aristotle. The aim of the last section of the paper is to point out how eventually some of these problems could be solved.

903

## **2. The Central Biological Difference between the Male and the Female and its Ethical Implications**

Briefly speaking, in his *Generation of Animals* (GA 765b9–15), Aristotle draws two central differences between the sexes in the generation of offspring. First, the male has full capacity to concoct the semen, due to the amount of its vital heat, and to emit it outside his body, whereas the

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2 There are some very insightful papers on Aristotle's philosophy from the feminist perspective. See particularly: Freeland 1998 and Witt 2005.

female's *catamenia*, which can be better or worse concocted, preserves the semen within her body. Second, the male "has the principle of the form" (in his soul) that "determines the shape and the functions of the off-spring" (Deslauriers 2009: 216), while the female contributes only the material to the new offspring, which is "in the substance of *catamenia*" (GA 727b31). The *eidos* of the future offspring is potentially in the soul of the male, and the semen, serving as a kind of instrument, puts "motion in actuality" (GA 765b21), which fundamentally influences both the shape and faculties of the offsprings. The ovum of the female provides merely the material for generation of anew individual. Aristotle's division of the sexual role in generation is not without the evaluation of both sexes. Due to the fact that the female is "incapable of concocting the nutriment in its last stage into semen", "women are", Aristotle concludes, "impotent men (GA 728a 18)". Aristotle seems to surpass the field and the language of science and biology by attributing the female "impotence" to the inability to influence any of the psychic abilities of the child.

There are different opinions among scholars about the relevance of the biological sexual difference (Lange 1983, Deslauriers 2009) for Aristotle's account of the political roles of men and women. Biological differentiation has been considered the foundation for the socio-political, rational and moral differences of the sexes. Lynda Lange (Lange 1983) seems to argue that Aristotle aims to ground the claims on women's political inferiority on the biological differences. On the other hand, Marguerite Deslauriers (Deslauriers 2009) supposes that the reasons why Aristotle's political sexual differences could not be explained in Aristotelian biological, conceptual framework.

In light of *Politics* (1260a7–14), as we will see, one may rightly draw the inference that there is no explicit connection between Aristotle's biological reflections on the female's contribution to the generation of the off-spring and his claims on the political role of women in the society. While arguing on the political role of men and women, he has in mind the psychological make-up, the psychological factors significant for determining the political relations, rather than the biology of both sexes. Nevertheless, Aristotle's vocabulary, used not only to describe, but also to evaluate the female's biological deficiency, points out that his biological claims do not have a neutral meaning, and subsequently do have, albeit indirectly, socio-political implications.

I concur with Marguerite Deslauriers' opinion that Aristotle did not intend to found his political claims on biological differences (Deslauriers

2009: 215), but rather to ground them in the divergent psychological characteristics of men and women. One may, of course, argue that the development of the body during the embryological formation could also affect the psychic abilities and their functioning from perception through imagination to reasoning. For example, some defects of our body can also affect our soul.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, due to Aristotle's thesis of the priority of the soul over the body, one may claim that generally bodily characteristics are not constitutive of psychological characteristics, that is to say, that the body does not determine our soul and its abilities and features. Moreover, the psychic features, particularly of the rational soul, are not reducible to a biological conceptual framework.

Evidently, Aristotle did not program his biology to be the justification for gender differences, neither had he in mind to establish a coherent philosophical account of the female gender founded in his biological writings. Nevertheless, there is a consistency in Aristotle concerning the inferiority of women from the biological through the psychological and to the socio-political level. From these very diverse perspectives, Aristotle evidently held that a woman is a deficient human being, inferior to man in all respects. Therefore, his evaluation of the female's role in the process of natural generation fits in his overall outlook that he has about women. This does not mean, as some scholars did imply (Lange 1983, Okins 1979, etc.), that his "misogynist" reflections have implications for his philosophy in general, and for his metaphysics in particular.<sup>4</sup>

905

### 3. The Female's Deliberative Reason without Authority

Aristotle asserts that both men and women do not differ in species, and are therefore humans due to their uniquely human form (*GA* 731b34–732a2, *Met.* 1058a29–b25). Accordingly, they must share the same moral characteristics and intellectual abilities that distinguish humans as rational and political animals. Nevertheless, many times in his *Politics* he states that "according to nature (φύσει)" the male is superior, and the female is inferior, implying, as it might seem, that women, unlike men, are incomplete humans. These evaluative claims on the female's inferiority have social and political consequences. Men should rule and women should be ruled over, i.e., women should be subjected to men in their social and political lives.

3 Regarding the question of the priority in Aristotle's philosophy see Peramatzis 2012.

4 Recently, Charlotte Witt successfully argued that "gender associations with Aristotelian matter and form are extrinsic to these concepts". See Witt 2005: 5.

There is a tendency in the contemporary literature to defend Aristotle from the feminist accusations, by drawing attention to the places where the opposite genders are not accounted for in the terms of men's superiority over women. By suggesting that Aristotle's claims on the gender roles might imply that "the fullest human excellence would combine masculine and feminine inclinations", (Arnhart 1994: 398) overestimates some passages in Aristotle's writings where, indeed, the evaluation of the female and the relationship between genders are more complex and more friendly than it has been usually assumed. The claims for the inferiority of women and their subjection to men's rule are prevailing in Aristotle, whether we concur with them or not, or how we judge them from a contemporary perspective.

906

Aristotle, however, does not leave his claims about the men's supremacy over women unexplained. One of the justifications for his beliefs regarding the different political roles of both genders and slaves may found in the following well-known passage:

Almost all things rule (τὰ ἄρχοντα) and are ruled (ἀρχόμενα) according to nature (φύσει). But the free man rules the slave in a different way in which the male rules the female or the man the child; although the parts of the soul (τὰ μέρη τῆς ψυχῆς) are present in all of them, they are present in different ways. For the slave has no deliberative faculty (τὸ βουλευτικόν) at all; the woman has, but it is without authority (ἄκυρον), and the child has, but it is incomplete (ἀτελής). (Pol. 1260a7–14)

In my analysis, I will focus on the relationship between the male and the female, skipping the very important question of slavery, for it falls outside the scope of the present discussion. The ruling is strictly predisposed and determined "according to nature", implying that the better should rule over the worse. Analogously, in the human soul the better "part" should rule over the "worse" one, in order for it to accomplish the complete excellence. Aristotle accounts for the political or ruling legitimacy in terms of the ability to deliberate (τὸ βουλευτικόν). It is a disposition to arrive at correct moral and political judgments about what should be done in private and public affairs. This is also a particular kind of means-end reasoning, where the starting point is a good goal and the conclusion is a decision about what should be done here and now, in order to achieve that aim.

Unlike slaves and children, women do possess the capacity to deliberate, which is, however, ἄκυρον. This term can have one of two meanings: it can denote those who has no power or authority; or it can apply to laws or sentences, meaning that they are "no longer in force, cancelled, annulled,

or set aside” (Bradshaw 1991: 564). However, it is very important to understand what Aristotle here meant by the non-authoritative character of deliberative reason in women relative to the authoritative deliberative faculty in men. This issue is crucial for understanding Aristotle’s account of both the “nature” of women’s reasoning and their exclusion from political life, i.e., public affairs.

There are three lines of interpretation of Aristotle’s ambiguous claim that women’s practical rationality is “without authority”. I will argue that all three of them are problematic. My aim is to prove that the first and the third one seem to lead Aristotle to contradictions, whereas the second one is not supported by the textual evidence in the *Politics*. We cannot be certain as to what Aristotle has in mind, but we can at least attempt a reconstruction of his text.

According to the first line of interpretation, Aristotle reiterates the view, prevailing in Athens of his time, about the women’s faculty for deliberation in public affairs. Women might accurately and correctly judge about moral and even political affairs, having at the same time no executive power to implement their judgments. If this is what Aristotle has in mind when he asserts that women do have τὸ βουλευτικόν, but without authority, then he is stating an empirical fact, and it seems that the first line of interpretation is correct. Nevertheless, his claim on the inability of women to rule “without authority” seems to be naturalistic, since it is based on Aristotle’s assumptions that women are naturally inferior to men (*Pol.* 1245b12, 1254a14–16, 1259a41). Moreover, Aristotle’s first claim in the above-cited passage that “all things rule and are ruled according to nature” presupposes that women rule or are ruled “according to nature”. On the other hand, according to the first line of interpretation, women’s non-authoritative deliberative faculty seems to be by conventions, i.e., by the opinions and customs of Athenian society of 4th century BC. Subsequently, if we accept this kind of interpretation, it seems that we would have to accept two contradictory claims: that – women’s deliberative faculty “without authority” is “according to nature”, and that – women’s deliberative faculty “without authority” is according to conventions. Or, at least we would weaken Aristotle’s argument about women’s natural inability to exercise their deliberative faculty, since it lacks authority, by claiming that this is according to the conventions. Aristotle shared the prevailing opinion of his time about women’s inferiority, but I do not believe that these opinions and customs were sufficient justification for his claim of women’s deliberative faculty lacking authority.

Recently, Marguerite Deslauriers (Deslauriers 2003: 228–229) has suggested an interpretation of the thesis that women's deliberative faculty lacks authority, in terms of the different functions and tasks that men and women exercise (NE 1162b22–3). The functions and tasks of women have authority in different domain. Both genders have some roles and authorities in the household. The duties and tasks of women are restricted to the household, whereas men's duties and tasks "extend beyond the household to the city" (Deslauriers 2003: 228). According to Deslauriers' interpretation of Aristotle, the *polis* has priority over the household, i.e., the household exists and functions for the purpose of the *polis*. Therefore, the ruling of the house hold is for the sake of the ruling of the *polis*, and hence is both better and choice worthy. As Deslauriers rightly claims, the assertion that the woman's faculty of deliberation is "without authority", means that the deliberations and decisions of women are "subject to the authority of the deliberative faculty in men (Deslauriers 2003: 229)". In her opinion, the reason for that is that duties and tasks over which women have authority are restricted to the household, and are for the sake of the duties and tasks of men, which are performed in the *polis*. The rule of the household, which is a woman's task, is without authority relative to the rule of the *polis*, which is a man's task. This interpretation appears consistent and conclusive. It also brings out an insight that the deliberative faculty in women is not completely without authority, but is limited to less important and worthwhile jobs.

Yet, this interpretation produces more problems than it solves. First, if Aristotle had had in mind that the authority of women is relative and limited to the household, he would have explicitly said so or at least he would have had indicated it. Second, when claiming that a woman has a deliberative faculty, but without authority, Aristotle does not specify the domains in which this is the case, although the lack of a woman's authority in public affairs is evident. This claim appears more like a general one. Third, in Aristotle's view there is no domain in which only women rule, not even in the household. Apparently women only partake in ruling the household. Aristotle explicitly claims that if women rule in the household, it is not due to their excellence, but because of the wealth and power (NE 1160b38–1161a2), meaning that this kind of ruling is not preferable. Consequently, women should not have exclusive authority in the household, but they share it with their husbands.

The prevailing interpretation among scholars (Fortenbaugh 1977, Modrak 2004, Arnhart 1994) regarding the thesis that the deliberative faculty in

women lacks authority, is based upon certain characteristics of women's nature. According to this interpretation, Aristotle's intention here is to explain why women should not rule, and not simply to state the fact that they cannot rule in the society of his time. In other words, Aristotle makes an effort to justify his previously stated claim that there are natural rulers and natural subjects. This justification is based on the nature of the rulers and their subjects, implying that the nature of the former has to be better and superior than the nature of the latter. It seems that the problem with a woman's nature is that the rational and irrational parts of her soul are not properly balanced, in the sense that irrational "forces" are often not subjected to her deliberative faculty. In other words, the prevailing interpretation takes it that Aristotle's claim that the deliberative faculty of a woman is non-authoritative, is to be understood as follows: a woman's practical reason is all too frequently overcome by the irrational "part" of her soul; that is to say, her deliberative faculty can easily be over-ridden by certain irrational desires or appetites, thus preventing her from making reasonable decisions in public affairs.

909

As we can see, according to this line of interpretation Aristotle's controversial and ambiguous claim should be understood in the psychological conceptual framework. It might be claimed that it fits the context, since in *Politics* I.13 Aristotle discusses the relation of the rational and irrational part of the soul. Albeit this discussion does not directly relate to a different deliberative faculty in men and women. A differentiation of the rational and the irrational part of the soul might indicate in what direction the special character of the deliberative faculty in women should be understood.

This line of interpretation in the psychological conceptual framework can be well supported by the passages from the *History of Animals*, in which the male's and female's psychological make-up are distinguished. Aristotle surveys the natural differences between male and female that characterize many animals including human beings, implying that these features cannot be applied only to animals, but also to human beings. Compared with the male, the female is inclined to be softer, "more capable of learning (μαθηματικώτερον)"<sup>5</sup> more attentive to nurturing the young, and of "more retentive memory", whereas also being less spirited, less courageous, less savage. Aristotle supplemented his observation by claiming that in comparison to the male the female is "more compassionate, more easily moved to tears", "more jealous, more querulous", "more difficult to rouse to

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5 HA 608a28.



action" (*HA* 608a25–608b19), etc. Aristotle is fully aware that these are general tendencies, and that there are the exceptions, even in one and the same species, but these differences are only in degree (Arnhart 1994: 397).

910 From these comparisons, including other passages in Aristotle (e.g., *PA* 661b33–4), the majority of scholars concluded that Aristotle, when claiming that the women's deliberative capacity lacks authority, meant that women in general are easily and frequently overcome by their irrational forces, which prevents them to exercise their deliberative capacity properly and beneficially both for them and society as such. Presumably, that is what Aristotle has in mind, since it fits the psychological make-up of females, as it is described in the *History of Animals* that they are, in comparison to men, more compassionate, jealous, querulous and easily moved to tears. For being too emotional or not being able to control their emotions, it seems that women in general are naturally incapable of judging properly on public affairs, and accordingly, of making reasonable decisions. Thereby, it is important to stress that their weakness in deliberation is not caused, in Aristotle's view, by their cognitive incapacities. He even stresses that women are "more capable of learning", and that they have "retentive memory". So, he distinguishes here also between the cognitive and deliberative functions of reason.

This interpretation also raises many problems. To say that women cannot rule their emotions is an empirical generalization with lots of exceptions. Fortenbaugh (1977: 138–139) uses an example of Euripides' *Medea* to illustrate this thesis. One may also utilize the counter-example of Homer's Penelope, whose practical reasons was not overruled by emotions. More serious are the problems of philosophical character. If women in general are overcome by appetites, then, as Marguerite Deslauriers rightly objects, it would be difficult for Aristotle to distinguish them from weak willed persons. Furthermore, there are also men overruled by emotions like Homer's Achilles, implying that the subjection to emotions cannot be a *differentia specifica* of women. In addition, Deslauriers objects to this kind of interpretation that if women are unable to control their irrational "forces" by their reason, then they cannot be virtuous.

#### **4. Women, *Phronesis* and Virtues**

I will argue that the above-discussed, prevailing interpretation elucidates what Aristotle presumably has in mind, although it makes his account of women and their rationality if not inconclusive, then indisputably problematic. The additional support for this kind of interpretation will be

provided. I will also attempt to prove that, even if this widespread line of interpretation is correct, it produces intricate problems for Aristotle regarding the question of virtues in women. The aim of the last section of the paper is to point out how eventually some of these problems may be resolved.

Marguerite Deslauriers objects that the last line of interpretation does not have “textual authority” (Deslauriers: 223). The passages from the *History of Animals*, concerning Aristotle’s views of women’s natural tendencies of their psychological make-up, is the textual evidence for those who claim that women are inclined to be overruled by emotions, whereby weakening their deliberative faculty. Moreover, Aristotle’s remarks that women (608a10–19) have the natural inclination not to act, presumably are meant to indicate their frequent indecisiveness in making decisions. This inclination, in Aristotle’s view, makes women incapable to exercise political functions, which require that their participants should be quick, calm and very decisive in action.

911

These assumptions are supported by the passage in the *Nicomachean ethics*, where Aristotle discusses the situation, in which a man cannot be overruled by pleasure and pains, claiming that most men can “hold out against, when this is not due to heredity or disease like the softness with the kings of Scythians, or that witch distinguishes the female from the male” (*NE* 1150b14–16). From this sentence, one might infer the conclusion that, according to Aristotle, a certain moral attitude, for example, the lack of self-control, is under the influence of “a biological, gender-based disposition” (Bradshaw 1991: 568). Referring to the inferior endurance and softness as the innate characteristics, I concur with Bradshaw’s assumption here that, “female sex as a whole suffers from some physiological weakness” (Bradshaw 1991: 568). As, it has been shown, Aristotle utilizes this kind of argumentation, which is of bio-psychological rather than of sociological character, to generalize some of his observations of individual females to the female gender in general. This is, altogether, more than problematic at least due to the reason, with which Aristotle himself might concur, that there are some women, albeit rare and exceptional, who can act reasonably and decisively. It is certain that the prevailing opinions of his time influenced Aristotle’s views, but they are, according to the given textual evidence, grounded in what Aristotle really held about the female nature. This much seems to suggest that these views are for him not pure conventions; they are in fact supported by arguments.

Moreover, it seems that there is a contradiction between the claim about women’s “physiological weakness”, i. e., their inability to control the

irrational “parts” of their soul by reason, and the attribution of virtues to them. It is, indeed, inconsistent to maintain that women cannot subject their irrational appetites and emotions, and to claim that they can be virtuous, which presupposes the acquirement of rational excellence. I will extend the principle of charity to Aristotle, in order to reconcile to some degree his apparently inconsistent views. One may reply to the assumed inconsistency in Aristotle by referring to *Nicomachean Ethics* 1102b28–33, where Aristotle distinguishes reason and the “appetitive and in general the desiring element”, which is irrational, but can also be virtuous by “obeying” reason. Since women have reason and a deliberative faculty, the inference might be drawn that the virtues of the irrational “part” of the soul should be subjected to the virtues of her own reason and deliberative faculty. Taking into account our previous discussion, and Aristotle’s general account of women, one may assert that women do not subject the virtues of the appetitive and desiring part of the soul to their own reason. Yet, due to the fact that women also “share in reason”,<sup>6</sup> they can obey, listen to reason, be cultivated and taught by reason. In order to acquire the virtues of some irrational parts of the soul, it seems obvious that women should teach, educate and guide the irrational desires by reason. On the other hand, women in general have a natural inclination to be subjected to irrational appetites and emotions. This natural inclination, however, can be cultivated and educated, permitting women to develop the virtues. In this context, obeying does not mean pure subjection, but the understanding of the reasons why such subjection is good and beneficial both for our irrational desires and for the functioning of the female’s soul as a whole.

Aristotle’s differentiation between the good understanding and phronesis,<sup>7</sup> where the latter presupposes issuing commands, albeit both implying the accurate grasping of the things belonging to the practical realm, is comparable with the relation between the female and the male. Regardless of the advanced faculty of the accurate understanding even of the political matters, the female is deprived of issuing commands. Aristotle might permit that women can command in the domain of the household, but

6 Marguerite Deslauriers states that women and slaves “borrow” the practical rationality from free, rational men, which facilitates their becoming virtuous. Instead of this term, i.e., “borrow”, which might imply that what has been borrowed, has to be returned, I am more inclined to utilize terms such as “share in”, meaning that the irrational “parts” of our soul participate in reason. In this way, reason is present in all other virtues, although it manifests differently in men and women.

7 Bradshaw (1991) discusses in detail the relation between prudence (*pronesis*) and women’s issues.

only under the control of their fathers or husbands, if they believe that her commands are reasonable, and if they allow them to be imposed upon the other members of the household.

When Aristotle discusses the subject-matter of education in the last two books of the *Politics*, he is exclusively concerned with the education of the citizen, and the good citizen is repeatedly identified with the good man. Nevertheless, in their families the women have the opportunity to have access to practical reason in their fathers, and later their husbands. Although women are *dependent* on the others and are not provided the opportunity to acquire a proper education, they are inclined to listen, understand the arguments of others and, consequently, to be taught how to behave rationally in their own right and domain. Therefore, women can be virtuous in so far as they can develop certain kind of virtues suitable to them, by subjecting themselves to teaching and the correct reasoning of free men.

913

If the *phronesis*, i.e., the rational, practical excellence, is the only *arete* peculiar to the natural ruler, then there is a problem concerning the attaining of virtues for the subjects, including women, since *phronesis*, according to Aristotle, is the condition for being virtuous. One of the replies to this serious, philosophical problem, concerning the attribution of the *phronesis* to all non-ruling individuals, might be that by partaking in the practical rationality, non-ruling individuals develop the virtues of their own. Despite the fact that women have reason, including a deliberative faculty, according to Aristotle, they are enabled to develop it to its “completeness”, i.e., to its full realization. Women can be moderate, generous, even courageous, but different from men not only in degree, but also in kind. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle gave examples of female character virtues: diligence (φιλεργία, literary “delight in hard work”) and moderation (σωφροσύνη), defined as “the virtue that disposes us to obey νόμος where physical pleasures are concerned” (*Rht.* 1366b14–15).

It seems that the lack of *control* either in the psychic make-up or the political organization prevents women from exercising their deliberative faculty to its full potential, i.e., to its full accomplishment. According to Aristotle, however, women, on one hand, can acquire virtues, but, on the other, in exercising their virtues, they are always do so under someone else’s “command”, either of their fathers or husbands or the prevailing customs of the society they live in. Therefore, according to him, women have virtues, but different in kind to men, which, among other things, means that they participate in reason to some degree. Consequently,

women can develop some virtues, appropriate to them, even to their full “completeness”, as in the case of the definition of feminine *σωφροσύνη* in the *Rhetoric*, but always under the guidance of someone else, i.e., male individuals or certain social and cultural customs.

## 5. Conclusion

914

Aristotle never disregarded the position of women in a society. Moreover, he criticizes a slavish treatment of women as a matter of brute strength and barbarism. At *Politics* 1259b1, Aristotle even provides a telling analogy of the relation of the male and the female with the rule in the constitutional cities, where citizens are equal. In these cities, one holds an office when it is one's turn. This simile indicated that the male and the female are, in fact, equal like the constitutional rule, although Aristotle never explains why it is never the woman's turn to rule in the household. Nonetheless, we can find in Aristotle places, where he provides a more positive view of the gender relations, although they are not detailed enough, or not systematically connected to overthrow the traditional interpretation of how Aristotle accounted for the female's gender and its social and political role.

If Aristotle, does have in mind that women are seldom capable of ruling, since their deliberative faculty has been overcome by their irrational desires, appetites and emotions, then his thesis has serious social and political consequences. It follows that they should be governed by someone with a fully developed deliberative faculty, i.e., by their fathers or husbands, who possess the authority required for their preferably rational choices both in private and public affairs. Furthermore, it implies that they are fully excluded from public affairs, and they only have authority within the household. Nevertheless, Aristotle asserts that women are even “more capable of teaching”, and have a deliberative faculty, facilitating their correct judgments about practical affairs. If their reason is capable of teaching, listening and understanding reasonable arguments, which can lead women to better and deeper insights, one may rightly raise the question of why they are then incapable of developing the deliberative faculty which could have authority. Such a reply cannot be found in Aristotle.

In the most developed contemporary societies men and women are constitutionally equal. Nonetheless, women's deliberations are all too frequently treated insufficiently recognized, as if they were less sound, reasonable, grounded, even sometimes as having no authority at all. The laws, which guarantee the equality of all citizens, are obligatory not

only for the equality of both genders, but also for the punishment of those who are breaking these laws. The lesson we can learn from Aristotle, concerning the issue of authority, is that all individuals, including women in our contemporary societies, should primarily perform and develop both their intellectual and character excellences to their complete accomplishment, if they want their deliberations to be accepted “with authority”. It is, indeed, not the only, but the best way to “fight” against traditionally grounded constraints and prejudices of all kinds.<sup>8</sup>

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Zašto ženska sposobnost rasuđivanja nema autoritet?

Aristotel o političkoj ulozi žena

916

Rezime

U ovom radu raspravljaju o Aristotelovim kontroverznim pogledima o ženama. Kritički ću preispitati tri glavne interpretacije njegove tvrdnje da žene imaju sposobnost rasuđivanja, ali „bez autoriteta“. Interpretatori, koji spadaju u prvu grupu tumača ove tvrdnje, smatraju da je Aristotel pod time podrazumevao da je ženska nesposobnost da daje ispravne savete i donosi pravilne odluke prouzrokovana konvencijama i običajima vremena u kojem je živio. Nastojacu da ukažem na loše strane ovog tipa tumačenja. Nadalje, izneću razloge zašto nije uverljiva jedna od novijih interpretacija koju iznosi Margaret Delorje. Prema njenom čitanju, nedostatak autoriteta u ženskoj sposobnosti rasuđivanja ne znači ništa drugo do da zadacima, nad kojima žene imaju autoritet sprovode se zarad zadataka nad kojima muškarci imaju autoriteta. Prema preovlađujućem tumačenju, među znalcima antičke baštine, Aristotel je smatrao da su žene inferiorne u odnosu na muškarce, zato što isuviše često bivaju nadvladane iracionalnim „silama“ svoje prirode. Argumentovaću u prilog toga da upravo ova preovlađujuća interpretacija razjašnjava ono što je Aristotel najverovatnije imao u vidu, premda to čini njegovo shvatanje žena i njihove racionalnosti ako ne inkonkluzivnim, onda neosporno problematičnim. Drugim rečima, nastojacu na pokažem da ukoliko je preovlađujući tip interpretacije ispravan, takvo shvatanje žena za Aristotela proizvodi neke filozofski „nepremostive“ probleme. Cilj poslednjeg dela ovog rada jeste da se ukaže kako bi se neki od tih problema mogli rešiti.

**Cljučne reči:** Aristotel, žene, sposobnost rasuđivanja, donošenje odluka, autoritet