

Gender and Rhetoric in Plato's Political Thought

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Gender and the Virtues in the Rhetorical Situation

Nor is it at all clear that, faced with the problems of our own age, we are at a less primitive stage of political thinking than the Greeks were when confronted with the formation of the *polis*.

– Christian Meier (1990, 125)

If the political community is a “we,” it is only very recently that this “we” has ceased to mean “we men” and come to mean “we men and women.” Until virtually the present moment in the history of civilization, women could not generally speak for themselves in public debate. In order to understand how women are and can be included in the new “we,” we must not take their exclusion as a simple and regrettable historical fact but as a cultural and ideological process.¹ In that sense, at least, we can get some help from the twenty-five-hundred-year history of political thought and political rhetoric: We can get the most help from those who discussed the exclusion of women explicitly and assessed its justifications.

Plato understands the exclusion of women and the female from political life as corrupting the ethical development of men. Unlike contemporary arguments for the inclusion of women under the rubric of “gender justice,” Plato’s arguments appeal to what we, the philosophical heirs of Kant, would call nonmoral or submoral considerations. Plato appeals to the desires and aspirations of men that, he claims, are frustrated in the regimes that inculcate and perpetuate women’s exclusion. Such an appeal is in essence rhetorical: Plato creates and deploys a rhetoric of gender that can aid us in understanding our new “we.”

¹ As Brian Smith puts it, “You have to stop being what you were when you start paying attention to the work it takes to maintain your clear distinctions” (quoted by Haraway 1997, 67).

The problem of forging a community out of many disparate elements is hardly new, of course. The classical Greek orators developed a rhetorical art that took as central the plurality of classes within the regime and usually within their audience.² We, in our new and unprecedented rhetorical situation, need to develop a rhetorical art that is suited for the new public in which men and women for the first time have the full right (if only formally recognized) to speak and to listen. We need an explicitly gendered art of rhetoric, to take the simplest reason, because we now must make gender issues the subject of collective debate. Such an art must recognize that speeches are always heard with the gender of the speaker in mind, and it must also teach us to craft speeches that take account of the very different experiences of the men and women who listen to them.

1.1 THE ECLIPSE OF THE RHETORICAL SITUATION

Our rhetorical needs are poorly recognized because we all half-believe in features of modern moral theory and contemporary social science that obscure the essential features of the rhetorical situation. The rhetorical situation and the conception of politics that it presumes even appear mythical, a story of a lost Golden Age invented by Philathenian political theorists such as Hannah Arendt and Cornelius Castoriadis. We are used to moral theories that contrast duty with interest, justice with happiness, the right with the good. Morality has its demands, and on the contemporary moral understanding, one of these demands is the demand for the equality of men and women. Like all other demands of morality, according to our semi-Kantian common concept of moral reasoning, the demand for the equality of women and men cannot be impeached in its obligatory character by nonmoral considerations. Compromise on that demand may be humanly necessary, but these compromises are not in themselves morally credible. They are mere concessions to vested interests, or, to use a more Kantian tone, concessions to “man’s radical evil.” To build a justification of gender justice on the satisfaction or reweighting rather than the simple irrelevance of these interests is to deceive and seduce our reason from moral duty.³

These Kantian considerations would constrain our defense of gender justice along with other moral questions; the role of values in

² The principal recent works on rhetoric and class pluralism in Athens are those of Josiah Ober (1989, 1996). Ober 1999 explores the relation between Plato and other critics of the Athenian democracy, on the one hand, and Athenian political-rhetorical practices, on the other.

³ See, e.g., *Critique of Judgment* 327; *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* 410–11 and n.; *Critique of Practical Reason* 84–6, 89–90.

contemporary social science makes discussions of any moral question appear superfluous and inexplicable when such discussions occur.⁴ I am not going to discuss the alleged fact–value distinction, but I do want to point to another important consequence of our adopting the language of values. “Everyone has his or her own values” gets translated in the rational-choice models now prevalent in economics, sociology, and political science into “Everyone has his or her own fixed preferences about the structure of society as a whole.” Some prefer more liberty, say, and others prefer more equality; some, greater distribution according to contribution, and others, greater distribution according to need. Even among those whose preferences locate them on the left, some prefer a stronger welfare state paid for by high marginal tax rates while allowing less government regulation of the economy. Others prefer lower tax rates, with welfarist results achieved through more regulation and more state ownership of enterprises. To return to gender issues, some prefer a social order that maintains male privileges, others prefer a social order that guarantees equality of all, and perhaps still others prefer a social order that guarantees female privileges.

This pluralism of and about values is itself supposed to be a fact, the most correct description of our present moral condition. Values are multiple, and at the same time, every individual is equipped with a full range of value judgments about the possible circumstances of every other individual. These preferences about individual and collective “states of affairs” are not changed by the political process, our models assume. Values are merely “strategically revealed” by their holders in attempts to deceive others and so to maximize their realization. By the proper design of institutions, social scientists who work within the rational-choice paradigm aim to compel all to express preferences “sincerely.”⁵

The result of our Kantian moral theory combined with our post-Kantian recognition of value pluralism is strange. We think that moral argument is easy, and at the same time impossible. Everyone, every “rational being,” knows that equality is necessary, and yet everyone who reads the newspaper or watches political talk shows knows that those who deny that, or even those who interpret equality in a different fashion – as substantive equality rather than equality of opportunity, say – cannot

⁴ See, e.g., the demonstration by Thomas Pangle and Peter Ahrens Dorf that the great weakness of Hans Morgenthau’s “realism” is that he did not explain but only condemned the appeal to justice in interstate relations (1999, 218–26, 234–5).

⁵ A superior starting point for political analysis is indicated in this comment on the role of feminist civil servants in the Australian welfare state: “There is in Australia a recognition that femocrats [feminist bureaucrats] are actually articulating interests that are by no means pre-given, and which have to be constructed in the context of the machinery of government” (Pringle and Watson 1992, 60).

for practical purposes be convinced.⁶ A post-Kantian theory of values and a political science in which individuals are assumed to enter politics with fixed preferences about the policies that affect their interests can understand only a politics of interest groups. Women in the contemporary political scene are simply the largest interest group, a potential “feminist majority.”

The rhetorical situation assumes rather different preconditions. It assumes that considerations of justice or of rights are not “trumps” in deliberation, but that compromise with interests and desires is always necessary and can be both morally and prudentially credible. Men and women enter into the rhetorical situation in order to *form* their preferences about collective actions and organize themselves into a body capable of acting collectively, in order to persuade and be persuaded about the existence of a common that includes them and thus of a common good. They do not compose critiques of existing arrangements that are addressed to others, “speaking truth to power” as though confident that the speakers of truth would forever be spared the responsibilities of power. These speakers aim rather to compose their critiques, if critique is what is called for, so as to constitute themselves and their listeners as an audience capable of acting on them.⁷

⁶ Chantal Mouffe, for example, uses Carl Schmitt’s notorious thesis that the concept of the political rests on the distinction between friend and enemy to expound her claim that differences over conception of liberty and equality cannot be reconciled. Mouffe asserts that the political “we,” the friend’s side, as constructed in the course of political action to elaborate and impose “our” social-democratic, liberal-democratic, feminist, or syndicalist conceptions of liberty and equality (1993, 68–9, 84–5, 114). Mouffe’s aim, which she shares with other supposedly “antifoundationalist” Left intellectuals such as Richard Rorty and Stanley Fish, is to relieve her faction of the burden of arguing for her substantive political position. The result, paradoxically, is that Mouffe adheres to a form of foundationalism in which every aspect of her political program is supposed to be self-justifying.

⁷ Elizabeth Spelman’s *Inessential Woman* (1988) is a sweeping attack on numerous feminist accounts of the “condition of women” as generalizing improperly from the circumstances of a few privileged white middle-class women to the difficulties that all women face, whether oppressed by sexism, racism, or class bias. Yet it seems rhetorically unsophisticated to detach such accounts from their circumstances and critique them on the basis of their descriptive value alone. Spelman generally ignores the fact that all actual statements of the “condition of women” are offered with a view toward constituting an audience that will respond to that condition as so described. Such descriptions must be assessed for their effectiveness in achieving worthwhile goals in the circumstances of their deployment. The expression of such biased generalizations of the sort Spelman and other have described may serve only the interests of white middle-class women (see, e.g., hooks 1984, 6). Yet to assess that charge, one would have to know not only the extent to which feminist rhetoric is exclusive, but also whether more inclusive rhetoric would have better served the interests of white middle-class women.

The rhetorical situation can be democratic if the audience itself is made up of all who are understood to share in the community, and if the audience is empowered to act as a body, but it is itself not egalitarian but agonistic. Few speak, but many listen (and heckle), and these few contend with each other for the adherence of the many.⁸ It is not an ideal speech situation à la Habermas: Speakers are known to lie, but speakers who are caught in a lie will find persuasion difficult to achieve. While modern moral consciousness turns our attention toward the subjective, toward what is going on within each of us, in the rhetorical situation our attention turns away from our own consciousness, toward the goods and evils the speeches present to us, but also to the motives and qualities of the speaker.⁹ Members of the orator's audience do not ask "What do I really think?" but rather "What is he saying?" and "Why is he saying it? What's in it for him?"

The emancipation of women has coincided with the emergence of a politics and a social science that obscure the rhetorical situation. Nor is the correlation between the entry of women as citizens and the delegitimation of rhetoric accidental. Since the French Revolution, the politics of the class-stratified community has been under continual attack from a politics that aspires to transform the political community into a classless society. In that kind of revolutionary class politics there is no "we" that transcends "we bourgeois," "we workers," or "we aristocrats." Early feminist writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Mill were themselves important practitioners of the rhetoric that delegitimated the old stratified community. To enlarge the community of citizens required that what had previously been understood as the political community, namely, the body of male citizens, be shown to be no genuine community of interests or judgments. Yet it was not merely the historical community of interests that represented some interests very poorly and others very well, but the very idea of appealing to or constituting a community of initially diverse interests, that came to be discredited.¹⁰

⁸ On the tension between the elite qualifications of the principal speakers in the Athenian Assembly and courts, and the democratic character of the norms and procedures in which they participated, see Ober 1989; 1996, chaps. 3 and 7.

⁹ The principal part of the art of rhetoric does not lie in the manufacture of apparent goods but rather in their arrangement and presentation as reasons in the speech. Rhetorical invention is the composition of statements that make reasons or facts present to the attention of the audience (see Black 1965, 132–77; Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 115–20).

¹⁰ In reading Mill, the best-known supporter of the emancipation of women in the canon of political thought, one is surprised to note how many of the most telling points are intended to exploit the class divisions among male voters. How can power over women be granted to every illiterate farmhand and drunken casual laborer, while control of their

Notwithstanding its origin on the Left, this skepticism about the possibility of political community given the diversity of interests has been even more influential on the contemporary Right, and could be fairly said to be the animating sentiment of the economic approaches to law and politics, whether of the public choice, rational choice, or law and economics schools.

These contemporary arguments contend that a political community of the sort that the rhetorical situation characterizes is impossible. One reply to this contention is that it is not the diversity of interests in modern societies per se but the modern expectation that social problems can be addressed through politics that makes the political community unworkable. One could thus argue that such a community of political men and women, if it came into existence, could not respond politically to the most important feminist demands. Hannah Arendt notoriously argued that public life demands the abandonment of private life and its merely economic concerns to a kind of primeval darkness. The tragedy of modern revolutionary politics, she claims, is that the cry for bread drowned out the give-and-take of political debate. For Arendt, one would suppose, comparable worth and sexual harassment ought no more to be political issues than social (as opposed to legal) racism.¹¹

Arendt claims to describe political life as realized by the Greeks. Yet as a description of the Athenians, Arendt's claim that the male citizen's roots in the household were politically invisible is far from accurate. We know from many forensic speeches that a politically active Athenian man might have to demonstrate to a jury of 501 his birth from citizen parents, show that his sexual life fit within the appropriate conventions, or expose

property and the franchise are denied to educated women in the middle and upper classes? Mill asks (1988, 85–8). In advocating the emancipation of women, Mill describes men as linked together in a community of interest in dominating women, but he argues that this common interest is outweighed by the class interests that link together educated, middle-class men and women. Mill disparages the community of male citizens as unjust toward women and blind toward class divisions among men. The rhetorical sophistication of Mill's tract has generally been ignored, and his concessions to the prejudices of his readers are taken as showing the limits of his liberal feminism rather than the aspects of his rhetorical situation that he skillfully exploits (see *inter alia* Pateman 1989).

¹¹ Arendt 1958, 7; 1965, 64–5. On the controversy provoked by Arendt's opposition to compulsory school desegregation see Young-Bruehl 1982, 312–13; on Arendt's deprecatory use of "social" see also Pitkin 1981, 1998. In her notorious essay "Reflections on Little Rock" (1959), Arendt distinguishes between political reforms of race relations such as the recognition of interracial marriage, which she favors, and social reforms such as compulsory school desegregation, which she opposes. The force of this distinction is demonstrated by Andrew Sullivan's application of it in defense of the legal recognition of same-sex marriage (Sullivan 1995, 1997).

his wealth to a public accounting to avoid a liturgy.¹² No one who stepped forward as a public speaker could hope to keep his private life or character beyond the reach of public debate, because each speaker's true convictions as a friend or enemy of the democratic regime were always in question. Speakers had to simultaneously distinguish themselves from the many in political knowledge and experience, and identify themselves with the many as loyal democrats who aimed only at what would benefit the citizens of Athens. To show that his rare knowledge was combined with a "common touch," a politically active Athenian man would have to prove repeatedly that he acquired and disposed of his wealth, and that he loved and hated in a manner becoming of a friend of the Athenian people.¹³

In Athens, the citizens' knowledge of their political leaders came principally from Rumour, deified as the goddess Phēmē.¹⁴ Character was thus always an issue, and those now infamous categories, the "personal" and the "political," were not be demarcated in Athens in a fashion beyond the reach of rhetoric to transform. As the orator Aeschines states the Athenian view:

To the lawgiver it did not seem possible that the same man could be worthless in private and worthy in public; nor did he think that the orator ought to ascend the platform having prepared his words beforehand, but not his life.¹⁵

All are agreed that some boundary divides public from private, city from household, but the boundary is marked out by the orator in order to demand that on both sides of the boundary one ought to maintain a consistent character, thus making private conduct into public reputation.

If we are to look to rhetoric to ease the strains of joining men and women together as equal citizens, we can hardly ignore the bad name that rhetoric has acquired. Rhetoric, as an art, is concerned not with what ought to persuade but with what does, in fact, persuade. Our suspicions of rhetoric, like those of the Greeks, have much to do with rhetoric's claim to "make the weaker speech the stronger," to discredit the traditional commonplaces and invent new arguments that overturn received moral understandings. The city fathers of Athens charged the teachers of rhetoric accordingly when they accused them of corrupting their youth. Yet this very charge ought to remind us that Socrates, who

¹² On the role of the Athenian courts as sites for elite conflict see Ober 1989; 1996, chap. 7; Cohen 1995.

¹³ See, e.g., Thucydides 6.12; Yunis 1996, 11, 104; Ober 1989, 126–7; Kochin n.d.

¹⁴ Aeschines 1.127–31, cited by Moore 1984, 157n. On the role of gossip in disciplining the Athenian elite see Ober 1989, 148–51; 1996, 182.

¹⁵ *Prosecution of Timarchus* 30; Moore 1984, 154.

was not a professional teacher of rhetoric, suffered execution for the same crimes generally ascribed to the rhetorical masters.

It is a matter of historical fact that political philosophy, the attempt to know the truth about the human things, emerges in the writings of Plato and Aristotle out of the rhetorical situation. In Aristotle's ethical writings, to start with the easier case, the phenomena that are to be explained by philosophical inquiry are the judgments that mature citizens express and act upon. The general knowledge that political science can achieve is thus a purified version of the probabilities on which the orator relies in fashioning a rhetorical proof in an individual case.

With regard to Aristotle, the philosophical encomiast or praiser of practical reason and of human beings as "political animals," the rhetorical origin of political philosophy is not so surprising, perhaps. But Plato, the scourge of the orators, mocker of Protagoras, Gorgias, Thrasymachus, Lysias, and Isocrates?

In the *Symposium* the idea of the beautiful appears at the crowning moment in an encomium of Eros delivered in obedience to a decree offered by Phaedrus and passed by an assembly of fellow drinkers. The contest over the claims to power and artfulness of rhetoric in the first half of the *Gorgias* paves the way for the encomium of the just life that Socrates blends from arguments ad hominem, insults, and myths of the afterlife in his struggle against Callicles.

In the *Republic*, Socrates is once again compelled to praise justice, speaking for himself against Glaucon's "unjust speech" offered on the grounds of natural right and against Adeimantus's "just speech" that appeals to the opinions of fathers, priests, and poets. Glaucon's celebrated challenge, the challenge in the second book of the *Republic* that invites Socrates' prolonged and complex response, is not only to show that the just is worthy of choice in itself but that it is so worthy because "justice itself is more choiceworthy in terms of happiness than injustice itself."¹⁶ The philosophical concern with the meaning of justice becomes an example of the general deliberative, and thus rhetorical, effort to distinguish between apparent and real goods.¹⁷ In legislating for the second-best city of the *Laws*, the Athenian Stranger makes the laws "come close to philosophizing" by adding persuasive preludes to the laws' commands

¹⁶ Reeve 1988, 33. Neither in Plato nor in Aristotle is there any notion of moral goodness apart from happiness, even if the happiness that justice brings is strictly psychic or even present only in a future life, whether that future life is here on earth or in "another place." As John Rist writes, "The notion that a defence of morality must be conducted without any reference to what is expedient is unknown in Greece or in Greek philosophy" (1982, 117).

¹⁷ Cf. *Republic* 357b–358a with 505.

and prohibitions, and in doing so persuades his interlocutors, the Cretan Kleinias and the Spartan Megillus, “to endorse the language of persuasion.”¹⁸

Plato not only criticizes rhetorical forms, he also “adapts and transforms” them, so that “the entire corpus of dialogues contains the full articulation of an alternative view of what is truly praiseworthy.”¹⁹ As Harvey Yunis writes: “Plato was – explicitly so – a rhetorical theorist of the first order; and he deserves our attention for his engagement with political communication no less than the sophists who preceded him” (1996, 17).²⁰ Plato’s use of examples and images, in particular, reflects the rhetorical necessity of grounding all claims, no matter how

¹⁸ The last words are quoted from Nightingale 1993, 294. As Cicero says: “But I think that I should follow the same course as Plato, who was at the same time a very learned man and the greatest of all philosophers, who wrote a book on the regime (*de re publica*) first, and then in a separate treatise described its laws. Therefore, before I recite the law itself, I will speak in praise of that law” (*De Legibus* II.vi, cited by Rutherford 1995, 303 n. 93; slightly modified from Keyes’ Loeb translation). Cicero’s claim that the *Laws* describes the laws of the regime of the *Republic* appears, however, more problematic (see Section 5.1).

¹⁹ Rutherford 1995, 244; Monoson 2000, 204. Thomas Cole’s even more radical claim that the word “rhetoric” and the concept of an art of persuasion are themselves Platonic inventions has not found favor with the critics (cf. Cole 1991 with O’Donnell 1991; Wardy 1996).

²⁰ In two important respects, my arguments for Plato as rhetorical master depart from that of Yunis. Relying on a radical distinction between the rhetoric addressed to the masses and the speech of private persuasion, Yunis sees a conscious effort to redesign rhetoric beginning only with the *Phaedrus*. As he puts it, “In both the *Gorgias* and the *Republic* the decisive political fact is the utter recalcitrance of the multitude which incapacitates communication between political expert and masses” (1996, 202). Yet although Plato’s new art of rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* is an art of turning around individual souls (*psychagogē*), it is in virtue of his practice of private advising, which would seem to be the veritable true rhetoric of the *Phaedrus*, that Socrates claims in the *Apology* to be a public benefactor and in the *Gorgias* to be the only political man in Athens. His attempted *psychagogē* of Polemarchus, Thrasymachus, Glaucon, and Adeimantus is likewise a political and rhetorical effort.

Having asserted a radical dichotomy between public and private speech, Yunis then claims that Plato can revalue public speaking in the *Phaedrus* because the masses act as if they had one soul (1996, 204), thus bridging the gap between the need to address many at once and the claim that the true art of rhetoric addresses itself to the type of each soul. It is more reasonable to say that if rhetoric must be able to grasp the type of soul of the addressee, speaking to many at once is only partially artful, just as in the *Statesman* the doctor, trainer, or lawgiver who prescribes for many and varied individuals cannot fully apply his skill in judging particulars (see Section 5.4 and Kochin 1999a). Rhetoric becomes philosophic in Plato’s dialogues when it consciously confronts the variation in types of souls and thus its own real but limited capacity to persuade all, given that diversity. Yunis’s radical separation of public speaking and private counseling obscures this confrontation by dichotomizing where Plato sees a matter of degree.

abstract or universal, in the things that illustrate them (Allen 2000, 271–2).

Yet for all the rhetorical talents that Plato's Socrates displays, he remains the Socrates who refused to stand up in the assembly and chastise the Athenians all at once. Socrates presents this, however, as merely a judgment of his rhetorical situation. In the assembly, Socrates says, at best he would fail to persuade and at worst would be condemned for his advice (*Apology* 31c–32a). Instead, Socrates converses about political subjects in private conversations. He claims in the *Gorgias* that this made him more a public man than Themistocles or Pericles.

For Plato the central exemplification of the rhetorical situation occurs when a speaker with knowledge faces an audience that does not readily recognize the justice of the speaker's claim to know. This is an account less foreign to us than the Athenian democratic understanding wherein the rhetorical situation allows a pooling of the knowledge of the many and the few. Plato's account is less foreign because it was readily adapted to the politics of the Enlightenment by its advocates, from Francis Bacon to John Stuart Mill and beyond. Indeed, the contemporary notion of a political community as made up of individuals with fixed preferences about social outcomes is simply an egalitarian version of Plato's understanding of the rhetorical situation, in which each citizen is granted what can be described interchangeably as perfect knowledge or invincible ignorance, since under either description he or she has nothing to learn about common concerns and possibilities. Plato's partial alienation from the rhetorical situation, as understood by ancient citizens of classical polities, anticipates our own estrangement from the rhetorical and hence from the political (see Latour 1999, 216–65). For that reason, the study of Plato's rhetoric is a vital propaedeutic for the revival of the rhetorical that we must undertake if we are to grapple politically – as citizens and not just as objects of state administration – with gender questions.

1.2 GENDERED COMMONPLACES AND THE UNITY OF THE VIRTUES

In Plato's dialogues, philosophy and its politics and rhetoric contest with the manly life of public speaking, political activity, and success.²¹ Plato's

²¹ Here is an important point of comparison between Platonic political philosophy and feminism: Both are theories that “emerge from those whose interest they affirm,” to use Catherine MacKinnon's phrase (1989, 83), insofar as political philosophy speaks in the first place in and for the interest of philosophy and philosophers. Perhaps, however, the distinction is more important: Political philosophy emerges from the perspective of the few on themselves, whereas feminism emerges from the perspective of the many, or claims to so emerge. The philosophic few do have a view as to the true interest of the unphilosophic many, but that view is secondary to the philosopher's

apologies for or defenses of philosophy must operate against a field of rhetorical commonplaces in which every aspect of political life was colored with gendered language. In Athens only men were citizens in the fullest sense, sharing in ruling and being ruled as members of the autonomous political community of the city. The men of Athens, the *andres athēnaioi*, did not conceal this from themselves with a false universality. They saw themselves as men, not in the generic sense of standard English usage before the age of inclusive language,²² but as real men and not mere human beings (see Xenophon, *Hiero* 7.3). They entered into politics and war to prove their manly valor and steadfastness before womanly passions, and put at risk their lives and reputations to win the fame of men who proved noble and good (*andres kaloi k'agathoi*). In continually competing to prove their manhood, the *andres athēnaioi* were repeatedly purging themselves of what they saw as effeminate. Plato, for his part, saw this purgation as in important respects a corruption of men's souls.

Plato describes this corruption by developing an account of the soul as a hierarchy of desires.²³ The soul or psyche is healthy, Plato says, when its desires are in proper alignment. The individual then governs his or her life by the rational desire for knowledge of how to live (Reeve 1988, 256), and the other desires pursue only their peculiar objects, in obedience to reason's plan for the whole self. Such a rational hierarchy of the desires is possible only if there is in truth, and not only in speeches, a single hierarchy of the human goods, whose capstone is the final human good. The single human good would provide a single standard for human excellence.

The possibility of a single standard of human excellence valid for all human beings is called into question by the division of gender roles in actual Greek cities (see, e.g., *Meno* 71e ff.). In Homer and in tragedy, women are frequently condemned for performing acts that are respectable or even praiseworthy when performed by their husbands (Adkins 1960, 37). The Greeks assigned gender to the virtues because they separated gender roles radically. The radical separation of Greek gender roles is often described spatially: Men work and act outside;

view of their own interest (see Kochin 2002). MacKinnon intends the claim that feminism is the first theory to emerge from those whose interest it would affirm to contrast it with Marxism, which emerged from bourgeois reflection on the condition of the working class.

²² Defoe (1971, 215–19) is an amusing exploration of the ambiguity of supposedly inclusive language.

²³ As James Peters (1989, 174) writes: "Each part of the psyche, including the rational element, seeks its own distinctive kind of pleasure and is fueled by its own particular kind of desire."

women, inside.²⁴ The entire sphere of political life belongs to the outside: Merely to be mentioned in public is compromising of women's honor.²⁵

The Greeks had thought of *aretē*, excellence or virtue, as in some way composed of other virtues. Although *aretē* itself somehow belonged especially to men,²⁶ two of its component excellences are frequently assigned separately to both genders: courage or manliness (*andreia*) to men (*andres*) and moderation (*sōphrosunē*) to women. In Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* the young bride says to her husband:

What would I be able to do together with you? What is my ability? Rather, everything is up to you. My work, my mother said, is to be moderate. (*Oeconomicus* VII.14)

The excellences of women that Aristotle declares are relevant for the orator are "excellences of body, beauty and stature; of soul, moderation and a love of activity that is not illiberal."²⁷ For both married and unmarried women of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E., moderation "is the most common of all tributes inscribed on memorial reliefs and tombstones."²⁸ Men gain honor when other men recognize their manliness in public speeches uttered or preserved in monuments, while women retain honor only as long as their chastity, the core of women's moderation,²⁹ is publicly or rhetorically unquestioned.

While manliness or courage is simply male, ordinary Greek opinion assigned gender to moderation in a more complex manner.³⁰ Two different and contesting Greek conceptions of the good man, which I will call the "civic" and the "heroic" conceptions of masculinity, are distinguished by their views of the status of moderation. The

²⁴ Xenophon *Oeconomicus* VII.22ff.; Salkever 1986, 234; Cohen 1991, 72.

²⁵ Thucydides 2.45; Cohen 1991, 64; Gould 1980, 45; Schaps 1977.

²⁶ The word *aretē* when not qualified means male virtue simply (Loraux 1987, 27; cf. Brown 1988a, 60; Jaeger 1945, 1.6–7). For example, Laches claims to have seen the *aretē* of Socrates during the retreat from Potidaea: This would imply that Socrates' *aretē* is reducible to the martial and manly virtue he manifested through the rigors of that march (*Laches* 189b4–5; Schmid 1992, 89).

²⁷ *Rhetoric* 1361a6. These references to Aristotle and Xenophon are from Cornford 1912, 252. See also *Poetics* 1454a20–4, where Aristotle advises the poet crafting characters for the stage that "to be manly or clever is not suitable for a female."

²⁸ On moderation as the womanly virtue see also North 1966, 41; Loraux 1986, 386 n. 31.

²⁹ See Aeschylus *Suppliant Maidens* 1012–13; North 1966, 37; Cohen 1991, 160–1.

³⁰ We can get a good sense of the complications from Sophocles' *Ajax*. Ajax moves from understanding moderation as his wife's silence to understanding that he, too, ought to be moderate (586, 677–8). As the Greek proverb had it, "Suffering is learning," but the suffering that enables Ajax to learn the value of moderation destroys him.

true man, the civic conception of masculinity proclaims, masters his desires; his desires never overpower him and compel him to do anything unlawful or shameful. For a grown man to submit to his desires for food, sex, or drink is not merely immature but actually effeminate. In *Against Timarchus*, Aeschines describes the dissipated Timarchus as “a male and masculine in body, who has committed feminine transgressions.”³¹

The second Greek ideal of masculinity, the heroic ideal of the warrior, explicitly excludes self-control – Homer’s Achaeans hardly exemplify moderation. The civic ideal of masculinity must therefore contend with the heroic tradition, inherited in part through the reception of Homer, and with the constant war that beset Greek cities. Both epic idealization and military necessity appeared to the ordinary Greek citizen to validate the notion of manliness as assertive valor, and to proclaim the good warrior as the best or the only type of man.³² As Kurt Raaflaub writes, for the aristocrats within the *polis* “there was a constant tension between personal and communal obligations – a tension that was frequently resolved in favor of the former and cause the community much harm. Such attitudes were as much alive in the fifth century as they had been in the archaic age” (1994, 129).

³¹ Aeschines 1.185; see also Aeschines 1.42; Demosthenes 60.3; *Laws* 633d–e; Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1361a3–4; Dover 1974, 208; Loraux 1986, 45; Just 1989, 158, 166. Pace Alford, the aim “to persuade the sons of Athenian aristocrats that *sôphrosunê* is the mark of a real man” (1991, 67) is not Plato’s “solution,” but a crucial element of the ideology of all settled Greek regimes and in particular of the Athenian democracy.

³² *Laws* 626b7–c2; for a general discussion see Adkins 1960, 1970; Gutzwiller and Michelini 1991, 69–71. Admittedly, the hoplite standing shoulder to shoulder with his fellow citizens in a phalanx was not the Homeric hero who rides to the battlefield in a chariot to engage another hero in single combat, though the *Iliad* itself describes the clashes of massed troops in a fashion consistent with hoplite combat (Pritchett 1971–91, IV, 11–15, 42–4; Bowden 1993). This contrast did not, however, become a conflict between heroic courage and civic discipline. The soldiers massed together in the phalanx saw themselves both collectively and individually as seeking to prove their heroic *aretê* on the battlefield (Wheeler 1991, 123). In Tyrtaeus 10 the poet commands the soldier: “let each man close the foe, and with his own long spear, or else with his sword, wound and take an enemy, and setting foot beside foot, resting shield against shield, crest beside crest, helm beside helm, fight his man breast to breast with sword or long spear in hand” (29–34, tr. Edmonds 1931). In Tyrtaeus’s image, the clash of disciplined lines is itself a clash of fighters striving manfully in single combat. Victor Davis Hanson, the leading contemporary authority on hoplite warfare, puts the issue thus: “Hoplite battle, like other aspects of Greek culture, must have required a unique duality of spirit in the warrior: at once a reckless barroom fighter who would brawl his own way through the flesh and bronze of the enemy in his face, and yet, mindful all the while to do so in orchestrated effort with those at his side” (1989, 169).

The political life of free Greek men remained viable because the warrior ideal was balanced by the civic conception of masculinity that included self-control. The warrior ideal required internalized control of fears: The ideal of the citizen requires internal control even of desires.³³

A twofold account of Greek femininity emerges as the negation of the civic and heroic ideals of Greek masculinity, wherein women are seen as lacking both heroic courage and civic moderation. Women are weak, prone to excessive lamentation, incapable of resisting their fears; they are also rapacious in their appetites, abiding no limitation of their desire for food, drink, and intercourse. The common opinions that structure the ideals of Greek manhood thus endow women with the traits that male citizens must control if civilization is to survive. Women must be ruled by manly citizens who are themselves courageous before fears and self-controlled before pleasures.³⁴ Women represent the forces that the city exiled beyond its bounds, mythically with the Greek defeat of the Amazons,³⁵ actually with the exclusion of women from the public spaces of the city when in political use. Any action by a woman that has a publicly visible impact is transgressive and therefore tragic. Even women's role as mourners of the honored dead, slain in battle with the city's enemies, must be carefully restricted if the passions the women represent are not to overwhelm the civic order.³⁶

Plato sought to redefine male excellence because he saw the actual Greek conceptions of masculinity as diseases of the soul, as misalignments of the hierarchy of desires. He describes the civic and heroic conceptions of masculinity as two sets of symptoms, the first less virulent but prone to be transformed into the second. The first set of symptoms, the mild form, is that exhibited in the manly ideal of the citizen, who in Athens, at least, was always male. The citizen's manly illness remains mild because he is self-controlled. Yet, as Plato points out, the city commands its citizens to control their desire to enlarge themselves in the long run. The citizen is taught to aim at self-expansion as an individual by achieving glory in the competitive political culture of the city.³⁷ He is also taught to aim at the joint aggrandizement of all of

³³ Though Adkins' account of the development of Greek moral ideas is widely criticized (Long 1970; Lloyd-Jones 1983; Williams 1993), these criticisms focus on Adkins' account of the role of justice in Homer and not on the role of *sōphrosunē*, which is uncontroversially exceedingly minimal (see Long 1970, 123). Justice is the virtue of "mine and thine," while the paradigmatic instances of *sōphrosunē* involve what is one's own.

³⁴ Aeschines 1.183–5; Just 1989, 192–3, 216. ³⁵ duBois 1982; Just 1989, 243.

³⁶ Allen 2000, 112–21; Loraux 1998, 26 and *passim*.

³⁷ See, e.g., *Alcibiades I* 105, *Theages* 124a, *Gorgias* 485d.

the citizens by conquering other cities and enslaving their inhabitants.³⁸ The citizen's self-control is for the sake of unlimited self-aggrandizement in the long run, whether as an individual who achieves glory in the agonistic politics of the city or as a member of a city that dominates other cities as a master does slaves (*Laws* 625e–626c). The citizen is commanded by his city to control his desires only when these desires threaten their eventual maximal satisfaction. The city teaches the citizen to be moderate so that he can realize the city's immoderate ends.³⁹ Civic mores are thus but an instrument for the pursuit of heroic values.⁴⁰

The citizen's individual self-control depends on repression and a high degree of control by others: Plato will argue in the *Laws* that the Dorians, who were most successful at internalizing in their citizens the control of fears, depended not on self-control to moderate the desires but on control of the self by the city and its laws. Such enforced control is generally resented rather than welcomed, at least at an intellectual level.⁴¹

The heroic ideal of masculinity, for its part, discards moderation even as a contingent good. When reapplied from the battlefield to the city within the walls, the heroic ideal sees politics as a ceaseless struggle of all against all (*Laws* 626c–628): Classes, families, and individuals contend for the prize of unlimited tyranny over the lives and possessions of all the inhabitants. The heroic ideal in its most pristine form undermines any notion of obedience to law, for what free and spirited man wishes to be a slave, even a slave to the laws?⁴² Plato shows that the heroic ideal threatens to destroy political life and subverts the civic ideal of masculinity that actual Greek cities sought to foster. It idealizes not citizens but mercenaries, men who will fight anywhere as long as the

³⁸ *Laws* 625e–626c. Compare Leo Strauss's distinction between the version of the natural right of the stronger as proclaimed by the Athenians in the Melian dialogue, which uses "the stronger" only of cities, and the version of Thrasymachus and Callicles, which uses "the stronger" to refer to individuals within a city (Strauss 1978, 193–4, 195–6).

³⁹ As Arthur Adkins points out, while a citizen might admit his inferiority before other citizens, it would be far more painful for him to admit the categorical inferiority of his city, even as the Melians cannot resign themselves to civic slavery at Athenian hands (1976, 312–13).

⁴⁰ It is thus only a partial, if still fundamental, truth that "the 'warrior ideal' in democratic Athens was subsumed under [the] overarching democratic morality" (Ober 1999, 158). The city demands such a subsumption from her citizens, but the city itself relies upon this subsumption in her own unrestrained pursuit of the heroic or warrior ideal.

⁴¹ See the discussion of Glaucon's account of the origin of the city in a contract not to do injustice and to punish any man who does in Section 3.1.

⁴² Adkins 1960, 263; compare *Laws* 922a. For a harsh condemnation of such slavery to the laws (by Plato!) see *Theaetetus* 172c8–173b4, cited by Vickers 1988, 129.

material reward is sufficient, with no concern for the justness of their cause or for moderation in its pursuit (*Laws* 630b).

Plato claims that by inculcating both the civic and the heroic ideals of masculinity, actual Greek regimes taught that self-controlled male citizens ought to seek to rule over uncontrolled female citizens, and simultaneously taught that self-control or moderation is unmanly and thus itself suitable only for women. Plato's Callicles, for example, attacks moderation as unworthy of a real man:

This is the noble and just according to nature – which I will explain to you now because I speak freely – namely, it is necessary for the man who would live rightly to allow his own desires to be as great as possible, and not to check them, and to be competent to attend to these desires when they are as great as possible, out of manliness and intelligence,⁴³ and to fill himself up of whatever his desire comes to be at any time. But I think this is not possible for the many, so they, out of weakness, blame the men of this sort, and thereby conceal their own impotence. And the many say that want of check is shameful, as I said before, so that they can enslave the human beings best in their natures. And the many themselves, because they are unable to provide fulfillment for their pleasures, praise moderation and justice due to their own unmanliness. (*Gorgias* 491e6–492b1)

Callicles says frankly what the city promulgates covertly: The city itself praises the aggrandizement of the city even as it condemns immoderation in the citizens (517b–519b). Callicles' frankness is all the more remarkable because it leads him to express openly and subversively his resentment of the pretensions of the many to rule the man who is stronger by nature (483e–484a, 489b–492c). Many among Athens' aristocratic elite, including some of Plato's relatives, had learned from the Sophists who educated them to see the unity of the city as a myth, and to discredit it along with the other myths whose charms were dissolved by the philosophic inquiry into nature. Philosophy had dispelled the civic understanding of manly excellence for this elite, while the heroic understanding stood firm and thus became the most available alternative.⁴⁴

⁴³ *Phronēsis* is usually translated as "practical wisdom," but Plato does not distinguish between practical and theoretical wisdom or (outside of the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*; see Kochin 1999a) between philosophy and political science. Reason has only one function: to rule the whole in the light of the good. Accordingly, it is difficult to know how to distinguish *phronēsis* from *sophia* in Plato, although to translate *phronēsis* as "practical wisdom" in accordance with Aristotle's division of practical and theoretical reason gives an untenable interpretation of Plato.

⁴⁴ On the relation between the Sophists and the heroic conception of masculinity see Scolnicov 1988, 4–5. In the *Protagoras* (315cd), Socrates compares the Sophists assembled in the house of Callias to the mindless ghosts of the heroes that Odysseus encountered in Hades.

The resulting tension between manliness and moderation emerges not only in the subversive grumbings of the resentful aristocrat Callicles but even in the city's characteristic practice, making war. To be successful in war, these men must practice some form of moderation or self-control: Citizens must endure the privations of campaign and must not always be turned toward the fruits of peace.⁴⁵ Yet the purpose of this constant self-denial is civic self-aggrandizement, success in aggressive war – the rape and enslavement of enemy cities. Through their laws and public speeches, cities inculcate the civic ideal of masculinity among their own citizens in order that these citizens may practice the heroic ideal of masculinity toward other cities.⁴⁶ As long as citizens do not question the unity of their city, they see the city as the place of concord among citizens and the area beyond the walls as the place of strife with the city's foreign enemies. Through this bifurcation of space, citizens can simultaneously but separately practice the two ideals of masculinity, as the city demands. Yet every failure of civic unity threatens to bring the heroic, manly strivings of aggressive war into the political spaces that ought to be governed by the civic conception of masculinity, the civic conception that includes moderation or self-control.

Plato aims to establish the superiority of the just life to the unjust life – of the life of the philosopher to the life of the tyrant – but to do so, he must replace the Greek ideal of masculinity with a *human* excellence (*anthrōpinē aretē*) of individuals distinct from and superseding the excellences that the actual city assigned separately to men and women.⁴⁷ An individual can achieve the single human excellence only by transcending what Greek men understood and spoke about as the masculine excellence of manliness or courage (*andreia*) and the feminine excellence of moderation (*sōphrosunē*). The gendering of the virtues in actual Greek regimes occurred through opinions instilled by laws and unwritten conventions. It is by legislating for his cities-in-speech that Plato challenges the customary division of the excellences of human beings.

⁴⁵ This contrast between the rigors of war and the pleasures of peace forms the theme of Aristophanes' *Acharnians*.

⁴⁶ Loraux (1986) shows how the officially mandated funeral oration describes Athens as a unity, without classes or factions. Greek democracy did not so much replace aristocratic values as enable the demos to act on them: "Democracy stood, in antiquity, for a limited extension of the circle of loyalty, not for a principled abandonment of the circle of inborn superiority" (Rahe 1992, 193; see also Meier 1990, 50, 145).

⁴⁷ See, e.g., *Republic* 332d, *Meno* 71e–73b.