

Family Matters: Aristotle's Appreciation of Women and the Plural Structure of Society

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Aristotle is no misogynist, but the way this charge is answered can skew the understanding of his political theory as a whole. Those who dismiss the charge of misogyny on grounds that Aristotle covertly advocates women's participation in civic affairs tend to obscure the leading thesis of the POLITICS: namely, that polis and household differ in kind, not merely in number. I argue, instead, that Aristotle condones the exclusion of women from civic affairs because this practice conforms to the natural complementarity of the sexes and because it fortifies the naturally pluralistic structure of society. By securing these underpinnings, Aristotle frames a constitution that best supports women and men in their pursuit of human excellence.

Courtesy is probably not the first criterion that comes to mind when one ponders the current scholarly debate over Aristotle's view of women. But a similar controversy, reported in Baldassare Castiglione's sixteenth-century dialogue, *The Courtier*, is judged on precisely this basis. Castiglione's interlocutors discuss the perfect courtier, in whom, they agree, all human excellences -- moral and intellectual -- are rightly ordered. Thus, they hold true courtesy to be the consummate or architectonic human virtue. But they clash over the possibility that this virtue might be possessed by a woman. The interlocutors do concur in their deference in such matters to the magisterial authority of the philosopher Aristotle (III §§11-18). But this consensus settles nothing. Gasparo Pallavicino, one of the interlocutors, claims that Aristotle's likening of male and female to form and matter implies that women are by nature inferior to men. But he is opposed by Giuliano de' Medici, who denies the implication in question and holds that on Aristotle's reckoning women possess, if anything, a greater capacity for intellectual virtue and more constancy of character than men. This being the case, Giuliano infers that nothing prevents a woman being the perfect courtier, or, consequently, the best human being.

Whatever else one might say of it, Giuliano's rendition of Aristotle is a model of tact. Yet this is not enough to establish his superiority to Gasparo in the decisive virtue of courtesy -- at least not in the judgment of the noblewomen before whom the gentlemen have been conducting their debate (III §17; III §32). Of course, the standards of Castiglione's court of Urbino are by no means those upheld in the court of current opinion. One might expect that Giuliano's proposal would meet with a much warmer welcome today. But the acceptance of Gasparo's reading remains widespread, although we must admit that its staying-power is fueled more by an unexamined suspicion of "dead Greeks" than by the lucidity of Gasparian exegesis. Thus, Horowitz (1976, 193-194, 206), Okin (1979, 82-83), Elshtain (1981, 44), Allen (1985, 83-126), and many others now share Gasparo's interpretation of Aristotle on women. Unlike Gasparo, however, they propose to bury Aristotle, not to praise him. The prospect of this internment has recently provoked another ensemble of scholars, no less friendly to the cause of women, who wish to resur-

rect Aristotle, or at least to rehabilitate important elements of his teaching concerning natural right. To this end, they adopt a reading of Aristotle that is both reminiscent of Giuliano de' Medici and more congenial to current opinion. Like Giuliano, they contend that Aristotle's remarks on form and matter in the generation of animals in no way commit him to the view that women are inferior to men. Thus, Salkever (1986, 238) holds that "Aristotle's biology does *not* result in a theory of orthogenesis, or a kind of theodicy which bestows the blessings of the gods on a particular group of humans." Nichols (1987, 133) likewise cautions against too hasty a jump from Aristotle's zoological works to his view of women, observing that it is imperative that we also consider his political works, "which emphasize the difference between humans and other animals." Levy (1990, 399) consolidates this position, arguing trenchantly that "the biopolitical question is not what we give to procreation but what we get from it by way of natural equipment pertinent to ruling." In regard to this equipment, Saxonhouse (1985, 72) tends to minimize the existence of sexual differences, maintaining that according to Aristotle "the male is marked off from his wife less by a difference in nature than by a difference in appearance and speech and honors." This reading prompts Nichols (1987, 133) to ask "why, then, could political equality in Aristotle's sense not embrace females as well as males?" Indeed, as the same author (Nichols 1992, 188) further reasons, "if ruling satisfies the male's need to exercise his potential for deliberation and choice, and if women need the same things from the political relationship as males do, then women too must rule in turn." Similarly, Levy (1990, 411) maintains that "by Aristotle's [own] standard, it is the baldest sort of injustice to exclude good women from politics while including bad men." Swanson (1992, 60-61) endorses this line of interpretation and concludes that Aristotle is "hinting that women might perform both domestic and political roles." According to these scholars, then, it is mistaken to view Aristotle as an apologist for conventional opinion concerning the inferiority of women. Instead, they interpret him as an astute, though appropriately circumspect, critic of the customary exclusion of women from politics.

There is, to be sure, a certain rhetorical elegance in countering the charge of sexual injustice by arguing that in

opposition to the conventions of his own time Aristotle actually supported women's political equality with men. The disenfranchisement of women constitutes *prima facie* evidence of sexual injustice -- at least as judged by the conventions of our own time, which demand a strict uniformity in the application of standards of justice. So the removal of this putative blemish would go a long way toward refurbishing Aristotle's reputation and standing among our contemporaries. Such a result is certainly desirable but not desirable at all costs. I would suggest, in particular, that we cannot afford to concede that the currently prevailing conception of justice is adequate, even if doing so should appear to be a means for courting the good opinion of our contemporaries. For one thing, the perfect courtier (as we may learn from Castiglione) is not the servant of prevailing convention. The virtue of courtesy amounts to something more than tact, to say nothing of flattery. Moreover, our conventional notions are utterly blind to the disparate requirements of political and domestic justice. According to Aristotle, domestic justice differs from political justice in requiring that office be assigned in recognition of sexual complementarity, not as a reward for superiority in individual excellence (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1134b15-18, 1160b32-1161a3).¹ To reduce this fundamental pluralism in the canon of justice to a uniformity -- as is now customary -- is to subvert the natural differentiation of household and *polis*. Yet it is precisely this differentiation, as we shall see, that Aristotle finds most conducive to the rearing and education of human beings, both female and male. For the sake of the common good of education, the best constitution will reflect and reinforce the plural structure of society. The *politeia* and the educational endeavor it facilitates are compromised when the *polis* takes on the functions of the family, where it imposes a standard of political justice upon it, or where the *polis* is itself patterned along the lines of a household.

To give an accurate account of Aristotle's view of women, one must do so in a manner that illuminates rather than obscures the character of his most favored political constitution. It is also necessary to pay close attention to Aristotle's natural philosophy, especially his account of male and female. The political implications of Aristotle's biology may strike some as remote, but they are, as I shall show, unequivocal. Aristotle acknowledges that women and men are equal in substance, in the *ousia* of being human. Yet he also recognizes that the sexes are, by nature, functionally different and complementary. Sexual complementarity centers on procreation: a work, admittedly, in which particular women and men may elect not to participate. Nevertheless, the influence of sexual complementarity permeates the whole of our existence. Procreative complementarity naturally gives rise to certain anatomical

and physiological differences between men and women that, in turn, result in identifiable differences in temperament. These temperamental differences are pedagogically significant. As a consequence, sexual differentiation must be taken into consideration in the design of the best constitution, which concerns itself with the education and not merely with the security of its members. Aristotle's appreciation of the procreative complementarity of man and woman thus manifests itself in his endorsement of a pluralistic, socially differentiated constitutional polity. By the same token, the philosopher's arguments in support of this pluralistic regime illuminate not only the inescapable limitations of governmental uniformity but also the undesirability of that particular violation of sexual complementarity known as *patriarchy*.²

CONSTITUTIONAL PLURALISM AND THE CRITIQUE OF PATRIARCHY

No fallacy concerning politics needs more urgently to be corrected than the notion that "there is no difference between a large household and a small city" (*Politics* 1252a12-13). At least, we may surmise, this is why Aristotle launches the *Politics* with an assault upon this misconception and targets it again in the critical appraisal of Plato's *Republic*, with which he initiates his own inquiry concerning political constitutions (*Politics* 1260b22-1261a22). Although the political community is the most lordly and architectonic of human associations, the statesman is by no means entitled to supplant fathers, husbands, or slave-masters in the government of their proper subjects. Aristotle criticizes "those who think the same person a fit statesman, and a king, and a household head, and a slave-master" (*Politics* 1252a7-9). Yet he distinguishes the statesmanly, royal, domestic, and despotic modes of rule on the basis of differences in the character of their appropriate subjects -- not on the basis of any essential difference in the character of the rulers themselves (*Politics* 1259a37-1259b17; 1260a12-14). In fact, there is no difference in the character or excellence required of good rulers. All must possess *phronēsis*, the virtue of practical wisdom. But if the virtue of a civic ruler is essentially the same as the virtue of a domestic ruler, why object to extending the statesman's sway to the subjects of royal, domestic or despotic government? Aristotle's objection to this extension only makes sense if the differentiation of household and civic authority is in itself conducive to the human good.

² Owing to a certain equivocation in the social scientific usage of the term matriarchy -- it is sometimes used when matrilineal is meant -- even the putatively *wertfrei* sense of the complementary term, patriarchy, is not without its ambiguities. In this essay I employ the term in its nontechnical and unequivocally pejorative sense, and thus denote a specific dysfunctional pattern in paternal government: namely, the father's arrogation of a dominion unsubordinated to higher authority.

¹ Citations to Aristotle follow the now conventional page, column, and line format established by Bekker. I have used the Greek text and critical apparatus prepared by the Oxford editors. All translations are my own.

The differentiation of household and *polis* is indeed conducive to the human good, specifically, to the promotion of education. Aristotle's understanding of the collaboration of household and *polis* in education is noteworthy for its appreciation of the natural differentiation of society and for its critique of patriarchy. As is well-known, Aristotle maintains that good laws are invaluable in support of education. The law is helpful because it has the compulsory force sometimes needed to ensure obedience (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1180a18-21). Thus, it follows that the beneficial influence of education would be "strongest (*kratiston*) if the lawgiver were to attend to such matters as our nurture and occupations . . . and were to do so correctly" (*NE* 1180a25-30). To do so correctly does seem to be the rub. For there are political communities that take an interest in education, Sparta being the celebrated example (*Politics* 1337a31-32; *NE* 1180a24-26). But the problem, as Aristotle sees it, is that *no* political community is capable of making the particular distinctions necessary to the effective delivery of a good education. In light of the need for such distinctions, one finds that "greater accuracy will result when care is private and directed to the particular case, for then each is more likely to meet with what is suitable" (*NE* 1180b11-13). In accordance with this appreciation of the importance of attention to the particular case, Aristotle now portrays as best (*arista*) -- not merely strongest (*kratiston*) -- that education which is attentive to individual needs while being at the same time directed by someone *nomothetikos*, someone "who possesses the legislative art" (*NE* 1180b13-25). Aristotle's insistence upon this combination of fatherly care and nomothetic capacity raises the following question: is education best served when legislation is paternalistic or when fathers have become nomothetic? Aristotle leaves no doubt as to his own answer to this question. The nomothetic capacity needed by a good teacher is distinguished not so much by compulsory force -- as is true of civic law -- as it is by practical wisdom (*phronêsis*), the capacity for making good judgments in the particular case (*NE* 1180b28). So the best combination of fatherly care and nomothetic capacity is achieved not when legislation is paternalistic, that is, when the statesman intrudes into the domain of paternal authority, but rather, as Aristotle indicates, when fathers have acquired the virtue of being *nomothetikos*.

More, however, is required for fathers to become nomothetic than merely that they *prevail* within their households. Of course, "paternal words and habits *do* prevail in households, just as laws and customs prevail in cities -- and even more so, on account of the kinship and kindnesses and the natural predisposition to affection and obedience that is present" (*NE* 1180b3-7). But paternal authority does not follow simply from the father's natural capacity to command obedience. In Aristotle's view, the authority of paternal government derives from the indispensability of fathers in the pursuit of our common interest in virtue (*NE* 1180a30-34). But this indispensability by no means authorizes paternal autonomy, or patriarchy. It is the call to virtue, not the paternal say-so, that has the prior

claim to our obedience. So while the *polis* cannot supplant the paternal role in education, it is imperative that the *paterfamilias* be stirred from complacency in his own domestic sway to seek the virtue of *nomothetikê*. In this way, fathers will be best equipped to "aid their own children and friends in the pursuit of virtue" (*NE* 1180a31-34).

Owing to a failure to appreciate Aristotle's concern for the problem of patriarchal complacency, many readers take his praise of civic education in Sparta only at face value. Aristotle singles out the Spartans as deserving special honor for the fundamentally antipatriarchal insight that education "must be common instead of along private lines, which is the way each now cares for his own offspring in private and teaches whatever private study (*mathêsian idian*) appeals to him" (*Politics* 1337a22-26). If any political community practices what Aristotle preaches on this score, it would appear to be Sparta (*Politics* 1337a31-32, *NE* 1180a24-26). Nevertheless, we shall find that Aristotle's tribute to Spartan education is meant to be protreptic rather than dispositive. In fact, Aristotle finds civic education in Sparta to be an unmitigated disaster. Though the Spartan statesmen intend to make courageous warriors of the youth by means of this education, "it in truth only makes them bestial and coarse" (*Politics* 1338b11-14, 32-36). Worst of all, the elders themselves do not even seek to find out (*exeuriskousin*) if their training actually fosters political courage (*Politics* 1338b16-17). Such aversion to inquiry is by no means innate to human beings. It, too, is a product of Spartan civic education. Rather than fostering virtue, then, civic training in Sparta turns out to be responsible for the induction of an intellectual bondage wholly counterproductive to the cause of education.

The shortcomings of civic-sponsored education as a response to the dangers of patriarchy are illuminated in the case of Sparta. As we have already noted, Aristotle observes that paternal speeches and habits have a more commanding strength than civic laws, owing to the natural affection and predisposition to obedience that exist in the household. The civic community does not have access to nearly as extensive an array of interior principles of motivation. In proportion to its impoverishment in this respect, civic compulsion is a blunt and violent instrument. The very methods upon which the civic community must rely to inculcate habits (*hexeis*) tend to subvert the interior psychic capacity by which these *hexeis* are transformed into genuine virtues. The Spartans present an advanced case of this dysfunction, as Aristotle indicates by linking their notorious *amathia* to the civic character of their education. The absurdly counter-productive results of Spartan civic education are extreme, but they are nevertheless typical. Aristotle, as always, has chosen his example well. The shortcomings of the "best case" illuminate the limits of the principle. Given his own sense of the shortcomings of civic education, Aristotle could hardly mean to endorse such a scheme when he speaks of the need to care for education "in common."

The defects of civic education in no way reflect upon the utility of the civic community's support of education.

It provides this support, however, not by supplanting paternal authority but by helping to elevate paternal government out of its primordial patriarchalism. The *polis* thus plays a critical role in helping the household to realize its own perfection as a community. Aristotle likens the primordial patriarchalism of paternal government to the ways of Homer's cave-dwelling cyclopes, each of whom "lives as he pleases, laying down the law to his children and bedmates" (*NE* 1180a24-29, *Politics* 1252b22-23; see *Odyssey* 9.114-115).³ Cyclopean patriarchy represents the polar opposite to Spartan civic education. Between these extremes lies the golden mean: Aristotle's appreciation of the unique contributions to the common good made by household and *polis*. Aristotle's unequivocal condemnation of cyclopean patriarchy indicates that it is the extreme most opposed to the golden mean. His judicious praise of Sparta implies no more than that it is the lesser of the two evils. We recall in this regard one of Aristotle's better known bits of practical advice. "One who would hit the mean must first avoid the extreme more opposed to it" (*NE* 1109a30-31). Just as Odysseus heeded Calypso's warning to steer toward Skylla in order to avoid Charybdis (*NE* 1109a32; *Odyssey* 12.219, 108), so too in his discussion of education does Aristotle tack toward the Skylla of Spartan civic education in order to avoid the Charybdis of cyclopean patriarchy.

We are in a position now to see that Aristotle's celebration of Spartan civic education is deliberately rhetorical. By praising the Spartan pedagogy, Aristotle intends to neutralize his auditors' predilection for patriarchal autonomy, which assumes that "paternal speeches and customs" are adequately settled by an isolated and solitary fiat rather than being subject to the scrutiny of common discourse. Once the common interest in education has been firmly stated, Aristotle indicates that neither patriarchal domination nor civic indoctrination serves this interest particularly well. The household community and the *polis* make unique and complementary contributions to the common good of education. In the best *politeia*, therefore, the civic community would neither dominate nor absorb functions that are more fittingly performed by the household. Instead, the *polis* would serve to bring the household to its own perfection, reinforcing in this way the plural structure of society.⁴ Aristotle likewise insists upon the noninter-

changeability of household and *polis*, in opposition to the unitary vision of Plato's Socrates (*Politics* 1261a10-1264b25; see Dobbs 1985). Now, to see in more detail how the *polis* might properly support the operations of the household, we must first consider Aristotle's account of the complementarity of man and wife.

ARISTOTLE'S CRITIQUE OF THE BARBARIC EQUATION OF WOMEN AND SLAVES

The hallmark of barbarism, Aristotle suggests, is the inability to distinguish between the nature of a female and that of a slave (*Politics* 1252b5-6). Mankind is by no means doomed to such barbarism, however, because there are by nature two equally primordial imperatives, each of which prompts the coupling (*synduazesthai*) of a distinct pair of beings. One of these imperatives is procreation, which Aristotle describes as a natural longing "to leave behind someone other of the same sort as oneself" (*Politics* 1252a30). It is for the sake of procreation, Aristotle says, that female and male are joined together. The second imperative is security -- the preservation of self -- which results in the bonding of the rudimentary partnership of ruler and ruled: the master and slave (*Politics* 1252a24-34). Because procreation means the leaving behind of someone other who is nevertheless *like* oneself, the coupling of male and female may be said to achieve fruition only when offspring attain maturity. So among human beings, the procreative partnership is ordered toward the rearing and education of children as well as toward their begetting. In contrast to the self-centered imperative of security, the procreative imperative centers on the generation and rearing of an other. Indeed, the satisfaction of this imperative will sometimes require the sacrifice of one's own security.

Aristotle notes that wherever the tension between the two primordial imperatives is obscured, where the differentiation of the two partnerships directed toward them is violated -- as by the barbarians who treat their women as slaves -- one finds not masters and slaves but only slaves and slaves (*Politics* 1252b6-7). Barbarians are in a sense worse than beasts. They are worse, especially, in relation to sex and food (*Politics* 1253a32-37) -- which, not surprisingly, are the means naturally ordained to procreation and self-preservation. On the other hand, the man and woman who share unselfishly in the work of procreation -- who do not misconstrue the spousal relationship as merely an alternative mode of seeking comfort and security -- are naturally excepted from the structures of domination that are the lot of partners in self-centered, security-seeking relationships. It is no coincidence, then, that the word for liberty (*eleutheriotês*) is the same as the word for liberality or generosity. Freedom, as Aristotle understands it, entails the capacity to appreciate the noble, or *kalon*: that good which comes to light in distinction from the simply useful

³ Compare Lindsay's observation that the cyclopes' way of life exhibits a tendency deeply ingrained in the democratic sensibility, whose "hostility to rule is linked to the prepolitical nature of its transpolitical good" (1992, 751-752). I infer, then, that Aristotle's critique of cyclopean patriarchy is indispensable to any attempted amelioration of democracy.

⁴ It bears repeating that the household is no less a community (*koinônia*) than is the *polis* (see, e.g., *Politics* 1253a18). It is literally true that the household (*oikos*) is *oikeion*: that is, something kindred or "my own." But "my own" here means that to which I belong, not that which belongs to me. Therefore, private interest or passion poses as much a threat to the good order of the *oikos* as to the *polis*. Nevertheless, many readers are mistakenly inclined to differentiate Aristotle's household and polity along a

private-public axis. Arendt (1958) offers the standard formulation of this public-private dichotomy in the interpretation of Aristotle. Her analysis is refuted by Salkever (1990, 169-174, 179-183).

(see Dobbs 1994, 80-83). The mere opportunity of choosing whatever conduces to one's own security (to say nothing of less compelling ends) does not suffice to make a man or woman free. True freedom, in contrast to the essentially patriarchal prerogative of doing as one pleases, is rooted in the good order of the household. It is in light of this rightful freedom of man and wife, moreover, that Aristotle portrays the spousal relationship as political. His use of this adjective in no way identifies the spousal relationship as a particular species of dominance relationship, as suggested by the modern phrase "the personal is political." *Political* is simply the term Aristotle employs to describe the manner in which free adults properly govern one another (*Politics* 1259a38-b1, 1277b7-9).

The relationship between man and wife is political in that it properly involves persons who are *eleutheroi*. Nevertheless, this relationship is unlike the civic partnership in that the freedom of man and wife cannot be expressed in functional interchangeability (*Politics* 1259a38-b10). Within the household, the spouses' natural complementarity -- the precise character of which we shall consider momentarily -- has a greater bearing upon the rightful distribution of tasks and honors than does the consideration of their relative virtue as human beings (*NE* 1160b32-35). The freedom of fellow citizens, unlike that of man and wife, is not an expression of a biologically determined differentiation of function, but rather resembles the relationship between brothers close to one another in age. It would be rightly held to be an injustice if fellow citizens were not permitted to exchange roles (*Politics* 1332b12-29). Inevitably, then, considerations of individual equality become the central concern in questions of *political* justice (*Politics* 1280a11-25, 1282b14-23, 1302a24-31). But in the exercise of the art of household management, Aristotle maintains, the complementarity of man and woman rightly trumps their equality as individuals.

To illustrate his understanding of the husband's status in the household, Aristotle cites Amasis' parable of the footpan (*Politics* 1259b8-10; cf. Herodotus II.172). Amasis, upon becoming king of the Egyptians, discovered that the populace held him in contempt because of his own common origins. Now, among Amasis' myriad belongings there was a golden footpan, in which he and his visitors washed their feet. One day Amasis had this footpan melted down and had the material reformed into a statue dedicated to a god. He then had the statue positioned where his subjects might meet with it as they went about their business. Encountering the statue with great frequency, the Egyptians began to show it great reverence. Learning of the people's reaction, Amasis made a parable of their experience; he declared that his own case was similar to what had happened to the footpan. Though low born, he was made their king. So the Egyptians should now respect him just as they had come to venerate the transformed footpan. For Aristotle, too, Amasis' footpan illustrates the principle that differentiation of function can rightly outweigh substantive equality. Amasis' footpan certainly differs from a sacred statue, yet the intrinsic

value of the underlying golden substance remains the same; the worth of the gold in the footpan is equal to that of the gold in the sacred statue. Nevertheless, Aristotle regards the variation in the Egyptians' behavior as appropriate. Of course, this variation does not occur in response to the substantial equality of the objects in question. It occurs, instead, in response to the peculiarity of each object's function, which is signified above all by a "distinction in forms (*schêmasi*) and titles and honors" (*Politics* 1259b7-8). This distinction, which is merely temporary in the case of a mass of metal, or a mass of fellow citizens, is permanent (*aei*) in the case of male and female. Amasis' parable thus helps to illuminate the propriety of the husband's permanent headship in a relationship that remains one of equality in freedom. The office of *oikonomikos* is not awarded to the husband because he is better than his wife -- for she is substantially equal to him, and is in many particular cases his moral and intellectual superior. It is awarded to him, instead, because it is an office somehow suited to the peculiar formation, and hence functional role, of the male sex. Because marital office is itself a matter of one's sex, man and wife do not rotate offices, i.e., reverse roles, in the manner of fellow citizens.

As already noted, it is in recognition of the spouses' freedom that the relationship of man and wife is described as political. But the unsuitability of role-reversal in their relationship, in contrast to the relationship of fellow citizens, requires that a finer point be put on this description. Let us, following Aristotle, say that "the rule of husband and wife seems to be aristocratic" (*NE* 1160b31-33). This representation of the spousal relation both as political and as aristocratic in appearance is quite important, and in no way exhibits any inconsistency on Aristotle's part. Man and wife are related politically in recognition of their freedom; but it is precisely in view of the conditions under which this freedom is safeguarded -- the acknowledgment of sex complementarity -- that we may say that their rule seems to be aristocratic in character. As Aristotle puts it, "a man rules worthily concerning just those things that require a man, but whatever is fitting for a woman he renders to his wife. If he lords it over all, the man turns his rule into an oligarchy, for he does so unworthily and not insofar as he is better. Yet sometimes, when the women are heiresses, it is they who do the ruling. These instances of rule do not come into being worthily but rather on account of wealth and power, which is the very thing that occurs in oligarchies" (*NE* 1160b33-1161a3). Notice that what *introduces* a dominance relation between the spouses is the violation of sex complementarity. The specific character of the dominance relationship into which the marital relationship degenerates is likened by Aristotle to an oligarchy. In the philosopher's schema of constitutional forms oligarchy represents aristocracy gone astray; so the correct rule of man and wife will, analogically, "seem to be aristocratic." If man and wife rightly defer to sex complementarity in the assignment and reception of household offices, patterns of dominance will not enter into their relationship. If spousal rule resembles an aristocracy, then,

man and wife will remain free; and if man and wife remain free, their relationship is rightly described as political.

Although Aristotle gives no indication whatever that women are inferior to men in capacity for achieving human virtue, he does maintain that it is the man who will assign household offices by *rendering* to his wife those offices that suit a woman. (The notion that the husband "delegates" certain tasks to his wife is quite mistaken. Aristotle's word *apodidōsin* conveys the suggestion that the man's division of tasks is not a matter of doling out authority that is properly his own but is rather a matter of rendering justice in acknowledging what is properly his wife's). Making this initial division of offices is simply a part of the man's office as *oikonomikos*. We will in due course ask why this initial division is itself a task that "requires a man." But it is clear now that no household head rules justly whose division of offices fails to defer to the authority of the complementarity of the sexes. The proper exercise of *oikonomikē* is in no way to be confused with the arrogation of patriarchal autonomy -- though it does presuppose a keen appreciation of the fundamental differences between men and women. We must turn now to Aristotle's biology to seek a deeper understanding of the differentiation of the sexes to which the proper exercise of household rule must defer. Along the way, we shall have to remove certain obstacles, left by a tradition of tendentious scholarship, that lie in our path.

ARISTOTLE'S BIOLOGY AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SEXUAL DIFFERENTIATION

Mankind, according to Aristotle, is essentially hylomorphic. Each man and woman is a unique composite of matter and form, body and soul. The human soul possesses an aptitude for nutrition and growth (*to threptikon*), for sensation (*to aisthētikon*), and for thoughtfulness (*to dianoētikonte kai nous*); non-human animal soul possesses only the first two aptitudes, the soul of plants only the first (*De Anima* 414a29-b18). In regard to the formulable essence of mankind, then, man and woman are one in species and have the same kind of soul (*Generation of Animals* 730b33-35; *Metaphysics* 1058a29-b24). Nevertheless, Aristotle represents the male's contribution to the generation of offspring as form and the female's contribution as matter. Is this portrayal symptomatic of a sexist tendency to belittle the female -- as Garside (1971, 536), Schott (1982), Lange (1983, 12-13), and many others maintain?⁵

⁵ See Morsink (1979) and Tress (1992) for valuable rejoinders to charges that sexist prejudice clouds Aristotle's scientific judgment. Both hold that Aristotle's scientific hypotheses are suggested not by a particular political ideology but rather by the vulnerabilities of the preformationist and pangenesis accounts of generation that prevailed at the time he composed the *Generation of Animals*. While granting the validity of this approach, my own strategy is directed by a greater interest in Aristotle's departure from the Platonic, as opposed to the Hippocratic, account of male

Well, no. As we shall see, Aristotle's analogy of male and female to form and matter is not proposed absolutely but is made rather in the manner of a rhetorical figure, a figure which serves to emphasize the equality of men and women in respect of the distinctively human soul.

Let us begin with what Aristotle himself describes as "the most important evidence" in support of his revolutionary ideas on the generation of animals (*GA* 729b33-730a2). From a study of bird eggs, it is possible to determine that a pregnancy cannot be initiated unless the material provided in the female's egg is first mixed with the male's *sperma* (*GA* 728a29-30, 730a14-15, 741a28-31, 757b15-16). The female clearly supplies the material out of which the offspring comes to be. Nevertheless, it would be mistaken to regard this material as inert. Aristotle recognizes the vitality inherent in the female's generative substance, and so rejects the notion that her contribution amounts to the provision of some inanimate matter, like wood or stone, to be passively informed by an external force (*GA* 741a6-25). On the contrary, we may say that the female contributes to a pregnancy a generative substance, or *sperma*, distinctly her own (*GA* 716a7-13, 727a2-4, 728a26-27). What the female provides is not only matter but a life-principle -- *to threptikon* -- by means of which, along with the material out of which, the offspring will grow. It is, however, the male *sperma* that provides the "principle of movement" (*archē tēs kinēseōs*) in a viable pregnancy by virtue of its torch-like capacity to ignite and to light the way for the dynamic processes of development inherent in the female's contribution to the pregnancy (*GA* 724a30-35, 728a26-30, 740b29-36, 768a2-768b15).⁶ Apart from combination with

and female. I suggest that while Aristotle was certainly interested in joining the scientific issues of his day, he regarded such controversies as preliminary to the articulation of his own philosophy of nature, which culminates in his account of the three soul principles in *De Anima*. It is the illumination of this culminating achievement, even more than the contrast provided by contemporaries, that is fundamental.

⁶ Lest an unwarranted impatience with Aristotle's outmoded science obstruct our inquiry, let us pause to note that modern research confirms the broad outlines, if not the details, of Aristotle's embryology. The characteristics that Aristotle attributed to the female generative substance turn out to apply to the mammalian ovum, the very existence of which was not confirmed until 1827. For example, 1) the ovum does indeed contain the matter out of which the embryo is formed; 2) it also contains other nutritive material necessary to the sustenance of the offspring until such time as the embryo can root itself in the uterus; and 3) although the ovum is potentially a complete human being (possessing, as we know, sufficient genetic information for this purpose), the female cannot *initiate* the process of reproduction apart from the intervention of the male's sperm. In this sense, modern science corroborates Aristotle's contention that the male, who provides no nourishment to the embryo, is the cause of the first movement of its generation, and that the female's generative potential, although ignited by the introduction of the male's sperm, is fueled by its own nutritive resources.

the male's *sperma*, the vitality of the female generative substance remains merely threptic or vegetative (*GA* 741a25-28; 757b15-19). But a complete animal embodies both soul principles, *to threptikon* and *to aisthêtikon*. If the offspring's capacity for sensation were simply inherent in the movements of the female's generative contribution, females would be able to conceive on their own. Aristotle considers the possibility of autogenesis, but he finds no empirical evidence to support it (*GA* 741a32-34). Procreation evidently requires quite different, yet equally indispensable, contributions from male and female. Since the female manifestly provides the material containing a threptic capacity, Aristotle infers that it is the male who communicates the capacity for sensitivity to the embryo.

In light of this argument, it is clear that Aristotle recognizes the female's contribution to form in the generation of offspring. Both *to threptikon* and *to aisthêtikon* are principles of the animal soul, which Aristotle identifies as its form. So, strictly speaking, the female's role in generation is formal as well as material. The male is not the exclusive agent of form in the generation of offspring. Nevertheless, it is the male who communicates the distinguishing form of animality, that part of form which is most characteristic of animal qua animal. Consequently, just as *head* may represent the intact steer, *all hands* the complete bodies of a ship's complement of sailors, and *daily bread* all our material needs, so too may the unique contribution of the male principle in generation represent the entire form of an animal. Aristotle's use of this rhetorical figure -- synecdoche is its technical name -- serves a further purpose. More than anything else, the principle of intelligent thought is the distinctive characteristic of the human soul. But this principle is engendered in human beings in a manner profoundly different from the manner in which the capacities for nutrition and sensitivity are engendered. Of all the soul-principles, Aristotle holds that "*nous* alone enters from outside, and it alone is divine" (*GA* 736b27-28). In other words, the form of soul distinctive of humanity derives from a source somehow transcending the generative contributions of both male and female. As a consequence, male and female may *both* be likened to matter (not inert matter, to be sure) in relation to that mysterious "outside" source, which may be likened -- again by synecdoche -- to form. I conclude that Aristotle's notorious analogy of the male and female principles in generation to form and matter in no way disparages women, for the logic underlying this analogy itself implies the equality of men and women in the case of the form that most distinguishes *human beings*.

One may still ask, of course, precisely how it is that the female contributes nutritive soul and the male contributes sensitive soul to offspring. Aristotle's answer to this question is offered in terms of complex physiological processes. The details of this account are not as important to us as is its general thrust, which penetrates beyond the purely anatomical conception of sexual differentiation. Sex, on this account, is more than skin deep. Aristotle maintains that the generative substance -- which he understands to be

a distillation of the residue of the body's ultimate nourishment, blood -- is more refined in the male than in the female, evidently because of the male's hotter metabolism (*GA* 728a26-27, 765b15-17). By virtue of its greater degree of distillation, the male *sperma* possesses the unique capacity of setting into motion the processes that constitute a pregnancy (*GA* 729b12-14, 730a14-17, 739b20-25). Ultimately, it is this physiological capacity -- and not merely an anatomical difference -- that distinguishes what it means to be male or female (*GA* 766a30-33). Sexual differences, in Aristotle's account, are more deeply rooted (and more diversely ramified) than would be the case if it were merely true, as Plato's Socrates would have it, that "the male mounts and the female bears" (*Republic* 454d10-e1).

I would suggest that Aristotle's most commonly quoted and tendentiously interpreted statements concerning the differences between male and female are not provoked by misogyny, or a belief in the natural inferiority of women as human beings, but by his own contemplation of the surprising depth of the roots of sexual differentiation. We need to take a moment to consider these statements, if we are to remove some of the prejudice that so often hinders the sober consideration of Aristotle's teaching concerning men and women. Perhaps the greatest impediment is posed by the misconstruction of Aristotle's remark that "the female is, as it were, a disabled male (*to gar thêly hôsper arren esti pepêrômenon* . . ." *GA* 737a28-29). But let us not take this citation out of context. To grasp its true significance we must read the rest of the sentence: ". . . and her catamenia is *sperma*, though not pure *sperma* -- there is only one thing that it does not have, the *archê* of soul." In other words, the only "disability" Aristotle finds in the female is her inability to ignite a pregnancy. To say that females are incapacitated in this sense is to say little more than that females are not males. Yet merely to say this will not suffice as a statement of the distinction between males and females. After all, it is true of everything that it is not some other thing. The male and female pair, besides involving difference, is also the same in species. So one must affirm identity as well as difference in order to explain adequately the phenomenon of sexual differentiation. It is for this reason that Aristotle must describe the female in common terms with the male. The material basis of this commonality is already implicit in the finding that the female's contribution to a pregnancy necessarily contains *all* the parts of an animal -- male and the female -- in potency (*GA* 737a23-25). As we have seen, only the male *sperma* has the capacity to set the female residue into motion. As a consequence, the motion thus imparted to the resulting embryo is "the very motion that is active in the male *sperma*" (*GA* 737a20-25). On this basis, one might expect every offspring to be born a male. This expectation is formulated in the notion that the developmental path leading to the generation of a male is typical, while the path leading to the generation of a female is, in some sense, a departure from type (*parekbebêke*, *GA* 767b7-8). This has given rise to the utterly fallacious allegation that Aristotle

regards the female as a monstrosity, a "misbegotten male." Of course, it happens to be the case that roughly equivalent numbers of male and female offspring are born. Aristotle infers that this results because something besides the simple mingling of male and female *spermata* is necessary to generation. The parental contributions must also achieve in combination a certain measure of heat, or conception will be a failure (*GA* 767a13-25). Within the range of viability, moreover, the movements at work in the male *sperma* will either predominate (*kratein*) as such -- when the ratio or *symmetria* of temperatures of the parental *spermata* is most congenial -- or relapse (*luesthai*) into secondary motions, including those resulting in the offspring's resemblance in sex and other characteristics to its mother (*GA* 737a23-25, 767b15-768b15). Aristotle anticipates the Mendelian distinction between dominant and recessive genes with his own notions of "predominance" and "relapse." So his depiction of the female as a departure from type corresponds to what we might today describe as the phenotypic realization of a recessive genotype. No superiority or inferiority in essential human qualities is implied in such portrayals. Aristotle emphatically rejects the notion that there is anything monstrous in the birth of a female; the departure from type she represents is perfectly natural (*GA* 767b7-10, 770b9-13, 775a15-16). Moreover, Aristotle observes, the good of the species as a whole is served by the presence of sexual differentiation. Without it animal species could not be preserved.

Indeed, the preservation of species is the ultimate purpose for the sake of which procreation occurs. Aristotle holds it as a cosmological axiom that "the beautiful and the divine is the cause, always in accord with its own nature, of what is better (*tou beltionos*) in the things that allow of it" (*GA* 731b25-27). The nature of mortal beings as such does not allow of a participation in the divine good of eternity. But mortals can partake in eternity as a species (*edei*, 731b35) via procreation. The male and female principles in mortal beings exist, then, as a divine gift for the sake of procreation. This is true of plants just as it is true of animals and of human beings, because plants have distinct male and female *parts* even if these parts typically do not have an existence separate from one another. In order to understand the significance of the separate existence of male and female a further application of the cosmological axiom is necessary. This step will introduce the broad distinction between plants and animals. Aristotle notes that "the male is separate from the female wherever possible and as far as possible because the principle of movement -- which is what the male is for things that are generated -- is better and more divine than the matter" (*GA* 732a5-9). Does this imply that he regards men as being more divine than women, as many readers suppose? By no means! Aristotle notes that in its capacity to initiate movement the male generative principle shares, to this extent, in the divine nature of the prime mover. This obviously applies to the male principle in plants, too. But the claim of the cosmological axiom is that the divinity is the

cause of "something better." So the crucial question is this: what betterment unavailable to mere plants does the divinity bring about for the male principle as a consequence of its separation from the female principle? Animals and human beings differ from plants in the possession of *to aisthêtikon* -- that is, the capacity for a life of sensitivity and awareness. Plants, which combine female and male, scarcely attain to even the most primitive manifestations of sensitivity (*GA* 731a24-731b8). The separate existence of the sexes somehow comports with the possibility of the higher life-form of *to aisthêtikon*.⁷ Conversely, when male and female animals are entwined in a sexual embrace they are hardly aware of anything else. At such times, Aristotle says, it is "as if the couple becomes a plant" (*GA* 731b6-8). Sexual pleasure drives out the awareness of anything else; "the greater pleasure crowds out the other . . . so that there is no act (*energeia*) at all in accordance with it" (*NE* 1175b8-10; see also 1152b16-18 and 1153a20-23). That which occurs occasionally (and incompletely) in the case of animals constitutes the permanent and essential condition of the sexual principles existing inseparably in plants. But the divine brings about the separate existence of male and female in animals for the sake of a higher life, a life of sensitivity, in which women and men equally share.

Aristotle's biological account of the sexes in fact provides no excuse for misogyny or for claims that women are inferior to men as human beings. On the contrary, it establishes the fundamental complementarity of the sexes and adumbrates the higher life that the divine has vouchsafed to human beings -- both males and females. The prospect of this life implies that both male and female are called to a higher work than that of procreation. Among human beings, the capacity for sensitivity is gathered up into a dianoetic soul and the possibility of a still higher life and *ergon* is introduced (*GA* 731a30-b7). This fundamental call to thoughtfulness, and so to the virtues of practical and theoretical wisdom, extends every bit as much to women as to men. To understand how we might best respond to this distinctively human vocation, however, we must join Aristotle in observing the remarkable fact that the stamp of sexual complementarity impresses itself more plainly upon mankind than upon any other species. The temperamental differences characteristic of men and women -- though

⁷ The separate existence of the sexes is, of course, no guarantee of this aptitude; the divine is a cause of betterment only insofar as things allow of it. I take it that Aristotle was acquainted with the phenomenon of unisexual plants. He was surely familiar with Herodotus's account (I.193) of the Egyptians' cultivation of the date palm. So if despite this he still says that nature mixes male and female in plants so that the two exist inseparably, I suspect that he is simply less concerned to explain the anomaly of why date palms cannot sense than he is to consider the significance of the general phenomenon that virtually all animals can. In natural philosophy, as in ethics, one must be content to illustrate the truth with reference to what is the case "generally and for the most part" (*hôs epi to poly*, *NE* 1094b16-1095a4 and 1142a11-18).

rooted in one of the humblest of life functions, namely, procreation -- are more pronounced, Aristotle declares, precisely because of the perfection of mankind's nature (*History of Animals* 608b5-7). The supervention of perception and thought does not suppress but rather enhances the significance of a human being's sexual nature in the execution of his or her natural functioning. The functional multiplicity of the human soul is synergistic.

This functional multiplicity of the human soul might seem to be inconsistent with Aristotle's well-known censure of the Delphic knife (*Politics* 1252b1-3). It is commonly held on the basis of this passage that Aristotle endorses a simplistic "one instrument, one function" rule. But this is quite mistaken. Aristotle acknowledges, for example, that the tongue exists both for tasting and for conversation (*De Anima* 420b17-20). The tongue is no Delphic knife because its multiple functions supplement and enrich one another. Taste guards against the consumption of food that is spoiled and consequently unhealthy, while conversation "illuminates the advantageous and the disadvantageous" (*Politics* 1253a14-15). Thus, we are sometimes willing to consume what tastes bad, if, on the basis of conversation with a pharmacist, we have reason to believe that it will benefit us. But in the absence of such discourses, one does well to rely upon taste. Taste, in turn, complements conversation about the good, as when we say "taste and see." For the ultimate particular, as Aristotle says, is a matter of perception, not argument. Now, the Delphic knife is the case in point in which this kind of harmonization is impossible. Some background may be helpful. Delphi, a place sacred to the Greeks, attracted pilgrims from throughout the Hellenic world. Exploiting this market, local artisans designed a knife that would be inexpensive and versatile. Some of the purposes it was designed to perform involved sacrificial functions, other purposes were ordinary and profane (see Newman 1973, v.2, 110). The combination borders on the blasphemous, and even those not easily shaken by impiety will recognize in it the paradigm of a thing at war with itself. But the human soul is not a Delphic knife; nor is it the hodgepodge proposed in Socrates' famous image in book 9 of the *Republic* (588b10-e1). On the contrary, mankind, according to Aristotle, is the most perfect in nature of all the animals. Though our sexual characteristics are ordained to a purpose determined by our natural role in procreation, the influence of these characteristics pervades and imbues our ethical lives and even crosses the threshold of the life of the mind. The functional complementarity of the sexes naturally gives rise to temperamental differences that warrant different approaches to the realization of a common human *telos*. A human being is by no means "entombed" in his or her sexually distinct body. It would be quite wrongheaded, perhaps even monstrous, to efface one's sexual nature in the pursuit of some rarefied conception of human excellence. On the contrary, the natural enhancement of sexual identity in mankind requires that we become more perfectly men and women, not less so, as we

become more perfect human beings. There is no androgynous path to virtue.

ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF SEX-LINKED DIVERGENCES IN TEMPERAMENT

Aristotle finds that the complementary procreative functions of male and female are accompanied by distinctive temperamental tendencies, the most important of which cluster around two dispositions: spiritedness (*thymos*) and nurturance (*hê tôn teknôn trophê*). Males tend to be more spirited than females in nearly all the species of animals, while females tend to be the more thoughtful (*phrontistikôtêra*) concerning the feeding and rearing of offspring. The sex differential in these dispositions is more conspicuous among the higher animals than among the lower, and is especially pronounced in the case of mankind, whose nature is most perfect or complete (*HA* 608a33-b7). The ramifications of this differential pervade the whole of the ethical life of men and women. As a consequence, the human excellence that good men and women share is naturally inflected by gender. Aristotle argues that "a man would be reputed a coward if he were courageous in the manner of a courageous woman, and a woman too talkative if she were decorous in the manner of a good man, since the management of the household also is different in the case of a man and a woman, for it is the man's work to acquire and the woman's to keep a vigilant watch" (*Politics* 1277b20-25). The inflections of human excellence in men and women comport perfectly with their differing temperaments and household functions. Serenity and modesty will adorn the woman, who is naturally suited to the function of vigilant preservation rather than acquisition. But decorum in a man's conduct requires more enterprise. The male's performance of his acquisitive role will profit from a greater dose of daring and even audacity than would be prudent in the essentially defensive posture of the female. Aristotle's precise characterization of women's work as keeping a vigilant watch (*phylattein*) may well be meant to remind his auditors of Plato's *phylakes*, his philosophical and spirited guardians (see Zuckert 1983, 195). Aristotle thus suggests that the tasks naturally assigned to women require a courage that is no less genuine than the courage one would expect of Plato's guardians. But if the feminine inflection of courage -- the virtue commonly held to be the special province of a manly man -- deserves this authentication, so too must the feminine inflections of all the other virtues, *a fortiori*. Although the particular acts that manifest virtue in a woman differ from those that manifest virtue in a man, a woman's virtue is of no lower rank than a man's.

Similarly, the *definition* of virtue is the same for men and women. Courage, for example, may be defined as the habit of choosing the golden mean in the face of feelings of fear or of confidence. But familiarity with such definitions is not enough. Aristotle notes that the reliance upon such general definitions invites complacency and self-deception, which is why he blames those who would appear to put too much stock in them (*Politics* 1260a25). To

know what virtue is really, one must develop an appreciation of the particulars, for the universal really exists only in the particular. The precise choice that constitutes the golden mean depends upon many such particulars; one of the most crucial of these is the character of the task with which one is principally charged by nature: acquiring or guarding. Because the man's office within the natural household differs from that of his wife, the particular deeds their common human excellence calls for will vary accordingly. The act in which the splendor of courage is manifest in a woman, if performed under the same circumstances by a man, might very well betray an excessive concern for security. It follows that "the same [action] is not moderation in the case of a woman and in the case of a man, nor [is the same action] courage or justice" (*Politics* 1260a21-22). Men are bolder by nature but not more courageous than excellent women, and women are more circumspect by nature but not more decorous than excellent men. We are thus brought back to Aristotle's rudimentary insight that men are more thymotic and women more thoughtful in respect to nurturance. So let us consider these dispositions in more detail.

As Aristotle explains it, spiritedness is "in every case the power of soul that the ruling element and the element of freedom presuppose, for *thymos* is apt for rule and will not accept defeat or second place" (*Politics* 1328a6-7). *To be free* refers here not only to liberation from the rule of others but also to independence from the constraint of one's own appetites -- especially, but not exclusively, the appetite for self-preservation. It is in this light that Aristotle describes spiritedness as *ekstatikos*, for it supports acts, such as the killing of a tyrant surrounded by armed bodyguards, that require such disregard of one's own safety as to justify our saying that the agent is literally "beside himself" (*Eudemian Ethics* 1229a22-25). Many have been known to undertake such acts to defend their friends and families. But such ecstatic disregard of one's own safety comes more naturally to a man than to a woman. Because the female carries and nurses the offspring, a mother's love of her own child is naturally interwoven with a concern for self-preservation. To save the child's life requires saving the mother's life, as well. The male is in a sense more expendable than the female because his contribution to the generation of offspring is completed in a much shorter time. During the period of a female's single pregnancy, Aristotle points out, a single male is able to make many similar contributions elsewhere (*Metaphysics* 988a5-6). It is only natural that females, who are biologically less expendable than males, will also tend to be less venturesome than males. Aristotle attributes the latter difference to a divergence in the metabolism of men and women that accounts for the greater prominence of *thymos* in the male of the species.⁸

⁸ The correspondence between sex and temperament does not arise by coincidence. According to Aristotle, all such affections of the soul involve the body (*De Anima* 403a15-19; *NE* 1147a15-17). Our language preserves this insight in the wealth of conno-

The ethical implications of the greater prominence of the thymotic temper in the male can be further detailed. For example, the ecstasy of *thymos* induces a certain detachment not only from the concern for self-preservation but also from all the needs of the body. Moreover, by abstracting from the body, which is an ontological principle of individuation, *thymos* leads a person not only to ignore his own physical needs but also to expect that others should be similarly detached. Homer describes how Achilles, upon learning of the death of his friend Patroclus, is overwhelmed by the desire for vengeance. In his zeal to enter the fray, Achilles refuses to take food and would deny the same to his comrades. But Odysseus prevails upon Achilles to allow the men food so their strength will be sustained throughout the long battle that is sure to follow (*Iliad* 19.146-220). Here we see the thymotic temperament at work in Achilles' detachment from the needs of his own body, in his demand to generalize this detachment, and, even more, in Odysseus' restraint of Achilles' appetite for revenge. As this episode indicates, "readiness to strike a blow" is by no means evidence of a superior *thymos*; Aristotle evidently agrees (*HA* 608b11-12). Odysseus' ability to oppose and restrain Achilles' *thymos* requires a spiritedness at least as great as Achilles' own. While *thymos* motivates the original thirst for vengeance, another manifestation of spiritedness (a *heteros thymos*, so to speak -- see *Odyssey* 9.302) is required to overrule it. The ability to control the irrationality of spiritedness arises from precisely the same psychic source as the irrationality needing to be controlled. This is because *thymos* is *aêt-têton*, i.e., unbeatable (*Politics* 1328a7). Only the same or

tations associated with the word *heart*. Aristotle elaborates a physiological link between the anatomical and ethical senses that this word conveys. The heart, Aristotle observes, is the first organ to be formed in an embryo; it provides the vital heat whose measure determines whether the embryo is itself destined to be able to distill *gonê*, and so to count as a male (*GA* 766a30-766b7). But heat is also identified as a defining characteristic of spiritedness or heart (*thymos*), which Aristotle diagnoses as "a seething of the heat surrounding the heart" (*Problems* 869a4-5; *NE* 1149a30). Terror -- a disheartening experience that cannot be experienced at the same time as *thymos* (*Rhetoric* 1380a33-34) -- is accompanied by a "cooling down of the region surrounding the heart" (*Problems* 902b38). Modern investigators point instead to the secretion of hormones; but their finding of a biochemical basis for the sexual differentiation of temperament reinforces the essential outlines of the work of their great predecessor. In controlled studies of males and females, researchers have found boys to be significantly more aggressive and competitive than girls, and girls to be more nurturant than boys, notwithstanding the variation in these traits among members of the same sex (Hutt 1975, 108-126; Maccoby and Jacklin 1974, 352-354). Perhaps most telling of all, the distinctively female tendencies are muted, and the distinctively male tendencies more pronounced, in fetally androgenized girls (Hutt 1975, 73-75; Money and Ehrhardt 1972, 98-105).

a greater *thymos* can overrule such a passion so that it may become amenable to the rule of reason.⁹

Nevertheless, spiritedness is superior to other appetites insofar as it "does hear reason somehow." But the problem is that it tends to be like hasty servants, who "rush away before they have heard all of what is said, and so mistake the order" (*NE* 1149a25-28). One must first bridle *thymos* if it is to hear reason speak its piece in full. The excellence of reason can make itself evident once *thymos* is bridled, but reason cannot do the bridling itself. For this, only *thymos* will suffice. Because the male is by nature better or stronger (*kreitton*) than the female in respect of *thymos* "the male is more fit for leadership" (*Politics* 1259b1-3; 1254b13-14). Yet the husband rules the household not merely because he is "bossier," as Sparshott (1985, 184-187) puts it,¹⁰ but because he is the household member best equipped to *overrule* bossiness, whether in himself or in others. In this way, Aristotle does not only imply that male headship is inevitable -- a thesis most recently associated with the work of Goldberg (1993); he also makes the argument that male headship is good.

All this being said, Aristotle can still acknowledge the possibility that a given female might be more spirited than a given male. But the key point, upon which Aristotle insists, is that "the male is more fit for leadership (*hégemonikôteron*) than the female, at least if their union is not constituted contrary to nature" (*Politics* 1259b1-3). In other words, Aristotle's comparative analysis does not apply exhaustively to every possible pair of male and female. Rather, he is comparing only the male and female members of a pair naturally joined in the work of generation.

⁹ Aristotle regards *thymos* both as an urge seeking vengeance (*NE* 1149a30-32; *Rhetoric* 1378a30-1378b7, 1380a18-21) and as the faculty of soul capable of resisting all urges and appetites, including the urge for vengeance. The latter point is implicit in the aptness of *thymos* for freedom (*Politics* 1328a6-7). Freedom and responsibility depend upon the capacity of *thymos* to resist the promptings of appetite, for if we did not possess the psychic capacity to resist our appetites, why should we be blamed for yielding to them? The duality of *thymos* also implies that one's own thymotic appetite can never be stronger than his or her thymotic capacity for resisting the longings of appetite. But this is by no means to take the *achievement* of such control for granted. It would be nearer to the truth to describe this achievement as heroic. The archetype of thymotic self-control is the *anêr* Odysseus (*Odyssey* 1.1), whose very manliness Homer ultimately presents as a matter of restraining the desire for revenge (*Odyssey* 20.9-21, IX.302, XXIV.545; see Dobbs 1987, 504).

¹⁰ Much of Sparshott's analysis is keen. But he errs fundamentally, in my view, because he ignores the importance of the thymotic difference between men and women and because he denigrates the natural status of the *oikos*. Even if the *oikos* is best represented by the "family farm," it does not follow that the historical disappearance of the family farm diminishes the natural status of the household, any more than the disappearance of the *polis* would be regarded by Aristotle as evidence of its diminished natural status as compared with the imperial regimes that swallowed it up.

This partnership of spouses is ordered toward procreation, and must remain so if civilization is to emerge from barbarism, as we have seen. In the partnership of spouses it is better, for reasons already discussed, for the male to take the lead -- to stick his neck out, so to speak -- ahead of the female. The male's more thymotic nature *relative to his natural mate* ensures that he will be the one better fit to lead their partnership. Likewise, the female proceeds in accord with nature when she rejects as a mate any male endowed with less *thymos* than herself. Aristotle disregards as unnatural such cases as the aggressive female and demure male who happen to find one another sexually attractive. One can acknowledge that the eccentric exists without seeking to reconstruct the *politeia* in its image.

The purposes of generation are best served when the male is sufficiently spirited to provide a margin of security for even an unusually venturesome female. As long as the marital community is constituted in accord with nature, then, the household will be monarchic, its one head being the husband (*Politics* 1255b19, 1259b1-3). As an expression of sex complementarity, the husband's status as household head exemplifies domestic justice. The husband's headship is not a reward for moral or intellectual excellence. As such, it is in no way inconsistent with his wife's being his moral and intellectual superior. Aristotle alludes to such a case when he quotes Sophocles' Ajax: "silence is a woman's ornament" (*Politics* 1260a30; *Ajax* 293). As recent commentators have observed, the dramatic context of this line raises an important question concerning the philosopher's intention. Could Aristotle really have meant to endorse this sentiment, in view of the fact that it is uttered by a madman?¹¹ It is typical of the debate on Aristotle's view of women that some commentators believe Aristotle to be sincere and misogynistic in this passage, while others believe his citation to be ironic and covertly indicative of support for women's political equality with men. As an alternative to these interpretations, I would suggest that Aristotle alludes to the coupling of Ajax and Tecmessa as the apparently exceptional case -- one in which the woman's superiority is disturbingly evident -- that proves the rule of male leadership.

For this purpose, let us begin by noting the obvious: when Tecmessa is confronted with the madness of her husband, she finds herself powerless to do anything about it. The hopelessness of Tecmessa's plight is indicative of

¹¹ Aristotle's quotation of Sophocles is not meant to put women in their place but rather to call attention to a difficulty concerning the nature of that place, as Saxonhouse (1982, 209) and Nichols (1983, 182) rightly observe. Far from endorsing misogyny, Aristotle's allusion to Ajax may well have been meant to remind his audience, as Nichols contends, that it is madness to disregard the good advice of a woman -- a cogent point of interpretation that one would have to be mad to disregard! But can it be right to dissociate Aristotle completely from the sentiment expressed by Ajax? It is worth recalling that Aristotle elsewhere, and in his own name, identifies talkativeness as a departure from graceful order in women (see *Politics* 1277b23).

the limits of a wife's capacity to cope effectively with the psychological intensity and the physical consequences of a madman's rage. Her helplessness illuminates the essential shortcomings that make the leadership of the household something that literally "requires a man" (*NE* 1160b34). Ajax's fury is a measure of his spiritedness. Because Ajax has not learned to restrain this spirit, and because no woman to whom he could be naturally yoked would be sufficiently thymotic to restrain it, he must depend upon another man to do the job for him. Unfortunately, one of the few men who could undertake so daunting a challenge, namely, Odysseus, is the very man who provoked Ajax in the first place. As a result, Ajax remains unrestrained and his story ends in tragedy. Apart from the moderation of *thymos*, the spirited male is destined to be a cause of great suffering. Sophocles' *Ajax*, as is typical of Greek tragedy, celebrates the human spirit in the midst of such suffering. The poet would thus reconcile us to a human situation in which the prospect of Ajax's suffering, and all its collateral damage, simply cannot be eradicated. So Aristotle's approving quotation of Sophocles is hardly misogynistic. Instead, it merely signifies that the philosopher in this case shares the poet's tragic vision. Neither believes that any change in the male's status as household head could bring about a better life for couples like Ajax and Tecmessa.

The woman does not rule as *oikonomikos* because she is by nature insufficiently spirited to overrule her husband and even her more spirited children. Of course, a woman's lesser endowment of *thymos* does not preclude her exercise of self-rule or, therefore, her acquisition of human virtue. Similarly, while a man's greater endowment of *thymos* establishes his claim to the monarchic status of *oikonomikos*, it by no means guarantees his acquisition of human virtue. On the contrary, spiritedness is in this respect alarmingly ambiguous. Venturesomeness, competitiveness, righteous indignation, and mastery of the needs of the body are readily exploited in an unjust cause and, what is hardly better, they may be squandered needlessly in a just cause. In many cases, there is considerable uncertainty about what it is that ought to be done. Because he is the more expendable of the partners in the procreative couple, the male is inclined by nature to take the lead in risky situations. The prominence of spiritedness in his soul prepares the male to put his life in jeopardy. But there remains a crucial difference between reckless behavior and genuine manliness. Moreover, untutored spiritedness is as ready to rally to the defense of appetites as it is to check them. Thus, Aristotle notes that while *thymos* "is in every case the power of soul that the ruling element and the element of freedom presuppose," it is also *thymos* that "warps even the best men when they rule" (*Politics* 1287a31-32, 1328a6-7).

The protean quality of the thymotic temperament contrasts sharply with the fundamental soundness and equilibrium that is typical of the nurturant temperament. Just as the male is more thymotic than the female, so we have seen that "the female is more thoughtful concerning the feeding and rearing of offspring." The biological value of

such an orientation is obvious. What is not so easily apprehended is the psychic balance and integrity that thoughtfulness concerning the feeding and nurture of offspring engenders in the female herself. In this light, Aristotle declares that "the female overall is more stable (*akinêtoeron*) than the male" (*HA* 608b14-15). Nor is it difficult for us to see how the more nurturant female comes by this stability. To flourish, a child requires nourishment, personal affection, and a selfless attentiveness. A child needs these things consistently, day in and day out. The temperamental inclination, along with the anatomical equipment, necessary for the provision of these needs is naturally present in the female. Maternal thoughtfulness concerning the nurture and rearing of offspring manifests itself in certain natural longings and desires, the appropriateness of which is hardly, if ever, unsettled by contingent circumstances. Of course, maternal tendencies are not infallible. A mother may overindulge her little ones, smothering rather than mothering them. But my contention is that the maternal instinct is less likely than *thymos* to be misdirected, and that even when it is misdirected the damage it causes is overshadowed by the damage inflicted by misdirected *thymos*. Civilization has more to fear from the wrath of Achilles than from the apronstrings of Mrs. Portnoy.

The difference between the protean and morally ambiguous appetites that accompany the thymotic temperament and the stable and fundamentally sound appetites that accompany the nurturant temperament provides a basis for a systematic contrast between the sexes. It is this contrast that is implicit in Aristotle's otherwise perplexing remark that "the female has the deliberative capacity but it lacks authority" (*Politics* 1260a12-13). To appreciate this remark, we must first ask: in what, precisely, does the authority of the human deliberative capacity consist? Saxenhouse (1982, 208) observes that Aristotle's term *akyron* would appear to permit two very different interpretations: "this want of authority in the woman's deliberative capacity [either] inheres in the soul itself or becomes manifest in groups of men who would scorn it coming from a woman." Fortenbaugh (1977, 138-139) seizes the first alternative, contending that this lack of authority is an *intrapersonal* phenomenon resulting from the woman's own emotions overruling her better judgment. In view of Aristotle's allusion to the madman Ajax in the course of the same passage, however, it is most unlikely that he means to argue that the psychic economy of women is any more turbulent than that of men. Moreover, Fortenbaugh's citation of Medea to illustrate the peculiar emotional disturbance of women proves nothing. Medea admits that her better judgment is overruled by a thymotic appetite for revenge, which is the very force that Aristotle says is more prominent in men than in women. What Medea holds in her heart, men have, so to speak, in spades. So if deliberation's lack of authority results from the influence of *thymos*, Aristotle is hardly justified in singling women out for special mention. In fact, there is not a shred of evidence to suggest that Aristotle held women in general to be any more

susceptible than men to the destabilizing affect of passion upon deliberation.¹²

But is it any more satisfactory to maintain that the female's deliberative capacity is lacking in authority merely because men are loathe to listen to women? Such an explanation regards this lack of authority as an *interpersonal* phenomenon and appeals to circumstances outside the female to explain why her deliberative capacity is *akyron*. Zuckert (1983, 194), for example, embraces this alternative, maintaining that "to say that the woman deliberates without authority, rule, or decisiveness (the alternative meanings of *kyrios*) is as much as to say that her reason does not rule because she does not rule." Levy (1990, 405) interprets the *akyron* passage similarly, holding that the issue is not what happens inside the wife but outside her, in her relationship with her husband: thus, "the resistance to the wife's deliberation is in the irrational part of the husband's soul." But here we must remember that Aristotle's description of the female deliberative capacity occurs in the context of a general statement concerning the manner in which the parts of the soul inhere in each of several types of human being. Aristotle says, "the parts of the soul inhere in everyone, but they inhere differently (*enhy-parchei diapherontôs*). The slave does not have the deliberative capacity as a whole. The female has it, but it lacks authority; and though the child has it, it is immature" (*Politics* 1260a10-14). Because Aristotle means to indicate something about the *inherent disposition* of the parts of the soul, I infer that we cannot accept a purely extrinsic account as satisfactory. We are left to conclude that the lack of authority of the female's deliberative capacity is indeed an intrapersonal phenomenon, though it has nothing to do with her good judgment being overruled by irrational passions.

If we keep the temperamental differences between male and female in mind, we may discover a different basis upon which an intrapersonal account may be offered. According to Aristotle, deliberation is a prelude to choice. He suggests that the thing chosen can be understood as what we desire on the basis of deliberation; choice may be described, accordingly, as a kind of deliberate appetite (*NE* 1113a9-12). The role of deliberation in choice consists, then, in the ordering of desire. We have already noticed that the distinctively male temperament involves desires that are more protean, more ambiguous both morally and prudentially, than is the case with the female. Because of this, it is up to deliberation in the particular case to provide direction for these desires. The very unsettledness of the male appetite makes it a fit subject for the authoritative

and lordly ordering operation of deliberation. But the relative stability and wholesomeness of the appetites naturally implanted in the female means that her desires stand in much less need of deliberate ordering. So the reason that the female's deliberative capacity is less lordly in its operation than the male's is simply that her desires are better ordered -- one might even say, more reasonable -- to begin with. A woman's choices manifest what Aristotle calls intelligent appetite, *orexis dianoêtikê*, as distinguished from appetitive intelligence (*NE* 1139b4-5).

POLITICAL AND DOMESTIC GOVERNMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN EXCELLENCE

Spiritedness is the political passion, *par excellence*. Political order, according to Aristotle, does not arise directly in response to human desire, nor is it merely an artifact of reason's calculation of the most expedient means to satisfy desire. On the contrary, the rise and fall of political constitutions can be best understood as a result of the spirited reactions of some to what they perceive to be the inequitable desires of others (*Politics* 1281a11-1281b21, 1301b26-40; see also Zuckert 1988, 2-4). But the thymotic temperament is a two-edged sword. Spiritedness enables one to ignore the clamoring of appetite, but it can also cause one to turn a deaf ear to reason. It is responsible for the barbarism of cyclopean patriarchy, Ajax's curt and self-destructive dismissal of Tecmessa, and the warping of even the best men when they rule. Yet Aristotle acknowledges that *thymos* is *aêttêton* or unbeatable (*Politics* 1328a7). It follows, as we have seen, that only *thymos* can contend with *thymos*. So the presence of spiritedness in human communities is as indispensable as it is dangerous. Apart from the spirited passion for "getting even," the search for justice might never be initiated. But this passion must be governed. Simply to unleash the furies of vengeance would be disastrous. Because the family is not equipped to provide such government -- at least not in the case of its most spirited male -- it falls to the *polis* to adjudicate justice and thus to rein in vigilantism and private "score-settling." This is a fundamental lesson that the Greek tragedians taught virtually as a matter of civic religion to the entire Athenian populace, and it is of no less currency to us today (see Euben 1982).

In its government of *thymos*, the political community ameliorates the problem of cyclopean patriarchy. In his account of the natural evolution of human communities, Aristotle indicates that the transition from the patriarchal rule of kings to the reciprocal rule of fellow citizens occurs as the political community comes to exist in its finality (*Politics* 1252b19-33). We may infer that the conversion of patriarch into citizen is an essential component of the work of politics. Of course, an exceptionally spirited female has the same need to temper her *thymos* as does a typical man. Such a woman might be inclined to be overbearing toward her children, for example. But the husband of such a woman, provided the two of them are not unnatu-

¹² Like Fortenbaugh, Smith (1983, 476-477), Garside (1971, 534-537), and Horowitz (1976, 211) fail to pay sufficient attention to the vulnerabilities of the male deliberative faculty to the irrational force of *thymos*. Whatever their other merits, these accounts consequently shed no light on the basis upon which Aristotle can single out the female deliberative faculty as peculiarly lacking in authority.

rally yoked, will be even more thymotic than she is. He will be able to overrule and thus curb her spirit. So even unusually thymotic women can find all the therapy they need within a rightly ordered household. But whether the man of the house exercises his thymotic superiority in accordance with domestic justice or merely "lays down the law" cyclopes-fashion depends ultimately upon his success in learning to govern *his own* thymotically based patriarchal proclivities. This is a lesson that the man is not apt to learn within the naturally constituted household, owing to the undisputed dominance of his own *thymos* in that setting. But in political life -- where one prevails by persuading other spirited males to share a common interest, which only *logos* can clarify -- unbridled *thymos* can be a distinct liability (*Politics* 1253a14-15). Even the most competitive male may learn in politics that *thymos* must be restrained if *logos* is to be heard. Nothing like this occurs in the soul of the patriarch, who prevails by force and never submits his autonomous will to the authority of any higher good. Once again, Homer's cyclopes define the type. Each lays down the law to his own family, and literally counts for nothing to the others; there are no hearths within their individual caves, and among them there is no deliberative assembly (*Odyssey* 9.112, 273-278). Prior to the coming into being of the *polis*, the household exists in a primitive form; but it is only after the political community has come into existence that Aristotle describes the household as finished or perfected (cf. *oikia prôtê* [1252b10] with *oikia de teleios* [1253b4]). Indeed, the household apart from the *polis* is a household only nominally (*Politics* 1253a18-25). Thus, by assisting more elementary human communities in the realization of their own natural perfection, the political community promotes the human good.

In this light it would appear absurd to view citizenship as some kind of prize granted exclusively to men in recognition of their supposed moral or intellectual superiority to women. Citizenship is more like a therapy than a trophy. Certainly, the *polis* has need of wise judges and assemblymen. But patriarchy is itself an obstacle to the development of such wisdom. So the amelioration of patriarchy via civic activity serves political purposes, too. Of course, political activity cannot work miracles. But Aristotle makes the most of its salutary influence by also requiring, in his best regime, that all men undergo the discipline of military training before coming of age to head their own households; as he repeatedly observes, one learns to rule by first learning to be ruled (*Politics* 1332b35-1333a3, 1277b7-13). The relative ages of the spouses is best decided with respect to the promotion of marital harmony, which will be more enduring if man and wife reach the limits of their procreative capacities at approximately the same time (*Politics* 1334b37-1335a29). The chief policy implication of this consideration, obviously, is to require men to postpone marriage. Specifically, Aristotle recommends that marriage should be postponed for the man until the age of 37 and for the woman until the age of 18, not only for the sake of procreation but also to provide for the woman's growth in excellence (*Politi-*

tics 1334b29-1335a29). Just as the wife who enters marriage at this age will be more sensible than before, so will her husband be less irascible and better able to govern his own *thymos*. Thus, in the best polity, women have time *and* the political activity of men on their side in the battle to get the patriarch out of the household.

A civilized man will find repellent the barbaric practices in which women occupy the same rank as slaves. But even his respect for his wife's human equality in no way entails the necessity that she should play a role in politics. Yet we tend today to overlook this and to protest the exclusion of women from politics as a matter of principle. The problem is that the principle in question derives from an unduly simplistic conception of justice -- the abstract demand that what is good for the gander be good for the goose. The appeal of this principle diminishes, however, the more one learns about ganders and geese. On the basis of his own understanding of men and women, Aristotle countenances the historical restriction of citizenship to men. In itself, this restriction is not surprising. Citizenship was thus restricted in ancient times because the *polis* first arose as a partnership of male-dominated clans and villages (*Politics* 1252b20-21, 1280b40-1281a1). But this restriction is also *fitting*, according to Aristotle's argument, because political activity serves to moderate the very *thymos* responsible for such patriarchal vestiges of primitive life. Aristotle consequently speaks only of the male human being, the *anêr*, as a citizen. He never speaks of women as citizens except once, when he is reporting the view of others who attempt to define citizenship by genealogy. But even in this purely analytical role the conception of woman as citizen ends in failure (*Politics* 1275b30-34). Sexism, of course, has nothing to do with the philosopher's terminology in this matter. Though Aristotle speaks only of the *anêr* as citizen, he just as consistently eschews sexually exclusive language when he speaks of *theôria*, the activity that constitutes a life distinctly superior to the political life. In references to the theoretical life, he speaks only of the *anthropos*, the human being (see, e.g., *NE* 1177b16-1178b32).

It remains true that "*phronêsis* alone is the virtue peculiar to a ruler" (*Politics* 1277b25-26). Some have concluded on the basis of this passage that women must participate in the government of the *polis* if they are to cultivate the virtue of practical wisdom. But Aristotle does not imply this at all, for he says nothing that restricts the experience of ruling to civic office. To suppose that he does is to err in overlooking the ruling offices available within the household. Of course, those who would homogenize the natural modes of rule into a unitary conception of government will pronounce such blindness visionary. But we must remember that this unitary conception of government is at odds with Aristotle's pluralist understanding of the best *politeia*. It is in a regime that reflects and enhances the natural differentiation of society that Aristotle expects women and men to have the best chance of achieving the human good. Domestic offices must be preserved in their integrity; they must not be absorbed by an expansive *polis*.

Certain of these domestic ruling offices are especially congenial to the human excellence of women. Women's more nurturing temperament equips them to rule in matters relating to the physical and emotional welfare of their own family. Moreover, it is a principle of domestic justice -- not of male largesse -- that a husband render such matters to his wife's government (*NE* 1160b33-35). The very earthiness of the domestic responsibilities entrusted to women defies, nay mocks, the statesman's retreat to the abstract formulas of political ideology. Household office is indeed occupied with necessities; but this grappling with necessity renders indispensable -- and so cannot help but exercise -- an ability for governing the tension between higher and more urgent goods. The execution of a woman's domestic responsibilities demands an exercise of practical wisdom no less vigorous than the one demanded by her husband's offices in the city. The political community plays a supporting role in household matters, not by substituting its own authority for that of the domestic community, but by preparing men to defer to the authority of sex complementarity and so to submit, where fitting, to the rule of their wives. Where political activity has reoriented man's *thymos* toward a higher source of law than his own will, he will be better able to appreciate his wife as a partner in a common work, to learn from her, and to rejoice in her proper excellence (*NE* 1162a25-27). Indeed, if women can achieve genuine human virtue -- and can achieve it in the context of domestic life -- the friendship between husband and wife can be of the very highest order, based upon virtue and not merely upon pleasure and utility. Friendship thus permeates the naturally perfected household. Thanks to its existence the woman has no need to vie with her husband in order to get his attention. In politics, and in other competitive enterprises, one must compete to be regarded. But in a household ensconced within a civilized polity, the husband acknowledges that it is not his prerogative to "lay down the law." On the contrary, it is up to him to see that his wife shares in the exercise of rule. But if the woman were to attempt to rule *outside* the home, the strength of *thymos* and the lack of affinity of the males there would hinder the practical execution of her good counsel. Her opportunity to exercise *phronêsis* would be constrained by the natural social dynamics that favor male domination. Friendship, which exists in these settings only in a diluted form, will be too weak to attenuate these dynamics (*Politics* 1262b7-24). In such circumstances, a few of the most spirited women might attain a position within which their capacity for practical wisdom could come to fruition. But it would be ill-advised for a general population of women to hang their aspirations for human excellence upon the prospect of success in politics or in other competitive struggles with men. Aristotle's best regime provides a criterion for the critique of political or cultural institutions that encourage such expectations. The *politeia* should not promise what nature will not permit it to deliver.

Finally, let us keep in mind Aristotle's observation that "although there are many forms of rulers and ruled, it is

always the case that the better rule is that which is exercised over better subjects" (*Politics* 1254a24-26; see also 1315b5-6, 1333b27-8, 1334a27-29). The measure of loftiness of office, in other words, is the character, not the number, of one's subjects. On this basis, we find that the woman exercises a most noble dominion. For in the matters appropriate to her natural temperament she rules not only her children but herself and her husband. The government of the statesman has no better subjects.

CONCLUSION

In his various remarks on the sexes, Aristotle consistently seeks to illuminate what is perhaps the most fundamental truth about man and woman: namely, that the existence of each presupposes the community of both. The phenomenon of sex complementarity thus serves as both the foundation and the touchstone of Aristotle's appreciation of women. Above all, Aristotle's account of sex complementarity adumbrates the fundamental equality of men and women as human beings. Both men and women possess the dianoetic soul-principle, which distinguishes human beings from other animals, yet neither deserves special credit for its presence in the procreation of offspring. In this sense, both resemble "matter" in relation to the "formal" contribution of *nous*.

Sex complementarity also involves certain temperamental differences between men and women. These differences exist for the sake of species preservation, but their integration in the human soul is such that they permeate mankind's higher callings as well. As a consequence, human excellence will be differently inflected in men and women. Woman's virtue is neither lower nor higher than a man's -- just as the feminine form of an adjective is neither more nor less grammatical than the masculine form. In keeping with their complementary roles in procreation, men tend temperamentally to be more spirited than women. So the husband in a naturally constituted procreative partnership will be more hegemonic than his wife. But unbridled hegemony leads to the patriarchal dictatorship of the dominant male. Aristotle deplores this prospect. He likens the patriarchal dictator to Homer's barbarous cyclops, who "lays down the law to his offspring and bedmates." By contrast, the hallmark of civilization consists in the recognition that in freedom woman is the equal of man. This freedom is not a license to do as one pleases. Such license merely replicates and perpetuates the patterns of domination typical of cyclopean barbarism. True freedom, Aristotle indicates, is coeval with the generosity or liberality of spirit that recognizes the work of procreation as an enterprise fundamentally different from the self-centered pursuits with which one is otherwise occupied. On the basis of Aristotle's analysis of the rudiments of human freedom and slavery, we may conclude that genuine liberty presupposes the good order of the household.

Far from being an enemy to the interests of women, Aristotle seeks to promote their genuine liberation by combating the patriarchal complacency that impedes the

good order of the household. Citizenship plays an important role in this combat. Nothing in Aristotle's analysis suggests that participation in civic activities is an index of moral or intellectual superiority. On the contrary, his endorsement of an all-male citizenry derives from an appreciation of the perils of the thymotic temperament and of the prospects of its amelioration through the un-cyclopean activity of civic deliberation. Political participation is critical to the functioning of the civic community, to be sure, but it by no means constitutes the best life for a human being. Nevertheless, Aristotle bolsters the popular standing of the political life, venturing at times to camouflage the manifest failures of Spartan civic education in order to oppose the still worse faults of cyclopean patriarchy. It would be quite mistaken, then, to claim that it is out of a patriarchal desire to perpetuate sexual inequality that Aristotle defends the integrity of the household against the wholesale civic unification proposed by Plato's Socrates. The truth is simpler. Aristotle seeks to discover the circumstances most conducive to the cultivation of human excellence and thus to the achievement of human happiness. These circumstances subsist, he finds, in a regime of constitutional pluralism, where the integrity of the household is preserved and the *polis* plays its indispensable supporting role. Such a regime would provide the firmest institutional foundation for the flourishing of excellence in, and hence for the increase of friendship between, men and women.

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