

Republic, Book V: Arguments for female guardians/rulers

- 1) The education of men is similar to training them to play the male parts in a drama.
- 2) Those spirited men will be established as guard-dogs of the flock.
- 3) Women should join in the same functions, just as female watch-dogs join the males in the hunt, guarding, & other tasks.

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4) So, women should have the same education & nurturing.

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5) Thus, women will also be taught education in the arts, and physical training, including training for war. [451c and ff.]

Many commentators have argued, rightly, that the key premise to the *Republic* is the following (found at 370b, 423d, 433a, 453b):

1) Each person must pursue the one task for which he/she is fitted by nature.

In Book II, starting from this premise, Plato argued that the division of labor, the specialization of tasks, made possible the founding of cities. Notice how Plato uses the premise in Book V, however, to consider an objection a critic might make:

2) The natures of men and women are different.

3) Different natures must follow different occupations.

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4) So, men and women, having different natures, must pursue different occupations.

We know from other passages that Plato thinks one's "nature" is determined by at least 3 things:

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| a) Ability | c) Upbringing (education, environment)     |
| b) Desire  | But, what about d) Habits or dispositions? |

So, while women differ from men in that the female bears children while the male begets them, there is no proof that men & women differ regarding their duty of guarding the city (the flock). Plato also argues that if anyone is given the same tasks as another, s/he must be taught the same things. Accordingly, women should be given the same education. So, Plato urges that (4) should be stated as:

4b) Although men and women have different natures, there is **no relevant or significant** difference between the natures of men & women.

However, notice that this is not strong enough to get to the conclusion. So he points to another observation drawn from social life (455e):

5) There is no way of life [**bios**] concerned with managing the **polis** that belongs to a woman merely because she's a woman (or to a man merely because he's a man); rather, the various natures are distributed in the same way in both creatures.

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6) Hence, we must concede that women share by nature in every way of life, just as the men do (though in all of these ways of life, women are weaker than men).

But this key concession allows Plato to say:

7) Some women have a philosophical nature (others having a guardian nature), and hence are wisdom-loving.

This enables Plato to appeal, once again [424a, 449c] to a Pythagorean premise at 456a-d:

8) Same natures should pursue same studies and share the same way of life.

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9) So, women should share in same educational & occupational opportunities.