

The Status of Women in Book Five of Plato's Republic

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Abstract

Plato's Republic is one of the most insightful and significant text in the study of political philosophy. An ancient work is still valuable to read from a philosophical standpoint and as a source of feminist and political interpretations. This article aims to highlight women's political position and role as presented in Book Five of the Republic. It also examines the current debate over whether Plato qualifies as a feminist thinker. From feminist and anti-feminist perspectives, Plato's views on women are both criticized and praised. Plato was the first philosopher to advocate for women's participation in political spheres. Plato's views on women's political participation, education, the end of the marriage, the family, and private property are complex and contentious. This article examines scholarly arguments to better understand Plato's motivations for caring about the political and educational advancement of women. This study assumes that feminist interpretations of Plato generalized him and declared him to be a feminist. However, Book Five shows that Plato is willing to take into account the political role of women; even he anticipates that women will hold the highest political position that of a philosopher king.

Key Words: Plato, Republic, Political role of Women, Feminism.

Introduction

In the history of Western philosophy, Plato's Republic is one of the most important works. The Republic is a conversation between Socrates and his companions in which they discuss the polis, an ideal state (Reid, 2020). It offers a revolutionary suggestion for an ideal city-state for Athens in the fourth century B.C. The concept of a polis, or city-state, was distinct from that of a contemporary nation-state (Blair, 2012). For women, children, and guardians, Plato proposed an ideal society (Buchan, 1999). In Republic, he describes in detail his ideas about how a philosopher ought to govern a state or society. In his ideal state, he suggests women to participate in public affairs. To ensure her political affairs, he eases women's domestic duties. Women will participate in both private and public affairs. He freed guardian women from private marriage and child-rearing responsibilities.

The purpose of this study is to look into current perceptions of Plato's views on women in Book Five of the Republic in light of contemporary feminist interpretations. The roles of women, children, and guardians are explicitly described in Plato's imagined ideal societies. Contemporary feminism should be thankful to Plato, but they questioned the intentions of Plato. Scholars frequently questioned whether Plato treated women fairly in the Republic. Plato was accused of not doing enough for women in feminist

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interpretations (Vlastos, 1994). Feminist academics contend that Plato emphasizes state questions while ignoring the oppression and rights of women.

Plato is regarded as one of the greatest philosophers of the Ancient Greek world and the entire history of Western thought. He was born in Athens in 427 BC, he passed away at the age of 80 in 347 BC. Plato came from an aristocratic family and was Socrates' best student (Annas, 1976). At a young age, Plato came under the influence of his teacher and philosopher, Socrates. Plato was a devoted follower of Socrates. He crafts an imaginary dialogue in the mouth of his master, Socrates, as a symbol of his devotion (Sayers, 2022). Plato left Athens after his master Socrates' trial and forced suicide in 399 BC. Plato spent 12 years travelling around Italy, Sicily, and Egypt. Plato wrote *Apologia* as an account of his tribute to the unfair trial of Socrates (Nails, 2005). Due to his accusation that the Athenian democracy was responsible for Socrates' death, Plato criticizes it in the *Republic* (Lukes & Scudder, 2009). In order to rebuild a just city where Socrates and philosophers, in general, will not risk their lives, he wants to overthrow this political order. At 40, Plato returned to Athens and founded his philosophical school, *Academia*, in the 380s. The Academy was the ultimate ancestor of the modern university (Townsend, 2015). This open-air research centre attracted many outstanding scholars and gathered students from all over the Greek world (Townsend, 2015). Aristotle joined the Academy at 17 and studied and taught there for 20 years. He produced a number of works, but *Apology*, *Crito*, *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *The Republic*, *Statesmen*, and *The Laws* are among his most significant.

Fifth Book of Plato's Republic

The *Republic* is Plato's most comprehensive work of art and has been criticized by feminists (Hulme, 2021). In *The Republic*, Plato discusses a wide variety of topics, such as early and advanced education, private property, women, marriage, virtues, the human soul and body, gender, family, governance, the philosopher king, music, rewards and punishment in the afterlife, and many others (Santas, 2010). In addition to posing some fundamental queries about the ideal society, the ruling class, and philosopher kings, it also raises the hotly contested assertion that the talents and aptitudes of both sexes are, in general, roughly equal (Kraut, 1997). Plato's ideas in the *Republic* are influenced by those of his master, Socrates. However, at some points, Plato and Socrates had a philosophical distance. Plato put his philosophical ideas into the mouth of Socrates (Halliwell, 1999). According to Santas (2010), Socrates, Cephalus, Polemarchus, Thrasymachus, Glaucon, and Adeimantus make the conversation of the *Republic* full of humour, liveliness, great dispositions, and drama.

The *Republic* is regarded as the most comprehensive masterpiece of Plato that feminist philosophy has encountered (Hulme, 2021; Santas, 2010). Beyond introducing some main questions about the ideal state, the ruling class, and philosopher kings, it sparks some highly controversial claims that both genders are principally equal regarding their talents and abilities (Kraut, 1997). For the rulers of the ideal state, Plato abolished private property and the family in the first part of the *Republic* (Kraut, 1997).

Socrates asserts that women are somehow weaker than men in a debate with Glaucon (Townsend, 2021). In terms of education, morality, and cultural perspectives, the Republic spread knowledge about the equality of men and women (Santas, 2010). It talks about the significance of ideal cities and wise kings. An ideal city with a philosopher king can produce happiness.

Plato explains his theory of the ideal state in the Republic. In many ways, his concept was influenced by those ancient social and political structures. The lives of women were largely kept out of the public eye in ancient Athens. Their existence and function were confined to the private spheres. They were not permitted to be citizens, own property, pursue formal education, or participate in government (Bluestone, 1988). Women were excluded from public affairs in ancient Athens because they were dominated by men. The views of women in Plato's time were not unique from the social trends in Athens. He did, however, eventually cross the time barrier. It is worthwhile to read the Republic, and scholars continue to debate its ideas. It will lighten up future political thought too.

Women's position in the Republic

According to Lukes & Scudder (2009), there are four different interpretations of Plato's discussion of women in Book Five literature. The first strategy is that women are to be minimized or even ignored. The second strategy is to put the needs of the entire community ahead of the interests of women. The third strategy is to admit that Plato treats women indecently while ignoring them because of the historical setting in which he wrote. Condemning dishonesty and unreasonable behavior is the fourth and final tactic.

Socrates describes three waves of paradox in Book V of the Republic (Howland, 1998). First Wave discusses the same education for men and women. The Second Wave is about the community of property and the abolition of private property for the ruling class. The Third Wave discusses the Philosophers' Kings (Howland, 1998).

The first wave of Republic 5 is well known for elevating women. The First Wave consists of four sections. According to Glaucon, the first wave is not easy to digest. Plato initiates a discussion on women here. Socrates advises women to teach music, engage in physical activity, and prepare for battle in this wave. After the first wave of conversation, Glaucon reaffirms Socrates' proposal that everything is common. According to Shaw (1975), women guardians are men's equals but weaker in every way, including the practice of traditionally feminine arts. Townsend (2015) was skeptical about why women's questions suddenly became a concern for the Republic. Research shows that women's questions did not come into Book V. In Book II, women are first mentioned, which discusses music and gymnastics. In Book IV, women's issues again discuss their place in the family, family arrangement, women's public role, and inclusion in the guardian class. In the second part of the first wave, Socrates indicates the difference between men and women. Men and women should be taught the same things. The third part of the wave settles some arguments about the nature of men and women. Both Socrates and Glaucon concur that women can make good nurses and doctors due to their nature. Some women are fit for guarding; some are lovers of philosophy; others may be haters. According to nature,

women may be assigned gymnastics, music, and guardianship. The fourth part of the first wave concludes that common education is not only possible but also the best.

In the second wave (Kochin, 2002), Socrates introduces the idea of a community of wives and children. Apart from his views on the equality of men and women, Plato also advocates a community of women (wives) and children. The guardian class is required to have a personal wife. Men and women coexist in a communal setting (Olugbade, 1989). The housing will be shared by both men and women, and meals will be shared. They will lead the mothers to the pen when their breasts are full, but they must take every precaution to prevent any mother from recognising her own infant (Olugbade, 1989). By eliminating the family and the community of wives and kids, Socrates envisioned an ideal society. Socrates predicts that if the rulers engage in corruption and nepotism, the city will be destroyed. Socrates aimed to establish justice and equality by dissolving the family and providing philosophers with an equal education. He finds family as a source of disunity in society. Community wives and children are the way to distort all sorts of disunity (Kochin, 2002). According to McAleer (2020), if the guardians have wives, families, or other possessions, they may be preoccupied and neglect their responsibilities to the state. They will guide them toward the individual good, which is harmful to the community. Socrates suggests a common life for women. All women will be common to all men. No woman will live a private life with any man (Townsend, 2015). The life of a guardian will be like a soldier's life lived in a barrack or a camp (McAleer, 2020). In an ideal city, guardians will not have any private property or private dwellings. They will get what is necessary for their own good and the state's.

Children will be common too in the ideal city. As a result, a parent could not recognize his children (Kennedy, 2006). Socrates believes that by de-privatising families, wives, children, property, and dwellings, the state will run smoothly, corruption free. Socrates thinks de-privatising the family would be beneficial. Glaucon disagrees with the idea of common children and de-privatising the family (McAleer, 2020). The second wave, which focuses on the abolition of the family, also emphasizes a plan that calls for public oversight of every aspect of education in place of parental control (Barker 1961, 213). Each child will be supervised with this education, bringing each child to their proper position according to their merit.

In the third wave of the Republic, Plato mentioned the qualities and role of the philosopher king. According to Plato (Matassa, 2013), a philosopher should be the head of state. Women who possess intellect, soul, and knowledge can rule as philosophers. They will, however, be only the second-best philosophers.

Prioritizing the soul over the body

According to Plato, a human is a temporary combination of a soul and a body that is defined as a living being. Four elements—fire, air, water, and earth—combine to form the human body. After a predetermined period of time, the body dissolves because it was only a temporary component. The soul is what makes us human. All of a person's mental and physical movements are controlled by their soul. The soul resides in the human body

and can consequently receive punishment or reward in a different world, according to Santas (2010).

One of the prime foundations of Plato's political philosophy is the idea of the soul. In accordance with Plato's theory, a person's soul ascends to actual knowledge under the control of their intellect (Buchan, 1999). According to Schultz (2019), there is no distinction between the souls of men and women. The nature of a man's and a woman's souls is the same, according to Plato, and a person's sexuality does not limit their capacity to serve as a guardian (Roochnik, 2018). Buchan (1999) states that women with inferior souls are unable to think rationally in their highest form, making them unable to acquire fundamental knowledge. According to Socrates, the soul is suitable because of its virtue rather than the body's ability to produce goodness (Plato, 1955). The Philosopher kings must be among those who have proved best in virtue and philosophy (Lane, 2016).

Plato allowed women access to the gym by putting the emphasis on the soul rather than the body. According to him, one should engage in physical activity for the benefit of the soul rather than the body (Reid, 2020). He argues that women should receive the same education as men, including instruction in music, gymnastics, and military skills. Socrates was furious that people would not accept the idea of women's naked exercise. He asked Glaucon if it would be ridiculous for people to see women exercising naked on the wrestling grounds with the men (Reid, 2020). Then Socrates made it clear that he cared more about the soul than the body. Socrates suggests physical training and exercises for women.

Inclusion of women in the Guardian Class

Socrates says potential guardians must have a particular disposition and quality. Any person, male or female, who possessed those traits—education, virtue, or philosopher's wisdom—could serve as a guardian (Bluestone, 1988). They should be like watchdogs, having the combination of fierceness and courage to face the enemy with gentleness towards friends. Plato states that society must be divided into three distinct classes or orders. Women, according to Plato, are unable to live independently; they are better off being paternalistically ruled by parents who are more knowledgeable. Plato divided the Guardians into two distinct groups: the Rulers of the Society, where reason rules, and the "Auxiliaries," or soldiers, who follow the spirit (Sayers, 2020). These two groups make up the three primary classes, along with the productive worker, and carry out three crucial societal tasks. In the ideal state, female guardians will have the same status as male guardians (Pomeroy, 1974). At first glance, his proposal to include women in the guardian class is revolutionary in terms of the ancient Athenian culture.

Education for women

In Book V of the Republic, Socrates questions whether men and women should have similar educations and pursuits. Socrates proposes that people should have similar educations. Women would have equal education access to men to join the Guardian class (Gregory, 2022). Socrates says that a guardian's education must be philosophic, spirited, swift, and decisive (Dillon, 2004). The guardians will go through controlled education.

They will be fierce towards enemies and gentle with familiars (Dillon, 2004). A philosopher requires two types of education; music for the soul and gymnastics for the body. By doing this, guardians could be disciplined and kept from terrorising the populace (Dillon, 2004). The rulers will be those who are the best at receiving education and training. Male and female guardians will be assigned the same education. When Glaucon argues that the nature of males and females is too different, and education must follow the spirit. Socrates asserts that men and women must share all pursuits in common. Socrates reminds us that education and guarding our fellow citizens should be common. He then describes the process of higher education, which leads to a knowledge of this realm.

Equality of women

One of Plato's proposals for gender equality in the Republic is still one of the most contradictory parts of his argument (Forde, 1997). According to Forde (1997), Plato's claim of gender equality in his work "Republic" left many questions unresolved. He defended the notion of gender equality, but the intelligence community did not find his arguments convincing. In his discussions of gender equality, Plato fell short of fully elaborating on the implications and outcomes (Forde, 1997). Plato favoured women's work both inside and outside. In ancient societies, women did not pursue careers outside the home. Santas (2010) noted that women did not have the same opportunities to develop their talents and abilities as men. Plato introduces a fundamental economic division of labour and an efficient production system where workers are organised according to their specialisation (Sayers, 2022). They naturally excel in trades like weaving, nursing, farming, and construction.

Plato's essential point is that there are innate differences between people, which provide a natural basis for specialisation. In ancient Athens, women were almost excluded from public life. They were kept inside the house. The only responsibility assigned to women was to run the home. Women did not get any formal education. They were not citizens and had no say in governmental decisions. However, women in Athens engaged in varying degrees of vocational work. Within the lowest social strata, working-class women could be midwives, nurses, and vegetable sellers. Plato argued, "How could you stop the women from going out of the house for work?" The Republic provides the best men and women with career opportunities. Both sexes qualify for guardianship equally. Plato paved the way for women to enter politics from the military.

Socrates states that many women are better than men in many things. Plato says that in some tasks, individual men or women outperform, which shows that natural aptitudes are not distributed consistently according to sex. Socrates concludes that women share by nature in every way of life just as men do. Specialisation is a fundamental moral and social principle governing the construction of Plato's ideal society. The focus of social justice is that men and women will be assigned to the same social tasks and pursuits on the same basis (Santas, 2010). It will be just that some men and women will be rulers, some will be soldiers, and some will be producers and traders (Santas, 2010). Men and

women with the same pursuits should have the same education, and those with different plans should have different educations.

In Plato's opinion, the sexes do not possess comparable abilities. He holds that women are the less capable and stronger sex overall. Many women will excel at certain tasks more than many men. Plato believes that every individual's ability should be fully developed and employed. If a particular woman is qualified to serve as a guardian, she ought to be chosen and given the appropriate training. Plato uses a common comparison between the Guardians and watchdogs that appear throughout the Republic to introduce his ideas. According to Plato, if watchdogs of both sexes receive the same training, they can carry out the same tasks. Both male and female guardians should also receive the same treatment at the same time (Sayers, 2020).

Concept of the family, marriage, and property

Plato states that intimate and personal aspects of our lives should be socially planned. In this regard, he suggests using eugenics or the "mating festival" system to select partners (Gardner, 2000). Marriage in Athenian society aimed to inherit property, which was always arranged. His purpose is to breed the "best" with the "best" to rear a "pedigree herd" of rulers (Gardner, 2000).

In Athens, women have little say in choosing their life partner, whom and when they will marry. Their closest male family members and the bridegroom usually negotiate the marriage proposal. Adultery was forbidden for women. If any woman were caught in adultery, they would be punished. Men do not have counterpart constraints. They could have any sexual relations they pleased with women other than spouses without incurring any legal or moral censure. For the good of society, men's and women's sexual interactions are strictly regulated. Though Plato is not very clear about it, children born outside of these arrangements are viewed as illegitimate and, in some cases, eliminated.

Children in Plato's Republic are reared communally. They do not know their true parents as such, nor do parents know which individual children belong to whom. Children will view all of the elders in their parents' generation as their parents, and all of the younger members of that generation as their siblings. Plato considers the family a source of corruption, nepotism, and division within the community. By abolishing the family, he wanted to ensure social unity. Plato's conviction that the family and private property can threaten social unity. His motivation behind eugenics is to free guardians from family and household responsibilities so they can concentrate on the state. His primary concerns were loyalty to the state (polis) from the Guardian class and the state's supremacy.

Plato proposes that the Guardians should do away with the separate family households. Without private residences or land, men and women will live together in communal living arrangements (Nails, 2005). Socrates wanted guardians to guard to keep corruption from creeping into the city. Only men are allowed to own and manage property in accordance with Athenian law. Among Plato's Guardians, private property is denied equally to men and women, and public support is assured equally to both. Women are

held in common because no woman is any individual man's exclusive possession or wife. Socrates predicts in the Republic that women will receive the same education as men and rule alongside them. Children will be raised in common, so they will not identify their parents. Marriage and child-rearing arrangements will be common. Plato's Republic has the longest contained discussion on marriage and child-rearing contracts.

Controlling reproduction for Eugenics arouses a strong reaction. Plato's arguments for the abolition of the family are still controversial. The dominant school of feminism contends that the biological distinctions between the sexes are socially unimportant. Based on this, it has fought for women's equality with men in public life, education, work, and politics. The traditional roles of sex as well as the unique traits and identities of men and women are eliminated by Plato's method. This is not natural and is not possible, according to Strauss and Bloom (Strauss, 1978; Bloom, 1968). Recent feminists have criticized Plato's methodology with more logical arguments. They blamed Plato's plan for denying distinctively feminine abilities and virtues (Gardner, 2000). Despite the fact that Plato questions conventional gender roles, his goal is to enable both men and women to develop into individuals who can use their natural talents rather than to force women to adopt a more masculine identity. As Cerrato & Cifre (2018) state, if we want women to play a full and equal role in society, we must free them from their responsibilities related to the home and raising children.

In Socrates' vision of the perfect city, women would reside there and be free to pursue their interests. In the beginning, Socrates conceals women from the city and then pays attention later. Women did not play public roles or own property in ancient Athens. Given the Republic's concern about who should rule and how they should be educated, these give a certain number of women public political standing (Townsend, 2015). Plato upholds the idea of social justice in the case of women's equality. According to Plato, there are only a few natural differences between men and women: men reproduce, while women give birth. Men are stronger than women physically. Men and women ought to play different social roles, in Plato's view. Plato says sexual differences are not socially relevant.

Evaluation

Plato is referred to as the father of western philosophy and an early feminist (Vlastos, 2022; Reid, 2020; Santas, 2010). He is the first man to give a detailed explanation of how to include women in the ruling class and in the education system. Plato advocates granting women an equal opportunity in terms of education, employment, and political power. The Position of Women in Plato's Republic sparked intense scholarly controversy about whether Plato was a feminist or misogynist (Vlastos, 2022). According to Reid (2020), Plato isn't a fully committed feminist, but scholars agree that his Republic is radical and gives women rights that have never been seen before. Plato is praised as a feminist by some, while others denounce him as an anti-feminist. According to Vlastos, Plato's position is unmistakably feminist in many ways, especially when it comes to his proposal for the place of women in the ruling class. He identified himself as an advocate

of women's rights. However, in his attitudes toward women elsewhere, Plato is anti-feminist (Vlastos, 1994).

Feminist academics argue that Plato did not intend for women to live in a free and equal society and state. In order to create a just society, Plato suggests that the guardian class hold only communal property instead of any private property. From this point on, it is unclear whether or not women will care for communal property. Because, in ancient society, women did not have property or other rights.

Socrates brought women into the public realm in the Republic through education and equal opportunities (Annas, 1976; Townsend, 2015). Socrates influenced others to pull the women into the ideal city and include them in the guardian class (Townsend, 2015). Socrates advises women to exercise in the open and naked in the First Wave of the Republic (Okin, 2013). Plato and Socrates lived in a community of men (Peers, 2008). Pomeroy (1974) states that Plato lived in a society where women were confined to the home and excluded from all public affairs. Plato did not free himself from the social prejudice of his time. Male guardians are chosen first; then, appropriate female guardians will be given to them. Plato holds human property exclusively for males.

Pomeroy (1974) finds Plato's attitude is misogynist. He proposed naked exercise for female guardians, though his attitude towards female sexuality was not sophisticated. He believes it won't be appealing to see a woman's body in nudity. Plato says nude females will be ridiculous and laughable. However, in discussing, he reveals his distaste for the naked female body by comparing the appearance of all women, both young and old, exercising in the nude to the unattractive appearance of wrinkled older adults exercising unclad (Pomeroy, 1974). Women are never mentioned by either Plato or Socrates in any significant dialogue in the Republic (Peers, 2008). Plato opposed all forms of private property, traditional marriage, and private family life in favor of communalizing the means of reproduction for the best human beings (Mackenzie, 2014). More than any other ancient political thinker, Plato and Socrates viewed women as a class and favored them (Wender, 1973). Instead of a feminist, Wender labels Plato a misogynist. He didn't like women, never got married (Sens, 2011). Plato never admired women or liked them. Women played no part in his life (Sens, 2011). Plato's division of class would not be unusual in contemporary societies. Athens was a society based on slavery and inequalities among men and imbued with the idea of natural inequalities (Sayers, 2022). Annas (1976) blamed Plato for overlooking women's rights or interests. Women's freedom was not Plato's ultimate goal. He sees women as a resource of the state. The state and society should nourish these resources for greater interest.

The Republic's arrangements for the place of women and the family have drawn more criticism than Plato's description of the ideal and just society. Plato's proposals in Book 5 to grant women equality and abolish the family have been studied, criticized, and defended by academics for centuries. Scholars argue that Plato's opinions on women often make simplistic generalizations without appreciating the insight underlying his proposals. The difficulty in interpreting Plato's meaning and philosophic intentions, as

well as the complexity of his works, fuels controversy (Saxonhouse, 1985; Okin, 1979). Socrates emphasizes the differences between "the nature of the female" and "female human nature." He acknowledges that this nature differs from the nature of men in general. Therefore, he does not claim that there are no differences between male and female natures; rather, he claims that these differences are no greater than those between bald and nonbald men (Forde, 1997).

According to Plato, men and women should receive the same education, training, and upbringing. Based on their intelligence and virtue, they ought to hold a position in society and politics. Plato's proposals are extraordinarily radical. Strauss (1974) discusses Plato's proposal for women, common marriage, and the abolition of the family. In his interpretative essay, Bloom supports Plato's views and identifies him as a feminist. Okin (2013) criticises private wives' ideas. Pierce criticises Plato for ignoring the difference between women and men. Aristotle rejected the idea of the ideal state in his Politics. Aristotle did not support the concept of equality between men and women. Richard Kraut (1997), on the other hand, remarks that Plato is still important to many philosophers in our liberal-democratic culture. Plato's vision of a new society for women's legal and political rights is the most radical. Plato rejects old dogma by liquidating the nuclear family and allocating work equally. Scholars praise Plato for being an advocate of gender equality before the sexes in contrast to the current anti-feminist trend. Plato's idea of a breeding union brings the most controversy (Pomeroy, 1974). The Republic deprives guardians of private property and private life. By abolishing the traditional pattern of Greek marriage, Plato introduces a "common possession of goods and wives" without granting equality of status to those wives (Pomeroy, 1994).

In the first wave When Plato takes the stand that women can be guardians. The moral of Plato's idea is that men and women are morally equal. In the second wave, Plato suggests the abolition of the family. Plato plans to obliterate the boundaries between households so that the polis becomes one large oikia, or household. There is some scholarly controversy about whether the household extension applies to everyone in the polis or just the auxiliaries and guardians. In an ideal society, Plato did not suggest equal freedom for women or men. He rejects the idea of liberty for the state's greater interest. Santas (2020) argued that Plato would not be called a misogynist. His remarks in many aspects are derogatory and look like a real woman-hater (Townsend, 2015), but in reality, he is the first thinker who suggests a complete opinion on women.

Conclusion

Plato's thoughts on women get both attention and controversy from scholars. Contemporary feminist interpretations argue that Plato does not seek women's endorsement in the ideal state for her equal status. Instead, he views women as a means of maintaining state security. Whatever the intention, Plato was one of the first men to focus his thoughts on women systematically. The influence of the Republic on current debates on gender relationships is significant to understand from different points of view. Plato's proposed men-women relationship, reproduction, marriage, and sexual identity in

political philosophy raised controversy both from feminist and philosophical perspectives. Women's questions in the Republic are still relevant to study. In his Ideal State, Plato allows women equal opportunity and participation in political life. Plato's thoughts on women are still crucial to the modern feminist debate. The Republic is one of the most significant works of Western philosophy. Scholars have discovered that Plato's ideas contain feminist as well as misogynistic elements in some instances. However, one could argue that Plato was the first feminist political theorist in classical Greek thought.

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