



REVISTA

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## Cartografía del ser, sentido y significado de la mujer en el pensamiento filosófico de las edades antigua y medieval

*Cartography of the being, sense and meaning of women in the philosophical thought of ancient and medieval times*

Floralba del Rocío Aguilar-Gordón

Universidad Politécnica Salesiana, Quito, Ecuador

[faguilar@ups.edu.ec](mailto:faguilar@ups.edu.ec)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9886-6878>

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### Resumen

El propósito de este trabajo es contribuir con herramientas teórico-conceptuales que permitan la comprensión del ser, sentido y significado de la mujer en la historia de la filosofía antigua y medieval, reflexiones que permitan comprender el protagonismo de la mujer en la sociedad actual. Se propone una serie de alternativas que conducen a la superación del pensamiento unidireccional y del carácter patriarcal que subsiste en algunos sectores y ámbitos sociales construidos desde una filosofía elaborada desde los hombres, concepciones que han configurado y consolidado una estructura social determinada que amplía la brecha entre hombres y mujeres, otorgándole más poder a los primeros. El manuscrito refleja los cambios experimentados por la mujer de todos los tiempos en los cuales una constante histórica ha sido la búsqueda de libertad, igualdad social y política de acuerdo a las circunstancias y al contexto que le correspondió vivir. Se trata de un trabajo de revisión bibliográfica, mismo que en su construcción utilizó la deducción como método de investigación que posibilitó la estructuración de ideas singulares y la comprensión de la realidad concreta. Así mismo, se acudió al auxilio de los métodos fenomenológico-hermenéutico que contribuyeron para la profundización del tema objeto de la investigación, propiciaron el análisis y la interpretación de la información procesada en este documento.



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## Palabras clave

Concepción filosófica, filosofía, protagonismo de la mujer, reivindicación, sociedad patriarcal.

## Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to contribute with theoretical-conceptual tools that allow the understanding of the being, sense and meaning of women in the history of ancient and medieval philosophy, reflections that allow understanding the role of women in today's society. A series of alternatives are proposed that lead to the overcoming of the unidirectional thought and the patriarchal character that remain in some sectors and areas of the current society and that has been constructed in a philosophy elaborated by men conceptions that have formed and consolidated a social structure that extends the gap between men and women, granting more power to men. The manuscript reflects the changes experienced by women during the times, in which a historical constant has been the search for freedom, social and political equality of agreement to the circumstances and to the context lived. This manuscript is a bibliographical review that used the deduction as method of investigation, making possible the structure of particular ideas and the comprehension of the reality. Likewise, phenomenological-hermeneutically methods were used to the deepening of the topic object of the investigation, propitiating the analysis and the interpretation of the information.

## Keywords

Philosophical conception, philosophy, woman leadership, claim, patriarchal society

## 1. Introduction

The present manuscript points out some examples of philosophers who throughout history have referred to the woman. It is necessary to emphasize that the historical conceptions emitted in this document are strictly derived from the mentality of men and the context that they lived.

Historically, women have been considered inferior to men. It is observed that the role of women and mothers has been denigrated in patriarchal societies in which the values of power, strength, social success in their different manifestations (material or prestige) have predominated. It is only from the end of the nineteenth century, when the voice of the woman started being heard and gradually begins to be valued.

The objective of this work is to contribute with theoretical-conceptual tools for the comprehension of the being, sense and meaning of the woman in the history of the ancient and medieval philosophy, tools that allow to rethink and transform the way of conceiving women and their role in society.

The main problem that guides the construction of the document is that the philosophical conceptions about women, emerged from the mentality of men throughout history, have silenced their thinking, have hidden their true role and have displaced them from the main intellectual scenarios.



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The idea to defend is that the various philosophical conceptions should contribute to a proper redefinition, the understanding of the meaning and significance of women in today's society.

The dynamism of society allows to make new reviews, deconstructions and reformulations of the different philosophical conceptions that govern the life of the human being; in this sense, it is important to establish a brief panorama on what would be the guidelines or mechanisms to redefine the conception of women according to their role and context, and if the feminist thought developed in the twentieth century is accepted, then it can be said that women and their thinking have been silenced and invisible through history.

However, there are exceptions from those like Plato and Stuart Mill who defend women. Plato, in "The Republic" and "In the law", argues that women should be educated in the same way as men. For its part, in the nineteenth century, Stuart Mill, in his work "The servitude of women", expressly defends equality between the genders and becomes one of the first defenders of the right for women to vote.

Nevertheless, in the philosophical tradition is often found those who do not conceal that in philosophy there has been no neutrality with regard to the genders, such is the case of Aristotle who by using the term *Anthropos* only referred to the man in a generic sense, hence it cannot be applied to women; on the other hand, in the eighteenth century, Kant, when speaking of 'rational beings', does so referring to man contexts, thereby excluding women from the realm of rationality. The above are commonly used linguistic examples to exclude or underestimate women.

In the historical process, there is evidence of a tendency of philosophical thought that seeks to relate the concept of "man-male" and the notion of "masculine" with rationality and culture, with the scope of the public, whereas the concept of "woman" and the idea of "feminine" is related to emotion and nature, in other words, the concept of women is confined to the sphere of private relations. Thus, as Morgan (1993) argues, women have been considered incapable of participating in public affairs and in the political life of society, as supported by Rousseau and Hegel in modernity.

Because of the latter, it is deduced the topicality and importance of the subject of this work, which presents the changes experienced by women during the time, in which a historical constant has been the search for their freedom, their social equality and politics according to the circumstances, customs, culture and the context lived.

But regardless the social, political and intellectual restrictions imposed the role of women in society has always been important. Her family sensibility, her role as mother and wife, the quality of education, the formation of children, etc., are substantial. The events of the twentieth century redirected the history of women. Femininity is no longer limited to sensitivity, passivity and motherhood, it is necessary to discover and express the creative and transformative capacity of women. Equal rights, salaries, education and work changed the way of thinking, being and acting of women who fought for their vindication.

Women have been the axis of society through the ages and their presence throughout history has been constant. However, until now there are some lags of machismo, discrimination, exploitation, violence, exclusion, etc., seen many times as the protagonist of ordinary facts, but not found in the great adventures of history. The social conditions that



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exist in each age and the role assigned to women have been decisive. By living in function of the other, of the masculine, of the man, the woman did not have an own project of life, and has always acted in the shade of man, and has been for a long time to the service of the patriarchy becoming a kind of appendix of the protagonist subject, active and agent of the historical transformation (“The man”) (Diaz Loving, 1996).

The work is structured in three parts: the first part examines the conceptions of women from ancient philosophy; in the second part, the conceptions of women in medieval philosophy are analyzed; and in the third part, the historical passage from the negative to the positive in the action of women is presented in today's society. Each of the aforementioned aspects is developed.

### 1.1 Being, sense and meaning of women in the ancient times

It is necessary to refer to the ancient Greece and the prevailing context at the time. Historically, is found that in Greece the woman was considered under the same social conditions as slaves, and it is explicitly stated in the dialogues of the Republic, Phaedrus, Plato's Symposium and in the Politics of Aristotle.

At that time, being a woman implied inferiority, age minority and prohibition to take on roles in society, restrictions on political office, accepting the denial of civil rights. This makes it possible to infer that the woman was relegated to the domestic work, to the care of the children and elderly people, including those working at home and the care of the husband. As Diaz Loving (1996) said, the few cases in which women could influence political affairs were through men as evidenced in the case of Aspasia (councilor of Pericles, governor of Athens), it is said that the political decision-making depended on Aspasia's criterion, however, she had no right to participate in political elections.

On the other hand, Plato (2011) argued that “there is no occupation in a state that is exclusive to men, therefore, women have the right to exercise in any of the tasks of the State, including that of the Government” (p. 56). In this quotation a possibility for the woman to intervene in some tasks of the society is envisioned; this philosopher considered that although women may be weaker in the physical exercise of some task, It is not for this reason that they should be banned from the social classes of the guardians or the rulers, what matters is that they fulfil the necessary requirements for the exercise of these responsibilities in the same terms as those demanded by men. According to Plato (2011) “As there are men who are fit for war and others who are unfit for it, there are women who are fit for war and others suitable for production” (p. 475), Aspects that obey the natural division of people but not a division between genders. Hence, following Plato direction, the stated that if a man and a woman have the same soul nature, then women would have the same capacity as men to perform in a state position. These platonic ideas are justified because of their claim to build a perfect society conceptually thought in the Republic.

Platonic ideas constituted a novelty in Greece, a society in which women did not play an important political role, it is the first time that someone places women and men in the same category, an aspect expressed in book V of the Republic, when Plato states: “There is no occupation between those concerning the Government of the State of the woman by being a woman or the man by being a man” (Plato, 2011, pp. 455-456).



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Recognizing the same nature for men and women, Plato was against the prevailing ideas in that context, however, for the philosopher it was logical for women and men to have equal opportunities to access an egalitarian education, although this was reduced to a mere utopia similar to the ideals in society; centuries later it was established in the principles of what would later be the rights of women in terms of receiving a full education and the right to be inserted in the public work area from which they were excluded for many centuries. Despite the assertion, it should not be forgotten that for Plato the education of women was necessary to equate man who was always considered as a superior being.

From Tommasi (2002) perspective, Plato occupies an important place in the discussion of the difference between genders, since women do not disappear from the Platonic discourse, although their indirect, oblique presence, like that of Diótima in the symposium, is a sign of an appropriation that at the same time is the exclusion of the feminine. Despite the recognition to the wisdom of Diótima, in this philosopher as in all the Greek culture, is present the conviction that the woman is strange to the logos and that partially and inappropriately participates of the rationality (Tommasi, 2002). The woman is considered as something necessary for the reproduction and for the conservation of the species. Updated aspect in the societies in which, despite the conquests of women of recent times in the various fields, women are still seen as beings necessary to perpetuate the species; it has ceased to be the property of man, husband, male, to become a kind of state property, she is in charge of procreating men and women of the new society, an aspect that remains nowadays.

In certain passages of the symposium and of Phaedrus is observed that in the Platonic thought is strengthened the idea of predominance of the man on woman, the male is subject and object of love, and there are even passages in which “the man-philosopher appropriates the feminine capacity of procreation and, at the same time, excludes women from the highest form of generation, that of the Spirit” (Ungo-Montenegro, 2000, p. 205).

The Greek man endorses the most specific characteristic of the feminine, the capacity to become mothers; it considers a distinction between the love among males who allow fecundating and to give birth in the level of the logos, speeches and immortal ideas and the children born by women, who according to the philosopher are destined to perish. In Plato's discourse, women appear to be enviable for whom it is necessary to appropriate the real feminine capacity to procreate, in Plato's words it is translated into the male mimesis of motherhood, an aspect evident in Theaetetus in which he represents a young mathematician, whose *psyqué* is in full gestation and Socrates helps to give birth. In spite of everything, in Plato the women do not disappear from their discourse, it is Diótima, a woman who possesses the wisdom on the things of love, who plays the role of Socrates's professor (Tommasi, 2002).

Socrates, in creating the Maieutics as an art of creating ideas through an interrogation process, thought in women, in his mother and then in his wife Xanthippe. This is also evidence on his partnership with the tradition where male thinking is imposed by continuing to think and considering woman as an interlocutor, disciple, and subordinate but never as female authority. However, the figure of Diótima is a woman who knows how to teach women and men, and Socrates is a man capable of being in the presence of a female authority and learning from it. This is also found in Plato's Symposium, in addition to the activity of this male philosopher to appropriate the maternal generating capacity; from Socrates and Plato, a hierarchy is constituted where the generation in its highest sense



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always has as subject the man, the male, and in the lowest, the woman; thus in Plato quoted by Rodríguez (1994):

... recognizing the subject of the discourse as sexed in the masculine, and as a debtor of the female generating capacity in their decisive metaphors regarding gestation and motherhood. He is indignant that such poorly educated beings are the ones who educate men (p. 266).

For that reason, Plato (2011) wants women to be educated the same way as men and decides to review the myths that mother are destined to teach their children, and says, "most of the information taught today should be rejected" (p. 87). In this regard, the figure of the guardian woman of the Republic should be taken into account. Plato attributed the woman a mission similar to that of man, thus affirming the irrelevance of the biological difference with regard to the capacity of the woman to develop a role in the communitarian structures. Hence, according to Menéndez (2006), "Plato proposes to neutralize the conception of the woman, without discriminating her, but integrating her partially in the public structures, and submitting her to a direct collective control" (p. 75).

On the other hand, the woman in the thought of Aristotle, acquires another connotation as will be seen below. As is common knowledge, the polis is the place of development, growth and perfection of man, because he is mainly a social political animal as Aristotle mentions in his policy.

Agreeing with the references raised in the analysis of Femenías (1988), it is found that for Aristotle, the organization of the State is by nature, prior to each particular individual. According to Aristotle, only in the polis, the man acquires the word that the rationality implies, and constitutes it in a moral being capable of choosing the good. The actions of man have a sense, a purpose and ends (Aristotle, 2010b). The ends are structured in such a way that they converge in a last human end, the most worthy good is the happiness. The human individual and the polis are proposed ends, the achievement of their own happiness (Aristotle, 2010a), the good of all. These are some of Aristotle's passages that envision the conception of a machista society by excellence (Femenías, 1988).

In politics and ethics to Nicomachus, Aristotle finds the woman as the organic model of the state that entails part/all relationships and an order that implies a hierarchy or natural stratification and necessary to achieve the ends that the polis proposes. But, if the last goal of the Polis is to reach the happiness of all its members, it is necessary to revise who are the individuals that cannot reach it.

It should not be forgotten that for Aristotle (2010B), "each individual or part relates to the State from his own activity and, as part of it, contributes to his ultimate goal, the achievement of the good of the Polis" (p. 1094). It is also necessary to remember that the references of Aristotle on the woman are stipulated in the passages on the house-home *oikía*, which includes both the free man and his family (wife and children), and the slaves, constituting what could be called an extended family as opposed to the nuclear family or reduced as mentioned by Femenías (1988).

In the beginning of the ethics with Nicomachus, Aristotle (2010a) expresses that "the good is that to which all the things are committed to" (p. 357), with this he explains that everything has a *telos* that dominates; the end appears as the cause by which something is



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done about the ends of a particular man and the ends of the community, which is constituted by nature to pursue its own purpose, the good of all or the majority, as established by Femenías (1988). This is reaffirmed in the politics, because it holds that every community is constituted in views of what is deemed to be some good. The man (in the universal sense), has as a goal to support himself, to achieve the best for him and improve. To obtain such achievements man relates with other men, and in this association with their fellows he reaches the exclusive human ends that bind him to the divine, making him worthy of the love of the gods. In this sense, according to Femenías (1988) the ultimate end of the state in Aristotle is reached with the participation of all its members in correspondence with the functions that concern them. A state organized in this way would reach its natural limits and the perfection of its form.

Hence, the background of these claims is given by the atomized situation of the Confederate Greek Polis, in which each one is closely related to the other members. For Femenías (1988), it is evident that this conception of state is organicist; the model to which the State is constituted is similar to the structure of the animal organism. An organism understood as a whole formed by parts that fulfil different functions and each one contributes to the survival of the organism as a whole. The happiness of all or the majority, the good life, the achievement of the maximum goal of the Polis (the whole), is above the happiness of one or some (part/s) of its inhabitants.

To gain balance, the state as a body must ensure that the members contribute to the common good by fulfilling satisfactorily its specific function for the general welfare. However, the objectives that Aristotle proposes for the polis present some drawbacks inherent to the organic model. Good/happiness refers to the majority of the citizens of the polis, thereby relegating the foreigners, serfs, slaves, children and all the women of the polis whatever their social position or age. The state that Aristotle conceives is the continuation of a natural order; it implies differences and hierarchies like those that are imposed in the social aspect.

Moreover, there are affirmations in Aristotle's politics like those that follow: "... The male is by nature superior and the female is inferior; one governs and the other is governed; this principle of necessity extends to all humanity" (p. 1161). With this statement, Aristotle reveals the subordinate role of women. The philosopher clearly states that the relationship between man and woman is superiority-inferiority, even if this is not enough to delimit two different species.

In Aristotle's metaphysics, passages like the following are found: both genders are members of the same species, in the same way that pairs and odds are numbers. In this sense it could be deduced that the pairs (or the odds) are superior with respect to the other numbers (their complementary class), or that males and females are not hierarchically related, but that they complement at each other without involving superiority of one on the inferiority of the other, Guariglia (1973). However, Aristotle (2010b) insists that in order to exert the power, the male is better endowed than the female, except for unnatural cases; he considers that the male is always superior with respect to the female.

These assertions show that a natural superiority must follow a functional superiority (politic-social), this is explained because Aristotle adopted a series of connotations of the Greek-barbaric type, master-slave, man-woman, woman-child among others, to refer to the dominating-dominated relationship, aspect that Guariglia (1973) shows clearly. In terms of



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Aristotle (2010B) it is a relationship of governor-governed, in which they benefit mutually, even though there can be no justice in the legal level or friendship in the ethical level (p. 1246). In the same ethic to Nicomachus is found that Aristotle (2010A) argues that the relationship of friendship or justice is feasible between both men and humans, and that involve them in a particular social role. Something similar is presented in the Politics, at the level of the polis regarding the way of governing, Aristotle (2010B) establishes that “the polis is a political grouping where governs a government of peers; the inheritance, (house, Kingdom) is organized according to a clear system of differences where there is a mandate but no laws” (p. 1252). This passage clearly illustrates the difference between the patriarchy and the civil organization of the polis.

Aristotle's words regarding the situation of male superiority on women seems to describe a socio-historical fact, a situation that is repeated in ancient society. Aristotle, according to Guariglia (1973) grants universal validity to the society and to the socio-historical moment lived, for that reason he instituted the hierarchical structure of his society as valid by nature for all time and place. This allows to infer that the strong hierarchy of the society, the patriarchal character of the Greek family and the organic conception of the State lead Aristotle to consider it as something necessary within the hierarchical order determined by the structure of the nature and with immutable characteristic.

As Guariglia (1973) points out about the master-slave relationship, Aristotle infers from it given a natural condition; the contingent depends on what is necessary; within the family, both the master-slave relationship and the husband-wife relationship are parts of the organization. Nevertheless, governors and governed have the same interests and each one contributes to the attainment of the ends of the *oikía*, as proposed by the head of the family, i.e, his functions converge in the common good (Aristotle, 2010b). This common good is proposed and recognized by the male head of the family and the woman –due to her inability to command- must obey. This confirms the need for guardianship by the father or husband, who legally governs his public and private life.

Aristotle (2010B, pp. 1258; 1359; 1260; 1277) points out the feminine virtues by nature: inability to command, consequently, submission and passivity, bodily weakness, *arete* for domestic chores, subordinate bravery, moderation and modesty. To this list of qualities must be added her thoughtless emotion, which governs her life overshadowing the deliberative faculty. This list according to Guariglia (1973) obeys the role assigned to the woman by the Greek society and to which she was obliged to comply, and the exceptional cases that were disobeyed were classified as unnatural. Likewise, Guariglia (1973) shows that in the Aristotelian terminology of value, *arete* is determined by the exclusive function of the use value; it also points out that the *Eidos*, the required form to natural entities and to humans (its example is that of the slave) is determined by the one who uses it, which generally "is who has the superior knowledge of the form against the inferior knowledge of the producer, reduced to matter" (p. 66). The producer is relegated to the role of a human tool, an animated instrument subjected to the function of supplying the needs of others, in this sense, Guariglia (1973), referring to Aristotle, states that: "... in the same way as nature, in order to achieve a perfect all organic allocates each part to a single function, it is not a slave but insofar as it must fulfil a subordinate and limited function" (p. 97).

If considering this approach to women's understanding, the situation is more complex; her *areté* is typical of domestic chores, an aspect that makes her a care instrument of the *oikía* in general and the male in particular. As for the reproduction of the species, while the man



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contributes to the form, the woman does the same with the matter. The woman is the complementary kind of the species; in addition, reproduction, in terms of gestation, is biologically conditional and is limited to fulfilling only natural functions, adding the care, the care of children, adult males and the house in general. These last activities are fulfilled even when nothing biological determines it. Her situation of subordination is not given by the natural order, as Aristotle thought (2010b), but by a social order, based on the need for a type of organization of the society: her *eidos* governs it, by force, the male, whose mandate in the family does not obey the law but his will: the government of the *oikía* is not a government of equals, but from the different function, each member of the *oikía* contributes to the common good; this implies a strong stratification that is daily ratified by social pressure, a situation that Aristotle names as a natural order. The purpose of this relationship is to care for the quality of life of the free man, for the case of the slaves and for the case of women, of all the adult males and the children. It recognizes the category of being-for-another as the self-mode of the woman's being, with the consequent loss of consciousness of being-for-her-own that implies, as Guariglia recognizes (1973) the institution of slavery: "... the condition of the honest living is the existence of a genus of men [slaves] subject to the heavy burden of producing the necessary instruments for the lives of others, making themselves into instruments, in means, in animated property" (p. 102).

This makes it noticeable that half of the species is subordinated to the benefit of the other half, on a social, legal and economic level. Women are forced from the social system to resign their public rights and autonomy in benefit of the "private security" provided by the state of the "minor" that must hold for life.

Guariglia (1973) says that the Aristotelian analysis presented in politics and ethics to Nicomachus is a kind of renunciation of the utopia of a philosophical-political scheme that represents the culmination of the Greek society, as it is required by nature. The Aristotelian proposal seeks a concrete, human and inseparable good of the specific historical and social forms to which it is linked. The satisfaction of these needs marks the ultimate purpose of the polis and their *raison d'être*. Similarly, Sandel (2000) analyzing Aristotelian thought considers that meeting *Oikía* needs is the ultimate goal and the *raison d'être* of the function of all the members that make it up. The social order must form the natural order. According to Aristotle, slaves and women collaborate at the end/good of the polis from their own instrumental situation.

Every family is part of the city; as those relationships belong to the family (relations man-woman, woman-child, etc.), and as the virtue of the part should look at the whole, it is necessary that the education of the children and the women is created and thought by looking at the political Constitution, as established in the analysis of Sandel (2000).

Education of women is subordinated to the objectives of the organicist polis, so that their virtue depends on the filiation with the social structure that determines it. Aristotle (2010) in the Politics says: "It is evident that no virtue of character is congenital by nature" (p. 1260) but is due to its possibility of updating. However, this ethical rule does not seem to govern in the case of the woman, who possesses virtues of the character that are within her by nature.

Aristotle, analyzed by Camps (1999), "ignores for women the questions of an educational, social and habitable nature that takes into account explicitly for the formation of the man's character (male) in terms of his concrete possibility of perfection" (p. 56). It is clear that the good of the poli only fits the males of the species, to which women must serve as a functional



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contribution for the achievement of perfection of those. The woman is denied happiness, has no freedom or deliberative ability to achieve it; she does not meet the requirements necessary to be part of the men's group.

Frankena (1968) says that the male is the only who tends to perfection in the species and, in addition, only those who are free; “the stratification of society seems to be solved from two axes: free men-slave men; male-female” (p. 218). The first pair responds to a purely instrumental use value producing goods for the free man, whose inoperability is recognized by Aristotle, the second pair (male-female) has the biological responsibility of reproduction. The woman gestates the infant, cares for him/her during the first years of his/her life, care without which the gestation would have been useless for the end of the species: to perpetuate itself. Household chores have a typical situation; its production is a way of conservation, so its replacement by a non-animated tool is more difficult. According to Guariglia (1973), Aristotle ignores that “in certain circumstances human beings, men and women, are unable to satisfactorily develop their ethical qualities” (p. 100). The strong Greek social stratification leads Aristotle (2010b) to accept the “recognized by the majority” as necessary by nature. It is seen that the liberal tradition, despite its supposed foundation of individual rights and human equality, “is more Aristotelian than is generally recognized, and prevails nowadays” (Vallespin, 2012 p. 86).

In general, Aristotle when referring to the origins of society, he concludes that these rely on the union of the genders for the reproduction of what constitutes the family and where each gender has specific functions determined by their own nature. The woman is a reproductive being and the man a possessor and administrator. Aristotle (2010b) considered that the origin of all the problems of the society is due to the prolonged absence of men because, according to this philosopher, women did not have enough experience to take these challenges due to their lack of learning. This is how women have historically been subordinated to men and judged because of their lack of experience and preparation in many areas that were traditionally performed only by men.

In the Aristotelian vision, the virtue of women was linked to the silence, submission, obedience, and it was the man who assigned her *status quo* and by not providing her a voice, he denied her an opportunity to create her own speech, to be recognized as valuable and consequently, lacks identity, citizenship and was not subject to law.

## 1.2 Being, sense and meaning of women in the Middle age

At this time, some reflections about the woman are found made by Saint Thomas Aquinas, however, before referring to his contributions, it is important to characterize briefly the context. During this period, women were marginalized from social life and excluded from the world of culture. Lay women did not have enough instruction unlike the educated women who were inside the convents and monasteries, represented in the librarians, clerks and educators, who wrote works on their mystical experiences as well as some scientific treatises. In this orientation, it is worth mentioning Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), who wrote important information on astronomy, botany and medicine, as well as prophetic books, based on her visions.

Thomas Aquinas, considered that male and female distinctly manifest human rationality. The female-mother, material and incorporated reason, identifies with nature and resembles the raw matter. The male-man resembles the form, encloses the fullness of being and tries



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to be a pure and disembodied reason separated from nature, and necessary to complete the woman. According to the thought analysis of Thomas Aquinas made by Pérez (2008), axiologically:

...woman is the indecent, dirty, morally, is the instrument to make the male fall into evil, while the male is the good, the appetizing, because it was created before the woman to signify its superiority in dignity and government (p. 35).

As stated by Pérez (2008), in Aquinas' conception is posed a kind of "ontological imperfection of the female and the woman" (p. 41) since in the underlying nature, the matter is similar to the mother and precisely with the form, cause of the things that are produced naturally: just as the mother is the cause of the generation, so is the matter (p. 44). Thomas Aquinas follows the approaches formulated by Aristotle in Physics, in which he compares the raw material with the mother by the passive and receiving function that she plays, by producing the natural substances in union of the form. Thomas Aquinas interpreted by Pérez (2008) reconfirms when he says:

... as the mother is the cause of the generation, so is the matter. The likeness of matter and the mother goes back to the very origins of the Greek culture; in fact, they have the same etymological root (P. 47).

From the foregoing, it is deduced what Pérez correctly raises (2008) that mother and matter have been linked to the production of natural beings and, consequently, to nature and the *physis*. Likewise, matter and form constitute the first or natural substance; it is a non-being that can be a being in power to receive forms; an imperfect being and with so little ontological consistency that it cannot exist without form. The form is the universalizing element of the substance by which it belongs to a species and is an act. The matter, without the form, is reduced to a non-being, this leads to Saint Thomas Aquinas to say that the form is the good, the appetizing, then the matter is born to wish by nature the form that is the good and, with it, to receive the being, constituting a first or individual substance. The mother plays the role of matter, and the man is the form, contributes to the formal element, engenders the human being and with the feminine material element, constitutes the new human individual or human substance.

The mother-woman, like the matter, is an ontologically imperfect being, which is born to desire the male by nature, that is her form and that provides her the fullness of the being. According to Tomás de Aquino, the female is somewhat deficient and occasional. The living species exists fully in the man, in the male, and the man-male, with its active potency, tries and seeks to create another male-male similar in perfection specific to him. The female is somewhat deficient and unwanted, and is begotten female, due to the weakness of the active potency of the male, to some indisposition of the matter or to some type of external transmutation. Because of her ontological deficiency, the woman had to be created from the rib of the man to indicate her ontological dependence to the man and his greater dignity. The imperfection and the ontological dependence of the female with respect to the male and the woman with respect to the male is consecrated in the biblical fact that the woman was created by God from the rib of the male. Man in his fullness of being and with his greatest dignity will be superior, by his likeness to God, which is the beginning of the whole universe and the beginning of all the human species.



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Thomas Aquinas in the words of Garcia (1985) states that if the female desires the male and the indecent desires the good, it does not mean that the indecency desires the good that is its opposite but only according to accident. The female relates to the indecent or clumsy and the masculine to the good. Likewise, Julián Marias (2011) argues that the desire of the matter by the form, of the feminine by the masculine and of the indecent by the good is only accidental because "who wants is an individual substance, which is the only thing that exists in itself" (p. 255). Meanwhile, Pérez (2008) argued that if man or male represents the fullness of the specific being and the female the imperfectness of the being, the masculine is the good and the feminine is awkward or indecent, but not bad. For García (1985) Thomas Aquinas asserts that the form is something divine because "the substantial form is the cause of all being in act" (p. 217).

Similarly to the other scholars, Pérez (2008) considers that in Thomas Aquinas is also present the subordination of the woman-mother to the male and should not try to dominate the male because it was not formed from the head and should not be despised by the male or be treated as a servant who is based on the utility of the master because it was not formed from the feet. This subordination is a natural subordination that is linked to the idea that the wisest should govern.

The woman was born to help the man in the procreation of children and even in that task the woman, by reason of her own nature, cannot play the role of active power. The scope of women's performance is the individual private, the domestic, should be devoted to the production of knowledge and political action within the polis. Her task is to collaborate in the tasks of the father, then to serve the husband and finally, to take care of the son because, without the male, the woman, enclosed in her imperfection of single, does not have for the Greeks capacity to integrate into the universal scope of the polis; confined in her solitude, she will spend her life in the position of never acquiring the social fullness of the citizen.

On the other hand, the body of the woman encloses a tempting connotation that for the medieval is sinful, so it was necessary to avoid looking at her attentively so as not to fall into the temptation with the thought and with the desire, therefore, "it is not the same rationality the one of the main agent and the instrument. The main agent has to be more dignified, fact that is not required for the instrumental agent" (Pérez, 2008, p. 41).

In this sense, Thomas Aquina distinguishes the rationality of the main agent and the rationality of the instrumental agent. The rationality of the main agent has to be more dignified than that of the instrumental agent, between masculine mind or rationality and feminine mind or rationality that is imperfect and less dignified. Man-Male is the one who truly engenders a new human being, and the woman is only the material cause and the place where the new human being finds the appropriate food for his development in his first nine months of life.

For Pérez (2008), in Thomas Aquina, the feminine reason, immersed in the sensitive and corporeal matter, is identified with nature and life, and responds to her calls and demands. The female reason embodied in each woman means the continual temptation to the masculine reason of the man, to make him come down from the pure and formal realm of his rationality and join her in the world of daily life with her mixture of pleasure and anguish. It is through the feminine reason, instrumental reason, embodied in the body of the woman, that the man reason feels the attraction by the vice, by the evil and the sin.



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In Thomas Aquinas there is evidence of a continuity of traditional thought already exhibited in the works of Hesiod, in Plato and in Aristotle, these approaches will be sequenced of the Christian tradition from Paul of Tarsus and with the contributions of Tertullian and the fathers of the church, such as Jerome and Augustine of Hippo, who emphasize the relationship of women with moral evil and sin; the female body is a symbol of temptation and sin, there is the impulse to sin in her. This is deepened when the church officially declares the religious inferiority of women by denying her access to the intelligible and powerful world of the clerical class.

### 1.3 The historical passage from the negative to the positive

Despite the fact that in Plato is clear the idea that man is a superior and rational being, whereas the woman is a being object of reason that must prepare for the man because even the reproduction was to be given between people of the same social class in order to have perfect children, after the ideal of the construction of the perfect society, it follows that Plato recognized the same nature for men and women, thereby providing the opportunity to consider some rights for women: access to a full education, aspect currently improved in almost all regions of the planet; more possibilities of insertion in the work environment. The transition from the negative to the positive lived by women can be stated as follows:

- From the Aristotelian conception of considering women as a reproductive being, passive and submissive to the service of their administrator, there is a leap towards the age of administration, management, leadership and knowledge in various functions through a long learning process.
- The silence and submission as fundamental virtues of women open a path to action and to the construction of their own identity and their own discourse as subject of obligations, but also of rights.
- From the activities contingent on the house: cooking, cleaning, weaving/sewing the family's clothes, taking care of the children, having the house in order, meeting some agricultural tasks controlled by men and at best, being a counselor for the finances of the family time, appears a new conception of women as a being who has come to develop their own autonomy, to make their own decisions and to exert power in the various public and private spheres at social and cultural level.
- The physical, psychological and moral weakness attributed to women in the ancient times and in the Middle Ages resulted in a whole set of prohibitions that nullified women as an autonomous, dignified and thoughtful subject, denials that were supported by the church and by the man as guarantor and executor of the rules to maintain the social order, this changed and originated a multiplicity of pedagogical, religious, juridical, sporting, cultural actions starring by women in the spirit of transforming the individual and collective history.
- From the Middle Ages, which physiologically considered women to be inferior, less intelligent and less able to biologically speak, from the nineteenth century is the valuation of women as a capable and intelligent being, with the same intellectual abilities as men.

## 2. Conclusions

The analysis of the situation of women throughout the history of philosophy seen from men brings with it a set of interesting aspects that describe each of the stages that women lived at the time.



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The vision of the philosophers referred to in this work represents the fundamental milestones that allow understanding the dynamics lived by the woman; it is projected to rethink the various problems; it is proposed to break with the paradigms that have hindered the full development of women.

Over the time, women have been misunderstood and distorted in their developmental capacities in the social and cultural spheres of the society.

Only in recent times proposals have been generated that vindicate the role of women, and at the same time guarantee their rights as a human beings.

Women and men are equal as humans who share a rationality that makes us different from other beings in the world, humans have awareness, will and feelings, however, we are different in terms of physical strength and motherhood that is exclusive to women.

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## Author

**FLORALBA DEL ROCÍO AGUILAR-GORDÓN** holds a PhD degree in philosophy from the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador, in 1996. She obtained her master's degree in education, specialization in higher education by Universidad Tecnológica América, in 2008., in 2008. She has a master's degree in technology applied to education from Universidad de Alicante, Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona y la Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, in 2010. She obtained a master's degree in online education from Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja in 2010. Floralba has an Expert Degree in Analytical Knowledge from Universidad Internacional de la Rioja de España, Spain, in 2016. She obtained a degree as Specialist in Curricular Planning and Organization of online education systems by Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja. She holds a Superior Diploma in Curriculum and Didactics from Universidad Tecnológica América. She obtained a Superior Diploma in Educational Transformation from Universidad Multiversidad Edgar Morán de México in 2009. She



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obtained her higher diploma in e-Learning, by Instituto Tecnológico de Madrid, in 2016. She has a Superior Degree in Educational Research from Universidad Tecnológica América. She obtained a Superior Degree in Fundamentals of Online education and Research by Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja. She got a Superior Degree in Cooperative Learning from Universidad Católica de Brasilia in 2002, and obtained her international tutor certification accredited by Universidad Católica de Brasilia in 2004. She had a Superior Degree in technology, Management and Leadership from Universidad Tecnológica América. She obtained a degree in Philosophy from the Faculty of Human Sciences of Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador in 1991. Floralba obtained her degree in social, political and economic sciences from the School of Juridical Sciences of Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja Technical University Particular of Loja, in 2007. She was awarded the title of lawyer for the School of Juridical Sciences of Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja, in 2013.

She is currently a tenured professor at Universidad Politécnica Salesiana. She is the editor-in-chief of the journal *Sophia: Collection of Philosophy of the education* edited by Universidad Politécnica Salesiana del Ecuador, indexed in more than 60 indexes and databases of recognized international prestige. She is the coordinator of the research group in Philosophy of Education (GIFE), is member of the Scientific Council and international reviewer of important journals of Ecuador, Spain, Colombia, Uruguay, Chile, Mexico and Costa Rica.



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