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Bathsua Makin and Anna Maria van Schurman: Education and the Metaphysics of Being a Woman

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Introduction

In 1659, a London publisher printed a treatise entitled *The Learned Maid, or, Whether a Maid may be a Scholar? A Logick Exercise*, a translation of a Latin treatise originally written two decades earlier by a young woman from Utrecht, Anna Maria van Schurman (van Schurman 1659). About fifteen years later, in 1673, an anonymous short vernacular treatise dedicated to Lady Mary, eldest daughter of the Duke of York, was published, also in London, entitled *An Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen, in Religion, Manners, Arts & Tongues. With an Answer to the Objections Against this Way of Education*, written by Bathsua Makin.

Educational treatises such as these are important because, as Clabaugh notes, ‘the very essence of a culture is revealed in its educational attitudes, policies, and practices’ (Clabaugh 2010, p. 164). Whom a culture decides to educate as well as how this education is undertaken reflects not only pragmatic aspects about the culture but also something of the fundamental understanding the culture has of itself. In this respect, educational treatises provide us with a very specific view about the self-conceptions of a particular time and place. These two treatises, van Schurman’s and Makin’s, are especially important because they are some of the earliest treatises arguing for the education of women that are both written by women and in English, and both authors were eminent scholars and educators themselves – as we’ll see in the next section.¹

In this chapter, I argue that more than the essence of a culture is illustrated in such educational treatises: Attitudes towards education also reveal the essence of that which is to be educated – at least, the essence as it is understood in a particular time and context (in the present case, the second half of the seventeenth-century) – and treatises on female pedagogy provide us with a special insight into how the nature of women is understood. Both van Schurman’s and Makin’s treatises address the question of whether women should be educated by arguing that it is not contrary to the nature of woman to be educated. As a result, these treatises can be read as not only treatises in pedagogical theory concerning practical questions of education, but also as philosophical treatises in metaphysics.

It might seem strange to investigate metaphysics through treatises on educational theory; but if we are interested in views on the metaphysics of women – and on women’s views of metaphysics – in the seventeenth-century, we can’t just open a seventeenth-century textbook on metaphysics. For no such textbook was written by women, and (as far as I am aware) no

¹ A good introduction to Makin and her educational theory is (Teague 1998); see also (Helm 1993). For van Schurman’s life and works, see (de Baar 2004, Larsen 2016, van Beek 2010). On seventeenth-century educational theory in England, see (Greengrass, et al., 1994, Sadler 1966, Turnbull 1947). The relationship between feminism and philosophies of education, tangential to the current arguments but providing further support for the importance of looking to educational treatises for understanding philosophical positions, is discussed in (Detlefsen 2017).

textbook written by men treats the topic of the essence of women as distinct from that of men. Thus, if we are interested in the metaphysical views of women in the seventeenth century, as well as seventeenth-century views on the metaphysics of women, we must look for these views elsewhere. Makin's and van Schurman's arguments for the education of women, while often ultimately pragmatic, are substantially grounded in metaphysical issues. By reading these treatises with an eye towards these issues, we can develop an understanding of how the metaphysics of women was viewed during the latter half of the seventeenth-century, particularly by women themselves.

In this chapter I present van Schurman's and Makin's arguments for the education of women as a lens through which to understand their shared metaphysical conceptions about the nature, or essence, of women. The arguments that are advanced for the education of women provide us with an understanding of how the 'nature' or 'essence' of women was conceived of in this period, and which characteristics considered intrinsic to being a woman make women apt for education. In the next section I sketch the biographies of van Schurman and Makin, and identify some of the characteristics and conclusions found in both their treatises. I then discuss the specifics of van Schurman's and Makin's metaphysics of women each in turn, showing how both women perceive women as having natures similar to men's. I contrast the views of these two women with the view of a contemporary man on the same subject, Samuel Torshel, who in 1645 published *The Womans Glorie. A Treatise, Asserting the Due Honour of that Sexe, and Directing Wherein that Honour Consists* (Torshel 1645). Torshel's treatise is a nearly 250 page argument in favor of many of the same conclusions as van Schurman and Makin, but it lacks the metaphysical foundations of the women's treatises. This allows me to use Torshel as a foil for my final metaphysical conclusions, that van Schurman and Makin both argue for explicit conclusions about the nature of women that are advocated only implicitly by male metaphysicians (such as Descartes and Locke) even half a century afterwards.

Background and biographical information

The identity of the author of the *Essay* was for much of the 20th century confused, due to the previous identification of her as her brother-in-law's sister; it was not until 1993 that her proper biography was established. The author was born Bathsua Reginald (Rainolds) in 1600, the daughter of Henry Reginald (Reginolle, Reynolds) and sister of Ithamaria Reginald, who married John Pell in 1632 (Brink 1991, p. 314, Teague 1993, pp. 2, 5). In letters between Bathsua and John, Bathsua calls John her brother and calls herself his sister; later historians took this as literal rather than figurative and took her maiden name to be properly Bathsua Pell (Teague 1993, p. 2), and this created difficulty for establishing her biographical details. Bathsua in fact married Richard Makin, in 1621, and around 1640 entered court service as the tutor of Princess Elizabeth, daughter of Charles I. It was around this time that Makin and van Schurman corresponded (in Hebrew), and van Schurman's treatise influenced Makin's (Teague 1993, pp. 6–7). Makin may have been connected with van Schurman via her brother-in-law, who between 1643 and 1652 held chairs in mathematics in Amsterdam and Breda (Brink 1991, p. 319). Alternatively, van Schurman may have sought out Makin herself or been connected with her via Dorothy (Dorothea) Dury (née Moore)² (de Baar, p. 122). A

² Moore herself was a proponent of women's education, and is the author of a letter 'On the Education of Girls', intended for publication along with Adolphus Speed's treatise on the same topic, but the publication of these texts was canceled due to lack of space (Webster 1970, p. 206, fn. 38). Moore's treatise was reprinted in

letter from van Schurman to Makin can be dated to either 1640 (in which case van Schurman was already connected to Makin before Pell moved to the Netherlands) or 1646 (which would support a connection via Pell) (de Baar 2004, pp. 123–124). In addition to her *Essay*, Makin also wrote poetry, including the *Musa Virginea* (Makin 1616), with verses in Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Spanish, German, French, and Italian, and as well as two poems to members of the Hastings family.

Anna Maria van Schurman was seven years Makin's junior. Born in Cologne in 1607, her family moved to Utrecht when she was a young child and she learned Greek, Latin, arithmetic, geography, astronomy, and music from her father. In 1636, she matriculated at Utrecht University, becoming the first female student at a Dutch university.³ Her treatise advocating the education of women was part of her correspondence with the Calvinist theologian André (Andrew) Rivet; it was published first in Latin, in 1638, 1641, and 1673, with translations into French in 1646 and English in 1659 (Ariew and Garber 1998, p. 1461, van Beek 2010, pp. 180–181). In addition to advocating for women's education, van Schurman also acquired renown as a painter and engraver, obtaining honorary admission to the St. Luke Guild of Painters in 1643 (van Beek 2010, p. 94), and wrote theological treatises (van Schurman 1639, 1648, 1673).

At the time van Schurman and Makin were writing, there was no strong argument against teaching women how to read, so long as it did not take away from time better spent doing household chores. For a woman who can read is able to read the Bible, and a woman who reads the Bible improves her soul and maintains her virtue – her most precious asset.⁴ For both authors, the purpose of educating women is primarily practical. While education is not 'a thing requisite and precisely needfull to eternall salvation' (van Schurman 1659 p. 6), for even uneducated women may still aspire to salvation⁵, any skills in language, education, wit, or mind are all still secondary to a woman's piety and virtue. Fr. Spanhemius in his introduction to the 1659 English translation of van Schurman's treatise says that 'these Gifts are far inferiour to those which she accounteth chief; Piety without Ostension, Modesty beyond Example, and most Exemplary Holineses of Life and Conversation' (van Schurman 1659). Van Schurman further argues that if woman is to be virtuous, and virtuous action must conform to reason, knowing reason will make one more virtuous (van Schurman 1659, p. 22). She argues that 'especially let regard be had unto those Arts which have the neerest alliance to *Theology* and the *Moral Virtues*, and are Principally subservient to them...especially *Logick*, fitly called *The Key of all Sciences*' (van Schurman 1659, pp. 4–5). Other disciplines which are close enough to theology and moral virtues to shed light upon them include physics, history, and metaphysics.

Many of Makin's arguments for the education of women are similarly pragmatic. After pointing out that 'Men, by liberal Education, are much better'd, as to intellectuals and morals' (Makin 1673, p. 7), Makin notes that 'greater Care ought to be taken of [women]; Because Evil seems to be begun here, as in *Eve*, and to be propagated by her Daughters' (Makin 1673,

(Turnbull 1947, pp. 120–121). Unlike Makin and van Schurman, Moore focuses on the practical aspects of women's education, what and how and by whom they should be taught. She does not consider the theoretical foundations which justify offering such an education in the way that Main and van Schurman do.

³ Some claim that she was the first female student at any university. This is a contentious claim, and the evidence for it is well discuss by van Beek (2010).

⁴ See (Teague 1996) for more on the reading habits of early modern women.

⁵ In this, van Schurman rejects the Lutheran view that 'salvation of every human soul depended upon informed reading of the Holy Scriptures' (Clabaugh 2010, p. 172).

p. 7). Women are both weak when it comes to resisting and strong when it comes to being tempted by evil (Makin 1673, p. 7), and thus given that education can promote virtue, it is important that women be educated, perhaps even more important than that men be educated. Makin argues directly against classical views, wherein ‘because females were widely regarded as potentially or even inherently vicious, irrational, and untrustworthy, it was commonly held that their education was not only unnecessary, but imprudent, counterproductive, even dangerous’ (Clabaugh 2010, pp. 166–167). In Makin’s view, ‘Women ought to be Learned, that they may stop their ears against Seducers’ (Makin 1673, p. 25).

In addition to the firm anchoring of their arguments in the salvific benefits of education, both women also point out the benefits to men of educated women; for an educated woman can produce educated sons, and assist her husband in his business cares. But though most of their arguments are pragmatic, not all are. From a modern point of view, it is reassuring to read that both are happy to admit that the education of women can also be an intrinsic good, bringing pleasure to the woman so educated.

Neither woman ever makes explicit what she means by the ‘nature’ or ‘essence’ of women; in Makin’s case, this is not surprising, given that her treatise is not philosophical in nature and thus she does not need to go through the careful exercise of introducing, defining, and employing technical philosophical terms. Van Schurman’s treatise, on the other hand, is explicitly couched in philosophical argumentative structures, and she does make a point of defining her primary terms (‘maid’, ‘scholar’, and ‘whether [a maid] may be’ (van Schurman 1659, pp. 1–2)). Though she does not explicitly define it, van Schurman uses ‘nature’ in two distinct ways. In the first way, ‘nature’ picks out an active causal power that applies generally across creation, for instance when van Schurman argues that ‘Nature doth nothing in vain’ (van Schurman 1659, p. 8). In the second way, ‘nature’ picks out the essence or ‘true *being*’ of some ‘natural, finite phenomena’ (van Beek 2010, p. 67); for example when ‘nothing is more agreeable to humane nature, then [sic] honest and ingenuous delight’ (van Schurman 1659, pp. 19–20). Thus, I will not treat ‘essence’ and ‘nature’ as distinct notions, but rather use them interchangeably.

The learned maid

The central thesis of van Schurman’s treatise is ‘That a Maid may be a Scholar’ (van Schurman 1659, p. 1), and she begins with providing her definition of both:

By a *Maid or Woman*, I understand her that is a *Christian*, and that not in Profession onely, but really and indeed (van Schurman 1659, p. 1).

Despite this restriction of the subject to Christian women, van Schurman feels free to draw her examples of educated women from the pagans as well⁶, as does Makin. Additionally, though van Schurman includes *all* Christian women within the domain of ‘Maid’, through her examples and later discussion it is clear that she is happy to admit that not every maid is apt for education; her arguments are directed at those women who have the means and the time to devote to being educated. Women who must work to support themselves, or who have children to care for, may not be best suited for education:

⁶ Van Schurman provides the reader with a list of sources in which one can read ‘of the erudition of Maids’; these sources include Livy, Plutarch, and Pliny (van Schurman 1959, p. 3).

For some *Maids* are *ingenious*, others *not so*: some are rich, some *poor*: some *engaged* in Domestick cares, others *at liberty* (van Schurman 1659, p. 2).

She defines a ‘scholar’ as follows:

By a *Scholar*, I mean one that is given to the study of *Letters*, that is, the knowledge of *Tongues* and *Histories*, all kinds of Learning, both superior entitled *Faculties*; and inferiour, call’d *Philosophy* (van Schurman 1659, pp. 1–2).

The study of scriptures is exempted, as it is taken for granted that this ‘without Controversie belongs to all Christians’ (van Schurman 1659, p. 2). The studies of a scholar are divided into two types: ‘*universal*, when we give our selves to all sorts of Learning or *particular*, when we learn some one Language or Science, or one distinct Faculty’ (van Schurman 1659, p. 2).

The arguments that she gives for her conclusion are all syllogistic in nature, and can be divided into two types: Arguments based on characteristics of the subject (that is ‘Maid’) and those that are based on characteristics of the predicate (that is ‘Scholar’). In each case, van Schurman seeks to show how these characteristics make learning ‘*convenient*, that is, expedient, fit, decent’ (van Schurman 1659, p. 2) for women.

My focus will be on arguments of the first type, from the characteristics of the subject, because they are the ones that will give us insight into the nature of women. The arguments from the subject can be further subdivided into two types: Those that are intrinsic to the nature of women, stemming from some aspect of the essence of women, and those that are extrinsic, rooted in pragmatic and accidental properties of women. My further focus is arguments in the first category, because they provide insight into the underlying view of the metaphysics of women.

First, though, I briefly look at some of the extrinsic arguments, to show how it is that they are extrinsic, and can therefore be ignored in the remainder of my discussion. An example of such an extrinsic argument is the following objection to van Schurman’s main thesis:

The studies of Learning are not convenient for those that are destitute of *means* necessary to their studies.

But Women are destitute of means, &c.

Therefore (van Schurman 1659, p. 28).

The fact that women are destitute of means is not essential to their nature as women, for not all women are indeed destitute of means. On the positive side, van Schurman offers the following extrinsic argument:

They that have the happiness of a more quiet and free course of life, may with most convenience follow their studies.

But Maids for the most part, have the happiness of a more quiet and free course of life:

Therefore (van Schurman 1659, p. 11).

This, too, is not essential to the nature or essence of women; it is happenstance (or, if you are more cynical, a direct result of the patriarchal social structures in place at the time) that women have more quiet leisure time than men do, simply because they are excluded from so many of the realms that would deprive them of this quiet leisure time. (Van Schurman makes precisely this point when she notes that women are ‘exempt from publick cares’ (van Schurman 1659, p. 11).)

Van Schurman gives seven arguments from properties of the subject; of these, three derive from intrinsic properties. These intrinsic properties are:

1. That ‘Maids are naturally endued with the *Principles*, or powers of the principles, of all Arts and Sciences’ (van Schurman 1659, pp. 6–7).⁷
2. That ‘a Maid hath naturally a *desire* of Arts and Sciences’ (van Schurman 1659, p. 8).
3. That ‘God hath created women also with a sublime and erect countenance’ (van Schurman 1659, p. 9).

The second and third properties are worth highlighting, because they indicate a lack of a distinction between the nature, or essence, of men and the nature, or essence, of women. In particular, in support of the second claim, van Schurman appeals to Aristotle, who argues in his *Metaphysics* that ‘all Mankind have in them by Nature a desire of knowledge’ (van Schurman 1659, p. 8). Women are taken by van Schurman to participate equally in ‘mankind’; because women are just as human as men are, they by nature also desire education; and where we would not shrink from satisfying the desire of a man we should not shrink from satisfying this same desire in a woman. This lack of distinction is a theme that van Schurman (and, we’ll see, Makin) continually picks up on in her treatise.

The arguments from the property of the predicate provide us with indirect evidence concerning the nature of women. In these arguments, the major premise picks up on a characteristic property of being a scholar, but the minor premise relates these properties to characteristics of women (either specifically, or as members of a larger genus, such as ‘human’ or ‘animal’). From these, we can extract the following characteristics of the nature of women:

1. That ‘all creatures tend unto their last and highest perfections as that which is most convenient for them’ (van Schurman 1659, p. 15).
2. That ‘the Honour of the Female Sexe is most tender, and needeth nothing more than Prudence’ (van Schurman 1659, p. 18).
3. That ‘a Woman is by Nature prone to the vice of pusillanimity’⁸ (van Schurman 1659, p. 19).

After considering arguments in favor of the education of women, van Schurman turns to objections to her thesis that maids can be scholars. Of these five objections, it is noteworthy that only one of them derives from the nature of women. Unsurprisingly, the view of women held by those who think women should not be educated is not very flattering: Women should not be educated because they are ‘of weak wits’ (and this fact, ‘they think, needeth no Prooffe’ (van Schurman 1659, pp. 25–26)). Van Schurman’s response to this argument is quite clever: Rather than rejecting the claim that women are of weak wits, she accepts that they are, but shows that this is also a part of the nature of men, and therefore any argument from this fact to the conclusion that women should not be educated also applies to men as well. She points out that ‘not alwayes *heroical wits* are precisely necessary to studies: for the number even of learned Men, we see, is made up in good part, of those that are of the *middle* sort’ (van Schurman 1659, p. 26). Who cares if women are weak-witted? Men are only middling themselves. Not only that, but she goes further to make women’s weakness of wit a point in *favor* of them being educated, ‘because studies do supply us with aids and helps for our weakness’ (van Schurman 1659, p. 27). (This is a point that Makin also makes below.) All

⁷ In these, and in other quotes, I regularly, and silently, expand the ‘&c.’ of van Schurman’s text.

⁸ ‘Pusillanimity’ is the vice of timidity or cowardice, with the further implication of not living up to one’s full potential.

of the other objections that van Schurman considers are extrinsic, rather than intrinsic, to the nature of women.

The educated gentlewoman

While van Schurman's treatise is structured in a tight syllogistic fashion, the argumentative structure of Makin's text is harder to tease out.⁹ At first pass, her argument is nothing more than ostension – lists of historical women who have excelled in different areas of learning.¹⁰ Makin provides examples of women who are educated 'in Arts and Tongues' (Makin 1673, pp. 8–9), of which some women 'have been eminent in them' and 'the equal to most Men' (Makin 1673, pp. 9–11); are good linguists (Makin 1673, pp. 11–12)¹¹; are good orators (Makin 1673, pp. 12–13); understand logic (Makin 1673, p. 13); are profound philosophers (Makin 1673, pp. 13–14); understand mathematics (Makin 1673, p. 15); excel in divinity (Makin 1673, pp. 15–16); and are good poets (Makin 1673, pp. 16–21). After these long lists, Makin demands an explanation for why 'the Vertues, the Disciplines, the Nine Muses, the Devisers, and Patrons of all good Arts, the Three Graces' have historically been represented as women, if not the fact that 'Women were the Inventors of many of these Arts, and the promoters of them, and since have studied them, and attained to an excellent in them' (Makin 1673, p. 21).

Having thus established that women have been educated, and have been instigators of the fields of education, Makin then explains the ways in which women ought to be educated. Like van Schurman, she is happy to distinguish rich women from poor women (and to further distinguish, in each of these categories, women 'of good natural Parts' and 'of low Parts' (Makin 1673, p. 22)), and focus her attention on the education of rich women of good parts. She also agrees with van Schurman that while education can improve a woman's virtue, it is not 'necessary to the...Salvation of Women, to be thus educated' (Makin 1673, p. 22). Women may lack education (perhaps because they lack the means or the time) and yet still not be damned.

But the order of the lists that she begins the treatise with is an argument in itself. After giving examples of women who have excelled in a particular forté, Makin, playing the part of the devil's advocate, objects that this is no skill, but part of the nature of women. For example, after the list of women who have understood logic, Makin notes that 'Some think I have hardly spoke to the Purpose yet; Logick disposes to wrangle, a thing Women are inclined to naturally' (Makin 1673, p. 13). After having considered women skilled in languages, linguistics, and oration, she considers the objection that women 'may learn Tongues and speak freely, being naturally disposed to be talkative' (Makin 1673, p. 13). Makin meets each 'objection' by showing that this display of what the objector says is mere 'nature' is developed in a particular and noteworthy bent. Women are not merely prattlers – they are logicians. They are not merely wranglers – they are philosophers, divines, etc.

⁹ Teague argues that van Schurman's treatise 'provides the format that Makin's essay uses' (Teague 1993, p. 7), but it is hard to see how this can be justified; there is no hint of syllogistic reasoning, which provides the bulk of the shape of van Schurman's structure. Van Beek recognises that 'the form of the *Essay* is clearly different' from van Schurman's treatise (van Beek 2010, p. 181).

¹⁰ Though this is in itself of interest; as Waithe notes, this overview of the history of educated women makes Makin one of the first, if not *the* first, female historian of philosophy (Waithe 1989, p. 137); Brink also calls her 'one of the first scholars to work in the field of women's history' (Brink 1991, p. 313).

¹¹ By which she means they know many languages.

And all of this derives from the nature of women. The very features of women that the objector attempts to appeal to to dismiss women from the status of educated are the same features that Makin implicitly argues support their claim to that status.

We saw above some of Makin's pragmatic arguments for the education of women. These arguments can also be read as indicating the nature of women. Many of Makin's arguments are theological in nature, revolving around God's intended role or purpose for women. She notes that 'had God intended Women onely as a finer sort of Cattle, he would not have made them reasonable' and that 'God intended Woman as a help-meet to Man, in his constant conversation, and in the concerns of his Family and Estate' (Makin 1673, p. 23). Not only this, but 'We cannot be so stupid as to imagine, that God gives Ladies great Estates, merely that they may Eat, Drink, Sleep, and rise up to Play' (Makin 1673, p. 26). Instead, they should use their leisure time in becoming educated, so that they don't, 'for want of this Education, have nothing to imploy themselves, but are forced to Cards, Dice, Playes, and frothy Romances' (Makin 1673, p. 26) or 'dressing and trimming themselves like *Bartholomew-Babies*' (Makin 1673, p. 30). She is not explicit about whether the intended purpose of woman is part of the essence of woman, but it is not unreasonable to think that she would assent to this.

Other arguments appeal to 'Nature' as an effective cause, rather than God: 'Nature produces Women of such excellent Parts, that they do often equalize, some-times excel men, in what ever they attempt' (Makin 1673, p. 23).

Furthermore, Makin does make a specific claim about the nature of women with respect to education and learning, namely that it is not 'necessary to *esse*, to the *substance*' (Makin 1673, p. 22) that a woman be educated. Presumably she would say the same is true of men; she – like van Schurman – often dissolves arguments against the education of women by turning them into arguments against the education of men.

It is interesting that almost all of the objections to the education of women that Makin considers are, in the terms that I used to describe van Schurman's arguments above, extrinsic. No one will want to marry educated women, and it is against custom to educate them (Makin 1673, pp. 30–31). Solomon's 'good Housewife' is not commended for her education (Makin 1673, p. 30). The end goal of learning is the public sphere, in which women do not participate (Makin 1673, p. 33). Women 'will not mind their Household affairs', 'have other things to do', 'do not desire Learning', and 'are of low Parts', (Makin 1673, pp. 33–34).

All of these objections, Makin dispenses with short shrift. ('Neither do many boys', she replies to the objection that women do not desire learning (Makin 1673, p. 33).)

Only two objections stem from the (purported) nature of women, and one of these is one of the objections that Makin takes the longest in rebutting. This is the objection that 'Women are of ill Natures, and will abuse their Education' (Makin 1673, p. 32). Makin calls this 'the killing objection' (Makin 1673, p. 32)...if it were unanswerable. And, of course, it is answerable. Makin takes up three points that she sees falling under this objection: That (1) 'They will abuse Learning'; (2) 'They are of ill Natures', and (3) 'They will be proud, and not obey their Husbands' (Makin 1673, p. 32). The first and third subobjections are extrinsic ones, and to both Makin replies by noting that 'so do men' and 'This same Argument may be turned upon Men; what-ever they answer for themselves, will defend Woman' (Makin 1673, p. 32). In this, Makin holds that what makes men suited for the pursuit of knowledge applies equally to women. I will discuss the Cartesian roots of such a view below.

Regarding the charge that women are ‘of ill nature’, Makin wholly rejects it (albeit without clear argument; but then again, hers is not an argumentative treatise in the way that van Schurman’s is). She calls it ‘an impudent calumny’,

as if the whole Sex of Women...had that malice infused into their very Natures and Constitutions, that they are ordinarily made worse by that Education that makes Men generally better (Makin 1673, p. 32).

To extract an argument from this, we could say that the burden of proof lies with the objector; they are the ones that must explain what the difference in nature between men and women is such that men are generally made better by education but women generally made worse. Failure to give such a difference leaves one in the default position that there is nothing *in the nature* of women that distinguishes them from men with respect to education.

The other objection stemming from the nature of women is that they ‘are of softer Natures’ (Makin 1673, p. 34). This she counters as being no objection at all, for that which is soft is more impressionable, and that which is more impressionable is more apt to benefit from education. Furthermore, that which is weak can be strengthened by education, and thus those who are of softer natures have the most to benefit from learning. Far from being an objection, it is a positive point in favor of the education of women.

Despite the overtly non-philosophical approach of Makin’s treatise, the philosophical implications of her views are clear. Many of her arguments for the education of women are clearly rooted in the nature or essence of women themselves, and not external or pragmatic considerations (though, as with van Schurman, some of her arguments are rooted in those considerations). The metaphysical foundations of Makin’s arguments become clearer when we look at another collection of arguments for similar conclusions that almost wholly lacks this foundation.

The glory of women

It was not only women that were advocating the education of women in this period; enlightened men also saw the utility of such an education. In this section I look at the structure of Samuel Torshel’s *The Womans Glorie* (Torshel 1645), published between Makin’s treatise and van Schurman’s translation into English, and arguing for similar conclusions. Torshel’s book is of interest to us here for two reasons: First, to see if any difference between women’s arguments for women’s education and men’s arguments for women’s education tell us anything about different conceptions of the nature and essence of women. Second, because Torshel’s book contains a translation of ‘The letters touching this argument, between And[rew] Rivet & A. Maria à Schurman’ (Torshel 1645, p. 34)¹²:

For the confirmation of the point in hand, and for the honour of that *Maiden Pen*, I will translate into our own tongue for the use of our English women, so much of that learned Letter as concernes this present argument, which that renowned

¹² ‘From the prologue to *The Learned Maid* it becomes clear that Van Schurman’s *Dissertatio* had previously been translated into English; for in it the following reference can be found: ‘This strange Maid, being now the second time drest up in her English habit’. Recent research has established that the first translation of the *Dissertatio* came into being in 1645 under the auspices of Bathsua Makin and was included in the work *The Woman’s Glorie*, a manifesto written by Samuel Torshel, a devout chaplain at the royal court’ (van Beek 2010, pp. 180–181). However, Torshel did not translate the actual treatise, but rather part of the correspondence surrounding the treatise. In the 1659 translation, only an excerpt of the letter that Torshel translates is included.

Virgin, *Anne Marie Schurman of Utrecht* wrote in *Latine* (Torshel 1645, pp. 34–35).

The first point of difference between Torshel's treatise and those of van Schurman and Makin is the length – what they have been able to eloquently argue in around 40 pages Torshel expends nearly 250 pages on. Torshel's primary conclusions are (1) 'That Women are capable of the highest improvement, and the greatest glory to which man may be advanced' and (2) 'That their highest improvement is that of the Soul, and their greatest glory is Soul-glory' (Torshel 1645, p. 2). His method of demonstrating these conclusions is closer to Makin's than van Schurman's; to provide support for (1) and (2), he says 'I will principally build upon *Scripture Grounds* and *Examples*' (Torshel 1645, p. 5).

Scripture tells us that '*woman* as well as *man* was created after the Image of God,' and a consequence of this is that '*woman* hath the same prerogative of creation with *man*' (Torshel 1645, pp. 5–6). Thus, given that man has been endowed with a 'spirituall, rationall, free, willing, immortall Soul' and that 'in his mind [there is] a right knowledge of Gods nature, will, and workes' (Torshel 1645, p. 6), the same holds of women; this is, in part, because 'the *Soul* knowes no difference of *Sexe* (Torshel 1645, p. 11) (a very Cartesian sentiment (Detlefsen 2017, p. 196)). Thus, while all three authors appeal to the fact that women are created in the image of God in the same way that men are, Torshel's arguments are substantially more theologically- and less philosophically-based.

Having demonstrated the scriptural underpinning for his conclusion in Chapter I, in Chapter II Torshel – like Makin a few decades later – proves his point by ostension, by listing women who have achieved eminence in 'Wisdome, Policie, Deliberation, Secresie, [and] Learning' (Torshel 1645, p. 16). After his excursion in Chapter III on van Schurman's letter to Rivet, in Chapter IV he returns to the ostensive matter, provided examples of women who have achieved eminence in 'Constancie, Courage, Abilitie to govern, [and] Piety and Religion' (Torshel 1645, p. 74).

But while the book starts off with a promising goal, the remainder of the book is devoted to paeans of women's virtue and platitudes of practical advice; no further arguments are given. The question of education is left almost wholly behind, reduced to 'the old and familiar cry of censorship' that women should 'read no romances, no plays, and no pastorals' (Waith 1949, p. 136).

I would like now to situate the metaphysical views we have teased out of van Schurman and Makin in a broader philosophical context. The only explicit philosophical authority that van Schurman appeals to is Aristotle's adage that 'all Mankind have in them by Nature a desire of knowledge' (van Schurman 1659, p. 8). But this appeal can only be successful if the Nature indicated here is a nature that both men and women share. Aristotle himself would not necessarily have agreed with this, as he 'denied underprivileged classes of humanity, that is, women and slaves, certain powers of deliberation' (Ready 2002, p. 566). Contemporary historians of feminism have noted how this 'common tendency either to deny women rationality or to acknowledge in them a form of it qualitatively different from men's' (Ready 2002, p. 566) has been used to justify the continual oppression of women, especially when it comes to denying them equal education. In fact, 'granting women the same form of rationality as men was a necessary first step in advancing the situation of women' (Ready 2002, p. 566).

Makin and van Schurman are explicitly granting this equality of rationality, that women and men share the same forms and capacities of reason. Both van Schurman and Makin emphasise the equality of the natures of men and women with respect to mankind/humankind, following Descartes, who also argued that the Aristotelian property of desiring knowledge was an essential property of *humankind* not *mankind* (Larsen 2016, fn. 37). Descartes' dualism, with its unsexed souls embodied in sexed bodies, 'provides an ontological basis for the radical egalitarianism of women's and men's natures as well as their modes of reasoning' (Detlefsen 2017, p. 191) and provides a way to support the claim that 'women's human essence is identical with—and thus equal to—that of men' (Detlefsen 2017, p. 196).

What we see in van Schurman and Makin is the explicit articulation of a metaphysical position that is only implicit in male authors through the end of the seventeenth century and into the next: The view that men and women participate in the same nature when it comes to their capacities and desires for learning and education. At the end of the seventeenth century, such a view was advocated by Locke in his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, but only implicitly does he accept 'men's and women's claims to the same faculties of reason and reflection' (Ready 2002, p. 563).¹³ Locke's views on personal identity are often heralded as playing a 'complex and seminal role in the evolution of Enlightenment feminism, influencing the way in which issues like female education and marriage were debated well into the British Romantic period' (Ready 2002, p. 564)¹⁴; but what we see here is that these views are neither new nor unique to Locke. Instead, they were already expressed and articulated half a century before him, and by women.

Despite the different structures and argumentative approaches of van Schurman's and Makin's treatises, their metaphysical conclusions are strikingly parallel. (Since Makin was influenced by van Schurman, perhaps this is not surprising.) While the overall conclusion that women should be educated is predominantly motivated by pragmatic concerns, such as their salvation and their ability to be adequate helpmeets to their spouses and children, both women appeal to the nature of women to ground arguments. Women partake in the same metaphysical nature as men – they are created in the image of God in the same way; they 'desire to know' in equal capacity; they, despite this *need not be* educated – and in arguing for these conclusions Makin and van Schurman explicitly advocate the equality of men and women implicit in Descartes and Locke. But equality of nature does not entail that their natures are identical; both women are happy to admit that women's natures are not entirely identical to men's. Where women differ from men, for example in the strength of their nature or character, these differences are unsuitable as the *loci* of arguments against the education of women.

¹³ 'As set out in the chapter "Of Identity and Diversity," the definition of a person appears strikingly gender-neutral. The generic definition of a person as "a thinking intelligent being that has reason and reflection and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places" (2.27.9:335) assumes that men and women share the same faculties of reason and reflection' (Ready 2002, p. 565).

¹⁴ 'Locke made it possible to conceptualize the self in terms other than the body and the soul—concepts that had long been implicated in arguments in favour of women's subordination' (Ready 2002, p. 563). A reconceptualisation of the self in terms of minds makes it possible to focus on the aspects that the natures of men and women share.

When we compare these to treatises with Torshel's – a comparison worth doing because all three authors aim at the same conclusions – despite the similarity in approach between Makin and Torshel in their appeal to specific examples of learned women in different fields in history, what is striking is the *lack* of explicit metaphysical argumentation in Torshel's book. Outside of his appeal to example, his primary authority is scriptural. While neither Makin nor van Schurman reject theological premises, both of them complement the theological premises with arguments of a more philosophical – and more secular – nature. This in itself provides a further, and final, interesting conclusion: That it is, perhaps, in the nature of women to appeal to that very nature in support of their conclusions concerning their own education.

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