

JUAN BAUTISTA ALBERDI (1810–1884)
BASES AND POINTS OF DEPARTURE FOR THE POLITICAL ORGANIZATION OF THE ARGENTINE REPUBLIC (1852)

Our youth should be trained for industrial life, and therefore should be educated in the arts and sciences that would prepare them for industry. The South American type of man should be one formed for the conquest of the great and oppressive enemies of our progress: the desert, material backwardness; the brutal and primitive nature of this continent.

We should therefore endeavor to draw our youth away from the cities of the interior, where the old order with its habits of idleness, conceit, and dissipation prevails, and to attract them to the coastal towns so that they may obtain inspiration from Europe, which extends to our shores, and from the spirit of modern life.

Industry is the grand means of promoting morality. By furnishing men with the means of getting a living you keep them from crime, which is generally the fruit of misery and idleness. You will find it useless to fill the minds of youths with abstract notions about religion if you leave them idle and poor. Unless they take monastic vows they will be corrupt and fanatical at the same time. England and the United States have arrived at religious morality by way of industry; Spain has failed to acquire industry and liberty by means of religion alone. Spain has never been guilty of irreligion, but that did not save her from poverty, corruption, and despotism . . .

The railroad offers the means of righting the topsy-turvy order that Spain established on this continent. She placed the heads of our states where the feet should be. For the ends of isolation and monopoly this was a wise system; for our aims of commercial expansion and freedom it is disastrous. We must bring our capitals to the coast, or rather bring the coast into the interior of the continent. The railroad and the electric telegraph, the conquerors of space, work this wonder better than all the potentates on earth. The railroad changes, reforms, and solves the most difficult problems without decrees or mob violence.

It will forge the unity of the Argentine Republic better than all our congresses. The congresses may declare it “one and indivisible,” but without the railroad to connect its most remote regions it will always remain divided and divisible, despite all the legislative decrees

Without the railroad you will not have political unity in lands where distance nullifies the action of the central government. Do you want the government, the legislators, the courts of the coastal capital to legislate and judge concerning the affairs of the provinces of San Juan and Mendoza, for example? Bring the coast to those regions with the railroad, or vice versa; place those widely separated points within three days’ travel of each other, at least. But to have the metropolis or capital a twenty days’ journey away is little better than having it in Spain, as it was under the old system, which we overthrew for presenting precisely this absurdity. Political unity, then, should begin with territorial unity, and only the railroad can make a single region of two regions separated by five hundred leagues.

The great rivers, those “moving roads,” as Pascal called them, are yet another means of introducing the civilizing action of Europe into the interior of our continent by means of her immigrants. But rivers that are not navigated do not, for practical purposes, exist. To place them under the exclusive domination of our poor banners is to close them to navigation. If they are to achieve the destiny assigned to them by God of populating the interior of the continent, we must place them under the law of the sea—that is, open them to an absolute freedom of navigation . . .

Let the light of the world penetrate every corner of our republics . . . Let us grant to European civilization what our ancient masters denied.

Taken from Juan Bautista Alberdi, “Roads to the Future,” in *Latin American Civilization: History & Society, 1492 to the Present*, ed. Benjamin Keen, 6th ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 270–272.

CATHERINE SAWBRIDGE MACAULAY GRAHAM (1731–1791)
LETTERS ON EDUCATION (1790)

Letter XXIII: No Characteristic Difference in Sex

The great difference that is observable in the characters of the sexes, Hortensia, as they display themselves in the scenes of social life, has given rise to much false speculation on the natural qualities of the female mind.

It is a long time before the crowd give up opinions they have been taught to look upon with respect It is from such causes that the notion of a sexual difference in the human character has, with a very few exceptions, universally prevailed from the earliest times, and the pride of one sex, and the ignorance and vanity of the other, have helped to support an opinion which a close observation of Nature, and a more accurate way of reasoning, would disprove.

It must be confessed, that the virtues of the males among the human species, though mixed and blended with a variety of vices and errors, have displayed a bolder and a more consistent picture of excellence than female nature has hitherto done. It is on these reasons that, when we compliment the appearance of a more than ordinary energy in the female mind, we call it masculine; and hence it is, that Pope has elegantly said *a perfect woman's but a softer man*. And if we take in the consideration, that there can be but one rule of moral excellence for beings made of the same materials, organized after the same manner, and subjected to similar laws of Nature, we must either agree with Mr. Pope, or we must reverse the proposition, and say, that *a perfect man is a woman formed after a coarser mold*.

Among the most strenuous asserters of a sexual difference in character, Rousseau is the most conspicuous, both on account of that warmth of sentiment which distinguishes all his writings, and the eloquence of his compositions: but never did enthusiasm and the love of paradox, those enemies to philosophical disquisition, appear in more strong opposition to plain sense than in Rousseau's definition of this difference. He sets out with a supposition, that Nature intended the subjection of the one sex to the other; that consequently there must be an inferiority of intellect in the subjected party; but as man is a very imperfect being, and apt to play the capricious tyrant, Nature, to bring things nearer to an equality, bestowed on the woman such attractive graces, and such an insinuating address, as to turn the balance on the other scale. Thus Nature, in a giddy mood, recedes from her purposes, and subjects prerogative to an influence which must produce confusion and disorder in the system of human affairs. Rousseau saw this objection; and in order to obviate it, he has made up a moral person of the union of the two sexes, which, for contradiction and absurdity, outdoes every metaphysical riddle that was ever formed in the schools. In short, it is not reason, it is not wit; it is pride and sensuality that speak in Rousseau, and, in this instance, has lowered the man of genius to the licentious pedant.

But whatever might be the wise purpose intended by Providence in such a disposition of things, certain it is, that some degree of inferiority, in point of corporal strength, seems always to have existed between the two sexes; and this advantage, in the barbarous ages of mankind, was abused to such a degree, as to destroy all the natural rights of the female species, and reduce them to a state of abject slavery. What accidents have contributed in Europe to better their condition, would not be to my purpose to relate; for I do not intend to give you a history of women; I mean only to trace the sources of their peculiar foibles and vices; and these I firmly believe to originate in situation and education only: for so little did a wise and just Providence intend to make the condition of slavery an unalterable law of female nature, that in the same proportion as the male sex have consulted the interest of their own happiness, they have relaxed in their tyranny over women; and such is their use in the system of mundane creation, and such their natural influence over the male mind, that were these advantages properly exerted, they might carry every point of any importance to their honour and happiness. However, till that period arrives in which women will act wisely, we will amuse ourselves in talking of their follies.

The situation and education of women, Hortensia, is precisely that which must necessarily tend to corrupt and debilitate both the powers of mind and body. From a false notion of beauty and delicacy, their system of nerves is depraved before they come out of their nursery; and this kind of depravity has more influence over the mind, and consequently over morals, than is commonly apprehended. But it would be well if such causes only acted towards the debasement of the sex; their moral education is, if possible, more absurd than their physical. The principles and nature of virtue, which is never properly explained to boys, is kept quite a mystery to girls. They are told indeed, that they must abstain from those vices which are contrary to their personal happiness, or they will be regarded as criminals, both by God and man; but all the higher parts of rectitude, every thing that ennobles our being, and that renders us both innoxious and useful, is either not taught, or is taught in such a manner as to leave no proper impression on the mind. This is so obvious a truth, that the defects of female education have ever been a fruitful topic of declamation for the moralist; but not one of this class of writers have laid down any judicious rules for amendment. Whilst we still retain the absurd notion of a sexual excellence, it will militate against the perfecting a plan of education for either sex. The judicious Addison animadverts on the absurdity of bringing a young lady up with no higher idea of the end of education than to make her agreeable to a husband, and confining the necessary excellence for this happy acquisition to the mere graces of person.

Taken from Catherine Sawbridge Macaulay Graham, *Letters on Education: With Observations on Religious and Metaphysical Subjects* (London: C. Dilly, 1790), 204–208