

THE FRENCH ENCYCLOPEDIA (1751–1772)

Woman (Anthropology) by Paul Joseph Barthez

The varied prejudices on the relationship between the excellence of man and woman have been produced by the customs of ancient people, and by the political and religious systems which they have shaped in their turn. I exclude from this the Christian religion, which has established, as I will discuss below, a real superiority in men, while preserving nevertheless for the woman the right to equality.

We have so severely neglected the education of women among all of the refined peoples, that it is surprising that we can identify so many whose erudition and written works have made them renowned. M. Christian Wolff has provided a catalog of celebrated women, followed by fragments of classic Greek prose texts. He has elsewhere published the fragmentary poems of Sappho, and the elegies that she received. The Romans, the Jews, and all of the literate peoples of Europe have had learned women.

Female Sex (Ethics) by Louis de Jaucourt

Sex. Strictly speaking, the sex, or rather, the *fair* sex, is the epithet applied to women, and one that cannot be denied them, since they are the principal embellishment of the world. That they should join to this deserved title all that is peculiar to their condition—modesty, restraint, gentleness, compassion and the virtues of tender souls: music, dance, the art of shading colors on canvas are the pastimes that suit them; yet the cultivation of their wit is even more important and more essential. That, on the other hand, their happy fertility should perpetuate loves and graces; that society should owe them its politeness and its most delicate tastes; that they should constitute the most precious delights of the peaceful citizen; that by a submissive prudence and a modest ability, skillful yet artless, they should excite virtue, revive the feeling of happiness, and soften all the work of human life: such is the glory, such is the power, of the *fair sex*.

Woman (Juriprudence) by Antoine-Gaspard Boucher d'Argis

Woman, we include under this rubric all persons of the feminine sex, whether girls, married women or widows; but in certain respects married women are distinguished from unmarried and widowed women from married.

The condition of women in general is nevertheless different in several ways from that of men. Women are earlier nubile than men, the age of puberty is fixed for them at 12 years; their personality is commonly formed sooner than that of men, they also cease to be of childbearing capability earlier than men.

Men, according to the prerogatives of their sex and the force of their temperament, are naturally capable of all sorts of employment and activities; whereas women, due to the fragility of their sex and their naturally delicacy, are excluded from many functions and incapable of certain activities.

In certain monarchical states, as in France, women, whether single, married or widowed, cannot succeed to the throne.

It is commonly said that two women are necessary to act as witness: nevertheless it is not that women's depositions count for half that of men, this is rather founded on the belief that women's testimony is in general light and subject to variation; this is why it is taken less seriously than that of men: it depends on the prudence of the judge to add more or less faith to the depositions of women, according to the quality of those who are deposing and other circumstances.

Taken from:

Barthez, Paul-Joseph. "Woman." *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project*. Translated by Naomi Andrews. Ann Arbor: MPublishing, University of Michigan Library, 2004. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.did2222.0000.181> (accessed February 27, 2012).

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