

“IF THEN WOMEN ARE NOT A SWARM OF EPHEMERON TRIFLERS, WHY SHOULD THEY BE KEPT IN IGNORANCE UNDER THE SPECIOUS NAME OF INNOCENCE? (22).

A VINDICATION OF THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN (1792)

Knowledge vs. Experience

Day 4: Beauty in Innocence

A Vindication: Chp.2

- * “By individual education, I mean . . . such an attention to a child as will slowly sharpen the *senses*, form the *temper*, regulate the *passions* as they begin to ferment, and set the *understanding* to work before the body arrives at maturity (24 top, my emphasis).
- * “I do not believe that a private education can work . . . wonders . . . Men and women must be educated, in a great degree, by the opinions and manners of the society they live in” (24 top).
- * “the most perfect education . . . is such an exercise of the understanding as is best calculated to strengthen the body and form the heart . . . to enable the individual to attain such habits of virtue as will render it independent” (24 mid).

A Vindication: Chp.2

- * “Many are the causes that . . . contribute to enslave women . . . One . . . is their disregard of order. . . . women . . . seldom attend to [education] with that degree of exactness that men, who from their infancy are broken into method, observe (25 bot).
- * “what they learn is rather by snatches; and as learning is with them . . . only a secondary thing, they do not pursue any one branch with persevering ardour . . . [I]n the education of women, the cultivation of the understanding is always subordinate to the acquirement of some corporeal accomplishment” (26 top).
- * “[They] have no serious scientific study, if they have natural sagacity it is turned too soon on life and manners. They dwell on effects, and modifications, without tracing them back to causes . . .” (26 mid)

A Vindication: Chp.2

- * “Rousseau declares that a woman should never, for a moment, feel herself independent, that she should be governed by fear to exercise her natural cunning, and made a coquetish slave in order to render her a more alluring object of desire, a *sweeter* companion to man, whenever he chooses to relax himself” (28 bot).
- * “[He] insinuates that truth and fortitude . . . should be cultivated with certain restrictions, because, with respect to the female character, obedience is the grand lesson which ought to be impressed with unrelenting rigour” (28 bot).

A Vindication: Chp.2

- ✿ “To speak disrespectfully of love is, I know, high treason against sentiment and fine feelings; but I wish to speak the simple language of truth, and rather to address the head than the heart. . . . [I] endeavour to restrain this tumultuous passion, and to prove that it should not be allowed to dethrone superior powers, or to usurp the sceptre which the understanding should ever coolly wield . . .” (30 mid).
- ✿ “Youth is the season for love in both sexes; but in those days of thoughtless enjoyment provision should be made for the more important years of life, when reflection takes the place of sensation” (30 mid).

A Vindication: Chp.2

- ✱ “The woman who has only been taught to please will soon find that her charms are oblique sunbeams, and that they cannot have much effect on her husband’s heart when they are seen every day, when the summer is passed and gone. Will she then have sufficient native energy to look into herself for comfort, and cultivate her dormant faculties? or, is it not more rational to expect that she will try to please other men . . .?” (30 bot).

A Vindication: Chp.2

- * “[Dr. Gregory] actually recommends dissimulation, and advises an innocent girl to give the lie to her feelings, and not dance with spirit, when gaiety of heart would make her feel eloquent without making her gestures immodest. In the name of truth and common sense, why should not one woman acknowledge that she can take more exercise than another? . . . why, to damp innocent vivacity, is she darkly to be told that men will draw conclusions which she little thinks of?” (31-32).
- * “[H]e advises a wife never to let her husband know the extent of her sensibility or affection. Voluptuous precaution, and as ineffectual as absurd.--Love, from its very nature, must be transitory. To seek for a secret that would render it constant, would be as wild a search as for the philosopher’s stone . . . The most holy band of society is friendship” (33 mid).

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- * “Friendship or indifference inevitably succeeds love” (33 bot).
- * “In order to fulfil the duties of life, and to be able to pursue with vigour the various employments which form the moral character, a master and mistress of a family ought not to continue to love each other with passion. I mean to say, that they ought not to indulge those emotions which . . . engross the thoughts that should be otherwise employed” (34 top).
- * “I will go still further, and advance, without dreaming of a paradox, that an unhappy marriage is often very advantageous to a family, and that the neglected wife is, in general, the best mother” (34 mid). [contrast w/ importance of affection on pp. 50 bot, 54 mid, etc.]

A Vindication: Chp.2

- ✱ “Throughout the . . . animal kingdom every young creature requires almost continual exercise, and the infancy of children . . . should be passed in harmless gambols, that exercise the feet and hands, without requiring . . . the constant attention of a nurse” (45 mid).
- ✱ “To preserve personal beauty . . . the limbs and faculties are cramped with worse than Chinese bands, and the sedentary life which they are condemned to live, whilst boys frolic in the open air, weakens the muscles and relaxes the nerves” (45 bot).
- ✱ “The baneful consequences . . . extend further than is supposed--dependence of body naturally produces dependence of mind; and how can she be a good wife or mother, the greater part of whose time is employed to guard against or endure sickness?” (47 mid).

A Vindication: Chp.2

- * “Children, I grant, should be innocent; but when the epithet is applied to men, or women, it is but a civil term for weakness” (23 top).
- * “Women are every where in this deplorable state; for, in order to preserve their innocence, as ignorance is courteously termed, truth is hidden from them, and they are made to assume an artificial character before their faculties have acquired any strength” (48 mid).