

Review of Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of The Right of Woman

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Abstract

The book "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman," written by Mary Wollstonecraft, was published in 1792. The reason why this book is important is that it not only meets the requirements of the era in which it was written but also sheds light on today's concepts, such as political and human rights. The purpose of writing "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" was actually a response to the famous philosopher Edmund Burke's "Reflections on the Revolution in France", which was published in the 18th century. At the same time, another point that makes Wollstonecraft important in this book review is that she reflected her thoughts in her book, which would not remain a spectator to the political and social events of the 18th century. However, by opposing the hierarchy system in this period, she not only defended a section of women, but she was the defender of all women. She wanted to defend every woman in society. Of course, she determined this right to defense with reference to the education that women and men would receive. According to her, both sexes, men and women, have the same mind and the same common sense. The feature that distinguishes them from each other is their lack of education, and it is precisely for this reason that women were considered dependent on men in this period because they could not have the right to education. Accordingly, in her response, Wollstonecraft wrote that men and women had equal status and equal rights. The purpose of this study is to evaluate Wollstonecraft's book and discuss the prevailing opinion of a sexual character.

Keywords: book review, women right, gender right, Wollstonecraft



Introduction

Author Mary Wollstonecraft had both feminist and political experience. Although Mary Wollstonecraft, an English philosopher, had written many works, she was best known for her feminist works. The most important factor in Wollstonecraft's recognition was her criticism of the book written by Edmund Burke in 1790. In this work, she strongly opposed the idea of hereditary privilege defended by Edward Burke. Since the formation process of the work is in the 19th century, it seems that the conflicts between men and women in this period are also reflected.

Content

"A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" has 270 pages and was written in English. It also consists of 13 chapters. The first chapter is "The Rights and Involved Duties of Mankind Considering". Wollstonecraft asked some questions in the first chapter and answered them herself, and she also mentions that in order to make a statement on a subject, it is necessary to first analyze it from the very beginning. The first chapter answers some of these questions, such as which being of man is superior to another or for what purpose man is motivated. Wollstonecraft recognizes the power of reason as supremacy. Reason enables us to distinguish between right and wrong. It is thus free from prejudice. But according to Wollstonecraft, most men try to justify their prejudices instead of breaking them. The answer to the other question is moral goodness. However, the chapter also argues against the need for blind agreement with another person. Workplaces and schools are given as examples. Because the purpose of humanity is to dominate. In the end, reason provides rationality and finds the right answer. No one has to agree with anyone else blindly.

In the continuation of the second part, the section "The Prevailing Opinion of a Sexual Character Discussed" is by referring to the first part. So, according to Rousseau, over the years he has questioned men about whether they psychologically possess the necessary power over women to be morally good. In other words, men saw themselves as the guides of women. This idea was opposed by Wollstonecraft. She argued that women and men have the same power. Wollstonecraft talked about the difficulties experienced by women and stated that even in their education, they only went through a process aimed at pleasing their future spouses, that is, marriage. On the other hand, the education provided to men has a purpose. Women need to get out of this shallow education and become independent in order to improve themselves. In the sequel, the same subject is discussed. The fourth part includes "Observations on the State of Degradation to

Which Woman Is Reduced by Various Causes". This section includes discussions on men's opposition to women's education and the lack of need for it. According to men, there is no need for women's education. Because, according to them, there is no need to strive for society. Also, according to men, the world of marriage is a matter of reputation, and for women, it is everything. If women are not educated, how will they educate their future children after marriage? This chapter discusses the answer to this question. In addition, the fifth part is "Animadversions on Some of the Writers Who Have Rendered Women Objects of Pity, Bordering on Contempt." This part claiming that Rousseau saw women as weak and passive, Wollstonecraft argues to readers that women are not weak and passive, but are capable of accomplishing anything if they are well and worthily educated. In the next chapter, the effects of this situation are mentioned under the title "The Effect Which An Early Association Of Ideas Has Upon The Character". The answer to the question of what happens if women are not educated in a valuable way from an early age is given. In the seventh chapter, "Modesty Comprehensively Considered and Not As a Sexual Virtue". Wollstonecraft argues that women engaged in intellectual pursuits are more valuable than other women. Chapter eight touches on a similar subject, "Morality Undermined by Sexual Notions of the Importance of a Good Reputation." In chapter nine, "Of the Pernicious Effects That Arise From The Unnatural Distinctions Established in Society". It is explained that women should be financially well off. The next section is "Parental Affection," followed by "Duty to Parents," explains how the bond between parents and their children should be. Then "On National Education," Wollstonecraft's ideas on education included this chapter and finally "Some Instances of the Folly Which the Ignorance of Women Generates" conclude that comments on situations he sees in women in general.

In terms of style in this book, the author expressed anger against the situation women were in. She thought that it was necessary for women to ensure their economic freedom throughout their lives and that this opportunity should be given to them. This book on women's fundamental rights was based on the understanding that women should not only be concerned with household chores but should also pursue their education. At the same time, a stream of thoughts on the positive side of politics, a rule of thoughts that follows the author, seems to be quite common. The book manuscript bequeathed the ideas intellectually to the future.

For these reasons, the writer Mary Wollstonecraft openly criticized Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In particular, although Jean-Jacques Rousseau took himself as a source of inspiration for the French Revolution in his ideas, he was criticized by Wollstonecraft for seeing men as superior in the distinction between men and women in general. Contrary to this idea, Wollstonecraft included the education system she created in her book. According to her, this education was perceived to the extent that it could create an ideal national environment on the way to becoming a better individual in the future. This was where the idea of liberal philosophy did



not succeed. In fact, she believed that the negative perception of women stemmed from liberal philosophy. The main reason for this was the perception created by society. The elimination of the perception would be women learning to be virtuous.

According to Rosseau women should be subject to the superior abilities of men. The woman is dependent on the man and is designed to be presented to him by nature. The woman is obliged to endear herself to men, to respect them, to raise them when they were young, and to look after them when they were older. They have numerous duties, such as making life pleasurable and lovable for the man. Being a mother and a wife are two features that stand out in all these definitions. Mary Wollstonecraft criticized these thoughts of Rousseau for having a sexist attitude. She emphasized the importance of education in order for women to oppose the male-dominated order and oppression. Rousseau emphasized the necessity of having power over men, not standing on their own two feet. According to the author, underlying all these thoughts of Rousseau is that she saw men as absolute authorities not accountable to anyone.

Conclusion

Given these aspects, the author's thoughts on women and men have been successfully reflected. It is for these reasons that the work on the book is still effective. The understanding of education mentioned in the book also supports this idea. Women's access to education should not be shallow, but well-rounded and effective.

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Conflicts of interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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