Gender Issues: Discussing the Patriarchal Gender System

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Considering how critical I am of how badly gender issues are presented in textbooks, I've put this together in case anyone is interested in doing individual thinking. Students are welcome to create classroom discussions or presentations, too.

Why do people mistrust feminists, when the case is that most people have not read a single feminist book, or met a feminist in their lives? Why hate feminists when thanks to this nonviolent struggle our lives are much better, more truly human? (For genitals are not as important as human minds in determining our identities.)

We're all antifeminists when we don't think twice. That's the power of mass culture, and we've had that for centuries -- not today's diversity.

The fact is it could be much better for us all if we thought a bit more... Here's a sample of how women are thought of in patriarchal societies. Learn to identify the true enemy: sexism.

Know Your Enemy: A Sampling of Sexist Quotes

The glory of a man is knowledge, but the glory of a woman is to renounce knowledge. —Chinese proverb

Do not trust a good woman, and keep away from a bad one. —Portuguese proverb

Women are sisters nowhere. —West African proverb

Whenever a woman dies there is one quarrel less on earth. —German proverb

Never trust a woman, even though she has given you ten sons. —Chinese proverb

In childhood a woman must be subject to her father; in youth, to her husband; when her husband is dead, to her sons. A woman must never be free of subjugation. —The Hindu Code of Manu, V

I thank thee, O Lord, that thou hast not created me a woman. —Daily Orthodox Jewish Prayer (for a male)

There is a good principle which created order, light, and
man, and an evil principle which created chaos, darkness, and woman. —Pythagoras

We may thus conclude that it is a general law that there should be naturally ruling elements and elements naturally ruled . . . the rule of the freeman over the slave is one kind of rule; that of the male over the female another . . . the slave is entirely without the faculty of deliberation; the female indeed possesses it, but in a form which remains inconclusive . . . —Aristotle (Politics)

If thy wife does not obey thee at a signal and a glance, separate from her. —Sirach 25:26

When a woman thinks . . . she thinks evil. —Seneca

Creator of the heavens and the earth, He has given you wives from among yourselves to multiply you, and cattle male and female. Nothing can be compared with Him.

—Holy Koran of Islam

And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. —Genesis 2:22–23

How can he be clean that is born of a woman?

—Job, 4:4

Suffer women once to arrive at an equality with you, and they will from that moment become your superiors.

—Cato the Elder, 195 B.C.

Let the women learn in silence with all subjection . . . I suffer not a woman to usurp authority over men, but to be in silence. —St. Paul

Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands . . . for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church. —Ephesians 5:23–24
The five worst infirmities that afflict the female are indocility, discontent, slander, jealousy, and silliness. . . . Such is the stupidity of woman's character, that it is incumbent upon her, in every particular, to distrust herself and to obey her husband. —Confucian Marriage Manual

God created Adam lord of all living creatures, but Eve spoiled it all. —Martin Luther

All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable.

—Kramer and Sprenger, Inquisitors (Malleus Maleficarum, c. 1486)

A man in general is better pleased when he has a good dinner than when his wife talks Greek.

—Samuel Johnson

The whole education of women ought to be relative to men. To please them, to be useful to them, to make themselves loved and honored by them, to educate them when young, to care for them when grown, to counsel them, to console them, and to make life sweet and agreeable to them—these are the duties of women at all times and what should be taught them from their infancy.

—Jean Jacques Rousseau

Women have no moral sense; they rely for their behavior upon the men they love. —La Bruyere

Most women have no characters at all.

—Alexander Pope

I never knew a tolerable woman to be fond of her own sex.

—Jonathan Swift

Man for the field and woman for the hearth:
Man for the sword and for the needle she:
Man with the head and woman with the heart:
Man to command and woman to obey;
All else confusion. —Alfred, Lord Tennyson
sisterhood is powerful

Men are men, but Man is a woman. —G. K. Chesterton

Nature intended women to be our slaves . . . they are our property; we are not theirs. They belong to us, just as a tree that bears fruit belongs to a gardener. What a mad idea to demand equality for women! . . . Women are nothing but machines for producing children.

—Napoleon Bonaparte

To men a man is but a mind. Who cares what face he carries or what he wears? But woman's body is the woman.

—Ambrose Bierce

Regard the society of women as a necessary unpleasantness of social life, and avoid it as much as possible.

—Count Leo Tolstoy

A woman who is guided by the head and not the heart is a social pestilence: she has all the defects of the passionate and affectionate woman, with none of her compensations; she is without pity, without love, without virtue, without sex. —Honoré de Balzac

And a woman is only a woman but a good cigar is a smoke.

—Rudyard Kipling

Women have great talent, but no genius, for they always remain subjective. —Arthur Schopenhauer

One must have loved a woman of genius to comprehend the happiness of loving a fool. —Talleyrand

If the feminine abilities were developed to the same degree as those of the male, her (woman's) maternal organs would suffer and we should have a repulsive and useless hybrid.

—P.J. Moebius (German scientist, 1907)

The great question that has never been answered, and which I have not yet been able to answer despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul, is: What does a woman want? —Sigmund Freud
The woman’s fundamental status is that of her husband’s wife, the mother of his children. —Talcott Parsons

*Man’s superiority* will be shown, not in the fact that he has enslaved his wife, but that *he* has made her free.

—Eugene V. Debs

Women should receive a higher education, not in order to become doctors, lawyers, or professors, but to rear their offspring to be valuable human beings.

—Alexis Carrel, *Man, the Unknown*

Woman as a person enjoys a dignity equal with men, but she was given different tasks by God and by Nature which perfect and complete the work entrusted to men.

—Pope John XXIII

The only position for women in SNCC is prone.

—Stokely Carmichael, 1966

It would be preposterously naive to suggest that a B.A. can be made as attractive to girls as a marriage license.

—Dr. Grayson Kirk (former President, Columbia University)

Women, in general, want to be loved for what they are and men for what they accomplish. The first for their looks and charm, the latter for their actions. —Theodor Reik

My secretary is a lovable slave.

—Morris Ernst, attorney, on the 50th Anniversary of his having hired Paula Gross, secretary.

The only alliance I would make with the Women’s Liberation Movement is in bed.—Abbie Hoffman

Women are usually more patient in working at unexciting, repetitive tasks . . . Women on the average have more passivity in the inborn core of their personality . . . I believe women are designed in their deeper instincts to get more pleasure out of life—not only sexually but socially, occupa-
sisterhood is powerful

tionally, maternally—when they are not aggressive. To put it another way I think that when women are encouraged to be competitive too many of them become disagreeable.

—Dr. Benjamin M. Spock, *Decent and Indecent* 

Women? I guess they ought to exercise Pussy Power.

—Eldridge Cleaver, 1968

AND

A woman’s place is in the home/Housewives are such dull people/Women’s talk is all chatter/Intelligent women are emasculating/If you’re so smart why aren’t you married/-Can you type?/If you want to make decisions in this family, go out and earn a paycheck yourself/Working women are unfeminine/A smart woman never shows her brains/It is a woman’s duty to make herself attractive/All women think about are clothes/Women are always playing hard to get/No man likes an easy woman/Women should be struck regularly, like gongs/Women like to be raped/Women are always crying about something/Women don’t understand the value of a dollar/Women executives are castrating bitches/Don’t worry your pretty little head about it/Dumb broad/It is glorious to be the mother of all mankind/A woman’s work is never done/All you do is cook and clean and sit around all day/Women are only interested in trapping some man/A woman who can’t hold a man isn’t much of a woman/Women hate to be with other women/Women are always off chattering with each other/Some of my best friends are women...