



Center for the History of Women Philosophers and Scientists  
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## *Gender and Equality in Marie le Jars de Gournay (1665–1645)*

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Marie Le Jars de Gournay defends the equality of the sexes and the access of women to education and office currently accessible only to men. According to Gournay, the meager achievement by contemporary women in the arts and the sciences is due to irrational prejudices concerning their alleged inferiority to men and to the systematic denial of educational opportunities based upon that prejudice. To prove her point on gender equality, Gournay cites authoritative sources within the Catholic tradition: classical Stoic philosophers, the Bible, patristic authors, church councils, declarations by popes, liturgical texts, and the lives of the saints. The consensus of these authorities demonstrates the God-given equality between the sexes and the irrational injustice by which women have been denied their rightful freedom to pursue education and work outside the home. Gournay denounces the bitter misogyny which routinely makes women who aspire to scholarly achievement, like herself, an object of ridicule. This atmosphere of mockery makes it impossible for the public to perceive the record of scholarly, artistic, and scientific accomplishments by women in the past and the present.

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