**Rousseau vs Wollstonecraft**

[Name of Writer]

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The work ‘On Education’ by Jean-Jacques Rousseau tackles several issues relating to women’s education and problems and ideas circulating gender in general. Mary Wollstonecraft was an avid advocate of women’s rights and her work ‘Vindication of the Rights of Woman’ is an significant work on feminist philosophy. Both these essays are comparable commentaries on the merits and disadvantages of education for women.

Rousseau views the relationship between men and women in similar way as that of the conservative and patriarchal society that has historically defined gender boundaries all over the world and designated a special role to men and women by defining their respective ‘strengths and weaknesses’. Rousseau believes that men are physically stronger and therefore exist to protect and provide for women. He strongly believed that the similarities between men and women are limited to belonging to the same species. His thoughts and ideas vividly circulate around the conception that gender divisions in society exist due to the differences in biology and sex of men and women. Rousseau writes that the man as a husband and father provides while the wife and mother has to be meek and subordinate in order to deserve support and special treatment by the man. Therefore, he believes that the root cause of gender inequality is biological differences which there is no way of getting around. Rousseau asserts that if women got the same opportunity or education as men, it would eliminate their special status and would serve to lower them. He believed that the differences or the social ‘inequalities’ between men and women are ‘natural’ and therefore, if women seek equality, they automatically ask for a disruption in the natural order. Women are attractive and desirable to men simply because of their meekness and timidity, Rousseau writes. Much of his thoughts have been supported with logics borrowed from primitive and patriarchal ideologies. Although his work provides reasons for his assertions, it is highly unlikely that any of these would stand in the social atmosphere of America today.

Mary Wollstonecraft, on the other hand, focuses on a primarily feminist narrative while describing the case for women’s right to social equality. Her ideas might not be as radical as those celebrated in the feminist and progressive circles today but they were a vast improvement and an important critique on the works of thinkers like Rousseau. Wollstonecraft’s standing on gender equality is ambiguous if analyzed with respect to modern feminism. She believes that men and women are equal ‘in the eyes of God’ but refuses to delve deep enough to define how this equality translates into their social standings. Wollstonecraft has specifically mentioned Rousseau and his works while asserting that the different social statuses enjoyed by men and women are due to education (men) or the lack thereof (women). She therefore claims that biology and sex are not why women are not as socially powerful as men. Her case for women’s education is also not a stern or radical one. She simply relates it to motherhood and claims that since mothers educate children, women ought to be educated so they can be better mothers and better ‘companions’ to their husbands. Wollstonecraft writes that women waste away their lives in discontent over the little they achieve and the negligent mark they leave on the world. It is therefore evident that Wollstonecraft has employed both religion and logic in carefully weaving the foundation on which modern feminism stands. Her case for gender equality is not very vivid or bold but it is fearless nonetheless if we consider the cultural and historical context of her work. Hence, Wollstonecraft’s works are much more likely to be accepted in today’s America.